

Stephen H. Norwood



"OUR SONS  
DIDNT DIE  
TO REBUILD  
NAZI  
INDUSTRIES"

*Gold Star Parents*

HOW MUCH  
FOR  
ILSE KOCH'S  
LAMP SHADES  
?

# ANTISEMITISM AND THE AMERICAN FAR LEFT

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## Antisemitism and the American Far Left

Stephen H. Norwood has written the first systematic study of the American far left's role in both propagating and combating antisemitism. This book covers Communists from 1920 onward, Trotskyists, the New Left and its black nationalist allies, and the contemporary remnants of the New Left. Professor Norwood analyzes the deficiencies of the American far left's explanations of Nazism and the Holocaust. He explores far left approaches to militant Islam, from condemnation of its fierce antisemitism in the 1930s to recent apologies for jihad. Norwood discusses the far left's use of long-standing theological and economic antisemitic stereotypes that the far right also embraced. The study analyzes the far left's antipathy to Jewish culture, as well as its occasional efforts to promote it. He considers how early Marxist and Bolshevik paradigms continued to shape American far left views of Jewish identity, Zionism, Israel, and antisemitism.

Stephen H. Norwood (PhD, Columbia University) is Professor of History and Judaic Studies at the University of Oklahoma. He is the author of five books on American history, including *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower* (Cambridge 2009), which was a Finalist for the National Jewish Book Award for Holocaust Studies. He coedited the *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History* (2008, with Eunice G. Pollack), which won Booklist's Editor's Choice Award.





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*To Eunice G. Pollack*



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## Promoting a Socialism of Fools

### *The New Left's Debt to the Old Left*

#### USING ANTISEMITIC STEREOTYPES TO DEMONIZE ISRAEL, 1967–1973

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the American far left repeatedly denounced Israel as a criminal regime resembling Nazi Germany and enthusiastically endorsed the Arab guerilla movement's terrorist campaign to eradicate the Jewish state. This was a period, bounded by two wars that threatened Israel with destruction, in which the far left devoted particular attention to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Leading far left publications joined the Arab guerillas in charging that Israel was aggressively racist and expansionist.

To support these claims, the far left often invoked long-standing antisemitic stereotypes, both economic and theological. It attributed to Jews enormous financial power and an arrogance and sense of superiority that drove them to exploit and dominate other peoples. In a three-part series published in 1969 on what it called the "History of Middle East Liberation Struggle," *New Left Notes*, the newspaper of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), declared that the Jews' chosen people concept gives Israel "the right to expand and expand." Like Nazi Germany, the Jewish state would "not contain itself within any set borders." It explained that the "architects of Zionism were mainly bourgeois Jewish intellectuals" and that the movement's early sponsors were "leaders in ... world imperialism" like wealthy Jewish banker Edmond de Rothschild, who wanted to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine to promote "his own financial interests."<sup>1</sup>

The Black Panther Party, which identified as Marxist-Leninist, made similar charges rooted in a tradition of economic antisemitism dating to medieval Europe. For the Black Panthers the core of the Middle East conflict was a war between heroic Palestinian guerillas and "Israeli Pigs." They referred to Zionism as "Kosher Nationalism." In 1973 the Black Panther Party newspaper approvingly quoted South African pan-Africanist David Sibeko, who

charged that since its creation in 1948, Israel had sustained itself on “the blood and wealth” that “Zionist Jews” extracted from South Africa. He claimed that South Africa’s gold mines were “owned by Zionists.” Using the term “Zionist” to mean “Jew,” a technique popularized decades before by right-wing antisemites, Sibeko declared that “the Zionists” had “assume[d] superiority in the take-over” of South Africa’s industries. He dismissed as a “red herring” the argument that a Jewish state was needed because of the existence of antisemitism; it was part of a scheme to “cover up imperialism’s designs against Africa [and its] rich resources.”<sup>2</sup>

The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which in 1966 had expelled its white members and positioned itself on the far left of the African American movement, made similar charges. A sizeable proportion of SNCC’s white membership had been Jewish. Shortly after the Six-Day War in 1967, it published an article in the *SNCC Newsletter* entitled “The Palestine Problem” that compared Israel to Nazi Germany and accused it of committing “atrocities” against the Palestinians. The article was written at the request of the SNCC National Committee by the newsletter’s editor, Ethel Minor, a former member of the virulently antisemitic Nation of Islam. It was accompanied by a blurred photograph that purported to show Israelis shooting Arab prisoners lined up against a wall. The caption read, “This is the Gaza Strip, Palestine, not Dachau, Germany.” According to SNCC, the Jewish state had been established “through terror, force, and massacres.” The “Zionists” had committed mass slaughter, indiscriminately murdering and mutilating Arab men, women, and children.

SNCC’s article implied that the Zionists’ primary motivation had been the lust for wealth. It declared that “the famous European Jews, the Rothschilds,” who had “long controlled the wealth of many European nations,” had conspired with the British to create the state of Israel. Like the Black Panther Party, SNCC claimed that the Rothschilds controlled “much of Africa’s mineral wealth.” The article was illustrated by two blatantly antisemitic cartoons. One depicted a hand, stamped with both a Star of David and a dollar sign, tightening a rope around the necks of Egyptian dictator Gamal Abdel Nasser and African American boxer Muhammad Ali. In the other, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan appeared with dollar signs on his shoulders.<sup>3</sup>

Around that time, SNCC engaged in other explicitly antisemitic outbursts that, unlike the *Newsletter* article, went unreported in the mainstream and far left press. On June 22, 1967, SNCC distributed an anti-Israel leaflet at a Washington, D.C., Black Power rally featuring a speech by its president, Rap Brown, who stereotyped Jews as inordinately wealthy, parasitic, and exploitative. The leaflet claimed that Jews had extracted from ghetto blacks a sizeable proportion of the funds they sent to Israel during the Six-Day War: “We have recently seen another minority group in the United States raise, in a matter of hours, millions of dollars to aid their brothers in distress.



PHOTO 1. SNCC antisemitic drawing.

Much of this money came directly from the pockets of black people.”<sup>4</sup> Ethel Minor recalled that Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown, who succeeded Carmichael as SNCC’s chairman in May 1967, “drove through a black neighborhood shouting, ‘Guns for the Arabs, sneakers for the Jews.’”<sup>5</sup>

The most prominent African American civil rights leaders joined Jewish organizations in promptly denouncing the *SNCC Newsletter* article. A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, organizers of the 1963 March on Washington, declared that they were “appalled” by SNCC’s “anti-Semitic article.” National Urban League head Whitney Young said that SNCC’s article expressed views similar to those of the American Nazi Party. The African American Los Angeles *Sentinel* reported that Martin Luther King, Jr., “took a slap at SNCC,” vowing that he would “never be anti-Semitic.”<sup>6</sup>

By contrast, the Trotskyist newspaper the *Militant*, organ of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), insisted that the SNCC article was not antisemitic and accused Jews who had denounced it of “chauvinist hysteria.” It claimed that SNCC had presented a “well-known fact” in “defense of the Arab nations,” which faced “imperialist-backed invasion by the Zionists.” The *Militant* even minimized the significance of the antisemitic cartoons, conceding only that the Star of David might be “misinterpreted.” It suggested that SNCC meant to use it as “an insignia of Zionism,” noting that mainstream newspaper cartoons depicted Israeli soldiers wearing it.<sup>7</sup>

The *Militant* had itself claimed that the Jewish state was created as a beachhead for Western imperialism to economically exploit the Middle East. It declared that Israel owed its prosperity to sizeable financial contributions from American Jews and to West German Holocaust reparations payments, in addition to U.S. government aid.<sup>8</sup>

SDS published two contrasting letters on the SNCC controversy in *New Left Notes* but refused to take a position as an organization and did not otherwise address the issue of antisemitism. Itzhak Epstein asked the SDS National Council to adopt a resolution expressing regret about SNCC’s “recent inclination towards racism in general and antisemitism in particular.” He wanted SDS to maintain a fraternal relationship with SNCC and called on the two organizations to engage “in a mutual dialogue on racism and antisemitism.” Michael Meeropol, son of the executed atom spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, responded by accusing Epstein of “hav[ing] bought the lies of the Establishment Press about SNCC.” He called Epstein’s proposed resolution patronizing and declared that SDS had no right “to charge SNCC with a trend towards racism.” Meeropol suggested instead a resolution that would reaffirm SDS’s “continuing support for the revolutionary program of SNCC.”<sup>9</sup>

The radical pacifist Daniel Berrigan, one of the most prominent figures in the anti-Vietnam War movement, drew on both theological and economic antisemitism in an address condemning Israel before the Association of Arab-American University Graduates during the Yom Kippur War in October 1973. The Jesuit priest invoked the hoary image of the demonic Jew in the Christian Bible. Berrigan denounced Israel as a racist “settler state” that used the Hebrew Bible to justify its “crimes against humanity.” He claimed that, a generation after the Holocaust, Israel had embraced a Nazi-style ideology “aimed at proving its racial superiority to the people [the Arabs] it has crushed.” Blinded by “the blood myths of divine election,” Israel had “closed her sacred books” and become morally bankrupt. An “imperial entity,” Israel now resembled its ancient adversary, Pharaoh’s Egypt: “The slave became master, and created slaves.” Like Nazi Germany, Israel created ghettos and disenfranchised peoples; its citizens existed “for the well-being of the state.” The Jewish state had become a nightmare, “an Orwellian transplant,” a totalitarian society “taken bodily from Big Brother’s bloody heart.”

Berrigan castigated American Jewish leaders for abandoning the prophetic tradition centered on social justice by backing Israel. He accused them of ignoring the “Asian holocaust,” his term for the American military effort in Vietnam.<sup>10</sup> Here Berrigan raised a standard claim of the far left: that the Holocaust was not unique. Berrigan’s portrayal of a morally bankrupt American Jewish leadership was shaped by the Christian Bible’s condemnation and misrepresentation of the Pharisees. As Arthur Hertzberg noted, Berrigan was repeating an “ancient canard” that the Jews’ “horrible leaders, ‘the pharisees,’” had caused them to reject Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

David Dellinger, another leader of the anti-Vietnam War movement and long-time pacifist, strongly supported Berrigan’s tirade against Israel and its American Jewish supporters. He acknowledged that it had precipitated a storm of criticism from prominent liberals and conservatives. But Dellinger declared that such a reaction was inevitable because of what he called a “taboo against serious public criticism of Israel”: “It was almost impossible ... to speak truth to power grown arrogant.”<sup>12</sup>

In speaking of a taboo against public criticism of Israel, Dellinger raised a hackneyed charge long leveled by conservative anti-Zionists: that Jews had the power to suppress public debate about Zionism and Israel. This implied that American Jews controlled the mass media. For example, Virginia Gildersleeve, dean of Barnard College from 1911 to 1947, who had introduced quotas to reduce Jewish enrollment, claimed in her decades-long campaign against what she called “International Zionism” that “Zionist control of the media of communication” made it difficult for Americans to obtain accurate information about the Middle East.<sup>13</sup> The Black Panther Party declared that Jewish money dictated U.S. government support of Israel: “Nearly every presidential and congressional candidate is heavily financed by American Zionists in exchange for support of Israel.”<sup>14</sup>

Shortly after the Six-Day War the far left underground newspaper the Berkeley *Barb* had also depicted the Jewish state as Pharaoh’s Egypt, a monstrous Goliath contemptuous of the Jewish ethical tradition. It ran a cartoon whose top panel showed an ancient Egyptian commander in a chariot, sword thrust forward, leading spear-bearing warriors against fleeing Hebrews following Moses, carrying only walking staffs. The bottom panel depicted Israeli jets marked with the Star of David flying above similarly identified Israeli tanks, accompanied by infantry, pursuing retreating Arabs. A few years later the SWP also drew on traditional Christian theological antisemitism in declaring that the creation of Israel “symbolize[d] the spiritual degeneration of ... [the] Jewish community.”<sup>15</sup>

