

3. *A Pile of Stones*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965, p. 77. Citations from this collection appear in parentheses.
4. Scholars have noted the terrible irony that many of the SS officers came from religious backgrounds. Forty-two percent of this group were Catholic. Most of the rest were Protestants. Many of the high ranking Nazi officials, Himmler, Hoess, *et al.*, either came from deeply religious families and/or were going to enter the ministry themselves. See Raul Hilberg *The Destruction of European Jewry* (Chicago: Quadrangle Press, 1967). Even the murderers make this point, perhaps inadvertently. See the self-serving memoir of Rudolph Hoess, *Commandment of Auschwitz* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1960).
5. This theme is a constant one in Nissenson's fiction. *The Crazy Old Man*, tells the story of Kolya, a Russian blacksmith who raped and murdered a Jewish woman he had known for forty years. A hasid, the old man observes that "violence made all the difference between us, the goyim and the Jews" (p. 39). This tale is not without problems however: the old man's view of the Holocaust is that God relented and saved a remnant because they did not fight back. The story's denouement comes when the old man shoots an Arab soldier being interrogated by two Israeli born officers in order to spare them the deed. He had done so because, in the words of one of the officers, "I had been born in the country into which his God had returned the Jews to give them their last chance" (p. 47). Redemption requires "forcing the end of history." "The Crazy Old Man" *In the Reign of Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972).
6. *My Own Ground*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976.) Page numbers in parentheses.
7. Schlifka's notion of soul root appears as a skewed version of the concept which originated with the Lurianic kabbala and had cosmic significance. Gershom Scholem observes that according to the kabbala of Isaac Luria: — each individual is enjoined to raise the holy sparks which belong specifically to his spiritual root in the great soul of Adam, the common soul of all mankind. Gershom G. Scholem. *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1971.) p. 246.
8. Edward Alexander's astute comments on the persistence of the "universalist-humanist delusion" among American Jews deserves note in this context. Rightly tracing the origins of the phenomenon to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, Alexander notes that the Jews of Europe sincerely believed that they must forswear their Jewish identity in order to assimilate with "humanity." "No conviction," writes Alexander, "has ever been more resistant to negative evidence than the belief of the Jewish leftist in the promises held out to him by declarations of human rights." Edward Alexander. *The Resonance of Dust*. (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1979) p. 124.
9. Analysts of Holocaust literature need to sharpen their focus when treating American Jewish novels. There exists what I term a sub-genre of Holocaust literature whose authors, while consciously choosing to abstain from direct confrontation with the Shoah nonetheless intend their works to be read as Holocaust fiction. Examples of this sub-genre include Mark Helprin's *Tamar*, Robert Kotlowitz's *Someplace Else*, Jay Neugeboren's *The Stolen Jew*, and Isaac Singer's *Shosha*.
10. Scholem notes that Rachel is "exiled from God and lamenting," while Leah is in a "perpetually repeated reunion with her Lord". Only the *tikkun* Rachel was, therefore, a true rite of lamentation, one which acknowledges the exile of the Shekhinah. The rite for Leah, on the other hand, emphasizes not exile but the redemptive promise. Some kabbalists added a third part to the ritual, a *tikkun haneefesh* or rite for the soul. Here the goal of the mystic was to unite God and the shekhinah by intense concentration "with every single organ of (the kabbalist's) body." Gershom G. Scholem. *On the Kabbala and its Symbolism*. Translated by R. Mannheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 149-150.
11. Kabbalists viewed evil as the *sitra achra*, the left or evil side of God. Kabbalistic theodicy is a complex phenomenon. At times it is suggested that evil is an element within the God-head while on other occasions evil is viewed as an independent reality. See Scholem, *Op cit.*, p. 92f.

Don't Cry for Me San Francisco

*'Refrain thy voice from weeping,
And thine eyes from tears;
For thy work shall have compense,'
saith the Lord;
'And thy children shall return to
their own border.'*

— Jeremiah XXX

Two weeks we spent recently with refuseniks in three Soviet cities have to be carefully chronicled, accurately mapped. Otherwise there is a chance that the recounting will turn into anecdote, the point of the journey of discovery might be lost as engaging travelogue.

At root it was a pilgrimage: looking for the answer to Weizmann's anguished question (when initially, the British had been prepared to grant Jews unlimited entry into Palestine): "Jewish people, where are you?" and to other anguished questions, too. As all pilgrimages it was a trajectory into the past. And as with all such "family" visits when Jews from

free lands meet Jews in the Soviet Union, there were poignant moments we shall not forget.

While the journey we wish to map was not devoid of highly personal, existential dimensions, they are not the point. The essential features of the map we draw are the co-ordinates of the mind's landscape, not the heart's contours. The cartography is straight ideology, it is nothing if not normative.

Sasha has just turned 17. He dreads the thought that if he doesn't get out soon he'll have to serve in the army. He is alert, intense, articulate, with street-smarts and very good looking. He reminds me of our son Geffen and it gave me a wrench.

