

caught in the act, the court record, the newspaper article, says it is David Abramovich who was caught, and everybody knows it is a Jew who did the wrong. David Abramovich is that Jew, and you are another Jew. And you feel as though his malfeasance reflects on you. It makes no sense, but it's there."

It makes no sense, of course. But it has been that way a long time, and, strangely, it continues to be that way also under the Soviet Socialist system.

There is a talmudic saying that goes back more than 1,500 years, to the effect that all Jews are held responsible for one another. In this country, my own mother, on reading of a sensational crime in which a non-Jew was involved, would say, "Thank God, it's one of them." And when a Jew was the criminal, she would be as heartbroken as though he were a member of her own family. During the centuries Jews have lived in many lands "on approval." Psychologically, they are still on approval in the Soviet Union, as elsewhere. Such an attitude may be the historical defense mechanism of a people in Exile.

Perhaps here lies the real explanation for the frequency of the appearance of these articles. They are a barrage against that defense mechanism, an onslaught against the self-identification of the Soviet Jew with his own people. They are, in essence, a way of smoking the Jew out of his Jewishness, a drive to make him disconnect, disown, break all inner ties with his past and his people. He is to become just a Soviet citizen—indeed, the first Soviet citizen minus a national identity.

### Chapter Three •

## A RELIGION GASPING FOR BREATH

"... Even before this generation passes on, religion will be gone in our country. It is already on the way out. It needs only a little push to get it over the brink. And we are pushing..."

This was Yeremyan Yaroslavsky, head of *Bezhbozhnik*, the anti-religious movement, speaking to me in his sumptuous office in Moscow in October, 1934. In October, 1960, Yaroslavsky had long passed on, and so also most of his generation. But religion was not gone. On the contrary, it seemed to be gathering new strength. *Trud*, the official organ of the Soviet trade unions, has recently called upon the unions to purge their ranks of clergymen of all faiths. Anti-religious articles by A. V. Lunacharsky, first Commissar of Education, originally published in the early 1920's, were collected and reissued in 1960, long after his death, in the renewed campaign against faith in God. *Bezhbozhnik* had died, but *Bog* (God) continued to command belief.

In 1934, Yaroslavsky was sitting on top of the world. A short, rotund man with a massive head, a wild bush of graying hair, a walrus mustache, and an easy smile, his blue eyes sparkling with fun, he was confident he had religion whipped. He was an Old Bolshevik, a youthful friend of Lenin, and a genuine Siberian. His grandfather, a Jew, had been drafted as a young boy for twenty-five years' military service in Siberia under the rule of Czar Nicholas I. The grandson was now engaged in battle with the Lord of Hosts. The Lord might have the larger hosts, he said facetiously, "but His powder is wet and mine is dry." There was no miracle about religion, he maintained. People clung to their faith out of helplessness, hopelessness, and ignorance. And the Soviet system was erasing all three.

The peasant had been helpless against drought. If rain failed to come, he perished from hunger. So down on his knees he went, praying to a Lord in heaven for rain. But now that he had crop insurance, the peasant was not so panicky about rain. Instead of praying, he went to collect his crop insurance. And take the case of the poor man. His lot had been all misery, suffering, humiliation. There was no hope for him; his fate was such, his masters told him. So he fell back on the dream of a hereafter, encouraged by his exploiters so that he would bear his cross on this earth in the hope of a reward after death. But exploitation had already been abolished and the workers had become masters of their own fate, secure in their jobs, provided for against all emergencies, with new vistas for increasing betterment. As the standard of living rose, as the prospects for a

better future brightened, man concentrated on life here rather than on the hereafter. And of course as the Soviet people became more enlightened, they were less prone to accept superstitious belief.

This was how Yaroslavsky saw the religious situation over a quarter of a century ago. Since then, the condition of the Soviet masses has improved immeasurably, yet the need for religion has not disappeared. The churches are functioning, or "working," as the Soviet phrase goes, and, surprisingly, quite a number of young persons, born into a well-established Socialist system, attend services. Economic improvement, social security, and Soviet education have not made God superfluous. On the contrary, these seem to have created a spiritual void which some of the young generation are impelled to fill with religious faith. Apparently, it is to arrest this trend that the anti-religious movement has been revived. The old *Bezhbozhnik* rides again.

Why the Soviets still war on God is not easy to understand.

If the Bolsheviks had been less doctrinaire, they might have drawn a distinction between God and religion, and concentrating their fire on the corrupt clergy, they could have lined up all true believers on the side of the Revolution. But it was faith, belief in the existence of the Deity, that they regarded as their deadly enemy, the clergy being merely the agents, or servitors, of the evil. And this was their mistake. Forty years after, the struggle still goes on along the same lines: faith in God incompatible with membership in the Party; church attendance, or any other religious observance, a social aberration that must be eradicated. The propaganda machines are blasting away, but people go on believing, praying, and crossing their hearts. Even Communists do so, but secretly. As an elderly intellectual told me on the steps of a cathedral: "The *Bezhbozhnik* is mortal; he comes and goes. But *Bog* is eternal. The Antichrist may reign over the land, but Christ rules the heart."

### *The Jewish Religion—Innocent Bystander*

The Jewish religion was an innocent party in the October Revolution. It had, and could have had, no interest in the continuance of the Czarist regime, with its oppressive legislation

and pogroms against Jews. Since European Jewish society had never had a hereditary nobility nor a feudal aristocracy nor a large propertied class, the Jewish religious institutions could not have become identified with, or subservient to, the exploiting classes, which were the *bête noir* of the Bolsheviks. In effect, the Jewish faith had evolved into a democratic religion. Its laws, customs, social traditions, and ideals reflected the interests and aspirations of the lower classes, the poor, the widow and orphan, the toiler, and the petty trader—which was in the tradition of the ancient prophets.

One might have expected the Bolsheviks to take all this into consideration in dealing with the Jewish religion. But that was not to be. The principle of equality for all religions was maintained in the diverse restrictions of religious expression. In practice, this made Judaism a little less equal. For being the faith of a poor, harassed minority, Judaism did not possess the deterrent against arbitrary persecution that the massive constituency of the Russian church commanded. Moreover, the Jewish Communists who were active in the Jewish field were burdened with a hostility complex toward the faith of their fathers. Most of them, if not all, had had a religious, rabbinical education. Their atheism was young, the inner spiritual crisis preceding their apostasy still fresh, their neophyte zeal unrestrained. The story of the Jewish religion under the satrapy of the Jewish Communists has been one long harrowing tale of incessant crude abuse, torment, and torture. Often a religious Jewish community had to appeal over the heads of their own Communists to the non-Jewish authorities for the protection of their rights under the law.

