

CONCERN FOR 16,000 CZECK JEWS

NEW YORK, Concern for the safety of Czechoslovakia's 16,000 Jews was voiced by the American Jewish Congress following charges by Communist party

newspapers in Warsaw and East Berlin that "Zionists" were responsible for the present turmoil in Czechoslovakia.

In a statement issued here Rabbi Arthur J. Lelyveld of Cleveland, president of the Congress, called upon the United Nations and the free governments of the world "to make it clear that they will not countenance the victimization of Czech Jews or any other racial or religious groups in order to justify the present outrages against the Czechoslovakian people."

Rabbi Lelyveld said: "As groundless charges against 'Zionists' continue to circulate and do their work they raise grave doubts as to the safety and security of the Czechoslovak Jewish community. Czechoslovakian Jews have demonstrated their loyalty to their government time and again and their attachment to the people of Czechoslovakia cannot ra-

tionally be called into question. Nonetheless, there is danger that unless present Soviet pressures are reduced Jews in Czechoslovakia will be made to pay the price for the demand of all the Czech people for a more liberal society and greater personal freedom."

Rabbi Lelyveld cited statements in Neues Deutschland, the main organ of East Germany's ruling Communist Party, accusing "Zionist forces" of having "taken over the leadership" of the Czech-Communist Party, and in Trybuna Ludu, the Polish Communist Party newspaper, that "Zionists" were responsible for the "real threat of transition from Socialism to Capitalism" which justified the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia. Rabbi Lelyveld declared that "these statements obviously were inspired by and followed hard upon attacks a little more than a week ago in the Soviet army newspaper, Red Star, which warned the peoples of Communist countries against 'fifth columns; of Zionist sympathizers and denounced the World Zionist Organization as harboring 'ideological sa-

boteurs.'"

In commenting on these statements Rabbi Lelyveld said: "These calumnies can no longer be dismissed as reflecting merely the personal prejudice of one or another local Communist leader. They appear unmistakably to be part of a concerted drive within countries subject to Soviet domination to use the time-dishonored device of blaming local Jewish populations for every internal shortcoming, falling, disappointment or limitation."

It need hardly be said that there is nothing in the public or communal life of any of these countries to warrant even the slightest of the charges now being made against so-called "Zionists" and Jews. This is a gross, crude and blatant attempt to play upon popular anti-Semitism in order to divert attention from official inadequacy and failure. It is a not unfamiliar tactic, it is one that has disgraced history for centuries."

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