

Hyman Levy 1958

## Jews and the National Question

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Hyman Levy (1889–1975) was born into a Jewish family in Edinburgh; he worked at the National Physical Laboratory and was later a professor of mathematics at Imperial College in London, and wrote extensively on that subject. He joined the Labour Party in 1920, and left it for the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1931. He was deeply distressed by the resurgence of anti-Semitism within the Soviet Union, and was expelled from the CPGB in 1958 after publishing the pamphlet *Jews and the National Question* (Hillway, London, 1958).

### Preface

It has not been easy for me to write this small book. There is a curious reluctance on the part of Jews to discuss their problems publicly. This is connected with the kind of admonition I used to receive from my mother in my childhood, ‘Now remember, behave yourself. A Jewish boy doesn’t do that kind of thing. It causes anti-Semitism’, and this was already part of my flesh and bones almost before I attended school. So a book on Jews might give rise to anti-Semitism by making non-Jews Jew-conscious: and in spite of the traditional joke that only upper-class Gentiles and lower-class Jews speak loudly in public, it is the case that Jews would rather pass unnoticed. Here, however, I have the safeguard that only a Gentile already interested in Jews would bother to read this book.

But there is a time for silence and a time for speech. Many of my political friends imagine that this is a time for silence. I disagree. Let me explain why. I have always had high hopes of the tremendous advantages that were to flow to mankind from the colossal social and political experiment that is being conducted in the Soviet Union, and now also in China. If I can be said to believe in anything, I believe in experiment, provided, of course, that it is guided and controlled by theory based on the fullest available knowledge, and is continually subjected to the most searching criticism. It is the only way in which we can learn to think clearly; and on this basis only can we hope to see the values we acquire in the process blossom out into practical fruition.

These social experiments in the Soviet Union and in China involve a multitude of nationalities, a medley of peoples. Now professionally I am not a biologist or a medical man, and on matters that fall within these provinces I bow to those with specialised knowledge and more informed minds. For precisely such reasons I disapprove strongly of those individuals, outside the Soviet Union and China, who have no hesitation in criticising sharply the internal policy of the governments of these vast areas, as if those individuals from the depths of their ignorance of the issues involved must know better. Nevertheless, it must be said in all honesty that those who adopt this antagonistic attitude, blind as they are to the great positive achievements that have undoubtedly been made, are not very different, in the quality of their critical sense, from those other enthusiasts who are equally blind to the negative side. Either we maintain silence on both aspects, or we speak frankly about both. An experiment is not a piece of one-sided propaganda, but a search after truth. Anything other than this is unscientific and unhelpful. As one of those who earnestly hope that these great historic social experiments will be crowned with success for the sake of suffering humanity, I hold that on this matter speech, if it is based on specialist knowledge, is golden and silence a betrayal of the very cause itself.

The great socialist experiments are not being conducted in an international vacuum. On the contrary, we know that the world today is divided into two hostile camps — socialist and capitalist — to put it very bluntly. This political alignment has occurred at a crucial point in the history of science when man is entering the phase where he will be able to redesign the firmament. The sputniks are the fingers of man’s groping hand as it stretches out into the skies. If in this situation the political alignment becomes unstable, and governments, for whatever reason, resort to force to achieve their ends, the consequences to mankind are certain to be catastrophic. This nightmare is now a commonplace. The possible outcome of a breakaway from the present position of unstable equilibrium is therefore something that sane people dare not contemplate. Yet none of the leading

statesmen on either side, on whose judgement depends the maintenance of this equilibrium until such time as the world can once more move forward stably at a higher level, clearly measures up to the occasion. They do not understand what is happening to the world.

I am one of those who hold that, whether we like it or not, we are moving into a socialist era. In these circumstances it is vital that neither the Soviet Union nor China should misjudge or misinterpret the mood, values and understanding of the capitalist sector; equally the United States, Britain and France must make an effort to grasp precisely the direction in which the socialist countries are moving. Those of us, therefore, in this hemisphere, who think we understand something of the theory and practice of the socialist countries, and of course have first-hand knowledge and first-hand living experience of our own half-world, have a definite responsibility to speak up should it seem to be the case that a possibly false and therefore, in the present world circumstances, dangerous policy is being pursued, albeit unconsciously. It is in this spirit that I have dared to criticise the Soviet Union, where I have done so here, believing that my intentions will be understood and appreciated. In no sense, therefore, would this be a direct criticism of the internal policy of the socialist countries, but only indirectly in so far as internal policy has external repercussions. The effect, in this half of the world, of the revelations of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Union is a case in point.

This approach has a special meaning for the central theme of this book. I am a Jew, and I am concerned for the fate of my people. How I come to be so concerned is a matter of social history, and is of little moment. I could find reasons, if reasons are important. They are not. The fact itself is significant when taken alongside the other fact that, from the religious point of view, my Jewishness is non-existent. I am a human being like others, with all the values I have inherited — and I think refined — from the society in which I have been nourished. That society contains Jews, an internationally-distributed people, with a peculiarly unique history. Every event everywhere touches us somewhere. In their own peculiar way, the forces that mould society have separated us out in this way. In this book I have tried to show that there is nothing mystical or mysterious in this, but because we have been so fashioned and moulded in space and in time, the archives of my people, in one way or another, contain the scrolls of history. It is not surprising, therefore, that we are extremely sensitive to national and to international happenings. Hitler tried his best to wipe us out. He failed. Hitler is now dead. An international people cannot be eliminated by a national policy, it can only be wounded, and the incinerating chambers of the Nazis now figure in the scrolls in our archives, alongside the Jewish tortures of the Spanish Inquisition and the Jewish massacres during the Holy Crusades.

Today the Soviet Union faces its special form of the so-called Jewish problem, the presence in its midst of an international people with humanistic and cultural affiliations everywhere, at a moment when the world is sharply divided into socialist and capitalist camps. It is attempting to meet this problem in what it regards as a Marxist way. In my humble view, as a Marxist, I think they have made a false analysis of the problem, and I have tried in this book to show where its falsity lies. Because it is not a purely internal problem, but one that impinges on an internationally-distributed people, and because I am a well-wisher to the great experiment which the Soviet Union is conducting, and finally because I am a Jew, I have no option but to speak up. I do so in the firm belief that what I have to say will be weighed up in the spirit in which it is offered.

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## **The Two Problems**

Two factors have been mainly responsible for the arousal of a new interest in the old problem of the present position and the future of Jewry. One of these factors, of wide and general interest to Jew and non-Jew alike, is the emergence, during the past decade, of about one-sixth of this widely-distributed people as a distinct national entity, the Israelis, in the Middle East. The other factor is the strange, almost unexplained, policy which the Soviet Union appears to be pursuing with regard to its Jewish population.

For centuries the centre of gravity of Jewry, and the sources of its spiritual and cultural strength, has been in Eastern Europe, Poland and Russia. During Czarist times periodic pogroms have forced the 'Jewish Problem' to the fore, with the result that to Jews — and also to socialists generally — a society's treatment of its Jews has been regarded as the acid test of its level of civilisation. For this reason the eyes of Jewish socialists have been steadfastly turned to the new socialist republics because

of a conviction that the conscious will — and the planned and organised means available — to resolve the Jewish problem can exist only in a socialist society. This is based on the premise that, broadly speaking, the Jewish ‘problem’ is, in fact, an excrescence of capitalist society, and that with the passing of this society the problem will disappear. This is precisely where the shoe pinches now for the socialist. It is agreed, almost universally, that in the Soviet Union capitalism has in fact disappeared. Has the Jewish problem then vanished? If not — and such issues are not resolved overnight — then what policy is being pursued in the effort to resolve it, and what precisely is the nature of the resolution sought? Since there is not available any clear and definite answer to these questions from Soviet sources, and since, as we intend to show here, the answer, were it available, would be heavily conditioned by the first factor — the existence of a small Israeli nation in the Middle East — the whole matter takes on a totally new interest.

## Early Jewry

It is said that the Jews are an ancient people. This, of course, is only true in a special sense. They are no more and no less ancient than other people. They are a modern people who, in their time, have absorbed much culturally, genetically and biologically from their neighbours, and who have left their cultural, biological and genetic mark on many peoples. They are an ancient people in the sense that they were a very early nation. What is interesting is that the forces of history have been such as to maintain their separation into a more or less definite social group over a long period of time, carrying a continuous but changing tradition over a span of about 2000 years. The Jews of today are a very different people from their early progenitors of so-called Biblical times, in their economic situation, in their social structure, and in their ideological outlook. Even if it were true — which it is not — that what has held them as a distinct social entity has been their religion, Judaism, the fact remains that modern Judaism consists of a very different set of beliefs and values from those held by the Jews of twenty centuries ago. A Chassidic Jew and a member of the British Liberal Jewish Synagogue are poles apart. This is only one of the minor internal reflections of the variegated history of Jewry, in space and in time. A people who have been distributed so long historically and geographically, while they will differ very considerably among themselves, may still form a group, sociologically speaking, because of certain underlying similarities that they have preserved. National characteristics, in so far as Jews evince them at all, would feature among these similarities.

It is historically false to assert, as is done both in Jewish and non-Jewish circles, that until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD the Jews were a compact nation localised entirely in Palestine. There was, indeed, such a nation that fought tenaciously for its independence, but already, well before the fall of Jerusalem, it is estimated that more than three-quarters of Jewry no longer lived in Palestine. Emigrating from their mountainous and relatively infertile country, many had settled in various parts of the Greek Empire, and the later Roman Empire, in the islands of the Mediterranean, and along the north coast of Africa. They went as sailors, traders and small bankers. Under the Roman Empire there were many Jews in Rome, but in 135 AD after the Jewish Rebellion in Palestine led by Bar Cochba, large numbers were carried off as captives into slavery. The Jewish Tower in Rome in which they were held is still extant. Later, with the disintegration of the Roman Empire, these Jews moved up into France, thence into the Rhineland of Germany, and later north-east to what is now Poland and the western provinces of Russia. Broadly speaking, the ancestors of the Jews of the Eastern European ghettos, and therefore of most Western Jewry, were Roman captives.

There were, of course, earlier emigrations from Palestine in the direction of Iraq and thence through Persia into Russia. A considerable population of Persian Jews exists in Bokhara, and again in the Crimea, the latter arriving therefore by a totally different route from the remainder of the Jews of Eastern Europe. In Kerch in the Crimea are to be found old inscriptions both in Greek and in Hebrew. With the exception of these early Crimean Jews who actually settled on the land, most of these emigrants, as we have said, went as traders and small bankers in the first instance. Even if the population of Palestine tended to outrun the basic food supply, one would not expect agricultural workers to leave the land to which they were already attached.

Of those Jews who came to the western provinces, however, those who moved into Lithuania entered a region that was rich forest land. The sparse population lived mainly as hunters and wood-fellers. In these circumstances many of the incoming Jews themselves settled as agricultural workers and

farmers, and there, in the course of time, developed a high tradition of Hebrew and Yiddish learning, with centres of religious training and scholarship that became famous throughout the world of Jewry.

As dealers in commodities, however, the first Jewish emigrants, and the communities they established, were in fact carriers of *early* merchant capitalism and banking into regions where the people would otherwise have lived at the level of life appropriate to a simple user's economy, where people consumed directly what they produced. In this sense they were therefore fulfilling a progressive historical role, widening the range of interdependence of peoples and so deepening the meaning of society. For such reasons — it gave them a considerable social status — Roman emperors accorded the Jews a degree of autonomy in the running of their affairs, and protected them in their religious worship against local Roman and Greek priests, so that, in effect, they became almost a community within a community. Thus their socio-religious customs were preserved, emotionally linked up as they were with Jerusalem, and Palestine generally, at a time when the Jewish nation itself was fiercely struggling for its independence in the homeland.

Yet there was already anti-Semitism in Roman times, expressed by the surrounding peoples, and stemming presumably from the antipathy felt by an agricultural and peasant population for those who live, not by actual direct work on the soil, but by trading. Here was a distinct people, the Jews, an alien people, carrying through an alien form of economic activity, which they resented, however important it may have been historically. Naturally, the resentment against the process becomes directed against its instrument, and this in its turn tended to consolidate these outposts of Jewry, and to confirm their identity as a separate people among strangers. We shall see that this situation occurs and recurs continually in the history of Jewry, as a formative and consolidating factor.

From the twelfth century onwards Europe began to undergo deep and lasting changes. In developing its merchant and commercial class on an increasing scale — and indeed on a self-competitive basis — it also saw the stimulation of local industries that produced the necessary commodities for exchange. With this came the growth of towns; and the way was open to the evolution of nationalities in Western Europe.

## What Is a Nation?

In his analysis of what constitutes a nation, Stalin has set out in characteristically clear fashion what he regards as the necessary and sufficient conditions to be satisfied by a social group if it is to be accorded this title. His conclusion in summary form can be stated thus — that a nation is an historically-evolved stable community, territorially, economically, linguistically and culturally, the latter expressing itself among other forms in a common psychological make-up. In this, it is necessary for our purpose to note particularly the word 'historically evolved' and 'stable'. The former must imply that there are various stages in the development towards nationhood, unevenly occurring, so that at points prior to the achievement of 'stability', one or more of these characteristics may manifest themselves without the others having reached full fruition. Moreover, 'stability' must itself be relative and historically conditioned, for in the past there have been many nations which have come and gone, although during their existence they would undoubtedly have satisfied all these criteria. A nation is a social entity, restricted and confined, and no nation has ever had, or could ever have, full control over its destiny. Unless we bear these qualifications in mind we might easily slip into a mechanical or a static approach to the whole question. As we shall see in a moment, when we examine this problem in relation to the Jews, these changing historical and social factors become of considerable importance in evaluating the nature, extent and depth of their national feeling, and its outward mode of expression.

