

CER

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN RABBIS

ועידת רבני אירופה

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13

Judge J Gribitz
885 Third Avenue
NY 10022
USA

18 November 1999

Dear Judge Gribitz,

I hereby attach two documents, which outline the concerns and aspirations of the Conference of European Rabbis. This body represents almost every Jewish community from Glasgow in Scotland to Krasnayarsk in Siberia. Sadly both documents contain the signature of our late president Lord Jakobovits, who had taken such a keen interest in the deliberations and discussions concerning reclaimed Holocaust funds. He had intended to visit you on his next trip to New York in order to discuss with you some of his ideas and thoughts.

We would appreciate if you could take our suggestions into consideration when making your recommendations. Our main concerns are threefold.

First, that every consideration be given to the fact that the Holocaust took place in Europe and it was there that Jewish life was almost annihilated.

Second, that when one speaks of Holocaust education or Holocaust memorial, that this should be translated as meaning the Jewish education of our next generation. There can be no more lasting memorial to the Holocaust than the Jewish survival of our future generations. Therefore every effort should be made to ensure that the sphere of Jewish education be encouraged to grow and to flourish. Let every Jewish child be given the opportunity to receive a Jewish education wherever they are.

Third, with some two and a half million Jews currently situated in the former Soviet Union, let adequate funds be made available to rebuild those areas that suffered two anti-Semitic regimes for many decades.

Yours respectfully,



Councillor A M Dunner
Executive Director-Community Relations

ORIGINAL
FAX

Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine

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ועידת רבני אירופה

בס"ד

POSITION PAPER RE HOLOCAUST FUNDS**PRESIDIUM***President*
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Haham Solomon Gaon
Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen**Countries Represented**

When deciding how to allocate the latest reclaimed holocaust funds one needs to examine what the perpetrators of the holocaust sought to achieve and how far they succeeded in their efforts.

The very first fact that has to be born in mind when studying historical data is that the Nazi overall philosophy was to totally annihilate European or even world Jewry. In fact as they consolidated their hold on Europe they systematically carried out this policy of ensuring that Europe was to become Juden-Rein (rid of its Jews). In the process they managed to eliminate some six million Jews in countries which they occupied and at the same time destroy any infrastructure which they deemed could contribute to future Jewish life, such as schools, synagogues, Jewish cultural centres, old age homes, hospitals and the like. They managed not only to destroy thriving European Jewish life but at the same time also destroyed their leaders, those who had inspired the growth of the twentieth century Jewry. In 1945 no one could foretell whether Jewish life in Europe would ever recover. As Jewish survivors emerged from the concentration camps, from their hiding places or their places of refuge in distant countries, they drifted around Europe dazed and leaderless, here and there attempting to restart what was completely destroyed, often without any trace.

Many preferred to emigrate to Palestine which later became the Jewish state of Israel, whilst others remained in Europe hoping that they might somehow revive and rebuild what had been ravaged.

The advent of the Iron Curtain all but ensured that no meaningful rebuilding of Jewish life could take place in Eastern Europe. This situation continued until perestroika.

In Western Europe Jewish life did begin to recover. Synagogues, colleges, schools and Jewish institutions were slowly established albeit with great difficulty. Yet many communities to this day have struggled to keep going and are hampered because of the lack of funds available to cope with the vast expenses involved in having to start from the beginning.

Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine.

It is of course important that Holocaust survivors are given every support to ensure that they live out their lives with the dignity and comfort they deserve. However if we are to ensure that the diabolical dreams of the Nazis should not have succeeded, we must concentrate on rebuilding those communities that were destroyed in the Holocaust and attempt to return them to their former glory.

Special attention must be focused on Eastern Europe where much of the destruction took place and where little to no post war efforts have been made to rebuild Jewish life. There are hundreds of towns and cities where funding is needed in order to provide the facilities to the local Jewish communities. Facilities that had existed before they were destroyed during World War 2.

There can be no better way to commemorate the Holocaust than to provide the guarantee that those that the Nazis sought to destroy continue to flourish as a people with all their traditions and culture. 1.5 million Jewish children were murdered during World War 2. The survivors do not represent these victims. The Jewish people have to ensure that these children are returned and providing funding for Jewish education at every level can only do this.

In conclusion note should be taken of the fact that the Holocaust took place in the theatre of Europe. It was here that Jewish life was almost brought to a standstill. Europe must therefore be given every opportunity to rebuild and recover what it lost. The allocation of funds must reflect that mission.

