

The
NATIONAL
and
JEWISH
QUESTION
in the Light of
REALITY

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50¢

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NATIONAL PROBLEMS IN THE LIGHT OF REALITY

One of the great developments of the present era is the truly epochal movement of national liberation.

Comprised in this, of course, are the developments primarily in Asia and Africa where seventy new, independent nations have arisen since the Second World War. Among these nations, to be sure, is the State of Israel. However, more than the rise of new nations is involved. We are witnessing a growth in national consciousness and a struggle for national interests in countries where it seemed such developments could no longer occur; this includes the United States as well.

We will dwell only briefly on the Socialist countries (except perhaps in passing), since these do not touch directly on our subject. It will bear mention, nevertheless, that in these countries, particularly in the Soviet Union where the Leninist approach is deeply rooted, there is no cessation in the attention devoted to the national question and there is no let up in the concern with it. An article in the Moscow *Izvestia* of April 27, 1968, for example, states that the movement for national liberation which...

"is characterized by great differentiation of socio-economic conditions, brings forth a host of new problems that require a constructive approach and the proper Marxist analysis."

DOGMATISM, NIHILISM — A BITTER CURSE

Note the words, "a host of new problems." In the national question, as in other questions and perhaps more than in other questions, ossification is a bitter curse. The same holds true of immobility, dogmatism, let alone nihilism which dismisses out of hand the entire national question along with the problems of national consciousness, sensitivity and national interests.

Since the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 and more particularly in recent years I had on several occasions written on this subject and touched on it in reports at conferences of the *Morning Freiheit* when I discussed the problems of the Jewish people. I also wrote a number of articles in 1965 at the time of the split in the Communist Party

of Israel in which I dealt with the dogmatism and nihilism of the Meir Vilner group. In connection with these efforts I turned to old sources, in particular, to Lenin's polemic with Rosa Luxembour and to Shimen Dimanshtein's* treatises on this subject.

For example, early in 1967 the *Morning Freiheit* received from the Novosti Press Agency in Moscow an essay by Edward Bagramov, a frequent writer on the national question. This essay, "**Lenin's Teaching on the National Question and the Present Situation**" first appeared in *Pravda*, October 17, 1966 in connection with the 50th anniversary of Lenin's polemic with Rosa Luxembour on the national question. ("The Junius Pamphlet," etc.) I emphasized then as I do now, the words of this title, "**and the Present Situation.**" In introducing Lenin's argument against Rosa Luxembour, Bagramov asserts: "**In his new works Lenin further elaborated upon the ideas concerning this problem contained in his earlier works.**"

Here we underscored the words, "**further elaborated.**" Yes, to further elaborate, to advance, never remain ossified while time moves ahead.

Lenin's greatness in large measure lay in his habit of keeping his ear to the ground, of basing himself on reality. He did not dwell on situations as they "ought to be," or as he would have "wished" them to be, but on reality. If certain concepts did not tally with reality Lenin would in a daring manner set them aside or reject them. This led him in 1921 to undertake a struggle against Stalin on the Caucasian problem, though Stalin (and also Ordjonikidze, Dzerzhinsky, etc.,) proceeded from the "accepted" Marxist concepts on the national question. When it appeared these concepts did not coincide with the interests of the then young Soviet state, Lenin rejected the dogmatic approach. It may be said the same consideration also prevailed in the Jewish question at the time.

KAUTSKY'S THEORY OF ASSIMILATION REJECTED

An assimilationist approach in regard to the Jewish people became firmly entrenched in the Marxist movement even in Marx's time. In a report to the *Morning Freiheit* conference in 1962 I reviewed the harmful theory of Karl Kautsky on this sub-

***Shimen Dimanshtein:** An old Bolshevik and friend and co-worker of V. I. Lenin. Was entrusted with the leadership of the Jewish Commisariat immediately after the October Revolution and led the early Soviet efforts to bring Jews into industries from which they had been barred under the czarist regime and to colonize Jews on the land. He was arrested on framed-up charges and executed in the purge of the late 1930's.

ject. This veteran authority on Marxism, Kautsky, whom Lenin held in high esteem for some years, set down his views on the Jewish question in his book, *Rasse und Judentum* in 1914. (In the United States this book was published by International Publishers in 1926 under the title, *Are the Jews a Race?*) In his concluding chapter Kautsky wrote:

"There is no doubt that the liberation of the Jews will be equivalent to their absorption to the extent to which this liberation is achieved. (Page 241) . . . Judaism draws its strength — as a specific group, segregated from its environment — from anti-Semitism alone, from persecution. (Page 244) . . . - - - It (Judaism) is like a weight of lead attached to the feet of the Jews who eagerly seek to progress, one of the last remnants of the feudal Middle Ages, a social ghetto still maintaining its existence in the consciousness, after the tangible, physical ghetto has disappeared. We cannot say we have completely emerged from the Middle Ages as long as Judaism still exists among us. The sooner it disappears, the better it will be, not only for society, but also for the Jews themselves." (page 246, *ibid*).

Kautsky's purpose in all this was to fight anti-Semitism on the one hand and Zionism on the other. May we be spared this method of struggle, both as regards anti-Semitism and Zionism! **Kautsky sought to solve this problem quite thoroughly—by abolishing the Jewish people!** This Kautskyian precept poisoned the Marxist movement and its influence is felt even now.

Lenin recognized Kautsky's authority in the Jewish question for many years and often cited him when he offered the concept of assimilation — **voluntary** assimilation, not forced assimilation — as a progressive development. After the October Revolution Lenin parted company with Kautsky not only in regard to the Revolution itself, even calling him a "renegade," but also in the Jewish question. This is proved in Lenin's **practice**. Instead of developing a program for the assimilation of the Jewish people in the Soviet Union, a Commisariat for Jewish Affairs was set up and there was a phenomenal growth of Yiddish culture; Yiddish schools, newspapers, theaters, and publishing houses, even Yiddish courts were established; Jewish Soviets were created in Jewish national regions, including (following Lenin's approach) a Jewish Autonomous Region, Biro Bidjhan, which, it was hoped, would develop into a Jewish Republic.

Life demonstrated something other than the old concepts and Lenin and Leninism took living reality into account.

THE BLACK LIBERATION STRUGGLE

That the epoch making movement for national liberation has also touched the United States can clearly be seen in the Black

Revolution and in the upsurge of national consciousness among other minorities here in our country: among the Puerto Ricans in New York and elsewhere, among the Mexican-Americans, the Chicanos, in California and the Southwest, among the Indians etc.

The American "melting pot," a petty-bourgeois-anarchist concept, was proved to be bankrupt years ago and has more recently suffered its final crash.

What is the significance of the struggle of the Blacks and the other minorities for the teaching of their history in the schools and the universities? This is no whim. We have here an upsurge of national consciousness, of the struggle for Negro freedom — and not only for Negro freedom.

Prof. Joseph Baskin of the University of California in San Diego correctly expressed this view in the *Los Angeles Times* of Dec. 12, 1968. Discussing the meaning of the history of one's own people, he notes:

"One who has no historic identity feels he is sharply inhibited. One who cannot connect his own experiences with the past in which the weakness and strength, the folly and the wisdom are parts of his own self is robbed of a proper perspective."

Prof. Baskin recalls the outcry of Dylan Thomas, "Who steals my history?" and the sigh of James Baldwin, "I have no idea of where in Africa my people came from!"

The idea that one who lacks an historical identity feels inhibited is a denial of the assimilationist concept which calls for tearing oneself away from his own historical identity and severing with the past experiences of one's own people. This or that individual might wish to do so, but not a people. All the theories in the world will never persuade a people to deny itself.

In this connection I should like to mention an important contribution by Claude Lightfoot, the Negro Communist leader, published in the Marxist monthly magazine, *Political Affairs*, of November, 1968. (I would also strongly recommend his book, "**Ghetto Rebellion to Black Liberation**".) Lightfoot indicates errors made by the American Communist Party on the Negro question and states:

"In view of a long background of vacillation in the handling of the slogan of self-determination within the Party, it is imperative that we present this question today in a way that will stand the test of time. We must avoid dotting i's and crossing t's in respect to future developments. Marxism-Leninism does not equip us to do that. At best it enables us to perceive what is new, what is aborning... But it does not enable us to blueprint the exact form that trend may take. In this discussion, there-

fore, we must combat a dogmatic, mechanical presentation of the matter."

Here is a correct and welcome approach. Theories must pass the test of time! If Marxism-Leninism does not arm us in respect to a certain question — and lacking now a Lenin in our midst, it may be added — we ought to refrain from indicating plans for the future down to the smallest detail.

Unfortunately, there are those who will do just that, resting on Lenin's writings of the Kautsky period, of the period before the First World War and the October Revolution. Neither do they take into account the developments following the Second World War and the present upsurge of the national liberation movements.

BOLD, CREATIVE MARXIST VIEW OF NAT'L QUESTION

I would like to touch on a few points of Claude Lightfoot's essay on the Negro question which indicate a bold, creative, Marxist view of the national question in general, of the Negro question in particular, as well as the approach to the Jewish question. Lightfoot recalls the error made by the American Communist Party years ago in advancing the program of self-determination in the black belt of the South. In retrospect he perceives the error in that "we reduced the matter of self-determination to an artificial, geographical consideration."

National strivings among the Negro people arose both in the Southern plantations and in the Northern ghettos, Lightfoot contends. He also refers to Stalin's view of the rise of nations and nationalism, that "the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism in the struggle for the market." The question therefore arises, is this position valid today when the national upsurge among the Negro people is not linked to the desire of conquering markets for itself, when the Negro people does not have a significantly large bourgeoisie. Stalin's thesis was that nations are the creation of capitalist society. We now see, Lightfoot indicates, without referring here to Stalin, that in respect to the Negro people capitalism "has acted as a barrier to its growth and development."

Lightfoot also considers the distinction between a people and a nation and writes:

"And certainly the Jewish people the world over joined to help form an emerging nation in Israel, yet nowhere else do they constitute a nation."

Quite correct! In the struggle of our black fellow citizens there is much that Jewish people can learn as they assist in this effort.

It is necessary to appreciate why Africa has such an attractive force for the Negro people and the popularity of Afro clothes, African history and culture. What is involved is the as-

sertion of **historical identity**, the need to know "where in Africa my people come from," as James Baldwin put it.

Is it not natural, at the same time, for Jews in the United States to have an interest in the countries from which they but **recently** came, relatively speaking, where they or their parents and grandparents were born or still may have their kin? Is not the concern of Jews for Israel a natural one, a concern which prompted them to aid in the creation of the State of Israel and to now offer assistance in various forms? Is it not natural for Jews to study their history and culture, to learn the Yiddish language?

ATTITUDE TOWARDS ISRAEL

Those who cannot forget the past attitudes on Palestine which were bred by the harsh struggle against Zionism, (and many of us, along with the Bund, were caught up in this fight), ought to remind themselves of Andrei Gromyko's historic address at the United Nations' General Assembly on May 14, 1947. On that occasion the Soviet representative acknowledged "the aspiration of the Jews for the creation of a state of their own," and added, "It would be unjust not to take this into account and to deny the right of the Jewish people to the realization of such an aspiration."

Carrying our comparison with the Negro people further, and it is recognized that in this case the comparison may not be entirely exact, it must be conceded that in the same way as the Negro people maintain an interest in Africa, yet regard the United States as their home, so American Jews regard the United States as their home even as they maintain an interest in Israel and in Jewish communities in Europe and elsewhere. Jews are a fully fledged nation only in Israel, as Claude Lightfoot correctly stated. There is, however, a **Jewish people** which lives in various countries, in communities which maintain an interest in each other, "the Jewish people the world over" which "joined to help form an emerging nation in Israel."

Such is the **reality**. Such is the **sensitivity** of the Jewish individual, of each one of us, even if here and there one prefers to remain indifferent. The situation of the **Jews** in the capitalist, as in the Socialist countries concerns us all, some more, some less, and in any case, more than it concerns non-Jews.