Drawing a parallel between Israel and Nazi Germany was the most dramatic way to make the Jewish state appear demonic. In 1970 Mike Klonsky, leader of SDS’s Revolutionary Movement II faction, equated what he called Israel’s “continuous attacks on the Arab people” with the Nazis’ annihilation of the Jews. During the Yom Kippur War, the Maoist Progressive

Labor Party published a lengthy statement in the UCLA student newspaper calling Israel “a Nazi state” and denouncing Zionism as a “racist atrocity.” The Weatherman newspaper *Fire* even claimed that Nazi antisemitic propaganda was directly modeled on “Zionist writings.”<sup>16</sup> Far left groups repeatedly referred to Israel’s campaign to defend itself against fourteen Arab nations during the Six-Day War as a “blitzkrieg,” suggesting a parallel with the Wehrmacht’s conquest of Poland in 1939 and its Western offensive in the spring of 1940.<sup>17</sup> The Black Panther Party called Israeli soldiers “fascist storm troopers” and charged that Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War resulted in Arab refugees being forced into “modern concentration camps.”<sup>18</sup>

The far left made this analogy while remaining silent about the sizeable numbers of Nazi war criminals harbored by such Arab governments as Egypt’s and Syria’s, which placed many of them in high political and military positions. It ignored the collaboration of Arab heads of state like Egypt’s Anwar Sadat with the Hitler regime during World War II. Nor did far left groups mention the participation of former Wehrmacht troops in the Arab military effort during Israel’s War of Independence, a charge that American Communists had leveled against the Arabs in 1948.<sup>19</sup>

The far left’s denigration of Israel was shaped in part by its trivialization of antisemitism, which it considered a nonissue.<sup>20</sup> It dismissed charges that it existed in Arab countries and among black nationalists. Following the lead of the Arab guerilla groups, the American far left of the late 1960s and early 1970s not only ignored the pervasive and centuries-old antisemitism in the Middle East but also denied that it had ever been significant there, or in the Islamic tradition. In this sense it replicated the Communist Party’s decades-long insistence that no antisemitism existed in the Soviet Union. To do otherwise would bolster arguments for a Jewish state.

Adhering rigidly to a narrow economic analysis, the far left could never properly assess or understand antisemitism. It ignored the highly important role of Christian and Islamic theology in forming, shaping, and sustaining antisemitism. For the far left, antisemitism was merely a device employed by the ruling class to maintain control by preventing the working masses from uniting against it. Typical was the *Militant*’s explanation that “the real source of anti-Semitism is ... the capitalist system.” Zionism was part of a ruling-class divide-and-conquer strategy: it “pits the Jewish people against those [the Arab masses] who should be their natural allies.”<sup>21</sup>

American far left groups echoed Palestinian guerilla spokesmen like Yassir Arafat, leader of Al Fatah, whom *New Left Notes* quoted in 1969 as stating that “Arabs have never discriminated against the Jews.” Similarly, in 1968 the *Militant* quoted an Al Fatah “commando” who declared: “Before 1948 we lived in peace with Jewish people.” Only the creation of Israel had disrupted perfectly harmonious relations.<sup>22</sup> The *Militant* claimed after the Six-Day War that Israel had raised the issue of Arab antisemitism “to divert attention from the virulent anti-Arab racism the Zionists have pumped into

the Israeli masses.”<sup>23</sup> During the Yom Kippur War, when Israel came very close to being overrun by invading Arab armies, who launched a surprise attack on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, the *Militant* stated that Arab “hostility to Jews came about as a result of the crimes of Zionism.”<sup>24</sup> The Black Panther Party similarly ridiculed the notion that a Jewish state was needed to protect Jews from extermination. It maintained that Arabs and Jews had “lived in complete friendship until the advent of Zionism.”<sup>25</sup>

The far left’s proposed solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict – that Israel be dismantled and replaced with a state composed of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, with an Arab majority and Jewish minority – assumed not only the insignificance of Arab antisemitism but the speciousness of Jewish claims to be a people with valid national aspirations. The Palestinian guerilla movement also claimed that Jews were merely a religious group, not a people. As Al Fatah’s chief public information officer put it in 1969, “Judaism is a religion ... and it cannot construct a national identity.”<sup>26</sup> The SWP rejected as “false to the core” the notion that Jews had “a right to a state of their own or to self-determination of any kind.”<sup>27</sup> The Weatherman organ *Fire*, to delegitimize the Jewish claim to a homeland in Palestine, described the ancient Hebrews as “invaders,” whose subsequent “occupation” of what they called Judaea was “intermittent and unstable.” Moreover, although “Zionist mythology pretende[d]” that the Roman conquest of Judaea and destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE was a catastrophe for the Jewish people, *Fire* maintained that the Jews had for centuries “been emigrating from Palestine of their own choice.” Anticipating the claims of the rabidly antisemitic Nation of Islam and Christian Identity movements that contemporary Jews were “imposters,” *Fire* asserted that “Zionist racial theory” connecting “modern European-American Jews” to the ancient Hebrews was “demonstrably false.”<sup>28</sup> The Black Panther Party similarly denied Jewish claims to a long-term presence in Judaea and the land the Romans renamed Palestine. It claimed that the ancient Hebrews were latecomers to the region and remained there for only 100 years, whereas “the Palestinians” maintained “their continuous residence in Palestine until they were expelled by the Zionists in 1948.”<sup>29</sup>

*Fire* even suggested that Zionism bore significant responsibility for the annihilation of Europe’s Jews during the Holocaust. Quoting British historian Arnold Toynbee’s claim that “Zionism and anti-Semitism are expressions of an identical point of view,” *Fire* argued that the Zionists propagandized that the Jews were an alien people who could never be integrated into the nations in which they lived.<sup>30</sup> This intensified prejudice against Jews such that in Eastern Europe, where Jews were inclined toward Zionism, hardly anyone objected to their slaughter during the Holocaust. *Fire* claimed that in Western Europe, by contrast, where Jews had acculturated and “were distinguished by religion only,” the surrounding gentile population made “concerted efforts” to rescue them. Weatherman went so far as to suggest a



moral equivalency between “organized Jewry” and the Nazis, alleging that the former’s willing “collaboration” with those committing mass genocide was almost “universal.” Without this collaboration, Weatherman claimed, the Holocaust would have been impossible: “There would have been chaos or an impossibly severe drain on German manpower.” Facing two enemies – “the Nazi authorities and the Jewish authorities” – the victims were doomed.<sup>31</sup>

Portraying Israel as a racist, genocidal settler-state similar to Nazi Germany led far left groups to justify or excuse the most brutal acts of terrorism against its population. At its 1971 convention, the SWP declared, “We unconditionally support the struggles of the Arab peoples against the state of Israel.” A 1973 column in the *Militant* called “By Any Means Necessary” implied that any act of violence the Palestinian terrorists committed in the effort to destroy Israel was excusable.<sup>32</sup> The SWP might label certain terrorist acts counterproductive, but it invariably claimed that Israeli policies had driven the Arabs to commit them. Weatherman leader Eric Mann declared in 1970 that “Israeli embassies, tourist offices, airlines and Zionist fund-raising and social affairs are important targets for whatever action is decided to be appropriate.”<sup>33</sup>

Such was the reasoning that shaped the far left’s reaction to the massacre of Israeli athletes by Palestinian terrorists at the Munich Olympics in 1972. The *Militant* expressed concern that the public outcry against the kidnapping and murder of the Olympic athletes made “the criminal [Israel] look like the victim.”<sup>34</sup> The SWP’s candidate for U.S. House of Representatives in the California district that included Berkeley, Ken Miliner, a national Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) leader, denounced what he called “the anti-Arab campaign over the Munich killings.” Showing no sympathy for the slaughtered Israelis, Miliner condemned both President Nixon and Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern for labeling the Palestinian terrorists “international outlaws.” He accused the American press of deliberately inciting prejudice against Arabs by using headlines that referred to “murder” or “terror” at the Olympics. Miliner’s only objections to the murders were tactical. He worried that targeting Israeli civilians for killing or kidnapping generated sympathy for the “Zionist state,” allowing it to “pose as the innocent victim.” The only effective strategy for eradicating the Jewish state, Miliner argued, was the revolutionary mobilization of “the Arab masses.”<sup>35</sup>

The Black Panther Party justified the Palestinian murder of the Israeli athletes, comparing it to the prison uprising at the Attica penitentiary in New York State: “The same events unfolded: desperate, disenfranchised men take other men as hostages in order to command the attention of the world to their plight.” It absolved the Palestinian terrorists of responsibility for the murders at Munich, blaming the authorities instead: “In Munich, as in Attica ... heads of state did not hesitate to condemn the athletes to death ... to hide from the world the unbearable suffering of the Palestinians.”<sup>36</sup>



Many on the far left openly endorsed the hijacking of airplanes, which risked large numbers of civilian lives, as a legitimate way for the Palestinians to publicize their cause. In 1970, the *Black Panther* reprinted an article entitled “The Sky’s the Limit,” which glorified the hijacking by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine of a TWA passenger plane flying from Rome to Athens. The hijackers took hand grenades into the cockpit and ordered the pilots to fly to Damascus, Syria. The article was accompanied by a photograph of hijacker Leila Khaled, identified as a “Revolutionary Sister.” SDS’s *New Left Notes* also supported Palestinian terrorist attacks on Israeli airliners as one of the “requirements of total war, of resistance to the [Israeli] occupier.”<sup>37</sup>

During the period from 1968 to 1973, the far left did express some discomfort with the frequent calls from Arabs for a jihad, or Muslim holy war, against Israel and the Jews, and the boasts of such Arab leaders as Egyptian dictator Gamal Abdel Nasser that the Arabs would drive the Jews of Israel “into the sea,” a euphemism for genocide, a second Holocaust for the Jewish people. On the eve of the Six-Day War, Ahmad Shuqayri, the first head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, predicted that none of Israel’s Jews would survive.<sup>38</sup> Believing that class interest fundamentally shaped the outlook of the Arab masses, the far left dismissed religious and cultural factors, including radical Islamic theology, as only of superficial importance. SDS stated that the calls for jihad against the Jews were merely a desperate tactic of “the Arab bourgeoisie” to deflect the anger of the Arab working masses from “their own throats.” *New Left Notes* called this “the non-progressive aspect of the Palestinian liberation struggle.”<sup>39</sup>

Shortly after the Six-Day War, the *Militant* admitted that “the Egyptian and other Arab leaders ... ha[d] called for a ‘jihad’ or holy war against Israel.” It considered such appeals unwise. They would cause “the Israeli Jewish masses to fear that a successful Arab struggle against Zionism would result in the extermination or suppression of the Jews in the Middle East.”<sup>40</sup> Calls for jihad would discourage Israeli workers from joining their Arab counterparts in a class war to dismantle Israel and establish a revolutionary binational state with an Arab majority, which the SWP advocated as the solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Although they acknowledged that Arab heads of state called for driving the Jews of Israel into the sea, the far left organizations never thought through the implications of denying Israel the right to defend itself against armed attacks that could annihilate its population. On the very rare occasions when far left newspapers addressed the issue, they simply characterized Arab threats to wipe out Israel’s Jews as meaningless bombast. Typical was the claim of the communist weekly *National Guardian* shortly after the Six-Day War, during which it had strongly backed the Arabs. The *National Guardian* had been founded by Stalinist supporters of the Progressive Party in October 1948. In 1967 its circulation probably surpassed that of

any other American far left newspaper. Responding to the question posed by several readers, "Has not Nasser threatened to destroy Israel?" the *National Guardian* declared, "Unbiased observers tend to view the reckless but essentially empty threats to exterminate Israel as internal propaganda directed to the Cairo radio audience, unsupported by Egypt's actual military preparations."<sup>41</sup>

Of course, the *National Guardian's* answer implied that the Cairo masses indeed harbored genocidal intentions toward Israel's Jews, for why else would the Nasser dictatorship mobilize the populace by broadcasting radio appeals to drive them into the sea? The far left, which vehemently denied the existence of Arab antisemitism, assumed that Islamic theology barely affected the Arab masses. It made no mention, if it was even aware, of Islam's concept of *dhimmitude*, which placed Jews in Muslim countries in an inferior position and status; of the implications of Muslim sharia law for Jews and women; of the numerous and horrific antisemitic pogroms in the Muslim world, including those in Baghdad in 1941 and in Tripoli, Cairo, and Alexandria in 1945; and of the forced expulsion of nearly all Jews from Arab countries after 1948, destroying centuries-old Jewish communities. Nor did the far left express any concern about how Jews' rights or existence could be safeguarded in an Arab-dominated "Palestine," or what the implications would be for women, who were subjugated, often brutally, in much of the Arab world.