We met his father, Leonid Gitlin, at the last stop of the Metro. Small features, delicate bone structure and a diffident manner do not at first betray an ironclad resolve. We walk together in the chilly afternoon to their apartment, talking English. Leonid's English is good. He reads Saul Bellow and

Faulkner. Sasha's is more fluent. Neither of them knows Hebrew or Yiddish. When we got to the flat, Sasha's mother Faina wasn't home. We didn't see her that first day because she was at work till late. Faina is a gynecologist who is still employed at a city clinic. She works very long hours treating all of Leningrad's refusenik women on top of her regular work load. This is part of the network.

Leonid holds a doctorate in computer science. Since losing his job as a scientist he has been working as a stoker of hot water furnaces. He suffered a loss of status and a large cut in his salary — surprisingly these two capitalist measures of a person's "worth" still figure large. He showed us a letter he had sent to a research aide of a U.S. Congressman: "My family has been waiting since we first applied for emigration in 1979. I constantly write to the Soviet authorities including the Supreme Soviet requesting that our right to emigrate be honored. We have always been denied permission. I was told the reason is the 'secrecy' I touched upon 14 years ago when I worked in the Leningrad Mechanical-Educational Institute, a technical university. But I wasn't in touch with any state secrets at all, for my occupation was some math problems in computing.

All my attempts have been fruitless in spite of the fact that there isn't any reason to deny permission."

In Moscow we met Pavel Abramovich who is organizing an international seminar on the right of free movement for people whose governments deny them that right on grounds of state secrecy. A whole literature has grown

up on this subject and it is neutral as the restrictions exist in other countries beside the USSR. Using his mathematics, Leonid prepared a paper on the "probability" factor in getting out. He submitted this paper to the conveners of the seminar. Conclusions: 1) Most Jews who have been refused exit on grounds of secrecy have been out of touch with genuinely sensitive information for some time; 2) The mind set of security bureaucrats knows no statute of limitations; 3) Some people who, arguably, had access more recently to more sensitive material were released while others are still being held; 4) Is it only the determination of the political echelon to over-ride the security apparatus which decides who will get out? 5) Yes! And yet there are ways to impact on this capriciousness.

Leonid isolated two variables, one external and the other domestic, which will spring a refusenik. They are interconnected. 1) If one's case achieves some notoriety in the world media; 2) If one's activity on behalf of aliya, Hebrew studies, seminars on Jewish history, etc., are persistent, effective and perceived to be such by the authorities, eventually you will get out. Consequently, his activity has accelerated. It was quite high before, too. Being modest, he wasn't pushy. Now, we hope he will be noticed.

Distribution and Dignity

There are sober policy considerations which stem from Leonid's assessment. Whoever portions out names and addresses must be sensitized to the fact that some refuseniks are genuinely over-

burdened with visitors. They have passed the effective saturation point vis-à-vis the Soviet authorities as well and if 10 or 30 Western Jews will visit them this year that will not make a difference. Those same visitors distributed more equitably, might make the difference in the case of a relatively anonymous family. There is something almost voyeuristic that one must guard against in the well-meaning visits of Jews bearing gifts of instant coffee, instant sympathy, and constant comment once back in San Francisco. There is a more-less-balance we have to strike between some unseemly motives as opposed to their beneficial results. Yehuda Amihai wrote in another context: "They pay condolence calls on us/ ...And laughing behind heavy curtains in hotel rooms/... They hang their underwear/ To dry fast/ in a cool, blue bathroom."

The sex-appeal in visiting well-known refuseniks, bringing some photos taken together with them, always in the home of the refuseniks: "You know, they couldn't come to our hotel," the name dropping: "You'll never believe who else was there;" (fill in as appropriate: the name of a well-known actress, a U.S. senator, the president of an important American Jewish organization); The hemorrhage of Jewish brotherhood: "Our hearts bled for them when we said 'next year in Jerusalem' together with them. Who knows when they'll be able to get out?" To safeguard both their dignity and that of the cause they believe in is important. Also important is who gets them out and takes them to which goal.

We ask Sasha what he needed. To observe his face wry up was to watch milk become yoghurt.

"Give more people our address and tell

them to visit us. Get word to the Lubavitcher."

When asked how many visits they had had, Sasha answered "We haven't had anyone but you since two months ago and the previous bunch were Scandinavians." Sasha has an ascending scale: Scandinavian, English and American Jews, in that order, and an emissary from the Lubavitcher is at the top. The Lubavitcher's importance, Sasha said, is that he could get anyone out. He had never met Israelis. I wondered where on his ladder he would find a place for us, as Zionists and as Israelis.

We told Sasha that in our opinion as monotheists and as Jews, the belief in miracle-working rabbis bordered on idolatry. His father filled in, "like the cult of personality around Stalin." "The rebbe can call up the president, can't he?" he persisted. "Yes," we said, "but it's unlikely the president will take the call." It is the State of Israel, or heads of American Jewish organizations whose importance derives from their connection with Israel that impact on the US government. It sounds grossly overstated and self-congratulatory to claim that Israel and the Zionists of the world (sometimes working covertly) got the Soviet government to agree to the family repatriation plan. On the surface it looks to be the result of negotiations conducted by the Americans. But that notion is as acute a perception as the observation that it was oven mitts which removed a pot from the fire. The hands are the hands of Jacob; the affidavits, from "relatives" in Israel.

