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JOSHUA KUNITZ

On Trials and Purges

THE EDITORS

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THE JEWISH PROBLEM IN THE USSR

BY JOSHUA KUNITZ

In recent months the newspapers and the airwaves have been full of charges, denials, and countercharges concerning the treatment of Jews in the Soviet-bloc countries. At the same time there has been an almost total absence of dispassionate analysis of the Jewish problem in the USSR—or even, for that matter, of recognition that there is such a problem. Enemies of the Soviet Union have contended that the Soviet leadership is using the Jews as pawns in the Cold War; friends of the Soviet Union have tended to counter with the charge of malicious anti-Soviet lies and propaganda. But there is a very real Jewish problem in the USSR. It has its roots in the war against Nazi Germany, and for that very reason it is one of the most poignant tragedies of our time. No one is better equipped than Joshua Kunitz, a profound student of both Russian and Jewish history, to tell this story. In the two-part article below, he has done so with dignity and feeling. We commend Dr. Kunitz's analysis to MR readers.—THE EDITORS.

PART I

The Spread of Anti-Semitism

The spread of popular anti-Semitism in the USSR during and after the war can now be taken as an established fact. The evidence is unimpeachable. The witnesses are Soviet-Yiddish writers. Their testimony can be found in their works published in the Soviet Union during and after the war. It is valid testimony. As every student of literature knows, the arts, especially imaginative literature, provide incomparably better insights into the subterranean feelings, moods, passions, fears, hopes, and resentments of a people than do official statements by leaders or officially slanted reports in newspapers. This is particularly true in countries and periods of severe censorship and governmental vigilance. In Russia it has always been the case, whether before or after the Revolution.

Generally, the people's hidden feelings find fuller expression in

Joshua Kunitz is the author of several books on the Soviet Union and on Russian literature, including Dawn Over Samarkand (1935) and Russia: The Giant That Came Last (1947).

the literatures produced in the little-known languages of the national minorities than in the universally known language of the preponderant majority, and in the figurative language of poetry than in the direct language of prose. Thus, while it is true that Soviet-Russian literature of the war years contains no evidence of anti-Semitism, Jewish reactions as reflected in Soviet-Yiddish literature reveal a startlingly different picture.

Take, for example, this episode from Perez Markish's superb epic poem "War" (*Milkhome*), published in Moscow in 1948 (the parts quoted below first appeared separately in 1943): It is the early part of the war. A group of Soviet soldiers cut off from their regiment are sitting in a forest, talking. Among them is one Jew, a Communist. Originally from the autonomous Jewish Republic of Biro-Bidjan, he was a student in Moscow when the war broke out. He joined the army immediately as a volunteer. A brave and politically educated soldier, he was elected by his comrades as party organizer of their section. Since neither his name, Ovadis, nor his looks, fair and blue-eyed, are recognizably Jewish, some of the soldiers gathered in the forest take him for a Russian.

The soldiers talk about the war and the hardships it has brought upon the country. One soldier draws lazily:

War! But Jews—you don't see them on any of the fronts!
 People say the Jews are hiding out somewhere;
 They say that Jews loaded with sacks crowd all the trains;
 They say the Jewish sacks 're so stuffed they can't be
 budged;
 They say that everywhere the roads are jammed with Jews
 and Jews.
 And you—you have to fight and give your life for them.

Only one of the Russians in the group, a Communist, twits the fellow, saying that he sounds like an echo of a Nazi leaflet. "Well, people say," the fellow throws back, "this is a free country."

"But what do *you* say?" broke in Ovadis,
 Peering sharply into the speaker's eyes.

"Are you a Jew, then, that you speak up for them?"

"A Jew!" Ovadis said, and straightened stiff,
 "A Jew! Mark well—A Jew from Biro-Bidjan!
 Want more?" Tossing his words like daggers,
 Ovadis took a step toward the startled man.
 "My name is Abraham, a name I got from grandad!"

He did not want to start a bloody fight.
 He only sized the fellow up from head to toe
 And pressed the automatic rifle grimly in his hand,
 And, white with rage, he let it down again.
 The mordant tragic truth stabbed at his heart
 And made it taut with pain:
 His job was not alone to fight the German foe,
 But also him, right here, who asks: "Are you a Jew?" . . .
 To keep a wakeful eye on him who says—"They say . . .
 they say . . ."

And here is the testimony of another famous Yiddish-Soviet poet, Ezra Fininberg (1899-1946). When the Nazis invaded the USSR, Fininberg, though he was 42 years old, volunteered for the army. He fought at the defenses of Moscow, his city. He was wounded, lost four fingers through frostbite, had his health undermined, spent almost two years in hospitals, and returned to Moscow late in 1943. At a reception given to him by the Jewish community in that city, he read a magnificent long poem, entitled *My Report*. Here is a stanza which shows, in its vehement assertion of his Semitism, an awareness of surrounding anti-Semitism:

And he who says that I, that I am stranger here,
 Who stares at me in bitterness, in venom and contempt—
 The devil knows him; Ah! may the devil take him—
 If it can't be mine, my comrade's gun will rake him.
 My folk, my Jewish folk, in silken bloody shirt,
 From centuries afar the peoples greet you.
 I'm proud, my folk—My voice is clear, emphatic!
 Yea, I am a Jew—my face, my walk, my very heart—Semitic!

One could cite many similar examples. Indeed, the whole Yiddish literature of the period, including the newspapers, was permeated with a subtle, though rarely explicit, awareness of the poison of prejudice in the atmosphere.

Reasons for the Spread of Anti-Semitism

What were the circumstances, the historic forces that brought on the unexpected and extraordinary recrudescence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union during the war years?

It should be remembered that up to the Revolution Russia was the classic land of Great Russian chauvinism on the one hand, and of Jewish persecution, pogroms, and ritual murder trials on the other. It should be remembered that during the Revolution and the Civil War, anti-Jewish propaganda was the stock in trade of every

enemy of the Revolution, and that Jewish pogroms in those years, especially in the Ukraine under the Whites, resulted in hundreds of thousands of Jewish dead and in scores of millions of rubles' worth of Jewish property destroyed. It should be remembered that the emergence of Jews as an important factor in the Soviet government and in all economic, social, cultural, and trade union institutions, as well as the prominence of the Jewish traders and speculators during the NEP period, added fuel to the secret counter-revolutionary and anti-Semitic propaganda, a propaganda that never subsided until about the middle of the first Five Year Plan, that is the beginning of the thirties. Even the struggle against Trotskyism was used by many secret enemies of the Revolution as a cover for anti-Semitic propaganda; and so were the purge trials of the middle thirties.

The Soviet government combatted anti-Semitism in every possible way—through legal enactments, administrative pressures, penal institutions, party propaganda, the arts, the press, the theater, the cinema, as well as through the “productivization” of the Jewish masses, that is, through turning them into workers and farmers and productive professionals. Up to the war the Soviet record on this score was magnificent, unmatched. If not entirely uprooted, anti-Semitism was at least driven underground.

But underground in the most backward sections of the population, it persisted and only waited for an opportunity to raise its head once more. The war with its unspeakable hardships and horrors provided the opportunity. People in distress yearned for a scapegoat—a primitive yearning, but universal and very real. And again the Jewish minority fulfilled its historic role. Somehow, the Jew was responsible for the country's suffering, somehow the Jew was to blame for the war! Somehow he did not bear his full share of the common burden. As any Jew familiar with his people's millennial history knows, this was not an abnormal phenomenon—it was quite normal.

There was another factor that contributed mightily to the spread of anti-Jewish sentiment—the annexation by the USSR of Western Ukraine, Western Bielorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, Esthonia, and Bessarabia (1939-1940). This brought into the Soviet fold somewhere between twenty and twenty-five million new citizens—*new* citizens but with *old* anti-Semitic traditions. Prior to the annexations, all of these people had lived under semi-fascist regimes, notorious for their Judophobia, especially Poland; and obviously the period of twenty months to one year during which these people lived under the Soviet flag before the Nazi invasion couldn't possibly have cured them of their old *malaise*. The Nazis who had put a premium on anti-Semitism certainly did not cure them. Since their re-incorporation into the Soviet Union occurred only in 1943 and after, it would simply

be flying in the face of probability to imagine that all of them were, by a mere change in allegiance, turned into Judophiles. Undoubtedly, their incorporation increased the number of anti-Semites in the Soviet Union by many millions, and undoubtedly, too, the ingestion of these millions of carriers of the anti-Semitic virus could not but affect to a considerable extent the whole Soviet organism.

But that was not all. The Nazis occupied also the *old* Soviet sections of Bielorussia and the Ukraine, as well as most of the northern Caucasus, the whole of the Crimea, and a large part of central Russia. It stands to reason that whatever vestiges of anti-Semitic sentiment lay hidden in these areas came to the surface and were revitalized under the impact of Nazi propaganda.

Worse still, in the occupied areas, the Nazis operated special schools for the purpose of indoctrinating youngsters with their racist anti-Jewish ideology. By offering extra rations to the children who patronized these schools, they managed to lure appreciable numbers. The evil seeds they implanted in the minds of the youngsters bore evil fruit, which Soviet education has been trying to eradicate ever since.

Besides the Nazis, the newly incorporated fascists, and many backward and highly nationalistic Great Russians, the Jews themselves, it must be admitted, contributed their share toward the growth of anti-Semitic sentiment among the Soviet masses. Not the Jews who had lived in the Soviet Union since 1917, but the Jews from the recently annexed territories—the 1.7 million Polish, Lithuanian, Rumanian, and Latvian Jews who had come under the Soviet flag in 1939-1941 either as new citizens or as refugees.

From the very beginning these people were quite unhappy under Soviet rule.

To them the Soviet Union, though in some respects preferable to the anti-Semitic regimes they had known before, and a welcome haven, they had hoped, from the Nazi beasts, was yet in no way a Jewish utopia. Everything in the Soviet way of life was alien to them, and much downright objectionable. As among the Russian Jews in 1917, so among these Jews the workers adapted themselves with relative ease, but the non-workers, the great majority, once the Nazi menace was left behind, began to chafe. Petty tradesmen, speculators, *luftmenshen*, they could find no legitimate employment for their traditional occupations in Soviet society.

To the many devout Zionists among them, the Soviet Union's repression of Zionist activities as inimical to Soviet-socialist ideology, constituted a major source of irritation. Then, too, a great many of the intellectuals and the working class leaders among these Jews

had long been associated with the social-democratic and bundist movements, and as such were ancient foes of Bolshevism and Leninism-Stalinism.

It is little to be wondered at that few of these new Soviet citizens and refugees had any deep love, or attachment, or sense of loyalty to the Soviet Union. The USSR was not their country; its ideology was not their ideology; and its way of life was not their way of life. For the Jew, they felt, the USSR, like any other country except the Promised Land, was also exile, *goluth*. Most of them were under Soviet rule without having had a choice in the matter, while those who came in voluntarily as refugees were soon so overwhelmed by the hardships of life as refugees that, incredible as it now seems, a considerable number were actually ready to turn back and try to live under the Nazis in Western Poland.

With the Nazi invasion, their situation grew even more tragic. Those who were not slaughtered by the Nazis, found themselves scattered in Siberia, Central Asia, and other parts of the Union. Life was hard. Many became demoralized.

Had all these Jewish evacuees and refugees been able to continue living peacefully under the Soviet flag in the places where they had lived before, they, like the Soviet Jews three decades earlier, would have gradually adjusted themselves, together with their non-Jewish neighbors, to the Soviet ways and standards of life. But they were caught in a war not of their making. As involuntary refugees and evacuees, they were thrown into utterly strange, remote, and wholly socialized regions, forced to live among people whom they did not understand and who did not understand them, and confronted by a whole system of mores, ethics, and laws which ran counter to everything they had known in the past. Yet somehow, in order to survive, they had to adapt themselves without delay. Many found it impossible. Most turned sullenly anti-Soviet.

