

SOVIET  
JEWRY

AND

The  
Australian  
Communist  
Party

Documents...

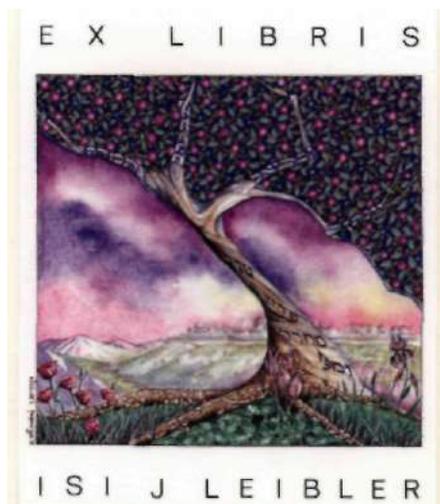
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**SOVIET JEWRY**  
**and**  
**THE AUSTRALIAN**  
**COMMUNIST PARTY**

**. . . Documents . . .**

With an Introduction by  
SAM LIPSKI.

*A Human Rights Research Publication.*

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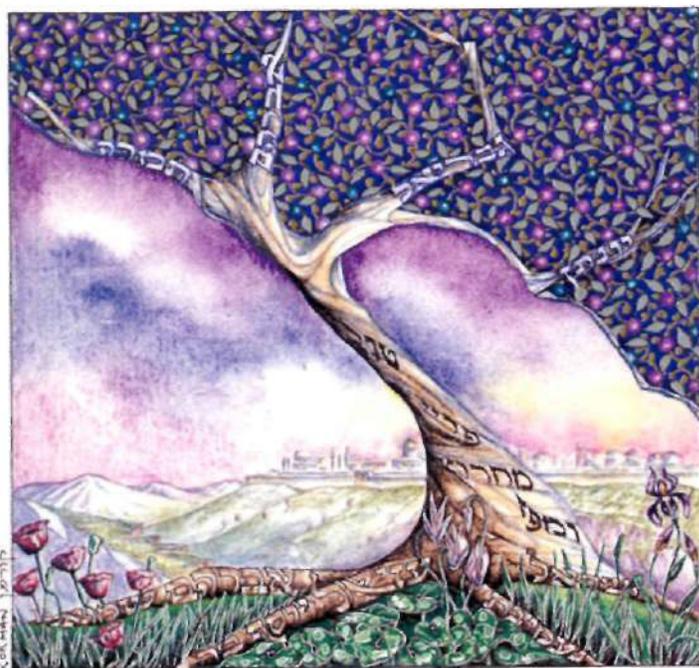
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E X L I B R I S



I S I J L E I B L E R

(I)

## INTRODUCTION

by SAM LIPSKI.

*[Sam Lipski is a graduate in Arts of the Melbourne University and is at present News Editor of The Bulletin.]*

This collection of documents, letters and articles provides a tract of our times. For the interest in the internationally unique exchange of correspondence and argument between Mr. I. Leibler and the Communist Party leadership in Australia goes beyond the central item of concern in the exchange—the position of Soviet Jewry. It provides us as well with a microcosm to study in close-up the impact of change in the Communist world, the efficacy and limits of "Dialogue" between Communists and non-Communists, the wisdom of militant protest against the abuses of the Soviet regime in matters like its discrimination against its Jewish population, and the future of the Labor movement in Australia. A personal experience may indicate for instance how seriously the issue is being taken inside the Communist Party of Australia.

In the last twelve months journalists in Sydney have been presented with a new phenomenon—a press conference for members of the "capitalist" press at which leading members of the Communist Party of Australia Central Committee answer questions and discuss C.P.A. policies. At the February 1966 conference one of the main items for discussion was the report of heavy prison sentences for the Russian writers, Sinyavsky and Daniel. Anxious to promote the more liberal image it is currently seeking for itself the C.P.A. was quick to add its voice to the protests of other Communist parties, particularly in Europe, against the exceptionally harsh sentences.