This reality needs to be recognized. This fact in no way diminishes the status of the Jews as loyal Americans, just as the interest of the black Americans in Africa does not diminish their status; nor does the interest of Irish Americans in Ireland and Northern Ireland, or of Polish Americans in Poland, etc., in

any way lessen their status as fully equal citizens of the United States.

A sense of **proportion**, however, is an essential element in this interest; it ought not overwhelm one's orientation on **America**. Israel is a Jewish community with important and specific attributes which other Jewish communities do not possess. **Jews are definitely interested in Israel, but this interest does not and cannot occupy a central place in the life of the Jewish people in this country**, nor can Israel supply its culture or even its Judaism to the Jewish people of the United States.

Israel is not only incapable of being the place of the "in-gathering of the exiles," it cannot even serve as the **spiritual center** of the Jewish people as Achad Ha'am imagined.

DR. MOSHE SNEH'S TREATISE ON THE JEWISH QUESTION

Dr. Moshe Sneh, the noted Israeli Communist leader, contributed an important work on the national question which he presented as a thesis for the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of Israel (the one led by Mikunis-Sneh) and which was published in the "Morning Freiheit," (October 20, 27 and November 3 and 10, 1968).

With exceptional clarity, with erudition and the appropriate and needed boldness, Dr. Sneh considered the national question as it appears in the present period. This period revealed the erroneousness of **Joseph Stalin's** essay "Marxism and the National Question," which served as a manual for Marxists for many years. Its defects were evident for a considerable time. It is really incredible that even after the First World War and the October Revolution this theoretical work written in 1913 commanded the adherence it did.

Dr. Sneh cites Stalin's assertion, "A nation is not merely a historical category, but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism." The fallacy of this concept was demonstrated immediately after the First World War when a number of new states were formed or consolidated themselves in newly acquired statehood. However, it is not only in the period of capitalism that nations develop and consolidate themselves. Dr. Sneh points out that after the October Revolution Stalin himself recognized the possibility of "Socialist nations." In addition, prior to the capitalist era nations also existed, Dr. Sneh notes. Anyone who ponders the present historic upsurge of the national liberation movement on a world scale perceives the inconsistency of Stalin's formulations even more clearly.

The rigidity of Stalin's formulation that a nation must con-

tain four distinguishing elements also loses its point. These elements according to Stalin were a common language, common territory, economic life and psychological makeup. "It is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be absent and the nation ceases to be a nation," Stalin claimed.

Dr. Sneh observes that China and India do not each have a single language; the Swiss nation has several languages; Belgium and Canada contain different peoples on their common national territories; race is also a factor which must be taken into account and the American Negroes provide such an example. Though their language is that of all Americans and though dispersed over the United States, the national factor operating in their contemporary upsurge has moved to the forefront and Claude Lightfoot, as noted, cautions against reducing "the matter of self-determination to an artificial, geographical consideration."

DEFINITION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Dr. Sneh proceeds to a consideration of the "specific character of the Jewish people." He rejects the positions of Jewish nationalism and Zionist extremism, pauses at the tangled problem in Israel of "who is a Jew" and on the obscurantism raised by this subject and then offers the following definition of the Jewish people:

"The Jewish people is a historically created community of people of different classes that was formed by a number of unifying factors — ethno-genetic, religious and national."

Dr. Sneh discards, and rightly so, the theories of the early Socialist movement, particularly those of Karl Kautsky which assumed the "progressiveness" of assimilation. He explains how much of Lenin's work before the First World War was influenced by these theories and how Lenin rejected them in his own practice after the October Revolution.

Earlier we mentioned the Soviet Armenian theoretician, **Edward Bagramov** (and it is no accident he is an Armenian). This author also wrote a lengthy treatise for the authoritative Moscow magazine, "**Kommunist**" (No. 14, 1966) entitled, "**Chauvinism and National Nihilism in the Ideology of Imperialism.**" We see, even from the title, that this author views not only chauvinism as an instrument of imperialism, but national nihilism which restricts the development of national liberation is also seen as an instrument of imperialism.

An engrossing and significant treatise by another Soviet theoretician, **M.S. Junusov**, was published in the Soviet magazine, "**Voprosi Filosofii**" ("Questions of Philosophy"), No. 9, 1967. This treatise, "**The Theory and Practice of Development of Socialist**

National Relations" was published in translation by "Reprints of the Soviet Press," (January 12, 1968). Junusov writes:

"National relations are among the most intricate forms of social relations. . . Here we find operating stable phenomena such as national consciousness, national character, national sentiments and a feeling of national pride. . . National sentiments are of tremendous significance in the spiritual life of a nation . . . (they) introduce a very definite tinge in men's political sentiments and their moral and esthetic reactions . . . National sentiments are tender and easily vulnerable. They are particularly sensitive among those peoples who suffered under the heavy yoke of national oppression in the past. . . Hence the demand of Marxist-Leninists to be exceptionally cautious and attentive to national interests and national sentiments of peoples, particularly small peoples." (ibid, pages 11, 12).

These and other works in regard to the national question need to be presented more fully and appraised in the light of present day reality.

"He who tells more deserves praise," as the Passover Haggadah says, and the more the better. Unfortunately, outside of the Soviet Union, quite little is written on this subject, and in our country, with occasional exceptions, almost nothing. Yet, the United States is a land of national minorities! Not only has there been a sharpening up on the Negro question, but also in regard to the Puerto Ricans, the Mexican Americans and the American Indians this question has assumed a new urgency. And Jewish national problems must also be borne in mind!

DISAGREEMENT WITH DR. SNEH

Dr. Sneh's treatise is important and timely, a weighty contribution also for non-Jews concerned with the national problem. Indeed, the Jewish question is not only the property of the Jews.

Although in agreement with most of Dr. Sneh's concepts, it must also be said that one must disagree with him on the manner in which he places the State of Israel vis-a-vis the Jewish communities in the rest of the world, or perhaps in the way his position can be interpreted or be understood. Dr. Sneh writes:

"In Israel a process of national concentration is occurring within the national renaissance of the Jewish people. Today, therefore, the Jewish people consists of the Jewish nation in Israel and of Jewish minorities — national, religious, ethno-genetic — in various parts of the world.

"Among Jews throughout the world there is a natural link because the State of Israel embodies the historic connection between the Jewish people as such and the

State of Israel. The Israel nation arose through the merging of all Jews in the world.”

The latter statement corresponds, of course, with the actual situation. When the United Nations decided to establish the State of Israel it was precisely stated, particularly in the historic address of Andrei Gromyko cited above, that this nation was being created not only for the Jewish inhabitants then in Palestine, but also for the survivors of the holocaust who were then, in 1947, still living in Germany, as well as for Jewish refugees in general.

Jews are interested in the State of Israel, a justified interest, as noted earlier. But Jews, let us say, American Jews, are also concerned with the Jews in the Soviet Union, Poland and in the other Socialist countries, as well as with the Jews of South America and in the remaining capitalist countries. In addition to a community, (a nation) in Israel, **the Jewish people consists of a number of communities.** Not all are of the same importance, to be sure, but if the State of Israel has the quality of a nation, the Jewish community in the United States possesses the quality of quantity, if one may so express himself. The six million Jews in the United States constitute a great entity!

Dr. Sneh's formulation, it seems, is the formulation of an Israeli Jew whose concentration is on Israel. It would appear, according to Dr. Sneh, **there is a centrality of Israel in the Life of the Jewish people.** All other Jewish communities are sort of supplements to Israel. Hence, one may ask, how can they develop as healthy Jewish communities?

Dr. Sneh himself is critical of Zionism for its “negation of the diaspora.” He rightly asks, “What actually is to be the fate of those masses of Jews who will not settle in Israel?” And here, it will be pertinent to consider the meaning of the words, “masses of Jews.”

A few years back the late Israeli statesman, **Moshe Sharett**, in his opposition to Ben Gurion's emphasis on the “ingathering” of the Jews from the Diaspora into Israel, pointed out that there are around **ten million Jews** in the Diaspora; that for an emigration of ten million — according to Mr. Sharett's estimates — around **one hundred years** would be required (an average of about 100,000 per year); that in the course of these one hundred years another ten million Jews could grow up in the Diaspora. . .

Without speculating on the distant future, and it is best to avoid such speculations, it is apparent we will have to reckon with **permanent Jewish communities**, particularly the large Jewish communities such as those in the United States and the Soviet Union. How can these communities enjoy a healthy development if the theory of the centrality of Israel to all Jewish communities is accepted?

Let us consider the American Jews. Is it not obvious that they,

including the Zionist-minded Jews, are integrated politically, economically and culturally in the general American life? At the same time they have their own Jewish concerns. Will they derive their Jewish spiritual nourishment from Israel or will they develop their own Jewish life here?

EFFECT OF ENVIRONMENT ON CULTURE

According to the official Zionist concept the spiritual life of the American Jews must be based on Israeli values. Is it merely fortuitous that all efforts to create in the United States Jewish cultural values based on Israel have had no substance and Jewish life in the United States remains, to a great extent empty because of this concept, this super-concentration on Israel?

What cultural values can Jews in America create if they base themselves primarily on Israel? **Is it possible to have a culture which has no relationship to the environment** in which it is created, with its landscape, its colors, its traditions — traditions and problems of the emigration to this country, of acclimatization, traditions of struggle and the Jewish labor movement? **Is it possible for a culture to stand apart from the conflicts in its own backyard?**

There is another question: to what extent does Israel itself have its own specific culture? A substantial period of time is needed for such an Israeli culture to mature. Nevertheless, a culture, even one fully formed, is not a fruit which can be transplanted.

Without rejecting the past of the “old country”, and benefiting from the forms, nuances and color of the culture of Jewish communities in other countries, including those of Israel, or perhaps particularly those of Israel, this culture must in essence be rooted in this country itself. It will not be an exaggeration to assert that only with the orientation on the home base can a healthy Jewish life be developed here.

The approach which holds the Jewish communities in the diaspora to be no more than supplements to Israel, or even mere reserves for aliyah (emigration) can condemn these communities to spiritual sterility. Fortunately, this has no relation to reality.

We fully agree, however, with Dr. Sneh when he emphasizes “**the progressive values in the Jewish tradition, as opposed to the influences of the exploiting classes which ought to be removed from the education and cultural life.**”

WHAT KIND OF CRITIQUE OF ZIONISM?

Dr. Sneh's treatise contains a section, “**An Objective Critique of Zionism,**” in which the author presents his view of the Zionist concept of the “negation of the diaspora”, as noted earlier, and asserts that Zionism has no answer to the question of the fate of those Jews who will not settle in Israel.

This "negation" concept does not only lead to an indifference to the struggles of the peoples among whom Jews live, Dr. Sneh feels. "The conclusion of blurring the class contradictions within Jewish society accompanies the conclusion of indifference to the struggles among 'the Gentiles.'" He correctly reminds us that "Zionist policy has striven to coordinate its aims with those of the imperialist powers." At the same time he underscores the "broad national and popular character" of the Zionist movement as well as the "class differentiation in the Zionist movement, between its bourgeois right-wing and the left-labor-pioneer (agricultural) wing."

This view is correct. However, something else must be added when speaking of Zionism. In the light of experiences of the recent period in Poland, in the Arab countries and also such experiences as the Slansky trial in Czechoslovakia in 1952, it is necessary to be extremely cautious lest anti-Zionist propaganda assumes an anti-Jewish character and so plays into the hands of political Zionism which always maintained Jews can be secure nowhere except in Israel. **Zionism is a nationalist ideology, but it is not a "conspiracy" which seeks to subvert nations and dominate the world as the anti-Semitic forgery, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" claims.**

One of the major objections to McCarthyism in the 1950's was that instead of opposing Communism as an ideology it saw "Communism" solely as a "conspiracy". This McCarthy view led to charges of guilt by association since who could know the agents of this "conspiracy," whom it sought to involve in its net, whom it attempted to subvert.