Far to the west, on a thousand mile battle front the Soviet armies, including hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jewish youths, were bleeding and dying to rid the world of the Nazi plague. It should be remembered that among the Soviet generals fighting the Nazis, 313 were Jews. It should also be remembered that although the Jews comprised only about 2 percent of the Soviet population, they took fourth place among all the national groups decorated for gallantry in the war against the Nazis, with the astounding number of 185,000 Jewish soldiers cited for bravery by the Soviet High Command. Nor should one forget, that still farther to the west numerous Polish-Jewish and Lithuanian-Jewish partisan groups, some under Zionist leadership, were waging heroic guerilla war against the invader. In Vilna, Grodno, Bialystock, Bendin, Cracow, Tarnopol,

Chestochowa, Stryj and, above all, in Warsaw, the Jews in the ghetto, the kinsmen of the refugees and evacuees in Central Asia and Siberia, were staging epic uprisings against the torturers of the Jewish people; yes, even in the charnel houses of Treblinka, Sobitor, and others.

Near their own homes, in their own forests and swamps, on their own city streets, the Polish and Lithuanian Jews once aroused to the peril fought magnificently in the common struggle against the common foe. But in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Siberia, the Jewish refugees and evacuees, torn from their homes, embittered, demoralized, were, at least physically, "hardly aware that a war was going on." They traded, they worked, they griped. They dealt on the black market. They antagonized the authorities. They aroused the dislike of many Soviet people who, while resorting to their services, nevertheless feared and resented them, all the more so because they were alien in manner, language, and outlook.

Can one blame these Jews? Hardly. They were victims of tragic circumstances. Can one blame the Russians? No. Their reaction was no more negative than that of many a Soviet Jew. We must remember that even in Israel, demoralized immigrants, refugees, and DPs, having brought with them some of the same disturbing attitudes and traits, have stirred up similar fears among the old, idealistic Israeli settlers. Even in the Jewish homeland, these dealers on the black market are regarded as serious threats to the state and are cordially disliked and severely punished. It was all very regrettable, but quite unavoidable.

The Growth of Jewish Nationalism

A vastly augmented feeling of nationalism among *all* Soviet peoples manifested itself in the course of the war. It was a spontaneous reaction to Nazi barbarism and the myth of German racial and cultural superiority. The Soviet government, forced by the exigencies of the great struggle, seized upon this spontaneous reaction and deliberately fanned it into the incandescent patriotic flame which was ultimately to destroy the Nazis—but not without, at the same time, undermining the ethnic harmony that had always distinguished Soviet policy.

While, in its determination to tap the spiritual resources of the entire Soviet population, the Soviet government did not hesitate to direct its appeals to the national, racial, and even religious sentiments of all of the Soviet peoples, including of course the Jews, it was the Slav peoples, the Ukrainians, Bielorusians, and Great Russians, toward whom it directed its most stirring appeals. That was natural

and inevitable. The three Slav peoples together comprise more than eighty percent of the total Soviet population. The bonds of history, language, religion, and culture are stronger among them than among the other Soviet peoples. Too, their countries were the first to be ravaged by the Nazis, and their populations were the first to rise in holy wrath against the invader. In a way, because of the facts of geography, the whole war assumed the character of a titanic struggle between the Slavs and the Teutons. And of necessity, the Soviet government oriented itself mainly toward the Slavs.

It was natural and inevitable, too, that of the three Slav peoples it was the Great Russians who were courted most assiduously and who responded to the courtship most enthusiastically. The Great Russian nation, comprising almost sixty percent of the total Soviet population, was the colossus on whose mighty shoulders the major part of the burden of crushing the Nazi hordes fell. Small wonder everything Russian became the subject of universal laudation and sentimentalization. Everybody, from Stalin down, sang praises to Russia—the Russian language, history, achievement; the Russian landscape, the Russian rifle, the Russian writers, the Russian theater, Russian music, Russian artillery, and even some Russian tsars and saints. “Russia,” exulted the poet Nikolai Tikhanov, “is our joy and our liberty, our past and our future, our heart and our soul. Russia was, is, and shall be. Her life is our life, and as our people is immortal, so is Russia immortal.” On May 24, 1945, at a Kremlin banquet for Red Army commanders, Stalin proposed the following toast to the Russian people:

I should like to propose a toast to the health of our Soviet people and above all of our Russian people. I drink in particular to the health of the Russian people because it is the most outstanding of all the nations of the Soviet Union. . . . Our government committed more than a few mistakes, and we had some bad moments in 1941 and 1942. Another people might have told the government: “Get out, we’ll put some other government in charge.” . . . But the Russian people chose not to do so, for it believed in the adequacy of its government’s policy, and it accepted sacrifices as necessary to help smash Germany. And this confidence on the part of the Russian people in the Soviet government proved to be the decisive force ensuring our decisive victory over mankind’s foe, fascism. Let us thank them, the Russian people, for this confidence!

A sincere and well-earned tribute. But whether as head of a multinational state and party, Stalin was well-advised in making such comparisons is another matter.

Nevertheless, no matter how small a part of the vast struggle Jewish suffering and Jewish heroism may have seemed to others, they were a factor in the revival of Jewish nationalism.

The Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Rumanian Jews in the Soviet Union scarcely needed either the Nazis or the Russians to arouse their Jewish consciousness. Having but recently been under semi-fascist and stridently anti-Semitic regimes, they were as a matter of course intensely Jewish in feeling and outlook. Most of them were religious, Orthodox, while a great many were ardent Zionists and nationalists. Hatred and persecution were not new to them, and there was little in the new circumstances that required of them any *basic* emotional adjustment. Their Jewish loyalty was monolithic, undiluted by any other loyalty, whether Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Rumanian, or Soviet.

They were *in*, but not *of* the Soviet Union. Their contact with Soviet life was too brief, and the fervor of Soviet patriotism had not touched them. The Nazis' brutalities and the Slavs' prejudices only intensified their Jewish feeling of separateness, aloneness. When they were being slaughtered, as scores of thousands of them were, they were sustained by the thought that even in death they were affirming their undying devotion to their own people and their own faith. They lived and they died, as Jews before them had lived and died through the generations. They were not weakened by doubts or dual loyalties. They were Jews, psychologically prepared for martyrdom by centuries of Jewish experience, including their own experience in the lands where they lived prior to the Nazi invasions. And those of them who survived the Nazi holocaust, emerged more dedicatedly Jewish than ever before.

The experience of the Soviet Jew was infinitely more tragic and poignant. After years of painful economic, social, and psychological adjustment imposed upon him by the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet Jew had long since come to think of himself as a full-fledged Soviet citizen, in no way different from any other Soviet citizen. He was a Soviet man. His life was a Soviet life. His loyalties were exclusively Soviet loyalties. His interest in the Jewish past, or in Jewish communities beyond the Soviet borders, or in the perpetuation of his Jewish identity was at its lowest ebb, for he felt completely secure in his identification with the mighty Soviet world about him—not with Russia, or the Ukraine, or Bielorussia, or any other individual Soviet republic, but with the Soviet Union as a whole. Indeed, his was the purest kind of Soviet patriotism. He was the Soviet patriot par excellence.

Suddenly came the Nazi invasion. And if he was in an area overrun by the Nazis, or if he knew what was happening there, as

he surely did, he came face to face with the shattering discovery that, irrespective of his own or his non-Jewish neighbors' feelings about his Jewishness, his being a Jew, if only by birth, if only by name, if only by "blood," made all the difference in the world with regard to his chances for survival. The Soviet Ukrainians, the Soviet Bielorrussians, the Soviet Russians, his non-Jewish neighbors and friends and fellow-workers, if they kept quiet and obeyed, could and did live and work even under the Nazis, humiliating and heartbreaking as that was. Not so with him. No matter what he did or did not do, he was a pariah, condemned to annihilation.

There are no end of Soviet-Yiddish stories and poems illustrating this point. I will cite only one. There is the touching story by S. Levin, of the Jewish soldier, a collective farmer from the Jewish national region in the Crimea, who, caught behind the German lines, wanders in search of a guerilla band he might join. In the meantime, hungry and weary, he stops off at the hut of a Russian farmer, offering the peasant woman to do some chores for her in return for food and a place to rest. The woman, quite embarrassed, asks him what his nationality is. "I am of Soviet nationality," says the soldier simply. "No, I don't mean that," says the woman stammeringly. The soldier finally surmises what she is driving at. "I am a Jew," he says. The woman declines his offer, explaining that she has no prejudices at all, quite the contrary, but the Germans had issued an order imposing the death sentence on anyone who gave refuge to a Jew. The soldier tries a few more farmhouses with similar results. Finally, the thought occurs to him to utilize his knowledge of the Tartar language and his swarthy looks. He destroys all his papers, and applies to the next farm house as a Tartar. Now he has no trouble, and is gladly taken in. Later he joins a guerilla band.

If the Soviet Jew had thought before that there was security in Soviet citizenship, that there was something unique about being a Soviet Jew, he now, in his heart of hearts, knew better. He was like all other Jews the world over, suffering the same indignities and pains and insecurities. His being Soviet was secondary to his being a Jew, a son of the Jewish people, the same Jewish people that had been hounded and driven and slaughtered through the centuries. To be a Soviet Jew was no different from being a German, Czech, or Serbian Jew. He was a Jew. And his suddenly awakened feeling of a common Jewish experience, and history, and destiny now rose above all geographical and political and class boundaries and embraced every Jew, everywhere. He was a Jew!

Jewish consciousness, Jewish national pride flared up with unprecedented violence. Even wholly Russianized Jews, like Ehrenburg, now proclaimed their Jewishness in words of fiery eloquence. Yes,

if the Russians and the Ukrainians and the others, shaken by the war and Germanic claims to superiority, turned to their respective national saints and heroes for inspiration and guidance, why not the Jews? And, naturally, the Maccabees, and Barkochba, and all the great national heroes in the Jews' millennial history came to life again in many a Soviet-Jewish heart and in many a Soviet-Yiddish poem, story, and novel.

Yiddish literature of those days is virile, aggressive, patriotically Soviet, and above all, militantly Jewish. Its very abhorrence of anti-Semitism, German or Russian, is expressed in terms of both socialist humanism and Jewish self-esteem. The Jewish writer does not take anti-Semitism supinely. Out of a hundred Yiddish writers at the front, 45 died in battle, fighting Hitlerism. And when they used their pens, they were no less militant.

It should be noted, as previously mentioned, that the Soviet government, set as it was on only one thing, victory, did not at first discourage this revival of Jewish nationalism. Indeed, it was under direct government sponsorship that the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was formed in Moscow. And it was with government encouragement that this Committee established contact with Jewish communities and organizations in the non-Soviet countries. Prominent Soviet Jews, like the famous Yiddish poet Itzik Feffer and the no less famous Yiddish actor-producer Scolomon Mikhoels were dispatched abroad to whip up feeling against the Nazis among their fellow Jews, regardless of the latter's class or political ideology. Indeed, in their speeches in this country, one almost caught echoes of the old Yiddish refrain: *Wos mir seinen seinen mir, ober Yidden seinen mir*—what we are, we are, but Jews we surely are. And it was in this country that Feffer recited his unforgettable Jewish credo, the poem "*Ich Bin a Yid.*"

However, by the spring of 1944, when victory over the Nazis was virtually assured, the Soviet authorities began to feel a little troubled about the strange paths Jewish nationalism in the USSR was taking. There were even openly expressed *Zionist* sentiments to be found in Soviet-Yiddish literature. That was going a little too far. The Jews had to be warned.

They were warned. On April 2, 1944, at the Third Plenary Session of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR, Shakhno Epstein, spokesman of the Communist Party and Responsible Secretary of the Committee, included in his report the following exceedingly significant remarks:

In the Soviet Union where exploitation of man by man has been done away with once and for all, there neither is nor can

be any basis for anti-Semitism. This everyone must understand and remember. If the war, as a result of the revival of the as yet unuprooted vestiges of the dark past among certain of the most backward strata of the population, has called out certain kinds of abnormal phenomena, this under no circumstances should be taken as a basis for generalization or exaggeration, for magnifying their significance or influence. All such generalizations and exaggerations play into the hands of the enemy—they depress the spirit, they nourish defeatism, they induce moods of desperation.