In an article published in the radical *Ramparts* magazine in 1971, Sol Stern, then a New Leftist in Berkeley, recounted his astonishment and distress as Bay Area activists began their campaign to "demonize Israel and turn it into a pariah among the nations." Stern described *Ramparts* as "the flagship publication of the New Left." He recalled more than thirty years later that *Ramparts* gave him "permission to deviate from the party line on Israel" because he was a reliable left-wing radical "on virtually every issue." Stern noted that it was the "last time that anything sympathetic to the Jewish state appeared in *Ramparts* or in any other New Left journal."<sup>42</sup>

In the article, Stern described attending a meeting at a Berkeley "political commune," at which members of San Francisco Newsreel, which produced New Left propaganda films, reported on their recent visit to Palestinian guerrilla camps in Jordan and Lebanon. The main speaker was a "hip-talking, thirtyish radical" who declared that Al Fatah was "correct" in "calling for [Israel's] destruction" because the Jews had "ripped off the land" and established a "racist and imperialist" state. When Stern asked about the Jews' right to self-determination, the speaker responded that the Jews were not a nation. The speaker charged that the Zionists had collaborated with the Nazis, a "gem," Stern noted, "apparently picked up in the guerilla camps." "Don't you know," the speaker asked, "that Theodore Herzl had discussions with Hitler?"<sup>43</sup> Of course, the two never met, and Hitler was only fifteen when Herzl died.

Newsreel screened a film at the meeting celebrating Al Fatah, which presented Israel as entirely the creation of British imperialism. The film failed to mention the British White Paper of 1939 that nearly terminated Jewish immigration to Palestine as European Jewry faced annihilation, or the Royal Navy's blockade, continued after World War II, that kept Holocaust survivors behind barbed wire in squalid detention camps in Germany and Cyprus. The film also neglected the struggle waged by the Haganah and Irgun against British occupation in Palestine, and British military support for the Arab effort to eradicate Israel during its War of Independence.<sup>44</sup>

Stern stated that he left the meeting "stunned by the [New Leftists'] crude and infantile approach" to the Arab-Israeli conflict. He emphasized that what he had observed was "part of a trend, not an isolated case," noting that "in subsequent months underground and Movement publications were filled" with similar material. When Stern objected to the New Leftists' delegitimization of Israel, they denounced him as a Zionist, an epithet that placed his views "beyond the pale of legitimacy."<sup>45</sup>

The New Left outlook toward Zionism and Israel eerily paralleled that of the extreme Right's most prominent commentator on the subject during the 1950s, Freda Utey, whose diatribes were strongly laced with antisemitism. Utey denounced the Nuremberg trials and accused the U.S. Army of torturing Waffen-SS defendants charged with slaughtering American prisoners of war in the Malmédy Massacre during the Battle of the Bulge. She referred to journalists critical of Senator Joseph McCarthy as "Pharisees."<sup>46</sup> New Left writers drew on many of the same sources that the ultraconservative Utey used, and most of their arguments were indistinguishable from hers. Utey depicted the Zionist movement as viciously racist and Israel as a militarist and expansionist state that strongly resembled Nazi Germany. Like the New Leftists, she denied the existence of Arab and Islamic antisemitism and refused to acknowledge Jewish historical ties to the land of Israel. Utey similarly disputed the Jews' claim to be a people. She accused Israel of provoking the 1948 War of Independence by deliberately perpetrating atrocities against the Arabs to drive them from Palestine and seize their land.<sup>47</sup>

In her book *Will the Middle East Go West?* (1957), Utey attributed to Israel a determination to expand and dominate the surrounding Arab populations, rooted in the Jews' "'chosen people' complex." SDS's *New Left Notes* made the same accusation twelve years later. Utey drew from Arnold Toynbee's work, as the Weathermen later did, quoting his statement that "the Jews' immediate reaction to their own experience was to become persecutors in their turn." She declared that Israel's claim to represent "a superior and older culture than any other nation" gave it "Messianic pretensions." Utey maintained that Israel's objective was to take over surrounding Arab lands and dispossess their inhabitants, until the Jewish state was eight times as large as what the UN awarded it under the 1947 partition plan. Like the Nazis, who coveted the vast expanses of European Russia and the Ukraine,

the Israelis demanded lebensraum to settle millions more Jews in the Middle East. "Can we wonder," Utley asked, "why the Arabs are afraid and want to destroy the State whose policy requires the conquest and expropriation of millions more of the Arab people?"<sup>48</sup>

Utley saw little difference between Israel's defending itself against Arab military and guerilla attacks and Nazi barbarism, complaining that the American press ignored "Israeli liquidations of Arabs." She approvingly quoted Stephen B. L. Penrose, president of the American University of Beirut, who charged that "the Zionists" used "terrorist tactics" against the Arabs that they had learned from "Nazi taskmasters."<sup>49</sup>

Like the far left of the late 1960s, Utley claimed that "until the State of Israel was carved out of their territory," the Arabs "had lived in amity with the Jews among them." Utley denied that the Arabs posed any danger to Jews in Israel, citing Egyptian dictator Nasser's statement in a personal interview with her that he did not wish to drive the Jews into the sea.<sup>50</sup> The far leftists of the late 1960s were similarly naïve about Palestinian guerilla claims that they were not antisemitic and harbored no genocidal intentions toward Jews.

#### ROOTS OF FAR LEFT ANTISEMITISM

The far left's outlook toward Jews and its understanding of antisemitism can be traced back to early Marxian paradigms. Karl Marx set the tone for the far left's assessment of the Jewish role in society in his 1844 essay "On the Jewish Question," in which he employed both Christian theological and economic antisemitic stereotypes in denigrating Jews and Judaism. Asserting that "money is the jealous god of Israel, in face of which no other god may exist," Marx combined Christian and pagan contempt for the Jewish concept of God.<sup>51</sup> Early Christians depicted the Jewish God as devoid of compassion, envious and wrathful. They portrayed the Temple as permeated with money-changing and had Judas, whose name resembles Judaism in any language, betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Idol-worshiping, polytheistic pagans, unable to grasp the oneness and invisibility of the Jewish God, contended that the Jews worshiped not a deity in their Temple but some material object like an ass's head. Money was one such material object. In accusing the Jews of permitting no other God to exist besides money, Marx was mocking their monotheism.

Marx's depiction of Judaism as nakedly materialistic and "anti-social" strongly resembled that of Christian theologians. Employing the antisemitic stereotype of the Jew as unscrupulous moneylender and petty trader, Marx claimed that "huckstering" was the Jew's "worldly religion." Invoking a nefarious image of Jewish conspiracy and power that resonated with the Christian Bible's decide accusation, Marx argued that by helping to stimulate the rise of capitalism Jews had not only "acquired financial power"

but infected the world with their commercial spirit, so that “the Christians [themselves] have become Jews.” Socialist revolution, by eliminating “huckstering” and its “preconditions” (a capitalist economy and social relations), would, however, render the Jews “*impossible*.”<sup>52</sup>

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European socialists – both Jews and gentiles – commonly held that Jewish identity was not worth preserving. The Jews were an “anachronistic sect” fated to disappear with the decline of petty capitalism.<sup>53</sup> There was therefore no point in supporting the Jewish national aspirations advanced by either modern Zionism or Bundism, the competing movements, themselves strongly influenced by socialism, that were emerging during the late 1890s. Most socialists of the period, not only those on the far left, considered the Zionist goal of reestablishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine as unfeasible, dismissing it as utopian. They did not believe it would be possible to stimulate sufficient Jewish emigration to a land so arid, economically undeveloped, and lacking in natural resources. Jewish communities established there would be easily annihilated by hostile Arabs. Nor could most socialists accept the Bund’s goal of achieving cultural autonomy for Jews within Eastern Europe. Russian Marxist George Plekhanov, who was highly influential in the European socialist movement before World War I, derided the Bundists simply as “Zionists suffering from sea-sickness.” Most socialists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and nearly all of those on the far left, favored assimilation as the solution to what they called the “Jewish Question.”<sup>54</sup>

Socialist assimilationism was often suffused with contempt for Judaism and Jewish culture. Its adherents shared Christian theologians’ view of Judaism as sterile, fossilized, and tribalistic, perpetuating ancient obscurantist rituals conducted in an obsolete language. Assimilationists on the left similarly disdained Jewish culture as deformed by Jews’ concentration in petty bourgeois occupations and centuries of confinement to ghettos. They suggested that as a result, Jews never valued the compassion that Christianity allegedly celebrated, respecting only the ability to accumulate wealth, using any means. This was compounded by Jews’ “tribalism,” and sense of themselves as the “Chosen People,” which encouraged them to consider gentiles inferior and deserving of exploitation. Assimilationists on the left joined with their counterparts on the right in deriding the language of the Jewish masses, Yiddish, which provided a foundation for Jewish cultural autonomy in Eastern and Central Europe, as a jargon not worth preserving. Robert S. Wistrich noted that Marxist assimilationism, in contemptuously denying Jewish claims to legitimacy as a people, resembled Christianity, “another universalist creed turned imperialist.”<sup>55</sup>

Bolshevik theoreticians addressing this subject, notably V. I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and Josef Stalin, strongly opposed both Bundism and Zionism. By separating Jewish workers from their gentile counterparts, they argued,

Bundism and Zionism impeded the effort to forge an inclusive revolutionary socialist alliance that would eliminate antisemitism – and with it, Jewish identity – merely by overthrowing capitalism. Lenin derided the idea that Jews possessed a national culture as only “a slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie.”<sup>56</sup> At the second congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party in July 1903, Trotsky, on one of the very few occasions in which he referred to himself as a Jew, helped spearhead the opposition to the Bund’s call for Jewish cultural autonomy. The Bund’s goals included gaining the right for Jews to conduct instruction in Yiddish in schools independent of the Russian educational system. Shortly afterward, Trotsky ridiculed the Zionists’ call to build a Jewish homeland in Palestine as “the hysterical sobbings of ... romanticists.”<sup>57</sup>

Even after the horrifying wave of pogroms that began at Kishinev in April 1903, Trotsky saw no reason for socialists to concentrate on eradicating antisemitism or protecting Jewish communities, unlike the Zionist and Bundist groups, which organized armed self-defense forces. For Trotsky, pogroms were largely initiated from above, a czarist tactic to deflect attention from the regime’s abuses and its failures in the Russo-Japanese War. Revolutionary socialist agitation would unify the masses across ethnic lines and direct their antagonism against the regime and the economically powerful, thus eliminating any basis for antisemitism.<sup>58</sup>

The most influential work outlining the Communist position that Jews did not compose a national group was Josef Stalin’s 1913 essay “Marxism and the National Question.” Stalin argued that because Jews were physically dispersed, even within the countries they inhabited, and were culturally diverse, they did not constitute a national group. Moreover, the Jews were not involved in agriculture, which he believed bound other peoples together. The Bund encouraged Jewish workers to observe what Stalin considered anachronistic “ancient Hebrew holidays.” This isolated them from their gentile counterparts, who otherwise would be their allies. Socialists should instead encourage Jewish assimilation. Stalin was confident that “semi-Asiatic” Russia would follow the path of Germany. Germany was “already Europe,” and its Jews were rapidly assimilating. As a result, Stalin asserted, attempts to infringe on Jewish rights in Germany never escalated into pogroms. Germany was well on the way to solving the Jewish question.<sup>59</sup>