We do not *define* a nation. Only an abstraction is capable of definition, and the Jews are by no means an abstraction. They are alive, active and virile. Any attempt to define a Jew, therefore, is philosophic nonsense. He is not a mere concept, but a physical object. Nor does he simply belong to a religious sect, nor to an ethnically distinctive group that has kept itself 'pure' by intra-marriage. The Jews are an historically-evolving entity, and this historical entity has to be examined in space and time to discover what features it shows in similarity with, and in difference from, other such historical social groupings that claim nationhood and are recognised as possessing it.

## **First Criterion of Nationhood**

One of the first facts we have to recognise is that Jews do not, by any means, all regard themselves as a separate nation, in spite of many propagandist efforts to obscure this. To take steps, as Zionists naturally do, to arouse a sense of national feeling is one thing; to examine how people actually feel about nationhood is another. The very first criterion of nationhood, in fact, is to test whether or not there exists, in the present, a community of feeling in this respect. What has existed in the past may in itself be quite irrelevant. Today there may be only knowledge of past feelings, tradition, social customs, and there may be historical relics of past nationhood. If the Jews are a nation today, they will feel they are one here and now, and that feeling is not created merely by reminding them that their ancestors once were a nation.

If we may be led astray by looking at the question — ‘What is a Nation?’ — unhistorically, there is a corresponding danger in treating it parochially, on the assumption, for example, that the conditions that gave rise to the birth of nations in Europe towards the end of the feudal period are the only ones in which nationhood may arise. The American nation is a glaring exception. It is certainly true that the rise of Arab nationalism in the Middle East today is taking place at a time when a near-feudal economy is dissolving, but this is occurring under the impact, not simply of merchant capitalism, as it did in feudal Europe, but of the most advanced form of imperialism; in a world, moreover, in which totally new types of state — the Soviet Union and China — have begun to make a dramatic impact on the minds and on the hopes of men. The conditions, therefore, are in many respects unique. Moreover, simultaneously with this, Arab national movements have arisen in North Africa within the French Empire; and Negro nationalisms are successfully emerging in other parts of Africa which, until quite recently, were under British domination. As this is written, a similar struggle is being waged in Indonesia against the Dutch. In all these areas a strong national sense has emerged under conditions very different from those in which it came to birth in Europe. They have almost all seen unity forged in the struggle of a people to free itself from what it felt to be imperialist exploitation. Everywhere the outsider, the foreigner, has maintained a standard of life in sharp contrast to that accorded to the native, whose labour and the natural resources of whose soil have been utilised to this end. Here then is a human group reaction which is independent of race or colour.

## **Diversity of Conditions For Nationhood**

We are compelled then to conclude that throughout history nations have evolved in diverse ways and by uneven steps, yet with an underlying similarity in all these circumstances. Naturally, in the past, a struggle of this nature could be waged only by a people occupying a localised region, communicating with each other through a common language, broadly expressing in their unity of action a common set of ethical and social values, and smarting under a common sense of injustice. And since no such struggle could be waged in an economic vacuum, nations, as they have emerged, have created some semblance of an economic order in the regions they have inhabited. We can easily read, in this process, the factors that impressed Stalin in his analysis as being essential qualities for nationhood. It does not follow by any means, however, that under modern conditions of communications, transport and finance, and with the possibilities of arousing international public opinion on behalf of a would-be national group, that all or even most of these factors are essential to the birth or indeed the re-birth of a nation. Stalin in his study of the question was concerned primarily with peoples which had already reached effective full-fledged nationhood in what he regarded as a stable form, and he was less concerned with the actual processes peoples have passed through in arriving at this situation.

These considerations begin to have special significance when we examine the rise of Jewish nationalism and the features it has shown particularly during the present century. Especially with a distributed and diversified people like the Jews, we shall have to bear in mind the distinction we would wish to draw between those Jews who have a sharp national feeling themselves and those Jews who, having no very strong national feeling, nevertheless have a strong understanding sympathy for other Jews who do. To grasp the modern ‘Jewish problem’, therefore, it has to be seen in its widely diverse forms as these have shaped themselves in different places through the successive historical phases of this people.

## Twin Aspects of Jewish Problem

There is a further point to which we merely refer at this point, and to which we shall return at its appropriate stage. If there exists a Jewish problem for Jews, as seen and felt from the inside of this people, there must *ipso facto* exist a Jewish problem as seen and felt by non-Jews from the outside. This simply means that there would be an objective sociological problem which impinges itself in these different ways on Jew and on non-Jew. Only a rationally-organised society can be expected to find a solution that is satisfactory when seen from either end of the telescope — the objective and the subjective ends.

## How Did Jewry Survive?

How have the Jews managed to survive at all as a distinct social entity during the past two thousand years? How did they, for example, survive in a Europe that was so sharply class-divided as was the feudal system with its lords and serfs? To answer this question in rational terms, to avoid falling into the mystical concept of 'The Chosen People', which the modern Jew himself would never accept, we have to discover what positive function having survival value the Jews managed to perform in such a tight economy. As we have already pointed out, for many generations prior to the Dispersion, Jews had been emigrating from Palestine, as the rise in population had tended to outrun the productive capacity of the soil. As immigrants into neighbouring lands, into the islands of Greece, into regions along the north coast of Africa, they were strangers who naturally did not become agriculturalists. Entering into almost self-sufficient economies, that is to say, localised societies that lived almost entirely on what they themselves produced, their function in the first place could only be that of traders and merchants. In effect, therefore, their first movement into Europe did not basically pose a new kind of problem to a people who had already entered, to some degree, into merchant capitalism in the Palestinian homeland.

We must realise that every large-scale feudal society must necessarily create craftsmen — builders, carpenters, wood-carvers, workers in metal for armour and weapons of war, silversmiths and goldsmiths, lace-makers, grinders and polishers of jewels. In the propitious climates of the East were spices and perfumes ready to be exchanged for the surplus craft products of the West. Europe was ripe for the transition to merchant and then industrial capitalism; and here was a people who had already established a tradition in such activities. Money transactions, book-keeping and accountancy were a commonplace to them. These, in the first instance, were the positive functions, with survival value, that the Jews were able to perform. They became the small merchants, the book-keepers, clerks and go-between men for the barons, and so became almost a privileged and sheltered class. These Eastern people, exercising special and indeed specialist functions among an alien population whose language they had to master, to read and to write, but who nevertheless kept their own accounts in their own sacred script, were therefore marked out in a distinctive separate way, really as a small social class. In this way, the preservation of their religio-nationalist feeling and outlook followed inevitably.

We have gone into these matters in order to underline the positive *survival* function which the Jews performed, and so understand why the Jews have not simply disappeared when they had no definitely localised habitation. At the same time, it is important not to exaggerate the role of these people in relation to the fuller development of merchant capitalism in the whole of Western Europe. This arose in the main from the native merchants themselves. Let us remember that the mediaeval Church refused, on scriptural grounds, to regard usury by a Christian as anything but a heinous sin. The field of usury itself was therefore open for the infidel Jew to pursue. Severe penalties were exacted on any Christian who dared to become a usurer, even through the intermediary Jew. But the distinction between usury and banking must be clearly drawn. The usurer is not directly productive. His loans, for example, to feudal lords and to kings, were for luxuries and for war expenditure. The banker, on the other hand, a later development under merchant and industrial capitalism, finances commercial and industrial ventures. The usurer therefore provides credit for the consumer, the banker for the purposes of production. The usurer also lends to the peasant and artisan in order to enable him to pay his taxes and his rent and in doing so takes possession of a portion of the surplus value which the peasant or artisan would otherwise have produced later in any case. The usurer is the vehicle of individual credit in the feudal period, the banker during the much more highly developed period of merchant and industrial capitalism. The mediaeval Church denied the right of a Christian to operate as

a usurer, but by the time merchant capitalism had developed, the Church had changed its attitude, and the banker and his profession were performing a recognised legitimate function. It was as a usurer, and primarily as a usurer, that a Jew was allowed to operate, and the part he played during the later banking period was relatively trivial. The reasons for this are not far to seek. Not only would he now have to compete with the new and expanding native merchant class, but his social position was also now much less secure. During the earlier period, for financial reasons, the Jews were protected by kings and lords, but with the weakening of the latter's power in the later period, the Jew could by no means be certain of the continuance of his personal security, and consequently long-range investment was not likely to occur.

We can illustrate all this in a more direct way. History text-books always depict the Holy Crusades as a pure Christian mission, and it comes as a surprise to learn of the accompanying massacres of Jews and of the confiscation of their goods and monies. But even in England at that time this was already well under way. England, lying to the extreme west of Europe, would not be expected to have in its midst a people, stemming from the Middle East, who had drifted so far afield. In fact, already in Anglo-Saxon times there were Jews in England, and, according to the laws of that period, Jews and all their property belonged to the King. They were his personal possession, and he protected them because of the purposes for which he could use them. They were regarded as sponges to be squeezed dry when necessary. It is recorded, for example, that in 1088 William I farmed out vacant episcopal seats to Jews in order to secure their revenue, while those Jews who embraced Christianity were compelled to return to Judaism in order that the King might still be entitled to confiscate their property when necessary. Henry II, the enlightened monarch who introduced trial by jury, sought to prevent conversion by taking possession of the property of those converted, in recompense for the consequent loss in revenue. In 1187, this same king, who alone owed Aron of Lincoln £100,000, equal to his whole annual budget, simply liquidated this debt by direct confiscation. All this is recorded history. As we have said, Jews and their property were owned by the King, and the usury which they alone were allowed to practise was merely an indirect method whereby the King fleeced his subjects, while the odium attaching to the collection of this revenue was thrown, not on the king, but on the Jew. Two years later, in London, Lincoln, York and Stafford there were great massacres of Jews. This process went on intermittently throughout the whole of the feudal period. In 1264 there were anti-Jewish pogroms in London and in Canterbury, organised by the landed gentry. The climax came in 1290, when, with the critical period into which feudal society was now passing, the possibility of lending under usurious conditions had drastically declined; all the property of the Jews in the whole realm was confiscated, and these people, numbering 3000 in all, were expelled. This was during the reign of Edward I.

It was not usury that the society now required, but money that would finance productive forms in the new emerging merchant capitalism. Thus by 1377 Edward III had already invited Florentine bankers to establish themselves in London in what is now known as Lombard Street. It is not until the period of Cromwell that the law forbidding Jews to reside in England was rescinded.

The merchant class expanded. Trade and shipping flourished, and the balance of power gradually shifted in Europe from the feudal lords to these merchants, who were now the new rich. The technical knowledge of ship-building grew apace, and towns began to spring up. As craftsmen grew in numbers and required to move from place to place to acquire and to exercise their skills, the old bonds that held the serf to his lord grew weaker and weaker. The foundations of feudalism were crumbling, and crisis after crisis shook its structure. It had been in this atmosphere that the younger barons, with little prospect for themselves in what was to them a decaying society, set out on their successive Crusades to the Middle East. These were in effect piratical expeditions whereby the barons could enrich themselves by pillage and massacre of the non-Christian, particularly Jewish, communities *en route*.

But a social crisis does not exist in an ideological vacuum. It is a period of doubt and of questioning. If the social structure was crumbling, so also was the security of faith that had been used to justify it — and in this, quite obviously, the Jews were the villains of the piece. They had not merely questioned Christianity; they had repudiated it. It was therefore clearly a law of divine justice that the infidel, who had denied the Jew Jesus, should be denuded of all his worldly goods, and destroyed. Thus it was that the early waves of anti-Semitism that had swept Europe at the time of the Crusades were not simply motivated by ethical or religious considerations, however they were clothed in these,

but had sprung from a deeper, more general source, a widespread social crisis. Wherever there have been Jews, recurrent social crises have left their imprint periodically as anti-Semitism on the body of that people. They have indeed been the scrolls of history.

## **The Impact on Jewry of Merchant Class Struggle**

We have said that it is important not to exaggerate the part which Jews played in the development of merchant capitalism in the Middle Ages. Indeed what they did in this respect occurred, in the main, only in the very early phase, for there were very powerful and significant forces at work that not merely excluded them from the later developments, but were responsible for inaugurating for them a long period of decline in their economic plight.

To appreciate how this happened we have to trace certain aspects of the growth of merchant capitalism and the alignment of forces in its development. One of the immediate consequences of the Crusades was that it gave a new impetus to East—West trade. The Crusaders returned, not simply with the rich spoils of war and pillage, but with stories of the vast wealth that lay in the countries of the Far East. This commercial revival saw the transport of exchangeable commodities along three distinct routes.

- i) By sailing ship from the original sources, up the Red Sea and the Nile River to Cairo and Alexandria and so to the Mediterranean Sea. These sources were, of course, China, India and the East Indies.
- ii) From the same sources up the Persian Gulf and the Tigris to Baghdad. Thence by caravan route overland to Antioch and Damascus, and so again to the Mediterranean Sea.
- iii) The third route, which was later heavily interfered with by Turkish conquests, went almost entirely overland to Constantinople and the Black Sea.