There was some talk about messianism as a Jewish phenomenon. Skipping Shabbtai Zevi, I told Sasha instead about the plains Indians. They too had a

bout with messianism, as the white man's railroads and firearms drove the buffalo further and further out; as his whiskey took its toll of the Indians' self confidence. They compensated and in over-confidence, Indian bucks began to talk of a messianic super-natural chief who would come, bring back the buffalo and restore Indians to their rightful place. He would have an unusual skin, it would be white.

Zionism doesn't believe in supernatural miracles. In the 'sixties, Isi Leibler, a foremost Australian Zionist, got Robert Hawke, then head of the Australian labor movement and now Prime Minister, to visit the home of Pavel Abramovich. Later Hawke got his Soviet opposite number, Shebiev, to promise to let Jews out. Isi's brother, Mark, is currently the president of the Australian Zionist Federation and has excellent connections in Canberra. Look to him, Sasha, not to a whitefaced buffalo spirit.

Barbara Oberman, Joan Dale and Doreen Gainsford who founded the 35's (Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry in England) in the year you were born, Sasha, were not necessarily Zionists. But Mark Dymshits and Edward Kuznetsov who led the "hijack attempt" from Leningrad's Smolny airport on June 16, 1970, were most certainly Zionists. Mark and Edward were condemned to death by a Soviet court. The public outcry in the world, which helped commute their sentence may not have been purely Zionist, but we know where it was initiated and by whom. So one has to forgive the contemporary writers of *Leningradskaya Pravda* if mistakenly (or not) they headline the activities of the 35's "Beware, Zionism!" You may be sure that they won't think that the effec-

tiveness of the "rebbe" is behind it all.

Sasha dotes on western music. He had some well-worn cassettes and a walkman with only one earphone working — his "invalid", as he calls it. To stop an allegory before it got started we gave him our still valid one. It plays *Hatikvah* brilliantly — and in balance.

Zionism Begins in the Galut

My parents came from Liozno, a shtetl near Vitebsk, the home of Shneur Zalman, the founder of Habad as well as of Marc Chagall. My father, a rabbi's son, spent four years in the Czar's army. Unlike Sasha, he went willingly, admittedly an unusual path for a young Jew.

He learned to eat *treif* food, to get along as the only Jew (in Liozno they comprised 67% of the population) among Russian peasants; and he learned how to use weapons. It was in order to acquire this last skill that he wanted to serve in the army. He chose to do so in response to ideas he heard at Poalei Zion meetings. There he heard Uncle Ben say that Jews had to re-enter history and start taking care of themselves because God wouldn't do it in their place. This was the lesson of the Kishinev massacre of 1903. Three important events happened in the wake of that murderous, government sponsored pogrom: That very year my father turned 18, Bialik wrote the poem "On The Slaughter" and Poalei Zion was founded. Uncle Ben said that he never told Gershon Ber to join the army, "that was his own idea."

But when he returned to Liozno after his army service, my father didn't join Poalei Zion. He was recruited by the local "revolutionaries" because he was the only one in town who knew how to use the one gun they had. He was supposed to shoot the district police chief but didn't. Fortunately the intended victim departed from his routine drive every Shabbat in an open carriage between Liozno and Vitebsk. Later, he said that he wouldn't have been able to do it in any case. He told me once that Bialik would have got in the way of aiming the pistol:

And cursed be the man who says:
Avenge! No such revenge — revenge
for
the blood of a little child — has yet
been devised by Satan.

But with one thing and another this muffed assassination attempt helped him decide to leave Russia. My mother had already left Russia for Chicago with her family. Indeed thousands, later hundreds of thousands, and still later, millions had begun one of the largest mass migrations of human history.

He wanted to follow but as the son of a penniless rabbi he didn't have money for the fare. Agents of Jacob B. Schiff offered to pay the passage of young Jews in return for their promise not to disembark in coast cities of the eastern U.S. but to stay aboard until Galveston, Texas. They were to stay west of the Mississippi for at least five years. It was hoped Jews would settle in the western and southern states and stay out of the teaming urban concentrations of Jews in the north east. The Galveston plan was meant to solve the socio-economic plight of the Jewish masses by making them

agrarian, productive and self-sufficient.

My father turned down the generous offer. He felt that the problem of the Jews, so incisively analyzed by Syrkin and Borochoy and Uncle Ben, could be solved in one country only — Israel. They were right, only in Israel! 10,000 Jews went to Galveston, almost none stayed.

Well-meaning Jews have been arranging transport for other Jews, deciding on locales for their resettlement and planning occupational retraining for some time now.