European socialists formally condemned antisemitism, but at the same time many believed it could sometimes prove useful in raising socialist consciousness among the working masses. August Bebel, one of German socialism’s leading theoreticians during the late nineteenth century, referred to antisemitism as “the socialism of fools.” He argued that working-class antagonism toward Jewish merchants and financiers was misdirected because the liberation of the proletariat could only be accomplished through the overthrow of the entire bourgeoisie, not merely a small section of it.<sup>60</sup> Those who considered Jews in the bourgeoisie to be the working-class movement’s

primary adversary were therefore not advocating true socialism. Nonetheless, many socialists believed that denunciations of Jewish businessmen or bankers might at least instill in workers an abhorrence of capitalism. Exposure to socialist agitation and propaganda could then propel the workers to expand the focus of their antagonism to include all capitalists, not just the relatively small minority who happened to be Jews.<sup>61</sup>

This conviction all too often led the far left to ignore, and sometimes even encourage, outbursts of severe antisemitism in the working and lower classes in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East, even when they included violent and indiscriminate attacks on Jews, causing deaths, injuries, and extensive destruction of property. On occasion, Communist denunciations of small Jewish entrepreneurs were indistinguishable from those of Nazis. This was the case when Ruth Fischer, a leader of the German Communist Party, seeking to draw members of the radical Right into Communist ranks, spoke to Nazi students in Berlin in July 1923: "Whoever declares against Jewish capital, gentlemen, is already a class warrior, even if he doesn't know it. You are against Jewish capital.... Quite right! Crush the Jewish capitalists, hang them from the lamp posts. But, gentlemen, what is your attitude to the big capitalists?"<sup>62</sup>

In Hungary in the period immediately following World War II, the Communists in the government coalition bore significant responsibility for sparking antisemitic pogroms at Kunmadaras in May 1946 and at Miskolc two months later. Fully aware that much of the Hungarian population stereotyped Jews as "hucksters" bent on economically exploiting gentiles, the Communist press repeatedly called for "violent action against black marketers [and] profiteers." During the Holocaust, many Hungarian gentiles had collaborated enthusiastically in the annihilation of the nation's Jews, including railroad workers who assisted in transporting them to death camps and midwives assigned to "search for hidden jewelry within the private parts of Jewish women." István Deák noted that "history registers no midwife – or medical doctor – who refused to perform this patriotic task."<sup>63</sup> Pogromists at Kunmadaras, who killed two Jews and inflicted injuries requiring hospitalization on seventy-eight others, acted out of concern that Holocaust survivors, rendered destitute, would ask for the return of their property. The 100 Jews who survived the Kunmadaras pogrom fled to Budapest for safety.<sup>64</sup>

The Hungarian Communist press incited the populace against the Jews by explicitly associating them with profiteering and even by invoking the blood libel. Next to the Magyarized names of arrested Jewish black marketers it sometimes published their original Jewish names. The Communists also urged "the toiling people" to "take revenge on the 'bloodsuckers,'" old coded language that suggested that Jews were parasites who did not engage in productive labor.<sup>65</sup> The term "bloodsucker" was linked with the persistent medieval Christian fantasy that Jews kidnapped innocent Christian



children, most commonly around Easter, to mock Jesus and to extract blood to mix with Passover matzoh.

Hungarian Communist Party head Mátyás Rákosi sparked the Miskolc pogrom by declaring that currency speculators should be hanged. Local workers lynched one alleged black marketer and mortally wounded another, both Jews, although they were already under arrest. However, they released another accused black marketer, who was not Jewish. Workers broke into a jail and freed fifteen men arrested in the slaying of the two Jews, killing a Jewish policeman in the process. They did no harm to non-Jewish policemen. The Miskolc pogromists received no punishment.<sup>66</sup> The American Communist Party publications ignored the Communist role in these pogroms, part of a larger pattern of denial of antisemitism in the Soviet bloc.

From 1964 to 1968, when riots erupted in the black ghettos of many American cities, the American far left also overlooked, and sometimes encouraged, the overt antisemitism and the destruction of Jewish stores. Far left groups identified the riots as “ghetto rebellions.” When SNCC program director Ralph Featherstone gave classic expression to the “socialism of fools” by proclaiming that “it is the Jews who are doing the exploiting of black people in the ghettos,” none of the far left groups publicly denounced him.<sup>67</sup>

Featherstone referred not to big manufacturers or financiers but only to the owners of “the little corner groceries.” In condemning these Jewish petty entrepreneurs, he ignored that insurance companies required them to pay unusually high premiums to operate in dangerous neighborhoods. He also overlooked the fact that many gentile businessmen avoided these neighborhoods altogether because of their disdain for blacks and their greater access to more affluent sections of the city. Moreover, prices in these corner groceries were also affected by the relatively high rate of shoplifting. Reinforcing his antisemitic message, the SNCC official compared American Jewish grocers’ “gouging” of ghetto blacks to “the oppression of Arabs by the Israelis.”<sup>68</sup>

The Black Panther Party drew the same parallel as SNCC, declaring in 1970 that the party was “anti-Zionist expansion in the Arab world” and anti-“Zionist exploitation here in Babylon.” The Black Panthers applied the term “Babylon” to the United States, but never to Islamic dictatorships that tolerated or participated in the Arab enslavement of blacks, or to Communist dictatorships, which they celebrated. The *Black Panther* associated Jews directly with criminality. It denounced Jews who operated businesses in African American neighborhoods as “bandit merchants” and denied any Jewish claim to Israel except by “robber’s right.”<sup>69</sup>

#### CONFLATING ANTI-ZIONISM AND ANTISEMITISM

Anti-Zionism is not necessarily antisemitic, but it often is. This has certainly been true of the far left version, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate.



In relentlessly attacking Zionism and defaming Israel, the American and European far left often invoked antisemitic stereotypes drawn from Christian theology. The far left endorsed the “grotesquely named” 2001 Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, discussed in [Chapter 8](#), during which incessant denunciations of Israel were intertwined with theologically inspired antisemitism. Hillel Halkin called the Durban conference “the largest and best-publicized anti-Semitic rally in history.”<sup>70</sup> Far left denunciations of Zionism and Israel frequently resembled those of the antisemitic extreme Right.

Far left anti-Zionists shared Christian theological antisemites’ contempt for Judaism and opposition to Jews persisting as a people. Like Christian theologians who believed that their religion had superseded Judaism, many far leftists disdained Jews as an anachronistic sect whose culture was not worth preserving. Karl Marx himself considered Judaism inferior to Christianity. He drew on Christian theological images of Jews as materialistic, unscrupulous, and lacking in compassion and portrayed them as money-obsessed hucksters.

Long-standing antisemitic theological images of arrogant Jews repudiating their prophetic tradition and ethics shaped far left anti-Israel polemics. American far left anti-Zionists claimed that the Hebrew Bible’s concept of Jews as “chosen” led Jews in Israel to feel they were superior to other peoples and entitled to oppress the Arabs. This anti-Zionist outlook resembled antisemites’ depiction of Eastern European Jews as nonproductive aliens viciously exploiting indigenous Christian populations.<sup>71</sup> Updating Marx, American far leftists and their black nationalist allies during the late 1960s similarly depicted Jews as parasitic intruders who accumulated wealth by exploiting the toil of black people in America’s ghettos and South Africa. They even hurled at Jews the same antisemitic epithet rooted in the medieval blood libel concept: “bloodsucker.”

[Chapter 2](#) shows how antisemitism pervaded far left anti-Zionism during the 1920s. The Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War linked Zionists to antisemitic White reactionaries in a sinister conspiracy to subjugate vast populations. This fantasy drew on the Christian decide accusation dating to the Gospels. It set a precedent for later far left charges of Zionist collusion with the Nazis before and during the Holocaust. The Bolsheviks singled out Hebrew from among the languages of the Soviet nationalities for suppression. [Chapter 2](#) also analyzes how the American Communist Party (CP) interwove antisemitism with anti-Zionism in backing the Arab pogroms in Palestine in 1929.

[Chapter 6](#) examines the American CP’s role as apologist for Soviet bloc anti-Zionist diatribes in the last years of Stalin’s rule, including those at Hungary’s Rajk trial, and its aggressive support for the explicitly antisemitic Slansky trials in Prague in 1952. Walter Laqueur has stated: “No one disputes that in the late Stalinist period anti-Zionism was merely a synonym

for antisemitism.”<sup>72</sup> The Slansky trials revolved around charges that the defendants, nearly all of whom were Jews, were engaged in a worldwide Zionist conspiracy to wreak havoc in Eastern Europe. As I demonstrate in [Chapter 6](#), the Czechoslovak Communist prosecutors in these trials were strongly influenced by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, one of the most pernicious pieces of antisemitic propaganda ever produced.

CP endorsement of the Slansky trials and condemnation of the Jewish physicians the Soviets charged in the doctors’ plot, who were also branded agents of “world Zionism,” foreshadowed the post-1967 American far left’s dissemination of conspiracy theories depicting Israel as the fount of world evil. Such theories link Zionism to the Rothschilds and other Jewish “plutocrats,” a word the Nazis repeatedly associated with Jews.

The antisemitic character of far left anti-Zionism was underscored by persistent comparison of Israel to Nazi Germany, borrowing from Christian theological images of satanic Jews dating back almost two millennia. Much of the far left has portrayed Israel as the new synagogue of Satan, “born in sin.”<sup>73</sup> Far leftists regularly engage in what Robert S. Wistrich calls “Holocaust inversion” – accusing Israel of planning or carrying out racially motivated genocide.<sup>74</sup> The far left deemed the Jewish state so evil that it called for its dismantling by any means. Many adherents in the late 1960s and early 1970s even endorsed Arab terrorists’ hijackings of passenger airliners and justified the murder of Israeli Olympic athletes. At the same time, the far left remained indifferent to, or dismissive of, Arab leaders’ genocidal threats against Israel’s population.

Whereas much of the far left demonized Zionism and Israel, it remained indifferent to the barbaric conduct and atrocities of numerous dictatorial regimes around the world. The far left’s antisemitism is reflected in its singling out Israel for allegedly mistreating the Palestinians, while at the same time displaying no concern about the persecution of many other minorities in the world, such as Egypt’s Copts, Iran’s Bahai, or the 100 million Dalets (Untouchables) in India, not to mention Jews in Arab and Islamic countries.<sup>75</sup> As Gabriel Schoenfeld noted, anti-Zionists’ “obsession with the malefactions of the Jewish state alone among all the other member states of the world community, and the extremity of the denunciations of it, show what is under the [anti-Zionist] mask.”<sup>76</sup>

Unlike previous generations of American radicals, the far left from the late 1960s onward was profoundly influenced by a stridently anti-Zionist black nationalist movement that was often very antagonistic toward Jews. Many white radicals imitated or expressed indifference toward the antisemitic invective spewed out by the Black Panther Party, SNCC in its Black Power phase, and Malcolm X, an SWP icon.<sup>77</sup> New Leftists followed the lead of black nationalists in making the Arab-Israeli conflict a priority issue and expressing hostility toward Israel.

Younger far leftists lacked interest in what previous generations of radicals had called “the Jewish question.” When they were educated during the 1950s and 1960s, American schools devoted almost no attention to anti-semitism, the Holocaust, or any aspect of the Jewish experience.<sup>78</sup> Radical youths’ approach toward Jews and antisemitism in the late 1960s and early 1970s shared many important similarities with that of previous far left cohorts. But there had been occasions, as [Chapters 4](#) and [5](#) demonstrate, when American Communists gave serious attention to promoting secular Jewish culture, combating antisemitism, and even supporting Israel.

#### THE FAR LEFT’S IMPACT ON AMERICAN SOCIETY

Although the far left never developed any electoral strength in the United States, at certain times it influenced mainstream views of Jews, antisemitism, Zionism, and Israel. The far left movements with the most significant impact in this country were the Communist Party, especially in the Popular Front (1935–1939), World War II, and the late 1940s, and the New Left during the period from 1967 to 1971. These receive the greatest amount of attention in the succeeding chapters. However, even in the decades from 1971 to the present, when the far left’s following was a tiny fraction of what it was in those earlier periods, it helped shape attitudes toward Israel and Jews in the mainstream population and media, as shown in [Chapter 8](#).

