The 12th of August has entered Jewish history and the consciousness of the Jewish people as a day of national mourning and anguish.

On that day, 30 years ago — on Aug. 12, 1952 — 24 community leaders, artists and writers, among them the leaders of Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union, were shot and killed in the yard of the Lubyanka Prison in Moscow.

This mass murder was the most hideous single event in the general plague of repression of Yiddish writers and cultural leaders, all of whom were, with few exceptions, sent to concentration camps, where many of them were killed. Together with the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, all Yiddish cultural institutions were closed, including all the Yiddish State Theatres, headed by the Mikhoels theatre, and the publishing house “Emes,” where the entire stock of Yiddish books and manuscripts was destroyed.

The whole world of Yiddish publication was annihilated and Yiddish type was melted down. Yiddish books were virtually forbidden, causing Jews to fear to have them even in their homes. In general it was a period of the destruction of Yiddish writers, cultural leaders and of Yiddish culture itself — a period reminiscent of other horrible periods in the several-thousand-year history of our people. Not only were the most elementary principles of humanism and socialism raped, but the violations, murders and extermination of Yiddish culture were, all together, a gruesome expression of anti-Semitism. All the edicts, persecutions and assassinations represented an historic act of destroying a people by tearing up its culture by the roots.

The event of Aug. 12, 1952, must, therefore, be understood not as a single historical aberration but as a result of definite historical developments in the relationship of the Soviet Union to the Jewish people in the past, and an indication of tragic prospects planned for the future.

The murder of Yiddish cultural creators in 1952 was rooted in a long chain of repressions against Yiddish culture in the past. These had begun in the late 1930s and included the liquidation by administrative fiat of Yiddish children’s schools and institutions of higher learning and the killing off of innumerable Yiddish cultural activists — artists and researchers of high quality and world renown such as Moyshe Litvakoff, Shimen Dimenschtein, Esther Frumkin, Izzy Kharik, Moyshe Kulbak, Max Erik and others, among them, the Bund leaders Erlich and Alter. If the wanton violence was, for understandable reasons, interrupted during the war years, it was renewed with even more sadism and brutality in the late 1940s.

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DECLARATION
(Continued from back cover)

It began in Jan., 1948, with the savage murder of the beloved Soviet Yiddish artist, the director of the Moscow Yiddish State Theatre, Shloyme Mikhoels. Later, in Nov., 1948, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was shut down, along with its newspaper, Eynikeyt. Then, in 1949, the Moscow Yiddish State Theatre was liquidated. Yiddish writers and cultural leaders were, one after the other, arrested, sent to the gulags, held in the Lubyanka and other prisons in various cities, as far away as Birobijan.

All this, through the devilish paths of violence, torture and anti-Semitism, led to Aug. 12, 1952.

That 1952 was a forecast for the future, time has confirmed. True, after 1956 some of the writers were “rehabilitated” — most of them posthumously. In 1961 the magazine Sovietish Heymland began to appear and a small number of books in Yiddish appeared (98 books since 1967, which means an average of four — 4! — per year).

However, neither the books nor the magazine were an expression of a cultural rebirth, of a conscious, state-supported plan to recreate a national Jewish culture.

After 30 years one must conclude that these were not more than gestures, which did not have any historical significance. No courses in Yiddish (or in Hebrew) were initiated — either for children or for adults. Not even a Jewish alphabet was published. No permanent theatre, daily or weekly newspaper was permitted. Jewish children and adults cannot learn the culture and history of their people — either in Yiddish, Russian or in any other language of the Soviet Union.

The historical fact is clear: Yiddish culture has NOT been rehabilitated. That is why so many Soviet Yiddish writers and cultural artists have been forced to emigrate. On the contrary, we see a process of the calculated, arbitrary deculturation of the Jewish people; its national values, which other peoples are allowed to and can develop, are strangled. Its creative potentials are thwarted. This represents a continuing process of forced assimilation, which leads inescapably to cultural atrophy, to national decline and extinction. The danger to the survival of the Jewish people on Soviet soil assumes catastrophic proportions.

Added to this has been, during approximately the past two decades, a series of anti-Semitic actions which have manifested themselves mainly in the publication of anti-Semitic articles and books, printed in the Soviet Union and exported to many countries throughout the world. Although some of these publications based themselves on anti-Israel precepts and spoke in the name of anti-Zionism, they soon degenerated into open anti-Semitism, and even played a role in the disgraceful “Zionism is racism” resolution adopted by the United Nations. All of this helped to shake the foundations of Jewish life in the Soviet Union and resulted in a larger emigration and an even greater desire to emigrate, a desire rooted in the insecurity of their life and future as Jews in the Soviet Union.

The Jewish people in the Soviet Union will, because of this pressure, be able to move only along three paths: (1) striving to emigrate, (2) carrying on a secret national Marrano-life, or (3) living in the shadow of losing national distinctiveness and identity. No other nationality in the Soviet Union is exposed to such anti-humanistic and anti-socialistic persecution and repression.

Therefore we — editors of progres-
part of the government to ensure that
never again will anti-Semitic books be
published in any language in the So-
viet Union.

It is clear to us that we face an his-
torical situation of great gravity that
requires urgent demands, in order to
prevent possibly tragic results for So-
viet Jewry, with its 1,000-year-old his-
tory on the soil of what is now the So-
viet Union.

PAUL NOVICK,
Editor, Morn Freiheit

CHAIM SULLER,
Co-Editor, Morn Freiheit

ITCHE GOLDBERG,
Editor, Yidishe Kultur

MORRIS U. SCHAPPEL,
Editor, Jewish Currents

This Statement was sent Sept. 30 to
the Soviet Ambassador in Wash-
ington, to the United Nations, and to
Soviet authorities in Moscow.

REMEMBERING
(Continued from page 11)

years old but so slight she looked line a 'teener.

9. Foner, work cited, pages 328n-329n, says
estimates vary from 15,000 to 30,000. B.
Weinstein said the UHT signed up 18,000 strik-
ers in three days. WTUL records studied by
Helen Marot in 1970 showed 3,000, which she
breaks down to: “20,000 to 21,000 Russian-
Jewish women, 6,000 Russian-Jewish men (cut-
ters and pressers), 2,000 Italian women and
approximately 1,000 native-born American
women.”

10. Alexander Trachtenberg (1884-1966) was a
socialist economist and educator. She may have
studied with him at the Rand School in 1915
and thereafter. Like Mrs. Shavelson, he was a
charter member of the Communist Party and
later established International Publishers as a
Marxist publishing house.

11. Rose Pastor Stokes (1870-1933) created a
sensation on the Lower East Side when she
married James Graham Phelps Stokes
(1872-1960), a wealthy socialist, in 1905 (they
were divorced in 1925). At the time of this
strike, she was a socialist and lectured for the
Intercollegiate Socialist Society, which her hus-
bond then headed. She was a popular and
effective speaker. In 1919 she also became a char-
ter member of the Communist Party.