This prompted one journalist to ask Mr. Laurie Aarons, the C.P.A. General Secretary, whether this was the first time that the C.P.A. had protested against an official act of the Soviet Union. Mr. Aarons looked embarrassed, but after a little thought answered, "Well, yes, I suppose it is really". At this point I reminded Mr. Aarons that the C.P.A. had already gone on record as partially opposing some anti-Semitic practices in the Soviet Union and that it was in the forefront of Communist agitation in this field. Mr. Aarons looked even more embarrassed and agreed that the Party had expressed some differences of opinion on the matter. The moment I raised the question of Soviet anti-Semitism one of the party's leading functionaries, Mr. Harry Stein, left the table and re-appeared almost immediately with copies of the

C.P.A. booklet, "Soviet Jewry—A reply to Mr. I. Leibler" which he proceeded to distribute to all the journalists present.

This seemingly unimportant incident seems worth mentioning in a foreword to the documents which follow because it does in fact illustrate how the issues they raise have come to loom large in the thinking and public behaviour of the C.P.A. It also demonstrates what the documents show in detail—the ambivalence of the Communists towards the question of Soviet anti-Semitism. On the one hand on a number of occasions now they have admitted their "concern" at certain manifestations of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union but on the other they must not seem to be excessively critical of the Moscow regime. The result is the distinctive pattern of the unique correspondence which the leading members of the party have had with Mr. Leibler.

Each letter shows how painful and how guarded the whole process of admitting to some of the realities of Soviet anti-Semitism has been for the Communists. For it must be remembered that while the last of the letters in the exchange show some softening of attitude (after continual reminders of racist newspaper articles, economic crimes trials, and the suppression of the rights to cultural and religious expression) this has occurred only recently, after years of stubborn and vehement denials by the Communist party that there was *any* anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.

An inspection of the files of the local Communist Press over the years 1962-64 shows an unusually large number of special articles—some written by local Communist figures such as writer Judah Waten, others being reprints of handouts from Soviet news agencies—all designed to flatly deny there was any discrimination against Jews and to discredit in the strongest terms men like Leibler who had commenced a vigorous campaign of protest and publicity within the Australian Jewish community and outside it.

The first document in this present collection is therefore quite correctly labelled "The Initial Breakthrough". It would have been more damning, but no less correct, to have called it "The Great About-face". What makes this first statement in late 1964 of special importance is the international background against which it occurred, the internal consequences it has had since, and the repercussions it will continue to have, and the possible effects the developments it foreshadowed might have on the situation of Soviet Jewry.

The polycentrism of the Communist world is now widely acknowledged. With it has come the dislocations and fragmentations which have accompanied the transition from the monolithic character of international Communism under Stalin to the present internecine jostling between independent Communist power-centres. In the process the Australian Communist Party has split

into a Peking-oriented minority faction and the much larger Moscow-oriented C.P.A. But within the C.P.A. the stresses and strains of polycentrism and ideological warfare have led to further factional division. These divisions are not only between the old-time Stalinist dogmatists and the new modernisers as is sometimes suggested. The modernisers themselves are divided between the revisionists—mainly intellectuals—and the still suspicious party bureaucrats.

For the time being both these groups are riding tandem with all the looking over the shoulder and watching the man in front that is implied in the metaphor. The intellectuals, Melbourne-based and led by Rex Mortimer, until this year the editor of the party's Melbourne newspaper "The Guardian", are busily trying to implement the Togliatti Manifesto; they are eager to have "dialogue" with non-Communists and even anti-Communists; they are attempting to attract intellectuals, regain the full confidence of students and academics and eventually unite with the left-wing and sympathetic elements of the A.L.P.

The bureaucrats, led by Laurie and Eric Aarons, are Sydney-based. They are also anxious to extend their influence within the wider labor movement but are less concerned than the Italian wing with the importance of the progressive-liberal image so assiduously cultivated by Mortimer and his supporters.

In this shadow-sparring the issue of Soviet anti-Semitism has assumed special importance. For to men like Mortimer it is the perfect issue on which to take a stand. By one gesture they can demonstrate the party's independence from Moscow, its attachment to liberal principles, and its willingness to admit past and present sins in the Socialist homeland. This is a dangerous path for the party and men like Laurie Aarons know it. Hence the reluctance and the ambivalence which have accompanied the public admission of past "errors" and which the interested reader will recognise in the very choice of language adopted by Mr. Aarons in his correspondence.