We must not shut our eyes to the fact that the Jewish milieu, under the impact of the unspeakable fascist brutalities, has produced not a few snivellers. This finds expression even in the creative work of some writers. Subjectively, these people are loyal Soviet citizens, but objectively, failing to grasp the real meaning of the grandiose events, living only by their emotions, they, by their whining, depress the spirit of those around them, and thus cause enormous harm.

One of the essential tasks of our Committee is to wage relentless war against all such unhealthy, narrowly nationalistic moods. We must expose these moods, and must extirpate all snivelling and whining in our midst.

Here, then, was official recognition of the fact of the revival of anti-Semitism "among certain of the most backward strata of the population," but coupled with it was a warning against "moods of desperation," against "unhealthy, narrowly nationalistic moods." Epstein cautiously broached the question of Jewish loyalty, weighing *subjective loyalty* against *objective disloyalty*, a question which is quite obviously central in the whole recent storm over the Soviets' treatment of the Jews.

In other words, to a perceptive person on the scene, especially to one habituated to see things from the official Soviet point of view, the roots of the Soviet-Jewish troubles we are now witnessing were discernible as far back as the spring of 1944: the growth of popular anti-Semitism and the concomitant growth of Jewish nationalism. Epstein sought to minimize the anti-Semitic threat in order to discourage the rising tide of Jewish nationalism. But his effort, pathetically quixotic, was doomed to fail. Circumstances beyond anyone's control, vast historic forces, operated in the opposite direction. Nothing that anyone in the USSR might have said or devised at that particular moment, not even Stalin himself, could have brought a halt to the ever rising tides of both popular anti-Semitism and Jewish nationalism. They were in the cards.

PART II

The Question of Loyalty

Russo-Jewish relations in the USSR, already abnormally sensitive toward the end of World War II, became aggravated still further with the outbreak of the Cold War and particularly after the birth of the United States-oriented state of Israel.

The new factor that now emerged was that of Jewish loyalty.

The experience of the war against the Nazis had made the Soviet government touchy on the general question of minority loyalties. It will be recalled that in several border republics occupied by the Germans considerable sections of the non-Russian populations collaborated with the enemy. The discovery of these defections came as a terrible shock. The manner in which the Soviet authorities dealt with the transgressors had been foreshadowed in the handling of the Volga German Republic earlier in the war: the Republic had been abolished and the population moved to Siberia. Later, the Chechen-Ingush, the Crimean-Tartar, the Kalmyk Autonomous Republics, and the Karachi Autonomous Region received similar treatment. Altogether, for their disloyalty four major and several minor nationalities were expunged from the ethnographic map of the USSR.

It should be noted that this procedure signified a deviation from the traditional Soviet approach to social phenomena. Instead of inimical classes, whole populations—workers, peasants, intellectuals—were subjected to wholesale punishment by being deprived of their constitutionally guaranteed right to national existence. The justification? These people collaborated with the worst enemy of mankind. They betrayed not only their country, but humanity. The punishment meted out to them was a just punishment, calculated as a deterrent to others.

At the time these things happened, the Jews were not directly concerned. There was of course the potentially dangerous upsurge of Jewish nationalism, but it so happened that in the war against the Nazis, Jewish national sentiments did not conflict with the im-

mediate purposes of the Soviet government. Rather, they coincided. Therefore, despite the existence of popular anti-Semitism, the Jews' exemplary conduct during the war, both at the front and in the rear, made the loyalty issue inapplicable to them. Yet obviously what happened to the Volga Germans, the Crimea Tartars, and the others, could, under parallel circumstances, happen to other national minorities, including the Jews.

Experience with some national minority defections caused a modification in the official conception of the relations of the various Soviet peoples to one another and to the state. And this in turn led to a corresponding modification in the official conception of loyalty. Stalin's toast to the Russian people, quoted previously, gave implicit expression to this change. From a fraternal union of would-be equals, the USSR was now frankly transformed into a union of one Big Brother and a lot of lesser ones. The backbone of the state was deservedly Russia, the Big Brother, and loyalty to him on the part of the lesser brothers became synonymous with loyalty to the Soviet state as a whole. If a little brother could not accommodate himself to this relationship, it was his hard luck.

Conceivably, a long period of peace and prosperity for the Soviets would have gradually dissipated the internal fears and suspicions bequeathed by the war, and the question of loyalty would have ceased to be a vital one. But that did not happen. The end of the war did not bring peace. Instead of one world, two diametrically opposed worlds came into being. International suspicions and mutual recriminations mounted. Even the United Nations, the very symbol of One World, became hopelessly split. Instead of international understanding, deliberate efforts to create misunderstandings. Instead of peace, humanity was treated to the so-called Cold War and was being psychologically readied for a Hot War.

In this tense situation, aggravated by the threat of the atom bomb, no abatement of nationalism was possible, either in Russia or in the United States. American national self-righteousness was countered by Soviet-Russian self-righteousness, Soviet-Russian boasts by American boasts. The spiritual and intellectual atmosphere on both sides of the "curtain" grew ever more rigid, more intolerant. Even in this "land of the free," the question of loyalty, loyalty to the country, its institutions, its way of life, its cultural heritage, even its class structure, came to the fore with unprecedented urgency. In the Soviet Union, things were no better. It is not germane to this discussion to assess the causes and apportion the blame. What is important is to realize that once a situation of this sort had arisen, the universal compulsion toward uniformity of thought and reaction was well nigh irresistible. We have seen it happen in this

country; it happened in the Soviet Union too, and with more justification. After all, the Soviet Union had been wounded deeply by the war, and perhaps even more deeply by the war's aftermath.

Project against this cold-war background the Zionist-induced birth of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, and see the tremendous impact of this event on the question of Jewish loyalty in all countries outside of Israel, but especially in the Soviet Union. Stated baldly, the question as now posed was: Did the Jew owe political and spiritual allegiance exclusively to the state of his birth and his citizenship, or did he, regardless of citizenship, owe it, fully or in part, to the Jewish people and particularly to the newly formed Jewish State of Israel?

The Zionist View

The Zionist answer to this question, as gathered from official statements and acts, may be summarized as follows:

(1) The Jews of the world are *one* people, with a common historical background in Palestine, a common national experience of hatred and persecution, and a common national destiny back in Palestine.

(2) All Jewish communities, living as they do in an incurably inimical non-Jewish world, are responsible for each other.

(3) Since the birth of Israel, the ultimate moral and (when possible) political responsibility for the safety and welfare of Jewish communities everywhere rests on Israel.

(4) Israel is the home of the Jewish people; the Jews in all countries outside Israel are in *goluth*, in exile; this is true even of Jews who live in countries where they enjoy full equality of rights, but where "any ill wind may turn the wheel back and destroy the achievements of this emancipation with its equality of rights and face the Jews once more with the danger of persecution and humiliations." (*Zion*, monthly magazine published by World Zionist Organization, Jerusalem, August, 1951.)

(5) It is the moral duty of every Jew in the "stepmother countries," that is in *all* countries of the diaspora, whether capitalist or socialist, to return to the mother country, to Israel; or when return is impossible, at least to do everything in his power to strengthen and support it.

(6) The Hebrew language and culture are the official language and culture of Israel, hence they should enjoy primacy in the education and creative expression of Jews the world over—not Yiddish, not Ladino, not any other language or culture adopted by this or that Jewish group in centuries past, but Hebrew.

The Communist View

The Communist answer to the same question starts from different premises and comes to different conclusions. Summarized briefly, these are:

(1) The basic ills of contemporary society, including the ills suffered by all national minorities and colonial peoples throughout the world, stem from capitalism-imperialism.

(2) The cure for all these ills, including the ills suffered by the Jewish minorities everywhere, is to be found in international socialism, in the freedom and equality of the classless society which is superseding capitalism.

(3) The duty of the Jew, wherever he is, is to join his non-Jewish brothers in the common struggle for the establishment of socialism where it has not yet been established and for its preservation and defense where it has.

(4) Bourgeois in its very origin, Zionism, by diverting Jewish energy and material substance from the struggle for international socialism serves the ends of capitalism; it is separatist, divisive, and, like all bourgeois nationalisms, is, in the final analysis, reactionary and counter-revolutionary.*

* Since there seems to be a great deal of misunderstanding of the Soviet use of such phrases as "bourgeois nationalists" and "*Jewish* bourgeois nationalism," it may be advisable to reproduce the definition of the first term as given in the Soviet *Political Dictionary*, published in 1940. "*Bourgeois Nationalists*—Agents of the bourgeoisie who make use of national differences in order to fan hatred among the laboring masses of various peoples and thus insure the rule of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois nationalists blur the class struggle between the exploited and the exploiters in order to subject the toilers to the influence of the bourgeoisie. In the Soviet Union, thanks to the Leninist-Stalinist nationalities policy, national oppression has been eradicated. All the fraternal national Republics have voluntarily entered into one Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The aim of the bourgeois nationalists, direct agents of foreign intelligence services, is to undermine the fraternal unity of the toiling people of the USSR, and thus to make possible the return of the rule of landlords and capitalists, and to transform the Soviet Republics into colonies of capitalist states. The bourgeois nationalists (Petlurovites in the Ukraine, Mussavists in Azerbaijan, Dashnaks in Armenia, the Georgian Mensheviks, the Bielorrussian National Democrats, etc.) formed a *bloc* with the Trotskyite-Bukharinite agents of foreign intelligence services. They became a band of out-and-out spies and murderers, and were finally annihilated by the Soviet people's own intelligence service."

The term *Jewish bourgeois nationalists*, which is now much used and abused and which seems to have suggested to some an anti-Semitic odor, is nothing of the sort. It simply tells the non-Jewish reader that Zionism is a *Jewish* form of bourgeois nationalism as, say, Mussavatism is an *Azerbaijanian* form of the same ailment.

(5) The reactionary character of Zionism is embodied in its bourgeois leadership, its undemocratic Hebraic orientation, its political and economic alignment with Western imperialism, its contempt for the needs and aspirations of the Arab masses, and its consistently unfriendly and provocative attitude toward the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as well as toward the other lands where socialism is being built.

(6) The Zionist conception of a Jewish loyalty that transcends all territorial, racial, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, all class lines and social formations, is based on the utterly unscientific and unhistorical myth that all the different Jews of the world—white, black, and yellow; Yiddish-speaking, Ladino-speaking, Persian-, Arabic-, English-, Russian-, or Hebrew-speaking; Orthodox, Reform, and unreligious; exploiters and exploited; those in capitalist lands and those in socialist lands—are one people, one nation. This is a dangerous myth bearing the seeds of civic irresponsibility and disloyalty and, in critical times, of subversion and downright treason.

(7) A Jew in a socialist country who succumbs to Zionism is a double traitor—he betrays his country and he betrays socialism; indeed, he betrays the best hopes of humanity, and thus the best interests of his own Jewish group.

Reaction To The Jewish State

The Zionist-Communist clash of basic doctrine is of course as old as the two movements. But the questions involved are of broader implication and concern all Jews alike. They had been discussed, sometimes heatedly, for about fifty years. The birth of a Jewish state, and that state's claims to speak for all of world Jewry, raised these questions to a new plane. Questions of doctrine now became matters of immediate urgency. The question of loyalty now placed all Jews, on both sides of the "curtain," in a tragic dilemma, less urgent for the Jews who happened to live in countries with which Israel was to become associated in the Cold War, but excruciatingly so for the Jews who happened to live in countries on the opposite side, the Soviet side. For there, the Jews' natural sympathy for Israel meant sympathy for an avowedly inimical state: it meant courting the charge of disloyalty, giving ammunition to the anti-Semites, and, in the light of precedent, inviting the fate of the Volga Germans and the Crimea Tartars.

It will be instructive to contrast the reactions of American and Soviet Jewry to the problem raised by the emergence of the state of Israel.