Although the CP’s peak membership during the Popular Front never exceeded 75,000, those in its ranks were unusually committed and energetic, as was the case in other American far left movements. Moreover, as many as ten times that number passed through the CP at various times. Even more people were exposed to CP ideas through involvement in one or another of its many front groups, which the party referred to as “mass organizations.”<sup>79</sup>

The CP was unusual on the far left in focusing on ethnicity as well as class, although it did not give it consistent attention. The CP was also unique on the far left in founding a Yiddish-language newspaper, *Morgen Freiheit*, published from 1922 until 1988, and an English-language magazine, *Jewish Life*, published from 1946 until 1957. Much of [Chapter 4](#) is devoted to analyzing the CP’s pioneering role in promoting secular Jewish studies in the decade following World War II, which mainstream American academia had almost entirely neglected.

The CP from the mid-1930s until the McCarthy period in the early 1950s exerted significant influence in many sectors of American life. It was in a position to disseminate its views on Jewish issues to sizeable numbers of people in the labor movement, on the campus, and in cultural and intellectual circles. CP members or fellow travelers led more than a dozen Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) unions and formed influential blocs in

others, including the United Automobile Workers, one of the largest; New York City's Transport Workers Union; and the Newspaper Guild. The CP was also a sizeable presence in the American Federation of Labor's American Federation of Teachers, and for a time the CP controlled its large New York City local. Communists were also prominent in the grassroots leadership of the CIO's Steel Workers Organizing Committee.<sup>80</sup> The CP wielded some influence in the civil rights movement during the 1930s as a result of its highly active role in the Scottsboro case, which it helped transform into an international cause célèbre. There were also many Communists and fellow travelers in the film industry and in literary circles and publishing.<sup>81</sup>

Communists were a very significant presence in the student movement of the 1930s and in the peace movement until the Popular Front period. Communists again assumed a prominent role in the peace movement when the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact was in force, from August 23, 1939, until June 22, 1941. During both of these periods of peace activism, the CP energetically campaigned against a U.S. military buildup, and in the latter against any U.S. assistance to Britain's war effort. The student movement of the 1930s was not surpassed in size and impact until the 1960s. The peace movement was also highly influential during the 1930s and until U.S. intervention in World War II.

The Trotskyists, although a marginal force on the American Left, joined pacifists in downplaying Nazi atrocities during the Holocaust by equating them with the Allied bombing of German cities, as discussed in [Chapter 3](#). This denial of the Holocaust's uniqueness, in which the New Left later joined, influenced America's liberal and academic mainstream as it turned against Israel in recent decades. The Trotskyists, who unlike the Communists have been consistently hostile to Israel since the 1930s, have been in the forefront in developing and disseminating anti-Zionist propaganda, often working closely with black nationalists. Some of this propaganda circulates in the mainstream.

The CP profoundly influenced the New Left of the 1960s, even though the younger movement emphasized its discontinuity and differences with the Old Left. Many of the New Left's leaders and activists were children of Communists, fellow travelers, and former Communists – so-called red diaper babies. The later New Left's persistent denial that antisemitism existed in the Arab world paralleled the CP's decades-long insistence that Jews were not persecuted in the Soviet Union. Its adulation of Palestinian guerilla chieftains like Yassir Arafat (and Third World dictators like Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, and Fidel Castro) was consistent with the CP's romanticization of Josef Stalin – New Leftists adored Uncle Ho as Communists of a previous generation had Uncle Joe.

The New Left, which came to wide public attention during the later years of the 1960s, had about 150,000 adherents at its peak in 1969–1970, with several million more youths participating in activities it sponsored.<sup>82</sup> The

New Left was highly important in shaping the antiwar movement. Its views were often presented in underground newspapers, which circulated widely on many campuses and in university neighborhoods. [Chapter 7](#) examines the anti-Israel campus alliance the New Left forged in the late 1960s with Arab student and black nationalist groups that often propagated or rationalized antisemitism. [Chapter 8](#) discusses the persisting influence of the far left–Arab student–black nationalist anti-Israel campus alliance in the decades following the New Left’s demise in the early 1970s.

Many New Leftists later joined university faculties, where they helped shape campus opinion about Israel, Zionism, and antisemitism (through teaching) and public opinion (through publication and speaking engagements). Their prominence in the anti-Israel boycott/divestment movement is analyzed in [Chapter 8](#). As Irving Howe noted, New Leftists during the early 1970s managed to take power in the largest academic professional association, the 30,000-member Modern Language Association.<sup>83</sup> Former New Leftists, many of whom remained on the far left, exercised significant influence in many other professional associations, often establishing their own caucuses, journals, and newsletters.<sup>84</sup>

New Left scholars were instrumental in establishing the “whiteness school,” which contributed significantly to the trivialization and denial of antisemitism in American history. The whiteness school strongly influenced mainstream ethnic/racial studies, and its approach has been incorporated into many college-level American history textbooks. Influenced by black nationalism, the whiteness school argues that European ethnic groups immigrating to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the Jews, quickly acculturated as “white Americans.” For the whiteness school, racial identity – white and black – remained the only significant line of division in the post–World War I period. It followed that antisemitism had ceased to be of any importance in the United States.<sup>85</sup>

## American Communists' Tangled Responses to Antisemitism and Nazism, 1920–1939

Communists during the interwar period elaborated the fierce anti-Zionism laced with antisemitism that the far left embraced in the late 1960s. The Soviets suppressed Zionism and the Hebrew language in Russia. Bolshevik overtures to radical Islamists in Central Asia anticipated those of the American far left in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The Communists failed to appreciate the central role of antisemitism in Nazi ideology and opposed Jewish emigration to Palestine, which might have saved many from annihilation. During the Moscow trials of 1936 to 1938, the Soviets invoked antisemitism to mobilize the public against the accused. For American Communists and their fellow travelers, the Moscow trials legitimated the use of anti-Jewish conspiracy theories, leading them to justify their use in subsequent Communist bloc show trials and in Arab propaganda.

The American CP's support for the anti-Jewish pogroms Arab mobs unleashed in Palestine during late August 1929 set a precedent for the far left's backing for, or excusing, Palestinian terrorist attacks against Jews during the 1960s and after. Much of the CP propaganda on behalf of what it alleged was a "revolutionary Arab uprising" was as viciously antisemitic as that issued by the Black Panthers or SDS during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

### SOVIET COURTSHIP OF MILITANT ISLAMISTS: THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLES OF THE EAST, BAKU, 1920

The Communist International (Comintern), frustrated by its failure to extend socialist revolution to the industrialized nations of Western Europe, increasingly after 1920 devoted its efforts to fomenting nationalist uprisings among the Islamic peoples of the Middle East and North Africa against Britain and France, the world's leading colonial powers. (The Comintern was the Soviet-controlled international organization of Communist parties.) The Comintern believed that it could most easily weaken Britain and France

by inciting revolt in the colonies, their “Achilles heel.” The Communists concentrated on eliciting support from Muslims, who comprised the overwhelming majority of the population of these regions. But profound cultural differences made tradition-bound Afro-Asian Muslims exceedingly distrustful of the Eurocentric Communists. As the London *Times* noted in 1920, “Bolshevism and Islam can no more mix than oil and water.”<sup>1</sup> Communist efforts to mobilize the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa led them often to overlook reactionary Muslim customs and prejudices.

In September 1920, the Comintern convened a Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku, the capital of Muslim Azerbaijan, to stimulate anti-imperialist sentiment in North Africa, the Middle East, and other parts of Asia. Almost 2,000 delegates representing twenty-nine Asian and African nationalities attended the Baku Congress. Congress chairman Grigory Zinoviev, head of the Comintern, in his opening address foreshadowed the 1960s far left’s substitution of the nonwhite “Third World” peasantry for the Western proletariat, “bought off” by affluence, as the world’s driving revolutionary force. Zinoviev proclaimed: “Millions of the toiling peoples of the East are rising up, who represent the majority of the world’s population and who, thus, are alone capable of resolving finally the struggle between labor and capital.”<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Pavlovich of the Bolshevik Commissariat of Foreign Affairs told the delegates that the postwar world was “divided into two groups of nations, with a small group of [Western] privileged, exploiting nations with full rights,” led by Britain, France, and the United States, “separated off from the rest.”<sup>3</sup>

At the Baku Congress, the Comintern made a concerted effort to associate the anticolonial struggle with Islam. Its manifesto inviting the peoples of the East to Baku, signed by Grigory Zinoviev and Karl Radek, was a call to a haj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca: “You march year in and year out through the deserts to the holy places where you show your respect for your past and for your God – now march through deserts, over mountains, and across rivers ... to come together to discuss how you can escape from the bonds of slavery.”<sup>4</sup> Most strikingly, Zinoviev concluded his opening address by urging the delegates to ignite a “holy war” against “English imperialism.” Zinoviev’s call to a Muslim “holy war” (not a class war) brought the delegates to their feet, waving their swords and shouting: “We vow it!” The London *Times* ridiculed the strange “spectacle of two Jews [Zinoviev and Hungarian Communist leader Bela Kun] ... summoning the world of Islam to a new Jihad.”<sup>5</sup>

Although formally committed to eradicating Islamic customs and practices that degraded women, the Comintern tolerated the Muslim delegates’ reactionary views about gender relations, which had disgusted Bolshevik leaders like Lenin and Trotsky. Some male delegates brought their harems with them. There were only fifty-five women among the almost 2,000 delegates at Baku. Two of the female delegates did speak at the congress,



denouncing “the secluded life led by Muslim women of the East” and calling for “complete equality of rights” for women. Comintern leaders engineered the election of women to the congress presidium.<sup>6</sup> But from that time onward, the Communists tended to trivialize Arab oppression of women, like the far left during and after the 1960s.

The Bolsheviks embraced militant anti-Zionism, ignoring its reactionary implications for women. The Zionist movement promised vastly greater freedom for women in Palestine than was permitted in Arab society. Indeed, the ferocity of Arab opposition to Jewish immigration was fueled in part by fear that the Zionist presence would undermine an Islamic gender system that severely restricted and humiliated women. The left-wing socialist Zionist Poale Zion delegation at Baku, in its declaration to the congress, “Settle and Colonize Palestine on Communist Principles,” emphasized this point, stating that Jewish settlement in Palestine “undermine[s] the patriarchal order of the country.”<sup>7</sup>

The Communists did not consider the consequences for women of mobilizing militant Arab nationalism and radical Islamism against the West. The Soviets already controlled Central Asia, unlike the Middle East and North Africa and thus, at least initially, did not believe they had to tolerate reactionary Islamic customs and practices there. As doctrinaire Marxists they assumed that having changed the economic system of the region, they could transform its cultural practices. Culture was part of a “superstructure” rooted in the economic “base.” According to the Soviets’ line of thinking, changing a society’s economic base transformed the superstructure. The Soviets in Central Asia therefore believed that they could abolish the veiling of women, which denied their individuality and discouraged oral expression, and the wearing of the “disfiguring *paranja*,” which covered a woman’s body “like a ‘living sack.’” They were optimistic about providing Central Asian Muslim women access to education and freedom of physical movement outside and inside the home and about abolishing harems; forced marriage of young girls, often to middle-aged and old men; the selling of wives; and polygamy.<sup>8</sup> Yet the Soviets supported Arab nationalist and Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa that promoted these customs and promised to impose them on all of Palestine after expelling or exterminating the Jews. Militant Islamists in Central Asia also offered formidable resistance to Soviet efforts to emancipate Muslim women.

