

Antisemitism as a Policy Tool in the Soviet Bloc

THE USE of antisemitism in fostering government policy objectives has a notoriously long tradition in Eastern Europe, one that reaches back to the massacres of Ukraine's Jews in seventeenth-century Poland, and even beyond. More recently, antisemitism was used at the turn of this century by tsarist Russia's reactionary authorities in a vain effort to prop their crumbling regime. At that time, a number of Russia's leading writers and public figures, including Tolstoi, Korolenko, Chekhov and Gorki, denounced the state-condoned, if not, indeed, state-inspired, pogroms as an outrage against humanity and a blot on Russia's national honor. Lenin, a man far less susceptible to moral considerations, denounced antisemitism primarily as a ploy invented by the capitalists to distract workers and peasants from class struggle.

End of Stalin Era

Opinions differ regarding the exact stage at which antisemitism was first used in the USSR as a policy tool; but most students of Soviet history agree that, by the end of World War II, the Jews had become convenient scapegoats for a variety of failures of the Soviet regime. In other words, Lenin's successors have availed themselves of an instrument that the founder of their state found despicable. In the mid-1940s and early 1950s, i.e., during the last decade of Stalin's life, abundant use was made of antisemitism, most of it overt and virulent, in the USSR proper, as well as in the newly established Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe. The Soviet "anti-cosmopolitan" campaigns of the late 1940s, which culminated in the abortive 1953 trial of a group of Jewish physicians accused of having plotted, in cooperation with Jewish organizations in the West, the mass medical murder of Soviet leaders, are often viewed as aberrations of the diseased mind of an aging dictator. This they no doubt were, but they were also the circuses offered by the Soviet caesars to their subjects in lieu of the bread and freedom they had hoped to obtain after victory over Nazism.

Similarly, in Eastern Europe, the nationalist frustrations generated by a failure to regain true national independence and by the replacement of Nazi occupation armies and Quisling governments with Soviet Russian armies and their local puppets, often led to antisemitic excesses. This solution, encouraged as an outlet, was facilitated by the all-too-visible fact that Communists of Jewish extraction were quite prominent in the hated Soviet-imposed regimes. There is strong evidence to support the contention that the

1946 Kielce pogrom in Poland, in which several scores of survivors of the Nazi holocaust were killed only a year after the defeat of Nazi Germany, was instigated by Soviet agents in the hope that this would "ease" nationalist tensions and, incidentally, manufacture another excuse for the Soviet military presence in Poland. Similar objectives may well have been behind the shrill antisemitic atmosphere of the November 1952 Prague trial of Rudolf Slansky, a former head of Czechoslovakia's Communist party who was of Jewish origin.

In the aftermath of Stalin's death in 1953, there was a revulsion against many of the dictator's policies, including his state-fostered antisemitism. Indeed, attitudes toward antisemitism in time became a litmus test separating Stalinist conservatives from their foes, the relatively liberal reformers in the Communist parties of Eastern Europe and Russia. The Stalinists denied that antisemitism was an issue worth discussing, while their opponents pointed to it as one of the most reprehensible features of Stalin's heritage. Some use of antisemitism was made in the struggle between the two factions, but not too much. In the popular mind, "official" antisemitism was too closely associated with the other wounds of Stalinism, then still very fresh. Nevertheless, there were some exceptions. Thus, in 1956, *Pravda* cited Hungary's Jewish-born Communist boss Matyas Rákosi as an example of an "anti-patriotic" party chieftain in what was an obvious attempt to channel anti-Soviet sentiments in the direction of antisemitism.

Khrushchev Regime

It was under Nikita Khrushchev that state-instigated antisemitism reappeared in the USSR on a large scale. Again, it is our contention that, while his personal antisemitic sentiments might have been a contributing factor, Khrushchev, probably the most pragmatic politician so far produced by the Soviet system, must have had some practical considerations in mind. The one that most readily suggests itself is that antisemitism might serve as a lightning-rod in the threatening storm of discontent over the country's serious economic ills which now could no longer be blamed solely on the consequences of Nazi occupation and general wartime devastation. Appetites for a more abundant life were whetted only lately by Khrushchev himself. On the other hand, economic grievances played an important part in the recent dangerous disturbances among East German and Polish workers, and were a leading factor in the Hungarian revolution of 1956, second only to nationalist and political factors.

All these considerations probably contributed to the Soviet decision to introduce, in 1961, the death penalty for such economic offenses as embezzlement, theft, graft, and black marketeering. It should be noted that no precedent is known to exist anywhere for such draconic punishment for economic crimes committed in peacetime, i.e., when they could not directly threaten or adversely affect a country's survival. However, there was reason to

believe that the stamping out of such crimes could help the survival of Khrushchev as the master of the Soviet state. Also, a crusade against such offenses had the added attraction of making it possible to give the campaign an antisemitic flavor, which was impossible in other campaigns (e.g., the never-ceasing attempts to rid the Soviet state of the burdensome problem of alcoholism). For in the popular image, one partly borne out by fact, Russia's Jews have traditionally been attracted to such "economic" occupations as minor managerial jobs, accounting, etc. Of course, the fallacy lay in the fact that, while the number of accountants and petty managers among Soviet Russia's Jews may have been high, the percentage of Jews in the country's total population was such that they could not but constitute a miniscule part of all managers and accountants. Nevertheless, of the more than 100 persons executed for economic crimes in 1961-62, the large majority were Jews, and their trials had strongly antisemitic overtones. The obvious insinuation therefore was that shortages of consumer goods and their shabby quality were not to be blamed on the country's leadership or on the Soviet economic system, but on a handful of Jewish black marketeers and corrupt petty officials. In time, the number of trials fell off, or, if nothing more, they were given less publicity, at least in part because of the uproar they stirred abroad. Nevertheless, such trials continued well into the mid-1960s.