The exchange of letters also highlights a basic truth about dialogue with Communists. It is simply that there is a limit to the nature of the "Dialogue". There can be tough, hard-headed, political bargaining with the Communists about particular points but there can be no concessions by them on major issues affecting the basis of the Soviet totalitarian state. Insofar as "dialogue" simply means hard-headed bargaining with Communists on matters of practical business concern to both parties, results can be achieved. Yet to assume that "dialogue" can also lead to some kind of moral or ideological rapprochement with totalitarian communism is a dangerous illusion. This is clearly borne out by Leibler's correspondence. It is also of supreme importance that

the men entering into the "dialogue" must be thoroughly knowledgeable of communist affairs—like Mr. Leibler—and under no illusions about the nature and character of the people they are dealing with. "Dialogue" with starry-eyed innocents representing the non-Communist side invariably rebounds to the advantage of the Communists.

Finally there are some lessons about the value of intelligent protest and continued publicity accompanied by irrefutable evidence. In this context it is necessary to say something about Mr. Leibler's personal role. In 1962 when the question of public protest against Soviet anti-Semitism became the single most important issue facing the Australian Jewish community, Mr. Leibler in his capacity as an executive member of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies was in the forefront of those who advocated a militant approach. But at that time the Communist Party's line was that there was no such thing as anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, a line echoed by many left-wing intellectuals. Mr. Leibler was vilified in the Communist Press. Even within the Jewish Community there were many who doubted the wisdom of Mr. Leibler's tactics of publicity and open protest.

It was, however, this view which won out over the opposition, some of it from within the Jewish community, and led to the now historic action of the Australian Government raising the question of Soviet anti-Semitism in the United Nations.

Since that time Mr. Leibler, a first class honours graduate in political science from Melbourne University, has earned an international reputation for his continuing and careful documentation of the position of Soviet Jewry. His book "Soviet Jewry and Human Rights" has been widely reviewed and attracted special overseas attention as well as being discussed and debated in the Australian Communist Party and left-wing circles.

When the book appeared in April 1965, the C.P.A. had already attracted world-wide attention to itself by its initial statements critical of the Soviet Union. But the publication of the text of the Leibler-C.P.A. correspondence which began in August, 1965, together with the remarkable interview given by Mr. E. Aarons in the "Tribune", the party's official organ, on December 15, 1965, which grew out of it, will have an even greater impact.

Yet whatever the effects on the domestic intrigues of the Communists in Australia or however interesting the documents and letters are for the student of polycentric ideological developments, the overriding and central concern of Mr. Leibler throughout the exchange has been to bring pressure to bear on the Soviet Union in what is basically a question of human rights. By this standard it may be asked what has been the value of the exchange? How will it affect the position of Soviet Jewry? The most encourag-

ing indications are those which are quoted in the interview given by Mr. E. Aarons after his visit to the Soviet Union. In it he refers to the important question of the liberalisation of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union which according to Aarons is under review by the Soviet authorities. This would mean the Soviet Union would allow Jews to join their relatives in other countries. The letter from Mr. V. Loginov, the USSR Ambassador to Australia, does not help to confirm this report and so far there has not been any real corroborating evidence that the Soviet authorities are doing anything on the issue. But what is of the utmost importance is that the issues are now being discussed by Communists at all.

If the Soviet authorities are only discussing the explosive question of emigration then there has been a breakthrough because liberalising emigration laws would affect not only Jews but would raise basic questions about the rights of all other minorities in the U.S.S.R. That the Soviet authorities might be willing to open this Pandora's box shows that the protests have been felt.

There is still of course the possibility, as Mr. Leibler points out, that the Communist authorities were deliberately lying — not for the first time. There are, however, some recent indications of a possibly significant change in Soviet foreign policy towards Israel, a change which has been accelerated in the first months of 1966 and would of course be quite unrelated to events in the C.P.A. It is possible that a liberalisation of Jewish emigration is being considered as part of this new policy.