Zionists have been at it more consistently than philanthropic-minded ameliorists. Schiff wasn't the sole resettler. There were barons as well as notables, each with his favorite territory. And there was the tragic intervention by the Joint Distribution Committee. Their common denominator was that they all rejected Zion as the proposed site.

That was the only common thing about them.

A Tragic Defeat

When the contemporary heirs of these notables fought and won the fight to grant the dropouts American refugee status it was a Zionist defeat. All along our work was made more difficult because of the attack by wealthy, assimilated Jews in the west who loathed the idea of a sovereign independent Jewish state precisely because it would be regarded as the Jewish *homeland*, and we considered the twin questions of Jewish land and Jewish homelessness closed on May 15, 1948, when upon termination of the British Mandate we declared the independence of the State of Israel. We were convinced that once we controlled

immigration and the gates would be open, that never again would there be homeless Jewish refugees.

Suddenly they reappear! In Vienna, "our" Jews, the ones who left the USSR under our affidavits are made homeless again with HIAS labels on their US bound suitcases. They are turned into refugees by virtue of the JDC's inability, *nebech*, to resettle Jews where they belong rather than "in those places where Jews themselves had chosen to live." Until its establishment, only a minority of Jews actively supported the notion of a Jewish homeland. Thus, in 1948, the Zionists suddenly found themselves vindicated not only by history but by a tacit majority status in world Jewry. Jewish space and Jewish time would have bearing upon one another and would be impacted upon reciprocally by the whole world and its family of nations.

Jewish Space, Jewish Time and the Jewish Public

The Hassidim had a *niggun* whose words were: "I say of Jerusalem: 'She shall be inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah: 'They shall be rebuilt.'" My father told me that his father, the Hassidic rebbe told him: "These words are not meant to be taken literally, certainly not today." And yet, my grandfather continued, it didn't pay to be caught unprepared. So no shtetl worth its salt was without its watchman. From dawn to dusk he stood at the entrance to the town in order to alert its Jews in case the messiah should come. This was no

volunteer function — he was retained at full pay — but neither was it accidental that invariably it was the town fool, not its spiritual leader, who kept watch over shtetl-time until messiah-time when they would all be led back upright to that other place they would inhabit.

Take Mendel Beilis for instance. Bernard Malamud took him as the last on which to shape a story of great elegance, *The Fixer*. Beilis, falsely accused by the Czarist police of having murdered 12 year old Andrei Yushchinsky for purposes of Jewish ritual (one of the last genuine blood libels - 1911) spent two years in a Kiev prison. He was released due to western public opinion which was galvanized by one of the first orchestrated protest campaigns organized by world Jewry. Upon winning his freedom he came to Palestine. But soon after World War I he left for America, where 14 years later he died almost unremarked. With the passage of years he had grown increasing querulous — the Jewish people would not support him in freedom as they had in the heyday of his trial.

Malamud's achievement with the fictional character of Jacob Bok is truly impressive. Unlike the Beilis on whom he was patterned, who deteriorated from humble beginnings as an 'everyjew' into a whining, less than a *gornisht*, nothing; Bok, the Fixer becomes a somebody. Malamud's writing is so fine that many a reader suspends disbelief to behold a person becoming a believable hero, great, under intolerable conditions.

Elsewhere, I have indicated that Malamud's craft is dependent in great measure on his having grafted a mythopoetic skin onto Jacob. Jacob Bok's very name is an expansive pun on the ford of

Jabbok on the Jordan. It was here that Jacob recrossed on his return home to Canaan from a 14-year stint with his father-in-law, Laban. There, (see *Genesis*, 32) he struggles with an angel all night. In a scene reminiscent of that wrestling match of giants Malamud shows Beilis-Bok striving against the Czar in a dream sequence.

Why did Malamud not show that world Jewry, if not the "hero" of the piece, at least had a supporting role, nor show that the place for Beilis is at home with his people? Probably because his craft is his belief system and he isn't writing a Zionist tract.

Michael Zand is! Zand made aliya from the USSR in 1971. He heads the Institute for Iranian and Armenian Studies at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem and is a permanent member of the President of Israel's Study Group on Contemporary Jewry. Once, while speculating on the metahistoric aspects of the return to Zion, he called our attention to what he considered Herzl's singular contribution to have been. The revolution Herzl ignited was not the creation of a movement of national liberation *ex nihilo*; for after all, such a movement, including a membership roll, slogans, and fairly well-articulated ideology, existed already. Admittedly they existed solely on the planes of metaphysics and supra-reality careening along at breakneck speed in a time-capsule homed in on external time and outer space which are the "end of days."

Herzl's significance in the eyes of the former Jewish Russian dissident is that he switched time modes, that his revolution transposed the hands on the clock of ingathering-of-exiles from its accus-

tomed pace of eschatological time to the mode of our present existence.

Along with his fellow revolutionaries he actualized the Zionism that had been dormant in our tradition, turning it from the visionary to the existential. He applied the data of reality to the vision and thereby transferred Zionism from the realms of a dogma and a catechism to that of an operative social doctrine.