Their religious rights under the Soviet religious law—that was all religious Soviet Jews ever asked, but they never got them. And still haven't. In fact, the Soviet Jews—or, in their silence, Jews outside the Soviet Union—have not asked even for a full measure of the law, merely for as much of it as has been put into practice. For unfortunately there has been a discrepancy between the letter of the law and its application. Religious Soviet Jews ask only that they be permitted the enjoyment of the same rights other religious groups enjoy. All the synagogue demands is to be treated like the churches.

On paper, the religious law of the Soviet Union is liberal enough. According to the information officially supplied by Soviet authorities to the Commission on Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination of the United Nations, and published as Conference Room Paper No. 35, January 30, 1959, the legal position of religious practice is as follows:

"The Church is separated from the State.

"Within the limits of the Republic it is prohibited to pass local laws or regulations which would restrict or limit the freedom of conscience or establish any kind of privileges or advantages on the ground of the religious affiliation of citizens.

"Freedom of worship . . . is scrupulously protected and safeguarded by the State as a Constitutional right of the Soviet citizen. In Chapter IV of the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), currently in force, and in corresponding chapters of the Codes of other Republics, special penalties are provided for interference with the regular performance of religious worship.

"In its legislation on religion the Soviet State, being a true people's state, accords completely unrestricted freedom of worship to citizens of the Soviet Union who are believers. To that end the State places church buildings and devotional articles at the disposal of believers and co-operates in the publication of religious literature and books of divine service and in the establishment of the necessary ecclesiastical educational institutions for the training of clergy. Thus the laws in force in the Soviet State in actual fact enable Soviet citizens who are believers to carry out their religious observances in a normal manner, without hindering them in any way . . .

"A group of not less than twenty citizens who have attained their majority and who profess the same faith may, for the purpose of jointly satisfying their religious needs, combine to form a religious association, which acquires official status through registration with the appropriate Soviet organs. Once the religious association, thus formed, has been duly registered, the State accords it, under contract, the free use of an ecclesiastical building, and the necessary articles for religious worship, where these are available; where a building specially designed for wor-

ship is not available, the association is given permission to rent or construct suitable premises. Religious organizations enjoy the right to rent, purchase, or construct buildings for purposes of worship, to acquire means of transportation and set up undertakings, such as candle factories and icon-painting studios, for the manufacture of the requisite articles for religious worship. It should be noted in this connection that all the materials required for the manufacture of candles and church plates, including precious metals, are issued to churches upon application from State warehouses at fixed State prices.

"Religious organizations are voluntary associations of believers and are entirely self-supporting. They derive their funds from the voluntary contributions of their members, sales of candles and other devotional articles, and fees for the performance of rites and ceremonies (baptisms, weddings, funeral services, etc.). . . . Believers who are not numerous enough to organize a religious society may form a group of believers . . .

"Under the existing laws, religious communities of the same denominations may form religious associations, which may or may not coincide geographically with the administrative subdivisions of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (regions, territories, and republics), and may set up religious centers, which must then be registered with the State authorities. These religious centers, which are governed by their own rules and regulations, may hold Republic or All-Union congresses, church councils, and other conferences on matters related to the administration of church affairs, and direct the entire internal life of their particular denomination without outside interference. They may also draft directives relating to internal ecclesiastical matters, including administrative, financial, and economic church organizations; publish periodicals and the necessary devotional literature.

"The various religious centers, and religious communities in the Soviet Union which do not form a part of a religious center, have the right to publish such devotional literature as they require. In order to enable them to do so, the State supplies them with the necessary paper and affords them the use of the printing plants. With such aid from the State, the various religious

organizations which exist in the USSR regularly publish a wide assortment of devotional literature.

"The school is separated from the Church. The teaching of religious doctrines in all State and public, as well as private, educational institutions in which general subjects are taught, is forbidden. Citizens may teach and study religion privately. Any teaching of a religious belief to children or persons under age, done in government or private teaching establishments or schools, in violation of rules issued concerning this matter, shall be punished by compulsory labor. According to the established practice, citizens receive religious instruction in houses of worship in which, in addition to the holding of services of public worship, sermons and homilies are given expounding the tenets of their religious faith, or else they invite ministers of religion to their homes to give them and members of their family private instruction. Religious associations, centers, and communities have the right to set up special theological educational establishments to train ministers of religion . . . To enable the organizations to exercise this right, the State makes special premises available to them and gives them all necessary assistance in organizing such schools.

"The Communist Party . . . on the basis of the law of freedom of conscience, carries on scientific atheist propaganda among the population. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union requires of its members the correct local organization of scientific atheist propaganda based upon all the achievements of modern science, and stresses the need for a sensitive careful attitude toward believers. In this connection the resolution of 10 November 1954 of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on errors in scientific atheist propaganda amongst the population says: 'Profound, patient and skillfully presented atheist propaganda among believers will help them to free themselves in the end from religious illusions, whereas administrative measures and offensive attacks of any sort against believers and the clergy can only do harm, reinforcing and even intensifying their religious prejudices.' "

Now, these statements are not exudations from a propaganda machine. They are quotations from a lengthy official report by the Soviet authorities to a Commission of the United Nations.

Each item is documented by a reference to a clause in the Constitution and a section of the Soviet Code of Laws. This is, then, how religion should be able to function in the Soviet Union. The Soviet report to the United Nations maintains that it is also the actual practice. It cites concrete details in evidence, among them the provision of matzohs and the publication of a siddur (prayer book) for Jews. Each item in the Soviet statement to the United Nations which was quoted above has a direct bearing on the religious life of Soviet Jewry. How does practice tally with principle and law in regard to the Jewish religion?

The statement says that all religious communities have the right to set up "religious centers," i.e., central bodies, which may hold Republic or All-Union congresses on religious matters. Such is actually the case with all religious sects and denominations of any consequence. It holds good for as small a sect as the Buddhists and as scattered a denomination, spread all over the Soviet Union, as the Seventh-Day Adventists. The Jewish religion is the exception. There was a central body for all Jewish communities when the Bolsheviks took over. But the Bolsheviks dissolved it. There was a Conference of Rabbis of the Soviet Union, but 1926 is the year it was last heard from. It met at Korosten, rabbis having arrived from many parts of the country. But only twenty-five, representing the local community and two near-by communities (Zhitomir and Shepetovka), were permitted by the authorities to figure as delegates. Ninety other rabbis could be present only as "guests." Since then there has not been even a semblance of a central Jewish religious body in the Soviet Union. For the Jews alone this right established in law is a dead letter to this day.

The statement to the United Nations further asserts that the State "places church buildings and devotional articles at the disposal of believers" and reiterates that "religious organizations enjoy the right to rent, purchase, or construct buildings for purposes of worship." However the case may be for other religious organizations, the Jewish experience has not been in line with these assertions. Thousands of synagogues have been sequestered by the Soviet authorities. Those left for the worshippers were generally the smallest and most deteriorated. The

only synagogue left in a town often had a precarious existence, subject to the caprice of the local official. He might seize the synagogue building on some pretense, such as sudden discovery of a violation or hazard, or the town's urgent need for just such a structure. Once a synagogue was sequestered, there was no recourse for recompense or chance of obtaining another place of worship in its stead. There are today many towns with tens of thousands of Jews without a single synagogue.

