

with its reluctance to say anything about the behavior of the British forces. It has been 17 days since the British security forces attacked Jews in Tel Aviv and killed five, and a promised report has not yet appeared."

If the British had the least interest in friendly relations between the two peoples of Palestine, one would suppose that they might have tried to stop the two-year old Arab boycott. Actually they have done nothing to stop it. They have encouraged it by their passivity. In fact, the boycott is to the narrow economic advantage of the British, since the Food Ministry records that in 1946 British food export

to the Middle East had grown fivefold. And a British trade commission visiting Syria said at a press conference in Damascus recently: "If you continue to boycott Zionist products, we are sure you will achieve your national aims."

We have given only a few instances of British instigation of Arab-Jewish antagonism. The history of British rule in Palestine is in fact the history of such provocation. The evidence of the unfitness of the imperialist British regime to supervise an interim period of settlement of the Palestine problem is overwhelming. A supervisory body can serve only under collective United Nations auspices.

## A JEWISH STATE RISES IN BIROBIDJAN

By J. M. Budish

**T**HE thirtieth anniversary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has special significance for the Jewish people. It is in that country that a new era dawned for the Jews bringing them hope, encouragement and promise at the time of their greatest distress. The new day had its crowning achievement in the establishment and development of the Jewish Autonomous Region. Birobidjan has become an anchor for our hopes, renewing our faith in man's progress and the certainty that national and racial equality will conquer all forms of national and racial discrimination and oppression.

The designation in 1928 of the territory of Birobidjan for Jewish settlement had a twofold purpose. In the European part of the Soviet Union, the funds of unoccupied, cultivatable land that could be made available for Jews desiring to take up farming was practically exhausted. Birobidjan provided opportunities for additional substantial numbers of Jews to settle on land and engage in agriculture, forestry, fishing, etc. But, above all, Birobidjan presented the Jews of the Soviet Union with the opportunity to develop their own statehood.

The late president of the USSR, Michael I. Kalinin, explained these purposes in an address to the workers of the Moscow industries on May 28, 1934. Said Kalinin:

"Three million Soviet Jews are the only nationality in the USSR that has no statehood. . . . In the Jewish Autonomous Region, Birobidjan, there will develop a great socialist construction and hand in hand with a genuine socialist Jewish culture. . . . How are people regenerated? They are regenerated by contact with the hard, almost virgin nature of the region, through the great creative effort that it demands. . . . Just like the early American cowboys, the Birobidjan people will have to conquer na-

ture. Naturally, the development of a great region is a time-consuming process. . . . I consider Birobidjan as a Jewish national state. The elevation of Birobidjan to the status of an Autonomous Region [in 1934] is a result of the will of the Jewish masses to strengthen the work in Birobidjan and develop Jewish national statehood. . . . As to the transformation of this region into a Republic, it is merely a matter of time. . . . To create a republic out of a region will be easier than it was to transform a district [county] into a region. The elevation of the Region to the status of Republic depends on the efforts of the toiling Jews themselves."

### A Rich Area

Birobidjan is located in the Far Eastern territory of the Soviet Union, in the bend of the Amur River above Manchuria. Its area is fifteen thousand square miles. It extends from the village of Obluchie in the west almost up to the city of Khabarovsk on the east—a distance of 200 miles along the Trans-Siberian Railroad. It is bounded on the South by the Amur River which separates the region from Manchuria for a distance of over four hundred miles. Although it lies about five thousand miles east of Moscow, it is no further from the equator than Duluth, Minnesota, Paris, or Montreal. Its climate is similar to that of the states of Maine and Minnesota, but has much more sunshine. This climate is quite favorable for such crops as spring wheat, early varieties of maize, potatoes, oats, soy beans, rice, grapes and all vegetables. The abundance of fine flowers make it one of the leading honey-producing areas of the Soviet Union. Its climate and vegetation make the region adaptable for large-scale livestock-raising.

Heavy woods cover about 32 per cent of the entire area and the timber resources are estimated at two and one-

J. M. BUDISH, executive vice-president of the American Birobidjan Committee (Ambijan), is an economist and an expert on Soviet affairs.

half billion cubic feet. This forms an excellent basis for the building and furniture industries and for the production of pulp and paper. The forests teem with fur-bearing animals, including some valuable species such as sables, foxes, bears, racoons, squirrels, deer, etc.