At the Congress of the Peoples of the East, the Central Bureau of Jewish Sections of the Communist Party of Russia spoke for the party leadership in a position paper that identified Zionism as a bourgeois instrument of British imperialism. The paper declared that “on the pretense of [Jewish] national liberation, a privileged Jewish minority is being artificially implanted in the population of Palestine” in “direct violation of the rights of the Arab working masses.” Britain’s “Zionist servants,” by arousing “national feelings” among Jewish workers, led them to ally with the Jewish bourgeoisie, undermining



support for Communism. The Zionist leadership joined with the “British occupiers” to “plunder” the Arab peasantry. The position paper branded Zionism thoroughly bourgeois and “sharply condemn[ed]” the Poale Zion, which it referred to as the “so-called Jewish Communist Party,” for claiming to “combine communism with adherence to Zionist ideology.” Poale Zion was “using communist slogans to exert bourgeois influence on the proletariat.”<sup>9</sup>

The party leadership, however, did permit a hearing at the congress for other perspectives on Zionism, a toleration it soon after abandoned. The savage pogroms that swept across Poland, the Ukraine, and Russia from 1919 to 1921 persuaded increasing numbers of Communists of the need for a Jewish homeland. The Poale Zion argued that Zionism constituted a progressive force in Palestine, establishing “communal farms and production cooperatives” that showed the Arab masses “the way out of their bondage” to the Arab “sheiks, emirs, and other parasites.” The Jewish masses were introducing the “Red specter of communism” into Palestine. Similarly, a delegation of Mountain Jews from the Caucasus declared to the congress that it hoped to help build “a Jewish communist society in Palestine.” The delegation challenged the orthodox Bolshevik position that Jews did not constitute a people. Citing the “cries and groans of our brothers in Ukraine and Poland,” it insisted that the postwar pogroms had underscored “yet again the commonality and singularity of [the] ... needs of Jewish working people around the world.”<sup>10</sup>

#### THE SOVIET SUPPRESSION OF ZIONISM AND HEBREW DURING THE 1920S

During the 1920s, the Soviet government waged a concerted campaign to obliterate the Zionist movement in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It denounced Zionism as a monstrous force, a “hydra,” allied to Russian reaction and Western imperialism. Bolshevik authorities during the Russian Civil War falsely claimed that soldiers from Britain’s Jewish Legion, which had fought the Ottoman Turks in Palestine during World War I, were engaged in combat against Red forces in the Crimea and in Siberia. They alleged that American Zionists provided financial backing for Admiral Kolchak’s White Army and branded Henry Morgenthau, former U.S. ambassador to Turkey, a Zionist agent dispatched to Poland to persuade Jews there to submit to “imperialist” rule.<sup>11</sup>

These bizarre charges foreshadowed Soviet and far left fantasies decades later about Zionists joining antisemitic reactionaries in sinister conspiracies to subjugate vast populations. Zionists would hardly provide financial or military backing to the White Armies, which murdered unprecedented numbers of Jews in horrific pogroms. Drawing on the long-standing antisemitic image of inordinate Jewish power, the Soviets claimed that 80,000 Jewish

Legionnaires in Palestine had pledged support to Entente forces fighting the Red Army in Russia, hugely exaggerating the Legion's size. The allegation of Zionist collaboration with the Whites, whose officers circulated virulently antisemitic tracts, including the czarist forgery the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, presaged later patently false far left claims that Zionists collaborated with the Nazis during the Holocaust. The portrayal of the staunchly anti-Zionist Henry Morgenthau as a Zionist emissary foreshadowed the Soviet accusation in the 1952 Slansky show trials (discussed in [Chapter 6](#)) that the eleven Jewish defendants, all anti-Zionists, were Zionist agents of an American-Israeli plot to restore capitalism in Eastern Europe. In 1921, Morgenthau published a blistering attack on Zionism, calling it "the most stupendous fallacy in Jewish history." Morgenthau denounced Zionism as "wrong in principle and impossible of realization ... unsound in its economics, fantastical in its politics, and sterile in its spiritual ideals.... A retrogression into the blackest error."<sup>12</sup>

The Bolshevik government in 1919 banned Zionism as "a counter-revolutionary expression of bourgeois nationalism" and raided Zionist meetings. The resulting arrests soon drove the movement underground. In February 1921, the head of the Zionist commission in Palestine reported to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency after a trip to Soviet Russia that almost no Zionist activity was permitted there. Soviet universities frequently expelled Zionist students.<sup>13</sup>

During the mid-1920s, arrests of Zionists escalated significantly, with thousands deported to Siberian labor camps. Soviet authorities forbade many of those who completed their sentences to return home, abandoning them in remote regions of Asia. In 1927, the Fifteenth Zionist Congress, meeting at Basel, Switzerland, issued a sharply worded protest against the "inhuman persecutions" that Soviet Communists inflicted on Zionists, which were designed to destroy "the Jewish national sentiment." The congress called the Zionists held in Soviet prisons "martyrs of the Jewish liberation movement" and demanded their release. At the next Zionist congress in Zurich in 1929, the delegates stood to honor the many Zionists who had died during the previous two years on their way to prison and exile in Siberia.<sup>14</sup>

By the late 1920s, the Soviet government had also liquidated the Hechalutz colonies, collective farms concentrated in the Crimea, which Jews had founded to prepare themselves to establish agricultural settlements in Palestine. Soviet authorities sent the Hechalutz colonies' leaders to prison or labor camps. In 1928, Dr. Chaim Alizaroff, representative of the Jewish Labor Party of Palestine, informed a conference of the American Jewish Congress in New York that the Soviet government had, in one concerted action, just imprisoned 3,000 Zionists and shut down four Russian Zionist training farms. The *New York Times* reported in July 1928 the GPU's (Soviet secret police) arrest of the entire administration of the Crimea's last surviving Hechalutz colony and the exile of thirty Jewish colonists to Siberia.<sup>15</sup>

The Soviets' drive against Zionism was accompanied by the suppression of the Hebrew language, which they feared would stimulate Jewish national consciousness and encourage commitment to Judaism. Viewing the language as "defective and dangerous," the Soviets banned even Hebrew works favorable to the regime. Their contempt for Hebrew ignored its role as the language in which the earliest concepts of social justice were expressed. Dismissing Hebrew as a dead language, Soviet authorities maintained that "a corpse had no rights."<sup>16</sup>

American Communists fully endorsed the Soviet suppression of Zionism and Hebrew. In 1934, Joshua Kunitz, an American CP member of Russian-Jewish origin, writing in the Communist weekly magazine *New Masses*, dismissed Hebrew as a "thoroughly obsolete" language of no interest to anyone but philologists. Kunitz explained that the Soviets were justified in prohibiting Zionism because they could not tolerate "bourgeois chauvinism."<sup>17</sup>

THE COMMUNIST RESPONSE TO THE 1929 ARAB POGROMS:  
PRECEDENT FOR THE AMERICAN FAR LEFT'S POST-1967  
SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN TERRORISM

In late August 1929, aroused by the virulently antisemitic harangues of the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, Arab mobs armed with swords and axes, knives, sledgehammers, iron bars, and stones, screaming "Allah is Great ... Kill the Jews!" attacked Jews in Hebron, Jerusalem, Safed, Haifa, Jaffa, and even Tel Aviv, as well as many Jewish agricultural settlements. They broke into Jewish homes and stores and massacred Jewish men and women – including the elderly – and children, some of them less than five years old. The Arabs' savagery was unrestrained. The pogromists beheaded some of their victims with axes and chopped off hands. They gouged out the eyes of a Jewish pharmacist in Hebron while he was still alive and then murdered him. The attackers castrated two rabbis there and killed them and burned another rabbi alive. They raped Jewish women. An Arab, noticing a Jewish girl with stab wounds writhing on the ground, sliced open her abdomen. The pogromists looted Jewish houses and stores before setting them on fire. They burned down the Jewish orphanage at Safed and desecrated synagogues. Arab policemen, sympathetic to the pogromists, did little or nothing to intercede.<sup>18</sup>

The pogroms inflicted massive damage to the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) – at least 133 Jews were killed and 399 wounded.<sup>19</sup> Entire Jewish settlements and neighborhoods were permanently destroyed. Hebron, "the most ancient Jewish community in Palestine," was "virtually extinguished."<sup>20</sup> Many of the murdered Jews in Hebron were orthodox students at the Slobodka Rabbinical College, which was attacked on the Sabbath. Rooms there were "strewn with arms, legs, and noses," which



PHOTO 2. A synagogue in Hebron desecrated by Arabs during the 1929 Palestine pogroms. The pogromists smashed furniture and tore up sacred books. (Library of Congress)



PHOTO 3. Jews fleeing the Old City, Jerusalem, during the 1929 Palestine pogroms. (Library of Congress)

Arabs had amputated from their Jewish victims.<sup>21</sup> British forces, arriving from Egypt several days after the pogroms had begun, forced Jews to evacuate agricultural settlements where they had determined to make a stand, after which “the Arabs came in and looted and pillaged and smashed to their hearts’ content.” A few days after the pogroms subsided the *New York*

*Times* estimated that they had created 9,200 Jewish refugees, of whom 4,200 had been left absolutely destitute.<sup>22</sup>

Although hostile to Zionism, the American CP's Yiddish newspaper, *Morgen Freiheit*, at first called the violent outbreaks in Palestine anti-Jewish pogroms. It assigned "final responsibility," however, to the "British imperialists," arguing that, had the British authorities wished to do so, they could have suppressed the violence. But "Zionist leaders" were also partly to blame, according to *Morgen Freiheit*, because their "anti-Arab policy" had sparked resentment among the masses.<sup>23</sup>

The CP secretariat almost immediately condemned *Morgen Freiheit*'s position as "counterrevolutionary." It informed *Morgen Freiheit* that it had seriously erred in viewing the violent outbreaks as a "race" war, rather than as a "class" war launched by "expropriated Arab peasants" against "British imperialism" and its "Zionist agents." The British used the Zionist movement to confiscate Arab land and gain control of Palestine's "rich" chemical resources. The Zionists flooded the labor market by encouraging Jewish immigration to Palestine, thereby depressing wage levels. Parasitic Jewish capitalists established large fruit plantations on the land of displaced Arab peasants, sharing with their British masters the profits they extracted from Arab and Jewish workers employed at "starvation rates."<sup>24</sup> The CP was emphatic that "Palestine is an Arab country."<sup>25</sup>

Reacting to pressure from the CP secretariat, which was following Moscow's instructions, *Morgen Freiheit* now joined the CP's English-language newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, in a campaign of vituperation against the "Zionist-Fascists" who had "provoked the Arab uprising." During the years from 1928 to 1935, the "Third Period" in world Communist policy, the Comintern assumed that capitalism was entering its final stage of crisis and adopted an ultraleftist posture to hasten its collapse. Thus *Morgen Freiheit* proclaimed, "The Arab uprising is spreading throughout the entire Middle East." Foreshadowing the charges of "criminality" that such groups as the Black Panthers and SDS later directed against Israel, the CP denounced Zionists as "murderers" engaged in "frightful campaigns of land robbery." The CP staged rallies in New York and other major cities to build support for "the Arabian masses in their struggle against British imperialism and its Zionist allies."<sup>26</sup> In the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century the denunciations would undergo a slight change, with Zionists now identified as "agents of American imperialism."

Incredibly, the American Communist press accused the Jews of the Yishuv of joining with the "British imperialists" to carry out pogroms against the Arabs, issuing such headlines as "Zionists Slaughter Arab Men, Women, and Children" and "The Blood Is on Your Hands, Zionists."<sup>27</sup> The *Daily Worker* denied the reports of Arab atrocities against Jews as fabrications by "Zionist" physicians.<sup>28</sup> The CP defamed the Jewish Legion, the first Jewish army created since the Romans crushed Bar Kochba's uprising in 135 CE.