If this happens it will be a great step forward but it will be only a step. As Mr. Leibler points out in his reply to Mr. L. Churchward:

"Nothing short of a genuine restitution of rights for Soviet Jewry can be accepted . . . The Soviet authorities cannot possibly defend or justify their existing policy towards the Jews. The events of the last six months are a clear illustration that the Soviet leadership is sensitive to open protests and the impact of public opinion. It is the responsibility of all men of good will who respect human rights to ensure that the fires of the protest movement be maintained, so long as Soviet Jews continue to experience discrimination".

It is in this spirit which Mr. Leibler approached his contacts with the C.P.A. And it is his purposeful approach which has led to what is hoped may be a beginning, however small, to the end of Soviet Jewry's long and sad history of persecution and discrimination.



(II)

## THE INITIAL BREAKTHROUGH

*On the 27th November 1964, the Australian Jewish Herald published statements by two members of the Communist Party of Australia Central Committee. They were Mr. B. Taft and Mr. R. Mortimer. Mr. Mortimer was until January 1966 the Editor of "Guardian", one of the two national organs of the Australian Communist Party.*

### AUST. COMMUNISTS ON SOVIET JEWRY

Mr. Isi Leibler advises that Mr. Bernard Taft and Mr. Rex Mortimer, leading members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia, have commented on Australian Communist Party attitudes to the question of Soviet Jewry.

Mr. Taft stated: "Within the framework of advances made by Soviet Jewry, which are more far-reaching than similar advances made anywhere else in the world by Jews in the same period, as a result of the period of the cult of the personality, there unfortunately still remain certain problems and difficulties demanding attention and correction. The appearance of the Kichko book is an example of this. These matters are being attended to and I am confident will receive further attention in the immediate future".

Mr. Rex Mortimer, editor of the Communist weekly "Guardian" who has just returned from the Soviet Union, expressed satisfaction with Lord Bertrand Russell's recent references to the Australian Communist Party as one of the parties that do publicly criticise anti-semitic literature in the U.S.S.R.

Mr. Mortimer expressed his "regret that the Australian Communist Party, on the surface, was not more active in taking initiatives on this question". He did add that "the Australian Communist Party was unfortunately not always 'as quick off the mark' in such matters as it should be".

Mr. Mortimer also stated that he was "very concerned that problems relating to Soviet Jewry were still unresolved". He emphasised that the matter was "being considered within the framework of the Australian Communist Party" but felt that he was not authorised to make a formal press statement at this stage.

Mr. Mortimer emphasised that "The Communist Party of Australia has previously pointed out that constructive criticism of negative features of Soviet life assist rather than harm the causes of peace and socialism. The question of Soviet Jewry falls into this category".

As a co-editor of the Marxist quarterly journal "Arena" Mr.

Mortimer intimated a willingness to accept a comprehensive article relating to the plight of Soviet Jewry for publication.

These texts have been authorised by Messrs. Taft and Mortimer.

*Mr. R. Mortimer's position was further clarified in a letter written to Mr. Isi Leibler which was subsequently published in the Preface to Mr. Leibler's book entitled Soviet Jewry and Human Rights.*

205 Lennox St.,  
Richmond.  
20 February, 1965.

Dear Mr. Leibler:

Thank you for your manuscript. After very careful consideration, the Editorial Board of *Arena* have had to decide that in view of its great length your study in its present form could not be incorporated in *Arena*.

However, speaking personally, I am sure you are aware from our private discussions and my publicly expressed views that the question of Soviet Jewry is one that concerns me seriously. As a Communist, I cannot but react to any manifestations of discrimination and prejudice wherever they may occur.

I do not share your political views. I am also aware that people of notoriously inhumane views have involved themselves in campaigns about Soviet Jewry for the sole purpose of discrediting the U.S.S.R., whose general contribution to the welfare and progress of mankind is, in my opinion, profound and unassailable. Needless to say, I will not associate myself with these individuals, and their purposes, under any circumstances.

