

## Communism and Anti-Semitism

By Erich Goldbagen

"Judaism kills the love for the Soviet Motherland."

—Sovetskaia Moldavia, July 23, 1959.

"They do not like collective work, group discipline . . . They are individualists. . . . Jews are interested in everything, they want to probe into everything, they discuss everything, and end up by having profoundly different opinions."

—Khrushchev in an interview with Serge Goussard, correspondent of *Le Figaro* (Paris), April 9, 1958.

THE EXISTENCE OF ANTI-SEMITISM in the USSR, its employment as a tool by the Communist leadership, and its absorption into the *Weltanschauung* of the "New Class" should no longer come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the realities of Soviet life. Yet few are aware of the genealogy of this unique phenomenon—of its historical roots and ideological evolution. For it is a fact that anti-Semitism is not alien to the radical tradition—in Western Europe, and more particularly in Russia. Indeed, the ancestry of Communist anti-Semitism may be traced to the precursors of Leninism and Stalinism—the revolutionary terrorists, the so-called "Populists," who dominated the revolutionary scene in Russia in the second half of the 19th century.

### "Lubricant on the Wheel of Revolution"

When socialism as a current of political thought made its appearance in Western Europe, it tended to look upon the Jews with unfriendly eyes, regarding them as the

---

*Mr. Goldbagen, formerly with the Russian Research Center of Harvard University, and now teaching at Hunter College, New York, is preparing a book tentatively entitled A Political and Cultural History of Soviet Jewry. This is his first contribution to Problems of Communism.*

embodiment of those qualities of social life which socialists denounced as evil and which they were sworn to undo. Barred from the ownership of land and excluded from the Guilds, the Jews had long ago been driven to devote themselves primarily to the pursuit of commerce; and throughout Western Europe the name Jew came to be almost synonymous with that of trader. The belief was thus born that the pursuit of money was a national vocation of the Jews, enjoined by their religion and practiced with unrivaled skill and zeal. It seemed that the spirit of commerce had found its purest embodiment and its consummate practitioners in the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

The Jews thus incurred the contempt and hatred that socialists harbored against the world of finance. The comprehensive condemnation of commerce and finance as useless and parasitic occupations, as unproductive activities whereby those who shun honest labor could derive undeserved riches from the toil of others was bound to embrace the Jews. This attitude was reinforced by the sinister tales which popular lore came to weave around the name of Rothschild, whose enormous wealth was believed to be a source of evil power—swaying monarchs, making and unmaking governments, and determining the destinies of nations. The vagaries of history, its irrationalities, the injustices and sufferings

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note, in this connection, that all utopian reformers viewed money as a pernicious force serving no purpose save that of breeding injustice and perverting authentic human values, and foresaw its disappearance in the desired society of the future. The citizens of Thomas More's *Utopia*, for instance, "hold gold and silver up to scorn in every way . . . . They hang gold rings from the ears of criminals, place gold rings on their fingers, gold collars around their necks, and gold crowns on their heads." (T. More, *Utopia*, New York, 1949, p. 44.) And Karl Marx, in his *Nationale Ökonomie und Philosophie*, had the following to say about the evil influence of money: "It turns loyalty into disloyalty, love into hate, virtue into vice, vice into virtue, slave into master, master into slave, stupidity into intelligence, intelligence into stupidity." (Quoted in Kenneth Muir's "Marx's Conversion to Communism," *The New Reasoner*, London, No. 3, Winter 1957-58, p. 63).

which it inflicted were traced not to the impersonal forces of economic and social processes but to villains of flesh and blood to whom one could assign guilt and upon whom one could discharge that hatred in which suffering and discontent often seek relief.

It was this outlook which Marx in part echoed in his famous essay *Zur Judenfrage*:

What is the object of the Jew's worship in this world? Usury. What is his worldly god? Money. . . .

Money is the zealous one God of Israel, beside which no other God may stand. Money degrades all the gods of mankind and turns them into commodities. Money is the universal and self-constituted value set upon all things. It has therefore robbed the whole world, of both nature and man, of its original value. Money is the essence of man's life and work, which have become alienated from him. This alien monster rules him and he worships it.<sup>2</sup>

In Russia, too, disdain towards the Jews was the prevalent attitude of the early revolutionaries. The abysmal conditions of the Jews—constrained in their movement, compelled to live only in assigned regions known as the Pale of Settlement, and reduced (save for a tiny minority) to a state of poverty verging on starvation—evoked little sympathy in the breasts of the radical intellectuals of the 1870's and 1880's, however virulent their hatred of the Tsarist autocracy. To be sure, the Jews were wretched and poor, but their wretchedness and poverty was not graced by those lofty virtues which the fertile imagination of the revolutionaries ascribed to the Russian peasantry. Unlike the peasants, who earned their meager subsistence by toil and who were regarded by the intellectuals as noble beings endowed with the qualities of selflessness and instinctive communalism, the Jews were a work-shirking lot, engaging in the "para-

sitic" and "exploitative" occupations. Even poverty, their only reward, could not redeem them.

But some revolutionaries did not content themselves with passive disdain; they acclaimed and encouraged active violence against the Jews.