Formed to fight with the British in Palestine during World War I, the Jewish Legion had been a tremendous source of inspiration to Jews around the world, who for centuries were defenseless against antisemitic attack. The *Daily Worker* denounced the Jewish Legion as “fascists” and “dupes of British imperialism” (for having fought on the Allied side in World War I). *Morgen Freiheit* accused its veterans in Palestine of carrying out pogroms against the Arabs.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps most shocking were the *Daily Worker*’s blatantly antisemitic cartoons that accompanied reports of the conflict. Invoking the Christian deicide accusation, one depicted a huge cross, with a Star of David on top of the vertical bar and the words “For Arabs” on the horizontal bar. Another showed a smiling fat man holding a cigar, leaning back comfortably in an armchair – the proverbial capitalist – with bodies hanging above him. The fat man was labeled “Zionist”; in the background, a domed building displayed a Star of David.<sup>30</sup>

The CP’s support for what *Morgen Freiheit* editor Melech Epstein later called “fanatical Arab nationalism” and terrorism against Jews seriously damaged its standing in the Jewish community. Epstein commented that “the harm done was irreparable.”<sup>31</sup>

During the early 1930s, Leon Trotsky, exiled by Stalin from the Soviet Union, dodged the opportunity to condemn the antisemitic slaughter in Palestine when a journalist asked him to comment on the official Communist characterization of the “Jewish-Arab events in 1929 in Palestine as the revolutionary uprising of the oppressed Arabian masses.” Trotsky responded that he was not sufficiently “familiar with the facts to venture a definite opinion.” He stated that he would need to study the matter further to determine how best to assess the involvement of “national liberationists (anti-imperialists) and reactionary Mohammedans and anti-Semitic pogromists.” Like most Communists, Trotsky believed that the “Arabian-Jewish” conflict could be solved only through a proletarian revolution carried out by the working classes of both peoples acting in alliance.<sup>32</sup>

For the rest of the Third Period, the American CP expressed intense hatred of Zionism and adamantly opposed allowing Jewish refugees from Nazism a haven in Palestine. It praised the Arabs’ general strike against Jewish immigration on November 2, 1933, the sixteenth anniversary of Britain’s Balfour Declaration. The *Daily Worker* denounced the Balfour Declaration, which promised the Jewish people a homeland in Palestine, as an imperialist maneuver, a “step in Britain’s seizure of Palestine as a semi-colony and military base.”<sup>33</sup>

#### BIROBIDZHAN: DOOMED FROM THE START

In part to undermine support for Zionism, the Soviet leadership during the late 1920s modified its long-standing insistence that Jews did not

constitute a people by establishing a Jewish settlement called Birobidzhan in a remote, sparsely populated wilderness area of eastern Siberia near the Amur River bordering Manchuria. The Zionist movement was prohibited in Birobidzhan, and the practice of Judaism was "strictly proscribed," as it was throughout the Soviet Union. Birobidzhan was a Soviet concession to "territorialism," a form of Jewish nationalism that called for establishing a Jewish society on a land outside Palestine. Birobidzhan was also meant to serve as a bulwark against Japanese penetration of eastern Siberia. In May 1934, the Soviet government designated Birobidzhan as the "Jewish Autonomous Region (JAR)."

Raising Birobidzhan's status to that of autonomous region was designed to signal to the world that Jews in the Soviet Union enjoyed "full political and social rights" at a time when Fascist countries were engaged in "an orgy of anti-Semitism ... accompanied by ... pogroms." At a Communist-sponsored rally at New York's Madison Square Garden in June 1934 to celebrate the formation of the Jewish autonomous region, CP general secretary Earl Browder boasted that the Soviet Union alone among nations was "moving forward," advancing Jewish liberation, while the entire capitalist world drifted into fascism and "the slimy poison of anti-Semitism." The 10,000 people assembled adopted a resolution praising the Soviet Union as the only nation in the world where national minorities, including the Jews, were not "persecuted and forced into assimilation."<sup>34</sup>

The Birobidzhan project was doomed from the start because of its extreme isolation and distance from areas of Jewish population and its inhospitable climate and terrain, and most importantly, because the region was not in any way associated with Jewish historical experience, culture, or religion. Moreover, the Soviet leadership imposed its decision to create Birobidzhan from above, without consultation with the Jewish population, suggesting that it was undeserving of self-determination.<sup>35</sup> The Soviet government established no Jewish agency to prepare the region for settlement or to organize colonization.<sup>36</sup> Jewish Communists who proposed a territorial solution for the Jew within the Soviet Union favored the northern Crimea, a fertile region with a pleasant climate near large Jewish populations. By the 1920s, Jews had already established several colonies there.<sup>37</sup> Beginning in 1926, however, the Soviet leadership condemned and actively discouraged Jewish colonization in the Crimea.

Although Communists hailed Birobidzhan as a major advance for Jews and sang its praises into the mid-1950s, non-Communist commentators who observed its dismal living conditions and Jews' lack of interest in moving there quickly pronounced it a failure. Jews never constituted close to a majority of Birobidzhan's population. Migrants to Birobidzhan were required to travel vast distances, riding slowly across Siberia in primitive railroad conveyances. It could take almost a month on the one-track Siberian Railway to get to Birobidzhan from central Russia, and most Jews embarked from



farther away than that. Railroad cars were heated by wood stoves, and passengers sometimes had to collect wood along the route.<sup>38</sup>

Most Jews who made the enormous trek to the forests and swamps of eastern Siberia did not persist there for very long. At the end of 1933 only 7,000 Jews remained of the 18,000 who had migrated to Birobidzhan.<sup>39</sup> The settlers encountered a land with “poor soil, heavy rains during July and August when the crop was about to ripen, hordes of mosquitos and flies, and a very cold winter.”<sup>40</sup> An American Jewish migrant who settled in Birobidzhan during the early 1930s recalled the conditions as primitive: “Dirt roads, tents for sleeping, and an outdoor brick oven for cooking.” The *New York Times* reported in 1937 that the average worker in Birobidzhan “lived in barracks, two or three families in a space that normally should serve one.” The district was “teeming with epidemics,” and Birobidzhan lacked hospital accommodations for infectious cases. It was “short of even simple drugs like iodine.”<sup>41</sup>

Nor did Birobidzhan’s schools transmit much Jewish culture to students. In 1939, at most 20 percent of Birobidzhan’s Jewish children attended schools in which the instruction was in Yiddish rather than Russian. Even these schools disappeared during World War II. None of the Soviet Union’s Yiddish schools, including those in the Jewish Autonomous Region, offered Jewish history courses. Birobidzhan’s schools used Jewish holidays only to propagate antireligious propaganda.<sup>42</sup>

In 1936, Stalin himself, although not explicitly mentioning Jews, appeared to puncture any hope that the Soviet government would ever elevate Birobidzhan to the status of Jewish Autonomous Republic, the objective of many Jewish supporters of colonization. Mikhail Kalinin, president of the Soviet Union, had suggested in May 1934, when the Jewish Autonomous Region was declared, that the Soviet government might accord this status when Birobidzhan’s Jewish population reached 100,000. Stalin, however, in a speech entitled “On the Draft Constitution of the U.S.S.R.,” listed conditions required to transform an autonomous region into an autonomous republic that Birobidzhan clearly could not meet. In addition to constituting a majority, the nationality to which the autonomous republic was assigned must number at least one million. Birobidzhan clearly could not meet such conditions for at least a couple of centuries. It had attracted only a trickle of Jewish immigrants, many of whom had not stayed there. In 1937 Jews remained a relatively small minority in the Jewish Autonomous Region, numbering only 20,000.<sup>43</sup>

By the mid-1930s it was apparent to all but the diehard Communists that Birobidzhan would never attract more than a tiny percentage of Jews, even from within the Soviet Union. London’s *Jewish Chronicle* declared in June 1934 that “among all the projects that have been conceived ... to establish an independent Jewish settlement none has been proclaimed so triumphantly and failed so disastrously as the scheme to create a so-called ‘Jewish



Republic' in Biro-Bidjan." The leftist Manchester *Guardian* correctly predicted the same year that Birobidzhan "will be a quasi-political curiosity, but of no serious importance for the solution of the Jewish question."<sup>44</sup>

### THE THIRD PERIOD

From January 30, 1933, when Adolf Hitler assumed power in Germany, until the end of World War II, the Communist Party, the most influential American far left group of the time, made several sudden and substantive shifts in its positions on Nazism and antisemitism. These changes were necessitated by the sharp fluctuations in the Comintern's positions. During the early period of Nazi rule, which coincided with the last years of the Third Period, the Communists engaged in highly visible anti-Nazi agitation but made no attempt to cooperate with the mainstream American Jewish and labor groups that organized massive street demonstrations and rallies against Nazi antisemitism. Assuming that capitalism was entering its death throes, the CP considered anyone to its right to be an ally of a decaying bourgeoisie that would turn to fascism to protect its class interests. Such logic led the CP to denounce even the Socialists as "social fascists."

In explaining Hitler's rise to power, the CP typically advanced a simplistic class analysis that greatly deemphasized the role of antisemitism in Nazi ideology. The most widely distributed Communist work on the subject published in the United States, R. Palme Dutt's *Fascism and Social Revolution* (1935), subtitled *A Study of the Economics and Politics of the Extreme Stages of Capitalism in Decay*, presented Nazism as a maneuver by a desperate ruling class, confronted with the imminent collapse of the bourgeois economic system, to "hold down the workers" and "maintain its power." According to Dutt, modern antisemitism emerged when capitalism was "tottering," and it intensified "in proportion as the class struggle" grew "acute." Modern antisemitism was "directly inspired and stimulated from above" (that is, by the ruling class) to divide and undermine a growing proletarian movement.<sup>45</sup> Like the far left of the 1960s, the Communists of the 1930s ignored the deep theological and cultural roots of antisemitism in the Christian and Islamic worlds.

The Communists warned that as the United States veered toward fascism, antisemitism would intensify and that pogroms were "probable." The capitalists would promote antisemitism to deflect the masses' anger away from corporate business, the real cause of their economic miseries. The Jews, a weak minority group whom the masses associated with hucksterism, provided a convenient scapegoat. In December 1934, a *New Masses* editorial claimed that antisemitism in the United States was becoming as menacing as in Nazi Germany and Poland. The editorial accompanied a series of nine articles by John L. Spivak on the growth of organized antisemitism in the United States, published between October 2 and November 27, 1934.

Spivak attributed the outpouring of antisemitism to the machinations of corporate business and the U.S. government and military, and to the Hitler regime's operatives in the United States. He also emphasized the "avalanche of anti-semitism in our highest institutions of learning." *New Masses* published the articles as a pamphlet entitled *Plotting America's Pogroms*.<sup>46</sup>

*New Masses* insisted that the causes of antisemitism were primarily economic. Even in the Middle Ages, religion had served only as a "cloak." Antisemitism's companion fascism, introduced to protect corporate profits, was "primarily directed against the producing masses" rather than against Jews. *New Masses's* narrow class analysis caused it to predict that upper-class American Jews would side with the fascists against the Jewish masses. *New Masses* alleged that wealthy German Jews had "helped to finance Hitler's rise to power." It based this assertion on the Communists' claim that the Nazi government had not expropriated the larger Jewish bankers. Spivak similarly accused American Jewish business magnates of financing antisemitic organizations.<sup>47</sup>

Spivak did provide the American public with valuable information about domestic fascist groups, much of it gleaned from undercover operatives who had infiltrated them. He recalled that his "Plotting America's Pogroms" series generated considerable interest, particularly among American Jews, despite *New Masses's* small circulation. Spivak estimated that two million people read articles in the series, because many Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish newspapers printed lengthy excerpts or reprinted entire articles. He claimed that *New Masses's* circulation tripled during the period it ran his series.<sup>48</sup> In December 1934 Spivak delivered public lectures on the antisemitic danger in the United States in Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland.<sup>49</sup>

*New Masses* during the Third Period denounced the American Jewish (AJ) Congress's response to the Hitler regime's atrocities as "pussy-footing." The AJCongress had rallied hundreds of thousands of Americans against Nazi antisemitism in massive demonstrations during the spring of 1933. But *New Masses* condemned the AJCongress as supported by "upper middle-class groups" and for its "exaggerated nationalism" (meaning Zionism).<sup>50</sup> The AJCongress undermined the defense of European and American Jewry against fascism by not supporting Communist efforts to foment proletarian revolution. The CP ridiculed the AJCongress for promoting Jewish emigration to Palestine as a means of escaping the European death trap.

