

## REACTION TO ANTI-JEWISH DISCRIMINATION BY COMMUNISTS AND PROGRESSIVES SINCE 1958

### OPPOSITION FROM LIBERAL SOVIET INTELLECTUALS

The only visible internal opposition to the official treatment of Jewry has come from younger elements within the Soviet intelligentsia. These groups are regarded as the liberal avant-garde of Soviet society. They have adopted opposition to anti-semitism as a means to combat Stalinist and dogmatic elements within the bureaucracy and "Establishment". In turn the conservative elements have tended to support the status quo on Soviet Jewry as a symbolic defence against inroads by the liberalisers.

On occasion, this has come to the surface. For example, the distinguished Soviet writer, K. Paustovsky in a speech pillorying the dogmatic bureaucratic leaders at the Moscow Writers Union in 1956, described them as "cynics, black obscurantists who quite openly carry on anti-semitic talk of a kind worthy of pogrom makers . . . They are no fewer in number than they were".<sup>77</sup>

In his autobiography Yevtushenko, the talented young Russian poet, tells how he came to loathe the anti-semitism of leading Soviet literary bureaucrats. Referring to a prize winning Stalinist poet, he wrote:

Unfortunately, it was people such as this who sometimes made 'Literary policy,' infecting it with evil smelling things of all sorts, including anti-semitism. To me both as a Russian and as a man to whom Lenin's teaching is dearer than anything in the world, anti-semitism has always been doubly repulsive.<sup>78</sup>

Yevtushenko emphasized that he always regarded Communism and anti-semitism as mutually exclusive:

I once had a friend . . . who even went so far as to justify pogroms. I realised that such a person was more dangerous for Communism than all our Western enemies and I broke with him completely. Perhaps the seeds of my poem Babi Yar, were planted in me then.

Yevtushenko was actually stung into writing his poem because of the decision to build a park at Babi Yar—the site near Kiev where 100,000 Jewish men, women and children had been butchered by the Nazis. There were strong grounds to suggest

---

77 *Jews in Eastern Europe* Vol. II No. 3, September 1963, p. 41.

78 Published in the French Newspaper *L'Express* February 1963.

79 From French Jewish Communist *Naie Presse* February 1963.

that the decision not to build a "memorial" on the site as originally planned, came about because of the general policy by Soviet bureaucrats to play down the extent of specific Jewish suffering at the hands of the Nazis.<sup>80</sup>

The poem deliberately dealt with Babi Yar and underlined its significance as a symbol of what unchecked anti-semitism can lead to.

There are no monuments over Babi Yar  
The steep slope is the only gravestone  
The trees look sternly like judges  
Everything here shrieks silently.

The concluding lines of the now world famous poem carry a clear message:

Let the Internationale ring out  
When the last anti-semite on earth is buried  
There is no Jewish blood in mine  
But I am hated by every anti-semite as a Jew  
And for this reason  
I am a true Russian.<sup>81</sup>

The conservative reactions were swift and vicious. The poem was bitterly denounced in the Moscow journal *Literature and Life* by the writer Dimitri Starikov who described it as an attack on "Lenin's policy of nationalities by means of . . . acts of provocation". Using language reminiscent of Stalinist anti-semitism, Starikov described *Babi Yar* as a "monstrous" insult to the Soviet people and warned Yevtushenko against falling deeper into a "foul swampy quagmire".

Another critic, Alexei Markov, questioned Yevtushenko's patriotism insisting the poet had defiled "Russian crew cut lads" who had died in battle against the Nazis.

Elsewhere it was demanded that *Babi Yar* be rewritten because "it seeks to artificially revive the so-called Jewish problem and to start a discussion born in the old class society but which has already been solved and has died a natural death".<sup>82</sup>

In December 1962, Party leaders including Khrushchev met with Soviet intellectuals.<sup>83</sup> The composer Shostakovitch was

---

80 The distinguished Soviet writer Victor Nekrasov wrote in *Literaturnia Gazeta* on October 10, 1959, "Is this possible? Who could have thought of such a thing? To fill a ravine and on the site of such a colossal tragedy to make merry and play football? No this must not be allowed!"

81 Yevtushenko first publicly released *Babi Yar* when he personally recited it before a mass meeting of 1500 people on September 16, 1961.

82 *Sovetskaya Belorussia* April 1963.

83 December 18, 1962.

bitterly castigated by Leonid Ilychev, head of the Ideological Department of the Russian CP.<sup>84</sup> for having selected *Babi Yar* as the theme for a symphony. When the poem was ultimately set to music, Yevtushenko was induced to incorporate a few additional lines dealing with Russians and Ukrainians so that it would not be an exclusively "Jewish" theme.

In March 1963, Khrushchev had the last word.<sup>85</sup> At a Kremlin meeting of artists he categorically condemned Yevtushenko for "not displaying political wisdom and showing ignorance of historical facts". Khrushchev also complained that the poem was orientated as a national martyrdom whereas Communists must approach situations from a class viewpoint.<sup>86</sup>

Whilst the conservatives are clearly still in a position to humiliate the liberals, the fact that a young man like Yevtushenko does have such a remarkable following, particularly amongst the younger intellectuals is a basis for long range hope.

#### **THE DEBATE WITH WESTERN CIVIL LIBERTARIANS**

After the internal convulsions within the Western Communist Parties (1956-1957) had been temporarily overcome and substantial reversion to dogmatic attitudes had occurred within the World Communist movement, official Soviet handouts on the Jewish question, not substantially different from those disseminated during the Stalinist period, were again produced for Western consumption.

They consisted of the rather tedious statistics; the names of Lenin Prize winners; the insistence that only in the USSR were Jews granted complete equality; and the accusation that those raising the question of Soviet Jewry were merely "cold warriors" bent on besmirching the Soviet Union by telling lies. They also appealed to Jews in Western countries to ignore "fabrications" about Soviet anti-semitism and concentrate on the real menace to World Jewry such as the revival of fascism and anti-semitism,

---

84 As late as 1956 Ilychev was denying that Jewish intellectuals had been shot. When *Folks Shtimme* published its April 1956 editorial confirming these murders, Ilychev described the article in the Polish Jewish Communist paper as a "gross libel" and a "lie". Dychev's statement was highlighted in April 1956, in the *National Guardian*, a pro-Communist New York weekly.

85 March 8, 1963.

86 For a remarkable partial transcript of verbal exchanges between Khrushchev and Yevtushenko on this subject and an important speech by Mikhail Romm, see the American Jewish monthly *Commentary* December 1963.

the rearmament of West Germany, and the threat of nuclear warfare.

These themes were repeated again and again in *Novosti Press Agency* releases, Moscow Radio broadcasts and Soviet Embassy handouts. As the pressure of Western public opinion grew stronger, a special department headed by men like Shmuel Rozin concentrated exclusively on writing articles, letters and radio scripts dealing with the subject.<sup>87</sup> In recent years the Stalinist practice of "soliciting" statements from leading Soviet Jews including the Moscow Chief Rabbi, was re-introduced and shameless lies attributed to them.<sup>88</sup> Since the launching of *Sovietish Heimland* the Jewish editor Aaron Vergelis, who has a proven record of following "official policy" with regard to Jewish culture,<sup>89</sup> emerged as the principal "spokesman" on Jewish affairs.<sup>90</sup>

Between 1958 and 1964, with few notable exceptions, Western Communist publications reproduced these Soviet handouts or rewrote them uncritically to suit local taste.<sup>91</sup> When confronted by evidence of Soviet anti-semitic literature or press articles, they were either justified as "legitimate atheistic propaganda" or denounced as fabrications.<sup>92</sup>

---

87 For a typical example see the long article by Shmuel Rozin entitled "I Speak as a Soviet Jew" which appeared in the American progressive journal *The Minority of One* May 1963. A reply by Moshe Decter "The Truth About Soviet Jewry" appeared in the July 1963 issue.

88 For example, in his *Minority of One* article, Rozin "quotes" Moscow's Chief Rabbi as stating that "Jewish believers bake unleavened bread in their homes and in private religious establishments"—a blatant falsehood subsequently officially contradicted.

89 It is alleged that Vergelis co-operated freely with the Soviet authorities during the 1948-1953 "Black Years". After Stalin's death he is known to have opposed the restoration of Jewish culture claiming that Yiddish writers should be satisfied to be read in translation. See *Jews in Eastern Europe* Vol. II No. 4, February 1964, pp. 27-28.

90 In reply to a letter from Vergelis, Bertrand Russell told him that "as the appointed editor of the only Jewish journal in the USSR, you are not an initiator of policy on Jewish matters but an unauthorised spokesman". (29 October, 1964).

91 Two good examples are the pamphlets *The Truth About the Jews in the Soviet Union* by Sofia Frey (1961) and *The Fraud of Soviet Anti-Semitism* by Herbert Aptheker (1962) both published by the C.P.U.S.A. in New York.

92 An example was the letter from Mr. Pat Sloan, the Secretary of the British Soviet Friendship Society which appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* March 10, 1961. Mr. Sloan described the photostat from the *Buinaksk Kommunist* dealing with the Dagestan blood libel as being of "technically excellent montage." Yet much to Mr. Sloan's discomfort, the article he dismissed as a fabrication was subsequently reluctantly confirmed by Soviet authorities.

Despite the fact that this propaganda was similar to the apologias written during the Stalin period, some Communists still questioned the motives of progressives who raised the plight of Soviet Jewry. By implication, the only objective and unbiased people in these matters were spokesmen from Communist Parties who had performed similar roles in the past as overseas representatives for Stalin and Zhdanov.

After the death of Stalin, efforts to draw public attention to the plight of Soviet Jewry were initiated by Jews in Western countries. From the outset, Dr. Nachum Goldmann, President of the World Jewish Congress, appealed for caution, restraint, and appeals on humanitarian grounds to the Soviet leadership. In 1957 he expressed the generally accepted approach to the problem by all Jewish communities:

If we take the initiative we shall be able to get the support of the intellectuals, of the parliamentarians, of socialists and Communists and pro-Communists, of statesmen in the countries of the West. It may take a long time. I do not know when we shall accomplish anything. But if we do not dramatize the problem, nothing will be achieved.

In 1959, Dr. Goldmann sadly stated that he "could not say that we have made any real progress: broadly speaking, nothing has changed, and lately there are even reports of the deterioration of the situation in several places". But at the same time, he emphasized that:

In the last few years this problem has been successfully brought by us to the attention of the world at large. More and more non-Jewish leaders and groups—many of them unsuspected of being anti-Soviet—have expressed in general terms their understanding of the problem and have made known their sympathy for our demands . . . We have no choice but to go on pleading our case without getting involved in the general struggle between the two blocs and without becoming involved, as a Jewish people, in the Cold War.<sup>94</sup>

By the 1960's intensive activity by Western Jewish communities had succeeded in focusing public attention on the plight of Soviet Jewry and it had become generally accepted as one of the major issues involving human rights, discrimination, and oppressed minorities.