IN THE SPRING AND SUMMER of 1881 a wave of violence swept through the southern part of the Pale of Settlement. Over one hundred Jewish communities were visited by orgies of destruction, claiming, apart from enormous material damage, scores of dead and hundreds of wounded. This outbreak of unprovoked brute force visited upon a defenseless community moved the Executive Committee of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will)—the largest revolutionary-terroristic organization at that time—to issue a proclamation in Ukrainian on August 30, 1881, blessing the riots and exhorting the peasants to further violence against "the parasitic Jews" and the "Tsar of the Jews". "The people of the Ukraine", the proclamation stated, "suffer more than anyone else from the Jews . . . you have already begun to rise against the Jews . . . you have done well."<sup>3</sup>

This proclamation cannot be simply explained, of course, by the anti-Semitic spirit of the radical intelligentsia. No doubt its authors were imbued with anti-Semitic prejudices; yet it would be naive to assume, for instance, that they were in earnest in affixing the label "Tsar of the Jews" on Alexander III: his disdain for the Jews, and his oppressive and discriminatory policies against them were certainly known to the leaders of the Narodnaya Volya. Thus there is little doubt that the proclamation was first and foremost a *calculated device*. Underlying it, apart from the Bakuninist conviction that the "passion for destruction is a constructive passion," lay Machiavellian calculation, the wish and the hope that the violence against the Jews would be extended to the autocracy. By linking the Jews with the Tsar, the leaders of the Narodnaya Volya sought to telescope the pogroms into the social revolution, to fan its fire into a conflagration engulfing the authorities. They were consciously lying, but to their minds this was a "noble lie," graced by the lofty purpose it served. The blood of the Jews might have been wholly innocent, but it was nonetheless the "lubricant on the wheels of revolution."

In the society of radical émigrés in Geneva, one by the name of Zhukovsky defended the pogroms in the following terms:

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in E. Tcherikover, *geshikhte fun der yidisher arbeter bavegung in di fareynikte shtatn* (History of the Jewish Labor Movement in the USA—in Yiddish) New York, 1945, Vol. II, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, *A World Without Jews*, New York 1959, p. 41. This is not to say that Marx was anti-Semitic in the accepted sense of the term. Indeed, the main theme and purport of his essay was to expose the hollowness of the civic equality granted by the bourgeois order. As for Marx's linking of Jews and capitalism, the most original and freshest explanation of it, in this author's opinion, was offered by the East German scholar L. Kofler, in his *Zur Geschichte Der Buergerlichen Gesellschaft* (On the history of the Bourgeois Society) *n.d.*, Halle/Saale, pp. 478-496—a unique exception to the otherwise dreary gibberish that passes off as "social science" in the Communist bloc. According to Kofler, capitalism found its purest manifestation in the Jewish ethos because unlike Gentile capitalists who, being linked to the native proletariat by ties of common nationhood, have endeavored to disguise and temper their avarice and exploitative ambitions, the Jews knew no such restraint. Strangers to the society in which they have lived, they pursued their vocation with uninhibited ruthlessness and without an embellishing guise. They thus have mirrored capitalism in its stark nakedness.

Sixty percent of the Jewish population are engaged in commerce. This is the background against which the peasant hunts down the Jew. . . . To be sure, from a humanitarian standpoint, it is a piece of barbarism when peasants fall like savages upon a frightened Jew and beat him until he bleeds. However, take this event in the context of social dynamics. Why does he beat? Because [beating] is his political ballot. He has no other way of venting his wrath against his exploitation by the government. It is indeed a pity that the peasant beats the Jew—the most innocent of his exploiters. But he beats, and this is the beginning of his struggle for liberation. When . . . his fists will have grown strong and hard he will strike those who are above the Jews.<sup>4</sup>

But even those radicals who did not view the pogroms with approval could not bring themselves to call for an end to the bloodshed. Anti-Semitism was endemic to the Russian peasantry. It was its daily psychic bread designed to still the grievances and frustrations born of hunger—hunger for land and hunger for food. The Russian intelligentsia which had for two decades tried with only limited success to strike roots in the Russian peasantry, to secure its confidence and to persuade it to follow the intellectuals as the champions of its aspirations, feared that by showing concern for the Jews they would unwittingly alienate the peasants. To come out in defense of the Jews would have branded them as "Jewish stooges." Was it worth endangering, for the sake of a small national minority, the cause of socialism? These were the arguments with which radicals who had dissociated themselves from violence justified their refusal to come out publicly against the pogroms. The radical philosopher P. L. Lavrov, who was to describe anti-Semitism as the "most tragic epidemic of our era," declined to print a pamphlet against the pogroms submitted to him by the Social Democratic leader Akselrod:

I must confess that I regard this question as a very complicated one, indeed an exceedingly difficult one for a party which seeks to come closer to the people. Theoretically, on paper, the question can be easily answered. But in view of the prevailing popular passions and the need of the Russian socialists to have the people on their side whenever possible the question is quite different.<sup>5</sup>

### The New Spirit

The succeeding generation of Russian revolutionaries did not share the Populist view that anti-Semitic outrages have a redemptive quality. Manifestations of

<sup>4</sup> F. Kurski, "di zhenever grupe sotsialistn yidn un ir oyfruf" (The Geneva Group of Jewish Socialists and its proclamation—Yiddish), *Historishe Sbriftn*, Vilna/Paris 1939, Vol. III, p. 561.