Lord I Jakobovits
Emeritus Chief Rabbi Gt. Britain

Grand Rabbin J Sitruk
Chief Rabbi of France

Chief Rabbi P Goldschmidt
Moscow Russia

Chief Rabbi Dr E Toaff
Rome Italy

4 October 1999

CER

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN RABBIS

ועידת רבני אירופה

נס"ד

Proposal to Establish the Moscow Rabbinical College

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Rabbi Lord I. Jakobovits

The Conference of European Rabbis

The Conference of European Rabbis was founded in 1957. The CER is a pan-European organization with representation in almost every city in Europe which has a functioning Jewish community, from Glasgow to Krasnoyarsk. The rabbis in each city who are affiliated with the CER consult together on common issues at bi-annual conferences and organize joint projects for the benefit of European Jewry.

Although established and led by rabbis in Western Europe, the CER has always emphatically regarded Jews in Eastern Europe as an integral part of European Jewry as a whole. Indeed, one of its original aims was to help reconstruct Jewish communities in Europe which had been shattered by the Holocaust. Its first involvement in Eastern Europe was during the darkest days of communism in Eastern Europe, through the intervention of Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen of Bucharest. Throughout the period of the Cold War, members of the CER visited the Soviet Union to express their solidarity with Soviet Jewry, and to encourage the survival of Jewish life behind the Iron Curtain.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the CER has been one of the major organizations involved with the revival of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, and has been instrumental in placing rabbis in communities throughout the FSU. In addition, the CER both monitors and supports Jewish communal programs, such as the establishment of kindergartens, schools, colleges, yeshivot, and welfare programs.

Background

For three generations, the Jews of Eastern Europe were denied any contact with Judaism or with their brethren abroad. Under Communist rule, all religion was suppressed, and the study, teaching and practice of Judaism became a punishable offence. Applying for a visa to emigrate to Israel was considered treason.

Countries Represented

Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Yugoslavia

With the breakup of the USSR, the Jewish community awoke as if from a deep sleep. There were hardly any synagogues, nor was there any real focus for communal activity. There was no leadership, neither religious nor lay. Welfare programs were very limited, and there was no Jewish education, whether for children, students or adults.

Over the last decade, hundreds of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union have emigrated to Israel. Many others, however, have chosen to stay in the country of the birth and are attempting to rebuild Jewish life. Across the FSU, there has been a reawakening of interest in Judaism, as scores of thousands of Jews are seeking to rediscover their heritage.

While they failed in their attempt to eradicate Judaism, the Soviet authorities did succeed in destroying the institutions of community life and traditions of leadership which are so vital to Jewish revival. Indeed, the basic communal values of altruism, volunteerism and personal service were all but forgotten in a society in which the state bore all responsibility for the individual. Thus, although small numbers of Jews have recaptured the sense of communal service, they lack the tools and the experience to rebuild their communities without outside help.

Today, a historic window of opportunity has opened up. The Jewish communities of Eastern Europe may assimilate very quickly, or they may become a proud, vibrant entity, taking their place on the map of Jewish life. The outcome will be decided within the course of a very few years.

The Importance of Rabbinic Leadership

Rabbinic leadership lies at the heart of communal revival. A rabbi is often the dynamic kernel around which a community may grow, directing the establishment of schools, welfare programs, social clubs etc., and providing religious guidance and pastoral care to Jews of all levels of observance.

While scores of rabbis from all over the world have responded to the challenge and have taken up office in communities across Eastern Europe, many cities with significant Jewish populations are still bereft of religious leadership. Accordingly, the Conference of European Rabbis is involved in recruiting, training and placing rabbis from Israel, Western Europe and North America in Jewish communities across the FSU.

While rabbis from abroad are playing a vital role in rebuilding Jewish life in Eastern Europe, their effectiveness is hampered by two factors:

- Many do not stay in Eastern Europe for more than two or three years.
- The costs of "importing" rabbis from abroad are very high.

In general, the long-term future of Eastern European Jewry is unquestionably dependent on the emergence of local religious leadership. The emergence of "home-grown" leadership has hitherto been hampered by a number of factors:

- Religious Russian-born Jews are, by definition, newly religious. Having rejected the secularism with which they were brought up, they are sometimes intolerant of their compatriots who not traveled the same route.
- Having become religious, many potential leaders prefer to emigrate -- to Israel or to the West -- where the fabric of Jewish life is so much richer. This is especially true of Russians who have already spent time in Israel.

As a result, the religious leadership in the FSU is currently almost entirely "imported" from elsewhere. In order to address this urgent need, the CER proposes to establish the Moscow Rabbinical College that will provide Russian-born yeshiva students and community activists with the tools to lead communities across Eastern Europe.