Thus, for Europe, at any rate, the Mediterranean Sea — the Middle of the Earth — was the great highway, and every year saw the merchant fleets of Genoa and Venice set off for Bruges and Flanders, laden with their cargoes of cinnamon, cloves, ginger, gums, dyes, fragrant woods, and precious stones and metals. It was a period in Europe when meat and fish were preserved by heavy salting, so that the demand for spices was considerable. These Genoese and Venetian merchants practically operated a monopoly, with Bruges as the western depot from which trade with Britain and Germany was conducted.

By the latter part of the fifteenth century, Spanish and Portuguese merchants had already appeared as competitors for this lucrative trade in the effort to break the monopoly, better situated as they were for trade with Western Europe, but ill-placed as regards shipping from the Eastern Mediterranean. By 1487 Vasco Da Gama, starting off from Portugal, had already rounded the Cape of Good Hope at the southernmost point of Africa, and explored the east coast of that continent. We have to realise that Europe was in the main still Catholic, and every king and duke held his throne and dukedom by the grace of the Holy See. Here then were the Catholic merchants of the Italian cities established in the Eastern Mediterranean to which the products of the East flowed in the first instance, while at the western end were their Spanish and Portuguese Catholic competitors, severely handicapped for purely geographical reasons.

It is clear, therefore, that when Christopher Columbus, himself a Genoese, proposed to the merchants of his native city that they should finance and sponsor a voyage intended to discover a short route to India via the west, his proposal was of no interest to them. To accept was suicide; what they did not grasp was that to refuse was also suicide. Nothing more natural, therefore, than that Columbus should move with his proposition to Spain. (Incidentally we may remark that had Genoa accepted, South America would today have been an Italian-speaking continent instead of Spanish, and the history of Italy itself would have been very different from what it has been. So possibly would have been the history of the rest of Europe in certain respects.)

At this time Spain had by no means proceeded so far as the Italian cities along the mercantile route; it had its royalty and grandee landowners, and above all a strong Catholic Church, itself one of the largest landowners. It was therefore with the backing of the ecclesiastical side that Ferdinand and Isabella financed the Columbus expedition of 1492 that resulted in the acquisition of a Spanish Empire in the Americas, converted Spain, and to a lesser extent Portugal, into a leading maritime

power, and of course extended enormously the influence of the feudal Catholic Church. Accordingly, in 1493 Pope Alexander VI issued a Papal Bull announcing that Spain was being granted exclusive rights over the East Indies, and lineally dividing the Atlantic between Spain and Portugal. By this act, not only were the Italians excluded from any participation in further possible discoveries in the west, but Britain and other West European countries were also shut out. The date 1492 may therefore be taken as the beginning of the Atlantic period and marked the decay of the power of the Eastern Mediterranean. The monopoly that had hitherto relied on the maritime centres — Venice, Genoa, Hamburg, Lübeck and Bruges — as trading route and trading depots, began to shift to Lisbon, Cadiz, Bordeaux, Cherbourg, Antwerp, Amsterdam, London and Liverpool. Hence the interests of Spain in the Low Countries, and the natural development of merchant capitalism in England. We can appreciate the power of the centralised Catholic Church when we realise that almost a century later, when England was itself challenging the supremacy of the Spanish maritime traders, and repudiating the authority of the Pope over these and other matters, Spain was instructed to use its vast Armada to invade England, and tried to do so. That venture failed; and England was now set to assume the leadership in merchant and later industrial capitalism.

### **The Fate of Spanish Jewry**

This apparent digression into the history of European mercantilism is particularly relevant to the position of European Jewry. It brings out, in the first place, that Jews themselves were in no sense a major factor in that process. The forces at work were of a totally different kind and of a different order of magnitude from what could possibly have been exerted by individual Jews or by Jewish groups. Secondly, it shows that they were now to be caught up in a rapidly-changing social and political situation over which they had no control. This is precisely what was meant when we warned against exaggerating the part played by Jews during this period.

But 1492 was a very significant date for European Jewry. Under the Moslem empire in Spain, before it fell, Jews had risen to positions of high standing in the cultural professions as writers, philosophers and doctors, as well as merchants. With the rise of native Spanish merchants, and indeed with the interest of the Spanish Court and the Catholic Church in such matters, there was of course no place for a Jewish merchant. Indeed Alexander VI's Papal Bull of 1493 definitely and explicitly asserted that no Jew, converted or otherwise, might hold property in the new trans-Atlantic countries that were being discovered. The consequences were therefore obvious, and the Spanish Inquisition undertook its part of this task by its trials, persecutions, burning and harrying of Jews and people of Jewish origin. Those who managed to escape fled back along the north coast of Africa to Egypt. Thence some moved on to Palestine where Safed, dating from 1500, has a population of such Jews, while another stream spread up through Turkey to Turkey-in-Europe, namely the Balkans, where to this day the language spoken by Jewry there is Ladino, the tongue developed among the Jews of Spain.

To all intents and purposes, for many years thereafter, the role of the Jew in the commercial world now moving into mercantilism, was reduced to trivial proportions. The effect, however, was to accentuate the isolation of Jewry, and to sharpen their internal sense of separateness, even to the extent of inducing many who had more recently assimilated to return to the main body. Although the case charged against the Jews was that they were infidels and hostile to the true faith, those who had actually embraced that faith were yet refused; and this, of course, was consistent with the Papal Bull of Alexander VI. The religious and ideological case was as usual a mere reflection of totally different aspects of that socio-economic period.

### **Some Consequences of Anti-Semitism**

All this is a particular illustration of a principle running like a thread throughout history, and it applies not merely to the case of Jews but to many other minorities. Until relatively recent times the basic causes of rapid social change and of crisis have not been clearly understood, and even today governments are at a loss to know what steps to take to stem a rising tide of inflation, a mounting total of unemployment, a worsening in the relations between the governments of highly-armed countries, or even a steady but quite evident drift towards war. Social stress and strain rise and fall. It is a struggle for survival manifesting itself in a thousand different ways, here on the economic, there on the ideological and ethical plane. In such a confused, unorganised, unplanned and uncontrolled

society, when economic crises emerge, members of any minority group, separate and distinct from other individuals in their society, are in a particularly vulnerable position. They are likely to suffer in a two-fold way. The crisis hits them at first as it does any other member of the community; but in addition the majority of its victims tend to resent the fact that the minority should compete with them in the effort to obtain the diminishing means of survival. For example, 'No Catholic to have a job until every Protestant has one' made its appearance as a slogan in the West of Scotland during the slump of the 1930s in Britain. Thus it is not surprising that since the dispersion of the Jews among the nations, the successive social crises of the West have left their imprint in blood on the story of this people, with all their psychological and emotional repercussions. Whether it was the Inquisition with its vicious expulsion of Spanish Jews — merchants and intellectuals alike — just at the moment when the merchant class in the west of Europe were driven to seek a new and more secure route to the East; or whether it was the Nazis with their incinerating chambers, just at the moment when capitalist Germany was struggling to resolve her internal economic crisis by external expansion; or whether it was the pogroms of Czarist Russia during the long crisis that finally emerged in the 1905 revolution — in all cases where a considerable population of Jews existed, a period of social stress and strain has coincided with an upsurge of anti-Semitism.

Two consequences flow from this. Within the body of Jewry itself there undoubtedly exists a certain degree of hypertension, an unconscious alertness to the slightest sign of discrimination on the part of non-Jews against the Jew. In many cases, super-sensitive in this matter, they tend to see racial antagonism where none exists, but the very fact that Jews feel like this strengthens the bond between them, and subjectively tends to mark the Jew off from his neighbour. Again, once an anti-Semitic attitude has been engendered in a community during a period of social stress, who can tell how long a period of social quiescence must elapse before it is completely obliterated from the emotional and even the verbal tradition of that community? These are both what might be called superstructural or ideological reflections of an economic disorder that long outlive their immediate causes.

### **Anti-Semitism as Survival Factor**

We are therefore driven back to our original question — even if there was a positive function Jews were able to perform that made it possible for them to exist, how did they, or some at least, succeed in *persisting* in such a periodically hostile environment? The fact is, of course, that for Jewry, anti-Semitism has itself had great survival value. As successive generations grew up in their gentle environments, and as society itself slowly and painfully learnt to struggle for justice, the younger members of the Jewish community, emotionally alive to such values, naturally tended to assimilate — to live and work in unity with their non-Jewish brothers. For this to become wholly effective takes time; it has to work against the latent hostility that lurks like a shadow in the traditional background. Long before this merging has been achieved, there has invariably come into being yet another social crisis; and, in such periods, a small community withdraws into itself for consolidation and for self-protection. It seeks safety and security in unity. For Jewry, therefore, pogroms and the lesser forms of anti-Semitism have tended to keep them alive. A capitalist world that could not control its own crises was not likely to witness the natural absorption of its Jews; and so, they have persisted.

### **Role of Dispersion in Survival**

But there has been yet another factor that has had a very powerful influence on Jewish survival — and this, strange as it may seem, has been their dispersion among the nations. Between 1939 and 1945 Hitler and his henchmen reduced more than one quarter — probably nearer a third — of the world Jewish population to slavery, and then to ashes. Naturally it was not possible to make decent young Germans sink to such levels of barbarism without providing some kind of historical justification that would make it seem right in their eyes and that would, at the same time, imbue them with the desire to establish the might of Nazi Germany over Europe. Hence the theories of German supermen and Jewish sub-men. The Jews were a conveniently small minority against which to enhance German stature. It is the outstanding illustration in history of how, given the appropriate conditions, a fake theory, carried to its logical conclusion, debases the values of a whole people. Only a theory based on historical reality can enhance human dignity. To Jewry it was the greatest wound, the greatest blow that had ever been inflicted on it during its terrible history. At least five million men, women and children perished. I am asserting, without fear of contradiction, that only a Jew can grasp

intellectually and emotionally what this has signified. It has left an indelible mark on the mind and feelings of every Jew. What influence could this have had on their survival? Has it not struck them a mortal blow? On the contrary, it has enhanced their own sense of human dignity. It has engendered a new awareness of national feeling among large sections of Jewry of an urgency and of a quality that did not exist before 1939. As an unconscious force for heightened Jewish awareness, Jewish survival and Jewish nationalism, Hitler towers head and shoulders above any Jew living or dead. In a world at war with itself it was not possible to destroy a people as widely distributed as are the Jews. They must always be in one camp or another; but a war which obliterates humanity will also destroy Jewry.

### **Residual Forms of National Feeling**

The characteristics of this people today, their modern social stratification and the ideologies they express, are, however, vastly different from those of the fiercely nationalistic people of 2000 years ago. They have had twenty centuries of deepening experience. It is true, as we have pointed out, that even at that time, they were relatively speaking widely spread. Philo of Alexandria remarks that there is hardly a people in whose veins some Jewish blood does not run. To these émigrés Jerusalem was what Mecca is to the Moslems. But the core of Jewry in Palestine itself was imbued with an intense national feeling knit together with a strong religious sentiment. Their national destiny was regarded as a divine ordination as is obvious from their holy script. It is not therefore surprising that during the Dispersion, Hebrew became elevated in religious circles into a sacred tongue; but to the great majority of Jews today it has become little more than a language with which they have only a nodding acquaintance, through some elements of early religious instruction. Their natural speech is that of the people among whom they dwell, and with whom they have received their general education: English, Russian, French, and, for those who stem directly from Jewish communities in Eastern Europe — Yiddish. Every Western European nation has its Jewish writers, artists, musicians expressing the ideas and the values of their society in the language and the idiom of the people among whom they dwell. In the Soviet Union, there are Jewish writers in Russian but also writers and poets in Yiddish. Today a new vigorous modern Hebrew literature is emerging in Israel. Thus Jewish writers and poets reflect two aspects of Jewry, the cultural pattern they have in common with their non-Jewish neighbours, and a certain complex of values that have been socially inherited from the very distant past, moulded and modified by the fears and tensions that have been engendered by a history of communal insecurity extending over twenty centuries, coupled with a certain kind of pride in their tenacity to survive. It is in these latter qualities that the Jew is marked off from his neighbours, and it is exclusively these also that are reflected for the most part in Yiddish music, literature and poetry.