The issue was not only taken up by right wing and anti-Communist groups. Left wing social democrats and progressives were also raising their voice in protest. Distinguished writers with a long record of friendship to the Soviet Union like playwright Arthur Miller, were publicly voicing their indignation:

In the present case, the disabilities, the contempt, and the mockery laid upon the Jews, are carried on by people who are the heirs of a

---

93 Zionist General Council Session, July 1957, Jerusalem.

94 Zionist General Council Session, June 1959, Jerusalem.

long Socialist tradition, which whatever its twists and turns, consistently branded anti-semitism like racism and chauvinism as a weapon of reaction.<sup>95</sup>

By 1964, even such a notable friend of the Soviet Union as Professor Linus Pauling was advocating "overt demonstrations . . . along the lines of techniques used by peace marchers and civil rights demonstrators",<sup>96</sup> in order to draw attention to the plight of Soviet Jewry.

In a similar vein Martin Luther King stated:

The struggle of the Negro people for freedom is inextricably interwoven with the universal struggle of all peoples to be free from discrimination and oppression. The Jewish people must be given their full rights as Soviet citizens as guaranteed by the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. itself.

The anti-Jewish tone of the economic trials must cease. The free functioning of Synagogues should be permitted. There should be no interference with the performance of sacred rites. The religious and cultural freedom of this old Jewish community should be re-established.

In the name of humanity, I urge that the Soviet Government end all the discriminatory measures against its Jewish community. I will not remain silent in the face of injustice.<sup>97</sup>

Earl Russell, by no means "a knight of the cold war", emerged as the most articulate and outspoken critic of Soviet policy towards the Jews. Since 1963, Earl Russell has carried on a vigorous correspondence with Premier Khrushchev, *Izvestia*, and Aaron Vergelis, in which he has expressed concern and alarm at the increase of anti-semitism in the Soviet mass media, the anti-semitic undertones in the economic crimes campaign, and the cultural<sup>98</sup> and religious discrimination directed against Soviet Jewry.

Earl Russell's most recent correspondence with Aaron Vergelis, the editor of the only Soviet Jewish journal *Sovietish Heimland* is of some interest. In June 1964, Russell conveyed to Vergelis a moving letter received by him from a decorated

---

95 October 13, 1963 in his speech at "The Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews" in New York.

96 April 26, 1964 in Los Angeles.

97 January 14, 1965 in a letter to *The New York Times*.

98 February 2, 1963 to Premier Khrushchev. April 6, 1963 to *Izvestia*. July 22, 1965 to the Editor of *Sovietish Heimland*. October 29, 1964, in reply to Aaron Vergelis.

On February 21, 1963 Khrushchev wrote a lengthy reply to Earl Russell rebutting all his charges. It was published in *Izvestia* and *Pravda* on February 28, 1963. Earl Russell's reply to *Izvestia* was not published. Instead, on May 31, 1963, *Izvestia* stated that "Comrade N. K. Khrushchev in his reply to the English philosopher Bertrand Russell said very convincingly that all this is a gross fabrication and malicious slander of the Soviet people and our country."

Soviet Jewish war veteran and member of the Soviet Communist Party, who had pleaded with him to appeal to world public opinion so that Soviet Jewry could be granted the same rights applying to Jews in Poland, Rumania and Czechoslovakia. Vergelis replied to Russell accusing him of ventilating cold war propaganda and suggesting that his motive was to draw attention from the "racist and anti-semitic orgy rife in some countries across the water".<sup>99</sup>

Earl Russell wrote an indignant reply:

If Jews in your country had a comparable choice within the framework of Soviet society, or if they had opportunities equal to those of other Soviet nationalities, outside interventions would be presumptuous. Unfortunately they do not; authority imposes upon them conditions of assimilation in which they have virtually no choice but submission.<sup>100</sup>

Bertrand Russell's attitude to the question of Soviet Jewry was typical of progressive opinion generally throughout the world, with the notable exception of Australia.

#### **UNEASE AMONGST WESTERN COMMUNISTS PRIOR TO "KICHKO"**

It has already been demonstrated how dogmatism re-emerged within Western Communist Parties after the storm of protest in 1956 and 1957 had abated. Those Communists unwilling to adopt this approach defected or were expelled from the Party.

Yet despite the official policy justifying the existing status of Soviet Jewry, there was still a muffled and tortuous dissent in some Communist Parties, particularly in the ranks of American, Canadian, French and British Jewish Party members.

As late as March 1958, the French CP. sent a delegation of three Jews to the USSR to investigate the status of Soviet Jews. The report of its leader, Chaim Sloves, was so critical that the French Communist press refused to publish it. Ultimately it appeared in a pro-Communist New York Yiddish monthly.

Sloves maintained that contrary to official Soviet statements, Jews in all strata of the Soviet population longed for Jewish culture:

---

<sup>99</sup> Vergelis's letter was also published in the October issue of *Sovietish Heimland* without reproducing the letter from Bertrand Russell to which it was replying.

On October 11, 1963, Vergelis expressed similar sentiments when he described criticism of Soviet anti-Jewish policy as "a political campaign to conceal racist crimes and anti-semitism in capitalist countries".

<sup>100</sup> October 29, 1964; see also note 90.

One can safely say that the source for Yiddish writing, the black earth—the people—exists . . . a Jewish book in the Soviet Union could be distributed today without any difficulties and in a number not less than books of any other minority literature . . . the majority of Russian writers, headed by leading authors like Sholokhov, Leonov, Fedin, Paustovsky, Kirsanov, Azaev, Kataev, Polevoy, Agepov, etc. pleaded for the publication of the works of their Yiddish colleagues in Yiddish . . .

Sloves urged that "the murder of the Jewish writers and artists" be publicly and categorically condemned, together with "the false theoretical presumptions which serve to justify the tragedy . . . of the present bloodless Jewish culture in the Soviet Union". Sloves concluded by appealing that:

All these things must be proclaimed openly and loudly. It is no longer sufficient merely to mention them in restricted circles or to just a tiny handful of individuals, or to note them in confidential documents. Every ordinary Jew, every friend of progressive Jewish culture, must face himself and rediscover himself through such a declaration of principle.<sup>101</sup>

The question was again raised in April 1959 by Mr. Alex Waterman in the official theoretical organ of the British Communist Party. Waterman objected to the thesis of a previous correspondent who maintained that Yiddish was a "Ghetto culture" and superfluous in a socialist society. Waterman pointed out that:

There are still three daily newspapers, three Yiddish theatres, scores of journals, amateur theatrical groups, choirs, Yiddish secondary schools, and Yiddish faculties at the universities in the U.S.A. . . . Does not the fact that three million Soviet Jews flocked to Yiddish concerts, the existence of 72 Yiddish writers, poets, dramatists, the emergence of twenty young Yiddish writers—prove that there is a demand for its continuation?

Waterman also emphasised that prior to the Stalinist abrogation of Socialist legality,<sup>102</sup> Soviet Jewry possessed an outstanding Jewish cultural network.

Similar concern with the question of Jewish culture in the USSR was voiced by Paul Novick, editor of the only American Communist daily—the New York Yiddish *Morgen Freiheit*. On his return from a three month visit to the Soviet Union, Novick expressed his concern at the failure of the Government to publish Yiddish books:

"The problem has not yet been solved, not by far. , ."

Novick also urged the establishment of a central body to assist Soviet Jewish cultural activities.

In 1962, more Jewish Communist voices of dissent were heard. In a commentary to a pamphlet on the Jewish Question

---

101 *Yiddische Kultur* February, 1959.

102 *Marxism Today* April 1959.



written by Paul Novick, Michael Mirsky, editor of the Polish Jewish Communist daily *Folks Shtimme*, praised Lenin's postulate of equal rights for Yiddish culture as "a shining example". He criticised Stalin's contribution to the Nationalities Question and clearly in reference to Soviet Jewry, stated:

National assimilation makes its appearance in history as a bourgeois movement, and the revolutionary proletariat, its Marxist Leninist Party, has no need to use national assimilation as a means of solving the national problem, the theory and practice of which it had rejected in principle<sup>103</sup>

In a similar vein, the Canadian Yiddish Communist Weekly, *Vochenblatt* in January 1962 emphasised that:

An honest Soviet patriotism and integration into the general current of life are not incompatible with the wish, the need, of granting adequate facilities to thousands of Soviet Jews who wish to participate on a large scale in Jewish cultural activities.<sup>104</sup>

In September 1963, *Morgen Freiheit*, for the first time questioned aspects of the Soviet Jewry issue not confined to the question of cultural rights. Commenting on the "blood libel" incident in the Lithuanian capital of Vilna, the paper concluded that:

It is no surprise that there are still remnants of anti-semitism even in a socialist country like the Soviet Union. What is important is what policy the Government follows in meeting this problem . . .<sup>105</sup>

In the same issue of *Morgen Freiheit*, the editorial stated that:

The time for a Soviet national Jewish theatre and similar cultural expression is surely here, and certainly the lack of consistent publication of Yiddish books, despite a demonstrable market for them, or the handling of the matzah question—these are doubtless grounds for legitimate debate.<sup>105</sup>

The progressive American monthly *Jewish Currents* in its September editorial was likewise outspoken. It strongly rejected Premier Khrushchev's March 1963 analysis of Soviet Jewry. It stated that "The steps already taken in the reconstruction of Soviet Jewish culture since 1956 have turned out to be far from adequate".

The concluding paragraph noted that:

Mr. Khrushchev's flat assertion, "We have no Jewish Question" is unconvincing because his own remarks testify that there is a Jewish Question in the USSR. And the recognition of this fact by Soviet leaders will be the first step to solving it on a principled socialist basis.<sup>106</sup>

In its October editorial *Jewish Currents* condemned the Soviet ban on baking unleavened bread as a travesty of socialist justice:

---

103 *Folks Shtimme* May 1962.

104 *Vochenblatt* January 11, 1962.

105 *Morgen Freiheit* September 29, 1963.

106 *Jewish Currents* September 1963.

Observant orthodox Jews are required to eat matzot instead of bread for eight days. Furthermore, even non-religious secular Jews often eat matzot because of the historical meaning of Passover as a freedom festival . . . to expect all Jews who want matzot to make them themselves is a violation of freedom of religion under socialism.<sup>107</sup>

It must be emphasised that the above mentioned Communist and pro-Communist voices of dissent were exceptions to the rule. In general, Western Communist Parties, faithfully echoed the official Moscow line that there was no Jewish problem and that those raising the question were cold war warriors.

Yet these few Jewish Communists were apparently the spokesmen for the consciences of many who had to endure enforced silence. The violent Communist reaction in 1964 castigating one solitary anti-semitic book, showed that despite outward appearances to the contrary, there was considerable internal dissatisfaction over the question of Soviet Jewry.