Antisemitism was occasionally resorted to in the skirmishes between the Stalinists and the reformists within the Soviet bloc throughout the 1960s. It was generally used by the conservatives who were fond of hinting that "revisionism" was a Jewish invention and that "true" Russians (or "true" Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, etc.) should not be deceived by its alien heresies. But the true explosion of state-sponsored antisemitism in the USSR and the Soviet allies in Eastern Europe, and its sudden escalation into a prime policy tool, began in June 1967, immediately after Israel's lightning victory in the six-day war.

Aftermath of the Six-Day War

The diplomatic position taken by the USSR and its neighbors was one of unequivocal support of the Arab cause, and consequent hostility toward Israel. The exception was Rumania which, alone among members of the Warsaw Pact, refused to sever relations with Israel. By contrast, Tito's Yugoslavia, otherwise independent in its foreign policy, reentered the ranks of Soviet satellites on this particular issue, at least partly because of Tito's fears caused by the recent disintegration of the "neutralist bloc," and his long personal friendship with Nasser.

That opposition to Israel, however bitter, did not necessarily imply an espousal of antisemitic policies at home has been demonstrated since the war by several East European Communist countries. Understandably, there has been no upsurge of antisemitism in Rumania. In Yugoslavia a series of

newspaper articles at first attempted to establish a link between Israel's "aggression" and the "perfidious" teachings of Judaism. However, this was soon squashed on the ground that it actually constituted a disservice to the Arab cause, and no major evidence of antisemitism was found in the Yugoslav press thereafter. (In fact, a year later, it repeatedly denounced the antisemitic campaign then in full swing in Poland, rejecting the official Polish disclaimers that only "Zionism" was under attack.) Similarly, while Bulgaria's attacks on Israel at the United Nations were often more poisonous than those of the Arabs themselves, the country's Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov told the General Assembly that "the Bulgarian people have never been and never will be against the Jewish people,"¹ and in the last three years there has been no significant use of antisemitism in Bulgaria to complement the strongly anti-Israeli tone of its press. Still more emphatic was the stance of the Hungarian government. Soon after the cease-fire in the Middle East, Gyula Kallái, speaker of the Hungarian parliament, denounced "certain people who try to exploit the Arab-Israeli conflict for antisemitic incitement," while Zoltán Komocsin, a Politbureau member, declared in a television appearance that "we disassociate ourselves from any symptom of antisemitism in our country and shall, as always, fight against it with all our might."² Again, there has been no indication of any large-scale use of antisemitism in that country since these assurances were given.

The countries of the Soviet bloc where, in the post-1967 period, antisemitism emerged as a conscious tool of foreign and domestic policy were Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany, as well as the USSR. While a study of possible contributing historical factors is outside the scope of this survey, it is worth pointing out that, paradoxically, both East Germany and Czechoslovakia, i.e., the countries with the most and least intense antisemitic traditions in East Central Europe, respectively, "imported" post-1967 antisemitism from the Soviet Union. In Poland, on the other hand, much of the antisemitic campaign was spontaneous and of domestic origin, largely manufactured by Poland's own Communist party. Apparently it only was manipulated by the Soviet Union which, at first, found it useful but, ultimately, became aware of the inherent dangers of nationalist frenzy of any sort in an East European satellite.

Polish Antisemitism

The now notorious wave of antisemitism in Poland, which already has resulted in the virtual disappearance of organized Jewish life in that country and the emigration of all but some 10,000 of its Jews (p. 470), began in the wake of the six-day war. At that time Israel's victory was widely hailed in

¹ Quoted in William Korey, "Anti-Israel Policies Split Communist World," *Hadassah Magazine*, May 1968, p. 13. It is worth pointing out that Bulgaria's record of saving Jews threatened by deportation to Nazi death camps is unrivaled by any European country, with the sole exception of Denmark.

² *Ibid.*

traditionally anti-Russian Poland as the triumph of "our Polish Jews" over "their" (the Russians') Arabs. On June 19 Wladyslaw Gomulka, the head of the Polish Communist party, warned "Polish citizens of Jewish nationality" against such jubilation. Poland's authorities, Gomulka emphasized, "cannot remain indifferent toward people who . . . come out in favor of the aggressors." Intentionally disregarding popular glee over the humiliation of the Soviet Union and its friends, Gomulka pretended that those disagreeing with Poland's official backing of the Arabs were not "true" Poles. He implied that they were only Zionist Jews.

At the time Gomulka threatened the Jews, his own rule was being challenged by General Mieczyslaw Moczar, the secret police boss, standard-bearer of a nationalist group within the Communist party and head of the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBOWiD), a veterans' organization. Gomulka's position was made even more precarious by the country's economic difficulties and, with the whittling away of the democratic freedoms attained during the Polish October 1956 anti-Stalinist and anti-Soviet revolt that swept Gomulka into power, he also by and large lost the support of the liberal segments of the population.

In the months following, antisemitism was to become a political football. The use of the "Zionist" bogey became more attractive after a stage adaptation of a Polish classic poem, Adam Mickiewicz's *Forefathers Eve*, was closed in January of 1968 (the play's anti-Russian lines were demonstratively applauded). This incident later resulted in large-scale student demonstrations, some of whose leaders, as it turned out, were Jewish.³ From now on, each side—Gomulka's "moderates" and Moczar's "nationalists"—tried to outbid the other in blaming the country's foreign and domestic ills on the "Zionists." As suggested before, there was every indication that the Soviet authorities at first were only too pleased to see a potentially anti-Russian explosion channeled in the direction of antisemitism in a wave of nationalism and chauvinism that represented no threat to them—at least for the time being.

Until then, antisemitic attacks were directed, in the main, on such writers as Jerzy Kosinski, and Jean François Steiner, whose books on the Nazi holocaust—all published in the West—suggested that, during World War II, many Poles were active or passive Nazi accomplices in the extermination of Poland's Jews. Such attacks were as useful as the constant reminders of the danger of a resurgence of Nazism in West Germany: they were likely to strike a responsive chord in every Pole, no matter what his political views. Similar objectives were now pursued by attacks on Jews still living in Poland, some 25,000 in 1967. Thus, attacks on Poland's now pitifully small Jewish community as the main source of the country's many misfortunes were, gruesomely and paradoxically, among the very few slogans that could rally and unite the otherwise hopelessly divided nation.

