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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF  
DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION  
OF MINORITIES

Thirteenth session

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM AND OTHER FORMS OF RACIAL  
PREJUDICE AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE OF A SIMILAR NATURE

(Addendum)

Add to Part I the following:

COORDINATING BOARD OF JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

(communication dated 8 November 1960)

STATEMENT OF MAJOR AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS ON  
THE PLIGHT OF SOVIET JEWS

On the occasion of Yom Kippur, the sacred Day of Atonement of Jewish communities around the world, the undersigned American Jewish organizations feel impelled to join in this solemn declaration on a matter of deep urgency for common concern and action during the forthcoming period:

The United Nations General Assembly is now meeting in the presence of the leaders of many states. Questions of international peace are naturally uppermost in every mind.

Jews, as a people with a particular awareness of minority problems, are especially sensitive to the need for relaxation of tension and for the creation of an atmosphere conducive to the diminution and disappearance of national, ethnic, racial, and religious discrimination.

The creation of such an atmosphere demands, however, that problems causing genuine popular concern be frankly faced, rather than passed over in silence. A relaxation of tension requires not only the settlement of questions outstanding between governments, but also the elimination of issues causing anxiety to peoples.

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It is with this factor in mind that we must refer, with deep sorrow and ever-mounting concern, to the plight of the 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 Jews in the Soviet Union.

Reports whose veracity can no longer be in doubt clearly indicate that a special policy is being applied against Soviet Jews both as individuals and as an ethnic, religious and cultural group. This policy stands in sharp contrast even to those institutional facilities which have been permitted to other ethnic and religious groups in the Soviet Union; moreover, it contradicts the very principles of equality which the Soviet authorities have repeatedly professed in international forums.

Major facets of this tragic and deteriorating position have consistently been brought to public attention. They include a persistent refusal to restore their cultural institutions to Soviet Jews (after years of forcible deprivations) and a campaign of incitement in Russia and in the Ukraine against Judaism. Among those who have verified these reports are many outstanding personalities, including outspoken friends of the Soviet Union.

We American Jewish organizations find it difficult to believe that the Soviet authorities can refuse to take note of the collective concern of mankind. It would in no way be inconsistent with the Soviet system to carry out a major change in policy towards Soviet Jewry. Such a change would require:

- (1) The granting of full cultural and religious group rights and institutions in Yiddish and Hebrew to Soviet Jews, including the right to establish a federation of Jewish communities inside the Soviet Union;
- (2) Permission to Soviet Jews to emigrate, in accordance with the principles of the Human Rights Declaration, for purposes such as the reunion of dispersed families; and
- (3) Resumption of organizational contact between Soviet Jews and Jewish groups elsewhere.

The undersigned organizations appeal to men of good-will everywhere to bring the full weight of responsible public opinion to bear so that the tragic position of Soviet Jews may be alleviated:

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American-Israel Public Affairs Committee;  
American Jewish Congress;  
American Trade Union Council for Labor Israel;  
American Zionist Council;  
B'nai B'rith;  
Hadassah;  
Jewish Agency for Israel;  
Jewish Labor Committee;  
Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.;  
Labor Zionist Movement;  
Mizrachi-Hapoel Hamizrachi;  
National Community Relations Advisory Council;  
National Council of Young Israel;  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations;  
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America;  
United Synagogue of America;  
Zionist Organization of America.

(Appended to this statement is a memorandum listing some of the outstanding and documented facts concerning the situation of Soviet Jews today.)

#### THE PLIGHT OF SOVIET JEWRY

##### STATEMENT OF FACTS

I. Soviet Jews suffer disabilities both as an ethnic-cultural and religious group and as individuals. These disabilities, which do not apply to other groups or individuals in the Soviet Union, stand in clear contradiction to the framework of Soviet government.