#### **"KICHKO"—A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE FOR WESTERN COMMUNISTS**

*Judaism Without Embellishment* by T. K. Kichko.

The book *Judaism Without Embellishment* written in Ukrainian by T. K. Kichko, was published late in 1963 in Kiev by the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. Its exposure triggered off all the pent up emotions concerning Soviet Jewry within Western Communist parties.

The 192 page book teaches that Judaism encourages its adherents to steal from non-Jews, to give false testimony and lie to non-Jews, and to exploit the labour of non-Jews. It attempts to demonstrate that Judaism teaches contempt for work and for workers and peasants; that Judaism glorifies extortion and usury; and that it leads its believers into hypocrisy, bribery and financial speculation. Judaism in short "is impregnated with narrow practicality, with greed, the love of money and the spirit of egoism". The book also refers in detail to the world wide "conspiracy" of Judaism, Zionism, Israel, Jewish bankers and Western capitalists. The text is embellished with a series of Nazi-like anti-semitic caricatures.<sup>108</sup>

Yet, as previously indicated, such a book was not exceptional. It was in many ways typical of a host of similar books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles "scientifically analysing" Judaism and

---

107 *Jewish Currents* October 1963.

108 For extracts from the text and caricature reproductions see *Jews in Eastern Europe* Vol. II No. 5, July 1964.

freely circulating within the USSR.<sup>108a</sup> Furthermore, unlike other books in the Russian language, with a circulation of hundreds of thousands, *Kichko* was in Ukrainian in a limited edition of 12,000. Nor should the fact that the book carried the imprimatur of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences have caused such a stir. Virtually all the other books of this genre carry the blessing of various academic institutions and Party or Government instrumentalities.

Nor were the cartoons entirely a new occurrence. Negative pictorial representation of Jews has been an occasional feature of anti-semitic stereotyping in the Soviet mass media. Although the Nazi style caricatures were a new phenomenon, a few of the "traditional" anti-semitic cartoons incorporated in the *Kichko* book had already appeared previously in various Soviet newspapers.

But the most remarkable feature of the furore over the *Kichko* book was that Kichko himself had previously written several articles of a no less anti-semitic nature than his magnum opus against which there had been no reaction or protest.

In Kiev, in 1957, a Ukrainian "scientific" organisation published a text-book by Kichko which undoubtedly served as the basis for his more extensive later work. In it Kichko said that:

Judaism has always served, by the nature of its creed, the plundering policy of capitalism . . . Jewish clergy have thereby actively assisted the foreign imperialists . . . Judaism has pitched the Jews against other nations . . . Zionist leaders were collaborators with Hitler in his crimes against the world . . .<sup>109</sup>

This book was published in an issue of 40,000 but it brought no reaction whatsoever from Communist quarters.

In 1962, Kichko published another vicious tract on Judaism in the leading Ukrainian atheist monthly. Under the title "What do Jewish Ethics Teach", Kichko told his readers that a Jew's "secular cult" is business and his "secular god" money; that Jews were excited to "venomous hatred against all other nations" and were taught to be "cruel and bloody misanthropes". The balance of the article attempted to establish a correlation between economic crimes and synagogues, by listing Jews charged with alleged speculation and corruption and suggesting that they used synagogues as a base for transacting their "profitable business".<sup>110</sup>

---

108a See earlier chapter for anti-semitic books of an equally anti-semitic nature which are circulating freely today in the USSR, including one book specifically recommended by the CPSU Ideological Commission Resolution condemning Kichko.

109 *The Jewish Religion its Origin and Character* by T. K. Kichko published by the Ukrainian Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge. Kiev, 1957.

110 *Voyovnichy Ateist* December 1962.

When the article was reproduced in *Jews in Eastern Europe*<sup>111</sup> it created very little impact for the simple reason that it was typical of so much material of a similar nature constantly appearing in the Soviet Press.

From all this it should be manifestly clear that any suggestion that Kichko's *Judaism Without Embellishment* was an isolated aberration, is absurd.

### **American Jewish Communists React Violently.**

An American Jewish organisation, the American Jewish Committee obtained an original copy of the *Kichko* book. In view of the nature of the book the American Jewish Committee endeavoured to attract public attention to it by displaying it at a press conference in February 1964.<sup>112</sup> They achieved their purpose and the Western press took up the issue. Jewish communities in other Western countries also endeavoured to bring the book to public attention.

Three weeks after the *Kichko* press release, the Ukrainian Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, confirmed its authenticity and tried to justify its contents.<sup>113</sup>

The following week, the New York Yiddish Communist daily exploded and protested to the Soviet Government with a vehemence unprecedented in the history of the overseas Communist press. *Morgen Freiheit* insisted that:

It must be stated openly that the caricatures in the book were reminiscent of the well known caricatures of Jews in anti-semitic countries—Criminals of an anti-semitic type exist among the elements of the past in the Soviet Union.

*Morgen Freiheit* called for an educational campaign against such types "coupled with a drive to exterminate them, to mete out punishment for anti-semitic expressions or actions".

For the first time on record the Jewish Communist daily then openly criticised the general Soviet handling of the Jewish question:

It will surely be a serious mistake to dismiss all this with the argument that it is merely cold war propaganda. The blunders in the anti-religion drive, as well as—or even more so—the serious errors in the restoration of the Jewish cultural institutions destroyed during the Stalin cult (more correctly the non-restoration of these institutions), are matters that disturb many honest people, friends of the

---

111 *Jews in Eastern Europe* Vol. II No. 4, February 1964, pp. 43-45.

112 February 24, 1964.

113 March 15, 1964.

Soviet Union, Lord Russell and Dr. Linus Pauling and many others who point out these blunders.<sup>114</sup>

On the same page, Gus Hall, American Communist Party General Secretary stated:

Such stereotyped, slanderous caricatures of the Jewish people must be unquestionably condemned whatever their source. And certainly they have no place whatever in Communist or progressive literature. No matter what the intention of the artist who draws them, such stereotypes have a very specific, unquestionable anti-semitic meaning and their use has exactly the same effect as when it is engaged in by those imbued with and motivated by the crassest anti-semitism.\*

Declining to follow Gus Hall's lead by merely restricting criticism to the *Kichko* book, Paul Novick, who is recognised as one of the foremost Jewish intellectuals in the Communist movement, took the matter further in the editorial columns of his paper a week later.

He said that friends of the Soviet Union had become so tired of the exaggerations of the "anti-Soviet fabrication industry" that they had failed to pose questions about matters that were disturbing. He reminded readers that in 1956, after the exposure of Stalin's crimes, things were different and progressives had indulged in constructive criticism. Unfortunately, after 1956-57 people had reverted to their former positions. Yet "the case of the Kiev book should make it clear once and for all that such an approach is incorrect".

Novick emphasised that despite exploitation of the issue by enemies of the Soviet Union, "not all who ask questions or come forward with arguments are cold war people. They may even be principled opponents but. . . not fabricators and cold warriors."

Novick observed that there were active anti-semitic forces in the Soviet Union—"remnants of Tsarism, of fascist and pro-fascist regimes, of the Nazi occupation and of the Stalin Period". This situation demanded that special care be taken by anti-religious writers, some of whom forget:

while speaking of propaganda with regard to the Jewish religion that there was a Hitler and a Streicher, that there were six million Jewish victims . . . We speak of one third of our people that was destroyed only because they were Jews.

Novick then questioned whether the reasons brought forward for closing the Lvov Synagogue were justifiable. He criticised the Soviet Government for preventing religious Jews from accepting ritual requisites from abroad. Instead he suggested that Soviet synagogues be enabled to provide religious Jews with their needs—including the right to bake unleavened bread.

---

114 *Morgen Freiheit* March 22, 1964.

Finally he reiterated the demand **for the elimination "of the anti-semitic remnants . . . an anti-Soviet element" and called for the rebuilding of Soviet Yiddish culture.** Novick concluded by stating that:

It is quite certain that all these incidents, misunderstandings and crimes which must be eliminated per se, tend to obscure for many people the historic role of the Soviet Union in the forward march of mankind.<sup>115</sup>

#### **Other Communist Reactions to Kichko.**

An analysis of Western Communist Party reactions to **the Kichko** book shows that while none went so far in their criticism of the Soviet Union as *Morgen Freiheit*, the reactions nevertheless set a precedent by the intensity of their critique of a publication which had the blessing of an official Soviet instrumentality. One could also detect a qualitative difference of approach. This was not an attack on a Soviet leader already publicly disowned at a CPSU Congress. This was a criticism of the existing leadership.

The first French Communist reactions to *Kichko* appeared in the Yiddish Communist daily, which after seeking further information about the book from *Novosti Press Agency*,<sup>116</sup> published a series of bitter editorial condemnations<sup>117</sup> some of which were reproduced in the French Communist daily *L'Humanite*.<sup>118</sup> *L'Humanite* also reproduced a communique issued by the Movement against Racialism and Anti-Semitism which drew attention to the fact that the Soviet Constitution and laws forbid attacks directed against the honour and dignity of national or ethnic groups and yet enabled a book like *Judaism Without Embellishment* to circulate freely.<sup>119</sup>

About the same time, the writer Claud Fuzier stated in a French socialist daily:

I would wish deeply that Mr. Khrushchev and the Soviet leaders should be as outspoken in this sorrowful affair as Messrs Kennedy and Johnson have been in their struggle against racial segregation.<sup>120</sup>

In view of the emergence of the "autonomist" and "liberal" wing within the Italian Communist Party, it was not altogether surprising that the Italian CP. press was particularly critical and outspoken.

A leading Communist Party newspaper *Paesa Sera* condemned "classical anti-semitic literature". In the same issue its

---

115 *Morgen Freiheit* March 29, 1964.

116 *Naie Presse* March 16, 1964.

117 *Naie Presse* March 24 and March 25, 1964.

118 *L'Humanite* March 24 and March 26, 1964.

119 *L'Humanite* March 20, 1964.

120 *L'Populaire* March 26, 1964.

Moscow correspondent carried a report about the denial of unleavened bread to Moscow Jews, pointing out that bureaucratic restrictions of this nature neutralised the value of Soviet affirmations of religious freedom in the USSR.<sup>121</sup>

The official Communist Party daily, *L'Unita*, warned the Soviet Government that failure to combat anti-semitism would damage Soviet prestige throughout the world. *L'Unita* remarked that:

Stalin, particularly in his last years spread a certain nationalistic and therefore anti-semitic spirit among the people in general but also—and perhaps this counts most—among intellectuals, government officials and even officials of the Communist Party.<sup>122</sup>

The Norwegian Communist reaction was particularly interesting because in 1963, *Frihiten*, the Party newspaper, had responded to Earl Russell's appeals to the Soviet authorities to cease discrimination against the Jews by dubbing him "a conscious liar" and "a senile philosopher".<sup>123</sup> After the Kichko upheaval, the same newspaper endorsed Bertrand Russell's observations and confirmed that anti-semitism still exists in the Soviet Union.<sup>124</sup>

In Britain, Holland, Sweden, Norway,<sup>125</sup> Canada and other parts of the world, even including Australia,<sup>125</sup> Communist Parties protested in terms ranging from mere condemnations of the *Kichko* book to wider criticism of the whole question of Soviet Jewry.