³ Of the eight student leaders named by the Communist party's central newspaper *Trybuna Ludu* on March 10, 1968, five were Jews. On March 19, Gomulka declared that the demonstrations were the work of "over a dozen people, mainly students of Jewish origin."

The anti-Jewish campaign grew in intensity and shrillness with lightning speed. On March 12, 1968 *Slowo Powszechnie*, organ of a pseudo-Catholic puppet organization directed by Boleslaw Piasecki, a prominent member of the pre-war Polish fascist party, carried an appeal "To the Students at Warsaw University." It cautioned Polish students that they were being led astray by a Szlajfer, a Werfel, a Blumsztajn, and a Rubinsztajn. The danger was then spelled out: "The foremost aim of the Zionists in Poland was to influence intellectuals and young people to oppose the national interests of People's Poland."

On the same day, *Trybuna Ludu*, official organ of Poland's Communist party, warned that "we will not allow ourselves to be blackmailed by the bogey of antisemitism" and, furthermore, "we will not allow the Zionists to seek protection in accusing others of antisemitism." This blunt statement, in effect, amounted to a proclamation of an open season on the Jews.

On the following day, March 13, the same top authoritative paper accused Jewish students of a nasty provocation. The students themselves, it claimed, smeared some buildings with swastikas, and then pointed to these daubings as evidence of antisemitism. *Trybuna Ludu* then described how a mob was given an antisemitic pep-talk before marching to break up a student demonstration: "This morning, when our comrades were mobilized to take part in the operation, they had certain doubts and inhibitions. They had to be told who the instigators were, and with whom they were linked. Then all of the comrades went into action."

Two days later, the same newspaper informed its readers that the Zionists coerce Jews, wherever they may live, to give Israel "economic aid, political assistance (defense of its policies, particularly in the press), supplying of intelligence information etc." *Glos Pracy*, a trade union newspaper, provided a more exhaustive list on March 18:

In its struggle against Communism, Zionism resorts to a variety of methods. These include provocation, blackmail, subversion, the sowing of unrest and, until recently, the red herring of antisemitism. The Zionists are very adept in resorting to the latter device.

On March 19 Gomulka addressed some 3,000 Communist party activists; his speech was relayed by radio and television. Gomulka's questions "Are there in Poland any Jewish nationalists? Are there any supporters of Zionist ideology?" elicited roars of approval that sounded familiar to those who remembered Hitler's speeches. There is some evidence that Gomulka was already beginning to have second thoughts about the wisdom of using antisemitism for political purposes, but it was too late. Antisemitic hysteria raged throughout the country.

On March 23, 1968, Radio Warsaw broadcast a speech by General Tadeusz Pistrzak, local head of ZBOWiD, the veterans' organization that was General Moczar's center of power. General Pistrzak's speech typically tried to link the "Zionists" with both the hated Stalinist past and present-day

troublemakers. Before 1956, said the general, the "Zionists" were in charge of Poland's dreaded secret police, and now they clamored for "democracy": "They [the "Zionists"] simply want the kind of democracy and freedom under which diehard Jewish nationalists and reactionaries of all kinds can implement anti-Polish and antinational plans that serve the interests of international Zionism and imperialism."

On April 1, 1968, *Sztandar Młodych*, a youth newspaper, announced that the Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) was ordered to cease operating in Poland because its charitable activities were really a cover for espionage. The announcement had an ominous ring: at one time or another, most of Poland's Jews, left destitute after the war, had obtained some form of assistance from JDC and thus could be considered suspect of espionage. The announcement also bore sinister similarity to one made in the USSR when preparations for the trials of those accused of alleged participation in the notorious "doctor's plot" were under way.⁴

On April 5, 1968, General Moczar made yet another attempt to link the "Zionists" to the hated Stalinist regime, if not indeed to shift to them the blame for Poland's postwar status as a Soviet colony. In a television appearance, the general declared that the culprits actually responsible for present troubles were the "politicians" who arrived in Poland in 1944 with the victorious Soviet armies. Of the nine persons cited, eight were Jews and the ninth, a non-Jew, had a Jewish wife.⁵

As the campaign gained momentum, it turned with increasing frequency to familiar themes of prewar Polish, predominantly nonpolitical, antisemitism which was xenophobic, racist, and economic in nature. Thus, the April 15-31 issue of the Silesian bi-weekly *Naodrze*, published in Jelenia Góra, brought the sinister news that the Jewish Social and Cultural Society presents plays in Yiddish; that its library contained books printed in a mysterious script, and that the society ran its own summer camps for children—surely a suspicious activity.

On April 19, 1968, the 25th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, *Głos Koszaliński*, a provincial newspaper, reported the expulsion from the Party of some Jewish tailors who had failed to condemn Israel with sufficient vigor and who had conveniently absented themselves from a meeting at which the 1968 student riots were condemned.

On April 28-29 the Wrocław *Slowo Polskie* reported the discovery of yet another outrage. This time the target chosen for attack was the Jewish artisans' cooperatives, set up in postwar Silesia to provide employment for Yiddish-speaking tailors, shoemakers, mechanics, and others, who, for obvious psy-

⁴ On April 21-22, 1968, *Slowo Polskie*, a newspaper published in the Silesian city of Wrocław where relatively many Jews settled after 1945, revealed to its readers that, in the past, any Jew who visited the Israel embassy—even if only for a chat—received from the embassy a "gift" of 1,000 zlotys. The article was buttressed by a list of real persons who allegedly were recipients of such largesse. The implication of espionage was obvious.