The statement of the Soviet Union to the United Nations says that "believers who are not numerous enough to organize a religious society may form a group of believers." This is exactly what Jews do when they have no synagogue—form a minyan, or quorum of ten males for a service. But in recent years there has been a veritable campaign against such minyanim by officials who regard them as illegal public meetings and by scurrilous attacks in the press. The situation has reached a stage where, in order to pray with a minyan, (i.e., outside of a registered synagogue), Soviet Jews must go underground like the marranos in Inquisition Spain more than four hundred years ago. Soviet marranos pray in a bedroom, with shades drawn and hushed voices; the Torah, regarded as so sacred that if it is dropped the community declares a fast—that Torah, retrieved from the ark of a closed synagogue, often is kept in a box underneath a bed!

The Soviet statement to the United Nations makes a point of the provision by the State of "the necessary articles for religious worship," and says that "the State places . . . devotional articles at the disposal of believers," permitting such undertakings by believers as "candle factories and icon-painting studios," and that on days preceding particularly important holidays . . . the shops of the State trading organizations sell special types of bakery products such as *kulich* (Easter cakes) for Christians, matzo (unleavened bread) for Orthodox Jews, etc., to enable worshippers to perform the appropriate ritual." Now, let us look at the facts.

I have not noticed a shortage of candles in the Soviet churches, or a lack of icons. In fact, there seemed to be enough of the latter for the "biznismen," the youthful delinquents, to offer them for sale to tourists. But how about *talis* and *tefilin*? The *talis* is the ritual prayer shawl in which the Orthodox Jew covers

himself in morning prayer. Since he is also buried with it, as a covering for the shroud, the *talis* has become a most personal and intimate devotional object. Every adult Jew who attended a synagogue used to have a *talis*; today a *talis* is the rare possession of a fortunate Jew who happened to retain whole his pre-Revolutionary *talis*, or managed to purchase one from the irreligious heirs of a deceased religious Jew. There has not been a single *talis* manufactured in the Soviet Union since the Bolsheviks imposed their rule fully, and no importation of *talisim* has been permitted, not even from a Socialist country like Romania. There was not a synagogue that I visited in the entire length and breadth of the Soviet Union where I did not feel this terrible yearning for a *talis*. Always one intrepid soul would ask, when no one was listening, if I had a *talis*, and if I would part with it—I could always get another back home—for any sum I might care to name. In one Central Asian city, an elderly oriental Jew I met in a synagogue offered to serve as my guide for the Jewish community. He asked me if I had a *talis*, and I replied that I did. Then he asked me how long I might stay in town, and I said about five days. He put his hand on his heart and said, "I'll serve you five days, five weeks, five years, serve you day and night, if you will only give me the *talis*." How does this compare with factories for church candles?

*Tefilin* are called also phylacteries, small leather boxes containing parts of the Bible, worn on the left arm and forehead in accordance with the Mosaic precept (Deuteronomy 6:4-11): "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. . . . And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. . . . And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." On his thirteenth birthday, at bar mitzvah (confirmation), every religious Jewish boy receives his *tefilin*, which he carries as his religious possessions through most of his life (he may purchase newer or bigger ones late in life). The most sacred possessions of a pious Jew, with which he never parted, were his *talis* and *tefilin*. The *tefilin*, like the scroll of the Torah, used to be copied on parchment by sainted scholars called scribes. But there has not been a scribe functioning in the Soviet Union since Stalin imposed his control over the land, and not a single

pair of *tefilin* could be imported from anywhere into the Soviet Union. How does this compare with the assertion that the State provides devotional articles to believers? How does this total deprivation of *tefilin* go with the "icon-painting studios"?

As for the *kulich* (Easter cakes) and matzohs, it is true that both are equally available in some State stores in Moscow before the respective holidays. And in a number of cities in several republics Jews were given the facilities to bake matzohs for Passover. But it is also true that over a million Jews in the Ukraine were not permitted to bake matzohs for the Passover of 1960. The head of the Cult (Religion) Department of the Ukraine Republic admitted in an interview with a correspondent that the bakeries in the republic were not permitted to bake matzohs, and added facetiously, "So what? Didn't the Jews bake them anyhow?" He had not forbidden Jews to bake matzohs privately, each family on its own stove. The fact that matzohs could not be ritually baked on the stoves in use in ordinary kitchens did not concern the Cult official whose function it was to help the religious communities realize their rights under the Soviet law. And if the Jews in the Ukraine "baked matzohs anyhow"—illegally, that is—it is only a sad commentary on the status of freedom of religion for the Jews of the Ukraine. It also makes a mockery of the statement of the Soviet Union to the United Nations that "special penalties are provided for interference with the regular performance of religious worship."

The Soviet statement to the United Nations makes much of the provisions for religious literature. In the item about central religious bodies, it asserts that they may "publish periodicals and the necessary devotional literature." In the item on the religious communities that have no central bodies, it reports that they "have the right to publish such devotional literature as they require." It says that the State supplies them with the "necessary paper and affords the use of the printing plants." And it lists the religious publications currently appearing, an item worth quoting.

"In particular, the following are now being published in the Soviet Union: books for clergy and worshipers of the Sect of Evangelical Christian Baptists, prayer books for Catholics and Lutherans, the siddur (a prayer book) for worshipers of the

Jewish faith, the Koran for clergy and worshipers of the Moslem faith, annual church calendars for Christian worshipers and annual lunar calendars for worshipers of the Moslem faith. In addition, many religious centers publish special church periodicals for the clergy and laity. Among these may be cited the periodical *Echmiadzin*, published by Vazgen I, Catholicos of all the Armenians; the periodical *Fraternal Courier*, published by the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists; the official periodical of the religious board of Moslems of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, and the periodical *Almanac of the Lutheran Church* published by the consistory of the Lutheran Church of Esthonia." A Moscow radio broadcast in Arabic, on April 12, 1960, reported that "the Koran was published in Tashkent twice during the past year alone. The first edition was sold out within the first months of the year."

Now, what are the corresponding facts in regard to the Jewish religion?

To this day there has not appeared a Bible in Hebrew since the Bolsheviks took over. No Jewish calendar has yet appeared, and the synagogues paste up handwritten almanacs indicating the holidays. There has not been a single Jewish religious periodical, or indeed anything religious, printed except the one single edition of the siddur in 1958—one printing of a prayer book of 5,000 copies in forty years for a Jewish population of close to 3,000,000, who still count, according to a statement by a member of the five-man Soviet Committee for Religious Affairs in January, 1960, approximately 500,000 practicing their religion.