### **Soviet Reaction to the World Wide Protests.**

On March 15, 1964, the Ukrainian Representative to the U.N. Human Rights Commission attempted to justify *Judaism Without Embellishment* as legitimate anti-religious propaganda.

A week later, *Novosti Press Agency* circulated a release defending the book. It stated that Kichko had used his legitimate right under the Soviet Constitution to conduct anti-religious propaganda just as the constitution guaranteed the right to worship.<sup>126</sup>

The day after this release, it was "leaked" that the book had been withdrawn from Moscow bookshops. However, the publication was never on general sale in Moscow as it was written in Ukrainian for Ukrainian readers.

On March 27 *Tass* released a review of the book which had appeared in an obscure Kiev journal *Radianska Kultura*.

---

121 *Paesa Sera* March 25, 1964.

122 *L'Vnita* March 30, 1964.

123 *Frihiten* March 26, 1963.

124 *Frihiten* April 17, 1964.

125 Australia will be examined in detail in a separate chapter.

126 *Novosti Press Agency* March 24, 1964.

The review noted "positive" features of the book but criticised its shortcomings as "slipshod formulations" and "low artistic level".<sup>127</sup>

This review which *Morgen Freiheit* described as "good but not good enough by far" was not reproduced in the Soviet daily press. It was merely highlighted by overseas Soviet news services to pacify mounting public protests and demands for withdrawal of the book.

On April 4, 1964, the world wide campaign of protest and condemnation in which Western Communists had taken a part, had an effect. *Pravda* published a lengthy resolution by the C.P.S.U. Central Committee's Ideological Commission which criticised the book for incorporating "erroneous statements, and illustrations likely to offend believers and be interpreted in a spirit of anti-semitism".

Although this was a retraction, it was clear that the Party leaders were still being very stubborn. Kichko clearly was not being charged under Soviet laws designed to punish those "inciting national or racial hostility or discord".<sup>127a</sup>

Nor did the Resolution condemn the hundreds of other "anti-Judaist" publications that were freely circulating through the medium of Soviet books, periodicals, and newspapers. Instead it made the incredible blunder of specifically naming Osipov's *Catechism Without Embellishment* as a "reliable anti-religious work". Yet this book which was published in an edition of 105,000 copies in the Russian language is in some respects just as anti-semitic as that of Kichko. (The book is dealt with in the earlier chapter relating to anti-semitism in the Soviet mass media).

To top it off the Resolution quoted one of Premier Khrushchev's most cynical statements on the Jewish question:

From the days of the October Revolution, the Jews in our country have had equality with all other people of the USSR in all respects.

---

127 *Toss* March 27, 1964.

127a In this regard it is pertinent to quote Article 66 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR:

"Any propaganda or agitation aimed at inciting to racial or national enmity or discord, or any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of or, conversely, any establishment of direct or indirect privileges for citizens on account of their race or nationality, shall be punishable by deprivation of liberty for a term of six months to three years or by compulsory change of residence for a term of two to five years".

Neither the Ukrainian nor the general Soviet press accused Kichko of infringing the Criminal Code. Hence it is not surprising that Kichko and the other individuals involved in producing and approving this book were not punished in accordance with this Code or its Federal Soviet counterpart.



We do not have a Jewish question and those who dream it up are singing an alien tune.<sup>128</sup>

To emphasise the intransigence of the Soviet leadership, *Izvestia* published an article the day after *Pravda* had released "The Ideological Committee's Resolution". Under the title "Concerning an Incomprehensible Uproar", it expressed strong reservations about condemning the *Kichko* book outright.<sup>129</sup>

The *Kichko* book affair did not lead to any fundamental change in Soviet policy. The retraction of what was just another anti-semitic item amongst many would not solve the question. But although it underlined the reactionary and stubborn character of the Soviet leadership on this question, it also clearly demonstrated that the CPSU cannot ignore open and militant protests supported by progressive and general public opinion when the issue concerned is racism or human rights.

#### FURTHER AMERICAN COMMUNIST DISSENT SINCE THE KICHKO BOOK

While many of the Western Communist Party leaders and newspaper editors probably greeted the Ideological Committee statement with relief, *Morgen Freiheit* still expressed strong reservations.

It welcomed the united manner in which Western Communist Parties had protested. But it bitterly objected to the quotation from Premier Khrushchev incorporated in the Ideological Committee's Resolution, which implied that Stalin had not been anti-semitic when it was clear that Lenin's precepts "concerning many peoples and particularly the Jews had been criminally offended against during the Stalin cult". The article again called for a restoration of Jewish culture and the avoidance of "wrong practices" with relation to Jewish religion.<sup>130</sup>

On April 12, at a public meeting in New York attended by 2,000 people, Paul Novick demanded that the author of *Judaism Without Embellishment* be tried and punished. He emphasized that it was not just a case of an isolated or poorly prepared work, but reflected "a false and harmful approach that has permeated anti-religious propaganda in the USSR generally". Novick reminded "certain people in the USSR engaged in anti-religious propaganda" that there were now "clergymen, rabbis, and priests who are for co-existence and oppose the cold war" and were in the front rank in the struggle for Negro rights in the USA.<sup>131</sup>

---

128 Originally said on March 8, 1963.

129 *Izvestia* April 5, 1964.

130 *Morgen Freiheit* April 7, 1964.

131 *Morgen Freiheit* April 12, 1964.

#### POLITICAL AFFAIRS ARTICLE

The discussion was broadened by two long editorial articles which appeared in consecutive issues of *Political Affairs*, the theoretical organ of the American Communist Party.<sup>132</sup> These were subsequently slightly revised and published as a special pamphlet.<sup>133</sup>

Although the editorial was more critical than anything previously published by the American Communist Party, it was also clearly designed as an indirect polemic against *Morgen Freiheit* and its editor, Paul Novick.

It denied the Soviet Government was pursuing an anti-semitic policy. It attacked those allegedly exploiting the Soviet Jewry question for "cold war purposes" and expressed regret that even friends of the Soviet Union such as Bertrand Russell and Linus Pauling, indulged in the propaganda of "the Big Lie". It also condemned racism and anti-semitism in America itself.

It contained a long section "demonstrating" the steps allegedly taken to rectify "the terrible crimes" committed by Stalin against Jewish intellectuals and cultural institutions. This was documented by the standard inflated Soviet statistics about Yiddish publications and the theatre. Reference was made to a non-existent volume of poems by Aaron Vergelis, and the five Yiddish books published since 1948 were presented as a remarkable cultural achievement.

The kernel of the argument was that Soviet Jews are voluntarily assimilating and shedding their group identity. Although Soviet authorities should "lean over backwards" to ensure cultural facilities for those desiring them, it is clear that no policy of "forced assimilation" actually exists. This attitude directly contradicted the views expressed by Novick and other Communists.

The *Political Affairs* article then itemized confusing groups of statistics to demonstrate that Jews still figure prominently in the higher ranks of the Soviet armed forces (which is untrue). The editorial also strongly denied the existence of any form of discrimination against Soviet Jewry in professional and public life. The anti-semitic aspect to the economic crimes prosecutions was also dismissed as a cold war slander. In fact, *Political Affairs* maintained that Soviet Jews enjoy fuller equality than Jews in the United States.

Despite this build up, *Political Affairs* conceded that there "are grounds for criticism of Soviet policy in relation to the

---

<sup>132</sup> *Political Affairs* June, July 1964.

<sup>133</sup> Hyman Lumer, *Soviet Anti-Semitism—A Cold War Myth* "Political Affairs Pamphlet". New York: October 1964.

Jews" but that such criticism should only be made "within the framework of full recognition of the magnificent achievement of the Soviet Union . . . in establishing the full equality of nationalities".

The main criticism was concentrated on the question of anti-semitic literature. The *Kichko* book:

reflects the continued existence of anti-semitic ideas and influences among individuals within the Soviet Union. This conclusion is given added insight by the fact that the present instance [Kichko] is not unique. In recent years there have been other books and articles containing anti-semitic references or statements indicative at the very least, of a lack of sensitivity towards the question.<sup>134</sup>

In a footnote to the pamphlet version of the articles, Lumer illustrated this by referring to another Soviet anti-semitic book by F. S. Mayatsky,<sup>135</sup> which:

duplicates in large measure the crude anti-semitism of the *Kichko* book. The fact that it could appear after the furore provoked by the latter gives renewed emphasis to the gravity of the problem and to the continued absence of a serious ideological campaign against such continuing manifestations of anti-semitism.<sup>136</sup>

On the other hand, *Political Affairs* insisted that criticism of the Jewish religion and Zionism is not necessarily anti-semitic. But it maintained that anti-Zionist propaganda goes too far when it says that "it should come as no surprise" that "Israel circles lend themselves through their diplomatic channels" to C.I.A.

---

134 *Political Affairs* June 1964.

135 *Contemporary Judaism and Zionism* by F. S. Mayatsky, published by the State Publishing House of the Moldavian Soviet Republic, Kishinev, 1964.

Mayatsky, like Kichko, is an "expert" on Judaism. In an article published in *Sovietskaya Moldavia* on July 23, 1959 under the title *The Reactionary Essence of Judaism*, Mayatsky stated that "Judaism kills love for the Soviet Motherland".

The book itself is similar to *Kichko* but includes no caricatures. It revives the standard canards of mediaeval and modern anti-semitism, e.g. "Judaism cultivates in Jews distrust and hostility towards other people"; the link between synagogues, speculation, and subversion; the international conspiracy between Judaism, Zionism, Israel, Western espionage and imperialism; Israeli diplomats recruit spies for American espionage interests etc. The book is worse than Kichko's in so far as it recommends vicious Stalinist anti-semitic works issued in 1953 as additional reading matter.

It is significant that the *Mayatsky* volume was published after *Kichko* and is circulating freely with Government approval despite the Ideological Commission's Resolution.

After *Mayatsky's* book was brought to public attention in November 1964 by the Bnai Brith, an American Jewish group, it was condemned by a number of Western Communist Parties.

136 Hyman Lumer, *Soviet Anti-Semitism—A Cold War Myth*, a "Political Affairs Pamphlet", New York: October 1964, p. 6.

intrigues within the Soviet Union. Such accusations are similar to the "justifications" for the Slansky trial and Stalin's purges of Jews in Communist countries.