⁵ *The Anti-Jewish Campaign in Present-Day Poland: Facts, Documents, Press Reports* (London, Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1968), p. 39.

chological reasons, preferred to work with other Jews. As *Slowo Polskie* interpreted it, this meant that true Poles were the victims of employment discrimination in their own country. The newspaper also accused the Jewish cooperatives of importing raw materials from abroad. In fact, these raw materials were donated by Jewish philanthropic agencies abroad, and were thus gifts rather than imports.⁶

In keeping with Soviet historian Pokrovsky's famous dictum that history is but politics projected into the past, Polish publications began to minimize the extent of wartime Jewish resistance to the Nazis. Thus, a reviewer of *The Resistance Movement in the Bialystok Ghetto* by the late Communist scholar Bernard Mark claimed that there actually never was any Jewish resistance movement in the area—there were just a few Jews who were hidden in the forests by Polish peasants.⁷

The most "rational" explanation of the success of the 1968 antisemitic campaign was written by Andrzej Werblan, a leading Party theoretician, in a long monograph published in the June 1968 issue of *Miesiecznik Literacki*:

Why is it that among certain groups of the intelligentsia in our country there are comparatively many people of Jewish origin? It was their cosmopolitan [i.e., Jewish] background that gave rise to the unjustified accusation of antisemitism, hurled at those comrades who understood that no society will tolerate an inflated representation of a national minority in its elite, particularly in national defense, security, propaganda, and diplomatic service. Experience has demonstrated that the majority of the personnel under discussion was ideologically alien, and subsequently chose the path of revisionism, while many have embraced Zionism.⁸

And further:

Among the revisionists, both academic personnel at Warsaw University and the students involved in hostile revisionist activity, a considerable role was played by a large group of people of Jewish origin. The existence of specifically nationalist and ethnic solidarity exerted a powerful influence on the course of events in Warsaw academic circles. The favoritism demonstrated in the rapid advancement of persons of petit bourgeois Jewish origins, people who had no strong ties to Communism and often remained under Zionist influences, can only be ascribed to sheer thoughtlessness or to a clannishness based on racial ties.

According to Werblan, the evil's root was to be sought in the fact that, *before the war*, Jews constituted too high a percentage of Polish Communist party membership, and that this detracted from the party's popularity with the Polish masses, who justly regarded it as "Jewish." Thus, in Werblan's

⁶ A similar charge that Jewish cooperatives were guilty of defrauding the Polish Treasury appeared in the specialized economic publication *Zycie Gospodarcze* on April 17-18, 1968.

⁷ *Gazeta Bialostocka*, May 4-5, 1968. Since then, Polish sources have consistently minimized the extent and importance of Jewish anti-Nazi resistance, while simultaneously emphasizing Jewish collaboration with the Nazis in Poland, e.g., *Judenräte*, and the complicity of Western Jewish organizations.

⁸ This part of Werblan's article was also reprinted in *Trybuna Ludu*, June 16, 1968.

opinion, the once excessively "Jewish" profile of the Polish Communist party led it to oppose Poland's national independence:

The distorted nature of the [pre-war Polish] Communist party's ethnic make-up would not have been a major problem were it not linked in a way with problems of ideological nature. Thus, the programmatic position of the Polish Communist party (KPP) on the problem of Polish independence was for a long time burdened with the errors of Luxemburgism.⁹

The circle was thus closed. The Jews of Poland stood accused not only of being allied with Poland's enemies, but also of blackening the country's name abroad, subverting its might at home, exploiting it economically, engaging in espionage, and of ruling Poland. And, according to Werblan, they have even traditionally opposed the existence of Poland as an independent state.

At the July 1968 meeting of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist party (officially called United Polish Workers' Party), some voices were raised in opposition to the antisemitic orgy. Thus, for example, Zenon Kliszko complained that "Jews are being equated with Zionists" (*Trybuna Ludu*, July 8, 1968), as did Boleslaw Ruminski, another Central Committee member, who declared that the struggle against Zionism occasionally resulted in antisemitism (*Trybuna Ludu*, July 10, 1968). Even Gomulka warned in a Radio Warsaw speech, on July 12, that the anti-Zionist campaign was creating "an unfriendly attitude toward Jews in general." Gomulka's appeal for moderation went unheeded, while the much stronger warning by Minister of Finance Jerzy Albrecht that "all Jews, including good Communists, are sometimes being lumped together as Zionists" (*Trybuna Ludu*, July 10, 1968), may have contributed to his dismissal from the post the very next day. In fact, between 1967 and 1968 there existed within the Polish ministry of interior a special "Department of Zionist Affairs" headed by Colonel Tadeusz Walichnowski of the secret police who, within two years, produced seven "anti-Zionist" pamphlets under his name. The department was said to have maintained a card file of all persons of Jewish origin residing in Poland. According to some sources, the department was ordered closed only after it began investigating the antecedents of Premier Jozef Cyrankiewicz and then Defense Minister Marian Spychalski.

At first, the Soviet authorities demonstratively applauded Poland's "anti-Zionist" purges.¹⁰ Later, their enthusiasm cooled when it gradually became apparent that Polish antisemitism, originally unleashed to avert an anti-Soviet outbreak, might ultimately revert to its original target. Gomulka who, in the

⁹ Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919), a Polish-born Jewess and one of the founders of the German Communist party, was, for doctrinal reasons, opposed to the idea of Polish independence.

¹⁰ Thus, for example, the Soviet army newspaper *Krasnaya zvezda* wrote on August 17, 1968 that "The Polish comrades have convincingly demonstrated that anti-Zionism is not antisemitism." More authoritative support allegedly came from Vladimir Semyonov, Soviet deputy minister of foreign affairs who is rumored to write under the pseudonym "K. Ivanov." He approvingly repeated the Polish assertion that support of Zionism was tantamount to support of imperialism (*International Affairs*, Moscow, June 1968).

meantime, had demonstrated his fidelity to the Soviet cause by his all-out support of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, represented the "moderates" during the antisemitic purges.