The Herzl paradox is that at the Zionist congresses he supplied a venue for a motif deeply embedded in the Jewish tradition while he himself had to return to his people almost from the outside. It may have been this marginal footing that granted him that uncommon perspective, half-out, half-in. His case may be a historic hint of what the marginal Jews of Russia, half in, half out of Judaism, might yet contribute to the new-old amalgam unfolding in Herzl's new found land and in theirs.

Semantics, Slogans and Face Saving Formulas

So first things first: in terms of Zionist ideology, as we understand it, "refuseniks" is a misnomer. We used to call them (as indeed pioneers of the movement called themselves in the late sixties and early seventies), DISSIDENTS. Only later was the misguided name REFUSENIKS decided on.

A dissident has differences with a regime. These may stem from a disagreement about the self-definition of the dissident group and sometimes lead to a demand for autonomy or national liberation; in our case, outside the USSR. Dissidence is an active mode and its adherents are drawn into a collective

confrontation with the authorities. In contradistinction, a refusenik is an individual supplicant whose petition has been rejected, refused.

Although understandable as part of diplomatic formulations (find me a face-saving phrase and you can have anything you want) to enable the Soviet authorities to separate the Jewish question from that of other dissident groups within the larger Russian complex, the name is just not consistent with Zionist ideology. The term refusenik conjures up the tearful image that (again) somebody is doing something bad to Jews.

Otherness

The dissidence we speak of is not political in the sense that it doesn't wish to alter the Soviet Union but to leave it. Hence "let my people go" is so apt. Moses was no counter-revolutionary subversive — he was Exodus bound. But here the parallel ends. For today's "Egypt" is a house of bondage on grounds of civilization only. While not yet a Garden of Eden, neither is the USSR particularly oppressive of Jews. They are not treated very differently than other religions or ethnic minorities. The nub of Jewish dissidence is the Jews' self-perceived otherness. In another context Mordechai Kaplan said:

Judaism as otherness is something far more comprehensive than Jewish religion. It includes the nexus of a history, literature, language, social organization, folk sanctions, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideas, esthetic values, which in their totality form a civilization.

In a 1978 article (*FORUM*, No.30-31) entitled "Jewish Dissent in the USSR", Michael Zand wrote that precious little knowledge of what Kaplan called Judaism as a civilization was available to most Soviet Jews. (What remnants there were, were to be found in the Baltic states incorporated into the USSR after the Second World War.) They had to make do with a sub-pattern of experience, Jewishness-as-fate. Zand subdivided this "fated" group into three:

1) 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.

2) Those who saw their Jewish fate as a curse had to draw the logical conclusion too, namely, that they had to rid themselves of their Jewishness, i.e. to become assimilated.

3) Those who reconciled themselves apathetically to their fate.

The common denominator of all three was the determination to leave the Soviet Union. The first decided on aliya of course. The second decided to go anywhere *but* to Israel. To assimilate successfully in the USSR one has to have the category *Yevrei* erased from one's identity certificate. This can be done only by stating under oath that neither he nor his parents were Jews.

The only way out for assimilationists in-a-hurry was to leave the USSR for countries where their ethnic affiliation was not fixed officially and need not play an essential part in their lives if they did not wish it to — the goal was primarily a multi-ethnic country of immigration with a proven ability to absorb and assimilate — and the USA took top priority.

A Yearning to be Surrounded by Strangers

The second and third groups are disdainful of patriotism in whatever guise or under any flag, be it emblazoned with a *magen david* or the hammer and sickle. Together, they comprise the true cosmopolites. But they also differ from one another. The ones without strong feelings either for or against their Jewishness are also structuralists. Zand says:

"For them the main incentive has been that preference for various structural features of western democracies — either political (freedom of speech, free election) or juridical (personal immunity, freedom to leave the country of inhabitation and to return to it) or economic, or all of them — over the respective structural features of Soviet society."

But I think that the reason for the non-ideological variety of "dissidence" is often something perverse or perhaps only alienated. Toni Morrison, a black American woman put her finger on it in *Solomon's Song*:

"Truly landlocked people know they are. Know the occasional Bitter Creek or Powder River that runs through Wyoming; that the large tidy Salt Lake of Utah is all they have of the sea and that they must content themselves with *bank*, *shore* and *beach* because they cannot claim a coast. And having none, seldom dream of flight. But the people living in the Great Lakes region are confused by their place on the country's edge — an edge that is border but not coast.

They seem to be able to live a long time believing, as coastal people do, that they are at the frontier where final exit and total escape are the only journeys left. But those five Great Lakes which the St. Lawrence feeds with memories of the sea are themselves landlocked, in spite of the wandering river that connects them to the Atlantic. Once the people of the lake region discover this, the longing to leave becomes acute, and a break from the area, therefore, is necessarily dream-bitten, but necessary nonetheless. It might be an appetite for other streets, other slants of light. Or a yearning to be surrounded by strangers. It may even be a wish to hear the solid click of a door closing behind their back."