The northern part of the Jewish Autonomous Region is covered by the foot of the Kingan Mountains abounding in rich deposits of useful minerals: coal, iron ore, molybdenum, lead, magnesite, dolomite, gold and graphite. Recently, large deposits of these were discovered in Birobidjan. The region has practically inexhaustible supplies of construction minerals, such as limestone, marble, clay and sand, and some 40,000 acres of peat deposits.

The region derives its name from the two rivers, Biro and Bidjan, running from north to south and emptying into the Amur River. The total length of all rivers and lakes of the Jewish Autonomous Region is some 2,000 miles. The lakes and rivers of Birobidjan abound in fish, supplying the basis for a thriving fishing and canning industry. The hardy, healthy climate and rich natural resources of Birobidjan have made possible for the new Jewish settlers, with the assistance of the USSR as a whole, to develop in a comparatively short time agriculture and industries which have made the region not only self-sustaining but also enabled it to provide surpluses for the Red Army during World War II and to offer a haven for thousands of Jewish war orphans, evacuees and refugee Jews in the present period of postwar rehabilitation.

### ***Jews Rooted in the Land***

There are about 2,000,000 acres of tillable soil in the region. Up to the establishment of the Jewish Autonomous Region, the area under cultivation was so small that the average annual increase in the cultivated areas amounted to only a few hundred acres. In the past ten years, however, more than 17,000 acres of forest land have been cleared and 84,000 acres of virgin land were brought under cultivation. During the same period, 27,000 acres of marshland were drained. At present, the region has a total cultivated area of 123,550 acres.

Most significant is the transformation of the new Jewish settlers, former artisans and trading people into highly skilled farmers. One of the oldest Jewish collective farms in the region, Waldheim, was represented at the All Union Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow in 1938-1941 and received premiums for many of its excellent crops.

Cattle-breeding has also made record gains. Almost two-thirds of the sixty-six collective farms in the region have three cattle-farms each; one-quarter have four each and ten per cent two each. There are 300 head of cattle in each *kolkhoz* farm and up to 600 cattle in each of the five state farms of the region. A beginning has also been made in horse-raising and the region has five horse-breeding farms.

Another important branch of agriculture is apiculture;

there is hardly a *kolkhoz* in Birobidjan without a beehive. At present there are 84 bee houses in the collective farms, with 10,000 hives. The present plan provides for increasing the number of beehouses to 2,500, with 250,000 hives which would produce 5,000 tons of honey a year.

It is important to emphasize that the new Jewish settlers in their struggle to conquer this virgin land have succeeded not only in developing a large cultivated area and establishing many successful collective farms, but have also developed outstanding Jewish agriculturists well-known throughout the entire Far East.

### ***Industrial Center Rises***

The progress of industrial development has paralleled that of agriculture. At the time Birobidjan was designated for Jewish settlement there were practically no industries there. The only railroad station within the region at which the Trans-Siberian express would stop for a minute was Tikhonkaya (in English it means "quiet")—a little village of a few hundred people. Out of this village grew the present capital of the Jewish Autonomous Region, Birobidjan City, with a population of over 40,000. Birobidjan City is a thriving, industrial, agricultural and cultural center of the region. It has many fine buildings, paved streets, asphalt sidewalks, and last year it also got a system of water supply and sewage disposal.

Among the older industrial establishments in the city are the large clothing factory, furniture factory, leather factory, sawmill, plywood plant, barrel plant, wagon plant, brick works, mechanized bakery, printing shop, electric power station and several food and beverage producing plants. The large machine and automobile repair shops which service the eight machine tractor stations of the region are rapidly becoming the initial units for a machine producing and repairing industry. The World War retarded the rapid industrial development of Birobidjan. However, immediately after the war, new industrial construction began again on a large scale.

The building of a large textile mill was started in March 1945, and the first completed section of this mill was put into operation this year. The production capacity of this combine when completed with 6,780 spindles and 190 looms, will be five million meters of fabrics a year. It will also produce large quantities of felt and yarn for the knit-goods industry. A new shoe factory began production in August 1946. Its total initial capacity will be 15,000 pairs a year. However, the plant provides for the extension of its capacity to 100,000 pairs a year. A large candy factory is in operation now.

### ***Expanding the Industrial Area***

Birobidjan City is not the only industrial center of the Region. Londoko, with its great lime plant, is industrially important. Its present output is 40,000 tons of lime a year, but it is being expanded and its capacity will be doubled

by the end of this year. Near Londoko at Teploye Ozero (Warm Lake) the construction of a large cement plant has begun. This will be the biggest cement plant in the entire Far East. In the town of Birokan the first pulp and paper plant of Birobidjan has just been put in operation. On the Birofeld Highway, not far from the City of Birobidjan, a new tile factory with a capacity of 350,000 tiles a year has just started. Near the railroad station Obluchie are located the well-known Sutari gold works, third largest in size in the USSR.