Zionism is not a "conspiracy", nor is it the invention of the imperialists. We know well how Zionism came into existence. Every nationalist movement arises as a result of the suffering of a people. The suffering of the Negro people in the United States brought into existence the movement headed by Marcus Garvey after the First World War. This movement advocated the emigration of the American Negroes to Africa, specifically Liberia, as path to salvation.

I had occasion to state in an article in the "Morning Freiheit" of October 1, 1967: "Zionism was not invented by some kind of devil, by imperialists, as the propaganda of the Shukairys and the other Arab chauvinists who want to "obliterate Israel" pretends. **Zionism came into existence as a response to the pogroms, the persecutions, the ritual murder libels in Europe, the Dreyfus Trial, etc.**" It is well known that Dr. Herzl, the assimilated Jew and Paris correspondent of the Viennese newspaper, "Neue Freie Presse", arrived at political Zionism as a result of the frame-up trial of Capt. Alfred Dreyfus in Paris.

Though Dr. Herzl was really moved by the sufferings of his people, his theories were and remain separatist and reactionary, as for example, his belief that anti-Semitism is eternal, that Jews themselves cause anti-Semitism in the countries in which they live. Whatever his motivations, by pleading before the Czarist Interior Minister Von Plehve, the organizer of the Kishinev pogrom in 1903, or before such rulers as Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, his actions were most damaging and reaction was quick to use them against the revolutionary movement; objectively, he became the tool of reaction, of imperialism.

It is essential, however, to distinguish between the followers of Zionism and its leaders, as well as between leaders and leaders. In the present period the average Zionist is not at all an "agent" of the U.S. State Department and many Zionist leaders aren't such "agents" either. Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld or Rabbi Maurice Eisen-drath and others who resist the war in Vietnam and participate in the struggle for Negro rights can hardly be termed "agents" of the State Department. To be sure, this doesn't mean the U.S. State Department will not try to utilize its connections with Zionist leaders or that there are no Zionist leaders who are eager to assist it. However, the same measure cannot be applied to everyone.

It is always important to differentiate, not to dump everyone into the same pot, particularly when there is a need to seek out allies among other forces for the struggle against the war in Vietnam or in the fight against anti-Semitism and racism or who can contribute in developing a healthy Jewish life and culture.

ZIONISM IS A COMPLEX VARIED MOVEMENT

The Zionist movement contains elements of the bourgeois right wing and other elements who constitute its left-labor-chalutzim wing. The Mapam Party in Israel always was a left-socialist trend. It is necessary to cooperate with such forces and this is especially true in Israel where progressives must work for the formation of a broad democratic front for peace and against annexation. At the same time it must not be overlooked that these more advanced elements in the Mapam are also the most thorough negators of the diaspora and have a sharply negative attitude towards developing Jewish life and culture in the United States.

In Zionism we are confronted with a complex, varied movement, thoroughly nationalist and separatist and oriented essentially, or exclusively, on Israel. To the extent it influences youth it tends to draw them away from the struggles here at hand. One of the causes of the profound crisis which afflicts Zionism has been the fact that only a small section of the Jewish youth who are socially conscious is attracted to Zionist activities. Jewish youth who are at all socially conscious incline to join in the general struggles

of the American youth, for peace, against the draft, for black liberation, etc.

Indeed, as is the case with every nationalist movement, Zionism, too, is a complex, many sided movement, and the national question itself is full of complexity. One is required constantly to make distinctions, to bear reality in mind — and the dynamics of reality. Yesterday's concepts will not do for today. The concepts of the very early years of this century or even earlier, formulated before such epoch making events as the First World War, the October Revolution, the Second World War and the succeeding period, cannot be applied to the period of the smash-up of colonialism and the upsurge of the historic national liberation movement.

Frederick Engels once wrote that everything in society as in nature is conditional and in motion. We must avoid ossification, the urge to apply formulas which belonged to the past. Learning from the past we must, above all, consider the present-day reality.

(Transl. by S.R.)

CONTEMPORARY ASPECTS OF THE NATIONAL AND JEWISH QUESTIONS

On April 22, 1970, the advanced sections of mankind and, of course, the supporters of Socialism celebrated the centenary of the birth of V.I. Lenin, the birthday of the creative elaborator of Marxism in the period of imperialism and social revolution, the birthday of one of the greatest personalities of our time.

Lenin's genius as a theoretician, strategist and practical leader made itself felt and left a profound mark in a number of areas. The task which I have set for myself here is to indicate certain features of Lenin's contribution to the theory of the national question and particularly the Jewish question.

Prior to the October Revolution Lenin's distinction in the international Socialist movement lay, among other things in his approach to the national question, in his battle against opportunism and chauvinism as well as against sectarianism and national nihilism. His was a struggle for a program, for a solution to the problem of national relations, for a solution to the Jewish question. This struggle began to bear fruit under Lenin after the October Revolution and for some years following his death when a faithful adherence to Leninism remained in force.

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL RELATIONS

Lenin fought for a program and he elaborated this program in the process of struggle. It was not born ready-made and, this needs to be stressed, it is not completed even to the present day. Here time and its development is a great teacher and Lenin reckoned with time and its revelations.

Lenin was forced to strike out on new paths in the dense undergrowth of varied prejudices on the national question and especially on the Jewish question. The Soviet writer, M.S. Junusov, wrote in the authoritative Soviet magazine, "Voprosi Filosofi" ("Questions of Philosophy") No. 9, 1967:

"National relations are among the most intricate forms of social relations... These relations are also

displayed in the interaction of national cultures and languages. Socio-psychological problems of national relations are the most involved. Here we find operating stable phenomena such as national consciousness, national character, national sentiments and a feeling of national pride. National stereotypes, nationalist prejudices, moods, sentiments and sympathies or antipathies for other peoples, internationalism and national egoism are highly important elements in the psychology of intercourse between nationalities." ("Reprints of the Soviet Press," Jan. 12, 1968)

Junusov introduced his essay with the explanation that "the development of national relations is an essential element of Soviet experience in socialist and communist construction." He indicates the October Revolution confirmed the Marxist-Leninist propositions on the national question which had been formulated even prior to the Revolution, "but at the same time new problems arose." We emphasize the words, "new problems." Even in the conditions of a country building Socialism, or rather, particularly in such a country, such problems will arise.

THE GREAT FRENCH REVOLUTION AND ITS DECLARATION ON THE JEWS

It is hardly possible to conceive now how these "most intricate forms of social relations" appeared at the beginning of this century when Lenin undertook his struggle for a proper approach to the national question. The heritage he had to contend with was overwhelming. All sorts of prejudices of previous centuries exerted their influence, especially prejudices in regard to Jews and the Jewish question.

I came across an article in the London *Jewish Chronicle* of Dec. 12, 1969 by Rene Weingarten dealing with Voltaire (1694-1778), one of the liberating spirits and precursors of the Great French Revolution of 1789. This magnificent thinker was himself full of prejudices against Jews. As early as 1722 he had said, "The Jew belongs to no country, save the one in which he makes money." It appears that when the Bastille fell in 1789 such prejudices were still widespread.

There was something of a furor here and in other countries a few years ago over the book, "A Gallery of Saints" by Paul Heinrich Holbach (1723-1789), one of Voltaire's associates. This anti-religious book written in 1770 contains frightful libels against Jews. In their severe anti-religious battle the French Encyclopedists shot their arrows at the Christian Church but reserved their sharpest aim at the Old Testament and never forgot Jesus was of Jewish origin. Apparently for this or other reasons, and surely because of the centuries of prejudice against Jews, the French Revolution in its

Emancipation Declaration granted the Jews rights as individuals, but not as a community. The proponents of the Declaration on October 12, 1789 declared: "To Jews as human beings — everything: to Jews as a people — nothing!" Obviously, when Jews as a group were wronged the Jewish individual was also wronged, suffered discrimination and was not accorded full rights.

KARL MARX AND PROUDHON, LASSALLE AND KAUTSKY

The prejudices of past centuries which affected even a Voltaire and his fellow thinkers and were reflected in the historical postulates of the French Revolution understandably continued into the 19th century when Marx and Engels laid the foundations of Scientific Socialism.

Marx himself, though a descendant of Jews, had his prejudices. His early work, "On the Jewish Question" was written in 1844 when he was only 26 years old. Though it contains a number of positive concepts it is, on the whole, of a negative character, and is even used against the Marxist movement today. However, here too, Marx's thinking underwent continued development. The "Communist Manifesto" marked a new stage and Marx's defense of the liberation movement in Ireland 20 years later and his fight within the First International in the late 1860s against Proudhon and Bakunin indicated still a new stage. Marx himself in his later works never returned, at least not as explicitly, to the concepts of his early essay which echoed Voltaire on the Jews. It is significant that in all his writings on the national question Lenin never referred to this essay though he firmly stood on Marxist grounds.

Lenin's concern was in Marx's struggle against Proudhon and Marx's attitude to the struggle for national liberation in Ireland and other countries.

In respect to the Jewish question and to smaller peoples generally there prevailed in the early period of the Socialist movement a gross, coercively assimilationist approach. Lenin's co-worker, Shimen Dimanshtein, in his Yiddish pamphlet, "Lenin's Struggle Against Luxemburgism," (Moscow, 1933) recalls Ferdinand Lassalle's assertion: "I recognize the rights of nationality for the large, cultural nations." As for the smaller nations, their "right" according to Lassalle was to "assimilate and go forward with the aid of the culturally more powerful nations." Lassalle, of course, primarily had in mind the "culturally more powerful" German nation.

Karl Kautsky did not lag behind Lassalle in this regard. In January, 1966, the Soviet Yiddish magazine, "Sovietish Heimland" carried a discussion originally published in the Russian language "Literaturnaya Gazeta" which dealt with the specifically national features in cultures. In the course of this discussion it was stated: "At the beginning of our century Karl Kautsky advanced the hypo-

thesis of the assimilation of all nations by one nation and of all languages by one language." Let us add, he, too, meant the German nation and the German language. This is the same Kautsky who for so many years was regarded in the Second Socialist International as the last word in Marxism!

LENIN'S POLEMIC WITH ROSA LUXEMBURG

Lenin referred favorably to Kautsky in a polemical article he wrote in 1913 against the Bund. In it he cited the figures of the immigration into New York State based on the census of 1900. He lists the various ethnic groups who had immigrated there and concludes that New York State is "similar to a mill which grinds down national differences." One observes here Kautsky's influence as well as an echo of Israel Zangwill's, "The Melting Pot."

With the outbreak of the First World War Kautsky emerged as a German chauvinist and supported Kaiser Wilhelm's war effort. Lenin denounced Kautsky for his chauvinism and undertook a struggle against both the national chauvinists and the national nihilists who glossed over and negated national interests and national differences.

Lenin wrote a number of important essays against Rosa Luxemburg who opposed independence for Poland and the rights of national self-determination. In this effort Lenin was mainly concerned with the concept of national nihilism. When studying Lenin's works in the war period (i.e. World War I), one senses how Lenin's own approach became more distinctly formed in this process. This was merely the prelude to the new period which began in 1917 with the great epoch-making October Revolution.

Let us remember that whereas in general revolutionary problems, the Marxist movement was guided by Lenin's pamphlet, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky" which he wrote in 1918, on the national question and on the Jewish question Kautsky was still regarded as the authority. This is proved in our own country when as late as 1926 the Marxist publishing house, International Publishers, issued Kautsky's most harmful book, "Rasse und Judentum" in an English translation under the title, "Are the Jews a Race?" This book was for many years and perhaps is even today a manual for some people on the Jewish question.

I had occasion several times since 1960 to comment on this book in which Kautsky sought to "solve" the Jewish question by abolishing the Jewish people, by urging their assimilation and disappearance. He even predicted that when in the United States the third generation of Jews after the first immigrant generation would appear the Jewish community in the country would be finished!

It is hardly imaginable that the harmful views of Kautsky and Lassalle which so thoroughly infected the Socialist movement in our

country (and in its early period it was mainly German) would not have clung to some elements to the present day. Proudhonism also had its supporters here among the anarchists who had a considerable following in the Jewish community at the end of the last century.