It is not surprising, therefore, that wherever Jews gather together they form their communal institutions and their social centres. They set up their synagogues where their sons are confirmed and their daughters married — even many of those who are vigorous opponents of religious obscurantism. Recently, when in the Soviet Union, I asked a young Jew why he, an atheist, had attended synagogue on one of the festivals. He admitted, quite frankly, that as he had not been there for years he felt that for once he wanted to be among his fellow Jews. It is not unexpected, therefore, that there exists among them a keen concern about what is happening to Jews in other parts of the world. Jews in Britain, America and in Israel are avid for information about the manner of life of Jews in the Soviet Union. Jews in the Soviet Union ply visitors with questions about what is developing in Israel. When Suslov jokingly remarked, during my visit, that if the hair of a single Jew was touched anywhere a shout went up from every Jew in the four corners of the world, he was placing his finger not only on an objective fact of social significance to governments with considerable Jewish populations, but he was indicating how sensitive to signs of anti-Semitism this people has become under the impact of its history. It is these modes of mental, emotional and physical behaviour, superimposed on the ordinary non-Jewish pattern of social life, that must be recognised as the vestigial and transformed remains of the old nationalist feeling of 2000 years ago; and they are so deep and subtle that any attempt to ignore their existence by any political group interested in such questions would be the crassest stupidity. They undoubtedly exist. Scratch an American Jew one way and he shows himself rabidly pro-American; scratch him another way and he becomes fiercely pro-Jewish. There are occasions when this dual loyalty, if we can call it such, may become politically significant. It was so in Britain during the Israeli War of Liberation; there are corresponding aspects of the same nature to be seen

today in the Soviet Union in relation to Israel and the Middle East. A Jew looking across the frontier into the territory of a government hostile to his own may meet the eyes of his Jewish brother.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that today, for the great majority of these people, there is no question that their *home* is where they are, and not, say, in Israel. They may visit Israel but they return *home* to their native land, the land of their *personal* birth, and not the birthplace of their race. For reasons such as these it is quite impossible to say that the widely-distributed people who are called Jews are a *nation*, a single nation. Nor are they a religious denomination. Nor are they a more or less uniform cultural entity. There are cultural differences among them that arise from simple class stratification in the society in which they live; and cultural similarities that lie deeply rooted in their past history. Nor are they linguistically uniform from country to country. Yet they are a social group united together by a common bond, a people with a strong concern for the nation, which, under most precarious conditions, has undoubtedly come into existence in Israel. This community of feeling has been sharpened most intensely by the Nazi and Fascist movements that sprang up during the most recent world crisis. Families and communities have been broken up, some escaping to the United States, some to Britain, some to Israel, and the remainder destroyed in the incinerating chambers of Germany. Yet there has been a new cohesion of Jewry in the international sphere, a heightened sense of unity in adversity, a stronger sympathy with that section which feels itself a nation apart.

### **Russian Jewish Nation?**

All this represents a sudden reversal of a process that was well under way prior to this. The nearest approach to a section of Jewry being a national entity within the past thousand years occurred in Russia and Russian Poland during Czarist times; although before 1941 there were Jewish regions with recognised linguistic and cultural rights in Soviet Russia in the Crimea, the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Under the Czars, Jews living as they did in Pales of Settlement or in segregated ghettos, at a level and with a mode of life corresponding to early capitalism, spoke a common language, Yiddish, with a distinctive music, literature, art and philosophy of life. To all intents and purposes they were a subject nation, and felt themselves as such, not nearly so unified in most respects as other nations and only temporarily occupying their present habitations, since, according to their interpretation of their Holy Scripts, their eventual return to Palestine was divinely assured. This was the special ideological framework within which their vestigial national feeling persisted.

Over and above all this, these people functioned for the rest of world Jewry in a way that might be expected from a centralised nation. As they became the victims of successive pogroms, there took place a periodic exodus of Jews from these areas to Germany, Britain, France and America, carrying with them their specific Yiddish culture, their sense of separateness, and their national aspirations. Thus they served to keep these flames alight in the Western world, as the children of each generation of immigrants tended to move unconsciously towards closer assimilation with their non-Jewish neighbours. From the various religious colleges which had been established over many years in the Pales of Settlement, there came a steady flow of rabbis and religiously-trained functionaries with ecclesiastical authority of one kind and another, who helped to direct the course of religious instruction, and to decide, on occasion, on points of religious law. Prior to 1917 it is undoubtedly true that the centre of gravity of Jewish life in its cultural and religious aspects lay in Eastern Europe.

### **Impact of Russian Revolution**

In 1917, however, not only did the citadel of Czarism topple as a result of the revolution, but the walls of the ghettos collapsed. Young Jewish socialists, the young intelligentsia so urgently needed at that stage of the revolution, moved out as pioneers into the new republics. They were in many ways the cream of the revolution, and they threw themselves wholeheartedly into the task of helping to build up the new society. The Jewish contribution to socialist history lay no longer pent up, bottled in the stifling and overheated atmosphere of the ghettos. This marked the first stage in the disruption of Jewish separateness in Eastern Europe from the almost mediaeval society in which it existed. The early history of the revolution is rich with Jewish names, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Litvinov, Kaganovich, etc, many of whom for reasons almost too fantastic to believe were later to disappear from the scene. In a country with a long tradition of underground conspiracy against a Czarism to whom life was dirt cheap, and where naked force was the normal instrument of persuasion, revolution

was necessarily a dangerous occupation. There could be no greater mistake than to imagine that our own values, of a totally different nature, built up slowly in a totally different society with a totally different history, must or should necessarily manifest themselves under such conditions. To do so would not only be unhistoric stupidity, but would be to see an absoluteness in one set of values of a special nature, for which there could be no 'justification' in reason or in any rational view of evolutionary ethics. To justify it in terms of that set of ethical values itself would, of course, be to beg the whole question. So, for the moment, until we have examined this matter more closely, let us withhold our judgement.

It is sometimes felt by non-Jews that the presence of so many members of that people among prominent revolutionaries is a rather sinister fact. Fascists and anti-Semites have seen in it all the evidence they need to establish the 'fact' that the Jews are engaged in a subtle international conspiracy whose object is presumably to bring the governments of the world under their control. On the other hand, wealthy and socially exalted Jews frequently do not hesitate to express their intense distaste that any Jew should be so devoid of consideration for his people (themselves) as to align himself with anything in the nature of a revolutionary movement! Brushing the last point aside as little more than a form of class nervousness, there is nevertheless a serious point to be explained that lies embedded in the charges of the Fascists. How did it arise that so many Jews were prominent in the Russian Revolution — at least in the early stages? If we can answer this in a direct rational way, the further question that immediately would suggest itself is why the situation is now changed in this respect. That question we can turn to later, but for the moment we restrict ourselves to the first issue.

In Czarist Russia prior to the revolution the population was universally poverty-stricken and illiterate, except for a decadent and degenerate aristocracy and a class of civil servants whose function it was to operate the whole repressive system. Russia was regarded as a prison of nations, and to a very large extent the system continued to function through the sharpening of antagonisms between one nationality and another. Thus it was, for example, that the Cossacks evoked a feeling of horror in the hearts and minds of the Jews. Freedom from Czarist oppression meant, therefore, freedom for these numerous subject nations, however they were unified as a totality. The Jews with their long tradition of internal education, and the high value they placed on learning, were relatively speaking a very advanced national group. They were steeped in religious and philosophical lore, and by the time the country as a whole was ripe for the overthrow of the Czarist autocracy a considerable proportion of the younger Jews were already highly sophisticated socialists. The fact that Jews were directly involved in the revolutionary struggle was therefore nothing more than was to be expected from an oppressed people. The fact that a much larger proportion of leading revolutionaries were Jews than was to be expected from their numerical strength among the general population followed directly from their heightened political awareness and understanding. After all, Marx himself was a Jew who had very definite ideas how the solution of the Jewish problem was to be achieved. This in itself would turn the attention of young Jewish thinkers to a study of his mode of approach to such questions.

## **Impact Of World War II**

The next stage in the undermining of Jewish separateness in Eastern Europe took place in World War II with the Hitlerian invasion into Soviet Russia, into Poland, into Byelorussia, the Ukraine and south towards the Crimea. These were the areas where Jewish life still persisted with quite a considerable degree of unified Yiddish culture. It will always stand to the credit of the Soviet military authorities that they took immediate and timely steps to evacuate Jewry from these danger spots to regions far distant from the actual fighting front. Anyone who has set eyes on the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto, and the almost incredible bestial devastation wrought there by the Nazis, must realise the awful fate from which the Soviet Union saved their Jewish citizens. Nevertheless these circumstances were directly responsible for the final dissolution of what remained of a Jewry still wedded to its traditional ghetto areas. A social corpus that had for many generations inspired Jewish cultural life and enriched Jewry throughout the rest of the world was at last scattered. An epoch in Jewish history had come to an end. There was no longer a centre that could in the old sense be regarded as the focus and locus of Jewish national life.

The end of one epoch marks the beginning of another. To imagine for a moment that the underlying attachment of a people, internationally distributed as are the Jews, would automatically vanish with the dissolution of its earlier focal centre is to be quite unrealistic. The forces that compelled this dissolution themselves had a profound effect on world Jewry, as we have indicated. It was moved to its depths, and both it and 'The Jewish Problem' were suddenly seen in objective relief everywhere, in a way which had never before been experienced. I have already remarked that as an unconscious force that intensified Jewish nationalism Hitler towers head and shoulders above all others. In the capitalist sector of the world, as we may call it, immediately after World War II, two consequences followed. On the one side, in countries like the United States, Great Britain, France, South Africa, where considerable Jewish communities existed, a tremendous impetus was given to support for Zionism, and the flow of refugees from Central Europe was steadily directed towards Palestine. Cynics have said that the main motive for this in the Jewish middle and upper classes lay in the fear or discomfort of having in their country a poverty-stricken and dependent population of émigrés. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that a wave of Jews surged to Palestine to escape from the regions in which such horrors had been perpetrated on their people. The second effect was the outbreak of a struggle in the Middle East between the Jews and the British in the first instance, and then between the Jews and the neighbouring Arab states, when Israel was proclaimed an independent state. Thus within the space of a few years we have witnessed the dissolution of localised Jewish concentration in the Soviet Union, and the formation of a new focus of Jewish concentration in the Middle East. Today the eyes of Jewry everywhere are directed at Israel, watching events in that area with anxious interest; and in the minds behind these eyes there lurks a painful memory of Holy Crusades, massacres, the Spanish Inquisition, pogrom after pogrom in Czarist Russia, the Beilis Trial, the Dreyfus Trial and French anti-Semitism, the anti-Semitic outbursts of Fascists everywhere in Europe, the Nazi barbarity with its mass murder and genocide policy, and finally the liquidation of leading Jewish cultural workers in the Soviet Union during the latter years of Stalin's life. This then is the modern background against which the remains of the intense Jewish nationalism of two thousand years ago is silhouetted.

### **Jewry in a Divided World**

In whatever way the 'Jewish Problem' thus presented itself prior to the First World War, since that time it has taken on a totally new complexion. Today the world is sharply divided into two camps, socialist and capitalist, and Jew now looks anxiously at Jew across the frontiers that divide them. Soviet Jewry directs its eyes questioningly towards the fate of Israel. Israeli Jews, British, American, Italian, French, South and North African Jews — all without exception crowd around those who have visited the Soviet Union, for information about how their fellow Jews are faring. These are simple facts which it is futile to deny.

In these two world sectors, moreover, social and ideological life are widely different. So also are the political policies pursued by their respective governments. The Jew, therefore, is nervously alert to the fact that he may very easily become a political football between contending sides, a bargaining point, an object of suspicion to both, and a scapegoat on whose back is laid the responsibility for each and every social ill. But let us be quite frank about this. The use of Jewry as a political football is by no means the monopoly of non-Jews. Communities in the capitalist world are certainly class-divided, and in general Jews, broadly speaking, adopt the outlook and political biases of the class to which they belong. There are definitely sections of British and American Jewry, for example, who consider it is just to use the position of Soviet Jewry, as these sections interpret that position, as a stick to beat the Soviet system generally. They must surely be sufficiently intelligent to realise that if their judgement of the Soviet authorities is accurate, they cannot expect to do anything but damage to the welfare of Soviet Jewry by following this procedure. Apparently this means little to them.

### **Effect of Cold War**

The damage that may be done in this way can easily be illustrated. Stalin had a theory to which he was tenaciously attached, that as the socialist state becomes ever more firmly established, the class enemy — those who plot and scheme in conjunction with external co-conspirators to undermine the New Society — entrenches himself deeper and deeper, becoming ever more desperate. (This is the kind of situation which, it was maintained, had developed in that strategically important area, Hungary in October 1956.) When World War II came to its nominal end, the victorious Soviet Union

lay torn, bleeding and devastated. She, above all, had suffered the damage and destruction of the cruellest of invasions, to an extent far beyond the experience and the imagination of any of her allies. At this stage, with the hard-won achievements of the revolution in ruins around her, she found herself face to face with an ally, the USA, the monopoly-holder of the atom bomb, who proceeded to exercise pressure to bend her to her will. Here, as Stalin saw it, was an imperialist power behaving precisely in Marxist text-book fashion. Almost the first move was to force the evacuation of Soviet troops from Persia in 1945. The efforts of Mosaddeq to nationalise the Persian oil fields in 1950 were frustrated by a foreign-inspired coup, and now these invaluable natural resources have passed more fully into the control of American and, to a lesser extent, British finance. This was in fact the Cold War already in operation, atom bomb politics directed towards financial imperialist interests, the first overt movement that pointed to the gathering storm in the Middle East. As was to be expected, in order that the realistic side of this might not be exposed to a naive American public, McCarthyism began to rear its head, and the mouths of American critics were padlocked.

What effect would all this be expected to have on the Soviet Union? Naturally, this way and that way heads were turned to detect the intrigues of the enemy as they might expose themselves within the country itself; and on Beria, the head of the secret police, fell responsibility for unmasking the class enemy who, to Stalin, was necessarily at work. Here I am concerned only with one small group which found itself suddenly caught up in the terror and suspicion that naturally emerged in this awful atmosphere. During the war, representatives of the Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, Pfeffer and Mikhoels, poet and actor respectively, had visited Britain and the USA, anxious to win help and support for the struggle against Nazi Germany. They proved, by evidence to their Jewish cultural blood-brothers in these countries, how completely different was the treatment of Soviet Jewry from the repressive attitude of the Czarist regimes. Yiddish press, Yiddish papers and Yiddish theatres were all flourishing. Yiddish culture was being nurtured and nourished in a way that had never previously occurred in the history of the Jewish people. Only a socialist state, it was clear, could understand the real significance and the emotional need of such cultural opportunities. They succeeded only too well in their mission, and Jews of all parties responded nobly, especially in the face of the murderous attacks on their fellow Jews in Germany and the occupied territories.