The Ushuman coal mines have started to produce coal during the present year. A pencil factory from local graphite and cedar wood is being built. During the war the Region started the production of trailers for military vehicles and parachutes. These war industries are now being converted to peacetime production.

The construction and railroad industries are making rapid strides. The building of improved highways, housing facilities, schools and public buildings is one of the major tasks of the Jewish Autonomous Region at present. While Birobidjan has all the necessary raw materials and can easily obtain the needed labor force, since tens of thousands of new settlers are applying daily for admission to Birobidjan, the Region suffers from an acute shortage of construction machinery.

There are twenty railroad stations within the geographical limits of Birobidjan. There are large railroad depots and shops at Obluchie, Inn and Birobidjan City. While there were no Jewish railroad workers among the original Jewish settlers of Birobidjan a substantial number of highly skilled locomotive engineers, foremen and conductors, stationmasters, etc., have been trained in the Region. A number of new railroad branch lines are under construction, connecting such important industrial enterprises as the Ushuman coal mines with the Trans-Siberian Railway.

### ***Jewish Self-Government***

Birobidjan enjoys full self-government in all local affairs, including regional agriculture and industrial planning and development, police, militia, health and sanitation, local taxation and the collection of federal taxes. The local authorities are elected by the local population, and the Region is represented on the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. By the establishment of the Jewish Autonomous Region, the Soviet Union presented the Jews with the opportunity of acquiring all the attributes of a nation, thus enabling them to develop their own culture, national in form and socialist in content, on the basis of the historic continuity of the cultural heritage of the Jewish people.

The sound economic, social and political foundations have made possible for the Jewish Autonomous Region to develop within the short time of only thirteen years into one of the most important centers of Jewish culture in the

world. We shall briefly describe its major cultural achievements.

The cultural development of Birobidjan is of special historic significance. At present Birobidjan is the only Jewish community where Yiddish culture embraces every human endeavor as the super-structure of the production relationships of the Region. It is the only center where Yiddish culture is developing on the sure foundation of the entire economic, social and political life. Here Yiddish is the language of the community in its everyday life: in the marketplace, in government institutions, in the schools as the language of instruction, in the courts, in industry, trade and transportation.

### ***Developing Jewish Culture***

The Yiddish school system of Birobidjan has no parallel anywhere in the world. There are nurseries, kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools, four colleges, a music school, a school for physical culture, courses of kindergarten teachers, agricultural experimental and research stations, evening and day schools for adults, schools for civics, libraries, reading rooms and clubs. The writer had the opportunity to visit the public schools, high schools and colleges of Birobidjan. It was a real thrill to watch the classes in mathematics, physics, chemistry and natural sciences conducted in the Yiddish language, and examine the student's notebooks in the same language. The educational standards of the Birobidjan schools and colleges are second to none. They would do credit to similar educational institutions anywhere. Even though the Region still lacks adequate school equipment and supplies and is short of textbooks, the school educational level compare favorably with that prevailing in most civilized countries.

The four-year normal school for teachers in the City of Birobidjan has already supplied the Region with several hundred teachers. The Agricultural Technicum, also with a four-year course, in Stalinsk on the Amur River, provides a growing number of scientific agriculturists. Of the four experimental research stations in the various districts of the Region, one is devoted to all crops while the other three specialize respectively in seeds, vegetables and fruits. In this connection, we should mention the Yiddish scientific publications of the staff of the college and experimental stations, including B. Gottlieb, Zolotnitzky and D. Sokolsky on such subjects as the various crops of the Jewish Autonomous Region.

The Medical College in the City of Birobidjan offers a four-year course for assistant physicians. The railroad college has already given the Region 625 railway technicians. The seven-year music school graduated 80 students in 1947 and its present enrollment consists of some 100 students of violin, piano, clarinet and bayan (a local musical instrument). In 1947, a beginning has been made for the establishment of an art school for children. The known Leningrad Jewish painter, Tsimerinov, has settled in Biro-



bidjan and conducts two art schools for talented children, one at the House of Pioneers and the other at the Children's Home for war orphans. Some fifty children attend these two schools. At this writing, we have received word that first steps have been taken to establish a full-fledged Jewish State University in Birobidjan City.