*Political Affairs* cautioned that crude anti-religious propaganda:

when it is directed against the Jewish religion in particular, leads to anti-semitism. For even while we reject the idea that any criticism of Judaism is of necessity anti-semitic, the fact is that historically the maligning of the Jewish faith has been an intrinsic part of anti-semitism—for example the notorious blood libels which falsely ascribe to Jews the practice of using human blood in religious rituals and even of ritual murders. It is necessary to be extremely sensitive to such things, otherwise anti-religious propaganda can all too easily degenerate into anti-semitism and encourage such expressions of it as the Kichko book.<sup>137</sup>

#### **Morgen Freiheit Replies.**

The rather tortuous approach of the *Political Affairs* editorials contrasted sharply with the series of three articles by Paul Novick published between May 17 and June 14, 1964 in *Morgen Freiheit*.<sup>138</sup> The articles were ostensibly written as a reply to an article on Jews by Professor Braginsky, a Soviet Orientologist and Philologist, which appeared in *USSR*—a monthly published by the Soviet Embassy in Washington.<sup>139</sup> However, they should also be interpreted as an indirect rejoinder to *Political Affairs*, which expressed similar views to Professor Braginsky on the question of Jewish culture.

Professor Braginsky's article was crude and tendentious and, in essence, a restatement of the standard Soviet argument that the Jews wish to be totally absorbed into Russian culture.

Braginsky defined two main categories of Jews—those who are isolationist and therefore obscurantist, and the others—scientists, thinkers and writers—"who broke with the Jewish environment" and therefore contributed "to every field of knowledge". The author maintained that as "individuals of Jewish origin . . . become German, French, American and Russian scientists or writers, they slough off everything narrow minded, 'small townish', and backward in the 'Jewish Spirit'". This is taking place in the Soviet Union "without forcible interference, without artificially speeding it up or restraining it".

Professor Braginsky's article, if composed voluntarily, represents a case study in alienation. This is magnified by his failure to make any reference to the Stalinist crimes or the unwillingness

---

137 *Ibid*, p. 9.

138 *Morgen Freiheit* May 17, May 31, June 14, 1964.

139 *USSR* May 1964.

of the Soviet Government to remedy the injustices and make an end to existing discrimination against the Jews.

Novick tore Braginsky's argument to shreds showing it to be incompatible with Lenin's avowed policy on nationalities.

He emphasized that "anyone accepting Professor Braginsky as representing the Jewish masses would be making a serious mistake"<sup>140</sup>. He referred to the flourishing and vibrant Yiddish cultural network which existed as late as the 1930s, when Lenin's policy was still being implemented, and detailed the multitude of Yiddish schools, libraries, theatres, seminars, technical schools, newspapers, publishing houses and journals. He then outlined the Stalinist repression during the "dreadful years" culminating in the complete liquidation of Jewish cultural life in 1948.

Novick conceded that some cultural rehabilitation had taken place since the Twentieth Congress—the Yiddish bi-monthly journal and a number of dramatic touring groups and concerts. But not a single Yiddish book was published in 1962, 1963 and 1964 (May). There were no Jewish schools and no Jewish cultural facilities as required by Lenin. Novick therefore, concluded that despite some achievements, "the line of forced assimilation which began with the Stalin cult has in the main remained intact. . . ."<sup>141</sup>

Does it not occur to Professor Braginsky that . . . if one is to continue with the line of forced assimilation, of insensitivity to the deeply felt sentiments of the Jewish people he will only bring about . . . bourgeois nationalism?<sup>142</sup>

Novick emphasized that language integration does not mean national assimilation. Persecution for example is an important factor contributing to Jewish national consciousness but:

there is also the history of the Jewish people, Jewish culture (in Yiddish, Hebrew and other languages) traditions, customs or 'just' national pride . . . So are family ties among Jews of various countries. Religion has played a powerful role in the past and is still a factor among many Jews.

To demonstrate this thesis, Novick drew a detailed survey of the American Jewish scene and stressed that despite considerable language assimilation, American Jewry still maintained a strong national consciousness.<sup>143</sup>

He concluded by emphasising the consistency of his approach with that of Lenin, who said:

---

140 *Morgen Freiheit* May 31, 1964.

141 *Ibid.*

142 *Ibid.*

143 *Morgen Freiheit* June 14, 1964.

Whoever does not recognise and champion the equality of nations and languages does not fight against all national oppression or inequality is not a Marxist, is not even a democrat.<sup>144</sup>

Novick commented on this:

Anyone with a truly Leninist approach to the Jewish Question cannot be oblivious to the effects of the Hitlerite 'final solution' on the Jewish people. There is no question of course that one cannot and must not overlook the results of the 1959 census in the USSR which revealed a registration of close to half a million for Yiddish. Here one must remember the admonition of Lenin: full equality with other nationalities! Facts are stubborn things. The facts of life in relation to the problems of Jewish culture whether in Yiddish or Hebrew or English or Russian, or any language, are in total conflict with the premise upon which Professor Jacob Braginsky has built his theory of assimilation.<sup>145</sup>

Lest there be doubt that he was now merely restricting himself to the question of Jewish culture, Novick returned to the subject four months later with a blistering attack on the whole approach of the Soviet authorities to the Jewish question. The article entitled "A Patchwork Approach will not help matters"<sup>146</sup> was a bitter denunciation of the *Mayatsky* book.<sup>135</sup> It quoted favourably from the *Political Affairs* criticism of the anti-semitic nature of Soviet anti-religious propaganda,<sup>134</sup> and demanded a radical change in official policy with regard to Judaism, Zionism and Jewish life. Novick quoted approvingly from Togliatti's call for a radical break with Stalinist techniques and propounded the viewpoint identified with the Italian Communist Party. He also appealed for closer co-operation and understanding with non-Communist elements including "progressive rabbis" and sections of the Zionist Movement, emphasizing that the present policies serve to provide fuel to the enemies of the Soviet Union.

Novick concluded by calling for a genuine return to Leninist principles and demanded that instead of the old "patchwork" approach (e.g. protests of an isolated nature such as Kichko), fundamentals be examined.<sup>146</sup>

The January 1965 issue of *Political Affairs* brings the conflict between Novick and the official U.S. Communists into the open. Novick contributed an article entitled, "A Proper Approach to the National Question" which is significantly editorially described as "a section of the comment sent by Paul Novick" on the two previous *Political Affairs* articles. It largely reiterates Novick's views outlined earlier in *Morgen Freiheit*. Novick denied that all Soviet Jews wish to be assimilated and quoted Leninist theory to justify his thesis that the:

---

144 V. I. Lenin: *Critical Remarks on the National Question* Moscow: 1951, p. 24 quoted from Novick's article.

145 *Morgen Freiheit* June 14, 1964.

146 *Morgen Freiheit* October 2, 1964.

assimilation theories run counter to the realities of the Jewish community, as well as to the activities of Jewish progressives which are concentrated to a great extent, around work for progressive Jewish culture.

and that:

the true internationalist is the best fighter for national interest, for national dignity, for progressive national culture.

In the same issue there is a very sharp official rejoinder by the editor of *Political Affairs*—Hyman Lumer—who accused Novick of "misinterpreting Lenin on this issue" and being "guilty of omissions" in his quotations. He emphasised that "a Marxist cannot take a one-sided view of the question. To do so is to land either in the Scylla of national nihilism or in the Charybdis of bourgeois nationalism". Lumer warned against those who:

seek Jewish survival as an end in itself . . . this is not infrequently accompanied by the chauvinist concept of the Jews as the chosen people. It is not surprising that to such people, a decline of anti-semitism should appear as a source of problems.

Lumer then propounded the view that "assimilation is a historically progressive trend" and that "this tendency has manifested itself in the case of the Soviet Jews . . . the greater the freedom from persecution and discrimination, the more rapidly does this process take place."

The sharpness of Lumer's reply to Novick and his resort to tendentious Soviet justifications of "assimilation" are indications that the C.P.U.S.A. and individual American Jewish Communists are now in open conflict over the question.

Commenting on these debates within Western Communist Parties, Emanuel Litvinoff, editor of the highly respected periodical *Jews in Eastern Europe* observed that:

The Jewish Communists, grieved and outraged by the Soviet treatment of Jews, are now expressing their opposition in terms of an ideological challenge—the most serious expression of dissent Communists can make. It is also apparent that their point of view has won much sympathy in the Western Communist movement . . . It may also appear on the surface to be a relatively minor matter at a time when the international Communist movement is being tested by many internal stresses. But the Jewish Question and anti-semitism lie at the very root of Marxist attitudes to racialism. The Western Communist movement is aware of its vulnerability by association, to charges of anti-Jewish discrimination in the USSR. Can they make the Soviet authorities equally aware?<sup>147</sup>

---

147 *Jews in Eastern Europe* Vol. III No. 1, November 1964, p. 17.

## AUSTRALIAN COMMUNISTS, PROGRESSIVES AND SOVIET JEWRY

### Australian Communists and Soviet Jewry.

In view of Australia's geographical isolation, the marginal role of Jews in the Party and the absence of a numerically strong intellectual element—the Australian Communist Party was never really confronted with the question of Soviet Jewry.

Even in 1956 following Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin, the Jewish Question which was badly agitating the European and North American Parties, barely caused a stir. In 1953, J. D. Blake, then a member of the CP. Secretariat, who during the "Doctors' Plot" had attacked "some of our Jewish comrades" who "tended to act more like Zionists than Communists",<sup>148</sup> publicly apologised to Jewish Communists and regretted having described Zionism as nothing but "bourgeois nationalism".<sup>149</sup> Apart from this vague reference, the Communist press does not suggest that the issue was of great consequence.

Only one pro-Communist group took up the Jewish Question—the Melbourne based Jewish Progressive Centre which catered primarily for Yiddish speaking Communists and sympathisers. It had established itself as one of the staunchest defenders of Stalin's Jewish policy and in 1953 had gone so far as to organise public campaigns to justify the "Prague Trials" and "Doctors Plot".

After considerable internal controversy, the Jewish Progressive Centre in September 1956 belatedly wrote a letter to the "Soviet Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries" criticising Stalin's treatment of the Jews and soliciting further information regarding the existing state of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union.<sup>150</sup>

The reply was most unsatisfactory. It denied that Stalin had committed injustices to Jews as such, attempted to demonstrate that Soviet Jews had full civic equality, and insisted that the Jews themselves wished to avoid the "humiliation of ghettos . . . and segregation of Jewish culture". The "national tongue" of the Soviet Jew was "either Russian or the language of the Republic where they live".<sup>151</sup>

---

148 *Communist Review* April 1953.

149 *Tribune* August 15, 1956.