LENIN CASTIGATED INFANTILE DISORDER OF LEFTISM

One needs to turn to Lenin more keenly and profoundly, to the Lenin of the pre-October period and even more to the Lenin of the post-October era. "Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action," is a familiar Leninist formula. It was in action, in the political conflicts during the First World War, in the fight against imperialist and national coercion, against opportunism and nihilism that the program was created which achieved national liberation after the October Revolution. Remaining faithful to Leninism, a creative world outlook which cannot tolerate ossification, it is necessary to draw new conclusions, to learn new lessons, to deal with the "new problems." Junusov's formulation quoted above deserves repetition: "National relations are among the most intricate forms of social relations." He notes these relations imply "national consciousness, national character, national sentiments and a feeling of national pride." These words were written in the Soviet Union fifty years after the October Revolution!

Shortly after the October Revolution the infantile disorders of leftism made their appearance. In Lenin's book which was specifically devoted to this problem he wrote the following on the national question:

"As long as national and state differences exist among peoples and countries — and these differences will continue to exist for a very long time even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale — the unity of international tactics of the Communist working class movement of all countries demands, not the elimination of variety, not the abolition of national differences, (that is a foolish dream at the present moment) but such an application of the fundamental principles of Communism (Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) as will correctly modify these principles in certain particulars, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state differences. The main task of the historical period through which all the advanced countries (and not only the advanced countries) are now passing is to investigate, study, seek, divine, grasp that which is peculiarly national, specifically national in the concrete manner in which each country approaches the fulfillment of the single international task, the victory over oppor-

tunism and 'Left' doctrinairism within the working class movement." (page 73, "Left Wing Communism: An infantile Disorder", International Publishers, 1940).

LENIN DEMANDS SENSITIVITY TO NATIONAL FEELINGS

Note Lenin's insistence: **the abolition of national differences "is a foolish dream at the present moment"**; even after Communism will prevail over the entire world **"national differences will continue to exist for a very long time"**; it is necessary to go into details of national and national-state differences, **"to investigate, study, seek, divine, grasp that which is peculiarly national, specifically national"**, etc. Here is the simplicity of genius which is so characteristic of Lenin. Here is the admonition not to remain congealed but to learn from the lessons of life.

Later we shall briefly cite other examples of the further investigation and study of the national question which have been carried out in the Soviet Union in recent years. Let us now consider what Lenin said on the Jewish question. The practice of Leninism as applied to the Jewish Question derived from the theory of Leninism. **This practice was not accidental or opportunistic or of a temporary nature.** Here was purposefulness and an indicated program.

Shortly after Lenin's arrival in Russia in 1917 when he proposed the April Theses which outlined the program for a worker's state, he included a special resolution on the national question to assure safeguards to adequately represent the "national composition" of the population in government institutions. Later, in the draft of the program of the Bolshevik Party which he prepared for the 8th Party Congress in March, 1919 Lenin wrote:

"On the part of the workers of those nations which under capitalism were the oppressors the exercise of particular care is required in regard to the national feelings of the oppressed nations, (for example, on the part of the Great Russians, Ukrainians, Poles to the Jews, on the part of the Tartars to the Bashkirs, etc.) In addition, a collaboration directed not only to achieve actual equality, but for the development of the language, the literature of the working masses of the formerly oppressed nations is required in order to remove all the traces of the lack of confidence and alienation inherited from the epoch of capitalism."

LENIN'S LETTERS ON THE GEORGIANS

After the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 three hitherto unpublished letters by Lenin were made public. These letters were written in 1922 in opposition to Stalin, Ordjonikidze and others concerning their views on the auton-

omy or statehood of the caucasian regions. In this matter Lenin conducted an unrelenting battle against Great Russian chauvinism. In these letters (published in the Moscow Kommunist, 1956, No. 9) Lenin reiterated his fundamental concept on the difference of the **nationalism of an oppressed people and the nationalism of an oppressing people.** He maintained it was insufficient to grant formal equality to a people which had previously been oppressed. Such a people, he thought, must be accorded special consideration. He then reproached Stalin and his associates for having charged the Georgian Communist leaders with being "social nationalists." Lenin felt that whoever made such a charge was not only a "social nationalist himself", but was also a "crude Great Russian bully."

"Nothing," Lenin wrote in one of those letters, **"blocks the development and strengthening of proletarian class solidarity so much as national injustice, and to nothing are national 'feelings' so sensitive as to the infringement of national equality, even though due to carelessness, even though in the nature of a joke, and especially to the infringement of national equality by one's proletarian comrades.** That is why in the present instance, it is better to overdo it on the side of a willingness to make concessions and mild treatment of the national minority than not to go far enough."

"...It is necessary to lay down the strictest rules regarding the use of national languages in republics of different nationalities belonging to our union, and to enforce this rule with special thoroughness. There is no doubt that on the pretext of the unity of railway services, the pretext of fiscal unity and so on, we will have under the present apparatus a mass of evil practices of a Russian chauvinist character."

We recall that in his work, **The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky**, Lenin asserted that after the revolution it was not enough to assure the workers the same rights as were enjoyed by the bourgeoisie. This would, in fact, result in the workers having less rights. In order to achieve true equality the bourgeoisie should be given less rights. The same holds true in the national question. Formal equality does not yet assure equality for the formerly oppressed peoples. They must now receive special rights in order to achieve true equality. Observe, too, how Lenin does not cease to insist on the need for sensitivity, even to refrain from telling a joke which could be insulting to a member of a people which had suffered oppression.

LENIN'S SPEECH ON THE POGROMS

Let us consider a few examples of Lenin's interest in the Jew-

ish question. In his writings one comes across his commentary on the pogrom in Kishinev published in the "Iskra" in June, 1903; on the pogrom in Bialystok published in the "Vperiod" in 1906. In a number of his works prior to the First World War the Jewish question figures prominently and the pogromist policy of the czarist government is frequently discussed.

As for the struggle against pogroms his historic speech of March, 1919, "**The Pogroms Against the Jews**" for which he made a gramophone recording, deserves special attention.

"Disgrace and infamy to the damnable czarism which tortured and persecuted the Jews! Disgrace and infamy to whoever sows enmity against Jews and hatred of other nations. Long live brotherly faith and unity in the struggle of all nations for the overthrow of capitalism!" (pages 5,6, "Lenin On The Jewish Question", International Publishers, New York, 1934)

LENIN'S CONCERN FOR POLITICAL WORK IN YIDDISH

Lenin was not only greatly concerned with the Jewish question but he evinced a continuing interest in the problem of political activity among the Jews. One of Lenin's co-workers, the aforementioned **Shimen Dimanshtein**, who became the head of the Commissariat of Jewish Affairs when the Soviet government was founded, relates the following revealing incident. In 1916 Lenin who was then living in Switzerland had written a pamphlet, "**Socialism and War**". He wrote to Dimanshtein in Paris to translate this pamphlet into Yiddish. Dimanshtein, however, worked long hours in a factory, was unable to attend to this matter and even decided to give up the attempt at translation for this reason. There were also financial considerations. When Lenin became aware of Dimanshtein's decision he wrote him of his unhappiness. Dimanshtein noted that in Lenin's opinion, "the political significance of the Jewish worker was quite considerable and he proposed again that a way be found to translate the pamphlet into Yiddish."

It is important to recall these incidents which disclose Lenin's attitude on this subject prior to the October Revolution and most certainly following the Revolution when the Yiddish language blossomed forth in literature, in the press and theatre, and even in state institutions such as Jewish regional Soviets, Yiddish speaking courts and Yiddish institutes.

It thus becomes evident how senseless and harmful it is to quote only what Lenin wrote in 1903 or in 1913, before Kautsky was recognized for what he was, and to advance those early statements as the quintessence of Lenin's view on the Jewish question. This is a violation of Leninism! This is really monstrous! If anything, Lenin's writings before October as well as his writings after

October, and above all, his deed after October must be presented. Yet, it would be an error to rest even at that.

GEORGI DIMITROV AGAINST NIHILISM

The struggle for a proper approach to the national and Jewish questions is an enduring and persisting effort which learns from life's experiences, and in the years since Lenin died we have lived through fateful times.

The rise of fascism brought the solution of the national question to new trials, provided new experiences and required further efforts to rectify new distortions. So we have seen that one of Lenin's most faithful pupils, **Georgi Dimitrov**, drew attention to the enormous damage caused by the concept of **national nihilism** in the period of the rise of fascism. In his report to the 7th World Congress of the Communist International in August 1935 Dimitrov described how the "**fascists are rummaging through the entire history of every nation so as to be able to pose as the heirs and continuers of all that was exalted and heroic in its past. . .**" (page 77, "The United Front", International Publishers, 1938)

Dimitrov criticized the progressive forces in Europe and the Americas "**who do nothing to link up the present struggle with the people's revolutionary traditions and past. . .**" Dimitrov warned that those who fail to do so "**voluntarily hand over to the fascist falsifiers all that is valuable in the historical past of the nation. . .**" (page 78, *ibid*)

Dimitrov called for a struggle against both **bourgeois nationalism** as well as against **national nihilism** and warned against those who imagine the spirit of proletarian internationalism "permits him, or even compels him to sneer at all the national sentiments of the wide masses of working people. . ." Dimitrov held such people understood nothing of Lenin's teaching on the national question.

Here Dimitrov quoted from Lenin's essay, "**On the National Pride of the Great Russians**" written in December 1914. Lenin wrote:

"Are we, enlightened Great Russians, impervious to the feelings of national pride? Certainly not! We love our language and our motherland. . . we have given the world Radischev, the Decembrists, the declassé revolutionaries of the seventies. . . We are filled with national pride because of the knowledge that the Great Russian nation, **too**, has created a revolutionary class; that it, **too**, has proven capable of giving humanity great examples of struggle for freedom and socialism. . .

"We are filled with national pride, and therefore we **particularly** hate our slavish past and our slavish present. . ." (page 79, *ibid*)

Fascism and nazism, the destruction of six million Jews and millions of other nationalities offered new lessons in the national question to the peoples of the world and most particularly to the Jews. Surely one must draw new conclusions from the historic and epoch making struggles for national liberation which since the end of the Second World War brought some 70 new nations into being. Various tribes and small peoples were revived, languages matured, new literatures were created. These new developments demand a continuous struggle for a creative, truly Leninist approach to the national question.

PRESENT DAY SOVIET THEORETICIANS ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

A limited revival in this struggle occurred in 1966 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Lenin's essay, "**On the Junius Pamphlet**". Lenin wrote this essay as a polemic against Rosa Luxemburg's views on the national question which she had set down in a pamphlet and issued under the name of "Junius". In his essay Lenin developed his theory on the rights of nations to self-determination.

On this anniversary of Lenin's essay a highly significant contribution was made by the Soviet theorist on the national question, **Edward Bagramov**, an Armenian. Bagramov's article, "**The National Question at the Present Time**," (note the words, "**at the Present Time**"!) was published in "Pravda", Oct. 17, 1966. In the course of this article Bagramov disputes those who favor the concept of "an immediate merging of all nations." Such a concept, he insists, would only repel people from Socialism. "**Lenin**," he writes, "**defined such concepts as a caricature of Marxism, an expression of dogmatism and sectarianism.**"

Bagramov then turns to another thought developed by Lenin, namely, the dual process which occurs simultaneously in capitalist, and particularly in Socialist societies: on the one hand, the **drawing together**, the rapprochement of different peoples, and on the other hand, the **flourishing of each people separately**. In this article Bagramov, as if having our previously cited quotation of Lenin's "**Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder**" in mind, states:

"The path to the future merging of the nations must traverse a lengthy and many faceted development of the nations, of their cultures and languages."

Bagramov's article in the "Pravda" was a reply to the "Cultural Revolution" then raging in China which among other things sought to reject the national cultural heritage. Bagramov also wrote another article on this subject for the Moscow magazine, "Kommunist" (No. 14, 1966) and we will here only give its title: "**Chauvinism and National Nihilism in the Ideology of Imperial-**

ism." Note how Bagramov views both concepts as being of service to imperialism.