(a) Like all other ethnic groups in the Soviet Union, Jews are specifically recognized as a "nationality", but they constitute the only such group deprived by official policy from any of the attendant privileges granted to all other nationalities in the Soviet Union. These include schools, newspapers, publishing houses and theatres in the national tongue, plus instruction in the cultural and historic traditions of the nationality in question. Yet in Lenin's and even in Stalin's early days, Jews are permitted extensive facilities in the field of Yiddish culture. To this day other national groups, even when territorially dispersed, hold these privileges. Soviet Jews are unique in being denied such opportunities.

Jewish cultural institutions did not "wither away"; they were dismantled by administrative measures and at least 450 Jewish cultural leaders were

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executed (1948-53). Nor is there any truth to the claim that the Jews themselves have now "lost interest" in Jewish life. The official Soviet census returns of 4 February 1960, show that of 2,268,000 persons who officially declared themselves Jewish, no less than 472,000 declared Yiddish to be their mother tongue. (In addition, some 800,000 Jews are believed to have hidden their identity and to have registered as "Russian" or "Ukrainian"; many of these may be Yiddish speaking as well.) There are many ethnic groups in the Soviet Union whose membership is far less than 472,000 and who, nevertheless, are granted full cultural facilities.

It should also be stressed that other dispersed national groups in the Soviet Union without territorial basis - such as the Polish minority in some of the Baltic Republics, the Germans in Central Asia, and the Tadjik minority within the Uzhek Republic - are granted full cultural organizational facilities. This applies to some extent to the Gypsies as well. There is therefore no objective reason whatever why Jews should be singled out for differential treatment. Yet there is not a single Jewish school in the whole Soviet Union, even if the so-called "Jewish Autonomous Region" of Birobidjan. As late as 1932, however, there were no fewer than 1,400 Jewish schools with 150,000 pupils.

(b) Unlike other religious groups - Pravoslavs, Baptists and Moslems - Jews are prevented from having a nation-wide federation of religious communities, the only organizational framework through which religious groups in the USSR can maintain and construct houses of worship and manufacture religious articles. While churches are being repaired and reopened, synagogues are being closed. The ban on the Hebrew language prevents Jewish children from even understanding the prayers of their religion.

(c) As individuals, Jews have been removed in large numbers from positions of major governmental responsibility. Only three Jews remain among some 1,300 deputies of the two houses of the Supreme Soviet, even though the Soviet of Nationalities was created for the specific purposes of granting equitable representation to all ethnic groups; and only two Jews are among some 250 members and candidate members of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

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II. Although Soviet ideology proclaims international solidarity among peoples and the abolition of all national and racial discrimination, the acts outlined above constitute clear violation of these principles. Moreover, not only have the Soviet authorities ceased for many years now to enforce the penal clause against anti-Semitic incitement, but the Soviet press has been guided into publishing a vast number of scurrilous attacks upon Judaism as a religion and upon individual Jews as anti-social elements - publications which not only have an unmistakably anti-Semitic flavour, but also act as incitement in a country where the public regards every publication as officially inspired.

III. Thus, Jews are prevented from fulfilling their cultural and religious aspirations in spite of being specifically recognized as a national and religious entity; at the same time, since Jews are not treated as other Soviet citizens, even the road of assimilation is closed to them. Thus they are denied both the benefits of being Jews and of being equal Soviet citizens. This fact has led to a constantly deteriorating relationship with tragic consequences.

IV. Jews are almost unique in their dispersion across the whole world and in the intimate cultural, spiritual and even family ties which connect the Jewish community in various parts of the globe. The isolation of one such community from the others is thus a particularly grievous blow to Jews. Since the dissolution in 1948 of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, Soviet Jews have been barred not only from organizing within the Soviet Union but also from any contact, as a group or community, with Jewish cultural and spiritual communities and organizations outside the USSR - even in Eastern Europe. Even more tragic has been the impossibility of reunion with their families for many hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews whom the tragic events of recent decades carried to the far corners of the earth.

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