

JEWISH MINORITIES RESEARCH

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MOSHE DECTER, DIRECTOR

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Dr. Louis Rosenblum
Cleveland Council on Soviet Anti-Semitism
14308 Triskett Road
Cleveland, Ohio 44111

Dear Lou,

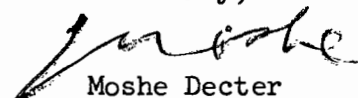
Thank you for keeping me informed about your pressure on Ted Comet for national action by youth. My sense of what is likely to emerge from today's meetings which Ted is convening (with Alfred Jospe on Hillel, with the professional directors of the many youth groups and with a small committee of directors and lay presidents of such organizations) is that only a very minimal program will be adopted and that it will move at a snail's pace. Last week I had a long discussion with Ted and it turned into rather a shouting match, at least on my side -- for I simply lost my patience with the nearly byzantine bureaucratic and organizational red tape which he is permitting to dominate his thinking and action. In the past, my loss of temper has sometimes had the effect of making the bureaucrats feel defensive and so stimulating them to greater effort; that's not why I lost my temper but we can hope that something may come of it.

As for Hillel, I entirely despair of any authentic, systematic or relevant action by this top-heavy, tired and moribund organization of empty rabbis. When Ted, exasperated by my temper, asked me for concrete proposals for Hillel action, I flew into an even greater fury simply because of what I regard as the irresponsible stupidity of all that lies behind that query, on his part as well as Hillel's. What I mean is very simple: quite aside from any public demonstrative action that Hillel might sponsor, what would be more natural, more simple and more obvious than for Hillel to undertake two parallel educational efforts -- one for the students and one for the faculty (Jewish and non-Jewish)? But after all these years and with all the alleged brains at their disposal and with the enormous budgets at their command, they can still ask, like simpletons, what is there for us to do. Ho hum.

Your own proposal is an intriguing one. I'm simply crazy about your choice of theme, and I believe the two reasons you advance in support of it are incontrovertible. Your idea of a day devoted to sessions on what you call root groups may, however, not be realistic, for it presupposes individuals to lead these sessions who are truly knowledgeable if not expert on Jewish life and culture in such regions as Lithuania, Poland, Galitzia, the Ukraine, Bessarabia, etc. That is, in my judgment, much too ambitious at the present time. You may turn the tables on me and call me therefore a minimalist, but I would be more than content to have an entire day devoted not to the sub-cultures but simply to the theme (a companion to your own theme), "One Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Eastern Europe and Russia" -- during which the contemporary problem would be talked through against its proper overall historical and cultural background.

In any event, please let me know immediately what Ted's reactions and reports are to you, for that information would have a bearing on the scope and nature of the pressures I would continue here. Let me again for the nth time -- and I shall never tire of repeating it -- tell you how deeply impressed and moved I am (and that goes also for some of our mutual Jewish friends from abroad) with the devotion, intelligence and energy that you and your colleagues in Cleveland have demonstrated for so long against such frustrating odds. I believe, and please convey this to Herb and the others, that when some day the history of the rescue of Russian Jewry will be written, the Cleveland group will occupy an honorable place in it. What higher aspiration can there be for us who are members of so history-conscious and so historic-laden a people?

Cordially,



Moshe Decter

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