PEOPLE AND NATION, JEWS AND ISRAEL

Still another important article by the same Bagramov was published in the magazine, "Soviet Life" of September, 1967. Here Bagramov states:

"Whichever facet of Soviet life we examine we will find abundant evidence that the national keeps company with the international. Needless to say, the proper combination of both is not achieved immediately or automatically. . .nobody calls into question Lenin's thesis that national distinctions will continue to exist for a long time to come, certainly for the foreseeable future.

"In other words, the allegation that Socialism erodes national characteristics and standardizes national cultures denies the reality. . .In short, we are for unity in variety. . .For the genuine internationalist has national pride and values national traditions. A man who does not love his own people is not likely to respect others."

Surely, it would seem there is no need to elaborate further on the above. Before delving into certain current problems of the Jewish people and a consideration of some of the present tasks, perhaps some consideration should be given to the concept of **people and nation**. These concepts should not be regarded as congealed, or as having sprung forth readymade from some sort of mold and then mechanically passing on from one to the other. In this, too, everything is complex, fluid and in motion. We are concerned here with socio-psychological concepts, expressions, phenomena of "national consciousness, national character, national stereotypes, national pride, moods, sympathies and antipathies," to quote from Junusov again. These had existed and shaped themselves with various nuances and changes in the course of many generations. They reflect achievements and setbacks, heroism and martyrdom in different historical periods.

Everyone now recognizes that in the State of Israel a nation was formed and this development took place in terms of an historically created stable community with a uniform language, territory, economy and spiritual make-up. This terminology originally employed by **Josef Stalin** in 1913, in his book, "**Marxism and the National Question**" is now considered outdated. Now it is accepted, for example, that the Negro people in the United States, though not inhabiting a uniform territory and not speaking a separate language, nevertheless constitute a national community with its own national interests.

MARTYRDOM AND HEROISM OF JEWS THRU THE AGES

It is obvious that in the State of Israel the Jews constitute a nation. In addition, there also exists a **Jewish people**, sections of which are scattered in various parts of the world. Within the people there are classes which are in conflict with each other. More on this later: here we are speaking of the people as such.

Ilya Ehrenburg had once asked what relationship there was between a Jew in Tunis and a Jew in Chicago if **not for anti-Semitism**. These words, "if not", were of course, most important back in September, 1948 when Ehrenburg first posed this question in his now widely known article in the "Pravda". In all times, **anti-Semitism**, the persecution of the Jews, was the cement which linked Jews together. During the Hitlerite massacre of one third of all the Jewish people this fact became starkly evident.

The late Isaac Deutscher, like Ehrenburg another "non-Jewish Jew," wrote in his book, "**The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays**" that "Auschwitz was the terrible cradle of the new Jewish consciousness and of the new Jewish nation." This is true, of course. Both among Jews and particularly among non-Jews there has not yet been a sufficient appreciation of the historic meaning of the Babi Yars, the Ponars and the Auschwitzes, of all the mass graves in Eastern Europe, of the mounds of human ash, the ashes of Jews, the soap made of Jews and the other horror products of nazism. The lasting effect this had and could not avoid having on the feelings of the Jewish people, on the Jewish psyche, has not yet been estimated. This impact need not express itself in dramatic actions, but undoubtedly it is persistent and will endure for generations.

The same applies to **Jewish heroism**, Jewish courage in this same period. If the horror which befell the Jewish people has been revealed in the ever increasing **literature of the holocaust** in various languages, and such books do not cease to appear even now, 25 years after the war, the record of Jewish heroism, the courage of the **Mordecai Anieleviches** and the **Joseph Levartowskis**, of the **Itzik Wittenbergs** and the **Tenenbaum-Tamarov**,* has not been adequately presented at all.

* **Mordecai Anielevich (Anilewicz)**, young left-wing Zionist, Commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April, 1943. When the nazis surrounded his bunker and escape was impossible, Anielevich and his comrades committed suicide rather than fall into the enemy's hands.

Joseph Levartowski, a Polish Jewish Communist leader who helped organize the United Front in the Warsaw Ghetto which uni-

Our concern here is with a profoundly affecting element of **connection** between Jews, of national Jewish consciousness and pride. Further: in the terrifying light of the holocaust it is necessary to correctly assess the **enormity of anti-Semitism**. It is said a single step begins a journey of a thousand miles. If one arrived at the **destination Auschwitz** after crossing many generations of persecution of the Jews, of pogroms, prejudices, the anti-Semitic pronouncements of Luther and Nietzsche and other German Jew-baiters, then it may be said that **anti-Semitism generally**, every type of anti-Semitism, is a **step in the direction of Auschwitz**, of a "final solution." It is in this sense that anti-Semitism must be viewed, that one must be alert to it and resist it betimes and fight this disease in its early stages before it leads to gas chambers.

One need not doubt that anti-Semitism, particularly of the post-Auschwitz period, is a factor which links Jews of different countries together. However, there are also other, positive factors which create links between them. These include the **history** of thousands of years of **martyrdom** and **courage**, of achievements and failures; **culture** — in different languages and most certainly in Yiddish and Hebrew; there are also **traditions, habits, customs, psychology, family ties, even foods**.

For untold generations **religion** was the strongest connecting force and it still exists and exerts its influence. **Such is the reality!**

We noted earlier that when Lenin spoke of the **national pride** of the Russians he recalled the Decembrists and the later Russian revolutionaries. **Jewish revolutionaries**, too, recall with pride the contributions which Jewish fighters for freedom made in various countries and the revolutionary struggles they participated in, including the fight to establish the Soviet Union and for **socialism generally**.

fied almost all the Jewish political movements. Perished prior to the Ghetto Uprising.

Itzik Wittenberg, a Soviet Jewish Communist who organized the United Fighting Organization in the ghetto in Vilna. He surrendered himself to the Gestapo in order to avoid the killing of a large number of hostages held by the nazis, as they threatened should he fail to surrender. Wittenberg was then tortured to death.

Mordecai Tenenbaum-Tamarov, of the left labor-Zionist **Hashomer Hatzair**, a leading resistance fighter in the Warsaw Ghetto, was delegated in November 1942 to proceed to Bialystok in order to assist in the preparation of the Ghetto uprising there. This uprising took place in August, 1943, led by him and the communist, Daniel Moshkowitz. Both of them perished.

THE BIRTH OF ISRAEL

Of course, the State of Israel plays a significant role in Jewish life. In an earlier work on this subject I cited an important statement by the Negro Marxist, **Claude Lightfoot** who noted:

“Certainly, the Jewish people the world over joined to help form an emerging nation in Israel, yet nowhere else do they constitute a nation.” (*Political Affairs*, Nov. 1968).

This is what actually occurred. Didn't we demonstrate here in New York in 1948 and demanded: “Arms for the Haganah”? Didn't the progressive Jewish movement arrange the giant celebration in the Polo Grounds in New York when Israel was established?

At that time, in 1948, it was clearly realized by everyone that these demonstrations and celebrations were **not an expression of Zionism**, though Zionist-oriented people also participated in them. This holds true for the present as well. The rise of a Jewish nation in Israel after a lapse of almost two thousand years was a matter of national pride. There are many non-Jews, Marxists, who also saw the situation in this light.

For example, in their effort to help establish a Jewish state, the Soviet representatives at the United Nations, **Andrei Gromyko**, **Semyon Tsarapkin**, **K. Kisiliev**, **L. Kaminski** and others not only recounted the record of the Jewish suffering during the Second World War — for which recompense to the Jewish people was due — but they also pointed out, and we quote Gromyko, that “the aspirations of an important part of the Jewish people are bound up with the question of Palestine and the future structure of that country.” Gromyko acknowledged “the aspiration of the Jews for the creation of a state of their own,” and urged, “It would be unjust not to take this into account and to deny the right of the Jewish people to the realization of such an aspiration.” Gromyko also denied that the setting up of a Jewish state would be an injustice to the Arabs, “if only because, after all, the Jewish people has been closely linked with Palestine for a considerable period in history.” Again Gromyko reminded the United Nations, “that as a result of the war which was unleashed by Hitlerite Germany, the Jews, as a people, have suffered more than any other people.”

Regardless of what happened since these views were first expressed, they remain correct. That estimate tallied with historical reality.

FOR WHOM WAS THE STATE OF ISRAEL INTENDED?

Here it will be quite relevant, I think, to refer to a letter by **Tom Foley** in the *People's World* of San Francisco (Dec. 27,

1969) in which this writer on Arab-Israel affairs concedes at last (after articles in the English Section of the *Morning Freiheit* recalled this fact) that, yes, in 1947-48 the Soviet government supported the Partition Plan at the United Nations and the Jewish state it envisaged. However, he now introduces a new notion. Mr. Foley writes:

“According to the (Partition) resolution, the ‘Jewish state,’ 56% of Palestine, would have had a population of about 500,000 Jews and 497,000 Arabs. How long this ‘Jewish state’ would have remained with a Jewish majority is an open question which we can never answer.”

The cordiality displayed here for the Jewish state is simply overwhelming. As is the habit of such “friends” who cite statistics, the Jewish figures are knocked down and the Arab figures are inflated. When the Jewish state was founded there were 600,000 Jews there, not “500,000.” However, this is not the main point.

It is incorrect to claim Israel was established by the United Nations only for the Jews who were then, in 1947, residing in Palestine. As we have seen, Gromyko spoke of the “**Jewish people**” whose “aspiration . . . for the creation of a state of their own” should not be denied. Gromyko definitely had in mind more than the Jews who were living in Palestine for he spoke at length of the sufferings of the Jews in Europe and the need to provide a haven for the surviving Jews who were then still in Germany and in camps in other European countries. Here is what Gromyko said on this point:

“A great many Jews who survived the war in Europe have found themselves deprived of their countries, of their shelter, and of means of earning their livelihood. Hundreds of thousands of Jews are wandering about the various countries of Europe, seeking means of livelihood and seeking shelter. A great many of them are in the camps for displaced persons where they continue to suffer great privations.

“It may be asked whether the United Nations, considering the very serious situation of the thousands of Jews who have survived the war, should not show an interest in the situation of these people who have been uprooted from their countries and their homes.

“It is necessary that we concern ourselves with the urgent needs of a people who have suffered such great hardships as a result of the war in connection with Hitlerite Germany; it is a duty of the United Nations.”

(From Andrei Gromyko's address at the United Nations General Assembly, New York, May 14, 1947).

Thus we see the United Nations specifically considered the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were then in displaced persons camps in Europe and who were seeking a haven in the new Jewish state. **It took into account the Jews who were expected to emigrate to Israel, not only those who already resided there.** Such are the facts, regardless of whether one is pleased with them or not.

PEOPLE'S REPUGNANCE FOR ASSIMILATORS

Thus, **Auschwitz** on the one hand, the **State of Israel** on the other are **two historic events** which link the various sections of the Jewish people all over the world. These, together with the other positive qualities referred to previously, form a barrier which restricts the process of assimilation or the absorption of the Jewish people by other peoples.

Here and there one can assimilate himself. There is no need to conduct any struggles against "non-Jewish Jews" such as Isaac Deutscher or Ilya Ehrenburg. Some months ago Zionist leaders sounded the alarm against the danger of assimilation. Here was not only an exaggerated outcry, but also an expression of **the crisis in the Zionist movement** which has been in the making since the founding of Israel. This outcry is also a sign of **the failure of the Zionist program** of the "ingathering of the exiles," the effort to bring all or most Jews to settle in Israel.

As for assimilation itself we must bear in mind that for many generations the Jewish masses felt a repugnance for it and this feeling is strong today as well. Assimilation in Jewish life **was always promoted by the bourgeois class**, by the wealthier elements who abandoned the mass of the people and refused to conduct any fight against its persecutors or improve the lot of the ordinary Jews. Here in the United States the American Council for Judaism, an organization of Jewish bourgeois elements, orients itself on assimilation.