As claustrophobic as is Russia, seeking an outlet to a warm weather sea, so are her Jews. Chagall points in a direction of possible exit — possible for the few. In his autobiography he writes:

"I was roaming in the streets seeking and praying, 'Oh God! Show me the way. I wish I could be different from the others; I want to see a new world.' In answer the town seems to tear apart... and its inhabitants start walking above the earth leaving their usual place. The familiar characters settle on the roofs..."

Keep the Fiddlers off the Roof

"At the precise moment of my birth, near Vitebsk, in a small house near the road, behind a prison, a fire broke

out. The town was on fire and with it the district of the poor Jews... And yet that small house remained untouched. I saw it again recently... it reminds me of the bump on the head of the *Rabbi* in *Green* I painted, or a potato thrown into a barrel of herrings and soaked in brine. Looking down at the small house, I shake all over in wonder as I look back today from the heights of my 'sublimity'; how could I have been born here? How does one breathe here?"

Nadine and Henri Kaspi, writing in *FORUM* (No. 34, Winter 1979) indicate that in retrospect Chagall discovered that there was only one direction, *out* rather than up: "In *The Fall of the Angel* which symbolizes suffering brought on by the pogroms which were inspired by the Russian Archduke, by war and revolution, the angel is depicted as a winged woman whose splendid body falls in a gorgeous arabesque. *The Revolution* provides another example. Chagall wrote at the time: "Russia was disappearing under ice. Lenin turned it upside down, exactly as I turn my pictures around." One knows the bitterness and despair Chagall experienced in those years. "Neither Czarist Russia nor the Russia of the Soviets need me. I am a stranger to them and truly incomprehensible. I am sure Rembrandt likes me."

Leningrad is less land-locked than Moscow, if only because of the Hermitage Art Museum and because early on, Peter the Great opened an aperture to the west. It was in that heroic city that we met Ida and Abba Taratuta, veteran refuseniks. Misha, their son is an artist who gave expression to the family's longing for other streets, other

slants of light, painting the door of their apartment (see the cover) in a dream bitten Chagallesque mode. He has come home to Israel. They still await the sound of a solid click of that door closing behind their backs.

Abba is a secular Jew, a man of broad culture, as were most of the founders of the movement. Like others of that ilk so reminiscent of the *maskilim* and early Russian-Zionist intellectuals, Abba is equally at home in the general and the Judaic cultures. He is, despite the enforced isolation, very much at home in contemporary Hebrew culture. (One blesses the hands of the dedicated people in the WZO Department of Education and Culture who over the years sent works by modern Israeli novelists and poets). He told us some Zionist home truths about those at both ends of the spectrum: the *hozrim b'tshuvah*, the newly-orthodox, and the extreme assimilationists. The latter may be lost to us, but the *hozrim b'tshuvah* who are increasingly in evidence are our mandate.

Later, we caught a fine article in the *Jerusalem Post* by an observer and shaker in the area of Soviet Jewry, Isi J. Leibler, of Australia. (The one we told Sasha Gitlin to look to). He understood the fact that facts had grown up under our feet so to speak and we are unprepared to cope with them:

"The veteran refuseniks, the founders of the Zionist revival movement make aliya. What then? What happens to Zionism and Jewish life in the Soviet Union? ... (we) are at a real crossroads there. A new generation of religiously observant activists has grown up... The great majority... are

remarkably impressive human beings who are idealists.

Until now, to their credit, Habad, Aguda and other non-Zionists, even anti-Zionist groups have catered for these religious elements. The consequences, in the development of growing non-Zionist leanings were inevitable."

Up to this point we had only minor quibbles with Leibler, e.g., it is not to "their credit" but due to their missionary zeal that Habad and others have come onto the scene. As they superficially "convert" secular Jews in Tel Aviv's central bus station, so they "save Jewish souls" in Moscow, leaving them there on ice till we get them out.

But we totally disagree when he writes: "The standard of their learning — largely self-taught — is extraordinarily high even by western standards." These pious souls with angelic looks are indeed idealists. They are also fundamentalist know-nothings: in both senses of the term; (they know nothing because they are innocent of life — uneducated and unschooled. They are also populists). Whatever Jewish knowledge they possess is seldom profound, and whatever general knowledge they may have possessed before embracing orthodoxy has been repressed to make room for "other worldliness".

Mikhael Geysel is paradigmatic of the violinists who have settled on roofs. He lives with his pregnant wife Marina-Miriam who has followed him into their new-found observance and his two children in a suburb 25 kilometers out of Moscow. No Anatevka this, there isn't another Jewish family around. He met us at the exit of the Metro. Above ground it was concrete socialist realism, block

upon distinguished, unrelievedly grey block. From there, the long drive in an old bus was an ordeal. Diesel fumes competed with obnoxious cigarette smoke for the privilege of asphyxiating us. We couldn't see the scenery because the windows had a thick brown mud coat. When we got out, both Rivka and I took a deep breath and remarked on the beauty of the birches and the other trees in their flaming autumn foliage.