However, having carefully read your article, and having also made independent studies of the subject, I am convinced that the massive documentation you have assembled poses a substantial and disturbing problem for Marxists and people of the left everywhere, even though they may challenge your interpretation at various points. This is already evidenced by material that has appeared in Communist publications here and overseas. On such a basic humanitarian issue, we cannot rest satisfied while there is any cause for questioning whether Jewish citizens of the Soviet Union have fully the same rights and security as any other nationality group. For this reason I consider that material of the kind contained in your study should be widely read and probed particularly by friends of the Soviet Union.

I have been asked by the *Arena* Board to inform you that it is prepared to accept a shorter version of your study for publication in a forthcoming issue, to a maximum length of 6,000 words.

Yours faithfully,  
**REX MORTIMER.**

(III)

**OPINION ON THE LEFT**

*The publication of Mr. Leibler's book Soviet Jewry and Human Rights led to reviews in most Australian newspapers and journals and proved a test-case for opinion on the left.*

*If all Australian Communists had not yet shown signs of self-criticism, the "friends" of the Soviet Union were more forthright. Such a one was Brian Fitzpatrick in the March 1965 issue of his "Labour Newsletter". The review reads as follows . . .*

'SOVIET JEWRY AND HUMAN RIGHTS' by I. Leibler.

Anti-semitism in the Soviet Union was being canvassed more than a dozen years ago, before Stalin died after nearly 30 years' rule. Hopeful friends of Soviet Russia (like ourselves) believed it no more than we did the stories about slave-camps in Siberia. We were wrong. It's not fun to admit this; but the evidence seems irresistible. Much of it is assembled in Mr. Isi Leibler's 80-page booklet (10s.6d.) just published (116 Kooyong Road, SE7, Victoria). The author is prominent in Jewish affairs in Australia, a young first-class political science graduate of the University of Melbourne.

His booklet, heavily and depressingly documented, is prefaced by a letter from Mr. Rex Mortimer, lawyer, sensible and well-informed man well known to us, member of the central committee of the (Moscow-oriented) Communist Party of Australia, delegate in December 1964 to an international CP conference in Moscow. Mr. Mortimer writes that Mr. Leibler's printed brief 'poses a substantial and disturbing problem for Marxists and people of the Left everywhere . . . For this reason I consider that material of the kind contained in your study should be widely read and probed particularly by friends of the Soviet Union . . .' We agree.

*The Marxist journal Arena, the Editorial Board of which Mr. Rex Mortimer is a member, also recognised the evidence of discrimination amassed in Mr. Leibler's book, in its Winter issue.*

SOVIET JEWRY

The evidence assembled by Mr. Leibler, to a large degree from sources friendly to the Soviet Union, cannot be ignored. There can be no doubt that a pattern of anti-Semitic discrimination exists in the USSR, and that at least some Party and Govern-

ment leaders have been guilty of either passivity or sometimes actual complicity.

It is not only socialists who will see a clear duty here; the most elementary humanism would require that protests be made and the rights of Soviet Jews defended. But Socialists have a further duty which is in some respects a harder one: to try to *understand* what Soviet anti-semitism is, how it arose and what perpetuates it. Not so that we may, having understood, go on to forgive and tolerate—but for precisely the opposite reason, that a true understanding is needed to guide us in the most effective steps towards combatting and eliminating this inhuman social practice.

Engels called anti-semitism "the socialism of fools", and his meaning is not hard to see. The "fools" he meant were those sections of the labouring and petit-bourgeois masses who, crushed by miseries whose sources they did not understand, oppressed by a society over which they had no control, swallowed the lie that their troubles and their powerlessness could alike be traced, not to the social system, but to the evil machinations of a gang of wicked men.

Of course, it is far from a complete analysis of anti-semitism to point to this mass helplessness as a precondition for it, and a great deal more can and should be said. But it is an obvious starting point to recognize that, if men understand their social position, if they are co-operating with their fellows in social relations whose nature is clear to them, if they are exercising their rightful share in the control of their own society, then there is just no motive or opportunity for them to fall for such confidence tricks as the big lie of anti-semitism.