150 September 15, 1956.

151 December 20, 1956.



Three months later the Jewish Progressive Centre replied. They appealed to the Soviet Union to make cultural restitution for the "destructive cloud" that commenced "with the opening of the Beria epoch in the years 1936, 1937".

The argument that Soviet Jewry did not desire Jewish culture was strongly rejected:

A national culture does not disappear overnight, not even in one generation. Precisely because of our own experience, we are convinced that the problems arising from these changes must not be solved mechanically and by administrative measures . . . . To forcibly hasten the end of a people's culture, even a weakling one, is not just, not humane, and not permissible.

In reply to the assertion that Soviet Jews enjoyed civic equality, the Jewish Progressive Centre retorted:

That is not all. We Jews in Australia enjoy full civic rights, just as Jews do in many other democratic countries. But we do not make a fuss about it. Jews here, too, are free to occupy positions in all spheres of the national economy and culture and government.<sup>152</sup>

This outspoken letter was published by Communist Party newspapers in Poland, Israel, Canada, Argentine and other countries. About May 1958, *Outlook*, a Sydney based bi-monthly initiated by Communists all of whom subsequently defected or were expelled, included it as a section of a roneoed symposium entitled *Documents on the Position of the Jewish People in the USSR*. The publication also included extracts from the writings of Salsberg, Professor Levy and other Communists. But it was not taken up by the Australian Communist press. One is tempted to conclude that after "having done their duty" the Jewish Progressive Centre did not press too hard to make the question a major issue within Australian Communist circles. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that after having signed their name to such a dignified and humane letter, the Jewish Progressive Centre then proceeded to harass Jewish newspapers from 1957 to 1964 with a stream of letters and statements clearly contradicting the content and spirit of their March 1957 protest.

From 1957, for about five years, the Australian Party followed the standard line of overseas Communist Parties with regard to the Soviet Jewish question. But generally speaking, the issue simply did not exist. All that happened was an occasional *Novosti Press Agency* reprint in *Tribune* or *Guardian* giving the official Soviet viewpoint.

In 1962, the Australian Jewish community initiated a major campaign to focus public attention on the plight of Soviet

---

152 March 27, 1957.

Jewry.<sup>153</sup> This ultimately brought about the first Australian Communist confrontation with the issue of Soviet Jewry.

Judah Waten, a Jewish Communist writer, emerged as the Communist Party expert and guide on the subject. Waten is no Paul Novick. By the brutal neo-Stalinist methodology he employed, and the obvious relish with which he handled the question, it was clear that his earlier approach to the question of Soviet Jewry had in no way been "influenced" by the facts that had emerged in 1956.<sup>153a</sup>

A series of unsigned articles dealing with Soviet Jewry written by Waten, began appearing in the pages of *Tribune* and *Guardian*.<sup>154</sup> The whole question was merely a Santamaria, D.L.P., fascist, Liberal stunt:

At a meeting in the office of a well known lawyer, representatives of *The Bulletin*, a Liberal M.P., a representative of the National Civic Council and several D.L.P. influenced members of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies mapped out the campaign against the Soviet Union using the most fraudulent anti-Soviet material.<sup>155</sup>

Following the publication of an article outlining the plight of Soviet Jewry in *The Bulletin*,<sup>156</sup> the Soviet Embassy in Canberra also moved into the fray. Parliamentarians were approached and briefed and vast quantities of *Novosti Press* releases and other handouts denying the existence of anti-semitism in the USSR widely distributed. The USSR Press Attache, Mr. V. Gamzeichshikov, wrote a long vitriolic letter to *The Bulletin* in which undiplomatic language predominated and claimed that

---

153 On March 5, 1962, when the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies unanimously carried a resolution to this effect.

153a Waten was expelled from the Communist Party in 1942. It is significant that he rejoined the party in mid-1956 precisely when the Communist Party was having difficulties with its intellectuals. He rapidly assumed the role of chief Australian apologist for Soviet policy towards the Jews but went much further and defended Stalinist anti-semitism. For example after visiting the Soviet Union in 1958 he went so far as to state: "There was never any anti-semitism or race discrimination in the Soviet Union, despite the crimes committed against some Jewish writers and cultural workers by Beria's associates, crimes committed for political, not racial reasons" (*Tribune*, March 11, 1959). In a similar vein when reviewing Manning Clark's book *Meeting Soviet Man* (*Tribune* March 9, 1960) he criticised Professor Clark in these words: "He trots out all the supposed crimes of the past, such as the persecution of the Jews, as if it had actually occurred, giving currency to one of the most vicious lies ever told about the Soviet Union".

154 *Guardian* May 3, August 2, October 18, November 22, November 29, December 19, 1962. September 5, October 21, 1963. *Tribune* October 17, October 24, October 31, November 7, 1962.

155 *Guardian* November 29, 1962.

156 *The Bulletin* September 29, 1962.

"Frankly speaking, Jews in the USSR are enjoying even better conditions compared with other Soviet nationalities".<sup>157</sup>

On October 18, 1962 the Minister for External Affairs announced that the Australian Government would raise the question of Soviet Jewry at the United Nations. This took place two weeks later.<sup>158</sup>

Soviet authorities were apparently concerned by this, because in addition to an intensification of activity on the part of the Soviet Embassy, Moscow Radio broadcast a series of English language programmes specially written by Aaron Vergelis, designed to refute the "vicious lies" being spread by "ignorant Australians".<sup>159</sup> In addition, Mr. Samuel Rozin of *Novosti Press Agency*, took the unprecedented step of writing a long letter from "Pushkin Square, Moscow" to *The Bulletin* in which, amongst other matters, Moscow's Chief Rabbi was "quoted" as having allegedly reprimanded the "ill informed Australian gentlemen" who "tell untruths about our life".<sup>160</sup>

The Communist Party also felt obliged to counter the impact made by the Australian Government's decision to raise the question at the United Nations. The greatest obstacle was dealing with the documentary evidence of Soviet anti-semitism that was being presented by Jewish leaders—particularly anti-semitic extracts from the Soviet press. At first, efforts were made to justify such articles as legitimate anti-religious propaganda.<sup>161</sup> When this line of approach failed, Judah Waten stepped in and solved the problem by questioning the authenticity of the quotations and demanding to see reproductions of original articles.<sup>161a</sup>

When these were produced, Waten made the extraordinary assertion that the photostatic reproductions could not "be treated as evidence of anything". Waten also asserted that the blood libel article which had appeared in the *Dagestan Kommunist* was a fake despite the fact that in his letter to *The Bulletin*

---

157 *The Bulletin* October 20, 1962.

158 The full text of the statement on Soviet Jewry made by Australia's United Nations representative, is included as an appendix to the "Dissent" publication of the *Socialist International Study Group Report*. Today, even a Communist would have to concede that it reads as an extremely moderate statement on the subject, far more temperate than the recent critical writings by some Western Communists.

159 Radio Moscow English language broadcasts (South East Asia and Australia), November 21, 22 and 23, 1962.

160 *The Bulletin* January 12, 1963.

161 Paul Mortier in a letter to *The Bulletin* December 22, 1962.

161a Judah Waten in a letter to *The Bulletin* December 22, 1962.

Rozin of the *Novosti Press Agency* had conceded that the article was genuine.<sup>162</sup>

Waten's cynicism was reflected when at about the same time he wrote an article for the Communist press in which he violently attacked Emanuel Litvinoff, the respected editor of *Jews in Eastern Europe* as a cold war warrior and forger. Waten accused Litvinoff of using documents whose "ultimate source is the United States where there are many experts in the production of cold war 'technically excellent montage'."<sup>163</sup> This violent calumny has yet to be retracted by the Australian Communist press.

A little later the Party reproduced Herbert Aptheker's American Communist pamphlet denying the existence of Soviet anti-semitism. It carried a brief foreword by Harry Stein suggesting that the Australian U.N. intervention "was part of a plot aimed at splitting the Labour Party" and had been engineered by a combination of "Santamaria's National Civic Council, News Weekly, the Packer press, the Liberal Party, and certain reactionary leaders in the Melbourne Jewish community". Stein also claimed that it was "an international disgrace" that a Government which "refuses to bar vile anti-semitic material from the post, [and] whose supporters bar Jews from golf and other clubs" should have the "audacity" to raise such a "fraudulent" issue on a United Nations level.<sup>164</sup>

In March 1964, the Jewish community again initiated a public campaign relating to Soviet Jewry, this time centred on the *Kichko* book. Public protest meetings were held and a pamphlet consisting of reproductions of some of the caricatures, together with extracts and commentary on the *Kichko* book was widely distributed.<sup>165</sup>

By 1964 Judah Waten was no longer contributing articles defending Soviet anti-semitism to the Communist press. But even so, compared to protests from other Western Communist Parties

---

162 *The Bulletin* February 2, 1963.

163 *Tribune* February 2, 1963.  
*Guardian* February 7, 1963.

164 Herbert Aptheker, *The Fraud of Anti-Semitism*. Foreword by Harry Stein: Current Book Distributors, Sydney, 1963.

165 20,000 copies were published. This move brought about a hysterical reaction from conservative quarters within the Jewish Community who tend to look askance at any type of militant action. In this case they were fearful that the caricatures would poison the minds of the people seeing them and "provide anti-semitic material for Eric Butler". This approach was supported by "a committee of Jewish members of the CPA" in the *Guardian* May 7, 1964.

prior to the CPSU Ideological Committee's condemnation, the Australian Party was very slow to act. The first to break the ice was Rex Mortimer Editor of the *Guardian*, who made an impromptu statement to the *Australian Jewish News* on April 3, condemning the book. This was reproduced in the *Guardian*.<sup>166</sup>

Two weeks later the Jewish Progressive Centre released the text of a letter it had sent to the Soviet Ambassador. The letter strongly condemned the *Kichko* book, noted that other anti-semitic articles had appeared previously in the Soviet press, and concluded from this that the Soviet Government was not taking adequate and prompt measure to prevent anti-Jewish publications from appearing. It urged the Soviet Government to remedy this in the future and take legal action against those responsible for the *Kichko* book.<sup>167</sup> This letter was important mainly because it appeared to reflect a change of policy from the intransigent and dogmatic approach adopted since 1958 by the Jewish Progressive Centre, on matters relating to Soviet Jewry. The letter was not reproduced in the Australian Communist press. Instead, at about the same time, rather belatedly, as the Soviet Government had already criticised the book two weeks earlier, *Tribune* associated itself with other Western Communist condemnations. The opening remarks were rather tortuous—citing the Soviet withdrawal of the book as proof that "contrary to Australia and other capitalist countries, anti-semitism is against the law in the Soviet Union". The statement then warned that:

Occasionally manifestations of anti-semitism such as Kichko's book . . . have a certain historical logic, but remain a cause for deep concern. Protests help the Soviet leaders in their struggle against this evil . . . Because of centuries of suffering in Christian Europe, the Jewish people attach to their faith an emotional significance transcending purely religious limits. Therefore people scientifically criticising Judaism have a special responsibility to guard against forms of expression which can rekindle anti-semitic ideas.<sup>168</sup>

This statement was hardly breathtaking in its scope compared to those of other Communist Parties, but for Australian Communists it was an important step in the right direction. Unfortunately it was taken no further, not even when a copy of the anti-semitic *Mayatsky* book—condemned by leading overseas Communist Parties—was brought to the attention of Communist leaders.