A similar situation prevails in regard to theological schools. "The existing laws," the Soviet statement to the United Nations declares, "accord to the religious organizations in the Soviet State the right to maintain theological schools for the training of ministers of religion. To enable the organizations to exercise this right the State makes special premises available to them and gives them all the necessary assistance in organizing such schools." The statement cites facts: The Russian Orthodox Church operates two theological academies and eight theological seminaries. The Moscow and Leningrad theological schools have 200 students each; the Leningrad theological academy

maintains a correspondence course serving many priests in outlying regions. "There are Roman Catholic theological seminaries at Riga and Kovno, Lutheran theological seminaries at Tallin and Vilna, a madrasah (Moslem college) at Bokhara, and a rabbinical theological school (yeshiva) in Moscow."

Let me say a word about the yeshiva. There has not been one until 1957, which means in forty years of Soviet rule. The yeshiva has no "special premise made available to it," and the students have to be instructed in a corner of the women's gallery of the Moscow *synagogue*. In spite of the boast of the Soviet statement that "large numbers of future priests and theological scholars" are being trained in the theological schools, in the case of the Jews the permit for the yeshiva, which trains not only rabbis but other members of the clergy, like cantors and slaughterers, limits the enrollment to thirty students, but no more than fifteen are passed. There are many would-be students, but every applicant has to be approved by the Cult authority, and no more than fifteen seem to be able to gain the approval of the authority.

Compare this situation with that of other religions in this respect, as stated in an article on religion in the recent edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*: "... Clergy and religious personnel are trained in special spiritual educational institutions which send their students abroad for specialization in theological learning. Thus, for instance, a group of Moslem youths studies at the Moslem university of Al-Azhar in Cairo, a group of Baptist youths at English theological colleges."

Last and possibly worst is the harassing propaganda, increasingly offensive and menacing in tone, that has been blasting away at the Jewish religion in recent years. It is part of the intensified general anti-religious campaign, but bears a specific malicious, sinister character. In respect to the other religions, some regard is had for the Communist Party Resolution of November 10, 1954, quoted as still valid in the Soviet Statement to the United Nations in January, 1959, which declared that "administrative measures and offensive attacks against believers and clergy can only do harm, reinforcing and even intensifying religious prejudices." Personal abuse of Christian or Moslem believers is avoided, the emphasis being on religion rather than

on the religious. The attack is against the theologic belief, the ritual, the superstition. But the campaign against the Jewish religion is concentrated against the believers, the religious personnel and active members, or the "twenties" (*dvatsatka*), the legal body necessary for the constitution of a religious community. Those assailed are called by name and described as hypocrites, cheats, embezzlers, crooks, drunkards, hooligans, and enemies of the State. Judaism is not spared, of course, the thrusts against it being obtuse by their crude ignorance and poisoned by political implication.

Articles with such titles as "The Reactionary Essence of Judaism" or "The Truth About the Jewish Religion" contain such erroneous crudities that it is hard to believe they were written by Jews, as the names of the authors are intended to indicate, however ignorant some Jews may be of their own faith. The association with Christian church concepts is all too apparent. It would be hard to find a Jew, not to speak of one presuming to parade as an authority on the Jewish religion, who would confuse matzoh with manna and say that Jews ate matzohs all through their forty years wandering in the wilderness, as "S. A. Axelrod" writes in his "Food for the Gods" (*Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, Alma Ata, 12-12-'60). If Mr. Axelrod had attended a single Passover Seder, which is celebrated by many non-believing Jews as well, he would have heard the simple story that for the first few days after their departure from Egypt, the Jews had to eat unleavened bread (matzohs) because they had to leave so hurriedly they could not wait for the dough to rise. A matter of a few days, not forty years! No Jew would refer to "Apostles of Moses," as a B. Veinstok does in his "Commentary" on an article "Under the Synagogue Vaults" in *Sovetskaya Byelorussia* (Minsk, 21-2-'60), since there is no such concept as "apostles" in the Jewish religion, and "Apostles of Moses" makes no sense whatever. Mr. Veinstok makes the further ridiculous statement that on the Day of Atonement plates are passed around in the synagogue for various purposes. Not only are plates never passed around among the worshipers in a synagogue, a custom purely Christian, but Jews are forbidden to handle money on that day.

A strange, tragic case is revealed in an article entitled "Why

We Have Stopped Believing in Religion," bearing the names of three old Jews, "the youngest . . . over fifty and the oldest seventy-seven," two of them former chairmen of the Religious Jewish Community of Tiraspol, in *Dnestrovskaya Pravda* (27-9-'59). The three Jewish names signed to the article are those of real people, but whether the writing is theirs may be questioned. The article begins with the words, "It may look strange to people that we, old men in the evening of our life, have decided to withdraw from religion and to address this letter, through the editorial board, to all religious Jews." It is stranger still to read over the signatures of these three old Jews this statement: "And now imagine, a prayer is performed, every person holds a Talmud, but almost nobody understands what is written in it." Nobody ever held, or could hold, "a Talmud." He might hold a tractate of the Talmud, which goes by its own name and does not include the word Talmud. (To speak of holding a Talmud is like speaking of holding "an English literature.") Furthermore, there are now no Soviet synagogues that would have an entire set of the Talmud; possibly a few odd volumes of it survive here and there, but certainly not enough of these for "everyone" to hold one. It is easy to guess how ineffective such propaganda is on religious Jews who instantly realize the dark ignorance of the propagandist.

What the propaganda against the Jewish religion lacks in knowledge and intelligence it makes up in intimidation and threats. It may not convince the religious Jew to reject his ancient faith, but it may scare him enough to keep him away from public religious practice or identifying himself with the Jewish religion. Rather than stress the superstition in the religion, as in the case of other faiths, the campaign against the Jewish religion harps on its "reactionary character," and ultimately equates this with hostility to the Soviet social order. The "reaction" of Judaism goes beyond the subservience to the ruling class "common" to all religions. It combines Jewish bourgeois nationalism with its twin, Zionism, which is one of the stock devils in the Soviet demonology.

It is this demon that is invoked whenever Judaism is mentioned. The list of subjects to be studied at a seminar for propagandist atheists contains, among others, Christianity and Its

Class Nature, and Judaism and Jewish Bourgeois Nationalism. No connection is drawn, though it well could be, between Russian Christianity and Slavophilism or plain Russian chauvinism. In the case of the Russian church it is religion and social philosophy. Nor is nationalism introduced in the atheistic propaganda against the Moslem faith. Indeed, Soviet spokesmen abroad boast of the permission to Moslems to make their pilgrimages to Mecca. Only in the case of Judaism is the faith tied up with bourgeois nationalism, which is abhorrent to Sovietism. Unlike Mecca, Jerusalem is anathematized.