Anti-Jewish articles continued to appear in Poland's press. Thus, on December 28, 1968, the Warsaw daily *Zycie Warszawy*, in a somewhat questionable attempt to shore up Franco-Polish relations, gleefully pointed to the fact that Poland and de Gaulle's France had common enemies—Baron Guy de Rothschild and the German Jew Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Truly pathological antisemitism may be found in Kazimierz Sidor's book *Behind the Pyramids* in which the author, a recent Polish ambassador to Egypt, indiscriminately used hundreds of antisemitic canards, ranging from the most recently manufactured in Eastern Europe to those of the ancient Greeks, who claimed that the Jews were descended from lepers.

German Democratic Republic

For obvious reasons, East Germany's Communist authorities long avoided antisemitism as a political weapon. Even though East Germany was one of the two successor states to Nazi Germany (with former Nazis occupying a number of important positions), unlike West Germany, it never paid any restitution to victims of Nazi persecutions.¹¹ While, in the wake of the six-day war, denunciations of Israel's "aggression" were as virulent in East Germany as in the other Soviet satellites, a really drastic reversal took place in the summer of 1968, immediately before and after the Soviet bloc's armed invasion of Czechoslovakia in which East German forces participated. As in Poland, there were some purges of "Zionists," though necessarily on a smaller scale since East Germany had only slightly over 1,000 Jews in a total population of 17 million. On August 25, 1968, within days after the invasion, *Neues Deutschland*, central organ of the East German Communist party, charged that "Zionist forces have taken over the leadership of Czechoslovakia's Communist party." A week later, on September 1, the same newspaper carried an article entitled "Prague Is Ruled by the Zionists." By a macabre coincidence, Hitler's *Voelkischer Beobachter* carried the headline "Prague Is Ruled by the Jews" several days after Nazi Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939.

There has been little change in East Germany. On March 14, 1970, *Pravda* published an article by Fritz Noll, deputy editor of the Essen paper *Unsere Zeit*, in which the East German journalist pointed an accusing finger at those

¹¹ As Simon Wiesenthal, head of the Documentation Center of the Federation of Jewish Victims of Nazism in Vienna pointed out at a press conference, September 6, 1968, former Nazis now active in East Germany included Minister of Propaganda and press chief Kurt Blecha; Horst Dressler-Anders, an employe of the propaganda ministry who had been president of the Nazi state broadcasting system and editor of the *Krakauer Tageblatt* in occupied Poland; Hans-Walter Aust, editor-in-chief of *Deutsche Aussenpolitik*, a publication of East Germany's ministry of foreign affairs; and Herbert Kroeger, staff member of the same journal, the onetime head of the Gestapo in Cologne.

West Germans who “presently charge our country’s democratic citizens with antisemitism because they condemn Israel’s aggressive policies.”

Czechoslovakia

As already stated, by East European standards Czechoslovakia has traditionally been remarkably free of anti-Jewish prejudice. In the weeks following the six-day war, Czechoslovakia’s official reaction, then formulated by the Stalinist regime of Antonín Novotný, did not differ from that of its Soviet-bloc neighbors. Inevitably, the anti-Israel hysteria brought about a wave of antisemitism which affected the country’s approximately 15,000 Jews. However, there was some vocal opposition to it, as there was also criticism of the government’s unconditional support of the Arab cause. The most eloquent was the defection of the Slovak novelist Ladislav Mňačko, who demonstratively went to Israel in order to denounce the Czechoslovak government’s position on both issues. The rapid liberalization in spring 1968, which resulted in Novotný’s downfall and swept into power Alexander Dubček’s liberal Communist government, muted the anti-Israel campaign, and temporarily brought to a halt state-inspired antisemitism.

However, antisemitism was soon to reemerge as one of the most important weapons of the enemies of Czechoslovakia’s liberals, both within the country and in the other Soviet bloc nations—first and foremost, in the USSR. Some of the antisemitic propaganda was open; much of it was clandestine and took the form of anonymous letters and pamphlets. Thus, for example, Eduard Goldstuecker, a Jew who was president of Czechoslovak Union of Writers and deputy rector of Prague’s Charles University, made public in the June 23, 1969 issue of *Rudé Právo*, the central organ of the Czech Communist party, an anonymous letter sent to him, which said in part:

You are not content to rule in Israel alone; as Zionists, you want to rule the whole world. Here you have something in common with Hitler. And we know for a fact that the ringleaders of the latest events here and in Poland are Zionists who are planning the final victory of international Zionism. . . In any case, it will soon be all over with you; your days are numbered, you loathsome Jew.¹²

An anonymous pamphlet declared:

The Federal [German] Republic is an agent of the USA, and Israel is an agent of the Federal Republic. . . Our working class understands that financial power is controlled by international monopoly capital, and that Jewry is an international race. And against these two enemies the international proletariat is taking its stand with the slogan “Let us unite.” The words of the Party’s present leader [Dubček] bear no relation to Socialism. They employ, it is said, the tactics of international capitalism “which in our country is represented by Jewry and its agents.” This “Jewry” shrinks from no kind of crime.¹³

¹² *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 20, 1968, quoted in *Wiener Library Bulletin* (London, Fall 1968).

¹³ *Ibid.*

A few days after the invasion, on August 26, 1968, the still defiant Czechoslovak radio commented:

At last we have learned who is responsible for the nonexistent Czechoslovak counterrevolution. We have been told this by the official press of the occupiers, and they have done so in their usual refined and euphemistic way. They did not say outright "the Jews"; they said "international Zionism." Apparently, our East German friends have been experts on this subject ever since World War II. Two million people allegedly are involved, and, after their liquidation, the soldiers apparently are to leave the country. . . . Why cannot these two million Zionists be found if the Soviet army command, or perhaps *Neues Deutschland*, wishes to find them? At any rate, today the Germans are the only real experts capable of distinguishing with absolute accuracy between Aryans and inferior races.