It was also significant that the theoretical journal of the Australian Communist Party saw fit to publish an outdated over-

---

166 *Guardian* April 2, 1964.

167 *Australian Jewish Herald* April 17, 1964.

168 *Tribune* April 29, 1964.

seas Communist apologia on the question of Soviet Jewry precisely when the *Kichko* book was under fire.<sup>169</sup> The *Guardian* issue reporting on the condemnation of the *Kichko* book also carried a fantastic article by "a committee of Jewish members of the Communist Party of Australia" which included the assertion that "the Soviet Union has never pursued an anti-semitic policy . . ."<sup>170</sup> It was clear that if Australian Jewish Communists were still going to deny Stalinist anti-semitism, there would not be policy changes without a struggle.

In June 1964, the pro-Chinese Communist Party (Marxist Leninist) published a strong attack on the Soviet Union for practising anti-semitism.<sup>171</sup> Coming precisely from those quarters which had previously strongly resisted the de-Stalinisation of the Australian Communist Party, it was clearly a cynical tactical move.

However, the break-away Communist Party (ML) did have a general impact on the CPA because by indulging freely in polemics with them, more "liberal" CPA elements began to come out into the open.<sup>172</sup>

Australia's strategic position in the world Communist Sino Soviet split, probably helped the liberalisers considerably. Their position ultimately became associated in the minds of outside observers with ideas popularised by the leadership of the Italian Communist Party, viz., greater autonomy, replacement of outworn slogans, elimination of Stalinism, and genuine co-operation with progressive non-Communist elements. Their philosophy was said to be expressed in Togliatti's memorandum released by the Italian Communists a month after his death.<sup>173</sup>

Togliatti's statement could well have far reaching implications for the fate of Soviet Jewry, despite the fact that the Jewish Question was not mentioned. However, some of the general principles enunciated were more than pertinent.

For example, Togliatti called for a "repudiation of revolutionary phrasemongering and opportunist practicalism"; he expressed his unwillingness to re-establish "a centralised international organisation" which might again interfere with the "autonomy of the Parties"; he appealed to Communists:

---

169 *Communist Review* May 1964, pp. 153-154.

170 *Guardian* April 16, 1964.

171 *Vanguard* June 1964.

172 For an excellent example see the article by CPA functionary Bernard Taft in *Guardian* April 16, 1964. Also "Some Comments on Intellectuals and Communism" by Rex Mortimer in *Communist Review*, August, 1963, pp. 270-271.

173 See the article by Luigo Longo in *Peace, Freedom and Socialism*, Vol. 7 No. 11, November 1964, pp. 2-9.

to show enough political daring to overcome dogmatism in all its forms, to advance and solve new problems in a new way, to adjust the methods of work to the rapidly changing political and social situation . . . we can and must act more boldly, discarding the outmoded formulae no longer conforming to present day reality.

Togliatti appealed for better relations with religious groups like the Catholics and the discarding of "the old atheistic propaganda" no longer of any use. Commenting on this, Luigi Longo, the Italian Communist leader, stated:

We consider it a mistake to regard religion as a weapon used by the conservative classes. On the contrary, sincere religious sentiment can make a valuable contribution to the struggle.<sup>178</sup>

Togliatti urged Communists to "act as champions of the freedom of intellectual life, freedom of artistic expression and scientific progress". He concluded by stating:

The problem meriting the greatest attention—this concerns both the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries—is however, that of overcoming the regime of restricting and suppressing democratic and personal freedom which was introduced by Stalin. We do not see an identical picture in all socialist countries in this respect. The general impression is that of slowness and resistance in the matter of returning to the Leninist norm, that ensured within the Party and outside it, a broad freedom for expression and debate in culture, art and also in politics. We find this slowness and this resistance difficult to explain, especially in view of the present situation, when capitalist encirclement no longer exists and economic construction has had tremendous success.

Togliatti apparently struck a chord with some members of the Communist Party of Australia.

Rex Mortimer, editor of the *Guardian* and a member of the Central Committee of the CPA, made front page headlines throughout the Australian and overseas Jewish press by an outspoken prepared statement on Soviet Jewry which he released late in November 1964, a week or so after his return from a visit to the Soviet Union.<sup>174</sup>

Mortimer said that he was "very concerned that problems relating to Soviet Jewry were still unresolved". Whilst the matter was in the process of being considered within the framework of the CPA, he expressed his "regret that the Australian Communist Party on the surface, was not more active in taking initiatives on this question". He added that "the Australian Communist Party was unfortunately not always 'as quick off the mark' in such matters as it should be". He emphasized that:

---

174 *Australian Jewish Herald* November 27, 1964.  
*Australian Jewish News* November 27, 1964.  
*Australian Jewish Times* December 4, 1964.  
*Sydney Jewish News* November 27, 1964.

the Communist Party of Australia has previously pointed out that constructive criticism of negative features of Soviet life assist rather than harm the cause of peace and socialism. The question of Soviet Jewry falls into this category!<sup>174</sup>

Mortimer's outspoken comments were correctly interpreted here and abroad as a most significant statement from a leading Communist functionary. The influential London *Jewish Chronicle* used the statement as the basis for its main editorial leader.<sup>175</sup>

Not surprisingly, Mortimer's remarks created a certain amount of friction within the Communist Party. In a manner that smacked of an indirect rebuke to Mortimer, the *Guardian* suggested that his published statements were extracts of wider discussions and might give "a false impression". But it also stressed that what Mortimer had stated was essentially "a re-statement of the Communist Party's publicly expressed views".<sup>176</sup>

It is also clear that some Jewish Communists did not welcome Mortimer's statement. They were alleged to have complained that Mortimer's unilateral action caused them to "lose face" in the Jewish community and should not have been made without prior consultations. Presumably to make up for this, Mortimer subsequently cosigned a letter with Bernard Taft, which was sent to the Jewish press, and was to some extent a restatement of the official Soviet position on the Jewish Question.<sup>177</sup> The letter was bitterly attacked in the same issue of the *Australian Jewish Herald* which editorially accused Jewish Communists of exerting pressure against "liberal" ideas, and attempting to stifle any possible breakthrough on the Soviet Jewry level.

Mortimer's stand represents a break with the "dogmatic" line hitherto adopted by the CPA. There is little doubt that it will be fiercely resisted as part and parcel of the overall "liberal" approach in which the question of Soviet Jewry is a symbolic representation. It is therefore no accident that those groups opposing dogmatic bureaucratic trends and neo Stalinism within the Soviet Union, have also been vocal on the question of anti-semitism. Seen in the perspective of major developments within

---

175 *Jewish Chronicle* December 4, 1964 (London).

176 *Guardian* December 3, 1964.

The statement by Mortimer and the shorter one by Taft appeared at the same time and were not condensations. Both Messrs. Taft and Mortimer personally checked and approved the complete texts prior to publication by the Jewish Press. Not a single word was omitted or added.

177 *Sydney Jewish News* December 17, 1964.

*Australian Jewish Herald* December 24, 1964.

*Australian Jewish News* December 24, 1964.



the international Communist movement—the growth of polycentrism, Italian style "liberalism", and the Sino-Soviet conflict—Soviet Jewry is basically only a marginal issue. But as a result of this new constellation, the Communist Party of Australia now occupies a particularly important role in the Pacific and South-East Asian international Communist movement. Hence, if Mortimer's approach were to be adopted, the CPA could have a much greater influence on Soviet leaders with regard to the Jewish Question than its numerical size and influence would suggest under normal circumstances.

#### **Australian Progressives and Soviet Jewry.**

The attitude of Communist Party members to specific issues is largely dependent on the type of leadership and policies laid down by the Party at a specific time. Inner Party democracy has never been extended to enable individual Communist Party members to take up issues freely in a "personal" capacity. Such restrictions of expression do not apply to pro-Communists and progressives. Their lack of initiative on the question of Soviet Jewry is therefore all the more disappointing and shameful.

To their credit, Australian progressives have been prominent in agitation against South African Apartheid, civil rights for Negroes in the United States, and the question of the Australian Aborigines. But with regard to the plight of Soviet Jewry there has been a virtual conspiracy of silence and deliberate evasion of any form of critical analysis of the question. When from time to time the suggestion was made that human rights are indivisible and that anti-semitism in particular, warrants progressive interest, the syndrome has invariably operated bringing back the response that those promoting the question are obstructing an easing of the cold war. In a similar vein, progressives tended to dismiss the Jewish community's agitation as a "provocation," and the case presented was usually labelled "hysterical and exaggerated" without further examination.

It is significant that proven friends of the Soviet Union like Britain's Bertrand Russell and America's Linus Pauling, who have publicly identified themselves with efforts to induce the Soviet leaders to put an end to anti-Jewish discrimination, do not have their counterparts in the Australian progressive camp. It is noteworthy that since 1958, not a single progressive journal even saw fit to publish a serious article analysing the question.

Racists and reactionaries like Eric Butler and the League of Rights, and their associates, are pernicious elements on the local scene. But it is a sad state of affairs in Australia when those identifying themselves as progressives become obsessed with the

necessity of exposing the above mentioned, yet at the same time reject any suggestion that the plight of three million Jews might also justify action.

It is a remarkable reflection of the cultural and political situation in Australia, that the people who militantly raised the question of Soviet Jewry outside the Jewish community were from sectors of the Liberal Party and organs of the NCC and DLP. This helped progressives ex post facto, to justify their silence on the matter because to their way of thinking, anything supported by Sir Robert Menzies, Mr. Santamaria or Australia's U.N. representative must automatically be unworthy.

This was taken to grotesque proportions during a Parliamentary Senate debate on the question of Soviet Jewry in 1962, when ALP Senators found themselves in the ludicrous position of opposing the move to raise the issue on a United Nations level.<sup>178</sup> The ALP has since brought its policy into line with its previous attitude and that of all other Democratic Socialist Parties.<sup>179</sup>

There is also no doubt that certain sections within the "Progressive Establishment" in this country still harbour conscious or unconscious neo-Stalinist tendencies. Mortimer's statement is known to have caused considerable resentment within these quarters. To have a leading Australian Communist contradict their dogmatic belief that Soviet authorities should only be approached by back door silent diplomacy, rather than open protest, was regarded as imprudent, irresponsible and adventurist.