An article in *Science and Religion* (*Nauka i Religia*, 11-12-'59) explains the origin of the word Zionism as deriving from Zion, "a 'holy' mountain in the vicinity of Jerusalem, where according to legend King David's castle stood," and deduces that "the worship of this slave-owning Jewish king vividly illustrates the Jewish religion's close ties with Zionism, which are even outwardly manifest: the magical hexagram ensign Star of David [*Magen David*] serves both as a sacred symbol (it appears on the enclosure of all scrolls, prayer books, and holy arks in the synagogues) and as a symbol of Zionism . . . Zionism is also based on the religious notion of 'the Jews being a people chosen by God.' . . . Zionism's ideological basis is Judaism. In their sermons rabbis contend for the 'promised land' in every possible way. It is a fact that on Passover many believers follow the cantor in repeating the Psalm: May God grant us to celebrate this holiday in Jerusalem, on Israeli soil, next year."

The "Atheist's Companion" (*Sputnik Ateista*, Moscow, 10-'59) reiterates the Zionist connection of Judaism and indicts Zionism. "The synagogue has ties with the Jewish bourgeois nationalists, the Zionists, the secret service of American imperialism in the Near East." To smear Zionism further, the "Atheist's Companion" asserts that "Zionists opposed the participation of Jewish workers in the struggle against Czarism. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Czarist Chief of Police in Moscow, Zubatov, wrote, 'Zionists must be supported.'" The "Atheist's Companion" ignores the fact that Zionist Socialist parties took a direct part in the March revolution that removed the Czar and established a democratic republic, or that the same Zubatov also maintained that trade unions must be "supported," and



took a hand in organizing unions in the general effort of deflecting the spearhead of the Revolution. An article in the *Communist Banner* (*Znamia Komunista*, Odessa, 9-10-'59), by a member of the Society for the Diffusion of Political and Scientific Knowledge, tells the readers that "the Jewish religious autumn holy days are most harmful. Their damage lies in the fact that during the holy day ritual a nationalistic intoxication is kindled . . . the 'idea' of the unity of the Jewish nation, regardless of class affiliation, is widely propagated on holy days."

An article in the *Bug Dawn* (*Bugskaya Zaria*, Nikolaiev, 13-10-'59), by the head of the Department of Marxism-Leninism at the Nikolaiev Pedagogical Institute, asserts that "Zionist preaching on the final ingathering of all the Jewish nation . . . is interpreted by individual believers as the ingathering of all Jews in the State of Israel. Here, so to say, the Jewish nation will receive its statehood anew and will finally subjugate all mankind, both physically and spiritually. This idea is propagated in many prayers, particularly those of Easter and New Year's. According to these, believers must trust fully that they will unfailingly celebrate the following New Year's and Easter in Zion. Prayer books used at present in the synagogues of the Soviet Union are impregnated with the Zionist conception that Jews are, so to say, 'in bondage' from which they will be liberated only on coming back to Zion; that Jews are in 'constant mourning for Zion,' and long for an immediate return to Palestine. The preaching arouses the nationalist feelings of believers, sows hostile bourgeois ideology among honest Soviet people . . ."

The head of the Department of Marxism-Leninism is not above taking a part of a Hebrew prayer out of context and giving it a meaning totally different from the one indicated quite clearly in the second sentence of the prayer, reducing a lofty universal thought to a low, degrading intent foreign to the letter and the spirit of the prayer. He quotes the close of the service *oleinu*, in which Jews offer praise to the Lord "for making us different from other people on earth, not putting us on the same level with its tribes, not making our lot like theirs, our destiny like to that of the throngs." But he omits the very next sentence which gives the meaning of this elation at being selected from the other peoples; "For we bow and kneel and

thank the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, Who turns the heavens and forms the earth . . . and therefore our hope is on Thee, soon to see the glory of Thy strength to clear the land of its idols and the graven images smashed and obliterated, to improve the world under Thy heavenly rule, and all flesh will call Thy name . . ." The lofty universalism of being singled out for service to the true God and praying for the rest of mankind to come and assume the same status has been perverted by the Professor of Marxism-Leninism into a crude, selfish tribalism. He tells his readers that that prayer preaches "racism and enmity to other nations, and not only to those in our country"; he considers it "a reactionary idea directed toward the destruction of proletarian internationalism and friendship of nations in our country. It inculcates feelings of distrust and hate toward other nations and faiths." Nothing is more alien to the words and spirit of the quoted prayer.

In various forms, hung on all sorts of irrelevant pegs, this is the specific in the campaign against Judaism. There is, of course, much detraction and vilification of Judaism on general antireligious grounds. Some of these go back to Roman-pagan and medieval Christian diatribes against the Jewish religion. One writer insists that the Bible is so much nonsense, since the fifth Book of Moses tells about the death of Moses—a matter already treated in the Talmud. Another quotes the prayer *Kol Nidre*, which begins the Day of Atonement service, pronouncing the annulment of vows, without understanding its true meaning, explicitly expressed a little farther in the same text—that it concerns only vows in relation to one's own self, not affecting others—and tells the Soviet readers that "fulfilling the commandments of this prayer, a Jewish believer can break military oaths, disclose state secrets, violate moral family obligations. He only has to read the prayer and he is absolved of his sin." This charge has, of course, been refuted five, six, seven centuries ago. But the Communist atheist is repeating it today with the same intent—to exclude the Jew from his social environment unless he gives up his faith. These and many similar charges against the Jewish religion invariably lead to the conclusion that Judaism is the "implacable enemy of the workers," or the "enemy of the Revolution and Socialism,"

that it serves as a "force hostile to the interest of the people," and that "Judaism kills the love for the Soviet motherland, the first in history to liberate all nations, including the Jewish nation, from various forms of human oppression, and to give workers, including Jewish workers, the authentic felicity of creative work in a country where all are equal."

These charges go unrefuted, because the kind of "freedom of conscience" they have in the Soviet Union permits atheists to attack religion, but does not give the religious the right to strike back, not to speak of the right to attack atheism. Under the circumstances, the Jew practising his religion in the Soviet Union is an outcaste, wearing spiritually the yellow badge of an ingrate enemy of his country and fellow citizens.

If such is the tenor of the "serious" articles by "scholars" for the intelligentsia and professional atheists, it is not surprising, perhaps, that anti-Judaism propaganda by local propagandists in the provincial press and radio goes beyond decency and sometimes stoops to a barbarity of the Nazi-Goebbels type. In fact, during the Nazi-Soviet pact, a contributor to the atheist organ *Bezbozhnik* (Godless) visited Nazi Germany, and was so impressed with the Goebbels anti-Judaism propaganda that he wrote in that publication (*Bezbozhnik*, 5-5-'40) that the Nazi attack on the Jewish religion was the principal achievement of the Third Reich, and that it was the duty of Soviet atheists to come to the aid of their new political allies in their fight against religion. Fortunately, *Bezbozhnik* was closed the following year, with the advent of a spirit of religious tolerance necessitated by the expectation of war. But obviously some of the hostility to religion managed to survive.