Aims

The Moscow Rabbinical College will aim to train rabbis in every aspect of community leadership and development, including:

- Organizing synagogue services
- Supporting the development of schools, kindergartens, youth movement activities and adult education programs
- Provide additional Jewish content to programs run by local Jewish community centers
- Kashrut supervision, especially within the context of Hesed welfare centers, which provide food packages and cooked meals to needy elderly
- Officiating at lifecycle events (Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies, weddings, funerals)
- Pastoral care (visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved)

In particular, the program will aim to give participants the skills and the sensitivity to provide religious leadership and guidance for Jews of all shades of religious observance and to work in harmony with the various communal organizations which operate on both a local and a national level.

Program Plan

The Moscow Rabbinical College will attract students from the FSU, Eastern Europe and Germany. The program will be comprised of two tracks:

□ **Yeshiva Track**

This full-time, residential track will attract students who are currently studying for rabbinic ordination at any of the six yeshivot (rabbinical schools) in Eastern Europe (three in Moscow, and one each in Kishinev, Tbilisi and St. Petersburg). The track has been designed as a three-year program, at the end of which students will receive full rabbinic ordination. During the course of the program, students will spend at least six months at a top-flight educational institution in Israel.

In addition to a rigorous program of Jewish studies, students will take academic courses at the Jewish University of Moscow, the Pedagogical Institute and so forth. In addition, there are plans for cooperation with the University of Moscow; students will be encouraged to earn a regular degree, for which their studies at the Rabbinical College will be accredited.

In order to give them practical training, students will be sent for weekends to established communities where they will conduct services, teach in Sunday schools and interact with the community. After graduation, students will be assigned to minister to major communities across Eastern Europe.

□ **Junior Rabbinical Track**

This part-time track is geared for community activists (i.e. teachers, youth workers or welfare directors) who have the ability to organize synagogue services and serve as community leaders. The program will aim to increase their Jewish knowledge and give them additional skills to lead communities. Although they will not be fully-fledged rabbis, they will fulfill many of the functions performed by rabbis, partin the field of education, synagogue life and community-building. They will serve in their own communities which are too small to be able to support a full-time rabbi.

This rigorous track has been developed as a two year program, with students spending two months every summer and two months every winter at the College in Moscow. In addition, students will spend one month a year at a specially-designed educational program in Israel.

The College hopes to accept around 60 students in total, 30 in each track. Students on both tracks must be willing to work in local communities for at least two years, after graduation.

The College will be headed by a principal -- a rabbi -- who will be "imported" from abroad, as well as by a local administrative director. They will be supported by a team of teachers currently teaching at other educational institutions in Moscow (yeshivot, the university etc.) who will teach at the College on a part-time basis.

Initially, the College will be housed in rented premises, comprising a dormitory, study hall, library, cafeteria and offices. In due course, it is hoped that permanent premises may be bought.

The College's library is expected to serve as a resource for the entire Moscow Jewish community; it will contain sophisticated computer equipment linked to important international databases, including the network of Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

The College will hope to publish its own rabbinical journal -- the first to be published in the FSU since the Revolution. The journal will be run by the student body and will contain essays, in Hebrew and Russian, on issues relevant to community-building in the FSU.

The driving force behind the establishment of the Moscow Rabbinical College is Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, who has served as Chief Rabbi of Moscow since 1989. Rabbi Goldschmidt has played a major role in rebuilding the Jewish community of Moscow, and has been instrumental in the establishment of the Russian Jewish Congress, as well as dozens of schools, kindergartens and yeshivot. He is a leading member of the CER.

The College will be under the auspices of the United Russian Synagogue, an umbrella organization which unites both the traditional and modern denominations of Judaism in Russia.

Timetable for Implementation

It is hoped that the Moscow Rabbinical College will begin operating on a limited scale by September 2000, with approximately 20 students (10 on each track). This is naturally contingent on funding availability.

Budget

Expected annual costs of the Moscow Rabbinical College are as follows:

Salaries:	
Principal (including relocation costs)	\$ 70,000
Administrative director	\$ 20,000
Teaching staff (6 teachers x \$700 per month)	\$ 50,400
Premises (\$10,000 per month)	\$ 120,000
Stipends for students (60 students x \$100 per month)	\$ 72,000
Travel expenses (60 students x \$300 per month)	\$ 216,000
Community programming (60 students x \$400 per month)	\$ 288,000
Total	\$ 836,400

Conclusion

Experience has shown that the presence of a dynamic, qualified and committed rabbi makes a major contribution to the development of that community, engendering the establishment of schools, welfare programs and communal institutions. Rabbis who grew up in the FSU, almost by definition, are likely to be more effective than rabbis from abroad. As such, the Rabbinic Training Program is expected to play a major role in rebuilding Jewish communities across Eastern Europe and ensuring their Jewish future, both for this generation and for generations to come.