Unlike the bourgeoisie, it was the **workers**, the backbone of every people, who attentively nursed and nourished the Jewish culture and the Yiddish language and fought for the recognition of Yiddish as a national language of the Jewish people. It was in this language that Jewish workers entered the struggle against czarism in **old Russia**, joined in the **picket lines** with their militant Yiddish labor songs in **America** and in this language spoke their last grieving words in the **gas chambers** and shouted their defiance in the **death camps** and fought as **partisans** in forests of the Eastern European countries.

THE MYTHICAL MELTING POT

How many times must one reiterate that the theory of the melting pot is bankrupt? Only recently, in November 1969 a con-

ference on ethnicity, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, was held at the University of Illinois with 200 specialists and workers in ethnic groups participating. Speakers at this conference stressed the concept of **cultural pluralism**. The conference participants agreed that "no longer are Irish-Americans, Polish-Americans or Italian-Americans so eager to merge their identities in the mythical melting pot." (N.Y. Times, Nov. 19, 1969). Other participants see in the growing awareness of ethnicity in America "a long overdue recognition of the differing life styles, attitudes and problems of hyphenated Americans." (ibid)

Despite examples of assimilation by individuals or mixed marriages from which, incidentally, Jews sometimes gain new individuals, the Jewish community in America continues to grow. The latest "**American Jewish Yearbook**" puts the **American-Jewish population at 5,869,000, a growth of more than a half million (502,000) in the past ten years.**

This is reality. The Jewish community in America amounts to almost half the entire Jewish population in the world. It is also a **highly organized community**. In a report I delivered in February 1968 I spoke of 273 national Jewish organizations and institutions in the United States in 1967. According to the latest "**American Jewish Yearbook**" (1969) there are now more than 300 national Jewish organizations—fraternal, cultural, religious, Zionist and others, some of which have thousands of chapters and a huge membership. For example, the B'nai Brith has half a million members, the Hadassah more than 300,000, the Zionist movement excluding the Hadassah, some 200,000 members.

THE SPECIAL TASKS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

When considering this large, existing, growing and organized Jewish community of close to six million people, the special tasks of the progressive elements and of the working people deserve added attention.

A people is a **community of classes and trends** which are in conflict with each other, in fact, are compelled to struggle against each other. The Jewish workers and progressive forces must help assure that the broadest sections of the Jewish people occupy advanced political positions. They should persistently bring forth the progressive Jewish traditions, the traditions of the Jewish fighters for freedom of past generations everywhere, of the Jewish-Americans such as Asher Levi, Haim Solomon, August Bondi and Ernestine Rose, the traditions of the American Jewish labor movement and of the Jewish revolutionary workers' movement in Europe.

A struggle against Jewish nationalism and certainly against

chauvinism must be conducted and one must struggle against dogmatism and nihilism as they relate to the Jewish question. Here, the progressive forces have a unique task to perform. In order to exert an influence within the Jewish community the base of the progressive Jewish movements needs to be strengthened. Lacking such a base we are helpless, fragmented. This base consists of the Clubs and Societies, the Emma Lazarus Federation, the secular Jewish children's schools, the YKUF (the Yiddish Cultural Alliance) and the reading circles, the choruses and the orchestras of the Jewish Music Alliance and similar Jewish organizations and institutions. A significant role, a decisive role, is exercised by the progressive Jewish press in Yiddish and in English. Without this press, without the daily *Morning Freiheit*, the magazines, *Yiddishe Kultur* and *Zamlungen*, without *Jewish Currents* this base would be paralyzed and the progressive Jewish forces would cease to be a factor capable of influencing Jewish life in our country. In that eventuality the field would be left free to those of a nationalist or even a chauvinist orientation.

We ought to treasure the base of the progressive Jewish movement and preserve the progressive Jewish press.

NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

We should never tire stressing the difference between nationalism and national interests.

We frequently cite the example of Moissaye J. Olgin, that splendid internationalist who was also a fighter for the national interests of the Jewish people and a master builder of the Yiddish culture. When Edward Bagamov wrote in the *Soviet Life* article quoted earlier that the "national keeps company with the international," that "the genuine internationalist has national pride and values national traditions. A man who does not love his own people is not likely to respect others," he merely confirmed what we had been advocating years. Those progressives who have a contemptuous attitude to work in the Jewish field, to Jewish cultural activity and to the Jewish progressive press would do well to note the words of this contemporary Soviet theoretician.

We often speak of the need to coordinate, harmonize the national and the international. Actually there is no contradiction between these concepts. A correct fight for national interests must oppose nationalism which contradicts an international outlook.

What does all this mean for today? We advocate the building of a healthy Jewish life here in America. However, such a healthy Jewish life cannot be isolated from the general, must not stand

apart from it. We have said, and rightly so, that the Jewish people cannot defeat anti-Semitism by their own efforts. To accomplish this they require allies among the democratic strata of the American people, in the labor movement and especially among the Negro people. Jews must participate in the struggle against anti-Negro racism as much for their own Jewish interests as in the interests of American democracy itself. Jews ought to be in the front ranks of the fighters against the Vietnam war, against political reaction and the ultra-right. The fulfillment of these truly sacred tasks can only be thwarted by Jewish nationalism which induces separatism and leads to chauvinism.

Lenin, as we noted, distinguished between the nationalism of an oppressed people and the nationalism of an oppressing people. In my view the Jews in the United States are not an oppressed national group despite the existence of discriminations and anti-Semitism directed against them. I would also say that an oppressed people or nationality, even one engaged in the fight against imperialism, must be on the alert to prevent nationalism from turning into a form of racist separatism or into hatred for another people.

Our opposition to Zionism derives from our approach to nationalism and our understanding of anti-Semitism. We do not agree that anti-Semitism is eternal just as we deny that capitalism is eternal. When Theodore Herzl presented his program for Zionism he assumed that anti-Semitism is eternal and that Jews themselves prompt anti-Semitism in the countries in which they live. Our opposition to Zionism is also based on our orientation on the existing Jewish community in America though this orientation does not diminish our interest in Israel or our wish to see Israel develop in peace and become a truly democratic and progressive state.

JEWISH AND ARAB CHAUVINISM

It is worth recalling that five years ago, two years prior to the Six Day War, we spoke out against those nihilists of the Vilner wing of the Israeli Communist movement who swallowed Ben Bella's and Nasser's slogans of "wiping out Israel." These nihilists then justified their position by saying that Ben Bella and Nasser were fighting imperialism. Yet, experience has proved that these dangerous slogans played into the hands of imperialism. In any case, slogans which call for "wiping out" another state must be opposed regardless of whether this aids imperialism or not.

Arab nationalism certainly is a positive force because it is directed against imperialism. Generally speaking this may be correct, but only generally. Any oppressed people which struggles against imperialism also includes reactionaries and chauvinists who can infect the movement with their own brand of racism, with hatred for other peoples.

The Arab masses, oppressed for generations, are now engaged in a struggle for national liberation and against imperialism. This is, indeed, a progressive effort. However, among these Arab forces one finds reactionaries and significant remnants of feudalism, such persons as the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and his associates, who once supported Hitler.

Another excuse we hear is that when one is struggling against a foreign foe it is not in order to fight internal reactionaries and chauvinists and that instead one should stand with them against the external enemy. Yet, **this is exactly what certain elements in Israel also urge** — while the conflict with the enemy outside continues it is not the time to take on the Moshe Dayans and the Menahim Beigins and the other chauvinists and annexationists, but rather there should be unity with them even on a government level. We think **this position only damages Israel**, undermines its interests, helps create a poor image for Israel throughout the world, plays into the hands of the Al Fatah and paralyzes Israel's peace efforts.

AL FATAH'S ROLE

Just as it is **vital for Israel to combat its own chauvinists and annexationists**, so it is important for Egypt and the other Arab countries to resist their own reactionaries, chauvinists, fire eaters, former supporters of nazism and even German nazis who Arabized their names.

The tragedy in Indonesia where hundreds of thousands of Communists and other leftists were massacred, the developments in Ghana and other newly liberated countries prove the necessity for a **struggle against one's own reactionaries and chauvinists**. Also, how can anyone really close his eyes to the fact that in Iraq, Communists and other progressives were but recently tortured and murdered or that a destructive war has been directed against the Kurds, even while anti-imperialist slogans were raised?

The progressive character of the nationalism of the countries fighting for their national liberation was discussed by a leading Soviet historian, A. Iskendrov ("Izvestia," April 27, 1968). He, too, warned that **"nationalism is also used by the local reactionaries"** which causes the "internal contradictions of nationalism that contains both progressive and conservative aspects" to come to the fore. He cautioned that **"nationalism also possesses a reactionary side"** along with its democratic tendencies.

In our opinion the Al Fatah is a reactionary movement despite all its "revolutionary" phrases, since its proclaimed objective is the destruction of another nation — Israel. Let it be noted that last January (1970) the Al Fatah celebrated its fifth anniversary. It had thus begun its terrorist activity **more than two years before** the war in June, 1967. This indicates again that Al Fatah activity is not a

result of the war, but on the contrary, the war was in great measure a result of the incessant terror attacks on kibbutzim and Israeli civilians which were all the while accompanied with ringing declarations for a war to "eliminate" the State of Israel.

OPPOSITION TO ZIONISM AND THE TASKS TODAY

In any discussion of nationalism it must be remembered that in Czarist Russia the Jews were the most oppressed of the oppressed. Nationalism in this situation was quite understandable. Zionism arose as a result of the discriminations, the persecutions and pogroms against the Jews. **It was not imperialism which created Zionism, as the irresponsible anti-"Zionist" propaganda pretends, but rather the suffering of an oppressed people.** However, when Zionism gave rise to separatism, when it developed chauvinist features and collaborated with reactionary politicians it became not only an obstruction in the revolutionary struggle, but had a negative effect on Jewish life as well. The birth of the Socialist Zionist movement was an answer to this predicament. Regardless of our differences with this movement we must recognize the reasons for its origin.

Here, too, one must apply a class approach. A different attitude had to be adopted to those Labor Zionists (Left Poale Zionists) who in Russia supported the Bolsheviks and the Revolution. Again let us differentiate and not assign everyone to the same pot.

We strive to work with all democratic forces, regardless of their viewpoint, in the struggle for the security of Israel based on the United Nations Resolution of November 22, 1967, a security based on friendship with the Arab nations and complete equality for the Arabs in Israel itself.

WHAT DOES IT IMPLY?

We seek to work with everyone who favors a healthy Jewish life here in our country — an objective which is in the interests of the Jewish people. We seek to work with others in the fight for peace, against racism — anti-Semitism. For this reason we stress the need for unity.

Unity for the democratic aims of the people does not contradict the need for the specific aims which progressives set for themselves. Unity does not mean obscuring one's own principles; this is true of us as well as "the other side." Unity implies the cooperation of people of different views and principles for a definite task of mutual concern — for example, peace.

We wish to cooperate with other forces even when we do not agree with them ideologically. We seek to work with Zionists against the war, against racism — anti-Semitism, without approving of their Zionism. However, such cooperation implies that the

ideological opposition must not express itself in a venomous wrangle as was done in the past, and wrongly done, may it be said now. Here, too, Auschwitz and the ghetto uprising in Warsaw in 1943, an uprising in which Zionists took part, and the struggle for the State of Israel in 1947-48 introduced another approach. The ideological contest now need not be one of invective, of slamming the door.

Certainly, too, one must speak out against the line of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" when opposing Zionism. The forged "Protocols" describe Zionism as a sort of Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world. This kind of "struggle" against Zionism is actually a racist and anti-Semitic exercise.

FOR UNITY AMONG PROGRESSIVES

Mass work, unity work is a complicated matter. It may seem simple to the opportunist who conceals his principles or to the dogmatist and nihilist who is ever ready to sacrifice the interests of the Jewish people for supposedly "higher aims" — while not sparing the harshest invective for those on the left who disagree with him. The efforts of such people are damaging and destructive. To wreck is so much easier than to build. To find points of contact with an opponent is something of an art. It requires patience and a correct approach; it demands also that one know what he is talking about. Only in this way can the progressive base be strengthened. Only in this way can a healthy Jewish life be built and the progressive Jewish traditions safeguarded.