The war comes to its end, and the erstwhile allies are now split by the Cold War. Jews in the USA and in Britain, and indeed the Jewish press of these countries, like their non-Jewish colleagues, align themselves mainly by class. Under cover of the atom bomb the finger is pointed accusingly at the Soviet Union, so it appears to her. She is scheming to enslave other peoples, she is anti-Semitic, she threatens to invade Europe. These are the accusations, and who are the accusers? The people whom the poet Pfeffer and the actor Mikhoels have hailed as their blood-brothers. So let it be. To an unscrupulous conspirator, self-seeker and sycophant like Beria, here is all the evidence required to convince Stalin — now probably almost in his dotage — that at last the class enemy has been unmasked. Sweep aside those who have pressed and propaganded on behalf of this dangerous and alien culture. Liquidate the leaders of this obviously subversive movement, and shut down on all avenues that exist for its expression. In judging this, let us remember that we are dealing with a period in which countless men, women and children have been drafted about *en masse* from camp to camp over thousands of miles, or simply exterminated by invasion, so that the ruthless use of force for all manner of objectives is still part of the general atmosphere.

I do not assert for a moment that this is an exact description of the course of events. Who can tell, since we have little direct evidence on which to go? Silence on these questions still seems to be a matter of set policy. Nor could this be the only reason that led to the elimination of the foremost Jewish cultural workers in the Soviet Union, during the last few years of Stalin's life.

I have diverged into this aspect of our problem in some detail in the first place to illustrate the way in which the Jews can be used as a political football even by sections of their own people. Political bias is a very powerful force in the modern world. But I have another reason. Those of us who have tried to study the process of history objectively have recognised the indispensable role that Jewry played in pre-capitalist society. As soon as capitalism had successfully established itself, it had no specific need of Jews in any special role. The economic basis of Jewry as such no longer existed. In this special sense, therefore, it is capitalism that has posed the Jewish problem, but it has been unable to resolve it simply because it had been unable to absorb them, to make them disappear. It has scattered them, but

its own blind unorganised forces have resulted in a retention of much of Jewry's ancient heritage; the Jews have remained. Even the last great effort by Nazi capitalist Germany to wipe them out, once and for all, was doomed to failure simply because by that time capitalist society had spread them throughout the nations. Only a combined capitalist and socialist effort directed to total extermination could be successful, and this is clearly impossible.

It must be stated quite frankly that Marxists have looked with complete assurance to the socialist part of the world to resolve this question in that sector. I propose shortly to examine the manner in which I would have expected this to occur, but it has to be stated equally frankly that our expectations have so far suffered disappointment. What is significant is that precisely at this historic stage in the rise of socialism and in the struggle within capitalism this problem for Jews should have reached its climax in both camps.

## **Zionism: Political Theory Within Capitalism**

Zionism, the case presented by those who seek to find a solution to the Jewish problem on a territorial basis by establishing or re-establishing a home for a resurgent Jewry in Palestine, is, of course, a political theory, and like all political theories without exception, a child of the period in which it was born. Marxism, for example, which purports to give the scientific approach to the processes of history, could not have been fashioned prior to the nineteenth century, when scientific method established the correctness of its own mode of analysis. In as much as science itself, and the great advances to its credit, was clearly a child of capitalism, so also was Marxism, even although the latter predicted the death of its parent. Because of this prediction and the political practice that has flowed from it, Marxism must be seen as a *reaction* to capitalism. By comparison, political Zionism must in the first instance be seen therefore as a *reflection* of capitalism in the minds of those who were tortured by the sufferings of international Jewry; and these sufferings arose from a widespread malaise within the framework of capitalism itself. Between 1881 and 1925, it is estimated that nearly four million Jews emigrated from Eastern European countries to the West, and, in spite of that, the population of Jewry in Eastern Europe rose steadily. This was a period of overproduction in capitalist society, which, of course, since this leads to unemployment, implies also overproduction of labour. Crises of this nature always occur in a society when, by the very nature of its structure, it is unable to accommodate itself to a growth in the productive forces of that society. The process that was occurring during the period we have mentioned reached its climax in the great slump of the 1930s. It was, therefore, towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth that this widespread crisis began to show itself, as usual, in outbursts of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, and that political Zionism therefore seized the imagination of Dr Herzl and his fellow propagandists. It was, of course, presented within a framework of Jewish nationalism, emotionally heightened by the occurrence of pogroms. Zionism was, therefore, subjectively speaking, a demand for justice for Jewry, with which every decent person will wholeheartedly sympathise, but it did not envisage thereby any injustice to others. Objectively, however, it differed fundamentally from earlier nationalist movements in the West. When nationalism raised its head at the end of the feudal period, it was in effect an assertion on the part of a new rising class, the merchant class, for an expanded society, supported, of course, by the craftsmen. Very specifically it sought to burst the bonds that were restricting the old society. Zionism, emerging from within capitalism, did not profess to be anti-capitalist, although, of course, there were socialist groups among them, as there are in capitalist countries in general. It simply sought to rescue Jewry, suspended, as it were, between Heaven and Hell, from its precarious position in a crisis-ridden capitalist society, by a direct territorial solution within capitalism. In this sense, it was not a *reaction* to capitalism but the reflection of a human problem of Jews within capitalism. At the best, it could only be intended as a makeshift amelioration. The Jewish problem, however, and its solution, is not one merely of territory. The world eruption which has split society into two opposing camps has thrown up a small part of the Jewish people on a strip of land in the Middle East, the hottest region of the volcanic crater. Out of a world struggle, a tiny state has come into existence with a capitalist structure, and beset with all the problems of capitalist society. Here, surrounded by a hostile crowd of onlookers, amid jeers and counter-jeers, the inevitable football match proceeds. It is a continuance of the same game that has gone on for centuries ever since capitalism began to emerge out of feudalism. This time, however, there is a crucial difference. Israel is now a nation, showing all the features that Stalin demanded, born in the confusion of a self-destroying capitalism, and this nation is the political

football. Now in this new form, it is being tossed about between the contending imperialist and socialist sides, in the effort to win the approbation of the onlookers for one side or the other.

## **The Irrelevance of Zionism**

Whether or not one accepts the tenets of non-expansionist Zionism is now of no consequence. The Israeli state is there, and in so far as this was the consummation devoutly desired by Zionists they are entitled to claim that their main objective has been achieved. Whether it will now bring peace and security to a tortured people is a very different matter. This surely was the real objective they had in mind. In this situation the great question mark that faces every sympathetic Jewish socialist is simply stated — how can a secure and balanced Israeli economy possibly be built up in a region that is itself so uncertain and unstable, at a moment in history when the whole of the West is in travail? What vital economic role can Israel fill that could ensure her survival? Israel, like the Jewish problem, is indeed the child of a crisis-ridden capitalism.

Whatever be the past story of the Zionist movement and the willingness of its leadership to play its part in an imperialist set-up, if only in the process a home can be found for a nationalist section of Jewry in Palestine, the fact remains that the dynamic of history has itself swept into this area a variegated mass of Jews who have now constituted themselves very definitely into a nation. As we have indicated, this consists of Central European Jews who have escaped the fate that Hitler had in store for them, Jews of all ages who have fled from the aggressive nationalism of neighbouring Arab states, and young idealist Zionists who, trained and educated in the capitalist part of the world, have gone to Israel to help reconstitute a nation. Large numbers of these young men and women have flocked into the kibbutzim — agricultural colonies — there to attempt to wed modern industrial methods and machinery to an agriculture which, in the Middle East at any rate, lags notoriously behind the level of world science. In addition to this new population of Jews, there is also a considerable minority of Arabs who have remained in the land of their birth and of their forefathers, living under what is to them an alien government, and undoubtedly discriminated against economically. In the neighbouring Arab countries, living under conditions of abject poverty, are the remains of those Arabs — men, women and children — who fled from their homes in Israel on the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war. They have been left to rot.

## **The Refugee Problem**

They have rotted not simply as a consequence of the fact that the Israeli government has refused to give them back the land from which they fled in terror. They have rotted also because the kings, sheikhs, effendis in the neighbouring Arab countries have preferred to retain a rotting peasantry lying literally idle and unsettled at the door of Israel, on land crying out for cultivation, so that whatever troubles might otherwise arise between themselves and those they exploit to their own advantage, the Jew may be held responsible. Jews know this game of old. But they rot also for another and deeper reason which is rarely faced. The world struggle that came to a head in Europe at the time of the Second World War saw a terrible injustice laid on the shoulders of Jewry. In fleeing to Israel, and, in effect, displacing the greater number of the Arabs whose homeland it was, they threw part of this injustice from their own shoulders on to those of the unhappy Arabs. This was clearly one of the by-products of the struggle that took place in Central Europe, and, to that extent, justice demands that its resolution be found as part of the final war settlement. Those who maintain that it is the responsibility of Israeli Jewry simply to evacuate the land that they now occupy so that the displaced Arabs — or all that remain of them as a peasantry — may return to their old habitations, are blind to the meaning and to the sweep of a whole historic process. It has passed them by. They see only immediate causes. Today Israel is nation with a language and a literature of its own, native music and native arts. It is a capitalist society whose principal towns, including Jerusalem, are completely westernised. There are strong socialist forces at work within the country. Mapam, one of the political parties represented within the coalition government, is avowedly Marxist.

## **Economic and Financial Dependence**

To the extent roughly of about one-third, Israel is dependent on American capital investment, one-third on donations without strings from Jews throughout the capitalist sector of the world, and only to the remaining third self-supporting. Its economic position is precarious; its population more than

doubled since 1948. It has its class distinctions and its colour discrimination — between Jew and Jew — but it is undoubtedly the only country in the world in which a Jewish nation can truly be said to exist. Today it leans heavily on imported material capital from America and intellectual capital from Central Europe. Whether it will survive in these circumstances as an independent entity, or whether Jewry has walked from one trap in Central Europe into another in the Middle East, remains to be seen. This is the stark issue that faces Zionists.

### **An American Satellite?**

As if to make confusion doubly confounded, just at the moment when the two major powers are seeking to win over the Arab peoples each to its own way of thinking, the Ben Gurion government publicly announces that Israel, partially at any rate, espouses the Eisenhower Doctrine, and so takes sides in a world struggle that she is impotent to affect. It is true that, like Afghanistan, she omitted the 'world communism' formula. Had Israel wished deliberately to weaken Arab support for the USA, she could have ventured no better step, and no more propitious moment; nor could she have chosen a better method of arousing Soviet hostility. Moreover, when one looks at the record of Israeli voting at the United Nations, the extent to which Israel appears as a satellite of the USA is obvious, although she would claim that this occurred only after the Soviet Union had adopted a hostile attitude to her.

This then in microcosm is the Jewish problem today, as it is posed for Jews in the capitalist sector of the world, and here also is the same problem as it is posed for non-Jews, in this case in particular the Arabs.

### **Soviet—Jewish Problem**

As we have explained, however, the fact that Israel exists in a form so intimately dependent on American resources, in the region of maximum world tension, gives a peculiar slant to the Jewish problem in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It is of immense importance, therefore, in attempting to assess this whole issue, that an effort be made to see it as it presents itself to the Soviet authorities. Unfortunately, no official statement has been forthcoming from that source that could be quoted as final, but there are many pointers that enable some kind of coherent picture to be pieced together.

To the Soviet Union there are two questions closely linked. One deals with the position of their own Jews and what precisely is the status of such a people; the other deals with the Soviet Union's relationship to Israel as one of the nations in the Middle Eastern cauldron. Today Russian Jewry does not constitute a separate nation on any definition, Stalinist or otherwise. Nor are they even a national minority in the strict sense of the term. It would be difficult to argue, for example, that they are a people who regard Israel as their cultural homeland in the sense that Turks within the Soviet frontier, for instance, would visualise Turkey. Nor do they speak Hebrew as their natural tongue. Thus on this basis, according to normal criteria, they are not entitled to regular national minority rights. The logic of this would appear to imply that they are nothing other than *simple* Soviet citizens, entitled to full rights of citizenship without discrimination of any kind. But simplicity is the last attribute that could be accorded to Jewry. How, with their complex historical record, with their periods of nomadic and of settled economics throughout the ages, with here the aloofness of the onlooker and there the fierce enthusiasm of the revolutionary or the prophet — how could the world reflect itself into their inner consciousness except in a highly complex way? All this implies that the Jew, as with every person, but with him in a rather exaggerated form, cannot but retain a certain degree of separateness and aloofness, a certain lack of complete integration. The difference from the non-Jew in this respect lies in the fact that the Jew has not only a personal but a group history, which has not consolidated itself, except in Israel, into the economic, emotional and psychological form to be found in stabilised national entities.