The height of the insidiously antisemitic Soviet drive against the liberal Communist Czechoslovak regime was reached when, on September 4, 1968, two weeks after the invasion, *Izvestia*, the official newspaper of the Soviet government, printed a scurrilous attack on Jiří Hájek, Czechoslovakia's foreign minister who vainly attempted to mobilize world public opinion in support of his country's cause. Wrote *Izvestia*:

A question suggests itself: who is that J. Hájek? Who was Czechoslovak Socialist Republic's minister of foreign affairs? . . . People say that, during the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, J. Hájek, in order to save his life, wrote flattering articles for the Gestapo. And that it was the Gestapo that saved J. Hájek's life, but that Hájek had to "earn" it by doing quite a bit of work for the Nazis. It was perhaps for that reason that he had, eventually, changed his name from Karpeles to Hájek. During the last two weeks Hájek-Karpeles had been running all over the world, from city to city and from village to village. He has been to Belgrade and to Vienna, to New York and to London, to Zurich and to Geneva. Some people intimate that he is getting ready to go overseas once again, to the United States. One of his "friends" there promised him a "big job" with an advertising agency.

The purpose of the article was all too transparent. The Soviet government's aim was to "expose" the liberal Czechoslovak minister as a shifty Jew, and a Nazi collaborator to boot. "Karpeles" is a fairly common Jewish name in Czechoslovakia. Jiří Hájek's answer appeared in the October 19, 1968 Prague magazine *Reportér*, one of the last issues of the publication. He stated that attacks on him had appeared in newspapers of certain (unnamed) Socialist countries:

Some of these attacks had a distinctly racist character and were without foundation. It is not true that I am of Jewish origin. But I must add that I would not be ashamed of it if I were, because I think a man should be judged on the basis of what he does and how he behaves, and because I think that, in this country, racism was disowned long ago.

Ultimately, *Izvestia* acknowledged its "innocent" error. Yet it is difficult to believe that the "misunderstanding" was anything but intentional (it is

hardly likely that the biography of a cabinet minister of a Soviet-bloc country was a secret in Moscow), but even if it were, the article would be no less revolting.

The Soviet press continued to blame the "Zionists" for the events in Czechoslovakia, though it was nearly two years since its occupation by the armies of Warsaw Pact countries. Thus, N. Gasarov, writing in the January 1969 issue of *Sovetskie profsoyuzy*, the trade union journal, blamed the Czechoslovak liberal interlude (and also, while on the subject, the 1956 workers' uprising in Poland) on the "Zionists," and ominously added that "since diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel were broken off, Israeli intelligence and Zionist organizations have been using Jewish citizens of other capitalist countries for conducting subversive activities aimed against the USSR." On March 8, 1969, *Izvestia* quoted the Left-wing Lebanese newspaper *Al Dunia*, which claimed that Israel was privy to all of Czechoslovakia's state secrets (including details of recent secret Czechoslovak-Soviet negotiations) "because many Jews residing in Czechoslovakia . . . occupy important political, scientific, and cultural positions, and favor the abolition of Socialism in Czechoslovakia and the restoration of a capitalist regime which would favor Israeli interests." Then, on January 28, 1970, Moscow's *Literaturnaya gazeta* printed an article by one Radoslav Čermak, judging from his name a Czech, which asserted that responsibility for the Czechoslovak debacle did not really lie with Dubček, who was merely a figurehead, but with Smrkovský, Kriegel and Šik. Of the three, Kriegel is a Jew and Šik is always described as one. The statement was reinforced by being ascribed to Luděk Pachman, a Jew, who allegedly gave this information to the Israeli newspaper *Al Hamishmar* on December 27, 1968.

Soviet Russia

The year 1967 marked a watershed in the use of antisemitism as a policy tool within the USSR proper. The Soviet Union's unconditional support of the Arab cause was motivated by a number of considerations. There was, first of all, the desire to gain a foothold in the Mediterranean—an old dream of Russian statesmen, tsarist and Soviet alike—which the Soviet rulers hoped to realize by backing the numerically and otherwise much stronger side in the conflict. There was also, no doubt, the hope of propping up the anti-American forces within the neutralist bloc still smarting under the impact of ignominious defeats in Ghana, Indonesia, and the former Belgian Congo. There was too, no doubt, the need to demonstrate to the Afro-Asians that the Soviet Union, and not Communist China, could be counted on to bail out its allies, should the need arise. Then, of course, support of the Arabs would gain the Soviet Union the sympathies of Moslems everywhere, not least among Russia's own Turkic minorities along the now sensitive Chinese frontier. Last, but not least, an anti-Israeli stance would of necessity result in some spillover of antisemitism, a posture that might alienate small

segments of the Soviet liberal intelligentsia, but one that would prove popular with more numerous and more significant segments of the population, including the army and the party bureaucracy.

Chronologically, the wave of state-inspired domestic antisemitism in the USSR followed, rather than preceded, similar campaigns in the satellite states. This situation was not without precedent: the antisemitic witchhunts in Czechoslovakia (including Slansky's trial in 1952) antedated by approximately one year the announcement of the discovery of the Soviet "doctors' plot." One gets the impression that, in the wake of the six-day war, Soviet propaganda planners decided, as it were, first to "experiment" with the various uses of antisemitism on the satellites, and then, depending on the results, either denounce it as an aberration alien to true Marxism-Leninism, or adapt it for domestic use. For the time being, Soviet propaganda spewed out antisemitic materials in Czechoslovakia, and offered at least encouragement and moral support of antisemitism in Poland. However, at first, at least until the end of 1967, precautions were taken not to allow the anti-Israeli rhetoric to degenerate into ordinary antisemitism.

It may be argued, of course, that, given the intensity of Soviet propaganda and the sharp awareness of ethnic identity in the USSR, this desire to steer a middle course was unrealistic; and events of the last three years certainly bear out this belief. One could not, in the USSR, wage an embittered propaganda war against the Jews of Israel without contributing to the already tensely antisemitic atmosphere in the country. Every Soviet citizen remembered that when the USSR was attacked by Nazi Germany in 1941, all persons of German descent, including tens of thousands whose ancestors had settled in Russia centuries before, and even the dedicated Communists among them, were deported.

