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Beliefs; A century ago, in what is now Chisinau, hundreds fell victim to a pogrom. Yesterday, a day of healing, Christians and Jews remembered.

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Before Kristallnacht, there was Kishinev.

Kishinev is now Chisinau, the capital of the independent country of Moldova, squeezed between the borders of Romania and Ukraine. At the beginning of this century, it was the capital of the Russian province of Bessarabia, an unruly city with a population that had grown in a hundred years to 100,000 from 7,000. More than a third were Jews.

In 1903, on Easter Sunday and Monday, rampaging mobs wrecked and looted Jewish shops and homes, and assaulted Jewish men, women and children. The pogrom left 49 Jews dead and more than 400 injured, with heads and faces battered by clubs or crowbars. Many more were left homeless or without means of support. A third of the city's buildings were damaged.

Those numbers, of course, are almost nothing compared with the Nazi extermination of the Jewish population in the 1940's. But in 1903 the Kishinev Massacre, as it was called, sent shock waves across Europe and especially through the United States.

Yellowing pages of a 1903 brochure, for example, bear the ''Proceedings of a Meeting of Citizens of New York'' held on May 27 at Carnegie Hall. Mayor Seth Low presided, and former President Grover Cleveland was one of the speakers. The hall rang with talk of ''barbarism'' and ''bigotries,'' of ''wholesale murder'' and ''return to the Dark Ages.'' Christian speakers confessed their shame that church leaders in Russia had not denounced the anti-Semitic slanders that had fueled the pogrom. The speakers grieved that their faith's holiest days had been turned to such a use. ''O Christ!'' lamented one. ''What crimes have been committed in Thy name against the race which gave Thee to the world!''

In Russia, the master of modern Hebrew poetry, Hayyim Nahman Bialik, memorialized the pogrom in a lacerating and often quoted poem, ''In the City of Slaughter.''

Yesterday all these historical ghosts hovered over a simple interfaith ceremony held in the Hall of Minorities at Chisinau, where about 25,000 of the city's current population of 800,000 are Jews. Rabbi Moshe Budilowski, the head of a resurgent yeshiva, was at the ceremony, and so was Yigal Kotler of the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a relief organization. Msgr. Anton Cosa, Roman Catholic Apostolic Administrator for Moldova, participated, and so did two representatives of American Catholics: Archbishop Judson Procyk of the Pittsburgh Archdiocese for Byzantine Rite Catholics and Msgr. George Sarauskas, executive director of the American church's Office to Aid the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe. Metropolitan Vladimir, head of the Orthodox Church in Moldova, lent his support although not present.

And trying her best to stay in the background even as she orchestrated the whole event was Dr. Mira P. Brichto, the founder and head of the R'fa-aye-nu Society. She translates the Hebrew phrase, from the prophet Jeremiah, as ''heal us.''

The society, based in Cincinnati, promotes physical healing by organizing donations of surplus American medical equipment and supplies to hospitals and clinics in Central and Eastern Europe. It also promotes spiritual healing, by encouraging Jews and Christians to explore both the glories and the nightmares in their intertwined heritages in that part of the world.

Earlier this year it arranged a shipment of medical equipment to Moldova. Among the donors, in the kind of ''reversal of history'' that delights Dr. Brichto, were the Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati and Standard Textile, a Cincinnati medical textile company founded by a Jewish refugee.

But for R'fa-aye-nu and Dr. Brichto, physical healing is always linked to spiritual healing. This is the weekend when Jews celebrate the feast of Shavuot, marking the covenant at Sinai: God's gift to the Israelites of the Ten Commandments and the whole way of life associated with them. It is also the weekend when Christians celebrate Pentecost, marking the gift of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' disciples, who as a result felt a new power to reach others, symbolized by the Apostle Peter's ability to overcome all barriers of language in preaching the Gospel that day.

Both themes converged at the Chisinau ceremony. Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish children sang Psalm 133 -- ''How good it is, and pleasant, for brothers to dwell peacefully together'' -- in Hebrew. Each child then read the Ten Commandments in the language of his or her religious and ethnic roots: Hebrew, Yiddish, Romanian, Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, German or English.

Bialik's poem, ''In the City of Slaughter,'' leads the reader mercilessly through the wreckage of the 1903 pogrom:

Pass over the shattered hearth, attain the broken wall

Whose burnt and barren brick, whose charred stones reveal

The open mouths of such wounds, that no mending

Shall ever mend, nor healing ever heal.

Dr. Brichto knows quite well that there are wounds that nothing on earth, let alone the R'fa-aye-nu Society, can heal. That does not stop her from doing what she can.

"For the first time," she said in a telephone call from Chisinau yesterday, "maybe we heard some answer to 'The City of Slaughter.' "