All this, as we have tried to explain, is the modern relic of a pre-feudal nationalism sharpened in the case of Soviet Jewry by generations of life in the Pales of Settlement, Czarist governmental discrimination, and recurrent pogroms, almost into a separate nation. And this again has been further intensified by the most acute disillusionment and the destruction of their highest hopes, by the repressive policy pursued in the Soviet Union during the latter years of Stalin's life, towards the cultural life of Soviet Jewry and the physical elimination of many of their most creative cultural

leaders. It is possibly true that if the Jews of the Soviet Union were allowed freely to emigrate to Israel at the present moment, quite a proportion might avail themselves of the opportunity. One cannot assert this with sureness. What is certainly true is that when the Polish government removed such a ban in the case of its Jews, in order probably to cope with its own long-established problem of anti-Semitism among its own population, large masses of Jews did emigrate, and many Jews from the Soviet Union seized their right of travel into Poland in order to make their way to Israel. If it were a fact that once the ban on emigration were lifted, many Jews would seize the chance so offered, it would in effect afford evidence of the ease with which Jewish Soviet citizens, in the present atmosphere, could change their citizenship. Their ties to other Soviet citizens would be shown to be weaker than those of their non-Jewish neighbours. Whether Israel could absorb them is quite another matter. But it would do more. It would expose the failure of the Soviet socialist state to win the allegiance of this section of 'simple Soviet citizens'.

From the standpoint of the Soviet Union this reflects the Jewish problem. It has in its midst a less integrated people than the others; but this would be of no consequence at all except in certain very special circumstances. These arise when international tension is such as to demand an almost rigorous conformity — what is usually called loyalty — from the population as a whole, and when at the same time the cause of the tension touches on a matter that is deeply felt by this slightly alien people. Quakers and pacifists are in such a position during a war, but they do not have the emotional penchant for another nation that the Jews have. Most civilised countries, when they go to war — a contradiction in terms — make allowance for the feelings and beliefs of Quakers and pacifists. The practical problem that faces the Soviet government is what to do about its Jews, when, because of the necessities of its external policy, their external sympathies become of importance. All this is sharpened at the present moment by the undoubted fact that the autonomous republics in the Soviet Union have each separately developed a strong local sense of nationalism, so that wherever the Soviet Jew finds himself his slight degree of separateness is present. In these areas he is both a Jew *and* a Russian. He is certainly not an Uzbek or a Turkoman, for example. Let us examine the implications of this problem more closely.

The overriding issue for the Soviet Union at the present moment is that of coexistence, peace or war, the need in her judgement to halt the creeping military power of American imperialism in the Middle East, in the countries that lie near the Soviet border. The United States of America has placed atom bases in a wide circle enveloping the Soviet Union. It follows that every country — including Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania — which lies along or near the Soviet frontier — is, or was, until quite recently, a region of strategic importance. This is one of the important factors which must be borne in mind in appraising Soviet relations with these countries. Those who imagine that, in the present state of world tension, either the USA or the Soviet Union would allow its neighbouring countries to become mere pawns to be used by the other side in such a struggle are politically and militarily naive. The real charge against the Soviet Union in relation to Hungary is that it allowed the situation there to degenerate, under Communist rule, to a point where the people were willing to rise against them instead of accepting them as the defenders of their safety. The Soviet charge, which has never been rebutted, is in substance that American agents played no small part in this whole business; and this, the Soviet maintains, is precisely what American imperialism for its own purposes is seeking to achieve in the Middle East.

Many people dislike the use of the word imperialism because of its propagandist odour and because it seems to them to suggest that 'imperialists' exploit mercilessly, and have no sense of decency in their dealings with people occupying a country which is at an early stage of development but which yet possesses natural resources that are of financial value to the 'imperialists'. When I speak of American imperialism in the Middle East I mean simply that there exists in that area, in Arab countries and in Persia, and to a lesser extent in Israel and in Egypt, very valuable natural oil resources, and that American oil companies (and by no means only American) are seeking to develop concessions they have received from the governments of these areas to exploit these oil resources. But a modern state, such as Britain or the USA, is not merely an uninterested outsider that looks on smiling at American citizens who risk their money and their energies on such activities. It may itself be directly involved, as the British government is in the Iranian oil fields in that it holds shares in the company concerned and uses the profits for its own national purposes. It is not a charitable organisation, no more than any

company is, but operates to make a profit. If it makes a loss, it would soon hear of it from its taxpayers. But even when it is itself not directly involved in the company it is by no means uninterested. For one thing it benefits by tax from the profits of the company, and so in a sense uses that company as a vehicle for the same ends as before. But more than this, it may be called upon to protest against any injustice meted out to its citizens in such areas, engaged in these activities, by other interested parties there. It may have to defend them, it may finally be involved in armed conflict. A state which contemplates or even encourages this kind of venture has to give a certain degree of backing that may bring it into conflict with other states doing precisely the same thing for its citizens there. There are states and states. Some of these, like the USA, that are in the modern sense democratic, have, among those who guide national and international policy, individuals who in many ways represent special interests, say, special oil interests, or more generally interests in securing 'mineral rights' in other countries. Of course, in a certain democratically theoretical sense they represent the people who elected them, but they are naturally inclined to act also on behalf of those whose financial backing made their success at the election possible. We need not labour this point. In a 'free enterprise' society the outward forms of democracy are not necessarily incompatible with the use of elected representatives to further large-scale private interests. It is in this way that the state can stand behind imperialist activities in the sense in which we have defined it. The American state apparatus undoubtedly stands behind American oil interests in the Middle East. Moreover, where these oil-bearing countries have a landed aristocracy, kings, sheikhs and effendis who can be provided with handsome royalties from the oil drawn from these areas, the governing class can usually be relied on to work in close liaison with the state — in this case the American state — that stands behind the oil companies.

Whatever criticism may be levelled against the Soviet Union, no one will accuse it of being a 'free enterprise' society. It has no private oil companies operating in the Middle East, nor does the Soviet state act there in any such capacity. But these oil-bearing areas lie close to the Soviet frontier, in regions that have a certain strategic importance to the Soviet Union. From the American point of view Soviet influence is dangerous. They might put ideas into the minds of the natives which might endanger the interests of the oil companies. Moreover, if an international 'showdown' should ever occur, American bases there would be invaluable. They would not only constitute points of direct attack, but also serve to divert Soviet counter-attack from the United States itself. In Europe this is clear and well understood.

### **American Imperialism — Israel's Role?**

In order to call a halt to aggressive American imperialism in this latter area, which peoples, the Soviet asks, could be her friends and allies, and which her enemies? We have already pointed out the economic and financial dependence of Israel on American sources especially at the present difficult stage in her development, the record of Israel's voting with the USA on all vital matters before the United Nations, and her public espousal of at least part of the Eisenhower Doctrine. To the Soviet Union Israel therefore appears to behave objectively as if she were a pawn and a satellite of the USA. Most Israelis would, of course, reply that this is in fact a measure of her desperate need of financial and economic support in constructing and modernising her state, that there are no American troops on Israeli soil, no atom bases, that adherence to the Eisenhower Doctrine is purely nominal and only partial, and that literally they have nowhere else to turn. That is a recognition of Israel's place in the world of capitalism, an admission of the nature of its birth and parentage. Unfortunately, Israel is judged in such matters not by the protests of the most progressive sections of its public, but by the objective policy of its government, and the fact remains that rightly or wrongly, justly or unjustly, to the Soviet Union 'Israel is an imperialist base threatening progress and security in the Middle East', to quote from the report in *Pravda* of 3 January 1958 of the Afro-Asian Conference in Cairo with Soviet participation. Thus until Israel can take up a position of complete neutrality between the major sides in this world struggle, if that were possible, she must be treated as a potential enemy.

It is conceivable, of course, that many of these considerations may sink into secondary importance in the immediate future. The sudden spectacular launching of the sputniks has faced the world — and the USA in particular — with a new fact which must finally force a complete reorientation in the kind of political and military strategy that negotiated only from a super-abundance of strength. The sputniks

in the skies reflect a great deal more than the sunlight that falls on them. They reflect the scientific and technological upsurge of a new society, and all that this means now and in the near future. If the world is to remain divided into two hostile camps then the sputniks signify that no spot on the surface of the earth will be immune from complete destruction by either side in the event of the present insanity among governments — and the infantile weakness of their peoples — moving into race suicide. The sputniks symbolise the fact that the time has arrived for a qualitative change in the level of world thinking, and new guiding minds are required that can rise far above the level of the puny political manoeuvres that has passed for statesmanship in the past. Plotting and scheming on neighbouring frontiers are drastically reduced in strategic importance, even as the danger they may precipitate heightens. For the moment, however, we have to recognise that as far as the Soviet Union is concerned, Israel does not rank as one of the peoples in the Middle East which, in the event of a catastrophe, will remain either neutral or swing over to her side. This, according to that analysis, is possible only for the peoples of the Arab states, for they have no interest in the victory of American imperialism.

There is no contradiction, it must be recognised, between this attitude of the Soviet Union and that adopted by the latter when Gromyko made his speech at the session of the United Nations, that recognised Israel as an independent Middle Eastern state. At that stage the primary consideration for the Soviet Union, as it is today, was to remove from that dangerous area any form of imperialist pressure. The British Mandate was one such form and to the Soviet government the recognition of an independent state of Israel marked the end of the British Mandate. It was also a public admission, in so many words, that the civilised world owed an obligation to rectify an historic injustice that had been vented on Jewry. As I have pointed out, this obligation still lacks fulfilment in connection with the solution of the problem of the Arab refugees. Today, however, the Soviet Union would maintain that Israel has, in a sense, betrayed the trust in her by subsequently throwing in her lot with the new proponent of imperialism in the Middle East — the USA.

### **Effect on Soviet Jewry**

It is not difficult to see that all this places Soviet Jewry in a very vulnerable and contradictory position. In the present international situation, resistance to American imperialism, in those regions where it might be regarded as a threat to the Soviet Union and its security, is seen as essential.

How dependable, the Soviet authorities are bound to ask, can their Jewish population be in an emergency if they still possess, as they undoubtedly do, this emotional affiliation to the people of Israel, whose government, to all outward appearances, is pursuing a policy inimical to the Soviet? What attitude can the USSR be expected to take? We have to remember, of course, that however important the Jews as a people are felt to be to themselves, the Soviet government cannot be expected to share these same values. A sense of community among a people is, at a higher level of organisation, something akin to a subjective feeling as experienced by an individual. Since the Soviet government cannot share this feeling, it can at best only take it into account as an objective factor in an objective situation. Israel is not a large state. Its population is some two million in an area in which forty million Arabs reside. To the Soviet Union, therefore, it is not a great power but a reflection of a great power. If the USSR merely brushes Israel and its own Jews aside, sharply and brusquely, demanding that the latter toe the line with other Soviet citizens, that is to be expected. If it does other than this, there must be some special significance in the action.

For the Soviet government, of course, this kind of problem is not new. During the late war, national minorities within her frontiers that regarded themselves as fragments of a nation whose centre was outside the Soviet Union (Turks, Germans, Armenians, etc) were naturally suspect, and were dealt with in some special — usually drastic — way. But the Soviet Jews are not a national minority, and have no specific rights as such. They are simply Soviet citizens who have a special interest in and a special feeling for Israeli Jews, and this happens to be of political importance to the authorities at this moment.

### **Right of Emigration?**

There is another factor, an external one, that complicates the position. Jews everywhere, including Israelis, have reacted sharply to the Soviet attitude, and assert that Soviet Jews have the ‘right’ to

emigrate to Israel if they wish, without let or hindrance. To the Soviet this, of course, underlines the very aspect of the problem that worries them, this foreign assertion of the separateness of a section of *their* population. 'Rights' are not easy matters to assess, and certainly are not established merely by vehement assertions from Jews in the capitalist part of the world, especially if these Jews are suspected by the Soviet authorities of being politically antagonistic to them. All we can say at the moment is that the demand is an expression of a strong feeling, and is therefore to that extent a fact to be reckoned with.

One of the commonest forms of self-delusion is that one is politically unbiased. Yet it is obvious that since every action is one of a chain with consequences spreading out in all directions in society, every action has political significance, whether one is conscious of it or not. There are Jewish organisations in particular that assert their independence from all political matters, but nevertheless they press the Soviet authorities to concede this or that 'right' to their Jewish citizens — usually on general humanistic grounds. The granting of this 'right', as we have explained, may have very significant political results. It follows that when such a self-designated non-political body makes a proposal of this nature, it is in fact intervening on an issue that to the Soviet authorities is very sharply political. An internationally distributed people like the Jews are not insulated from politics because they are internationally distributed, but in fact touch politics everywhere all the time.

On this particular matter of Jewish emigration, Poland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia are rather differently situated from the Soviet Union. They have little direct contact with the Arab world, which, as we shall see, affects the issue, and they with their smaller populations are very concerned that relics of the past like anti-Semitism should disappear from their midst. If, therefore, their Jews wish to leave no obstacle is placed in their way. They are free to do so.

## Arab Liberation Movement

It would be a complete stupidity to imagine that the Soviet Union refuses this concession to Jewish international feeling simply out of viciousness or ill-will. No responsible government acts on such a basis. The explanation must be sought in what the Soviet authorities regard as the political necessities of the situation. These lie in the menace of American and indeed British and French imperialism in the Middle East, and in the Soviet belief that the only hope for allies in this struggle rests in Syria, Egypt, Jordan, etc, all of whom without exception have begun to develop strong national movements. These, it is important to realise, in one way or another, have emerged out of the struggle against imperialism. For obvious historical and political reasons this movement at present has a strong anti-Israeli flavour. The Arab peasants who fled before the Israeli army into the neighbouring Arab countries, on the assurance that almost immediately victorious Arab armies would sweep the Israelis into the sea, naturally regard the Israeli state as having expropriated them — expropriated by what is to them clearly a Western people. As they see it, this act of piracy bears the authentic stamp of imperialism, and the external political alignment of the Israeli government does nothing to ameliorate this impression. By what process of logic, therefore, could the Soviet Union justify in the eyes of the Arab populations of the Middle East, the opening of its gates to its Jewish population so that they might flood into Israel? In what way could this help to mobilise Arab opposition to imperialism in that area? Thus the demand for the unrestricted and unconditional right of Soviet Jews to emigrate from the Soviet Union to Israel is seen — whatever its moral justification — to be the height of political unreality. If the Soviet Union were to change its policy on this matter, it could only mean that it had changed its attitude to the relation of the Arab world to the inroads of American imperialism, or to the part which Israel could then play in that struggle.