As late as November 1964, Australian progressives appeared to be more dogmatic than ever. At the Australian Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament held in Sydney on October 25, 1964, "the criticism of the Soviet treatment of Jews was challenged and it was claimed that the danger to Jews and to the world came from a re-armed Germany."<sup>180</sup>

---

178 The less said about this episode the better. The debate took place in the Senate on October 18, 1962 and appears in *Hansard* of that date pp. 1008-1020. The equally bizarre conflict which followed this, between the ALP Victorian Central Executive and the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies can be assessed from the *ALP Confidential Circular*, November 5, 1962 (widely circulated "confidentially" throughout the Jewish Community), and the statement issued by the President of the Victorian ALP, Mr. Holt, on November 13, 1962.

179 See ALP letter to the Soviet Embassy reproduced as an appendix in *International Socialist Study Group Report on Soviet Jewry* published by *Dissent*, p. 42.

180 *Outlook* No. 6, December, 1964. The attitude of *Outlook* in publishing this without comment contrasts sharply with the policy the journal maintained during the 1957-1958 period when a series of articles critical of the Soviet

Bertrand Russell and Linus Pauling are leaders of the Peace movement in Britain and the United States. Yet Lord Russell could write to M. David Mayer, President of the International League for the Rights of Man, in October 1964, stating that:

The treatment of the Jews in the Soviet Union causes great worries. It is intolerable that Communist Party publications in a number of different republics should contain anti-Semitic material comparable to that of the "Sturmer". The denial of the usual cultural facilities as well as the harassing and the charges of 'parasitism' which only serve as pretexts for anti-semitic campaigns have made a strong impact on all those who oppose the cold war and are active in favour of international understanding.

It is a duty for the Left-wing movements especially to publicly make their voices heard so as not to let the cold war partisans have the exclusive moral responsibility for protests directed against the intolerable persecutions which seem reserved for Soviet Jews.

The absence of similar public expressions of concern regarding the question of Soviet Jewry by Bertrand Russell's Australian counterparts require no emphasis.

The Australian progressive attitude to Soviet Jewry is more untenable today than ever before. After Mortimer's clearcut statement, progressives no longer have an alibi for isolating themselves from a human rights issue involving racism—especially anti-semitism. To continue doing so would be tantamount to making a grotesque parody of standards of morality and political integrity.

---

treatment of the Jews was published (e.g. *Outlook* Vol. 1 No. 4, November-December 1957; *Outlook* Vol. 2 No. 3, June 1958; and the publication by *Outlook* about May 1958 of a special roneoed pamphlet entitled: *Documents on the position of the Jewish people in the USSR*).

## CONCLUSION

### The Critical Period Ahead.

Important and far reaching developments—particularly those affecting the structure of the World Communist movement—are likely to bring the question of Soviet Jewry to a head in the near future.

The ultimate outcome could largely be determined by the attitudes adopted by Communist Parties and friends of the Soviet Union. It is therefore the responsibility and task of the latter to convince the Soviet authorities that the protest movement relating to Soviet Jewry in Western countries has no bearing on the cold war in itself but is exclusively bound up with the question of human rights. The Left will also share the major burden of having to convince the Soviet leadership that a foreign policy of peaceful co-existence in itself is not enough. The nature of the contemporary situation demands that no State—particularly one based on the Marxist philosophy—permit internal repression of any of its minorities.

The *Jewish Chronicle* editorial comment on Rex Mortimer's statement concerning Soviet Jewry stated this forcefully:

It is a truism everywhere if not in Moscow, that the test of a nation's civilisation is to be found in its treatment of minorities. It is just because the Jews have been the world minority that their particular situation has been the touchstone of national health, not only in Europe, but also in North Africa and Latin America. Russia's stature in a world of burgeoning freedoms will not be measured by her military capabilities or her wheat production, but by the extent to which her people, all her peoples, enjoy equality of rights and opportunities.<sup>176</sup>

Professor Hyman Levy, the leading Marxist intellectual who visited the Soviet Union in 1956 as a member of the British Communist Party delegation, expressed similar sentiments:

The question that presses itself to the front is whether the Soviet Union . . . is failing to respond to one of the acid tests of Socialism. Are Jews once again, as under Czarism, being reduced to the level of second class citizens? If so, is this emerging out of a false analysis of the problems of this people? And what indeed is a second class Socialist citizen? If such a status for Jews is unquestionably accepted by non-Jews, does this not automatically reduce the latter to second class level there?<sup>181</sup>

---

181 Professor Hyman Levy, *Jews and the National Question*: London: Hillway Publishing Company, 1958, p. 93.

### **The New Leadership.**

The downfall of Premier Khrushchev in itself is unlikely to herald any major changes in Soviet policy towards the Jews. Little is known of the attitude of the new leaders.

However, the powerful pressures generating from wide sections of Western public opinion and the now vocal participation from certain Western Communist Parties, does make it likely that certain minor cultural concessions (already promised during Khrushchev's leadership) will be granted to Soviet Jewry.

There is a danger in this. If the publication in limited numbers of a few Yiddish works were to placate and halt the ferment that is now taking place in progressive and Communist quarters in the West, it would be most unfortunate. Nothing could be worse for the interests of Soviet Jewry than a repetition of the events of 1956-1957 when after a short and limited burst of spirited protest, all Western Communist parties, again fell into line and reassumed the role of acting as public relations centres, justifying the status of Soviet Jewry. Such a course would in reality reflect a victory on a much wider level for the dogmatic and conservative elements in the USSR who correctly assess the Jewish issue as a measuring rod as to how far liberalisation tendencies can be resisted.

What must be done is to convince the Soviet leadership that a few token concessions here and there will not solve the problem. One has to get down to the roots of the question of Soviet Jewry. This will involve facing the reality of cultural and religious discrimination; ending policies based on quotas or the "numerus clausus"; issuing a clear directive to cease the flow of anti-semitic articles in the mass media and other publications; conducting a ruthless purge against anti-semitic elements within the bureaucracy and judiciary; initiating a clear cut educational campaign to combat anti-semitism, and sanctioning the reunification of families separated as a result of the war. In other words, ensuring that the Jews in the USSR are not treated worse than their kinsmen in Poland and other Communist countries.

### **The Reunification of Jewish Families.**

An important indication of a genuine change of heart on the part of the Soviet leadership in relation to the Jewish question will be the extent to which they are prepared to follow the examples set by other Communist countries, and enable the reunification of Jewish families separated as a result of war.

Many of these individual tragedies resulted from the incorporation of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, parts of Poland, Ru-

mania and other East European countries into the USSR. Yet in so far as non-Jews are concerned, repatriation agreements between the USSR and other Communist countries in Eastern Europe solved most of these problems by enabling Poles, Rumanians, and Germans to resettle in their own countries.

Reunification of families to Western countries would not be setting any precedents. In recent years people of Greek and Spanish national origin left the Soviet Union for their own countries and a reverse repatriation—from Western countries to the Soviet Union—of Armenians, Russians and Cossacks has been conducted by the Soviet Government—many being resettled in the USSR after having lived in the West for generations.<sup>182</sup>

The one community which suffered most at the hands of the Nazis, i.e. the Jews, still have many thousands of individuals in the USSR who have been separated from their closest relatives in other countries, mostly Israel. It would be difficult to exaggerate the hardship and pain created by this situation. Other East European Communist states such as Poland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Rumania have allowed Jews in similar positions to join their families in Israel but the Soviet Government has granted exit permits only to a few, mainly elderly persons.

#### **A Guide for Action for Progressives and Marxists.**

The plight of Soviet Jewry is clearly bound up with the question of human rights. This applies especially to progressives because of the key role that the elimination of racism and national discrimination assumes in Marxist ideology.

In December 1963, Lord Bertrand Russell wrote a letter to Premier Khrushchev which was co-signed by Professor Linus Pauling and a number of others with proven records of friendship to the Soviet Union. No better conclusion to this survey can be provided than quoting pertinent extracts from this communication. One can only express the hope that it might serve as a future basis for action for Australian progressives.

*"Although aware and appreciative of the improvement in the lives of Jews in the Soviet Union through the abolition of the legal disabilities of Czarist days, we are gravely concerned by the evident difficulties experienced by the Jews as a Soviet nationality.*

*"The Jews have been subjected to a long and continuous persecution in the history of Europe. The culmination of this*

---

182 For an interesting documented example of this, see the article "Soviet Zionism—Armenians and their Motherland" in *Jews in Eastern Europe* Vol. III No. 1, November 1964, pp. 72-74.

*cruelty was the wholesale extermination of Jews during our lifetimes, one of the most barbaric crimes in all human history, and the tragic fragmentation of families of survivors in the chaotic aftermath of this holocaust. If ever a people were deserving of understanding and sympathetic treatment after harsh suffering, it is the Jews of Europe.*

*"We greatly hope, therefore, that the Jews will be permitted full cultural lives, religious freedom and the rights of a national group, in practice as well as in law; and that people separated for many years from their closest kin who have since become resettled in Israel and elsewhere will be permitted at last to re-unite.*

*"Many of us are lifelong non-believers in any religion. Many of us have written and campaigned against superstition. Nonetheless, we believe that the freedom to practise religious views should be allowed Jews of the Soviet Union in the same manner that such freedom is granted people of other religious persuasion. We are concerned that the process of restitution of Jewish cultural activities has been slow.*

*"The journals and theatres of much smaller groups are more plentiful and the closure of synagogues and shortage of religious facilities have impaired Jews in the pursuit of their beliefs. We are deeply troubled that there should be articles in Soviet journals of many Republics expressing hostility to Jewish people as such, and using terms such as 'vermin', 'blood-suckers', 'parasites', in combination with caricatures of Jews.*

*"We understand the objections you have expressed to economic offences. We feel, however, that the death penalty upon citizens accused of these crimes harms the Soviet Union and allows those hostile to her to malign her. We consider the fact that sixty per cent of those executed are Jews to be gravely disturbing. We are troubled by the prison sentences imposed for the preparation by individuals of unleavened bread.*

*"During the last years of Stalin's life, Soviet Jews were totally deprived of their national culture and the means of expressing it. Leading intellectuals were imprisoned or executed by extra-legal practices which have since been condemned.*

*"We fervently hope that nothing will take place which obliges us to believe that Jews are receiving unjust treatment in contradiction to the law, and that those who break Soviet laws concerning economic offences will be treated without undue severity instead of being put to death.*

*"We cannot too strongly appeal for understanding of the difficulty experienced by those in the West who are working dedi-*

*catedly to ease tension, promote peaceful co-existence, and to end the Cold War. These objects are harmed by events which those who desire the Cold War can exploit, and which trouble us who wish peace and good relations.*

*"We speak as friends, but as friends whose friendship requires honesty".<sup>183</sup>*

---









SOVIET JEWRY AND HUMAN RIGHTS . . . ISI LEIBLER