In the summer of 1967 the Soviet Union's unconditional support of the Arab cause resulted in a frenzied anti-Israeli campaign which made abundant use of traditional antisemitic stereotypes, particularly in cartoons that usually accompanied articles in Soviet newspapers and magazines. Then, early in 1968, came the stream of expressions of support for Poland's "anti-Zionist" drive and, some months later, the barrage of antisemitic propaganda unleashed against Czechoslovakia's liberals. But "anti-Zionism" and "anti-Judaism" began to grow increasingly fashionable within the USSR itself, and, in the absence of *any* attempt to combat them, could not but contribute to an exacerbation of antisemitic tensions within the country. Last but not least, an antisemitic tone was injected into the growing campaign against dissident Soviet intellectuals, among them a significant number of persons of Jewish origin, e.g., Pavel Litvinov, Larissa Daniel, Alexander Ginzburg.

A precursor of the resurgence of officially-sponsored antisemitism was the reappearance in print of Trofim Kichko, a former Nazi collaborator, whose *Judaism Without Embellishment*, a crude antisemitic tract published in 1964 was, after vehement protests abroad, disowned by the ideological commission

of the party's Central Committee. On October 4, 1967 an article by Kichko appeared in *Komsomolskoye znamya*, a provincial newspaper published in the Ukraine; and on January 20, 1968, *Pravda Ukrainy*, the Republic's central newspaper, reported that Kichko was being rewarded with a scroll of honor for his "services to atheist propaganda," i.e., in effect his previously disowned tract. Soon thereafter, a new book by Kichko made its appearance. Its title, *Judaism and Zionism*, directly linked the practices and beliefs of Judaism to a hostile political ideology.¹⁴ One of the book's central theses was the claim that Judaism—i.e., a faith practiced by many of Russia's three million Jews—bears much of the responsibility for the "crimes" of Israeli "aggressors":

There is a direct connection between the morality of Judaism and the actions of the Israeli Zionists. Weren't the actions of the Israeli extremists during their latest aggression against the Arab countries in keeping with the Torah?

But then, Kichko continued, this should not be surprising. After all, "The Talmud does not even consider someone of another faith a man, but merely a creature created in the image of man." And, further, according to Kichko, Judaism claims that "the entire world belongs to the Jews."

Kichko's book was followed by Yuri Ivanov's monograph *Beware, Zionism!*¹⁵ If anything, Ivanov's book was even more poisonous than Kichko's. Raising the bogey of an international Jewish conspiracy, it said: "The Zionists are using the false and reactionary concept of a 'world Jewish nation' in order to establish control over citizens of diverse countries, as long as they are of Jewish origin." It intimated that Soviet Jews may not be immune to its blandishments by pointing out that Zionism's—and, by extension, American imperialism's—slogans "have evoked a response among some circles of the *working Jewish intelligentsia*" (author's emphasis).¹⁶

And, to top it all, it asserted that "Judaism is characterized by hatred of man, by preaching (in various forms and ways) genocide, by cultivating love of power, and praising criminal methods for achieving power."¹⁷ All this prompted a Soviet reviewer to point out approvingly that, "In contrast to other varieties of modern nationalism, Zionism, as Yu. Ivanov convincingly demonstrates, is completely devoid of any democratic elements." (*Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, Moscow, April 1969). The equation was thus completed:

¹⁴ Trofim K. Kichko, *Judaizm i sionizm* (Kiev: "Znanie," 1968) was published in a very inexpensive edition of 60,000, at 14 kopeks per copy.

¹⁵ Yuri Ivanov, *Ostorozhno, sionizm!* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1969), 173 pp.; published in an edition of 75,000, at 27 kopeks per copy.

¹⁶ The thesis had been advanced somewhat earlier in *Krasnaya zvezda*, the newspaper of the Soviet armed forces, on August 17, 1968: "The Zionists stubbornly strive to make all Jews, regardless of citizenship and Party loyalties, partners in the Israeli aggression and in the dirty actions of the Jewish big bourgeoisie and of international imperialism, which are aimed at the camp of peace and Socialism. . . . Similar stratagems were once resorted to by the Nazis in order to form their 'fifth columns' . . ." It also noted that Israeli intelligence was trying to recruit "persons of Jewish origin residing in Socialist countries" (author's emphasis). Similar ideas were put forth in the January 24, 1969, issue of *Sovetskaya Rossiya*.

¹⁷ Cited in *Jews in Eastern Europe* (London), January 1970, p. 61.

the world's most inhuman religion spawned the world's most vicious nationalism, the only one without *any* redeeming features. At one time or another, this assertion has been advanced by scores of Soviet publications.¹⁸

In the last three years, sinister pictures of worldwide Jewish conspiracy have become a regular feature of Soviet periodicals. An article in *Komsomolskaya pravda*, a Moscow youth newspaper, of October 4, 1967, offered a typical example of the genre:

Zionism is an invisible, but huge and mighty, empire of financiers and industrialists, an empire not to be found on any map of the world, but one which nonetheless exists and operates everywhere in the capitalist camp. The practical application of Zionism to Middle Eastern affairs includes genocide, racism, treachery, aggression and annexation. . . . As testified by a series of foreign sources, Zionist adherents in the United States alone number between twenty and twenty-five million. There are Jews and non-Jews among them [sic]. They belong to associations, organizations, and societies that play a dominant role in America's economy, politics, culture, and science. Zionist lawyers comprise about 70 per cent of all American lawyers; the physicists, including those engaged in secret work of preparing weapons for mass destruction, comprise 69 per cent, and the industrialists, more than 43 per cent. Adherents of Zionism among American Jews own 80 per cent of the local and international news agencies. In addition, about 60 per cent of the large publishing houses serve the aims of the Zionists.