Characteristically, even in the United States, where Jews enjoy the freedom not only to express their choice of allegiance but also to act on that choice, the question has proved exceedingly troublesome. The fact is that most Western Jews, including American Jews, have struggled with the subject of dual loyalty ever since Zionism first appeared on the world stage. According to Max Raisin's authoritative (and Zionist-oriented) *A History of the Jews in Modern Times* (New York, 1937 ed, pp. 407, 408) as far back as 1897, important sections of Western Jewry met Zionist propaganda with "open hostility." From the very outset, "Zionism was denounced as a movement of disloyalty to all lands in which Jews lived." Professor Ludwig Geiger of Berlin threatened the adherents of Zionism "with the loss of their German citizenship." In the United States, the prominent Jewish leader Dr. Emil G. Hirsh of Chicago "was but echoing the sentiments of his European colleagues when he denounced the Zionists as being on a level with the anti-Semites." Conferences of Rabbis (Reform and Orthodox) in many parts of the Western world denounced Zionist pretensions to Jewish loyalty in "bitter terms," while Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, one of the leading American Rabbis in his day, went so far as to denounce all the adherents of Zionism as "traitors, hypocrites and fools."

At the present time the American group that is most consistent and vocal in expressing this awareness of the peril of dual loyalties is the influential Council for Judaism.

This council has flatly rejected all the "pretensions" of the state of Israel to Jewish loyalties outside Israel proper. According to the Council, Jews in this country are Americans of the Jewish faith, *not* Jewish nationals in American exile. The American Jew's national loyalty is to America, and America only. In the words of Lessing J. Rosenwald, President of the American Council for Judaism:

The American Council for Judaism is dedicated to the principle that Judaism is a religion—*not a nationality*, that Americans of Jewish faith expect, are entitled to, and generally receive, treatment in the American scene as individual citizens of the United States, not as a separate, distinct community. The Council contends—and we are convinced the overwhelming majority of Americans of Jewish faith also believes—that because they worship God as Jews neither the state of Israel nor any of its official representatives have any authority to speak for them. Israel is a foreign state like any other foreign state, and Americans of Jewish faith have no national attachment to it. . . . The roots of Americans of Jewish faith are deep in the soil of America." (*New York Times*, June 26, 1952.)

The very powerful American Jewish Committee is fundamentally of the same view. This Committee has long and consistently opposed the promulgation of Jewish nationalism in any shape or form. It has never accepted the concept of Jewish "exile" in this "land of the free"; and the emergence of Israel only confirmed the Committee in its ardent Americanism.

Even the Zionists of the United States seem to have recoiled from the grandiose pretensions of the Israeli Government, as well as from their own early principles. For one thing, an infinitesimal number of American Zionists, and virtually no important Zionist leaders, have emigrated to the Jewish homeland. Whatever the theory may be, Zionist action seems not to support the notion that it is the moral duty of every Jew, particularly every Zionist, to emigrate to Zion. More significantly, when at a conference of American Zionists held in Israel (the so-called Jerusalem Conference of 1950), the Israeli leaders demanded that the conference declare itself in support of the proposition that America was *goluth*, like any other part of the diaspora, the American delegates refused to go along. America, they said, was no exile; and the American Jews were not in exile. Moreover, when a few months later Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, pointing to this defection of the American Zionists, accused the American movement of having collapsed on the very day the state of Israel came into being, the Zionists' bitter outcries were directed not at the *substance* of Ben-Gurion's charge but at his manner, his lack of tact; they thus virtually acknowledged that Ben-Gurion's blunt and unpalatable words hit the nail on the head. Equivocation being no longer possible, the American Zionists were forced to own up that they viewed their Zionist obligations as limited only to helping the Jews in *other* countries to emigrate to Palestine and to helping Israel to maintain itself as a state; it was not their duty to urge American Jews to renounce America and leave for Israel. In short, even the Zionists, when the acid test came, could not get themselves to spurn the United States as a stepmother and embrace Israel as their real mother!

Nevertheless, the potential clash of loyalties does persist, and to some extent it doubtless affects most American Jews. At the same time, in the present international situation, it is not keenly felt here. Israel is on the American side in the Cold War, and Jewish preoccupation with Israeli affairs does not conflict with the Jew's love for America. Yet the possibility, if not the immediate probability, exists that the international position of Israel may change. Suppose Israel were suddenly to pass under the control of a coalition of the Soviet-oriented Mapam and Communist Parties. Inevitably the Jewish homeland would shift into the Soviet orbit. The attitude of

the American people and government toward Israel would inevitably change from friendliness to hostility. The Jews who placed loyalty to Israel above loyalty to America, the Jews who had been reckless enough to subscribe to the proposition that America was exile, would then find themselves in a wholly untenable position. They would be regarded as enemies, subversives. And if the international situation deteriorated still further, they might even find themselves, like our Japanese citizens in the last war, in concentration camps.

The Soviet Jews were not, of course, so free to express whatever sympathy they might have had for Zionism and Israel. Zionism, like anti-Semitism, had been declared counter-revolutionary and its propagation had been forbidden in the early years of Soviet power. During the NEP period (1921-1928), remnants of the movement subsisted precariously in the underground, but by the middle thirties, due to the Government's splendid handling of the Jewish problem, Zionism lost whatever attractions it may have held for Soviet Jews, and it disappeared altogether, leaving scarcely a trace. However, the traumatic experience of the war, the shock of German and revived Russian anti-Semitism, and the re-established links with the nationalistic Polish-Lithuanian Jews, succeeded, as we have seen, in reviving Jewish nationalism in the USSR. The work of the Anti-Fascist Committee brought Soviet Jewry in sympathetic contact with Jews, including Zionists, in other countries and thus contributed to the re-emergence of a Jewish consciousness that transcended territorial and ideological boundaries.

Yiddish-Soviet writing in the postwar period was saturated with nationalism, a nationalism that sought to embrace all the Jews of the world, past, present, and future. The Zionist idea of "one people," one culture, one destiny was gaining a firm hold in the Yiddish publications. Some Yiddish writers were aware of the perils involved, they even expressed it in print, but the trend gathered momentum, and couldn't be halted. In this respect, the plans for 1949 of the Yiddish publishing house in Moscow, drawn up in 1948, are most revealing. They included Yiddish translations of the Old Testament, of parts of the Talmudic literature, of the Midrash, and of a great deal of Sephardic (Spanish-Hebrew) literature. Among the 150 titles projected for the year were *Jewish Holidays* by Altschuler, *Baruch Spinoza* by Bergleson, and *Reubeni* by Belesky. Nothing like that had happened in the thirty years of Jewish life under the Soviets. The bridges to the Jewish past, the Jewish tradition, and the Jewish life outside the Soviet Union, destroyed in 1917, were being rebuilt now with unprecedented fervor. And all the time, enthusiasm for the heroic struggle which the Palestinian Jews were waging against perfidious Albion grew by leaps and bounds.

Then in 1948, came the news that an independent Jewish state was established in the Holy Land, a real state recognized as an equal in the councils of nations! Could anything be more thrilling to Jews whose memories of the Nazi horrors were still fresh, whose wounds were still bleeding, and whose resentment was still hot against the anti-Semites in their immediate surroundings? The thrill was all the greater in view of the decisive diplomatic support which the Soviet government, despite its long-held theories, had given the Israel project in the United Nations, and the military support it had allowed to reach Israel, through Czechoslovakia, to meet the first Arab onslaught.

This seeming reversal in official Soviet attitudes created a vast confusion in the Soviet-Jewish mind. How could the Jews know that their government was engaged in a complicated diplomatic maneuver in the Middle East? How could they suspect that already then the Israeli government was committing itself irrevocably, though not yet openly, to the anti-Soviet side? How could they foresee that in a comparatively short time the two governments would be at loggerheads in the United Nations and elsewhere? How could they guess that less than five years later Israelis would hurl a bomb into the Soviet legation at Tel Aviv and the Soviet government would break off diplomatic relations with Israel? They could not know, nor foresee, nor guess. They were allowed to mistake appearances for realities and to let their hopes, dreams, and enthusiasms pass all bounds. All foreign correspondents in Moscow reported the wild scenes of rapture enacted by huge throngs of Moscow Jews when the Israeli legation first arrived there. Thus Edmund Stevens, Moscow correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, subsequently reported his observations as follows:

With the State of Israel an accomplished fact, Soviet policy-makers saw a chance to gain a foothold in the Middle East. Accordingly, Israel received a favorable press, and party lectures were organized on the subject.

After one such lecture in Moscow, a man in the audience got up and asked the speaker how Jews wishing to emigrate to Israel should make their applications. Instead of answering, the speaker launched into a violent tirade, saying that such a question was unworthy of a loyal Soviet citizen who should prize his birthright too much even to think of wanting to emigrate, and that the very idea was treasonable. Others in the audience rallied to the questioner's support: Had not Soviet citizens of Polish and Czech extraction been allowed to leave under repatriation agreements with the respective countries? Why not a similar agreement with Israel?

When members of the Israel legation, headed by Mrs. Golda Myerson, reached Moscow, they received a tremendous spontaneous ovation from the local Jews, first at the synagogue, then under the windows of their Metropol Hotel rooms—something without precedent in Soviet history. Immediately the legation was flooded with inquiries about how to get to Israel. (*Christian Science Monitor*, January 10, 1950.)

It was all an illusion, destined to be dispelled very soon indeed! The "tirade" of the speaker, reported by Stevens, was a portent. So was the speed with which Ilya Ehrenburg, a Jew and a leading Russian writer, hastened, obviously on official inspiration, to publish an article in which he attempted, first, to give guidance to his misguided fellow Jews; second, to dissipate apprehensions among non-Jews; and, third, to scotch any possible anti-Semitic propaganda which the Moscow demonstrations might generate. On the whole, Ehrenburg's attitude was no more and no less than a Soviet counterpart of the public attitude taken by most American Jews on this matter. He rejected the Zionist notion of *one people*, by saying that there was no such thing as "a Jewish nation internationally." He asserted that the Soviet Jews, unlike the Jews in the capitalist countries, were "citizens of a socialist society," united "by comradeship in arms" with the whole Soviet people, and bound "by the graves of the loved ones" to "every inch of Soviet soil." And he asserted the Soviet Jew's undivided loyalty to the Soviet Union and to socialism.

But the damage was done. Nothing Ehrenburg might say or do could prevent the inevitable consequences.

The Muscovites were stunned. The authorities were shocked. The Jews, albeit a minority of them, but an impressive and articulate minority, stood exposed as carriers of divided loyalties. An examination into Jewish cultural activities, particularly those conducted in Yiddish, revealed the incredible extent to which nationalist aspirations tinged with Zionism lay imbedded in them. And examination of the activities of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee revealed yet graver sins, particularly the maintenance of underground contact with various Jewish organizations, including Zionist ones, abroad. It was discovered, further (this is admitted by Harry Schwartz in the *New York Times*, January 26, 1953) that with the connivance of some Jews in the Committee, foreign Zionists operated an underground railroad in the Soviet Union during the years 1945 and 1946. "This railroad," Schwartz reported, "smuggled several thousand Jews out of the Soviet Union and Soviet-occupied territory so they could go to Palestine."

The authorities were now angry, all the more so since in official thinking Zionism had long since come to be considered a dead issue in the Soviet Union. So dead, indeed, that in 1940, the Soviet Political Dictionary did not even deign to mention Zionism, either under a separate heading or as one of the illustrations accompanying the definition of the phrase "Bourgeois Nationalists." But no matter how shocked and angry, the authorities nevertheless refrained from bringing the whole issue out into the open, fearing, it seems, that a widespread discussion of Jewish loyalty might provide additional fuel to the popular anti-Semitism which conditions beyond anyone's control had tended to revitalize in the country. Ehrenburg's article was the only thing that appeared in the press, and that article was calculated to allay suspicions and apprehensions.