Mikhael said: "feh!" He is very soft spoken and his Hebrew is quite rudimentary, so not sure that we had understood, we looked at each other for a moment. Then I asked whether I'd heard right and if so why had he said "feh?" "They are goyim, goyish trees," he answered. I objected, "for is the tree of the field man, that you should besiege it?" He hesitated a moment and asked "Where is that from?" Not remembering the exact chapter and verse from Deuteronomy, I answered, "*Devarim*, something — it's in the weekly portion called *Shoftim*". Mikhael looked at me uncertainly, my Hebrew was authentic but could I be trusted. I was clean shaven and my head was as uncovered as Adam's on the day God created him.

Mikhael had been a fairly accomplished professional violinist, before he lost his job. Now, supported spiritually and materially at near poverty level by one of the "non-Zionist groups that cater to these elements", he complements his meager income with occasional work as a piano tuner. He is culturally impoverished too; devoid of the general culture Isi Liebler shares with Abba Taratuta as well as the Hebraic-Judaic one. As a hozer b'teshuva he is observant of mitzvot, but as a person he is incapable of observing anything. As he rejects

nature, so too, he does not understand, in Ibn Paquda's sense, the *Duties of the Heart*.

He is stifled in Russia. The atmosphere atop the roof he has chosen to sit on is hard to breathe in. There is no room there for an older Russian Jew's nature; take Mendelevich's story, "The Calf." A child escaping the bleak and dusty atmosphere at the yeshiva, discovers nature in the company of his calf:

"The green grass was a revelation. Everything was alive. We met God's creatures, previously unknown to us: every manner of bird and insect. They flew through the air, glided in the grass, singing and humming and buzzing. I felt alive, myself, alive inside. For once I could breathe freely. I turned somersaults in high spirits."

Fiddlers precariously perched on rooftops don't turn somersaults.

Mikhael is real, he is paradigmatic of that growing band of isolated souls, alienated from both communist Russia and modern Zionist, secular Israel.

Abba Taratuta also explained that the scandal of the dropout phenomenon was that inadvertently we encourage final exit, the total escape — from Judaism. Instead, Israel must insist on direct flights. The scandal is that the present arrangement aids assimilated Jews to realize "a yearning to be surrounded by strangers", their aspiration to forget they ever were considered Jewish, a wish to hear the solid click of a door closing behind their backs. It is scandalous to exchange one document, an invitation to be reunited with family in Israel — without which they can not leave the USSR — for another document

giving homeless refugee status — without which they can not enter the US. Thus spoke Abba Taratuta!

By 1973 there were already alarming signs. In that year, 20% were already "defecting." (We spoke Hebrew but when we got to this point in the conversation he switched to English): "Dropout is too bland," he said. It took only three years of inadequate Zionist policy to reverse the ratio. By 1976 only 20% were coming to Israel while 50% were going to America.

But it is neither with the born-again to Judaism nor with the benighted escapees from Judaism with whom we have to conduct an ideological battle; it is with their sponsors. Empirically we know that dropouts at Vienna continue to dropout once they have been welcomed and aided by American Jewish communities. They do not attend synagogues, Jewish cultural events, nor do they give their children a Jewish education. Quite literally they excommunicate themselves. Their sponsors know this too. That they continue to help them "defect" makes one wonder about the high regard in Israel, for the way American Jewish communal leadership ostensibly conducts its affairs. Indeed the "business-like" nature of the operation came into question as early as 1924 when the JDC first began its dealings on behalf of Soviet Jews.

The leaders and major contributors of the JDC in its early years were German Jews who were proud of being part of American society and who viewed any "exaggerated nationalism" with suspicion — including that of Jews. Julius Rosenwald, a renowned philanthropist who in the course of his life donated more than \$70 million to charity, had

often told Weizmann that "if you convince me that Palestine is a practical solution for the Jews, you'll get every cent I have." The above, taken from an anniversary booklet recently produced by the JDC goes on to say:

"But Weizmann wasn't able to convince him and with good reason: there were millions of Jews in the world and Palestine was a tiny country. *More Jews became farmers in Russia through the efforts of Agro-Joint than all those who were settled on the land in Palestine from the beginnings of Zionism up until the establishment of the State of Israel*" [our italics]

Now in the eighties? This is something to be proud of?

When Agro-Joint was established, it was a co-venture with the Soviet government's Commission for Settling Jews (KONZET). There were those at JDC who were opposed to the scheme because they didn't like the idea of cooperation with a communist regime. "Others felt that the millions needed for such a project would be better spent establishing agricultural settlements in Palestine where the Jews at least would not be subjected to pogroms. Still others were sure that Jews would never make successful farmers."