Again it would be a mistake to suppose that support for the Arab liberation movement by the Soviet Union, to the extent of arming Egypt in advance of a possible attack on that country, implies that the Soviet Union believes that the movement is led and wholeheartedly supported by an exploited class. Its leaders are not themselves from the peasant class. They have other fish to fry, and a time must be expected when these fish become more important for them than social liberation for a downtrodden peasantry. The bourgeoisie, the intellectuals and the merchant class, who are much closer to the leadership than the peasants, require for their survival the *weakening* of foreign imperialism in that area and not necessarily its elimination. Both Arab and Israeli workers and peasants, however, require its *complete elimination*. In the long run the Soviet Union also requires complete elimination, but as a

first step in the present difficult state of world tension, it would clearly be happy to witness some degree of weakening.

This must not be taken to imply that Nasser and those who stand with him have not played a special — if historically orthodox — progressive role in the Middle East. Neguib and Nasser were the leading figures in the struggle that wiped out the power of Farouk and his reactionary aristocratic entourage. An historic blow has been struck at the whole of this setup that tends to dominate the Middle East and to play into the hands of foreign imperialists. A measure of educational opportunity and a certain degree of press freedom has been accorded to the Egyptian people. All this is definitely progressive. More than this, Nasser is clearly attempting to follow a neutralist policy in the Middle East, and by entering into trade arrangements with Socialist countries he is definitely encouraging the growth of the merchant class, and presently, through them, the growth of industry in a country that hitherto has hardly trodden this path at all.

### **Marxist Ethical Problem**

From the Marxist point of view there is, however, a debit side to the balance sheet. If Nasser is to be supported for the part he plays in obstructing the advance of imperialism in the Middle East, he is also *ipso facto* being supported in the means he adopts to maintain himself in power. Means and ends are elements of the same process and are inseparable. To retain the support of the landlords and bourgeoisie, 900,000 poverty-stricken peasants have been kept landless for years in agriculturally undeveloped Arab countries neighbouring on Israel. Had the Arab liberation movement and the power of Nasser himself been based on the peasant class and their struggle for emancipation, this would have been quite impossible. After all, why should Arab landlords bother their heads about miserable peasants when they can wax fat on the flow of oil royalties? To make this festering sore bearable to its victims, the leaders of the Arab liberation movement, therefore, find it useful to maintain, and to sharpen, anti-Israeli feeling. Thus the Israeli working class who have also fled to Israel, almost entirely in the effort to secure a safe resting place from German imperialist oppression, are sharply split from the Arab peasants and workers. It follows that the cost of holding the support of Nasser and his colleagues at the present stage of the anti-imperialist struggle in the form in which it manifests itself in the Middle East, is to repudiate working-class unity between Arabs and Jews. This denial of a basic Marxist principle is not resolved merely by remaining silent on the subject. Silence deceives none of the parties to this matter, but it certainly has the effect of blunting the ethical edge of those who maintain that silence, and seek to justify it.

For a Marxist this is a heavy cost, and the whole situation raises a serious problem in Marxist ethics. When and to what extent is it justifiable to weaken working-class unity for the sake of winning temporary allies in the anti-imperialist struggle? In this there are other considerations than mere tactics, for certain consequences must flow from it. For example, once the Soviet Union accepts such allies, as already explained, it cannot easily agree to allow Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel without antagonising the latter's Arab neighbours. Thus the Soviet Union is drawn into operating a policy which disturbs the feelings of its own Jewish citizens, and so sharpens what we have called the 'Jewish Problem' in that country. In this way, the Jewish issue is linked up with what is to the Soviet authorities a matter of first importance — the anti-imperialist struggle in the Middle East.

### **Israel's Internal Arab Problem**

All this would look very different if the Israeli government could and did pursue a policy of non-entanglement, and if its own internal policy towards its Arab population were different from what it is. For reasons of security the Arabs in frontier regions are, in effect, confined to ghettos. To move out temporarily they require a military pass. The level of life in the Arab villages is clearly lower than that of the Jewish Israelis, and there are few indications of enlightened steps to remedy this. There are wage discriminations against Arabs; and the Histadruth, the united body of trade unions, does not admit an individual Arab to membership as it does individual Jews except through membership of an affiliated trade union. The Arab schools are notoriously undersupplied with school books and few, if any, Arab books are published. These things cry out for justice; and Jews, who more than any other people can be expected from their own experience to appreciate these matters, ought not to tolerate such a state of affairs. Contrast this attitude of Israeli Jewry with that of Russian Jewry during the

revolution, to which we have already referred. It is clearly essential to develop the cultural side of the Israeli Arab population to the maximum possible extent so that it may stand out in the Middle East as evidence of what Arabs can achieve when, even under an alien government, they are given the greatest opportunity for fulfilment. It is good to see that Mapam stands precisely for such a policy.

## Soviet-Jewish Problem

It is against this whole background that we have to try to understand the Soviet approach to its Jewish problem. That problem is not new; as we have seen it was inherited in an acute form from Czarism, but it has taken on a special aspect since the revolution, and again since Stalin's death. Naturally Stalin's analysis of what constituted a nation was, for him, the starting point for its solution. Ignoring the historical factors to which I have referred, the obvious step was to transform the 'almost-National Jewish Minority' into a properly-constituted nation, by offering it a geographical location; and the place selected was Birobidjan. This was, like Zionism, an attempt to find a territorial solution, but this time not in a capitalist but in a socialist environment. It was, nevertheless, unrealistic and unhistorical. In the main the Jews of the Soviet Union were at that time town-bred, and only in certain localities did they have any direct roots in the soil. Had the Jews of the Soviet Union been taken by force *en bloc* and sent to Birobidjan, possibly in a generation they would have adapted themselves to the new situation. Such a forced move would, however, have had a tremendous repercussion outside the country. In a rapidly expanding economy like the Soviet Union it was absurd to imagine that a people wedded to the cities would voluntarily make this move. Since it was possible for them to continue to live and thrive in the large towns and still remain Jews, naturally they chose to do so. The experiment was therefore foredoomed. Meanwhile their Yiddish, their literature and their religious customs persisted.

It was apparently at this stage that the Soviet authorities made another undialectical mistake. If the Jews are not to be a nation, centred in some special area, then they must become ordinary simple Soviet citizens. If they cannot be enticed to become the former then they must be canalised into complete identification with their Soviet neighbours. Such an *either—or* attitude, if followed through with ruthless logic, necessarily meant that all avenues of Jewish cultural expression must be shut down, and the mouths of those who sought to develop it, or spoke on its behalf, must be closed. The *either—or* attitude was itself of course un-Marxist. Moreover, it showed a lack of understanding of the nature and strength — the quality and quantity — of the cultural background of Jewry, and its present-day attachment to old national feelings. It was evidence of a weakness in Marxist experience. Suppose we ask the simple question: how long does it take for a society which has socialised its economic structure, to create a socialist system of values among its population? We are asking a question about the rate at which people change as a result of a change in their material circumstances, the security of their jobs, the return for their labour, and in how their work is organised and for whom. This is a basic question of a numerical nature in Marxist science. We can see at once that we have no experience on which to rely to answer this, except that of the Soviet Union itself; and its experience has naturally been very exceptional indeed because it was the first country to try to make this change, and it has done so in a persistently hostile environment. More than this, it had to begin with an almost completely illiterate population. The exposures of the Twentieth Congress have shown clearly that the time required is much longer, especially in a country which inherited the conspiratorial atmosphere of the Czars, than many had expected. Had this been understood, the Soviet authorities might have been more realistic about their Jews. They would have known that a long persistent tradition of separateness and a haunting memory of anti-Semitism and pogroms are not wiped out in a day. They would have realised that force to the extent of actual physical elimination of Jewish cultural leaders, on whatever pretext, would certainly have the effect, as it undoubtedly did, of sharpening separateness, reviving a decaying national feeling, and focussing interest once more on Jewish cultural questions, especially among a people who traditionally have valued matters of the mind. I found in the Soviet Union that young Jews who had never learnt to speak Yiddish in their childhood were now at home with that tongue simply because the Jewish community, during the last few years of Stalin's life, had consolidated itself for mutual protection and strength. One would have imagined that the authorities would have grasped the elementary human fact that merely closing down the Yiddish press and refusing to print Yiddish books would be resented even by those unable to read

them. Any young person worth his salt would rise in anger against it. It would be resented by Jews everywhere, and so it served merely to arouse anti-Soviet feeling.

All this betrayed a lack of socialist understanding and experience — if it did not imply something a great deal worse — but it also exposed a lack of human imagination. Moreover, it betrayed a curious belief in the efficacy of force as a means of carrying mental and emotional conviction. This is so primitive as to be almost incredible among a group of Marxists who were otherwise of such high intellectual quality, and can be explained only as an inheritance from Czarist society. But the main dialectical blunder lay in the false *either—or* attitude; *either* Jews are a national entity *or* they are plain Soviet citizens. In fact, the Jews nowhere outside Israel are a national entity, and for reasons which I have tried to make clear they are nowhere simply normal citizens. The acceptance by the Soviet authorities of these two exclusive categories has made it impossible for them to handle this issue rationally. They find themselves involved in a contradiction. For some purposes, with passports and visas for example, a Jew is regarded as a member of a national minority, and has to state his Jewish nationality in this sense on his application form. For other purposes, cultural for example, he is regarded as of no national status particularly. To me all this is a denial of elementary Marxism.

Since Stalin's death a change has come in practical policy on this matter, although it still appears to be based on the same erroneous assumptions. Instead of trying to force Jews into a strict non-Jewish category by physical elimination of their cultural leaders, Jews are being encouraged to merge themselves completely by offering them almost but not quite every facility for integration, except in the political field, while at the same time no assistance is provided to express and encourage their own specific literary, artistic and dramatic forms. The expectation is presumably that on this basis the Jew, as such, will vanish. Once again, it must be said that there is no socialist experience that would enable such a forecast to be made with assurance, especially in a world in which the acute problem of Israel, and the fact of Israel, stand out sharply and affect the imagination of the Soviet Jew. It is this fact, and all that it implies, that is strangely missing from these policies. It is strange because, being a fact, one would expect that a Marxist policy would take it fully into account.

## Jews Disappear From Politics

Yet it is not really missing. In many indirect ways one can recognise something at work in regard to Jewry that seems to suggest a realisation of this matter. If it is not conscious and directed policy, it reflects a rather strange unconscious process! It is a commonplace that a considerable number of the prominent early leaders of the revolution were Jews. Today there is not a single Jew on the Central Committee, and indeed *no Jew in any high political position*. Mme Furtseva, in an interview last year, made the astonishing statement that in some departments there had been too many Jews, in proportion to their numbers in the general population. There are, it is true, about ten times the number of Jews in the scientific and technological field than would be warranted on proportionate population alone. It may be that there are too many mathematicians also among Jews in proportion to the population, and this may account for the rumours that are prevalent that there is a *numerus clausus* in operation for entry into the university! This — and a great deal more that could be mentioned — looks like anti-Jewish discrimination. It is difficult to say with any assurance; but one thing is certain — this is by no means the classical form of anti-Semitism. There is no agitation in the press or in public utterances, and any accusation of anti-Semitism would be vehemently denied. It is officially illegal. On the other hand, there is equally no possibility of an opportunity in the press to lay one's finger publicly on this apparent process. I know of only one possible theory that might explain this peculiar happening, and it is consistent with what I have described above as a false analysis by Soviet authorities of the Jewish problem, but it does not pretend to deal with the disappearance from the political scene of the early revolutionaries. That, I think, is a story by itself.

Recently a kite was flown in the Soviet Union on which was inscribed the hateful word 'Cosmopolitanism', the implication being that to be infected with this disease was to be an outcast indeed. A cosmopolitan socialist presumably was one who did not recognise the distinction between the kind of socialist culture that emerges in one national grouping from that which emerges in another. To him socialism is simply one thing everywhere. It is not that all men are brothers; they are twins. Thus a cosmopolitan has no local loyalty, he is so universal and generalised. It is obvious, of course, that this matter can only begin to have significance in a socialist society when it has reached the stage

where autonomous national republics are beginning to assert themselves. It reflects a certain kind of local independence along with mutual socialist interdependence.