But on the quiet the government moved swiftly and ruthlessly, following in many respects the precedent set in the handling of Volga Germans, Crimean Tartars, and the other dissolved nationalities. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was peremptorily disbanded and some of its leaders, including (according to rumor) the Yiddish poet Itzik Feffer, were arrested. Yiddish newspapers, publishing houses, theaters, and schools were discontinued. All the Yiddish writers and other cultural workers were removed from the scene, without anybody's knowing their whereabouts. In a quiet way, all references to Yiddish literature disappeared from textbooks and anthologies. The excellent magazine, published in Russian, *The Friendship of Peoples*, which heretofore frequently featured translations from Yiddish, discontinued offering such translations.

Also, without any publicity, Jewish employment in the sensitive fields of international trade and diplomacy, fields which afforded opportunities for contact with outside Jews, was reduced to a minimum. And there is circumstantial evidence that some control was imposed on mail going from Soviet Jews to their relatives and friends abroad.

Simultaneously, an *open* campaign was launched against "bourgeois nationalism" and "rootless" and "homeless" cosmopolitanism, the latter also being characterized as "bourgeois." In this campaign, individuals of various nationalities were assailed, but a disproportionate emphasis seems to have been placed on alleged transgressors of Jewish nationality, especially if they functioned in non-Jewish fields (Russian, Ukrainian, Bielorussian). To be sure, the word *Jewish* was never mentioned. But when the name did not reveal the transgressor's nationality (many Jews in literature had adopted Slavic names) parenthetical insertions of the original Jewish names did.

For the first time Jews abroad now began to voice charges of *official* anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Most of these charges

were based on evidence provided by the campaign against "bourgeois nationalists" and "rootless cosmopolitans." Understandably, too. Here was an *open* campaign, carried on vigorously in the official Soviet press with obvious governmental approval, yet the anti-Semitic overtones in the campaign were clear and undeniable, and without precedent in official Soviet polemics. Kholodov (Myerovich), Yakovlev (Holtzman), Yasny (Finkelstein), Izbach (Itzik Bachrach)—that was a new style of attacking ideological deviators. And when these underhanded attacks were accompanied by such tell-tale epithets as "homeless" and "rootless" the anti-Jewish animus was beyond dispute. How else than as a deliberate incitement of anti-Jewish passion could one interpret articles, written by Russians, which accused prominent critics bearing Jewish names—Altman, Gurvich, Trauberg, Bleiman—of "loathing everything Russian," of "mocking the Russian people, the Russian man, the Russian national traditions," of "vilifying Russian art," of "holding up to ridicule the national forces of our culture and servilely expressing delight in American plays and motion pictures."

The Soviet government never bothered answering the charge or explaining what lay behind this disturbing departure from established Soviet tradition. It was hardly surprising therefore that the charges persisted even after the anti-cosmopolitanism campaign came to an end. And recently they seem to have found further confirmation in the Slansky trial (for which the Soviet Union was widely held responsible), the charges of heinous crimes against the nine Moscow doctors (although only six of them are Jews), and the apparent emphasis on Jewish names in the current purge of corrupt bureaucrats.

Even with the best will in the world, how indeed, can one possibly remain undisturbed when a Soviet newspaper, the *Ukrainian Pravda* (Kiev), in editorializing on a recent exposure of a series of financial crimes in Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, and Voroshilovgrad, permits itself to proclaim the "profound hatred of the people" which "all these Kahns, Yaroshevskys, Greensteins, Pers, Kaplans, and Piljakovs" have "aroused." Granted that all these Kahns, Greensteins, Kaplans, et al, were crooks. But, surely, among the forty million Ukrainians there must have been plenty of Ivanenkos, Pavlenkos, and Kondratenkos who were not a bit better. Why the apparently invidious selection of Jews? And why the apparently reckless incitation of "profound hatred" among the Ukrainian people, a people with old anti-Semitic and pogromist traditions, a people that had only recently been exposed to Hitlerite indoctrination?

Were this the only evidence at one's disposal, only one conclusion would be possible: Since 1948 the Soviet leadership, disgusted

with the Jews' divided loyalties and fearing Jewish defection in case of a war, has turned anti-Semitic.

Evidence Against the Thesis of Official Anti-Semitism

But there is a plenitude of other evidence which, while confirming official Soviet uneasiness about nationalist-Zionist Jews, negates the thesis of official anti-Semitism, that is, that the Soviet government as such has turned on all Jews, persecuting them, discriminating against them, and inciting popular hatred for them, simply because they *are* Jews.

(1) Jewish synagogues continue to operate in all centers where there are enough religious Jews to support them.

(2) A disproportionate number of Jews continue to occupy important positions in all fields of political, economic, and cultural endeavor. Celebrated Russian-writing Jewish poets like Antokolsky, Selvinsky, Svetlov, and Vera Inber are as popular and honored now as they ever were in the past. The same is true of Ehrenburg and Zaslavsky in journalism. The same is true of a host of famous Jewish novelists, musicians, conductors, scientists, chess players, industrial managers, and so on without end. On the recently elected Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR there are three prominent Jews—Kaganovich, Mekhlis,* and Rayzer.

(3) Among the people who have received Stalin prizes in the various arts and sciences there has been a disproportionate number of Jews, an average of about thirteen percent, whereas the proportion of Jews in the entire Soviet population is only a little over one percent.

(4) Russian and Ukrainian literature since 1948 has produced not one negative Jewish image. On the contrary, every Jewish character in the literature produced by non-Jews during these years, has been, if anything, a little too good, too patriotic, too disciplined, too devoted to duty! There is, for instance, the popular Soviet novel *Far From Moscow*, by Vasili Azhaiev, in which one of the two central heroes is a Jewish Communist leader in the Far East, by the name of Zalkind. He is one of the most appealing Jewish characters in all of literature. This novel, written, I repeat, by a non-Jew, was published at the beginning of 1949 and received the Stalin Award for Literature in April of the same year. Needless to say that a novel that receives the Stalin Award is assured an enormous circulation in the USSR. Why an allegedly anti-Semitic government should

* As this article went to press, Mekhlis died of a heart attack. He was given a State funeral, attended by such huge throngs that traffic in downtown Moscow was tied up. (*New York Times*, February 16, 1953.)

publish, honor, and popularize a work of fiction which cannot but dispose the Soviet reader favorably to the Jew is a mystery. And another example is the novel *Youth*, published in 1950. In this novel the central character is a most sympathetic and devoted young Communist, a Jew bearing the unmistakably Jewish name Aaron Itskovich. It is worth noting that the creator of this fine Jewish character is a Ukrainian, Alexander Voichenko.

(5) Jewish writers who have abandoned Yiddish and turned to Russian or Ukrainian as their medium of expression have found no difficulty in publishing. The outstanding examples here are Emanuel Kazakevich who has turned to Russian and Khana Levin who has turned to Ukrainian. Kazakevich had achieved prominence as a Yiddish writer, but now he has gained all-Union fame as a Russian writer. His short novel *Star* was awarded a Stalin prize, and deservedly too.

(6) Practically all reports by recent Jewish visitors to the Soviet Union, mostly members of sympathetic delegations, are unanimous in denying any anti-Semitic atmosphere in the Soviet Union or any sense of insecurity among the Jews they met. The Labor member of the British Parliament, Sidney Silverman and his wife, on returning from the Soviet Union several months ago, vigorously denied the existence of any official anti-Semitism. This point is not conclusive, but it merits consideration.

(7) In almost all the countries in the Soviet orbit, Jews occupy important posts in the governments, and in disproportionate numbers. This is as true now as it was before the Slansky trial.

(8) In the Soviet Union, as in all the people's democracies, anti-Semitism is a crime against the state, explicitly written into the law, together with a prohibition against all forms of racism and discrimination.

In the face of such contradictory evidence, it seems reckless and irresponsible on the part of Zionist leaders and Israeli officials to charge the Soviet government with *official anti-Semitism*. Anti-Zionism, anti-bourgeois nationalism, and anti-cosmopolitanism are not *per se* anti-Semitic. There is plenty of sanction in Marxist philosophy and Soviet practice for opposition to Zionism and bourgeois nationalism; there is no such sanction for anti-Semitism.

The occasional anti-Semitic excrescences in the Soviet press? Horrifying, but inconclusive. A glance at earlier Soviet campaigns in which Jews were involved reveals that in every such campaign, whether against Nepmen, or Trotskyites, or for Jewish settlement on the land, or for Jewish proletarianization, as well as in the purge trials in the thirties, the hidden anti-Semites (and mark well, in the

Soviet Union they *are* hidden) invariably used the protective coloration of the revolutionary or patriotic phrase to carry on insidious anti-Jewish propaganda. This has always been an effective trick. And unquestionably the increased number of anti-Semites in the USSR since the war has made the renewed and intensified use of this trick in the official campaign against bourgeois nationalism or bourgeois cosmopolitanism all but inevitable.

It is quite likely that the same motivation operated in the trick of revealing the original Jewish names of the intellectuals under attack. Since about the middle thirties it had come to be regarded as distinctly bad form for forthright Soviet people to change their names in order to conceal their national derivation. It was a compromise with prejudice, objectively justified perhaps in tsarist days, but not in a socialist society where all nationalities were regarded as absolutely equal. Furthermore, in the past it was only the bourgeois elements that tended to change their names, never workers or peasants (except for purposes of revolutionary expediency). The hidden anti-Semites made use, for their own evil ends, of this widespread objection, even among Jews, to the changing of names. Their ostensible target was not the Jewishness of the people they attacked, but their "bourgeois rootlessness," their lack of Soviet forthrightness, their lack of spiritual substance, their cultural homelessness, their superficiality. They were, so to speak, neither Russians nor Ukrainians nor Jews nor anything else; they were without spiritual ancestors; they were all too facile in thrilling to any foreign, usually bourgeois, fad or fashion, whether the source was Jewish or non-Jewish; they were no good, and, incidentally they were Jews! Here too the hidden anti-Semite sought to confuse the official line with his own, and often succeeded.

The piece in the *Ukrainian Pravda* mentioned above sounds definitely as if it were written by a masked anti-Semite, counter-revolutionary, and wrecker. Such things have happened in the Soviet past, and their authors were later brought to book. Quite obviously, they are happening again, and it is not at all unlikely that the outcome will someday be the same.

Most difficult to accept is the sudden suppression of Yiddish as a cultural medium. Yet even in this case closer examination suggests many mitigating reasons, ideological, historical, and political.

Space does not permit detailed analysis. Briefly, it may be pointed out that Socialist thinkers, from Marx to Stalin, never regarded the survival of every nationality, of every national language and tribal dialect, as an *absolute* desideratum. Quite the contrary, all of them, without exception, saw socialism as providing the free

atmosphere in which there would be an ever accelerating trend toward the interpenetration and assimilation of peoples, languages, and cultures, with the peoples that were numerically the weakest and culturally the least viable, succumbing first to the universal assimilative process. In 1925, Stalin said:

Undoubtedly, some nationalities may, and even certainly will, undergo a process of assimilation. Such things have happened before. But the point is, that the process of assimilation of some nationalities does not preclude, but rather presupposes, the opposite process of the strengthening and developing of a number of powerful nationalities, for a partial process of assimilation is the result of the general process of development of nationalities.

And in 1950, in his discussion of *Marxism in Linguistics*, Stalin, citing historical evidence, pointed out that "in the process of hybridization, one of the languages usually emerges victorious. . . . That is what happened, for example, with Russian, with which the languages of a number of other peoples blended in the course of historical development, and which always emerged victorious."

How does this apply to Yiddish?

There can be little doubt but that Yiddish, both as the everyday language of the Jewish masses and as a cultural medium, has been historically doomed, everywhere. It started to die the moment Jews came out into the world from beyond the ghetto walls. It died in Germany more than a century ago. It is dying in the United States, where at present the largest concentration of Yiddish speaking Jews lives, but where the younger generation is wholly English speaking. It has been officially condemned to death in Israel, the Jewish homeland. And it had been declining rapidly in the Soviet Union before the war, when Jewish concentration in the townlets of the old Pale had come to an end and when the Jews had spread through the vast land, settling in localities where there were no established Jewish districts or neighborhoods, and hence, no opportunities for communal Jewish life, for Yiddish schools, or other cultural activities.