In their anniversary booklet, this tragic chapter of Rosenwaldian stewardship and of JDC statesmanship is called "A Tragic Success Story." It is worse than tragic, it is culpable. Before the outbreak of World War II, the Soviets had already liquidated local Agro-Joint officials as well as the leaders of the settlements. That they did not foresee that collective Jewish life in the Soviet Union

was doomed is sad, as was their inability to safeguard their own "investment". But that they have not internalized the moral of the story, that they continue to present it as a "success" and their contemporary obstructionism as statesmanlike should make potential contributors and contemporary givers think again.

Ostensibly the rationale for the policy was not anti-Zionist, it was merely "liberal" because the JDC had simply agreed to rehabilitate Jewish life "in those places where Jews themselves had chosen to live." This was the rationale under which 300,000 Jews were resettled by the JDC.

How was it that my father and Jacob Schiff, each in his own way, understood that Jews had to get out of Russia and that they could become successful agrarians only at home? Millions of dollars and three hundred thousand murdered Jews poorer, the Jewish people and the Zionist movement have a profit and loss account to settle with the givers of big gifts, the makers of independent policy. The first entry is *Psalms* 146,3; "Put not your trust in the generous".

The second entry is from Jeremiah:

"Refrain thy voice from weeping,
And thine eyes from tears;
For thy work shall have recompense,
saith the Lord;
'And thy children shall return to
their own border."

It is debited to the account of the lachrymose. To those who cry for Sasha, and for Ida and for Anatoly.

The ones you cry for, will come to their own border.

Leonid invited us to the dissidents' — refuseniks' Succot party at the home of

the Romanovski's. It was there that we finally met Faina Gitlin. Together with her husband and son the three Gitlin's participated in some skits they call a "Purim Shpiel." These satires are the most popular form of entertainment used at all big get-togethers recycling the genre for other occasions.

More than fifty people crowded into a small apartment where the comradeship overcame the crush and homebaked cakes had to compete for space with the library of Jewish historical and literary books of the community. This is their true "dissidence", these books.

I was asked to bring greetings from Israel. I couldn't read my prepared notes because my eyes were swimming. So, I ad-libbed something about an anthology of Zionism after the creation of the state I was working on. I mentioned that some cynics in Israel had commented: "Hmm, short book; after you finish the chapter on Soviet Jewry, what else have you got?" And then I remembered my message.

Succot and Hanuka are both eight day holidays, one connected with water and the other with fire. Each has acquired a renewed significance in Zionist Israel. Yehuda Sharett once taught our choir a Hanuka song to which he added a gloss to adapt it for Succot as well. The song:

Nes Lo Kara Lanu, "No Miracle Attended Us," was sung by the pioneers of the Third Aliya:

"No miracle attended us
Nor did we find a pan of oil
We struck rocks with our picks
'And there was light.'"

The Halutzim rejected miracles, opting instead for callouses. Sasha was listening very attentively. Several afternoons earlier in his house we had also rejected miracle-working rabbis. As I got to the end of the talk he began to smile. "A people that has no miracles for its future or myths of its past is a culturally impoverished group not deserving of the name 'nation'. We await you all so eagerly because until now we have been your myth and you — our miracle. When you come to Israel we will all be confronted with the reality of your absorption. It will resemble neither myth nor miracle, only callouses. When we overcome that scratchiness we'll have to pitch in, fashioning a new set."

Sasha came over afterward and said, "I wondered how you would get out of it." So did I. I got out of it at Leningrad airport several days later.

Who's going to get him out?

N.B. Since the above article was written, we are glad to report that the Abramovich, Taratuta, Geysel and Gitlin families have received their exit visas and have either arrived in Israel, or will do so shortly.

Book Reviews

FAITH AND FULFILLMENT — CHRISTIANS AND THE RETURN TO THE PROMISED LAND by Michael J. Pragai. (Valentine, Mitchell, London).

Reviewed by Mordechai Shalev

The author is a retired foreign service officer who has been involved in Israel-Christian relations for many years, both in Jerusalem and in postings abroad. To judge by the passion which he displays, it has been more than a professional involvement for him.

Pragai believes — and rightly so — that it is important to record the story of Christian belief in the return of the Jews to Eretz Israel, of the contribution that Christians have made to the Zionist movement and of the support they have given to the State of Israel, since its establishment. This phenomenon — of Christians supporting *shivat tsiyon* — the Return to Zion — in principle and practice, is the exception to the rule. For most of the 2,000 years that have passed

since Christianity developed out of Judaism, the Church had no regard for the Jews' hopes, and for their faith in their ultimate restoration to their land. In the eyes of the Church, the Jews did not exist for their own sake, but in order to bear living witness to the triumph of Church over Synagogue, of Christianity over Judaism. The idea of the return of the Jews to Zion was regarded by Christians as contradicting their own faith; as Pope Pius X told Theodor Herzl, "*Non possumus* — we cannot be in favor of the Jews returning to Jerusalem."

But there were Christians who found in their own faith the confirmation of the inalienable right of the Jews to rebuild Zion and considered it their Christian duty to help the Jews exercise that right. There were not many such Christians, but enough to make a difference.

Whatever the political considerations of the British Government may have been in issuing the Balfour Declaration, the ministers involved — Prime Minis-