Why then is it that, nearly fifty years after the overthrow of capitalism in Russia, and despite all the magnificent achievements since then in the spheres of planned economy and social welfare, there is enough confusion and bewilderment among a section of the Soviet masses to provide a basis for anti-semitism?

We are forced to the conclusion that the masses must still lack control over decisive areas of their lives—and indeed this is so. The conditions of work in a modern factory are not automatically made sweet or creative by the removal of capitalists, and the reduction of the worker to a cog in a machine is not cured simply by the knowledge that the means of production are nationalized. Something more is needed for the worker to occupy his rightful place in a socialist society, and that something more includes his actual control over the process of production, exercised through the form of a Workers' Council.

The severe restrictions on political initiative mean that in

another very important area of life the Soviet citizen is deprived of the social power and responsibility that the removal of exploiting classes should have brought him. This condition cannot now be rectified, I believe, without at least recognizing the right of legality for all parties supporting the Soviet system. For how can democratic rights be properly exercised inside a party, when the threat of expulsion from it is the threat of exclusion from all political life?

But an examination of anti-semitism in the USSR cannot stop with the reasons why it has some kind of mass support. It is also clear from the record that a section of the Party and Government leadership either fail to combat it or actually encourage it.

It is likewise clear that other elements in the USSR combat it vigorously, one of their spokesmen being the poet Evtushenko, with his outspoken denunciations of the anti-semites:

"I am hated by every anti-semite as a Jew

"And for this reason: I am a true Russian".

The question for Socialists in other countries, then, is simply this: which section of Soviet society do they support? The backward, conservative section that fears progressive change and is ready to use even anti-semitism, or the forward elements striving for more democracy in the factory, in cultural affairs, in social life generally?

Discrimination against Soviet Jews is a question on which every humanist will stand up to be counted when protests are recorded. *Socialist* humanists should go further than this, in supporting the movement which undermines the basis for anti-semitism, the movement for increased democracy and popular control which goes on under the slogan of "de-Stalinization". The logical outcome of this movement is a socialist community of free and cultured human beings, who will look back with horror on the days when men suffered penalties because of their race or their creed.

J.K.

*The issue of the Independent Socialist journal, Outlook, for June 1965 took a forthright look at the question of Human Rights raised by the situation in the USSR and saw it as a matter for . . .*

#### THE CONSCIENCE OF THE LEFT

To well-informed members of the Jewish communities throughout the world, there was serious ground for disappointment in Khrushchev's 20th-Congress speech in 1956. Nowhere among the criticism of Stalin's 'violations . . . of the nationalities policy' or of his 'making whole nations responsible for inimical

activity', nowhere among the promises to investigate and make restitution for cases of persecution, was there any admission of discrimination against Jews. By implication, yes: if there had been no 'doctor plotters' there had been no *Jewish* plot. But of explicit recognition that Jews had been singled out for special treatment, there was not a trace.

Perhaps this was evidence that among the dirty words of modern times, 'anti-semitism' is the dirtiest; no one wants to be tagged with it. If the status of women is an index in the progress of a society, the status of the Jews is a measure of its health. A lot of water has flowed under many bridges since 1956, and the USSR has reviewed many policies and attitudes of the Stalin era. But just as it has not yet felt able to look Trotsky full in the face, so it has failed to meet with intellectual candour the charge that certain acts against the Jews constitute discrimination. This is not a mere matter of terminology; it is a question of hard facts and hard theory, and a close concern of socialists who believe that there is nothing incompatible between socialism and the proper rights and status for Jews, or any other group, within it.

Discrimination *has* occurred. Not in the early days of the Revolution, which was a new dawn for ghetto-ridden Russian Jews; the USSR was the first country to declare anti-semitism a crime, and Stalin declared that it was 'cannibalism'. Not, in fact, till the mid-thirties. Perhaps even the first of the purges, occurring ironically while the 'Stalin Constitution' was making its statement of civil rights in bourgeois-liberal vein and spelling out the policy of 'cultural autonomy' for nationalities, cannot be said to have singled out Jews; they were merely prominent among old revolutionaries. The rot really set in after World War II. During the war, Stalin, taking advantage of the world-wide solidarity of Jews to build support for the war effort, had formed a Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee of which internationally-known members had toured Britain and the USA. The 'Black Years' of 1948-53 saw a tragic reaction: Jews were termed 'rootless cosmopolitans' and therefore by implication subversive of Soviet national aims in the Cold War. Soviet policy in the Middle East favoured the Arabs and was hostile to Israel; Soviet Jews were 'agents of Zionism'. There followed the decimation of Jewish leaders, particularly among the intellectuals, and the virtual extinction of Jewish cultural institutions—Yiddish literature, publishing and press, and the Yiddish theatre.