When speaking of unity we also emphasize the need for unity in the ranks of the progressives themselves and for a comradely dialogue on those questions on which there are divergencies. We should attempt to reach an understanding or simply agree to disagree on certain problems and these are really few in number. We ought not allow disruption, animosity and factionalism to wreck progressive institutions and organizations. If this occurred it would be an historic crime which later would be deeply regretted. Unity, a comradely dialogue, is an imperative matter in this period.

WITH RESPONSIBILITY TO HISTORY

We bear great responsibility. This is a time of searching in the Jewish community in our country, of probing and seeking answers to new questions. The youth in particular seeks answers to such questions as: **What is a Jew? How does one express identity with the Jewish people and with the general progressive movement and the general struggles at the same time?**

Further: How shall activity within the Jewish community harmonize with the desire of the other minorities in the country — the Blacks, the Puerto Ricans, the Chicanos, the Indians who are all fighting for their culture, their history, customs and heritage?

Most Jewish people understandably cannot adopt a Jewish identification which expresses itself in religious affiliation. The Temple may attempt to fill a vacuum with its social action work, but the relevance of religion, its relationship to life is now doubted even in middle class circles. There is another form of identification: giving funds for communal purposes, to the UJA or to Israel. It is obvious such a limited identification hardly contributes to building a healthy Jewish life in America.

We, on the other hand, base ourselves on a progressive and secular Jewish life which coincides with the present reality; we urge the building of the Jewish people's culture, the safeguarding of the progressive Jewish labor and people's traditions, all the while moving together with the rest of the American people in its struggle for democracy and peace.

We favor building a healthy Jewish life here in America and as American Jews, who are interested at the same time in the life of Jewish communities everywhere and in the security of Israel. We are a minority, but we offer positive values without which the American Jewish community would be ever so much poorer.

This is a difficult period. The growth of reaction and of the ultra-right, the attempts to undermine the Negro people's movement and the labor movement puts us to the test. The effort to resist fascism, racism and anti-Semitism becomes ever more demanding. At the same time we gain courage from the broad struggles for peace and from the upsurge of the youth. Our work in the Jewish field is organically tied in with these struggles and this upsurge. Herein lies its strength and relevance to actual life. Let us perform our task with responsibility to history.

ASSIMILATION AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The Soviet professor Josif Braginsky has published an article captioned: **Assimilation? Yes, But Why?** Whether the "Why" is sufficiently explained we shall see. But it seems to us Prof. Braginsky skips the first stage of the subject and that is: **ASSIMILATION — HOW?** It is true, he speaks of "non-forcible assimilation of the Jews or any other nationality." But that is all he has to say on this subject—a half a dozen words or so. This is quite insufficient on a question which is of great concern to the Jewish or any other nationality.

What does "non-forcible assimilation" mean? Lenin answers this question by stating:

"Inseparably connected with the principle of complete equality is the guaranteeing of the rights of a national minority... The incorporation in the Constitution of a fundamental law which shall declare null and void all privileges whatsoever enjoyed by one nation and all infringements whatsoever of the rights of a national minority" (V.I. Lenin: **Critical Remarks On the National Question**, Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow 1951, p. 49).

Polemizing with the leaders of the Jewish Social-Democratic Bund who advocated national cultural autonomy, Lenin quotes statistics of the number of pupils in the schools of St. Petersburg in czarist days (in 1911), with 396 Jewish children of a total enrollment of 48,076, and he asks: "Is it possible to draw up a 'positive' national program that will cover this diversity of relationship and conditions?"

In answering this question, Lenin speaks of:

"a fundamental law that rendered null and void every measure that infringed the rights of a minority... Every citizen would be able to demand the rescinding of orders that would, for example, prohibit the hiring at state expense, of teachers of the Jewish language, Jew-

ish history, and so forth, or the provision of state-owned premises for lectures for Jewish, Armenian or Rumanian children, or even for one Georgian child. At all events, it is by no means impossible to satisfy all the reasonable and just wishes of the national minorities on the basis of equality, and nobody will say that the advocacy of equality is harmful". (Ibid, pp. 51-52).

UPSURGE AFTER THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

This equality, as is well known, was introduced by Lenin after the October Revolution. When Lenin's approach was still in force in the 1930's, in the Ukraine alone there were 765 Jewish schools with over 90,000 pupils, 3 teachers' seminaries, 16 technical schools, numerous Yiddish libraries and reading rooms, 3 Jewish state theatres, 10 Yiddish newspapers and periodicals and one Jewish scientific institute. A similar flourishing of Jewish culture took place in Byelorussia. In Moscow, there was the famous Jewish State theatre headed by **Solomon Mikhols**, the Yiddish club "Kommunist," a Jewish school in the suburb of Malakhovka, the Yiddish daily **Emes**, the publishing house under that name and many other Jewish cultural institutions. In Moscow, Minsk, Kiev, Birobidjan there existed Yiddish pedagogical institutes, university chairs, scientific establishments.

Just these facts — and there are a great many more, as we shall see—will suffice to illustrate how the Leninist program of equality was put into practice. Then, towards the end of the 1930's there developed the Stalin cult and a **suppression of Jewish culture began**. Most Jewish schools were closed down, as were the **Emes** and other Yiddish newspapers and various publications. Yiddish book publishing still continued and it is worth noting that while in 1913, under czarism, only 73 Yiddish titles were published, they numbered 339 (titles) in 1939.

After the war the **Emes** publishing house resumed activity, publishing 14 titles in 1945, 19 in 1946, 52 in 1947 and 60 titles in the first ten months of 1948 (in November all Jewish cultural institutions were clamped down).

The Moscow Jewish State Theatre too, was revived after the war and a Yiddish weekly, **Einikeit**, was published by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee which had developed many activities in the field of Jewish culture and general Jewish affairs. All this was cut down when the cult brought down its heavy hand on the peoples to the USSR generally on the Jewish people in particular.

PARTIAL REHABILITATION AFTER THE 20TH CONGRESS

Since the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in

*The magazine USSR, May 1964.

1956 Jewish culture was rehabilitated to a certain degree. There is the monthly **Soviet Heimland** with a circulation larger than the circulation of any of the Yiddish magazines in the USSR even in the 1930's. There are a number of dramatic groups touring the country. Attendance at Jewish concerts reached the enormous figure of 300,000 annually in the sixties. All this is very important and in accordance with a Leninist approach to the national question.

However, there is no Yiddish publishing house and **no Yiddish books whatsoever** were published in 1962, 1963 and 1964, resuming publication in 1965 at the rate of around 6-8 annually. There are no Jewish schools and facilities "for hiring at state expense, of special teachers of the Jewish language, Jewish history" and so forth, or the provision of "state-owned-premises for lectures" for Jewish children as required by Lenin.

Prof. Braginsky states that "only some 20 percent of the people of Jewish nationality in the USSR declared Yiddish as their native tongue" in the census of January 1959. Considering the line of **forced assimilation** practiced by the Stalin cult for over 20 years prior to the census; considering the fact that that part of the Jewish population which was not evacuated by the Soviet authorities during the war, or could not be evacuated (or did not want to leave their old homesteads) and which was exterminated by the Nazis was overwhelmingly of the older generation (the younger people were quicker to evacuate while many hundreds of thousands of them were in the Red Army)—considering all this one is **amazed** at such a large percentage!

But what is a parent who registered Yiddish as his native tongue to do when he wants to teach his child Yiddish, with no Jewish schools or supplementary courses, with no Yiddish textbooks whatsoever? Lenin stated how this question should be answered — and he showed the world, after 1917, how national equality is put into practice. **Not until this Leninist approach is restored will one be able to speak of "voluntary, non-forcible assimilation of Jews,"** to quote Prof. Braginsky.

LANGUAGE INTEGRATION IS NOT IDENTICAL WITH NATIONAL ASSIMILATION

Prof. Braginsky confuses **language integration** with **national assimilation**. **Einstein**, mentioned by Prof. Braginsky, did not know Yiddish. That is true. But he was a **deeply national Jew**, even nationalist to a certain degree! The Jewish community in the USA, which is not Yiddish-speaking in its overwhelming majority, glaringly proves the point that **language integration does not mean national assimilation!**

Because of that, there appeared in Moscow a Jewish magazine in Russian in the 1930's, **Tribuna**. Soviet Jews who do not know Yiddish are now avid readers of Jewish books translated into Russian, although it is true that Russians, Ukrainians and members of other nationalities also read the translations from the Yiddish.

Since we mentioned here the Jewish community in the USA one must say, in passing, that not until the American Federal, state and municipal governments will provide the means and facilities for Yiddish courses in the public and other schools, the means and facilities for the development of culture in Yiddish generally — that is, for those Jews who want it; not until the rights of all national groups are provided for, there will continue to be practiced **forceful Anglo-Saxon assimilation — a violation of the rights of the national minorities, a violation of a truly democratic approach.**

One cannot begin to talk about "voluntary" assimilation while closing one's eyes to **forced assimilation.**

Before we are sure there is no **forced assimilation** we cannot accept at face value the statement that there is a **mass voluntary assimilation**, as follows from the article by Prof. Braginsky. To be more exact, considering the publication of **Sovyetish Heimland**, the dramatic groups, the widespread Jewish concerts which are growing in quantity and quality, we would say that in spite of these important achievements to which one should **not close his eyes**, the line of forced assimilation which began with the Stalin cult has in the main, remained intact.

MARX'S STRUGGLE AGAINST NATIONALISM AND NIHILISM

For many years Lenin conducted a struggle against the nationalist slogan of national cultural autonomy advanced by the Jewish social democratic organization, the Bund. As against this harmful slogan he put forth the program "to satisfy all the reasonable and just wishes of the national minorities on the basis of equality," as quoted above.

This program, outlined by Lenin in the autumn of 1913, deals with the subject of assimilation. We shall dwell on this subject later on. For the present, in stressing the harmfulness of forced assimilation let us record the struggle of Lenin against both opportunism and nationalism, as well as leftism and dogmatism in the approach to the national question.

In his essay *On the Right of Nations to Self Determination*, written in the spring of 1914, Lenin refers to the struggle led by Karl Marx in the First International both against the nationalism of Mazzini and the nihilism of the "Proudhon clique." In a letter to Frederick Engels, written June 20, 1866, Marx re-

lates how, during a discussion at the Council of the International, the representative of "Young France came forward with the thesis that nationality and nation are obsolete prejudices."

The British delegates chuckled, Marx writes, when he drew attention to the fact that the French delegates who would abolish nations were using a language—French—which nine-tenths of the delegates did not understand. He also intimated, Marx writes, that under cover of the theory of abolishing nationalities the French delegates expect the others "to be swallowed by the exemplary French nation."

UNPRECEDENTED FLOURISHING OF JEWISH CULTURE

Due to the truly Leninist approach on the national question, Jewish culture, alongside the cultures of all nationalities, flourished in the Soviet Union, gaining enormous prestige for the land of socialism among all peoples abroad, particularly among the Jewish people. Progressive Jews, fighters for socialism, pointed with pride to the Soviet Union as the land which truly solved the national question. Jewish culture—progressive culture, of course, in the spirit of the Yiddish classicists—can be built only under socialism, they maintained with full justification.

Previously we quoted some figures on the development of Jewish culture in the USSR. On leafing through the book, "Jews in the USSR" (Yiddish, published by Mezhkniga and Emes, Moscow 1935) we were filled with the pride of the achievements of those days as well as some painful nostalgia . . . We find that in 1933, only four Yiddish publishing houses in the USSR (there were more) published 391 books with a circulation of 2,609,700 copies. Of these there were 75 textbooks for Soviet Jewish schools, circulation—1,185,000 copies. (p. 169).

During the school year of 1933-1934, there were 143,815 pupils in the Jewish schools in the Ukraine, Byelorussia and other parts of the country, including Birobidjan. There were 25 pedagogical and other Jewish technicums, Jewish sections at various universities, university chairs. There were 17 Jewish State Theatres, many choruses, etc. Four Yiddish dailies were in existence. (Moscow, Minsk, Kiev, Birobidjan) as well as a large number of other publications.