<sup>5</sup> *Iz Arkhiva P. G. Akselroda* (From the P. G. Akselrod archive—in Russian) Berlin 1924, Vol. II, p. 30.

anti-Semitism were not tolerated in the Marxist-Socialist movement which dominated the Russian revolutionary scene during the next two decades. In his pamphlet *Our Differences* (1884), which set forth the program of the Social Democrats and the reasons for their opposition to the Narodnaya Volya, Plekhanov, the "father of Russian Marxism," condemned the proclamation of 1881 as "a base flattery of the national prejudices of the Russian people."<sup>6</sup> Similarly Lenin, after the notorious Kishinev pogrom in 1903, recalled with shame the "infamous proclamation" and called on all socialists to defend the Jews against the mob as a matter of honor.

Indeed, by the turn of the century both Russian and West European socialists tended to view anti-Semitism in a new light. Hitherto, socialists had regarded it as a misguided protest against existing social conditions by petty bourgeois and proletarians—"the socialism of fools," in the words of August Bebel. They had hoped that sooner or later those ensnared by it would recognize that not only capitalist Jews were the cause of their misery but Gentile and Jewish capitalists alike; and that this recognition would bring them into the fold of socialism. But when it seemed that instead of being a vestibule of socialism, anti-Semitism had become a useful tool in the hands of the ruling class, the socialist attitude changed. Anti-Semitism came to be treated unequivocally as a hostile ideology. During the two decades before 1917, there were few recorded overt expressions of anti-Jewish bias in the Russian socialist movement. In fact, there is no doubt that by and large the leaders of the Russian socialist parties did not harbor anti-Semitic sentiments. Such sentiments were certainly absent from Lenin, who was a genuine "internationalist," singularly free from national intolerance, and determinedly hostile to any manifestations of xenophobia or "Great Russian chauvinism" on the part of his comrades-in-arms.

Nevertheless, the Russian Social Democrats still shunned prominent association with specifically Jewish causes. To be sure, the central organs of their press denounced anti-Semitism in forceful terms; but they did not carry these denunciations in popular leaflets and pamphlets. For a socialist agitator, working among the grass-roots of the working-class, it was still unwise to appear in the role of an advocate of the Jews.

After the October Revolution the Bolsheviks adopted an uncompromising attitude against anti-Semitism. As the White armies converged to extinguish the infant regime with the battlecry "Beat the Jews and Save Rus-

<sup>6</sup> G. V. Plekhanov, *Izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniia* (Collected Philosophical Works), Moscow 1956, Vol. I, p. 217.

## SOVIET CLAIMS

In my country, all peoples enjoy freedom for the development of their culture. They can have their theaters and their literature, and that includes the Jews. However, the Jewish population has merged with the Russian in Russian culture so fully that Jews participate in general culture and literature . . .

—A. I. Mikoyan, *New York*, Jan. 15, 1959,  
(transcript of the United Nations Correspondence Association).

As far as the Jews are concerned, even if Jewish schools were established, very few would attend them voluntarily. . . . A university in the Yiddish language could never be established. There would not be a sufficient number of students. With regard to the Yiddish or Hebrew languages, there is no demand for their use. . . .

—N. S. Khrushchev, *Réalités* (Paris), May 1957

## COMMUNIST QUESTIONS

Why has nothing appeared in Yiddish [in the USSR]? Not a newspaper, not a book, not a magazine! All the arguments we heard from certain Soviet leaders that the Jews themselves do not want Yiddish publications do not correspond to reality. . . .

That the Soviet Jews are interested in having a Yiddish newspaper can be seen from the fact that close to 2000 copies of the Warsaw *Folkshetimme* come into the Soviet Union and are avidly read. Even the *Morgn Frayhayt* [US Communist Yiddish daily] comes all the way to the Soviet Union and is read eagerly.

—Ch. Suller, *Daily Worker* (New York), Sept. 22, 1957.

What about the 3,000,000 who flocked to the Yiddish concerts given sporadically in the USSR in 1957 (a figure given by N. N. Kanilov, Vice-Minister for Culture. . .)? Why should these millions, or even thousands, be denied full facilities to publish, speak, see plays, in what is still their mother tongue, namely Yiddish? . . .

If all facilities and help were extended to [Jewish] culture and language between 1917 and 1948, what change has taken place in their status after 1948 to warrant the cessation and elimination of this culture? . . . I have not come across a coherent Marxist argument . . . why Soviet Yiddish writers should have their novels, stories and poems published (in Yiddish) by left-wing publications in capitalist countries . . . and not in their country of origin, the USSR.

—A. Waterman, "On the Jewish Question,"  
*Marxism Today* (London), April 1959.

sia," the denunciation of anti-Semitism as counter-revolutionary became not only a duty enjoined by faith but a course dictated by the imperatives of the struggle in which the Bolsheviks were engaged. The weapon had to be wrested from the hands of those seeking to restore the *ancien regime*. Anti-Semitism was outlawed and suppressed; and the Red Army was hailed by the Jews as a protector and liberator from the White troops which were bringing upon them nothing but death and destruction. There was exaggeration but no falsification in the picture of Eastern Europe drawn by the American-Yiddish poet, A. Liesin, who was not a Communist: "While in all the countries surrounding Bolshevik Russia anti-Semitism is fanned with increasingly infernal power . . . Bolshevik Russia presents an example of humaneness and justice, the like of which the history of the Jewish Diaspora has never seen before."<sup>7</sup> Anti-Semitism could not figure in any indictment drawn up against the Soviet dictatorship during the 1920's. But with the advent of the 1930's a new picture began to unfold itself.