This far, OUTLOOK reported in a collection of *Documents on the position of the Jews in the Soviet Union* in 1958. The selected documents, including reports by Prof. Hyman Levy and the Canadian J. B. Salsberg, were part of a world-wide inquiry

by Jewish and non-Jewish Communists. They were seeking neither excuses for Soviet actions nor fuel to feed personal disillusion, but the answers to important questions: what discrimination had occurred, and how could it have occurred in a socialist society?

These are still the important questions. It is the first merit of Isi Leibler's booklet, *Soviet Jewry and Human Rights*, that it takes the story into the Khrushchev period, when optimists imagined discrimination would have gone the way of other 'Stalinist excesses'. The 'restoration of socialist legality' ended the rapping of the gun-butt on the door; there were Jews among those 'rehabilitated' alive or posthumously; and society has been much more open—questions are asked and more answers are given. But the government has never conceded that Yiddish culture should be restored. It was in 1956 that Madame Furtseva, Soviet Minister for Culture, made an admission that Jews were sometimes transferred to other jobs because they were found to be 'too concentrated' in some departments. And there have been new developments. In the economic crisis of the early 60's, the death penalty was introduced for 'economic crimes'—speculation, black marketing. Not only did Jews comprise 60% of those executed, but press campaigns emphasised the proportion, often associating such offences with the synagogue and the rabbi. Direct restrictions began to be placed on the practices of the Jewish religion, which was denied the national and international contacts granted other religions. The stereotype Jew, familiar from *Die Stunner*, began to appear in the mass media; the 'Kitchko book' was withdrawn after overseas protest, but others still circulate. Leibler calls this the period of "popular" anti-semitism; and with modifications, it still goes on.

Leibler documents the whole development with creditable objectivity. But for analysis of *why* these things have happened, one must go elsewhere. The fact is that the Jews in the Soviet Union suffer the disadvantages of being regarded as a 'nationality' (their passports are therefore stamped 'Jewish') without enjoying the advantages of the Soviet policy of cultural autonomy for nationalities. They do not fit precisely into Stalinist, or any other categories of what constitutes a nationality, or a national minority. Levy\* points out that the first attempt to solve the problem of this 'almost-National Jewish Minority' was to establish it in a geographical location—Birobidjan—but failure was foredoomed: most Russian Jews were scattered and urban. The authorities then fell victim to the other prong of the *either-or* choice: if the Jews were not to be a nation centred in some geographical area,

\*Prof. Hyman Levy: *Jews and the National Question* (Hillway Publishing Co., London, 1958).

then they must be 'canalised into complete identification with their Soviet neighbours'. In Levy's view, this was simply 'another undialectical mistake' that did not take account of historic and cultural factors. It is to the credit of the Webbs that in their now-unfashionable *Soviet Communism—a New Civilisation* (1937) they pointed out that though Jews had 'all the blessings of security from pogroms and freedom to enter professions', these blessings 'make, on the whole, for assimilation', and were unacceptable to the 'world-wide organisation of the Zionists'.

They were right; it is the now-familiar problem of integration or assimilation. The Soviet authorities have granted the right of integration to other recognised national minorities; but for the Jews, it is assimilation or else. After 48 years, assimilation as a natural social process *must* be almost complete; if not, thinking will make it so. It is this article of faith that gives an air of superficiality to Soviet handling of criticism on the matter. In 1958, Levy reported that the official answer to criticism about the closure of the Yiddish Publishing Press and the lack of encouragement to the Yiddish Theatre was that 'these ventures were not being adequately supported by the Jews themselves'. He regarded this answer as 'suspicious': 'It is the kind of answer one might expect from a capitalist-business government when approached to support the arts; it is not its prime motive to evoke the fullest and deepest qualities of a people'. In 1965, Dr. Nahum Goldmann still has grounds for speaking of the policy as one of 'enforced assimilation'; and adds, 'If this policy continues unchanged for many more years, it may signify the death sentence for the second largest Jewish community in the world, not from the point of view of physical annihilation or economic destruction, but by enforced assimilation'.

