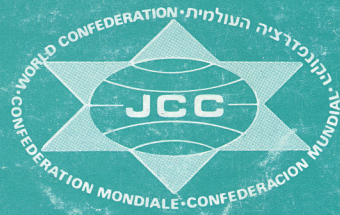


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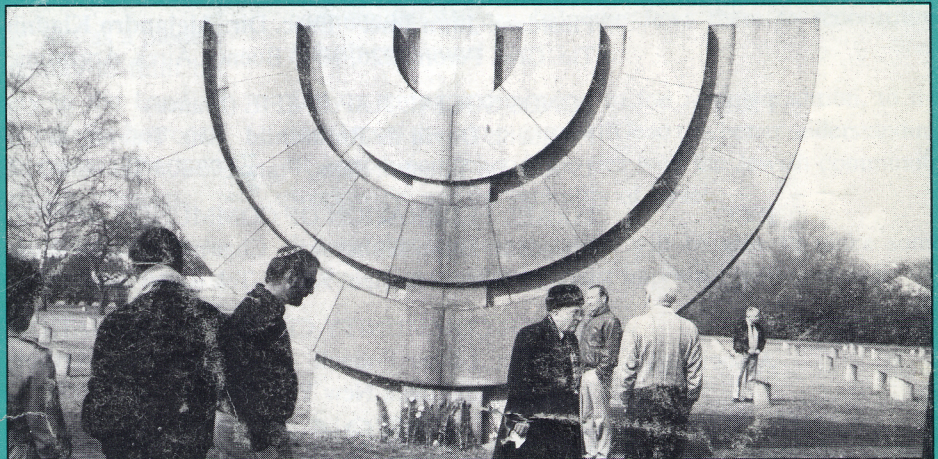
No. 6



August 1993

# bamerkaz במרכז

THE JOURNAL OF THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTERS



WCJCC  
EAST  
EUROPE  
STUDY  
MISSION -  
MARCH  
1993





*Lenny Rubin presenting Ralph Goldman and Haim Kubersky a Budapest siddur 'honoring' their Prague adventure*



*The 'Israeli Quartette' in Moscow's Arbat market*



*Petite violinist performs at Moscow Jewish Arts Centre*



*Young adult choral group take part in concert at Moscow's Jewish Arts Centre*

## THE EAST EUROPE STUDY MISSION — IMPRESSIONS

Sara Bogen (JDC Israel)

We were standing in the Jewish Music and Art Center in Moscow singing Hatikva with Vladimir Pliss and his Chazanim Chorus, and most of us could feel tears stinging our eyes. For me, as for most other members of the Mission, this was one of the most moving moments of the trip.

We congregated in Moscow, Board members and supporters of the World Confederation of Jewish Community Centers, representing seven countries. Our mission was to get a first hand experience of the Jewish communities of Moscow, Prague and Budapest. The cities we visited are diverse and different, as are the Jewish communities still living there.

In Moscow we visited the newly established schools and ulpanim, and met people studying Hebrew in preparation for their Aliya. We spent a memorable evening in the Music and Art Center where children and adults study classical music and Old Jewish music, reminders of the Jewish Shtetl which is no more, as well as the latest Israeli songs. We were struck by the vitality of this emerging

Jewish community, suppressed for so many years, but still longing to learn about Jewish history, tradition and customs and make contact with other Jewish communities.

In Prague, a town proud and appreciative of its Jewish tradition and history, it was very sad to observe the small, divided and struggling Jewish community, maintaining a Jewish life of sorts, amidst the impressive evidence of a strong, vibrant Jewish community that was destroyed.

And finally, in Budapest, a Jewish Community which maintained a Jewish life even during the communist rule, and is continuing to do so, setting a model for the rest of the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe.

And what about Community Centers?

We didn't see Community Centers, as we know them, in those towns. However, our hosts showed much interest in the idea of establishing Centers in their communities.

Are community centers a feasible instrumentality for strengthening community

life in these countries? I believe they are.

The Community Center, being an institution which serves all ages and which is apolitical, dedicated to providing for the social, educational, recreational and cultural needs of the community it serves and above all flexible and able to change its programs quickly, is the best instrument which the Jewish people can offer these communities, to help them recreate and rehabilitate their community. It is therefore incumbent upon us to provide these communities with the accumulated knowledge on how to build Community Centers, staff them and develop programs which will best serve their needs. We should offer them advice and support, being careful not to impose our ideas and ways of operation on them. We have to trust their knowledge of their communities and their strengths and capabilities, and help them in every way possible to establish Community Centers whose major characteristics will be their ability to best serve their own communities.

## A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

(Extracted from the CDI, Mexico journal of April 25th, 1993)

*We are publishing a letter written by Vice-President Ishie Gitlin and addressed to CLAM President Guiora Esrubilsky. Mr. Gitlin had participated in the WCJCC East Europe Study Mission to Moscow, Prague and Budapest.*

Dear Guiora,

The Study Mission which we carried out last month to Russia, the Czech Republic and Hungary was an impressive and enriching experience.

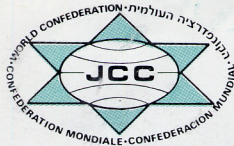
The WCJCC and its president Mr. Leonard Rubin, together with the support of the JDC, organized 10 days of marathon meetings and events in the three countries. We who participated, were lay and professional leaders from

North America, England, France, Italy, Australia, Latin America and Israel — 31 of us in all.

From the time we arrived in Moscow, the mission gathered strength and increased our motivation, for I found a reality I had never ever dreamed of. My parents came to Mexico 70 years ago, totally frustrated and full of apprehension and fears. Like others who came from Europe, and until some 3 years ago, they never dreamed of

returning to their roots. I am grateful daily that I was born in Mexico and educated according to our heritage and each day we should pray and be thankful for what we are and for what we have.

Russia was a conflict of emotions. On the one hand I found a country destroyed economically and many of our people trying to live there; on the other hand I saw a spiritual and



הקונפדרציה העולמית של מרכזים קהילתיים יהודיים  
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 CONFEDERATION MONDIALE DES CENTRES COMMUNAUTAIRES JUIFS  
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