CER

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN RABBIS

ועידת רבני אירופה

נס"ד

Proposal to Establish a Rabbinic Placement Program in the Former Soviet Union

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Background

For three generations, the Jews of Eastern Europe were denied any contact with Judaism or with their brethren abroad. Under Communist and for a period under Nazi rule, all religion was suppressed, and the study, teaching and practice of Judaism became a punishable offense. Applying for a visa to emigrate to Israel was considered treason.

With the breakup of the USSR, the Jewish community awoke as if from a deep sleep. There were hardly any synagogues, nor was there any real focus for communal activity. There was no leadership, neither religious nor lay. Welfare programs were very limited, and there was no Jewish education, whether for children, students or adults.

Over the last decade, hundreds of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union have emigrated to Israel. Many others, however, have chosen to stay in their country of birth and are attempting to rebuild Jewish life. Across the FSU, there has been a reawakening of interest in Judaism, as scores of thousands of Jews are seeking to rediscover their heritage.

Unfortunately, while failing in their attempt to eradicate Judaism, the Soviet authorities did succeed in destroying the institutions of community life and traditions of leadership which are so vital to Jewish revival. Indeed, the basic communal values of altruism, volunteerism and personal service were all but forgotten in a society in which the state bore all responsibility for the individual. Thus, although small numbers of Jews have recaptured the sense of communal service, they lack the tools and the experience to rebuild their communities without outside help.

Today, a historic window of opportunity has opened up. The Jewish communities of Eastern Europe may assimilate very quickly, or they may become a proud, vibrant entity, taking their place on the map of Jewish life. The outcome will be decided within the course of a very few years.

Countries Represented

Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine

The Importance of Rabbinic Leadership

Rabbinic leadership lies at the heart of communal revival. A rabbi is often the dynamic kernel around which a community may grow, directing the establishment of schools, welfare programs, social clubs etc., and providing religious guidance and pastoral care to Jews of all levels of observance.

While scores of rabbis from all over the world have responded to the challenge and have taken up office in communities across Eastern Europe, many cities with significant Jewish populations are still bereft of religious leadership. Accordingly, the Conference of European Rabbis seeks to establish a Rabbinic Placement Program which will recruit, train, place and supervise rabbis in Jewish communities across the FSU.

The Conference of European Rabbis

The Conference of European Rabbis was founded in 1957. The CER is a pan-European organization with representation in almost every city in Europe which has a functioning Jewish community, from Glasgow to Krasnoyarsk. The rabbis in each city who are affiliated with the CER consult together on common issues at bi-annual conferences and organize joint projects for the benefit of European Jewry.

Although established and led by rabbis in Western Europe, the CER has always emphatically regarded Jews in Eastern Europe as an integral part of European Jewry as a whole. Indeed, one of its original aims was to help reconstruct Jewish communities in Europe which had been shattered by the Holocaust. Its first involvement in Eastern Europe was during the darkest days of communism, through the intervention of Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen of Bucharest. Throughout the period of the Cold War, members of the CER visited the Soviet Union to express their solidarity with local Jews, and to encourage the survival of Jewish life behind the Iron Curtain. Prominent visits by Lord Jakobovits and others drew attention to the dire plight of Soviet Jewry.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the CER has been one of the major organizations involved in the revival of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, and has been instrumental in placing rabbis in communities throughout the FSU. In addition, the CER both monitors and supports Jewish communal programs, such as the establishment of kindergartens, schools, colleges, yeshivot and welfare programs.

The Rabbinic Placement Program in the Former Soviet Union will be directed by Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, who has served as Chief Rabbi of Moscow since 1989. Rabbi

Goldschmidt has played a major role in rebuilding the Jewish community of Moscow, and has been instrumental in the establishment of the Russian Jewish Congress, as well as of dozens of schools, kindergartens and yeshivot. He is a leading member of the CER.

Program Plan

The Rabbinic Placement Program seeks to appoint rabbis in six major regional centers with Jewish communities of 20,000 people or more, as well as in forty smaller cities with Jewish communities of between 3,000 and 20,000. All communities already possess the basics of communal infrastructure, including a functioning synagogue, community center and JDC-run welfare center.