\* \* \*

How best to contribute to a change in the position of Soviet Jews? As *The Bridge* reviewer points out (May 1965) there are two approaches: to encourage the Right to include this protest in its anti-communist mission, or to encourage the Left to help remove a source of criticism of the Soviet Union that is aggravating the Cold War. Mr. Leibler has tried the first, as the files of *The Bulletin* show; he is now trying the second. His treatise was originally submitted to *Arena*, a Marxist journal. It is addressed to 'progressives', a term which he explains is 'used . . . throughout the essay in the narrowest manner employed by Communists and others to designate those favourably disposed towards the Soviet Union and its social, economic and political goals'.

It is the second merit of his booklet that it poses for this audience some problems of conscience that are not susceptible to glib solutions.

The foreword quotes in full a letter from Mr. Rex Mortimer, editor of the Melbourne *Guardian* and a member of *Arena's* editorial board, urging that material of this kind should be 'widely read and probed particularly by friends of the Soviet Union'. The implication of the foreword is that if the Communist Party brings this subject off the banned list, there will be released a flood of protest so far held back. Here there is a half-truth. A good many people have handed to the CP the authority to decide for them whether this or that cause is a blow for justice or a cold-war manoeuvre. There is another half-truth implied in the selection of material in Mr. Leibler's second section. He directs his aim at that muscular reaction in his audience that is conditioned to reject criticism of the USSR coming from the Right. His argument is: Bertrand Russell, Sartre and Martin Luther King have protested about Soviet anti-semitism; they are not Cold Warriors; therefore it is OK for the Left to protest. A good many readers of the booklet must perhaps take this on the chin; it has been and still is a besetting sin of the Left to play the man and not the ball. It is tempting to let others make the decisions rather than think the matter through from scratch. OUTLOOK perpetuated this practice in its last issue, in publishing a series of quotations from liberals who were critical of Soviet policy on the Jews without providing a background analysis. It is a bad habit, nevertheless, and it's high time it was broken. It's no substitute for politics.

Let's accept that Mr. Leibler's 'progressive' complex, or Left, exists. It has several responsibilities. The first is to humanity rather than to social systems, which can claim allegiance only insofar as they liberate humanity. Discrimination must be utterly rejected, against whatever group. The second is to hard politics. Theory: Integration or assimilation—what do they mean and where do they lead? The particular case: Does Soviet discrimination have its origins in vestigial European anti-semitism, or is it the result of crooked thinking, the twisting of a piece of social theory to serve a tactical end? How far have Cold War considerations affected policies towards Soviet Jews? What conditions and actions will encourage change?

The third responsibility of the Left is to act responsibly; that is, as if one actually had powers of decision. It is the burden of real leadership that gives depth and wisdom to the words of some of the contributors to *The Bridge* symposium, as it does, for instance, to the warnings of Negro leaders or Nelson Mandela against Black Nationalism. Sheer protest is often essential; yet a good many people to whom Mr. Leibler's material is familiar have felt that protest by itself is so small a part of what is needed that they have avoided the problem. What is important now is the kind of overall understanding that will remove the Jews from

further risk of being a pawn in the game, and create the conditions in which they can find their right place within the framework of Soviet society.

Mankind is diminished by discrimination against Jews, or anyone else, anywhere. Jews, equally, gain rather than lose identity by participating in all the processes of the liberation of mankind. Their record is most notable where hardships, tyranny and poverty have been most prevalent. Of this, the authors of the Russian Revolution should be well aware.

**H.G.P.**

*(H.G.P. is Miss Helen Palmer, the Editor of "Outlook".)*