By the end of the '30s the Soviet-Jewish youth had on the whole ceased to be Yiddish speaking. The number of students in the Yiddish schools had shrunk to about 60,000. The readership of the Yiddish press had shrunk to the vanishing point. The number of young people entering the fields of Yiddish literature and dramaturgy was nil, while audiences in the Jewish theater had fallen catastrophically. Altogether, only a small inbred middle-aged group of professional *Yiddishists* had remained to carry on, but they could not have lasted long. There can be little doubt but that had it not

been for state financing, most of the Yiddish cultural undertakings would have collapsed as long ago as the end of the '30s.

The absorption of Yiddish-speaking Polish-Lithuanian Jews and the upsurge of Jewish nationalism during the war brought about something of a revival in Yiddish activities. But even so, a small part of Soviet Jewry was involved, mainly the *Yiddishist* intelligentsia which had a vested emotional (and economic) interest in perpetuating something which in reality was doomed, especially after the Nazis had destroyed the fountainhead of all Yiddish life and culture—about six million Yiddish-speaking East European Jews, and hundreds of Jewish schools, libraries, theaters, synagogues, and other cultural institutions. By the time the Soviet government administered the *coup de grâce* to Yiddish, the Russian language and culture had irretrievably captured the overwhelming mass of the Jewish population in the USSR. Without in the least condoning the brutal suddenness of the surgical operation, we must nevertheless recognize that it represented not a violation but a deliberately accelerated culmination of a long and irreversible historical process. Since most of the Yiddish cultural activities were financed by the government, all the government did was withdraw its financial support, and the whole thing came silently down, creating scarcely a ripple in the Soviet Union. As previously pointed out, the immediate cause for this operation was, in the words of two prominent Soviet-Yiddish critics, (M. Notovich and Sh. Roitman), the “hypertrophy of bourgeois nationalism,” (that is, Zionism) with which Yiddish cultural activity had become infected—a dangerous political ailment at a time of tremendous international tensions, at a time when ethnic harmony and socialist unity were the first prerequisites for the Revolution’s survival.

One more point in this connection. On October 20, 1951, the Yiddish daily in New York City, the *Morning Freiheit*, published a report by two Jewish members of a Canadian workers’ delegation that had spent 25 days in the Soviet Union. I do not know these delegates (David Biederman and Pearl Vidro) and cannot vouch for their accuracy, but in view of the fact that what they said confirms statements and rumors emanating from numerous other sources, I will quote them verbatim:

We had the particular pleasure to meet and have a special talk with the world-famous Jewish-Soviet publicist David Zaslavsky in the editorial offices of the *Pravda*. And we discussed particularly a number of questions concerning Jewish life in the Soviet Union. In the course of the discussion Zaslavsky said the following:

“You have travelled in our great country, you have seen everything with your own eyes, and I am certain that nowhere

did you find any signs of anti-Semitism. You must have come across a great number of Jews at various enterprises who have distinguished themselves in this or that field with their contribution to the country and the building of socialism. You saw that in our country it is impossible even to imagine any kind of discrimination—this is a socialist country!

“Jews in our country can live their economic and cultural lives according to their own choice and wish.

“It is a lie that can only come from the *Forward* that the Soviet Government has abolished the Jewish Autonomous Region in Birobidjan, or that there is any thought of giving up Birobidjan, or that there are any plans to limit the development of the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidjan.

“In the Jewish Region there is a Yiddish press, Yiddish schools are functioning, the Yiddish theater is functioning, etc.

“There has been no change in the Stalinist national policy toward the Jews or toward any other nationalities in the Soviet Union.”

We report David Zaslavsky's words which simply confirmed what we had ourselves seen with our own eyes in the Soviet Union in general and which leave no doubt concerning the truth about Birobidjan.

In the light of such reports, the picture of rampant anti-Semitism and complete denationalization peddled by the various rumormongers, pseudo-scholars, and Cold-War promoters seems somewhat overdone, to say the least.

At the same time, Zaslavsky's reported statement raises the question of what is really happening in regard to Birobidjan. Is it possible that Birobidjan, on whose continued existence almost every report emanating from the USSR agrees, is being built up as the sole center of Jewish national and cultural life? Is there anything to the rumor that most of the Jews from the newly annexed territories are being settled, forcibly or voluntarily, in Birobidjan? The attractiveness of such a solution from the point of view of the Soviet Government is obvious: it would remove the Jews from traditionally anti-Semitic areas; it would expedite their productivization by providing a firm agricultural and industrial base for their individual existence; it would afford them a continuous territory on which they could effectively develop their national life and culture; finally it would render them less accessible to the “bourgeois” influence of Jewish communities in western Europe, America, and especially Israel, and would thus remove the danger of dual loyalties.

All this, I admit, is conjecture. But it is not wild conjecture. The very obvious stress on Birobidjan contained in most rumors

and reports from the Soviet Union suggests not only the possibility but the probability that this is precisely what is presently taking place in Soviet Jewish life. We cannot be sure, however; and we won't be sure until peace is restored, all "curtains" are lifted, and contact with the Soviet peoples becomes once more a reality.

Conclusion

One may say that the Soviet leaders are too inflexibly doctrinaire in their understanding and treatment of the Jewish problem, that they have always underestimated the historic meaning of Zionism and the extent to which it *does* embody Jewish experience and hope. One may say that under the pressure of the Cold War they have allowed their disappointment and anger at the conduct of some Soviet Jews to express itself in draconian measures for which there was not enough objective justification; that if they had waited a little longer Soviet-Jewish enthusiasm for Israel would have evaporated, as the Jews discovered where the Israeli government stood in the Cold War. Finally one may say that the Soviet leaders unwisely confused a people and a people's movement with a government policy and government orientation which cannot but be temporary, that they should have borne in mind that the Israeli people will remain even when the present government and its leading party will have passed and been forgotten. There are many things in the recent Soviet handling of the Jews which can be deplored and criticized, but official anti-Semitism is scarcely one of them.

The Jewish problem in the USSR, bequeathed by the Hot War and aggravated by the Israel-Zionist position in the Cold War, is a tough problem, defying easy solutions. In attempting to solve it, the Soviet leadership has made and, likely, will continue to make mistakes, mistakes of which the anti-Semites inside and the anti-Sovieteers outside the Soviet Union have taken and will continue to take unconscionable advantage. One thing is certain: In these days of perilous tensions, those who indiscriminately, recklessly, often demagogically, persist in flaunting the unproved charge of *official* anti-Semitism against the USSR render no service to the Jews in the Soviet Union, in Israel, or anywhere else, and do grievous harm to the cause of peace, socialism, and international understanding.

Only the people are immortal. Everything else is transient.

—J. V. Stalin

ON TRIALS AND PURGES

BY THE EDITORS

Recent and current trials and purges in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe undoubtedly have many meanings, but first and foremost they mean that the leaders of the Soviet bloc are paying President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles the compliment of taking them seriously. For a long time, Eisenhower and Dulles have been preaching the doctrine of "liberation" of countries allied to the Soviet Union, and they have left no doubt that in practical terms this means a vastly intensified American policy of encouraging, financing, and supplying subversive movements looking to the violent disruption and overthrow of existing regimes.

Regimes do not quietly sit by and allow themselves to be overthrown. They fight back. And in so doing they not only strike down those who are caught "in the act"; they also warn and put under surveillance individuals and groups who are suspected of sympathizing with the enemy. If there was ever a universal law of political science, this is it. We need go back in history hardly more than a decade to convince ourselves that it applies to regimes of the most varied character—the British locked up Sir Oswald Mosely and many others under their Regulation 18B, the Soviet Union transported whole nationality groups from the path of the Nazi advance, the United States threw the Nisei population en masse into concentration camps.

Many people thought that these measures were unnecessary or too extreme, but no one was in any doubt as to why they were adopted. Why, then, should there be any misunderstanding about what is happening in the Soviet bloc? What kind of response did any one expect in that part of the world to Eisenhower's election and Dulles' appointment as Secretary of State?

Seen in this light, the anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish aspects of the trials and purges are all too easy to understand. Zionism, now embodied in the national state of Israel, claims jurisdiction over all Jews. And there is ample evidence that Israel commands if not the allegiance at least the sympathy of Jews everywhere—in the Soviet

bloc no less than in the United States. This is wholly intelligible and in no sense blameworthy. But in the context of intensified Cold War it cannot but have fateful consequences for the Jews in the Eastern countries.

Israel might like to be neutral in the Cold War; its spokesmen may even claim that it is. But the desires and claims of small nations mean little in the world of today. Israel is economically entirely dependent on American capitalism. Without the financial support of the United States government and wealthy American Jews, the Israeli economy would collapse overnight. The inevitable consequence is that Israel is firmly in the United States camp. It has, so to speak, been signed up for the duration and must do its bit to help win the Cold War.

But what can Israel do, it may be asked? The answer, unfortunately, is that it can do a good deal. Both directly through its own intelligence services—which, according to Hanson Baldwin (*New York Times*, January 29), are among the most efficient in the world—and indirectly through the sympathy it commands among Jews, Israel is in a position to furnish invaluable contacts and channels of communication in Eastern Europe. Very few people—not even the leaders of the Soviet bloc themselves—can know to what extent it is actually doing so,* but in such matters a threatened regime is pretty sure to suspect the worst—and to act on its suspicions.

All of this explains and justifies (in the only sense that such things can ever be justified) the violent anti-Zionism of the Soviet-bloc countries, the high proportion of Jews among those recently arrested or brought to trial, the special measures that have been taken regarding the Jewish communities. Given the worldwide sympathy of Jews for Israel and the dependence of Israel on American capitalism, these are tragic but inevitable byproducts of the Cold War.

Anti-Semitism, however, is an entirely different matter, and unfortunately there have been unmistakable signs of it in the Soviet-bloc countries in recent months. We are fully aware of the fact that the enemies of the Soviet Union have deliberately confused the issues and have vastly exaggerated these signs. We know that “the propagation of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt” (to use the words of the Soviet Constitution) remains a crime in the countries concerned, and that many of the leading statesmen are

* It follows, of course, that one must dismiss as ridiculous all the indignant denials that the apparatus of the Joint Distribution Committee is being used for espionage purposes. Intelligence services use whatever cover they can find, and they are not in the habit of asking the permission of presidents or boards of directors.

Jews. And yet the labeling of accused persons as "Jews," the repeated use of the phrase "Jewish bourgeois nationalist" instead of "Zionist," the listing of obviously Jewish names in connection with derogatory or contemptuous remarks—what are we to say of practices like this, which, if they occurred in any capitalist country, the entire Left would join in condemning as blatantly anti-Semitic? For our part, we do not believe that they are any more excusable in socialist countries.

Indeed, the very opposite is true. In its origins, anti-Semitism was one of the disgusting excrescences of feudalism. It was combatted by the bourgeoisie in its progressive heyday. But as the crisis of capitalism deepened, the bourgeoisie increasingly turned to anti-Semitism as an ideological bulwark of its threatened rule. Hitler, the hangman of German monopoly capitalism, finally made anti-Semitism into the undying symbol of all that is most cruel and corrupt and degraded in bourgeois civilization. On the other hand, the socialist movement has always spurned anti-Semitism as a wretched trap for the dupes of the ruling class; and socialists have felt it a source of pride and a reason for confidence in the future that Russia, turned socialist, immediately took the lead in blotting out this foul legacy of the past. If now even the slightest symptoms of anti-Semitism appear in the socialist countries we can only regard it as a matter of gravest concern to socialists everywhere. The pressures of the Cold War can certainly not be cited in extenuation or justification. As bearers of mankind's hopes for the future, the socialist countries have a special responsibility in dealing with their Zionist and Jewish problems—which are unfortunately real enough—to avoid anything that might even remind the world of the horrors that have been perpetrated in the name of anti-Semitism.