Where then do Soviet Jews stand in this matter of cosmopolitanism? There is no Jewish Socialist Republic in the Soviet Union, and Jews are not recognised as a national minority. They are to be found everywhere. Now we have already examined in some detail the particular quality that links Jew to Jew, and it is something that transcends regional and indeed national boundaries. This aspect of their values, therefore, appears to smell of this dreaded disease, cosmopolitanism, although it has, in fact, little in common with it. Indeed if Scotland, for example, were a socialist country, and if all Jews were socialist, a Scots Jew would be in the enviable position of reacting to the socialist culture of the Scots, and entering, at the same time, emotionally into the peculiar flavour of socialist Jewish culture. It was Stalin, I think, who said quite correctly that a person can become expert and creative in more than one field. So a Jew can be very strongly moved both by Scots and by Jewish music — as I am myself. To suppose that these are mutually exclusive is crassly unimaginative.

I suspect that it is a lack of understanding of this which is responsible for the publicly unexpressed suspicion that Jews are more prone to the sinister disease of cosmopolitanism than other members of the Soviet community. This would clearly imply that their political judgement is much more likely to be at fault than in the case of other Soviet citizens, who would not have this peculiar affinity Jews possess among themselves. What has actually happened in the Soviet Union, namely, the gradual elimination of Jews from positions of political responsibility, would then be expected as a matter of course. During my visit last year I did not find that on the technical and technological side any such process was at work. On the contrary, if anything, Jews were in positions of quite considerable responsibility. It looks, therefore, as if it is essentially on this question of political reliability that the matter turns. But inevitably a policy of this nature must spread to other fields.

### **What Socialists Expect of a Socialist State**

What then is the policy one might expect from a Marxist socialist state on this matter of the Jews? There is an underlying principle of Marxist theory and practice which points its direction. This principle asserts the unity of the particular and the general, and among its many aspects the one that is relevant here asserts in the first instance that, while every entity in the universe is essentially unique, in certain respects it falls into one or more general categories. Thus a widely-distributed social group such as the Jews, even if they are linked together only loosely in the way we have described, constitutes something unique. Indeed this is the first justification for describing them by a single word — Jew. The quality of this uniqueness manifests itself when we begin to examine what it is that has been created by these people during their chequered career — their literature, their art and their contribution to their own specific outlook on life; not only this, but because they have been distributed so long among other peoples, a variegated quality in their own social and cultural structure has been evolved. Furthermore, they have lived among other peoples and merged with them economically, socially, intellectually and culturally, and so they have made a special contribution to the general advance of mankind. One need not be accused of boastfulness if one asserts that this contribution must rank high in the judgement of history, when seen in relation to the relative smallness of the group in question. To mention only outstanding names, one does not find men of the stature of Marx and Einstein among many other peoples of this size. Jesus also might justly be included. Was he not a courageous Jewish social reformer speaking out for the underpaid and downtrodden, who drove the moneylenders from the Temple? It was the later Church, representing power and privilege, that offered the poor a reward in Heaven. Whatever the reason, perhaps it arises from some genetic factor intensified by their social habit of intra-marriage, it seems to be the case that the Jews are a highly endowed people. This then is the unique group which the socialist Soviet Union finds in its midst, and the Soviet leadership realises very well the part that group has played in the struggle to establish socialism, and how it has come to play that part.

These people are a sector of the general community of Soviet citizens, a unique sector. In a different sense they are as unique as the Uzbeks. The latter, however, belong to a normal national group in the Soviet Union. They are bound together geographically, linguistically, economically, religiously, culturally. They are Moslems. It was therefore possible to subsume them into a single socialist Uzbek republic, and the effect on a people whose womenfolk less than a quarter of a century ago universally

wore the veil, is little short of miraculous. In Tashkent, the capital of that republic, I found that a very considerable proportion of the university staff consisted of precisely such emancipated women.

The Jewish people in the Soviet Union are by no means a normal national group in this sense. Nevertheless, the fact that they are not a single geographical or economic unit does not, as we have stressed, imply the complete absence of some degree of cultural and even linguistic unity. Only a mechanically-minded Marxist, a contradiction in terms, would deny this. Why then cannot there be at least an academic institute at which all matters Jewish, including history, literature, language and poetry, and not merely theology, are the subject of study and research? There seems to be an impression prevalent in the Soviet Union in official circles that if a visitor expresses a desire to meet Jews, as I personally did, that one wishes to meet religious Jews, as if this were the sole criterion of a Jew. As I have explained, the authorities for their own purposes do not themselves abide by this criterion. For exactly the same reasons one would expect to find schools for Jewish children, in areas where there are a sufficiency of them, if their parents wished their children to be taught in such institutions. In fact, the problems of Soviet Jewry are unique and specific, and cover a much wider field than that of religion. They are primarily of a cultural nature, and a rationally organised society would meet them through the establishment of a special state department. A conscious Marxist policy would recognise this unique kind of situation, just as a good teacher takes special cognisance of a child with a background that differs much from others in some respect, or that shows some special abilities. Thus one would expect that a socialist government, alive to such matters, would set itself out deliberately to discover ways of enhancing the particular qualities inherent in these people, and fostering their cultural expression in art, in literature, in music, in drama, and in ethical values. Such a policy would be of the essence of socialism.

### **What the Soviet Union Would Gain**

To the Soviet Union in its present position of strength, the cost of deliberately encouraging a Yiddish university, Yiddish publishing houses, a Yiddish press, Yiddish literature, theatre and drama is trivial. The return in human terms can be immense. While it would tend to maintain the differentiation of Jews from others in a positive cultural sense, the very fact of such deliberate encouragement would inevitably win from Jewry the most loyal allegiance and universal acclaim. By underwriting the differences that exist between Jewish and non-Jewish Soviet citizens and facing them frankly and publicly in a Marxist way, the morale of Jewry would be strengthened, and the wide range of cultural unity held in common with the rest of Soviet society would thereby also be deepened. As we have tried to make clear, there is basically no clash whatsoever in this. Indeed they reinforce each other.

But it would achieve a great deal more than this. If the Soviet Union is faced with a serious and dangerous problem in the Middle East, as it undoubtedly is, and if the present policy of the Israeli government sharpens these difficulties, the obvious step is to win the sympathy and understanding of the world Jewish population — including Soviet Jewry. This can best be achieved by deliberately nourishing those features of Jewish life, which, for long-established historical reasons, lie deeply embedded in Jewish consciousness. These are not formal religious issues, but the kind of aesthetic matters that were pinpointed to good purpose during the war by representatives of the Jewish Soviet Anti-Fascist Committee. A world Jewry, emotionally drawn to the Soviet Union in this way, could exert considerable influence on Israel and its policy, in spite of the almost trapped position in which that country finds itself. If 'neutralism' between the two power blocs, for example, is a possible policy for Israel — and it could if it cared ring out a call to the nations in this respect — then this mode of approach by the Soviet Union could be a vital encouragement towards its achievement. It would not be the first time in history that Israel would have spoken to the nations. There can be no question but that a continuance of the present mood by Soviet authorities to its Jews, which apparently quietly seeks to absorb them out of existence while it clearly elbows them completely out of the political arena, after what had happened prior to Stalin's death, merely has the effect of alienating a potentially valuable international ally. It provides precisely the kind of background that could be used should an aggressive nationalist government in Israel seek to justify a transition towards Jewish fascism in the Middle East. This could be indeed the danger there. Among well-wishers in the capitalist sector of the world, the Soviet Union is a by-word for its lack of understanding of the mood and psychology of ordinary people in that sector. It does not grasp what it still has to live down in connection with the

revelations of the Twentieth Congress; and therefore it does not understand the interpretations that will be put on its actions, and on the fact that such actions are usually not given an explanation that carries conviction, or indeed not even offered any explanation at all. It must surely know that man cannot live by faith alone, and that since the Soviet Union is regarded by many as a totally new venture in history, every act of that drama has to be grasped by the world audience. A play cannot be carried on behind the scenes. Take, for example, the problems with which we are here concerned. After what has happened to Eastern European and to German Jewry under the Nazis, the present leadership of the Soviet Union cannot surely imagine that its Jewish population of several millions of sophisticated and intelligent people will absent-mindedly forget that people like Markish and Pfeffer and other such writers and poets were done to death in Soviet prisons. What kind of people do they think we are? Many of the present leaders may have plausible excuses for having kept silent while these and other crimes — inhuman if not illegal — were being perpetrated, and no doubt that has left its mark on them, for good or ill; but can they really imagine that no mark has been left on Jewry? It is significant indeed that they quashed the fake trial of the doctors, mostly Jewish, for their alleged poisoning plot, immediately on Stalin's death, but there is no evidence in their history for believing that they would have succeeded in doing so had Stalin not died.

To brush all this aside as having arisen out of the Cult of the Individual is to make a cult of the Cult of the Individual. It is to pretend that Marxists outside the Soviet Union are not only naive but unintelligent. Such a cult does not arise in a social vacuum. We who live in the capitalist sector of the world have had much experience of this kind of cult, and we understand its role. But we also understand that an 'Individual Interpretation of History', while it has a place, cannot be accorded a position of major importance in any understanding of historical process other than in very exceptional circumstances. What then were they here? The simple question that still remains unanswered from the Soviet end is how this cult could arise and attain the level it did in a society which many of us, who saw it with our own eyes, were induced to believe, obviously quite falsely, was not merely socialist but on the high road to communism. What Khrushchev publicly admitted at the Twentieth Congress was in many respects more akin to barbarism than to socialism, as many of us have conceived it.

All this has not merely to be lived down, but its detailed origin, persistence and development has to be explained. But an explanation of its origin will not explain it away; nevertheless an open well-founded analysis will at least prepare the minds and the feelings of socialist well-wishers for reasonable interpretations of further political actions, nationally and internationally. Today the peace of the whole world trembles in the balance. From the military standpoint at least, the new scientific discoveries in the sub-atomic world of physics and their reflection in the field of military strategy have to a large extent destroyed the military significance of frontiers. This is bound to have repercussions in the political sphere in relation to the political sovereignty of states, which in the past have been, nominally at least, sacrosanct. And all this becomes infinitely more complex if, just at the period of scientific history when this revolutionary advance occurs, the world splits itself into two hostile camps — socialist and capitalist. Such a dramatic combination of events in the history of man calls for a corresponding high level of historical judgement and human understanding among all those who are called upon to make decisions of fateful importance. Those of us who are first and foremost on the side of humanity, rather than that of restricted group interests that would thoughtlessly risk the future of the world in seeking to achieve their ends, must be presented with a detailed and honestly cogent case. We who live in the capitalist sector of the world do understand something about this sector, the forces that appear to direct its course, and the values that have been engendered among us. It is the other half that must now be understood — and it cannot now be taken on faith. The Cult of the Individual, for example, could have developed only in a society in which the fire that was to forge socialism — the means towards that end — had become more important than the end itself. One does not become a socialist except for the most compelling of humanistic feelings, and it is these which drive one to examine the problem objectively and intellectually. This examination has to be applied as ruthlessly to the socialist as to the capitalist sector of the world as they are. When, in these circumstances, in the socialist sector, *means* in their institutional form become *ends*, humaneness falls into a secondary position, even becomes an obstacle to the continuation of these institutions, and the door is thrown wide open to inhumanity.

Is this what had happened in the Soviet Union during the latter part of Stalin's life? Had the party and its officials become the *end*, rather than the *means* for which it was instituted? Who can tell until the principle of self-criticism, so essential for a would-be socialist society, is emancipated from the level of mere soul-searching of the individual, to that of public analysis and public criticism of social means and social ends. It is only against such a background of public explanation that conviction can be carried on what appear to be much less important matters.

All this illustrates itself in relation to the topic with which we are here directly concerned. To offer as an excuse for its closure of a Yiddish printing press and for its lack of encouragement of a Yiddish paper or of a Yiddish theatre (when even New York alone has several daily papers of this nature), that these ventures were not being adequately supported by the Jews themselves, is suspicious. It is the kind of answer one might expect from a capitalist-business government when approached to support the arts; it is not its prime motive to seek to evoke the fullest and deepest qualities of a people. Under capitalism one expects to see a standardised mode of commodity-production for profit, reflecting itself in the educational system on which it depends for its success. In that society, labour, the energy output of human beings in quality and in quantity, is bought and sold on the market like a commodity. Cultural values, nevertheless, do enter into social and human relations in spite of this. The Soviet Union, not based on a commodity view of human beings, legitimately boasts of the fact that its arts are very liberally supported by grants-in-aid, and its artists, writers, teachers, scientists and cultural workers are correspondingly highly paid. What then are we to make of the excuse that has been offered for its lack of encouragement of Jewish art forms? Why is a Yiddish theatre expected to be self-supporting? Can the Soviet Union not afford to publish Yiddish poetry in the original language? The suggestion is ridiculous, and there is no escape from the conclusion that it is of set and deliberate policy. I have tried to indicate what would appear to be that policy, but since the Soviet Union does not deign to explain itself — and yet expects the outside world and other governments to accept its *bona fides* on much more vital matters — it must not complain if a sinister interpretation is placed on its actions. The revelations of the Twentieth Congress and the handling of the Jewish Problem generally does not make this impossible. To me at any rate, Marxism implies that human beings and groups of human beings have a unique and intrinsic value to themselves that has to be nurtured, enhanced and cherished. The question that presses itself to the front is whether the Soviet Union in this respect is failing to respond to one of the acid tests of socialism. Are Jews once again, as under Czarism, being reduced to the level of second-class citizens? If so, is this emerging out of a false analysis of the problems of this people? And what indeed is a second-class socialist citizen? If such a status for Jews is unquestioningly accepted by non-Jews, does this not automatically reduce the latter to second-class level there? The answers to these questions will later be found inscribed in the annals of Jewry where so much of world history has left its imprint.