## Stalinist Nationalism

The revival of Great Russian nationalism under Stalin's dispensation in the early 1930's created a climate less congenial to the Jews than that which had prevailed throughout the preceding decade. With the building of "socialism in one country" proceeding apace, Bolshevik Russia began to shed many of the features which revolutionary enthusiasm and devotion had bestowed upon her. A new spirit pervaded the party, disillusioned by the dearth of revolutionary outbreaks in West Europe to which it had looked forward in the days of Lenin and Trotsky, and deeply immersed in its own "revolution from above." Under these circumstances, the Russian nationalist tradition, renounced and abused by the sweeping wave of revolutionary triumph, gradually reasserted its claims, casting the revolutionary *élan* into more traditional mold. Within these confining walls the cosmopolitan radiance of the revolution grew dimmer and dimmer. The old revolutionary leadership reared in the tradition of Marxist internationalism was replaced by a new generation of bureaucrats imbued with that peculiar mixture of Marxist militancy and Russian chauvinism which henceforth was to mark the ethos of Soviet society.

A chilly wind began to envelop the Jews, especially the Jewish intelligentsia which had been everywhere in

<sup>7</sup> A. Liesin, in *di tsukunft* (Yiddish), January 1920, p. 1.

the modern world the bearer of cosmopolitanism. In this new climate the dictatorship was less disposed to resist the envious and subdued demands that the high proportion of the Jews in administrative positions and universities be reduced and that the vacancies thus created be filled by native sons. Indeed, the dictatorship viewed such restrictive measures as salutary: they would earn the regime fresh popularity at home, and at the same time blunt the edge of anti-Communist propaganda throughout the world (emanating from the extreme right) that Mother Russia had fallen under the domination of the Judeo-Communist conspiracy. Accordingly, the Soviet government proceeded to reduce sharply the number of Jews in the leading bodies of the party and government, to introduce a *numerus clausus* into some institutions of higher learning, and virtually to exclude Jews from the diplomatic service.<sup>8</sup> To be a Jew again became a source of discomfort and a handicap.

These measures did not spring from anti-Semitic sentiment in the strict traditional sense of the term, but were motivated by coldly calculated *raison d'état*. They were sometimes accompanied by regrets (privately voiced) about the necessity of sacrificing principles to this greater consideration. *Lex revolutiae suprema est*, Plekhanov had proclaimed in faulty Latin at the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party (1903), scarcely aware of the horrifying deeds with which that tenet was pregnant. Would a movement which could massacre proletarians in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat, practice terror in order to achieve social harmony, glory in autocracy in order to establish universal self-government—would such a movement shrink from the appeasement of anti-Semitism if it thought such appeasement would further the “lofty” cause of communism? The head of the Central Committee's department on national minorities met the complaints of a Yiddish writer, Katcherginski, concerning the discrimination against Jews practiced by Soviet authorities in Lithuania, with the explanation that “the Jews of Lithuania may have to be sacrificed to the general cause.”<sup>9</sup> The rich and indiscriminate armory of means wherewith bolshevism professed to pursue Utopia acquired a fresh instrument, time-honored and of proven efficacy; and the anti-Semitic spirits, which had been

<sup>8</sup> Hitler revealed in the course of one of his celebrated table talks that “Stalin made no secret before Ribbentrop that he was waiting only for the moment of maturation of a sufficiently large indigenous intelligentsia to make short shrift (Schluss zu machen) of Jews as a leadership stratum which he still needs today.” *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, Bonn, 1951, p. 119.

<sup>9</sup> Sh. Katcherginsky, *tsvishn hamer un serp* (Between hammer and sickle—Yiddish), Buenos Aires 1950, p. 96.

outlawed by bolshevism and driven to lead a repressed existence in the subterranean dwellings of Soviet society, were now emboldened to emerge and engage in their practice in the guise of a Communist *raison d'état*.<sup>10</sup> (See box on p. 41.)

### From Intolerance to Repression

In 1948 Soviet policy towards the Jews acquired a fresh and disturbing dimension. If hitherto anti-Semitism had been a tool wielded with dispassion and calculated moderation without deeply engaging the spirit of the Communist leaders, and affecting only those Jews aspiring to careers in certain fields, now it was fed by passion and conviction, and was directed against the entire Jewish community. It was not only anti-Semitism *de logique*, to paraphrase Camus' famous phrase; it was at once logical and passionate.

The affection and enthusiasm displayed by the Jews of Russia for the newly created state of Israel, to whose birth the Soviet Union itself had made a modest contribution, provoked Stalin's suspicion that the Jews were an untrustworthy element whose ties with their numerous brethren abroad made them potential traitors. He proceeded to treat them accordingly. He decided not only to render them harmless by encouraging their removal from jobs as security risks, but also to extinguish their ethnic consciousness. With characteristic totalitarian swiftness all Jewish cultural institutions were abolished and several hundred Yiddish writers were arrested: the more prominent among them were executed after a secret trial (in 1952), while others expired in the penal camps of the arctic wasteland. The