A radio broadcast in the Ukrainian language over Radio Kirovgrad (9-12-'59), monitored and reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation, could have come right out of Goebbels' book except for crude boners which the more intelligent Nazis would never have made, such as telling of five local Jews, whose names are given, that they stuffed themselves on matzohs and ethrogim (matzohs are eaten at Passover in the spring, and ethrogim are not eaten but are used in prayers in the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall), or identifying the Pentateuch as "the Jewish prayer book." The Kirovgrad Ukrainians, who, like so

many others in the Ukraine, needed no further indoctrination in anti-Semitism, were being told on the radio that their local Jews, individual names given, "pray only to the Golden Calf, how to collect more money from the believers for their own needs and for the militant spirit of the Israeli militarists. Thus praying, they call for the killing of all those who deny the Pentateuch, the Jewish prayerbook. As we know, since the establishment of the Soviet rule many of the rabbis, ministers of the Jewish faith, have been hostile to the Socialist system and opposed to the interests of the Soviet people to the benefit of internal counterrevolution and international imperialism."

"International imperialism, Israeli militarists, killing for denial of Pentateuch"—have any accusations of similar character ever been directed by the Ukrainian atheists against their own religion?

Base and downright savage is the practice of striking at a particular identified worshiper by publicly denouncing his children, again fully identified, for permitting their parent to attend services at the synagogue. An article "Around the Minyan," in *Labor's Way* (*Robotchi Put*, Smolensk, 13-9-'59), goes after the two daughters of Zalman Yevseyevich Aronov, the daughter and son-in-law of Monus Tsemakhovich Freidin, the daughter of Haim Leibovich Yenin, and his son Yerukhim, and the son of Vladimir Solomonovich Auerbakh. Aronov's daughters, Frida and Tsiva, are "clever, educated . . . not just teachers. They instruct in secondary schools, read lectures, educate the growing generation in the Communist spirit. Tsiva joined the Party, married Yefim Georgevich Lifits, a teacher at Secondary School No. 22, who also carries the Party membership card in his pocket." Freidin's daughter, Sarah Freidine Lenskaya, "works as a doctor in Children's Hospital No. 1, and is married to Vladimir Markovich Lensky, a Party member and an interrogator at the Oblast Procurator's office. Yenin's daughter Raissa "is a teacher at the working youth school, and his son Yerukhim is an engineer in the Sovnarkhoz." Auerbakh's son is "the director of the Zadneprovsk market."

These young people are evidently well situated, hold responsible positions, and there seem to be no complaints against them personally, except that their fathers worship at the minyan and

take a leading part in its activities. And what is so bad about that? Well, in the first place, "a minyan is an illegal organization," the article declares. Yet it makes no issue of the illegality except mentioning, in passing, the former and current addresses of the minyan. Little more is made of the "drinking bouts being frequently organized" there. What does seem to agitate the writer, at least a little, is the presence at the minyan of a strange character, "an inveterate preacher of obscurantism," apparently also an itinerant preacher, for although on a pension, he "travels to various towns in the Soviet Union and obtains private orders for photographic enlargements." The article calls him "the old rascal from Kharkov," and reports the gossip that "though a family man with a wife in Kharkov, he has an affair with a woman in Smolensk, and do you think Smolensk only? What can such a man preach apart from obscurantism?" The article stresses two misdeeds: the manipulation and embezzlement of moneys collected from worshipers of the minyan for the erection of a prayer house; and the visit to the minyan by an Israeli diplomatic representative and his spouse, who left Zionist literature and Israeli chocolates for distribution. "Oh! How these religious leaders delighted in these chocolates. They were almost declared holy. How could our Soviet chocolates compare with the Israeli product?"

Venting his spleen against the worshipers, the writer turns to his readers with this closing remark: "We have shown you how several fathers successfully combine the practice of religious rites with dishonest transactions around the minyan. And where are their children? Particularly those with Party membership cards in their pockets? It seems that Zalman Yevseyevich Aronov does not delight in vain in his two daughters. What educated girls! They act as though they do not notice where and why their father goes on Saturdays."

One may well imagine the consternation of the Aronovs when that article appeared in the newspaper, the distress of the daughters Frida and Tsiva, and the bitter remorse of their father for having brought this calamity upon them. Probably he never appeared at the minyan again. And yet one cannot deny that there is freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Statement to the United Nations of January, 1959, de-

clares explicitly that "in the Soviet Union freedom of . . . worship is scrupulously protected and safeguarded by the State as a Constitutional right of Soviet citizens . . ."

Incidentally, the tale of embezzling the money collected for the purchase of a house of worship is no less an indictment of the Soviet authorities dealing with religion than of the poor miserable old Jews. The Soviet Statement to the United Nations declares and reiterates that the "State places church buildings . . . at the disposal of believers . . . if a special ecclesiastical building is not available in the area . . . the community is permitted to rent premises in privately owned houses for the performance of religious services and ceremonies or to construct a new building." Now, why was it necessary for the Jews of Smolensk to register the house they bought for services in the name of a Mr. Gitlin? (He resold the house at a higher price than the 17,000 rubles collected, and disappeared.) Why was it necessary, after the Smolensk Jews collected an additional 37,000 rubles for a house of worship, for them again to purchase a house not openly as a synagogue but as a private property of Haim Volkovich Roitberg, selecting him because he had two Communists in the family and would possibly go unmolested? Would those Jews twice go to so much trouble and risk if they could exercise their right to rent or construct a building for religious services and ceremonies?

On August 21, 1959, the Moscow *Pravda* carried an important Party pronouncement on the issue of religion, entitled "Against Religious Prejudices, Concerning Scientific-Atheist Propaganda." It exhorted Party members to a renewed and invigorated ideological campaign against the religious world outlook. It recalled the Party's basic view that religion is "inimical to the interests of the working masses, is the most conservative form of social consciousness and impedes the active struggle of the masses of the people for the transmutation of society." Now, it found that "the residues of religious holdovers are an obstacle in strengthening the friendship of peoples and are conducive to the retention of bourgeois nationalistic sentiments. In a number of instances the performance of religious rituals entails a breach of labor and State discipline, is injurious to the national economy and cripples people spiritually." The conclusion was

that "all ideological institutions must direct their efforts toward the final and complete eradication of religious prejudices." But the article also sounded a clear warning that this should be done "not through administrative fiat, but through thorough-going efforts at explanation." It criticized some of the atheistic material published as having been "on a low level and . . . guilty of offending the religious sensibilities of believers and of a brash tone." It emphasized that "while showing unflinching concern for the enlightenment of the masses, the Party admonishes against any insults whatsoever to the feelings of the believers. It must be kept in mind that such affronts are incompatible with the Party and State line in carrying on anti-religious propaganda and will bring nothing but harm."