These strikingly "exact" figures aroused the curiosity of some researchers who ultimately succeeded in tracking down the "series of foreign sources" referred to by the Soviet newspaper. It has now been established that the Soviet journalist's authority was a pamphlet published by *The Police Gazette*, a Cairo journal, in 1957, i.e., at a time when Egypt's propaganda apparatus was headed by Johannes van Leers, a Nazi fugitive and a former associate of Hitler's Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels.¹⁹ Of late there were indications that Soviet propaganda was resorting with increasing frequency to Arab sources which, needless to say, were overtly antisemitic. At the same time, the USSR increased the import of Arab "cultural materials," such as feature films, with predictable results. Thus, on October 17, 1969, the *London Jewish Chronicle* reported that antisemitic demonstrations followed the showing of an Egyptian film portraying bloodthirsty Israeli villains, in Bessarabia, a Rumanian province annexed by the USSR in 1940.

¹⁸ To cite two random examples from the central newspapers of the two union republics with the largest Jewish populations outside the Russian Federation: Zionism "promises the Jews that they will rule the entire world or, at the very least, enjoy a privileged position among the peoples of the entire world." (*Pravda Ukrainy*, Kiev, September 6, 1967); "He [Moshe Dayan] is a believer. He professes Judaism. In accordance with the tenets of his religion he considers himself 'God-chosen'; and that is why, according to the Minsk *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* of March 9, 1969, he ordered fourteen Arabs buried alive, ostensibly in reprisal for the Baghdad "spy" hangings.

¹⁹ Yaakov Moriah, *Anti-Semitism—Tool of Soviet Policy* (Tel Aviv, 1968), pp. 7–8. It is curious that the Soviet sources mistranslated "physicians" as "physicists," and then proceeded to improve on the Egyptian original by adding the words "including those engaged in secret work of preparing weapons for mass destruction."

In March 1970 the Soviet Union unleashed an unprecedented campaign of anti-Israel and "anti-Zionist" vilification, in which virulent attacks on Israel were completely merged with protestations that Jews in the USSR were a contented ethnic group, with no desire to leave for Israel. The latter element of the drive was a clear response to Western and Israeli protests against the disabilities suffered by Russia's Jews, who continued to be deprived even of those elementary rights granted to other ethnic groups in the USSR, such as schools, theaters, and publications, all essential for the perpetuation of Jewish identity. For the first time, statements began to appear making official what had been known for a long time—that the Soviet authorities would do everything in their power to hasten the disappearance of Russia's Jews as a distinct ethnic group. Cultural genocide has now been acknowledged as the aim. A particularly odious feature of the campaign—still in full swing at the time of writing, after a brief intermission for the Lenin centennial observances in April 1970—was the fact that the denunciations of "Nazi-like" Israeli actions and protestations of absolute contentment of Russia's Jews with their position were all presented as having been voiced at "spontaneous" meetings organized by Soviet Jews and in letters written by them. Thus, among the authors of such declarations—now numbering in the hundreds—have been Jews from all walks of life, ranging from military specialists to scientists and poets, and from ordinary workers to Moscow's aging rabbi and Russia's greatest ballerina.

* * *

The best explanation of the rationale making antisemitism an attractive policy tool for the authorities in the Soviet bloc countries miraculously appeared in the Czechoslovak journal *Zitrek*,²⁰ named after the journal of prewar democratic Czechoslovakia's President Eduard Beneš. The article was published on March 19, 1969, well after Czechoslovakia's occupation by Soviet troops, and its tone of sad irony was typical of that country's journalism in those tragic days. Written by Vilém Hejl a young novelist who was information officer of a now banned organization of former political prisoners during the Czechoslovak "liberal" period, it said in part:

In a classical recipe for saving an unsuccessful or shaken regime, or for saving power, it is advisable to channel dissatisfaction, resistance, and hatred in a direction which is not a threat to that power, and which may even be useful to it. Non-Aryans need not necessarily be the target, although it is precisely they who are tested and well-tried objects.

Jews can be more easily set apart and defined than, for instance, intellectuals, the opposition, or deviationists. Neither janitor nor mailman can be one hundred per cent certain that an attack on the intelligentsia is not somehow also aimed at him. The term "opposition" or "those extremist forces" are even more oblique and flexible. But every Aryan knows quite definitely that he is not a Zionist. This ensures that he will not feel endangered, and that he will not

²⁰ The journal was published by a group of liberal Czech intellectuals and was suppressed shortly after it published this article.

object if an apparatus of espionage and repression is created because, after all, it is only the Jews who are affected. Therefore, even if he is not sufficiently "high-principled" to cooperate, at least he won't obstruct it.

Hejl continued:

At first, the psychological mechanism [of blaming everything on the Jews—author] works reliably. Scapegoats are found, and, at the same time, there must be something positive for all the Aryans exempt from the effects of repressive measures. . . All but the members of the minority under attack are automatically promoted to a caste of citizens of higher quality: this is Krone-wetter's Socialism for imbeciles. Simultaneously, a generous amnesty is declared. The blame for negligence is shifted to those affected by it. If water is not running in a new building, it is not the Aryan plumber who is to blame, but the Zionist surgeon living on the second floor. This cheap, but tested, fiction increases the number of those who share in the power, and a degree of social consolidation immediately results. . . [But] after the first minority, the other minorities' turn inevitably must come. And everyone belongs to some minority—whether by origin, religion, profession, or by degree of commitment. And, the second time around, everything will go much more easily because the apparatus has had its workout in the first round. Coercion has come to be one of the well-tried and accepted methods of governing the state; and its success in solving the Jewish problem also intimidates those whose turn comes later.

Most of Hejl's observations do not appear to the Western reader as strikingly original. However, to the reader who was reared in Stalinist Czechoslovakia they must have been a revelation. Hejl's gloomy predictions unfortunately are being realized one by one, as a new era of repression gradually replaces the short-lived "thaw," not only in his homeland, but throughout the Soviet bloc.

MAURICE FRIEDBERG