<sup>10</sup> Trotsky diagnosed the first stealthy manifestations of official anti-Semitism in Soviet Russia as symptoms of the bureaucratic degeneration afflicting Soviet society. According to him, having usurped the dictatorship of the proletariat and betrayed the spirit of the Marxist-Leninist legacy, the Stalinist bureaucracy was seeking to use the Jews as a scapegoat for its misrule and betrayal. L. Trotsky, “Thermidor and Anti-Semitism,” *The New Internationalist* (New York), May 1941, pp. 91-94. The article bears the date February 22, 1937. This diagnosis, however, was less applicable for the 1930's than to the period after World War II. Thus in 1956 during the ferment in the Polish Communist Party which brought Gomulka to power, the Stalinist elements, known as the Natolin faction, proposed that the popular hatred besieging the Communist rulers be placated by offering the Jewish party members as a sacrificial lamb. They advocated, in the words of a contemporary revisionist account, that the governmental and party apparatus be reconstructed by applying “the criterion of pure Aryan blood.” Ryszard Turcki, in *Po Prostu* (Warsaw), October 28, 1956. See also Czeslaw Milosz, “Anti-Semitism in Poland,” *Problems of Communism*, May-June 1957.

entry "Jews" in the Soviet Encyclopedia appearing during that period described the Jews as if they were an extinct tribe.<sup>11</sup> Before World War II an elaborate network of cultural institutions had served the Jews of Russia: schools attended by over 100,000 children, a Yiddish press, a large and prolific Yiddish literary community, and a theatre rated among the best in the Soviet Union. By the autumn of 1948 almost nothing was left in existence. By a stroke of the dictator's pen all organized Jewish endeavor came to an abrupt end. Only a score or so of defunct synagogues survived. These and the withered label of Birobidzhan still incongruously attached to that region on the Amur, which had never acquired a Jewish character and in which the Jews formed a hopeless minority, were the only visible signs of a community of two and a half million.<sup>12</sup>

From 1948 until the death of Stalin Soviet Jews lived under a reign of terror amid rumors of their imminent mass deportation.<sup>13</sup>

### Rehabilitation with a Difference

The death of Stalin and the acquittal of the doctors involved in the "Doctors' Plot," as well as *Pravda's* (April 6, 1953) admission that the affair of the doctors was a "fabrication" intended to "inflame nationalist hostilities among the Soviet peoples," removed the nightmare which had hovered over the Jewish community. The terror relented. But the fundamentals of Stalin's policies towards the Jews were retained. As in many other spheres of Communist endeavor the Stalinist aims were preserved, only the methods were changed. The carrot gained ascendancy over the stick, the peaceful incentive over terror, the indirect approach over the direct brutal assault.

Stalin's heirs, in the process of their cautious detachment from the most severe features of Stalin's legacy, set out to right the wrongs inflicted on some nationalities. It will be recalled that seven other ethnic groups had fallen victim to Stalin's suspicion and vindictiveness: the Ingush, the Chechens, the Volga Germans, the Crimea Tatars, the Kalmyks, the Karachai and the Balkars. All of them were uprooted at various times

during World War II and banished in their entirety, including members of the party and the Komsomol, to remote places. While the expulsion of the Volga Germans was justified by the authorities as a security measure—and it was perhaps a more rational measure than the removal of the Japanese-American from the Pacific coast during World War II—the deportation of the other national groups was undertaken on the principle of collective guilt. The sins of the few were visited upon the entire community. The preamble to the official decree published in *Izvestia*, June 26, 1946, announcing, two years after the expulsion, the dissolution of the Chechen-Ingush and the Crimean Tatar autonomous republics, stated that collective punishment had been meted out for the failure of the peoples to combat those in their midst who were collaborating with the German enemy. It was this tribal notion of justice which Khrushchev included in his indictment of Stalin at the 20th Party Congress:

Not only a Marxist-Leninist but also no man of common sense can grasp how it is possible to make whole nations responsible for inimical activity, including women, children, old people, Communists and Komsomols, to use mass repression against them, and to expose them to misery and suffering for the hostile acts of individual persons or groups of persons.<sup>14</sup>

The repressed nationalities have since been restored to their public identity and some have even been permitted to return to their native lands. They ceased to be Orwellian "un-peoples." Their names reappeared on maps and in reference works. Even the Volga Germans have been provided with schools and newspapers.<sup>15</sup>

This wholesale rehabilitation has not embraced the Jews. To be sure the Jews had not been deported—although Soviet Jews are convinced that only Stalin's death saved them from that fate.<sup>16</sup> But condemned to the status of an "un-people," they had been marked out for cultural extinction and their institutions had been destroyed. However, it would seem that in Khrushchev's view this particular action of Stalin did not fall into the category of "monstrous acts" and "rude violations of the basic Leninist principles of the nationality policy of the Soviet state"<sup>17</sup>; it was a deed of prudent

<sup>11</sup> *Bolsbaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia*, 2nd ed., Vol. 15, Moscow 1952, pp. 377-79.

<sup>12</sup> Birobidzhan, an area in eastern Siberia, was set up in the late 1920's as a "Jewish autonomous region," but due to its geographic location and severe climatic conditions it never attracted many Jews, whose roots were in the Ukraine and Belorussia primarily.

<sup>13</sup> See Communist weekly *World News* (London), Jan. 12, 1957.

<sup>14</sup> See Khrushchev's "secret speech" in *The Anti-Stalin Campaign and International Communism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1956, pp. 57-58.

<sup>15</sup> For an account of the rehabilitation, see Walter Kolarz, "Die Rehabilitierung der liquidierten Sowjetvolker," (The rehabilitation of Soviet nationalities), *Ost Europa* (Stuttgart), June 1957, pp. 414-20.