It is much too early to pass a final judgment. What has happened so far may appear in retrospect to have been bureaucratic excesses having no deeper significance. It is certainly still possible for the responsible authorities, responding to the healthy instincts of the working class both inside and outside the socialist countries, to put a stop to all manifestations of anti-Semitism. We are even encouraged to hope that they are already doing so. At least that could be the meaning of a story, inconspicuously tucked away on an inside page of the *New York Times* of January 29th, which began as follows: "A.D.N., East Germany's official news agency, reported today that in three separate trials persons who had 'slandered' Jews had received terms up to two years at hard labor."

This illustrates the standards of uncompromising hostility to anti-Semitism we have come to expect in every part of the socialist movement. Let us hope that all the socialist countries return to

them—quickly and unequivocally.

Soviet-bloc trials and purges, of course, raise many other questions. Are the accused guilty? If so, what drove them to act as they did? If not, why are they brought to trial and convicted? Why do they confess? Why are the leading figures so regularly condemned to death? These are but a few of the questions which anyone really concerned about the history of our times cannot avoid asking and trying to answer. They are important questions, because the way a person answers them may well play an important part in shaping his whole political attitude and behavior. And they are very tough questions, not only because so many of the relevant facts are hidden from view, but also because it is always extremely difficult for people living in one cultural environment to interpret correctly what is happening in another. We don't pretend to have any special information or even to have made an exhaustive study of the sources that are accessible in this country. But we have thought a good deal about these questions ever since they were first posed by the Moscow trials of the mid-thirties, and we have come to certain conclusions—conclusions which are tentative and subject to constant revision but which, taken together, seem to us to make sense.

First, it is necessary to distinguish between two kinds of trials. There are those in which obvious opponents of the regime are accused and convicted of plotting its overthrow, black marketing, violating foreign exchange laws, spying for foreign powers, and so on. There is no reason to doubt that such things happen, that the offenders are often caught, and that by and large the trials are perfectly straightforward criminal proceedings. There is nothing in the least mysterious about confessions in such cases. According to the traditional methods of Continental European jurisprudence, an exhaustive pre-trial investigation takes place in which the accused is confronted with all the incriminating evidence. If the investigation shows the suspect to be innocent, the case is dropped. Hence, practically speaking, the fact that a case is brought to trial shows that proof of guilt has already been established, and a confession means little more than that the accused does not deny it. The trial and conviction of Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary was an obvious case of this kind. The Cardinal made no bones about his hostility to the regime, and he admitted that he had been caught in activities designed to weaken or overthrow it.

But there is another class of cases, those in which leading Communists, holding top positions in the party and the government, are arrested and tried on a whole series of charges which normally include espionage and sabotage, attempting to restore capitalism, and plotting to turn the country over to a foreign power. Why do we

say that these cases are different? Clearly, not because of any difference of form. These cases, too, are conducted as ordinary criminal trials. The difference lies in the fact that here the accused are not obvious opponents of the regime, in fact they have but recently been responsible and trusted members of it.

Some people deny that this is a real difference. In cases of this kind, they say, the enemies of the regime have merely been cleverer. Instead of fighting it from the outside, they have wormed their way into it to overthrow it from within. But that is all. According to this view, trials of this kind—of which the Rajk, Kostov, and Slansky trials are the main examples in recent years—are to be interpreted in precisely the same way as the Mindszenty-type trial analyzed above.

The difficulty about this view has always seemed to us to be that it requires you to believe too much that is simply incredible. All of the key figures in trials of this second kind have been veteran members of the Communist movement, usually from the days of their youth. In most cases, they have suffered for their beliefs and activities in ways too numerous to detail. They have worked hard for the movement, usually at great personal risk, and have succeeded in gaining the respect and confidence of their comrades. No doubt, it is conceivable that a fanatical opponent of Communism or perhaps even an intelligence service operative could go through all this in the hope of some day being in a strategic position to strike a deadly blow. But he would have to be a very remarkable person, and the idea that every Communist Party has a considerable number of such people in its top echelon is too far-fetched to be taken seriously. The only alternative hypothesis would seem to be that the accused in cases of this kind started out as sincere revolutionaries but after their party had achieved success and they had won positions of honor and responsibility they changed their minds and sold out to the enemy. This seems even less likely than that they were disguised opponents from the beginning. Every movement has its careerists and potential turncoats (as we in this country know only too well), but they show their colors in time of adversity, not of success. There is simply no conceivable pattern of motivation which would satisfactorily account for widespread selling-out on the part of leaders of a regime already firmly established in power.

We are forced to the conclusion that this second kind of trial *is* different from the first kind. If we are to make sense of it we must stop trying to interpret it as an ordinary criminal proceeding and instead analyze it in political terms.

Turning in this direction, we immediately run into a ready-made theory. There is, it is said, a continuous struggle for power

going on in all Communist-controlled countries. It takes place among factions inside the Communist Party and naturally involves the top leaders. Every once in a while one group, feeling specially strong or specially threatened, pulls off what amounts to a coup by seizing its rivals and throwing them in jail. Then in order to justify what it has done it invents all sorts of charges, puts the victims through what amounts to a mock trial, and finishes by shooting or hanging them.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that this theory, in one or another of its many possible variants, is held by the vast majority of people in this country today. And yet it has an obvious and fatal defect: it completely fails to explain why they confess. Why should a person who has been framed stand up in open court and confess to a lot of monstrous crimes of which he is quite innocent? The proffered answers—mysterious drugs, the Slavic soul, and all the rest—serve only to underline the total inadequacy of this frame-up theory.

We conclude, then, that it is impossible to accept the view that the accused are simply “guilty as charged”—that is, that they are either enemy agents or ordinary turncoats—because that would imply a pattern of motivation which, while it might occur in a few abnormal cases, is incredible when attributed to a more or less steady stream of top Communist leaders over a period of years. But it is equally impossible to believe that the accused are simple victims of a frame-up, because that leaves a crucial element of the problem, the confessions, to be explained by alleged causes which are obviously either fraudulent or fantastic. The truth must be more complicated than either of these explanations would imply.

Let us approach the problem by a different route. Like all other governments, socialist governments are continuously faced with the necessity to choose between various possible courses of action. It stands to reason that those who have the responsibility of deciding do not always agree about what should be done. There must be discussions and debates going on all the time. How are they resolved?

There are several possibilities.

Differences may be ironed out and a policy acceptable to all may be agreed upon. This is probably the commonest case.

There may be one person who is looked up to and in the final analysis deferred to by all the others. Lenin was in such a position in the Soviet Union until his death, and Stalin has been since the late thirties.

If no single leader commands the full confidence (and hence

the loyalty) of all the others, more or less well-defined groups tend to form. One succeeds in making its policies prevail; the others try, singly or in collaboration, to bring about a change. Note that this is not a struggle for power in the vulgar sense in which that term is commonly used. It is rather a struggle over policy among those in power, and normally it is resolved by the course of events. Policies fail and are changed; or they succeed, turning opponents into adherents. The line-up alters; groups dissolve; the struggle subsides.

But this is not always the outcome. If the issues are basic, and *if success or failure will be decided only in the relatively distant future*, then lines of division may harden, groups may solidify, and a deadly serious political struggle may set in. This sort of political struggle developed twice in the prewar history of the Soviet Union: once in the twenties over the issue of world revolution versus socialism in one country, and again in the thirties over the rate of industrialization and collectivization.

It is characteristic of such a struggle that both sides should be passionately convinced that the whole future of the regime is at stake, and it is easy to see why those who are losing out should be driven to more and more desperate expedients in an effort to prevent what they can only regard as the threat of disaster. In this context, it is possible to understand acts which otherwise would be totally incomprehensible. A perfectly sincere revolutionary may feel that he is not only allowed but actually duty-bound to make alliances with enemies of the regime. His intention, of course, is to use them for his own ends, just as theirs is to use him. But if he fails, his intentions will not save him. Objectively, he is putting himself in the ranks of those who are working to overthrow the regime. Objectively, he becomes a part of a conspiracy, and he can hardly expect to escape responsibility for all its acts and purposes.

This is naturally the way the matter appears to the group which succeeds in winning the struggle and in putting its policies into effect. The losers have simply sold out and are playing a counter-revolutionary game. And when this is expressed in the legal language of criminal indictments, the principle that a person must be presumed to have intended the natural consequences of his acts is thoroughly and consistently applied.

But why do they confess?

Here we must remember that both parties to the political struggle are trained Marxists who are accustomed to judging people and acts, not by their intentions or their sincerity, but by what they actually accomplish. The losers, looking backwards, are likely to see the whole affair in much the same light as the winners. They can see that instead of using the enemies of the regime they were used

by the enemies of the regime. And since subjectively they remain revolutionaries, the only logical course for them is to confess and repent in the hope of undoing some of the harm they have done. This whole attitude was given classic expression in Bukharin's final statement to the court:

For three months I refused to say anything. Then I began to testify. Why? Because while in prison I made a reevaluation of my entire past. For when you ask yourself: "If you must die, what are you dying for?"—an absolutely black vacuity suddenly rises before you with startling vividness. There was nothing to die for, if one wanted to die unrepented.

This is the attitude of a Marxist who recognizes right up to the last that his responsibility to history is in no way cancelled by the mistakes, miscalculations, and failures of the past. A real enemy of the revolution and of socialism would use the prisoner's dock as a forum from which to denounce the regime and all its works. A framed man would repudiate his pre-trial confessions. Only a person who remains subjectively true to his principles but whom the political struggle has led into objective betrayal will confess and repent in open court.

Finally, why are the leading figures among the accused condemned to death? Partly, of course, as a deterrent to others. But there is an even more important reason. As long as there is a danger of war and invasion—and it must be remembered that all the big trials have taken place in periods of this kind—a deposed leader must be looked upon by the government in power as a potential Quisling around whom opposition and enemy forces would rally if the opportunity offered.

We have sketched a pattern of explanation which we think hangs together both logically and psychologically, and which, if we allow for all the possible variations of detail and emphasis, applies not only to the Moscow trials of the thirties but also to the postwar trials in the Peoples' Democracies. The issues at stake in the Soviet Union were, as already noted, socialism in one country versus world revolution, and the rate of industrialization and collectivization. In the recent cases, available evidence seems to indicate, they have been the nature of relations between the USSR and the smaller socialist countries, and the policy to be adopted in the face of the United States drive for world domination.

This is not the place to discuss these issues, but surely no discussion is necessary to demonstrate their importance or urgency. Moreover, there is ample evidence apart from the trials themselves that these issues have given rise to division and struggle within the

world Communist movement. Titoism proves it as regards the nature of relations between the USSR and the smaller socialist countries, and it seems reasonably clear that this was the basic issue in both the Rajk and Kostov cases (quite possibly also in the Clementis case). It is not so obvious that a struggle has been going on over the appropriate policy to be pursued in the face of the United States drive for world domination; but we have little doubt that this is the inner meaning of the split in the French Communist Party which led to the expulsion of Marty and Tillon, and that it accounts for Stalin's heavy emphasis (in his *Bolshevik* article published on the eve of the XIXth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party) on the inevitability of conflicts and wars among capitalist powers—an emphasis which must have been designed to counteract the views and policy recommendations of those who regard global war between the capitalist and socialist camps as inevitable, if not already under way. It is quite possible that some of the accused in the recent Czech trials, perhaps including Slansky himself, belonged to this group.

If we turn from the meaning of the trials to their conduct, we enter an entirely different realm. Here are no subtleties or niceties, none of the ambiguities which are so characteristic of real life. There are periods—as Americans are beginning to realize, perhaps for the first time since their own revolution—when the dividing line between opposition and treason is narrow and shifting, when caution shades over into sabotage and audacity into provocation. But for the state prosecutor all such dialectical relations are anathema. A criminal has nothing but base motives, intentions are always definite, actions unequivocal. Moreover, since the trials have the political function of discrediting the accused, the prosecution does its utmost to multiply the number of crimes which are supposed to have been committed and fills the record with defamatory statements and innuendoes. The conventions of the law and the exigencies of politics succeed in making an historical tragedy appear as a mixture of sordid crime and arrogant mendacity.