Prof. Braginsky is, regrettably, at variance with the facts when he makes it appear that as a result of the October Revolution, Yiddish began to disappear. He states: "The natural course of cultural development of the Jewish population of the Soviet Union, a development which had already begun before the Revolution and was accelerated after 1917, lead to assimila-

tion." Compare at least the number of books published by the four Yiddish publishing houses in 1933 with the publication of only 93 titles in 1913 . . . And, of course, there were no Jewish State theatres and other institutions in 1913. After the October Revolution, there began an amazing upward development of Jewish culture.

Only after the cult set in, during the trials of 1936, followed by the "frightful year" of 1937, when the line of forcible assimilation was introduced, as pointed out before, did Jewish cultural institutions receive their first blow.

Jewish schools and other institutions were abolished, newspapers closed down (the Birobidjan Shtern began appearing three times a week in 2 pages and is still appearing so). Book publishing still continued, with 339 titles appearing in 1939. Jewish state theatres, too, still continued to exist, although reduced to 10 by 1939; there were also two theatrical schools (L. Singer: "The Renewed People," Emes Publishing, Moscow 1941, p. 109). After the war there was some revival, as indicated previously, developing in an upward line until the end of 1948 when everything was brutally crushed. (The Moscow Jewish Theatre was closed in the summer of 1949).

EFFECT OF THE HOLOCAUST ON THE JEWISH PEOPLE

But here some well-meaning people will say:

"Very well, you may be correct. But no matter how it happened, things have changed! You cannot turn the clock back!"

Without dwelling on the "morality" of an argument which accepts the results of a criminal policy, one can say: Yes, things have changed. And if by that one means that there are fewer Jews using the Yiddish language, then, there are still close to half a million Jews in the USSR who registered Yiddish as their mother tongue in the census of 1959. Let them enjoy the same rights accorded to similar groups of other nationalities, including nationalities that are not concentrated in one territory!

One could dwell at some length on this point, quoting facts and figures, making analogies. But . . . things have truly changed in quite a different way! Some changes were brought about by fascism, others by the Second World War, when six million Jews were murdered — because they were Jews, murdered without any distinction!

During the rise of Nazism national consciousness among the Jewish people was heightened. Then came Auschwitz . . . Treblinka . . . Maidanek . . . Babi Yar . . . Ponar, and many, many other death factories, places of the most horrible slaughter . . . Among

the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis, there were one million Jewish children, slaughtered in a most unbelievably barbaric manner, buried alive, burned alive. This really brought about **profound changes** among the Jewish people! If one is to continue with the line of forced assimilation, of **insensitivity** to the Jewish people, he will only bring about the very thing he is supposedly fighting — **bourgeois nationalism!**

This insensitivity to the suffering of the Jewish people during the war has brought about such products as the shameful booklet, **Judaism Without Embellishment**, by Trofim Kichko. This insensitivity led to attacks on that **pride** of Soviet literature, Evgeni Evtushenko, for his poem "Babi Yar," a poem published in the organ of the Union of Soviet Writers, **Literaturnaya Gazeta** — all honor to this Writers' Union and its organ!

Professor Braginsky may not be so sensitive on this subject — and that is his right. He may not observe the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, which is observed by countless numbers of Jews (and non-Jews, too) throughout the world — and that is his right, too. But he is certainly **not** expressing the sentiments of the Jewish masses.

INTERMARRIAGE AND VOLUNTARY ASSIMILATION

Some years back (May 1964) **Look** magazine carried an article sensationally captioned: **The Vanishing Jew**, by Thomas B. Morgan. From the standpoint of business this seemed to have been a good contribution: that issue of **Look** was gobbled up by the reading public, mainly by Jews. As a serious analysis, however, it was utterly worthless.

Mr. Morgan based his premise on some figures showing an increase in Jewish-Gentile intermarriages. Since American Jews do not go in for large families and therefore, according to Mr. Morgan, do not "reproduce" themselves, the day will come when the American Jew will "vanish."

While admitting intermarriage presents a problem, Jewish leaders nevertheless had little difficulty in blasting Mr. Morgan's superficial analysis.

Mr. Morgan's type of "prediction" is nothing new. In 1908, the writer and dramatist **Israel Zangwill** promulgated the well-known theory of the **Melting Pot**, predicting — 62 years ago — the disappearance of all nationalities and national groups in the USA . . . He was followed by **Karl Kautsky** who in his book **Are Jews A Race** written in 1914, predicted the disappearance of the Jewish nationality everywhere, basing himself on immigration figures of Jews into the USA . . . Here, in the USA, he stated (in 1914!) "the process of the dissolution of the native Jewry is

proceeding at full speed" (p. 154). He maintained (p. 241) that when Jewish immigration into the USA will end and the second and third Jewish generation will no longer understand Yiddish, will not live in compact Jewish neighborhoods and religion will become a matter of indifference to them, "**the last barrier to their assimilation will be removed**" (K. Kautsky: **Are The Jews A Race?** International Publishers, New York 1926).

Considering present day realities this sounds ludicrous. Around 80 percent of the Jewish community of close to six million in the USA are American-born second, third and even fourth generation Jews. But this community was never so highly organized around Jewish activities. B'nai B'rith with about 500,000 members, Hadassah with over 300,000, or the Zionist movement generally, or non-Zionist Jewish organizations, are not any less Jewish because they conduct their affairs in English and the overwhelming majority of their membership is English-speaking. If anything, they are **more nationalistic** than some of the Yiddish-speaking elements who are alert to **national** Jewish interests but are opposed to **nationalism**.

Again, language integration does **not** mean national assimilation! Many people, however, have made and are still making the mistake of confusing the two distinctly different developments.

Does it follow that there is no assimilation at all? Of course there is. There are forces in capitalist society, as well as in socialist society, that bring about, for different reasons, **trends** of assimilation, depending on many factors, but the nationality as a whole continues to exist and develop.

Some maintain that Jews have kept and are keeping together due to persecution, anti-Semitism. Undoubtedly this is a powerful factor. Anti-Semitism, anti-Semitic trends and discrimination, anti-Jewish persecution tend to unite the Jewish people. Persecution of Jews in any country, particularly a major one, affects **Jews everywhere**. The Dreyfuss case in France in the 90's had an effect on Jews throughout the world. And so with the persecution and pogroms in czarist Russia, in Eastern Europe generally, not to mention the extermination of a third of the Jewish people by the Hitlerite beasts during the Second World War. All these developments fostered nationalistic movements (Zionism came into being during the Dreyfuss uproar), but among proletarian-internationalist Jewish elements, too, national consciousness was heightened due to these causes.

Generations of persecutions, of pogroms, of ritual blood libels, have made Jews **everywhere** sensitive to persecution or

“just” anti-Semitism anywhere. Again, the experience of the Jewish people during the second world war, with its Auschwitzes and Babi Yars must be borne in mind.

ASSIMILATION, TREND OR POLICY?

There is no doubt, then, that here we have a powerful factor binding Jews together, keeping Jews on the alert. But one must not overlook other factors contributing to national consciousness and adhesiveness. There is the history of the Jewish people, Jewish culture (in Yiddish, Hebrew and other languages), tradition, customs or “just” national pride and other factors. So are family ties among Jews of various countries. Religion has played a powerful role in the past and is still a factor among many Jews.

With all this, certain elements among the Jewish people, even if relatively insignificant, may assimilate (and if these are progressive elements they are making it easier for nationalistic elements to hold sway over considerable Jewish masses). But it is not only idle to talk of the “vanishing” of the Jewish people because of the effect of the “melting pot,” or because of the diminished use of Yiddish — it is also harmful. The theories of Zangwill and Kautsky resulted in petty bourgeois, anarchistic, or leftist-dogmatic notions regarding the Jewish question and the national question generally. I am afraid the attitude of Professor Braginsky suffers from this confusion.

Prof. Braginsky, to support his approach, may refer to Lenin who in his polemics with the leaders of the Jewish Social Democratic Bund chided them over their “fear” of assimilation. But Lenin was dealing with a trend, not a policy. There is a big difference here! When assimilation becomes a line, a policy, one is apt to use a “little bit” of force in order to promote this policy, as has happened during the cult days in the USSR. But Lenin was quite stern on this subject: he kept warning against forced assimilation. As regards policy he put forth in the same essay, in his polemics with the Bund leaders, the program of equality, as quoted previously. In the very same essay we referred to on page 38 he declared in no uncertain terms:

“Whoever does not recognize and does not champion equality of nations and languages, does not fight against all national oppression or inequality, is not a Marxist, is not even a democrat” (V.I. Lenin: Critical Remarks On The National Question, Moscow 1951, p. 24).

Nothing could be clearer than that! And this is — policy!

In that same essay, written in 1913, while speaking favorably of the trends of assimilation, Lenin also referred favorably to the attitude of Kautsky, quoting — as Kautsky did — figures of Jewish and other immigration into the USA. However, during the First

World War, in his polemics with Rosa Luxemburg on the national question, and particularly in his book, *Left Wing Communism*, Lenin was mainly fighting against left-dogmatism on this question, as we have seen. What is most important, the policy of full equality which resulted in the flowering of the culture of the nationalities, including the Jewish nationality, was introduced by him and prosecuted after the October Revolution with utmost vigor, without weakening his struggle against bourgeois nationalism, against local nationalism and particularly against Great Russian chauvinism.

In this connection it will be important to recall “*Lenin’s Letters On The National Question*,” written towards the end of 1922 and published for the first time after the 20th Congress of the CPSU in the theoretical organ of the party, *Kommunist* (1956, No. 9). In these letters Lenin severely criticised the approach of Stalin and others on the subject of relations between the various Soviet Republics and towards the nationalities in the Caucasus. Lenin stated:

“Internationalism on the part of the oppressing or the so-called GREAT nation (although great only in its violence, great only in the sense of brutality) must consist not only in observing the formal equality of nations, but also in such inequality as will make up on the part of the oppressing nation, the big nation, for the inequality which in fact arises in life. Whoever does not understand this does not really understand the proletarian attitude to the national question.

“...It is necessary to lay down the strictest rules regarding the use of national languages in republics of different nationalities belonging to our union, and to enforce this rule with special thoroughness. There is no doubt that on the pretext of the unity of railway services, the pretext of fiscal unity and so on, we will have under the present apparatus a mass of evil practices of a Russian-chauvinist character.”

In 1956, after the cult of Stalin was exposed, quite a good deal was written on how Lenin’s tenets on the national question were violated during the cult period. The magazine *Voprosi Istori* (Problems of History), in the issue of March 1956, devoted its editorial and leading article to this question and to Lenin’s fight against Stalin in the Caucasian situation. The editorial pointed out how Lenin fought again “great-power chauvinism and local nationalism”; how in his struggle against the Russian reactionaries and bourgeois parties he fought against anti-Semitism.

Those who are holding fast — for whatever reasons — to the remarks made by Lenin in 1903 and 1913, forgetting about his writ-

ings between 1916 and 1922, forgetting about his policy — the policy of the strictest equality — forgetting how this policy was introduced and vigorously prosecuted after 1917, are not, obviously, adhering to the tenets of Lenin.

Lenin kept admonishing — it seems to us — that realities must be evaluated in a truly Marxist, creative way. Whereas Kautsky and others stuck to their “theories” in spite of realities (the worse off for the facts, as Lenin would say), Lenin took full cognizance of developments.

Ossification is totally alien to Leninism.



From the Library of:

This pamphlet by Paul Novick, editor of the Morning Freiheit, contains three essays. The first, “National Problems in the Light of Reality” was presented before a gathering of the Yiddish Cultural Alliance (YKUF) in Los Angeles in January, 1969.

The second paper, “Contemporary Aspects of the National and Jewish Questions,” was read to the leadership of the Jewish Clubs and Societies in January, 1970.

The third essay, “Assimilation and the Jewish People” was published in the “Morning Freiheit” in the summer of 1964.