<sup>16</sup> See *World News*, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Khrushchev, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

statesmanship. In the course of an interview with a Canadian Communist delegation, Khrushchev, in one of the unguarded moments of candor to which he is so often given, showed himself to share Stalin's view of the Jews as inherent security risks. "Khrushchev," relates the Canadian Communist, Salsberg, "agreed with Stalin that the Crimea, which had been depopulated at the war's end, should not be turned into a Jewish colonization center, because in case of war it would be turned into a base for attacking the USSR. . . ." <sup>18</sup>

Surely, a people harboring such a ready propensity to treason could not be allowed to possess cultural institutions fostering and perpetuating that tendency.

### Assimilation through Attrition

Stalin's heirs are determined not to revoke the edict against the cultural life of the Jews. The pleadings of a British Communist group asking that Yiddish schools and the theatre be restored were met by Suslov with a categorical refusal befitting that grim guardian of orthodoxy: "No, these things will not be reinstated." <sup>19</sup>

This obduracy has been maintained by the Soviet leaders in spite of its unfavorable impression on Western opinion, which has displayed anxiety over the lot

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *The New Leader* (New York), Sept. 14, 1959, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> *World News*, *op. cit.*

of the Jews, and in spite of the injuries inflicted on Communist parties with a substantial proportion of Jewish members. Three Communist delegations have taken up the Jewish question with the highest Soviet leaders: a Canadian delegation in August 1956; a British delegation in October of the same year; and a deputation of French Jewish Communists which journeyed to Moscow with the blessing of Thorez early in 1958 for the express purpose of dissuading the Soviet leaders from their present policy towards the Jewish minority. All returned empty-handed.

Disillusioned and embittered, Jewish Communists in Canada, the United States and Britain have deserted their parties in large numbers. For many years they had nourished a vision of Soviet Russia which bore little resemblance to reality. Their imagination had seen a land in which a multi-national brotherhood informed by love was laboring towards the realization of Utopia under the guidance of dedicated leaders, all of them paragons of Leninist virtue, stern, determined, ruthless against enemies but full of solicitude for the oppressed everywhere. In the aftermath of Stalin's death the veil of illusion dissolved. J. B. Salsberg, leader of the Canadian CP and a member of the delegation to the USSR, after an interview of two hours, found the First Secretary of the Communist Party and presumed custodian of Marxism-Leninism to be a man possessed of "a backward prejudice against the Jewish group as a people . . . a prejudice which sharply contradicts the Marxist mode of thought." His "statements smack of

### Constitutional Guarantees . . .

Equality of rights of Soviet citizens, irrespective of their nationality or race, in all spheres of governmental, economic, cultural, political and other public activity, has been inscribed in the Stalin Constitution.

No matter what nation or race a Soviet citizen may belong to, he enjoys the same political rights as all other citizens. He may be elected or appointed to any state office or post. He may work at any job he can cope with and receives equal pay for equal work. He may enter any educational institution and engage in scientific or cultural work . . . with all other citizens.

The Stalin Constitution most strictly prohibits any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of citizens on account of their race or nationality.

—From *The Social and State Structure of the USSR*, by V. Karpinsky, (Moscow), 1952, pp. 179-89.

### . . . and Official Rationalization

*Khrushchev*: At the outset of the Revolution, we had many Jews in the leadership of the party and the state . . . In due course, we have created new cadres . . . *Pervukhin*: . . . our own intelligentsia.

*Khrushchev*: Should the Jews want to occupy the foremost positions in our republic now, it would naturally be taken amiss by the indigenous inhabitants.

[Madame Furtseva] said that some years back, talk of anti-Semitism here [in Russia] was stirred as a result of misinterpretations of certain government actions. The government had found in some of its departments a heavy concentration of Jewish people' . . . Steps were taken to transfer them to other enterprises, giving them equally good positions and without jeopardizing their rights.

—From interview in *Réalités* (Paris), May 1957. Furtseva quoted in *National Guardian* (New York), June 25, 1956.

Great Russian chauvinism. . . . His approach to the problem of Jewish nationality is an unforgivable violation of socialist democracy.”<sup>20</sup> Soon afterwards, Salsberg resigned from the party and was followed in this action by a large number of Jews and non-Jews. The Canadian party lost some of its ablest leaders and dedicated members. In Montreal, where the Communists had once been strong enough to elect a member of Parliament, the party organization virtually ceased to exist.

In explanation of the absence of Jewish cultural institutions, Soviet spokesmen usually advance the theory of “integration.” According to this theory, the Jews have become so integrated into the body of the Russian people that they have lost all will or capacity for ethnic self-expression. Eager to submerge in the Russian majority, they have abandoned Yiddish for Russian. The breath of life has departed from Jewish culture; it has died from inanition. This consummation, marking an advance on the road of history, deserves the applause of all progressive persons, including Jews. Only reactionaries could lament it. To revive Jewish institutions would, therefore, be tantamount to reviving a corpse in defiance of the will of History. According to Salsberg:

Khrushchev repeated the view . . . that the majority of Soviet Jews have become integrated into the country's general life. He emphasized that such integration is historically progressive, whereas the maintenance of a separate group existence is reactionary.<sup>21</sup>

It is true, of course, that the majority of Jews have come to use Russian in their daily lives—to a large extent as a result of the assimilationist policies that have been enforced on them. Still, according to the last census, 20.8 percent of Soviet Jews have declared Yiddish to be their most intimate medium of communica-

<sup>20</sup> *New Leader*, *op. cit.* That Khrushchev harbors anti-Semitic feelings of a rather vulgar nature has been evidenced by many of his utterances made in private. One such adverse pronouncement on the Jews, made in the course of an interview with a French correspondent of *Le Figaro* (Paris), April 9, 1958, described the Jews as averse to collective work and group discipline, and stung even the most hardened Jewish Communists in the West, whose loyalty survived the *crise de conscience* produced by revelations after Stalin's death. “It is incomprehensible how such a statement could come from the leader of the Soviet state”—quoted from *morgn frayhayt*, New York, April 13, 1958.) It would be a mistake, however, to infer that the personal feelings of the dictator govern Soviet policy towards the Jews. The operative logic of the Soviet system is sufficient to account for it, although the dictator's sentiments lend a particular acerbity to some of its features.