The *Pravda* article appeared, as indicated, in August, 1959. Has there been any noticeable diminution in the "brash tone" or in the "insults" to the Jewish believers? The answer is regrettably an absolute no. The articles against the Jewish religion continue to pour forth without the slightest "efforts at explanation" or the most infinitesimal degree of "enlightenment." They are, as they have been, concoctions of manifest lies, rubbish, and personal abuse that must, from the point of view of atheism, "bring nothing but harm." How much atheistic "explanation" and "enlightenment" could a religious Jew derive from an ugly, abusive outpouring against another religious Jew for selling a religious calendar he had written out by hand, when he knows that the Soviet law explicitly permits the publication of religious calendars by all religious communities, and that Christian churches do print such calendars, but religious Jews cannot have them printed and must resort to having them prepared by hand? No Jew will lose his faith in God because an article in the local paper smears a fellow Jew as a swindler for selling other Jews matzohs he had brought from a distant city, when his own community was prevented illegally by the local official from baking its own matzohs. Neither will a Jew become an atheist because a newspaper article calls the active members of his synagogue thieves and crooks for trying to raise funds for the synagogue in the old traditional manner, which is neither less refined nor less legal than the means of fund-raising used in the churches. No Jew will forsake his Judaism as a re-

sult of watching and reading about the sorry spectacle of two rabbis and one lay communal leader being publicly tried in a cinema of a village (as reported in *Sovietskaya Moldavia* of April 28, 1960) before a motley, ignorant crowd and condemned to "public ridicule, contempt, and scorn" for being "parasites preventing the development of our society." This would only remind the religious Jew of the Middle Ages, of the persecutions of that period, which were survived in loyalty to the faith. Indeed, rather than "eradicating" the faith of the Jewish believer, this atheistic propaganda brings Jewish non-believers to the synagogue.

These articles reflect the attitudes of their individual authors. There is method and system behind them. They appear in specific localities where there is a concentration of Jews who are still imbued with the Jewish spirit, where they still speak Yiddish in the street as at home—or their Oriental dialects, in the case of the Asian Jews—or observe traditionally Jewish holidays, or manifest Jewish interests and solidarity—in short, where the Jewish community has not been fully pulverized. And they appear with a telling frequency. An incomplete list of articles against the Jewish religion in the course of two months (August and September, 1960) includes ten articles: two in Moldavia, which contains a considerable number of Jews who lived under Romanian rule between the two world wars; two in Latvia, which was an independent republic during the years between the two world wars; two in Bucovina, another part of the country under Romanian rule (earlier under Austrian) up to the second world war; one in Birobidjan (in the local Russian paper); one in Gomel, the heart of the provincial Jewish Ukraine, and two in Buinaksk, in the Moslem autonomous republic of Dagestan. To give this campaign official sanction, similar articles appear occasionally in prominent All-Soviet publications, like *Izvestia*, *Trud*, and *Sovietskaya Kultura*.

The article in the Dagestan paper, *Communist* (8-9-'60), the organ of the Communist Party of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Dagestan, published at Buinaksk, was perhaps the most despicable of them all; it must be set beside the "Beat the Jews" leaflets at Malakhovka. It did no less than revive the medieval ritual blood libel, which was originally used against

Christians in pagan Rome and in the Dark Ages imputed by Christians to Jews. When this libel was first used in Russia—Czarist Russia, in an effort to divert the disaffection of the masses for the oppressive regime—in 1911, protest came from Christian leaders and world figures in many parts of the world, and public opinion in Russia itself was dismayed at this “disgrace upon the Russian people.” The Russian intelligentsia was elated at the final acquittal of the victim of the libel, Mendel Beilis. But now, after forty-three years of Socialism, a Moslem version of the ritual blood libel appears in a local Communist organ, and not a word of protest is heard in the land.

The article, signed by D. Makhmudov, tells the Moslem readers that when “Jews speak of their own religion they assert: ‘Our religion is the true religion. We shall enter Paradise. The Moslem religion is false, therefore they [the Moslems] will go to hell.’ The Jews do such uncouth things. For example, a Jew who does not drink the blood of Moslems at least once a year is not considered a true believer. Consequently, many Jews buy five to ten grams of blood from Moslems, add it to a barrel of water and sell it as ‘water with Moslem blood’ . . . Moslems are hostile to Jews because Jews in the past have been hostile to Moslems.” Such is the *druzhba narodov*, the friendship among peoples, of which Moscow boasts abroad, as promoted in the Soviet republic of Dagestan.

There are only 11,000 Jews in Dagestan in a population of a million and a half. What could be the reason behind such an article? Presumably, to get the local authorities to “close the synagogue in the city of Buinaksk.” The article says that “it is true, only a few dozen people visit the synagogue, but the very fact of its presence does great harm.” It is inconceivable that Moscow ordered such an article. But what did Moscow do about it? Did it make an example of Makhmudov? Did it use this case as an opportunity to condemn once and for all the various hostile manifestations against Jews? It might have coupled this article with the hooliganism and thuggery of Malakhovka, a short year before, to declare, as Lenin had done, these crimes as treason against the state, and call upon all Party officials everywhere to be on guard against such manifestations of hooliganism and incitement to racial hatred. But it did nothing of the

sort. It passed in silence the ritual blood article as it did the murder of Malakhovka. The Malakhovka thugs were said to have been quietly punished. What was done in this case?

The news about this incident became known on October 21, through a press conference held by André Blumel on his return from Moscow. M. Blumel reported that while he was in the Soviet Union a delegation of Dagestan Jews arrived in Moscow to complain about the atmosphere of tension that had developed in Dagestan because of the publication of two articles. (In addition to the one about the use of Moslem blood there was one calling for the closing of the local synagogue). After prolonged efforts, M. Blumel said, the delegation succeeded in getting a promise that a refutation of the blood libel would appear in the *Communist* and the author of the article as well as the editor of the paper would be given due punishment. On November 4, the story of the blood libel article, with a photostat of the page in the paper, appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune*. On December 15, a letter signed by six Dagestan Jews was sent to the *New York Herald Tribune*; it finally appeared in the Jewish Communist daily of the same city on January 22, 1961. (The *Herald Tribune* refused to print the letter because it could “present no authentication” for the “content and authorship.”) Repeating all the clichés about “brotherly friendship” of peoples in the Soviet Union and the full rights of the Jews, the letter states, “The appearance of such an article [about the blood libel] was an extremely rare and exceptional case, the like of which has never occurred in our country and, we are sure, will never be repeated. It was a pure accident, a mistake of irresponsible journalists, made without ill will . . . On the day following the publication of this article, the newspaper made its excuse to its readers for having printed material which, owing to the author’s ignorance, contained an absurd falsehood. The government and Party organizations, the entire public of Dagestan ASSR, sharply condemned the mistake made by the newspaper, and those responsible for it were punished accordingly.”