It is always painful in the extreme to read the reports of these trials, and this fact alone has doubtless discouraged many people from even attempting to understand their deeper meaning. Is it not a familiar experience after one of the trials to read in the liberal press that, whatever the truth or falsity of the accusations and confessions, the whole proceeding reveals that in the socialist countries regimes are based on deceit and violence, that the mere possibility of such happenings puts these regimes beyond the pale of humanity and morality?

We certainly would not deny that the trials give evidence of a systematic practice of deceit and violence, not only by the opponents of the regimes but also by the regimes themselves. But does this give us, does it give any one, the right to condemn them? The American ruling class—speaking through its preachers and professors, its judges and journalists—fairly screams at us that it not only gives us the right to condemn, it imposes upon us the sacred duty to condemn.

But before you exercise the right or accept the duty, stop a moment and think. Do you know of any regime in history that is *not* based on deceit and violence? Need we remind you of the foundations of the present regime in Britain, which we, along with many of our countrymen, consider to be in important ways the most democratic in the world? Need we remind you of the colonial slavery of hundreds of millions? Of the depopulation of Ireland? Of the stunting of whole generations of free-born British workers? Of the dozens of wars, large and small, which the British ruling class has waged in its own interests and at the cost of countless human lives?

Need we remind you of the foundations of the regime which makes its headquarters in Washington and which is leading a crusade to free the world of all traces of the socialist heresy? Of the way the native Indians were first tricked out of their land and then hunted down like wild beasts? Of the way the Negroes of Africa were kidnapped and enslaved to pick the cotton that brought wealth to a tiny minority? Of the Revolution and the Civil War and the two World Wars in which we have shown ourselves to be adepts in the art of mass slaughter, fratricidal and otherwise?

It would be comforting to be able to argue that all this is history, that the world is more civilized now and should apply higher moral standards than it used to. But every day's newspaper brings crushing evidence to the contrary. In the month following the trial and execution of eleven Czech Communist leaders, French gendarmes slaughtered more than fifty Moroccans who were demonstrating against French rule. Are Czech Communists to be weighed in a different moral scale from Moroccan workers? Or has the liberal press put the Fourth Republic beyond the pale of humanity and morality? How many *entirely innocent* North Koreans were burned or blasted to death by American airmen acting on official orders of the United States government during the period of the Slansky trial? No one knows exactly, but it would be safe to put the figure at many times eleven. What regime is spending billions of dollars a year in the development of bombs which, it is said, will make the bomb that killed 248,000 Japanese seem like a fire-

cracker by comparison? In which country, within the last few months, did a presidential candidate promise peace and immediately upon taking office set about spreading war?

But there is no need to multiply examples; to those who do not deliberately shut their eyes the facts are all too obvious. *The truth is that all regimes are historically based on and currently practice deception and violence.*

We have a right to hate violence, and, if we are prepared to draw all the consequences, even to condemn it. But we must remember that condemning violence means condemning all regimes impartially, not just some that don't practice violence according to our rules. It means in fact becoming a thorough-going pacifist and non-resister. Most of us respect such a person for his consistency and courage, but we know that pacifism, for all its admirable qualities, is a withdrawal from history, not a form of struggle for a better future.

We can, of course, judge regimes by the *quantity* of violence they commit. It obviously makes good sense to say, for example, that a Tamerlane, who drowned his world in blood, was worse than an Asoka, who, though gaining an empire by violence, is said to have governed it according to the principles of "non-violence" and "friendliness." The criterion is a hard one to apply in an age of universal violence like ours, but if it were possible to make the necessary quantitative measurements we venture to guess that the Soviet-bloc countries would come off pretty well in comparison to their "free-world" counterparts. Surely Greece has put to death more opponents of the regime in the years since World War II than any two of its Soviet-bloc neighbors. The fact that eleven Czechs were executed in December was given banner headlines all over the United States, but even the *New York Times* (February 5th) gave only six lines on an inside page to the following AP dispatch from Formosa:

Seven men convicted as Communist agents were executed here today. This raised to ninety-seven the number put to death since November 26.

And as regards the leaders of the two camps, it is certain that in the last eight years the United States has been responsible for killing a vastly greater number of human beings than has the Soviet Union.

We would not argue, however, that the quantitative question, even if it were possible to answer it with precision, is the crucial one. In the last analysis, those who hate violence must judge it by an entirely different standard—they must ask whether violence is used to perpetuate a state of affairs in which violence is inevitable,

or whether it is used in the interests of creating a truly human society from which it will be possible at long last to banish violence altogether.

So far as the United States and its allies are concerned, there is unfortunately no doubt about the answer. Our country is preparing to practice violence on a hitherto undreamed-of scale to preserve a social order which in the space of four decades has already produced the greatest orgy of violence in the whole long and violent history of the human race. Capitalism, the organization of society according to the barbaric principle of private profit, is the scourge of mankind; and violence designed to preserve it is doubly damned, once for itself and once for its purpose.

Those of us who have socialism in our bones, who believe that a truly human society can be erected only on the basis of common ownership and economic planning, must necessarily judge the violence of the socialist countries differently. We hate it, as we hate all violence; we would have vastly preferred to have the building of the new economy take place peacefully and painlessly, as it could have if the advanced countries had led the way. But history—which, as Friedrich Engels once said, is a most cruel goddess—decreed that the economic foundations of the society of the future must be laid in backward countries, not only without the assistance of the advanced countries but against their ruthless and implacable resistance. It was thereby rendered inevitable that the process should be difficult, painful, and violent. But the process does go forward—of that the majestic successes of the Soviet economy, despite all the strains and trials to which it has been subjected in these years of Hot and Cold Wars, is irrefutable proof—and the hopes of mankind for a better future go with it. For the first time in history we can say that violence is being used to protect regimes which are doing their utmost to create a society which will be able to dispense with violence. That makes all the difference.

We do not draw the conclusion that one must justify everything that happens in the socialist countries. The new society is being born under the most difficult conditions. It is, as Marx predicted it would be, “stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.” Its leaders are mere human beings, with limited equipment and working under terrific pressures. It is bound to commit stupidities, mistakes, excesses. And we think it is a service to the cause of socialism to say these things quite frankly, to criticize what seems to deserve criticism, to condemn what seems inexcusable.

The conclusion we *do* draw is that it is absolutely impermissible to denounce the socialist regimes as a whole. To do so is to reject the most promising venture on which the human race has yet em-

barked. As far as the socialist countries are concerned we would substitute for the old proverb "to understand all is to forgive all" a new one, "to understand all is to have hope for the future of humanity." Is there anything more important for Americans today?

One final word: A very large part of what is unattractive or ugly about the socialist countries is due to the fact that the American ruling class has never ceased to try to destroy them, and is now waging war on an ever-expanding scale for precisely that purpose. Does it not follow that only he has a moral right to criticize the socialist countries who does everything within his power to reorient American policy toward peace and coexistence?

(February 15, 1953)

The final nihilism is not the desire to subordinate everything to a given end but the desire to sacrifice one's self without having an end to believe in.

—E. H. Carr, in *New York Times Book Review*,
March 24, 1951

Prosecutors Told of Peril to Courts

Hear Subversives May Try to Clog Them by Appeals

—*New York Herald Tribune*, December 10, 1952

Always the troublemakers!

THE EDITORS

LEO HUBERMAN was formerly Chairman of the Department of Social Science at New College, Columbia University, columnist on the magazine *US Week*, and the first labor editor of the newspaper *PM*. He was Education Director of the National Maritime Union from 1942 to 1945 and later an editor with Reynal & Hitchcock. His books and pamphlets in the fields of economic history and labor have sold over half a million copies. Among his books are *We, the People* (a choice of the Left Book Club in England and the Book Find Club in America), *Man's Worldly Goods*, *The Labor Spy Racket*, *The Truth About Unions*, *The Truth About Socialism*.

PAUL M. SWEEZY was for more than ten years a member of the Harvard University Economics Department, where he taught courses on American corporations and socialism. During the New Deal period he worked for the National Resources Planning Board, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Temporary National Economic Committee, especially investigating American Big Business and monopoly. From 1943 to 1945, he served with the OSS in England, France, and Germany. He is a frequent contributor of articles and reviews to scholarly magazines and popular journals. His books include *The Theory of Capitalist Development* and *Socialism*.

From a professor in Bombay, India:

"These days it is virtually impossible to perform any effective service (or disservice) to society, without doing it under the aegis of one of the major political parties, whether of the Right or of the Left. But your penetrating and lucid analysis of the situation without any sloganeering and your unbiased advocacy seem to me absolutely priceless. Whatever the net effect of your writing, you have at least done your best to serve a crying need of our times."

Monthly Review

is entirely independent of partisan or political control. Its objectives are the dissemination of a true understanding of socialism, and the reporting of dependable news of the movement toward a socialist society which is steadily spreading over the face of the globe. We call your attention to the accompanying statement of policy which appeared four years ago in Vol. 1, No. 1.

Where We Stand

During the early years of the 20th century the subject of socialism was widely and eagerly discussed in the United States. Eugene V. Debs, socialist candidate for president, polled close to 1,000,000 votes in 1912—the equivalent of approximately 3,000,000 votes in the 1948 election. The popular interest in socialism was reflected in an enormous sale of socialist literature. *The Appeal to Reason*, a weekly, had a circulation of more than 300,000 for several years; pamphlets by Oscar Ameringer were reprinted in editions of hundreds of thousands; books by Bellamy, Upton Sinclair, and Jack London ranked with the best-sellers of the day.

This widespread interest in socialism has declined to such an extent that today it would probably not be an exaggeration to say that for the great majority of Americans “socialism” is little more than a dirty word. This is an extraordinary situation because it occurs at the very moment that a large proportion of the rest of the world is moving toward socialism at an unprecedentedly rapid rate. It is a deeply disturbing situation because there are still many Americans who believe with us that, in the long run, socialism will prove to be the only solution to the increasingly serious economic and social problems that face the United States.

It is because we hold firmly to this belief that we are founding *Monthly Review*, an independent magazine devoted to analyzing, from a socialist point of view, the most significant trends in domestic and foreign affairs.

By “socialism” we mean a system of society with two fundamental characteristics: *first*, public ownership of the decisive sectors

of the economy and, *second*, comprehensive planning of production for the benefit of the producers themselves.

The possibility and workability of such a system of society are no longer open to doubt. Socialism became a reality with the introduction of the first Five Year Plan in Soviet Russia in 1928; its power to survive was demonstrated by the subsequent economic achievements of the USSR during the '30s and finally, once and for all, in the war against Nazi Germany. These facts—and they are facts which no amount of wishful thinking can conjure away—give to the USSR a unique importance in the development of socialism and in the history of our time.

We find completely unrealistic the view of those who call themselves socialists, yet imagine that socialism can be built on an international scale by fighting it where it already exists. This is the road to war, not to socialism. On the other hand, we do not accept the view that the USSR is above criticism simply because it is socialist. We believe in, and shall be guided by, the principle that the cause of socialism has everything to gain and nothing to lose from a full and frank discussion of shortcomings, as well as accomplishments, of socialist countries and socialist parties everywhere.

We shall follow the development of socialism all over the world, but we want to emphasize that our major concern is less with socialism abroad than with socialism at home. We are convinced that, the sooner the United States is transformed from a capitalist to a socialist society, the better it will be, not only for Americans, but for all mankind.

We believe that there are already many Americans who share this attitude with us and that their number will steadily increase. We ask their financial support, their assistance in extending our circulation, and their advice as to how *Monthly Review* can best serve the cause of socialism in the United States.

LEO HUBERMAN

PAUL M. SWEEZY

Editors of Monthly Review

May 1949

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PROFESSOR ALBERT EINSTEIN

in his article "Why Socialism?" in Vol. 1, No. 1

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