<sup>21</sup> *New Leader*, *op. cit.*

tion. To be sure, the percentage is lower than of any other ethnic group claiming its national language as the “mother tongue.” Yet two factors must be borne in mind: (1) That it must have taken a certain amount of courage for Jews to claim Yiddish as their tongue in the face of official hostility, and that the actual figure may therefore be considerably larger; and (2) that 20.8 percent still embraces 472,000 people—in absolute figures, a far larger number than that of two dozen or so other Soviet nationalities (such as the Buriats, Avars, Ossetians, and so on) whose languages are not only tolerated, but actively encouraged by the Soviet authorities. Such, indeed, are the canons of the Soviet nationality policy that 472,000 Jews are served by a meager sheet whose circulation of 1,000 is largely confined to Birobidzhan, while, say, the 12,000 Chukchi inhabiting the northern region of the RSFSR are served by a comparable organ of 800 copies.<sup>22</sup>

The picture becomes fuller when we add that about 80 Yiddish writers, survivors of the decimation of the Yiddish literary intelligentsia, who are denied a public forum in their own tongue for their creative talents. A chosen few may have their works translated into Russian, if their theme is not of a specific Jewish content. The others must find contentment in manuscripts languishing in the obscurity of desk drawers. According to a highly literate French Jewish Communist, Chaim Sloves:

The Soviet Jewish writers are more creative today than perhaps ever before. “Not a day passes that I don't write,” everyone tells you. And everyone has his own work ready for the press—volumes of poetry, novels, stories, dramas. It is not merely literary impetus or prolific creativity: It is, in the highest sense, sacred dedication.<sup>23</sup>

Immediately after the Revolution Hebrew was declared a counterrevolutionary language. Since 1948 Yiddish literature has been treated as a force inimical to the purposes of the Soviet government. A unique application, indeed, of the official formula “socialist in content—national in form”!

PURSUING THE GOAL of total assimilation of the Jews, the regime has for the past three years embarked on a campaign against the last fragments of communal life in Russia—the synagogues and the religious life associated with them. The purpose of this campaign, conducted through the familiar medium of the

<sup>22</sup> See census report in *Pravda*, Feb. 4, 1960. Also in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (New York), March 2, 1960.

<sup>23</sup> *Yiddishe kultur* (Yiddish culture), New York, Feb. 1959.



feuilleton in the press and the occasional radio broadcast, and practically reinforced by the closing of synagogues in outlying regions, is to deter the Jews from congregating in compact groups. The process of atomization is to be brought to its ultimate conclusion. By insulating the Jews from their co-religionists and co-nationals in the rest of the world, and by isolating them from each other, the regime hopes to extirpate the consciousness of kind and thus remove what it thinks is a source of disaffection from within the Soviet Union. For Judaism, Soviet propagandists insist, is not only "opium for the people," but also a creed implanting in its adherents allegiance to foreign powers and infidelity to the Soviet Union. In a recent broadcast (December 9, 1959) emanating from Kirovograd in the Ukraine (a town, incidentally, with a notorious record of pogroms in pre-revolutionary Russia, including the one which the Narodnaya Volya welcomed with such glee), the speaker inveighed in language of unusual virulence against the local synagogue and its officials:

. . . the Jewish faith has been strongly intermixed with Jewish bourgeois nationalism and Zionism, already possessing a strong reactionary essence. . . . Sermons by Rabbi Ayzik Pektor hardly differ from the woeful theory of the uniqueness of the Aryan race and its destiny to rule over the peoples of the entire world. . . .

The broadcast was saturated with sheer medievalism:

Among the numerous Jewish feasts, a special place belongs to Saturday, which should be inspiringly observed by every Orthodox Jew, for according to the teaching of the Talmud this is the day of absolute inactivity. And so, on a Saturday, when the divine service ends, the faithful disperse, and . . . the table is laid, vodka, wine and snacks appear, and toasts to the health of "God's servants" are raised. The drinking feast (*sic*) is led by the rabbi's wife, Roza Spektor.

Jewish ministers and circumcisers execute the rite of circumcision, which has a strikingly nationalistic character.

Its specific significance lies in the fact that it gives proof of belonging to the "chosen" people—the Jews. At the same time it imbues Jews with repugnance and hatred of those who do not possess this special sign. . . .