### **Study of Yiddish Obligatory**

Last year, the study of the Yiddish language was made obligatory for the non-Jewish schools of the Region. This year, a special textbook, *Yiddish for Non-Jews*, has been published by H. Rabinko. It seems to us that this is the only case where a textbook of that nature has become a necessity for units of the regular school system anywhere in the world.

Among other cultural institutions are the Jewish State Theater, which is the pride of the Region; the Central Library bearing the name of Sholom Aleichem in Birobidjan City, which has a total of 150,000 volumes (110,000 titles), including some 29,000 on Judaica; 29 libraries throughout the Region, 44 reading rooms, 24 clubs, six houses of culture, 27 stationary and 10 portable moving picture houses, 15 radio sub-stations, numerous choruses and music ensembles, several vocational schools, parks of rest and culture and the Regional museum devoted to the flora, fauna and paleontology of Birobidjan and the history of Regional development, to exhibits of Jewish culture, from ancient times to the present including a special department—"The Jew and Human Culture"—devoted to the contributions of such outstanding Jews as Spinoza, Marx, Heine, Mendelssohn, Rubenstein, etc.

The rapid development of educational institutions in Birobidjan is reflected in a growth of the educational budget: 2,400,000 rubles in 1934; 18,400,000 in 1946; the appropriation for 1947 is over 22,000,000 rubles.

Birobidjan press and literature deserve much more space than we can give it here. The Region has one Yiddish newspaper in the City of Birobidjan, *Der Stern* (The Star), and several in the various district centers. A number of talented writers and poets, dramatists and plastic artists have grown up during this short period of time in the Jewish Autonomous Region and have a prominent place among the Jewish writers of the Soviet Union and throughout the world. The small group of Birobidjan painters—L. Sevin, N. Gorshman, Sisman and Rosenblit—are distinguished by their full appreciation of the specific character of the Birobidjan landscape and the natural, industrial and social life of the Region. Their studies, sketches and paintings reflect the pioneering life and rapid construction of the Jewish Autonomous Region.

### **New Immigration Facilitated**

Early in 1947 the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union issued instructions to all Soviet Republics to facili-

tate in every possible way the immigration of new Jewish settlers to Birobidjan. Two big contingents of new settlers arrived in Birobidjan during the first six months of this year—one of 116 families early in March and another of 555 families and a group of Jewish war orphans on July 2. The organization of the third large contingent of new Jewish settlers is now taking place. In addition, a substantial number of new families have arrived in Birobidjan singly or in small groups. The Jewish Autonomous Region has, since the conclusion of the war, accepted thousands of refugee and evacuee Jewish war orphans and is maintaining them with the cooperation of the American Birobidjan Committee. Four special children's homes in Birobidjan City, Londoko, Waldheim and Bira have been organized for that purpose.

There is an increasing popular desire among the Jewish masses of the Soviet Regions that had been occupied and largely destroyed by the nazis to go to Birobidjan and participate in the upbuilding of this Jewish state. To quote only two instances: Efraim Granovsky, a Crimean farmer, writes in the name of fifty farm families: "We are envious of the fortunate Jews who have already arrived in Birobidjan; our aspiration to settle in the Jewish Autonomous Region is very great." Another Jew, Haim Heis, states: "My strongest desire is to go to Birobidjan and contribute with my own labor to the upbuilding of the Jewish Autonomous Region. I am not afraid of any difficulties. I know how to work."

The natural resources of Birobidjan make possible for it to absorb hundreds of thousands of new settlers and provide a high standard of living. The real difficulty arises from the lack of housing facilities and marginal machinery and tools. Under present conditions, keeping in mind the unprecedented destruction suffered by the Soviet Union in the war, these marginal facilities can be provided locally only relatively slowly. The great number of Jews seeking an opportunity to go to Birobidjan are thus unable to be received immediately. The cooperation of American Jews would play an important part in facilitating and hastening the development of the Jewish Autonomous Region.

It is impossible to overestimate the historic significance of the Jewish Autonomous Region to the Jews of the world. It is a convincing example to every civilized country that full equality for the Jewish people, as well as for all national minorities, is within the reach of the democratic forces of the community. What has been achieved in one great country can and must be achieved in every democratic country. Jewish equality, the development of Jewish culture on a basis of the historic continuity of the Jewish cultural heritage, has been proved by Birobidjan to be of benefit not only to the Jews but to the country as a whole. It lends encouragement and confidence in the struggle of all progressive forces for the elimination of bigotry, discrimination and anti-Semitism. Birobidjan has provided the Jews with all the attributes of a nation. It has opened a new era in the history of the Jewish people.