The letter signed by the six Dagestan Jews contained at least one incorrect statement. The correction in the *Communist* appeared not “on the day following publication” of the scurrilous article, but a full month after, on September 9, 1960. And

it contained no mention of the punishment or demotion of "those responsible for it." It simply referred to the date and the title of the article by "Comrade Daay Makhmudov" and stated that "due to the fault of the author and of the literary assistant K. Ataev, a gross political error was permitted to occur. The author claimed that the Jews allegedly had a religious custom according to which they use Moslem blood once a year. This is a gross and dastardly fabrication of the priests which was intended to produce hostility toward the Jews and has long since been disproved by great scientists and lawyers in the world. Marxism-Leninism has given exact explanations for the origin of such wild religious allegations."

Whether Makhmudov and Ataev, for whom the letter of the six Jews claimed in advance the mitigation of "ignorance" and the absence of "ill will," were punished in any way at all remains an uncertainty, as does the supposed punishment of the Malakhovka thugs. The public has not heard of any punishment, and so its effectiveness as a deterrent, which is the important thing of course, is nil. Certainly the author of the article, Makhmudov, did not suffer much. He was promoted, in fact, to the post of correspondent for the news agency Rabselcor on September 23, 1960, only six weeks later.

Two months later another incident occurred. *Krokodil*, a humor magazine with a circulation of a million and a half, ran a series of cartoons which a member of the Committee on Religious Cults admitted were an "oversight"; in January, 1961, he promised André Blumel, the invited guest from France, that it would never happen again. Neither the committee nor any other Soviet authority had taken notice of these cartoons until M. Blumel called attention to them after they had been reproduced abroad. Only the pressure of public opinion abroad seems to bring action against anti-Semitic manifestations in Soviet public life. Indeed, even in regard to Yiddish culture, Mme. Furtseva told M. Blumel, whose visit with her had been arranged by the French Communist leader Maurice Thorez: "If we do anything at all [toward permitting Yiddish publications and a traveling theatrical group], it will not be for domestic reasons, but to please our friends abroad."

The *Krokodil* cartoons came to the attention of the world

three months after publication, when they were introduced as "material for evaluation" at a session of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations on January 25, 1961. This was the first time that the situation of the Soviet Jews had come up for consideration in that international forum. By participating in the discussion, if only to deny the charges, the Soviet expert on the Commission, Valentin I. Sapozhnikov, tacitly agreed that the subject came within the province of the Subcommittee.

The cartoons, entitled First Parasites, appeared on the back cover of the magazine. They depict the familiar biblical stories as rackets. For example, Adam and Eve, on being expelled from the Garden of Eden, are represented as leaving a store designated as Heaven Store (*Raimag*), where a sign on the wall reads: Fig leaves for sale—only children's sizes left; Noah is shown collecting admission fees from the animals entering his ark, and a sign reads so much for "clean" animals and so much more for the "unclean"; Judas is depicted peddling Christ among the Romans. There are a few more of the same nature. At best, these drawings and inscriptions would be in bad taste even in a country with an atheistic government. The characters, even the angels selling the fig leaves are stereotyped anti-Semitic representations of Jews like those popularized by the Nazi Streicher; if one sees such a figure peddling an image of Jesus, with the inscription, "I sell Christ for dollars," the anti-Jewish intent is inescapable. No wonder even the Soviet religious authority regarded them as an "oversight."

Mr. Sapozhnikov denied any racial or religious discrimination in his country, and accused American Zionists of having crudely slandered the Soviet Union. But *Krokodil* is not a Zionist paper in the United States; neither are the satirical articles of an anti-Jewish character appearing in fourteen major and provincial centers Zionists' slander. They are facts of Soviet life, however they may be regarded by the central Soviet authorities.

Any juridical body, any investigating commission, any close observer, perusing these articles and comparing them with the articles on the other religions, and examining thoroughly the physical possibilities, the social climate, the official treatment

of the Jewish religion compared to that of other religions, would reach the conclusion that the Jewish religion is in an exceptional situation, exceptional in a negative, derogatory, persecutory sense, in violation of the Soviet Constitution, Soviet Statement on Religion to the United Nations and the Resolutions of the Communist Party of 1954 and 1959.

The pattern is all too obvious to the discerning eye. First, the aim is to undermine the physical existence of the synagogue by libeling its traditional sources of income (from "seats," honors in being called to pronounce the blessings at Bible reading, donations on memorial days, or fees for burial), all perfectly legitimate, as corruption and finagling; by threatening the executive members responsible for the maintenance of the synagogue (the Twenties) with abuse, calumny, exposure to public scorn, and damage to the interest of their children; by disrupting the inner organization of the synagogue through distorting and magnifying minor petty quarrels into outrageous public scandals—hoping by these means to keep from the synagogue all Jews who have something to lose socially. Secondly, the design is to prevent such Jews from practicing their religion at home by depriving them of the minima of devotional material, such as prayer books, Jewish calendars, matzohs, and other basic essentials. Recently, there has been considerable propaganda against the rite of circumcision, the last token of adherence to the Jewish people, as horridly savage and injurious to the child. In short, religion is to go under the way Yiddish culture went. There is no more originality in the Soviet pattern than in its purpose. There may be exaggeration in the words of the Passover prayer, that "in every generation some rise up against us to destroy us"; certainly over the many centuries quite a few efforts have been made in that direction, with the same instruments varying only in detail. Yet neither the God of Israel nor his Chosen People has been eliminated from the face of the earth. This fact has led to a *mystique* concerning the perpetuity of the Jewish people, the Eternal Jew. But perhaps there is no mystery. All efforts to assimilate the Jewish people have centered entirely on the Jews to be assimilated. Little attention, if any, has been paid to the non-Jews who are equally involved, the supposed assimilators. Perhaps the non-Jewish environment

has been as reluctant to assimilate the Jew as he has been to be assimilated. Before attempting to dissolve their Jewish communities, the Soviet authorities might do well to find out whether they have the effective solvent. They are driving their Jews toward assimilation. Are they sure their non-Jewish peoples are willing and able to assimilate them?

#### Chapter Four •

### ONCE AGAIN "ECONOMICALLY PECULIAR"

Strange as it may seem, the Soviet leaders have not manifested a Marxian approach to their own Jewish problem. They are now first becoming aware of the economic factors involved, but are still reluctant to admit their existence publicly. The Jews, however, for all their religiosity, have always taken a realistic attitude toward their hard lot in Exile. Rather than lay the blame for their suffering on their Gentile neighbors, which would have been easy and more comforting to do, they assumed the reproach themselves. In the theologic age, it was, in the words of the prayer, "for our sins that we were exiled from our land and distanced from our soil"; their troubles in Exile were the chastisement of their Lord for their failing to return unto Him. In the modern economic age, Jews account for their Exile by the imperial wars of the ancient great powers in the Near East, and ascribe their troubles in their new homelands to the abnormal economic conditions into which they were forced by local political and social factors. The solution of the Jewish problem, whether through return to Jerusalem or liberation from oppression in his native land, is associated in the mind of the modern Jew with the reconstruction and normalization of the economic status of the Jews.

Normalization means balance, the aspiration being a balanced