Judaic sermons are sermons of bourgeois Zionists. Such sermons are tools of the nationalistic, Israeli, cosmopolitan American bourgeoisie. With their tentacles, the Jewish bourgeois nationalists, with the help of Judaism, try to reach into our Soviet garden. But they will never succeed.<sup>24</sup>

THE TREATMENT OF the Jews by the Soviet dictatorship is without a full parallel among its policies toward the other national minorities. A unique people, the Jews have drawn themselves singular treatment. As Stalinism departed from the ideals of internationalism and cosmopolitanism which had inspired the Bolshevik Revolution, it cynically resorted to anti-Semitism as a tool of its designs, harkening back to the tradition of the Narodnaya Volya, in many ways its spiritual ancestor. The xenophobia born of its totalitarian isolation—a xenophobia incongruously linked to its international aspirations and professions—exposed the Jews to grave suspicion. They were members of a worldwide fraternity, the greater part of which lived in the camp of "imperialism," and the creation of the state of Israel intensified that suspicion. Alone among all the national minorities the Jews have been condemned to total assimilation. The Jews are indeed a "chosen people" in Russia—chosen for cultural extinction.

<sup>24</sup> Throughout 1959, a high percentage of the feuilletons appearing in the Soviet press were devoted to the pillorying and denunciation of individuals bearing unmistakable Jewish names, and of synagogues: e.g., 20-25 percent of the pieces in *Vechernaia Moskva*; 20 percent in *Sovetskaia Kultura*; 10 percent in *Komsomolskaia Pravda*; 33 percent in *Sovetskaia Latvia*. For representative samples see *Prikarpatska Pravda*, September 24, 1958; *Vechernaia Moskva*, March 13, 1959; and *Sovetskaia Moldavia*, November 12, 1959. See also *The New Leader*, *op. cit.*

## DISCUSSION

## Towards a "Communist Welfare State"?

The reader is referred to the symposium under the above title in the January-February 1960 issue, containing the article "Social Welfare in the USSR," by Alec Nove, and comments by Solomon Schwarz, Bertram D. Wolfe, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Peter Wiles, Richard Lowenthal, and Asoka Mehta—Editors.

### A Matter of Definition

YOU HAVE DONE useful service in opening your columns to this discussion, because it seems to me one of the fundamental questions with which we shall be occupied for some time to come. But I sense a certain confusion in the discussion, which arises, perhaps, from the fact that Mr. Nove's article is not really addressed to the question which you raise in your editorial introduction—the possibility of a "Communist welfare state." All that Mr. Nove says, supported by the evidence which he has assembled with his usual scholarly care, is that Khrushchev's regime is paying a good deal more attention to the welfare of the population than did Stalin's. This is really a very long way off from the "welfare state" (to which Mr. Nove makes no reference), at any rate in the sense in which we use the term in England. For, in our sense it means at least two things. First, a state in which the welfare of the governed takes precedence over some of the other aims which have preoccupied our governments in the past—national glory, for example, or far-flung empire. Secondly, a state in which this welfare is achieved with no, or at all events a minimum of, damage to our traditional free institutions by which our liberty is ensured. In other words, it is recognized by all—or so many of us hope—that increased preoccupation by the state with widespread welfare can constitute a danger to liberty, though opinions vary as to the extent to which this risk must be accepted in the interests of social justice.

Now, if one applies to the Soviet Union the synthesis of questions raised both by Mr. Nove and by you we arrive at three main questions:

*Question One:* Is the present Soviet regime more preoccupied with welfare than its predecessor? Answer: obviously yes. Whether the motive is fear of public disorder, or the inexorable logic of industrial growth, or some inherent benevolence in Khrushchev's disposition seems to me of very little practical importance, and probably undiscoverable, since the motives of politicians are seldom unmixed.

*Question Two:* Is welfare the primary preoccupation of the Soviet regime to the exclusion of such other great power preoccupations as glory, or empire? Answer: obviously not—though it is conceivable that it could become so, if ideology loses all its dynamic, if the appetite for the good and quiet life continues to grow, and if the party loses its grip.

*Question Three:* Is the present Soviet regime anxious lest increased attention to welfare should threaten its "traditional free institutions"? An absurd question, but one which helps to remind us how little the welfare state has to do with Communist regimes, and also that despotism and welfare are far from incompatible. For the masses, who are usually ready to trade freedom for greater material advantages, are satisfied under a "welfare despotism", while the few, with memories of greater tyranny in the past, are lulled by the benevolence into tolerating the despotism. On all sides in the Soviet Union today we see signs of party control digging itself in, extending its range of influence and interference, devising new "public organizations" through which it can channel public activity into useful directions which are at the same time harmless to its own authority—in short, laying the foundations for that effortless waking and sleeping subordination of the individual to the collectivity which is the totalitarian ideal. All this can be much better achieved by increased attention to welfare than by Stalin's wasteful terror. (May it not even be one of the motives for the new trend?) That increased attention to welfare should of itself lead to more freedom (and freedom is, I repeat, implicit in the phrase "welfare state") seems to me incomprehensible.

*Leonard Schapiro*

The London School of Economics and  
Political Science, London, England

ERRATA

- P. 19. The author of "The Soviet Attitude on Outer Space" spells his name ANDREW SWATKOVSKY.
- P. 25. Editors' Note, lines 12-13, should read: "...even to Communist sympathizers, that Soviet claims in this area..."
- P. 29. Box citing "Works on Soviet Nationality Policy": Richard Pipes' The Formation of the Soviet Union... was published in 1954.
- P. 42. Col. 2, para 2, first sentence should read: "The picture becomes fuller when we add that about 80 Yiddish writers, survivors of the decimation of the Yiddish literary intelligentsia, are denied a public forum...."
- P. 64. Col. 1, para 4, second sentence should read: "He accused the latter of failing to rely on Marxist value theory..."