The six major Jewish communities are:

1. Moscow, Russia
2. St. Petersburg, Russia
3. Yekaterinburg, Russia (the Urals)
4. Novosibirsk, Russia
5. Minsk, Belarus
6. Budapest, Hungary

The rabbis in the six major centers will also be involved in the surrounding, smaller Jewish communities; thus the rabbi in St. Petersburg, for example, will also have responsibilities in the Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The rabbi appointed to Moscow, in addition to various spiritual, education and pastoral roles, will also be involved in coordinating the program as a whole and providing resources and support to his colleagues.

Recruitment

The six rabbis in the central cities will hold rabbinic ordination and will be recruited from Israel, Western Europe or North America. Prerequisites will include significant congregational experience, knowledge of Russian, and sensitivity to the unique needs and characteristics of Jewish communities in the FSU.

The rabbis in the smaller cities will be recruited locally. They will not be fully-fledged rabbis, but rather community activists (i.e. teachers, youth workers or welfare directors) who have the ability to organize synagogue services and serve as community leaders.

Training

The rabbis in the six central cities will all undergo an intensive training program prior to assuming their positions. In addition, they will take part in a three month internship program under the supervision of the chief rabbi of one of the more "established" communities in Eastern Europe (e.g. Moscow, Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk). The six rabbis will meet approximately once every two months -- in Moscow or elsewhere -- to exchange ideas and information; these seminars will be organized by the Moscow incumbent.

The junior rabbis in the forty smaller communities will take part in a special training program in Moscow; they too will get together periodically, around three times a year, for in-service training seminars to be organized on a regional basis.

The five rabbis posted to St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Minsk and Budapest will each supervise eight of the junior rabbis working in the same region.

Functions

All rabbis will be involved in every aspect of community leadership and development. Responsibilities will include:

7. Organizing synagogue services
8. Supporting the development of schools, kindergartens, youth movement activities and adult education programs
9. Kashrut supervision
10. Officiating at lifecycle events (Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies, weddings, funerals)
11. Pastoral care (visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved)
12. Providing religious counseling to Jews of every shade of religious observance

The rabbis will work in close cooperation with the Russian Jewish Congress as well as with Jewish organizations currently operating in each city (e.g. the Jewish Agency for Israel [JAFI] and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee [JDC]), and will be responsible for ensuring the Jewish content of programs run by those organizations.

Timetable for Implementation

Implementation of the Rabbinic Placement Program is dependent on the procurement of necessary funding. That being said, it is hoped that:

- 13. 25% of the program will be in place by January 2000
- 14. 50% of the program will be in place by September 2000
- 15. 75% of the program will be in place by January 2001
- 16. 100% of the program will be in place by September 2001

Budget

Expected annual costs of the Rabbinic Placement Program are as follows:

Six central cities (per city):

Salary (\$2,500 per month)	\$ 30,000
Accommodation (\$750 per month)	\$ 9,000
Travel expenses and administrative support (\$500 per month)	\$ 6,000
Programmatic expenses (\$1,000 per month)	<u>\$ 12,000</u>
	<u>\$ 57,000</u>

\$57,000 x six cities = \$ 342,000

40 smaller cities (per city):

Salary (\$700 per month)	\$ 8,400
Accommodation (\$300 per month)	\$ 3,600
Programmatic expenses (\$800 per month)	<u>\$ 9,600</u>
	<u>\$ 21,600</u>

\$21,600 x 40 cities = \$ 864,000

Total annual cost (\$342,000 + \$864,000): \$1,206,000

Funding Strategy

The CER is committed to the program for a minimum of five years. In the long-run, it is expected that each community will become self-sufficient, at least to some extent; at the same time, all the rabbis will be given guidance in fundraising from federations, foundations and private donors. As these efforts begin to bear fruit, the CER expects to gradually ease back its financial commitment, as follows:

- Years 1 and 2: Program to be fully funded.
- Year 3: Program to be funded at 85% of original level.
- Year 4: Program to be funded at 70% of original level.
- Year 5: Program to be funded at 55% of original level.

Conclusion

Experience has shown that the presence of a dynamic, qualified and committed rabbi makes a major contribution to the development of that community, engendering the establishment of schools, welfare programs and communal institutions. As such, the Rabbinic Placement Program is expected to play a major role in rebuilding Jewish communities across Eastern Europe and ensuring their Jewish future, both for this generation and for generations to come.

Cllr A M Dunner - Executive Director - Community Relations

October 24, 1999