

DECLARATION

JOINT COMMITTEE FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EXECUTION OF THE YIDDISH WRITERS IN THE SOVIET UNION.

It was 20 years ago - on August 12th, 1952 - when the Soviet government executed 24 Jewish writers, artists and intellectuals. Among them, David Bergelson, Peretz Markesh, Leib Kvitko, Der Nister, David Hoffstain, Itzik Feller, and many, many others. And on an earlier date there was similar annihilation of Isaac Babel, Moshe Kulbak, Shlome Michaela, Max Erik and others. With that murderous and cruel act, the Stalin regime revealed its macabre plan to extinguish the entire cultural life of Soviet Jewry.

Already many years before, following on the heel of the October Revolution the Soviet Government wiped out completely any trace of Jewish culture and education in Hebrew. All creative contributors to that culture were either arrested, tortured or thrown into concentration camps.

Soviet Jewry can look back to a rich background to history and culture. Great was its contribution to talent, energy, and creativity to the overall culture of the country.

Until 1948, an appreciable number of Yiddish daily newspapers were published in Soviet Russia. There had also flourished publishing houses, Yiddish theatres, Jewish elementary schools, departments of research in Yiddish language and culture, and educational institutions. All this was brutally liquidated by the Soviet hierarchy. More than 450 Jewish writers, artists, and those from the theatre world had been active in Soviet Jewish life. The greater portion of them were arrested in the course of several government liquidation drives, and perished in prisons and slave-labor camps.

It is 20 years since that shameful murder and the Soviet Government has not yet expressed its regrets and sorrow, nor has it yet brought to justice the criminals who annihilated the body of Soviet Jewish creative builders of culture and their families, and the entire realm of Soviet Jewry in general.

20 years after this liquidation of Jewish culture, there is still no possibility of again raising the banner of Jewish cultural life in the Soviet Union. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the sad destruction of these innocent Jewish writers, Artists and intellectuals in the Soviet Union, we reinforce our requests that:

- 1) The Soviet government return to Soviet Jewry their cultural and religious rights, at least to the same extent as other nationalities in the Soviet Union enjoy their group-cultural rights. Soviet Jewry must be given the right to rebuild its cultural and educational institutions and, above all, its Jewish elementary educational systems.
- 2) Soviet Jewry must be granted the right to establish contact with Jews in other parts of the world.

- 3) In keeping with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, those Jews who wish to emigrate from the Soviet Union to Israel or other parts of the world, should be granted that right.

Our requests are not only based on the most elementary principles of human rights, but also on the fundamental ideas of the Soviet Constitution.

We believe that the Canadian people will support our just requests and that the Canadian government will actively support these rights guaranteed by international obligations, and above all, by declarations in behalf of the rights of man by the United Nations.