The Communists' conflation of socialists and fascists reinforced their support for the Arabs' violent campaign against Jewish settlement in Palestine. The nascent Jewish trade union movement in Palestine, the Histadrut, was aligned with the Labour and Socialist International, the international federation of social democratic parties. As Franz Borkenau noted, Palestine's Jews were the only people in the Middle East who developed during the 1920s a "powerful labor movement of the European type," a necessary precondition, according to Communists, for proletarian revolution. Jewish immigration to

Palestine increasingly strengthened this labor movement. Nonetheless, "the Comintern did not shrink for a moment from inciting the Arabs, under the leadership of the Mufti of Jerusalem, to fight and destroy the unions of the Jewish workers," and to block Jewish immigration.<sup>51</sup>

The CP throughout the Third Period conflated all strands of Zionism with fascism. In February 1935 *New Masses* published an article by Robert Gessner entitled "Brown Shirts in Zion" that branded as "Nazi" both the mainstream socialist Zionists, who were mostly affiliated with the Mapai Party and the Histadrut, and the more hard-line Revisionist Zionists led by Vladimir Jabotinsky. Gessner declared that the socialist Zionists, including those living on the *kibbutzim* (communal farms), "may be partially described as Pink Nazis." He labeled the Revisionists "Brown Nazis." The *New Masses* editors referred to the August 1929 Palestine pogroms as "outbreaks" in which "numerous Jews and Arabs were killed."<sup>52</sup>

To stimulate a revolutionary consciousness, the CP preferred to stage or join dramatic confrontations to protest Nazi officials' speaking engagements in the United States and the arrival of German vessels in U.S. ports. Most of these protest actions resulted in clashes with the police and arrests. To be sure, such demonstrations proved valuable in making Americans more aware of Nazi barbarism.<sup>53</sup> But in its anti-Nazi agitation, the CP emphasized the Hitler regime's imprisonment of German Communists and trade union opponents rather than Nazi antisemitism.

The CP distanced itself from the Jewish community by refusing to support the boycott of German goods, extending the damage created by its Palestine policy in 1929.<sup>54</sup> Initiated by the Jewish War Veterans of the United States in March 1933, almost immediately after the Nazis came to power, the boycott was endorsed in May by Samuel Untermyer's American League for the Defense of Jewish Rights and in August by the American Jewish Congress. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) declared its enthusiastic support for the boycott at its convention in October, during which it strongly condemned the Nazi persecution of Jews. By the end of 1933, Jews at the grass roots were extensively involved in promoting the boycott.<sup>55</sup>

Following the Kremlin's lead, the CP characterized the boycott as a "scheme" of the "bourgeoisie" to "capture the German market" in the United States. Ignoring massive grassroots Jewish and labor support for the boycott, the CP depicted it as a conspiracy by American corporate business to enlarge its market share by preventing German concerns from selling to American consumers.<sup>56</sup>

The Communists' main motive in opposing the boycott was probably its Third Period reluctance to cooperate in any way with mainstream Jewish organizations or with the AFL. The *Daily Worker* identified Samuel Untermyer, the most prominent leader of the anti-Nazi boycott movement, as a "financial adviser to Tammany Hall" and derided him as "a man accustomed for years to having his own way."<sup>57</sup> After the AFL convention

endorsed the boycott, the *Daily Worker* published an article by Comintern official Bela Kun, head of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet republic of 1919, which denounced the AFL's action as consistent with the Socialist (Second) International's "treacherous line." Kun maintained that the boycott, because it involved cooperation with "bourgeois" elements, "social fascists," and "reformist trade unions," distracted workers from their revolutionary task. He implied that proletarian revolution was imminent in the advanced industrial nations, and that Germany's Nazi regime did not differ appreciably from the government of the Western democracies. The struggle against Germany's "fascist dictatorship of finance capital" could succeed only if each nation's workers directed it "simultaneously against [their] own bourgeoisie." The current Jewish and trade union boycott of Nazi goods and services was accordingly a diversion designed "to sabotage the real struggle against German fascism and against the fascism of one's own country."<sup>58</sup> Melech Epstein, editor of the *Morgen Freiheit* when it condemned the boycott, later asserted that Kremlin opposition was influenced by a "huge new credit" that the Nazi government had extended for Soviet orders of German goods.<sup>59</sup>

The Communists' Third Period ultraleftism also led them initially to refrain from joining the movement against incorporating the Saar into Nazi Germany. This further antagonized many American Jews. The Allied powers at the Versailles Peace Conference had placed the mostly German-speaking Saar, a major coal-producing region, under a League of Nations commission, with France in control of its coal mines. They arranged for a plebiscite to be held after fifteen years, on January 13, 1935, in which the Saar's population could vote for annexation to either Germany or France, or could choose to remain under League of Nations administration. The plebiscite was highly significant because it provided an ethnically German population on Germany's border the opportunity to freely express its opinion of Hitler's regime after it had been in power for two years.<sup>60</sup>

Although reincorporating the Saar into Germany would obviously be disastrous for the region's 5,000 Jews, the Communists during the early phase of the plebiscite campaign refused to support either annexation to France or remaining under League of Nations administration. The Communists denounced those who backed these alternatives as "agents of French imperialism." They advanced instead the slogan "for a Red Saar in Soviet Germany." Many voters interpreted this as a call not to vote at all, or to vote for annexation to Germany.<sup>61</sup>

Although the Comintern suddenly abandoned the Red-Saar-in-a-Soviet-Germany slogan in June 1934 to support continuation of the League of Nations mandate, the Communists had damaged the anti-Nazi effort and endangered the Saar's Jews. The people of the Saar voted by more than 90 percent to join Nazi Germany. The day before the plebiscite, the Nazi party newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, "announced gleefully" that the

Saar's Jews would be "entirely liquidated." After the plebiscite many Jews fled the Saar in panic, although France and the Netherlands promptly sealed their borders to prevent refugees from entering. Most of the Saar's Jews were unable to leave, trapped because they could not sell their unmovable property. The *Philadelphia Jewish Exponent* noted immediately after the plebiscite that "no German today is willing to buy anything from a Jew in the Saar, even at low prices, because he figures that the Jew later will be compelled to give up his property in the Saar, and thus Germans will be able to get it without paying for it."<sup>62</sup>

Because the CP viewed Nazism as a system imposed by capitalists, it failed to grasp the German masses' strong support for it. It ignored clear signs like the Saar plebiscite result. From the Third Period into World War II, the CP deluded itself that a sizeable workers' anti-Nazi underground movement operated in Germany. Having visited the Third Reich in 1935, John L. Spivak reported in *Europe Under the Terror* (1936) that the only groups there commanding a large following were conservative monarchists favoring restoration of the Hohenzollerns and the Communists, not the Nazis. He alleged that the destruction of the Nazi Party's "left wing" during the Night of the Long Knives (June 30–July 1, 1934) had caused many workers to abandon Hitler. Spivak declared that a cohesive Communist underground was organizing effectively against the Nazi regime, particularly in Germany's industrial centers. A Communist who had infiltrated the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) and assumed an officer's rank told Spivak in Hamburg that "in many sections of Germany, Communists have won the sympathy of the people and the courts." He claimed that "the German people are not sadists; they are really a kindly people." The underground Communist informed Spivak that "the period Germany is passing through today is but another step in our direction. Before Hitler is through he will have helped considerably to wreck the already weak capitalist system here." He suggested that if war broke out between Germany and the Soviet Union in two or three years, Germany's Communists could be ready in a short time to launch a civil war to topple the Nazis.<sup>63</sup>

Melech Epstein noted that during the Third Period the CP dismissed the Jewish cultural heritage, including nearly all secular Yiddish literature, as of no value. It also made a point of expressing public contempt for Judaism by sponsoring disparaging lectures on Yom Kippur and publishing its Yiddish newspaper *Morgen Freiheit* on the Jewish high holidays.<sup>64</sup>

#### THE POPULAR FRONT

The CP made a dramatic shift in 1935 when the Comintern, alarmed by a remilitarizing and increasingly menacing Nazi Germany, encouraged Communists to join socialists and liberals in building a popular front against fascism. To enhance its security against German attack, the Soviet Union

also tried to forge stronger ties with the Western democracies. The CP now spoke very favorably of President Roosevelt.

The effort to build a broad anti-Nazi coalition led the CP to devote more serious attention to antisemitism. The Nazis, after all, were virulent anti-semites. The Communists now presented themselves as the most ardent and dependable opponent of the Nazis. In February 1936, the editors of *New Masses* strongly denounced the Nazis' "anti-semitic brutalities" and warned that "only world opinion has been able to save the German Jews from complete extermination." The CP endorsed the boycott of German goods. It was prominent in the formation and leadership of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, which was sent to Spain to defend the republican government in the first major armed confrontation with fascism. The Communists also repeatedly proclaimed that the Soviet Union was the first nation in the world to make antisemitism illegal. A. B. Magil, a CP leader, claimed to be the first to expose the antisemitism of the radio priest Charles Coughlin, in a 1935 pamphlet.<sup>65</sup>

The CP joined many American Jews and liberals in enthusiastically backing the movement to boycott the 1936 Olympic Games, hosted by the Nazi government in Berlin. Boycotting the Berlin games provided "a rare opportunity to deal a body blow to Nazism." William Cunningham, writing in the *New Masses* in October 1935, called the forthcoming Berlin Olympics "the greatest publicity stunt ever pulled ... for the purpose of glorifying ... 'Aryan superiority.'" The Hitler regime's intention was to make the Berlin Olympics "the proudest event in the history of Nazism." Cunningham condemned Germany for barring Jewish athletes from participating in the preliminaries used to select the national team. The *New Masses* editors called for a democratic nation to host a counter-Olympics as an alternative to the Berlin games. The proceeds from the counter-Olympics would be used for "the relief of refugees from Nazi terrorism."<sup>66</sup> The CP's youth division, the Young Communist League (YCL), gave special attention to promoting the Olympic boycott, believing that young people were particularly interested in athletics.<sup>67</sup>

In November 1935 Bruce Minton, a *New Masses* editor and CP leader, emphasized that keeping the United States out of the Berlin Olympics was an important part of the larger campaign to boycott German goods and services. He noted that Nazi Germany's economy would benefit enormously from the Berlin Olympics: "At least half a million tourists ... will patronize German hotels, travel on German boats and trains, and remain in Germany at least two weeks." Minton blasted American Olympic Committee official General Charles Sherrill for threatening Jews who supported boycotting the Berlin games and for invoking antisemitic stereotypes. Sherrill had recently returned from a three- or four-day trip to Germany to investigate charges that it discriminated against Jewish athletes. He had warned American Jews that their agitation for a boycott would precipitate "a wave of anti-semitism"

in the United States. Minton denounced as “patently absurd” Sherrill’s comment that no Jew had ever achieved prominence in sports, which implied that Nazi discrimination was of no consequence. Characterizing Jews as physically incapable was a long-standing antisemitic practice. Minton noted that Germany’s Jewish athletes won 8 percent of Germany’s points in the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, when Jews made up only 1 percent of Germany’s population.<sup>68</sup>

The CP’s Education Department in February 1939 distributed a set of “Speakers’ Notes” to party activists, to illustrate how reactionaries regularly appealed to anti-Jewish prejudice to discredit progressive causes. The “Speakers’ Notes” cited the following as common antisemitic lies: “The New Deal is a Jew Deal; Loyalist Spain is a Jewish-Communist dictatorship.” The CP accused the “top Jewish bourgeoisie,” associated with the American Jewish Committee, of pursuing a “policy of appeasement” toward antisemites. By contrast, the Jewish People’s Committee (JPC), a CP front group, had formulated “a militant program of action” to unify American Jews against antisemitism and fascism. But the CP complained that the JPC’s forceful stand against antisemitism was “sabotaged by the bourgeois Jewish organizations.”

In a concluding section entitled “What Is to Be Done,” “Speakers’ Notes” provided instructions for CP activists on how to combat antisemitism. The section heading strongly legitimized the struggle against anti-Jewish prejudice, discrimination, and violence by drawing on the title of V. I. Lenin’s 1902 book laying out the revolutionists’ tasks, a work greatly respected within the Communist movement. “Speakers’ Notes” urged party activists to monitor antisemitic organizations, and to convene public meetings to refute their propaganda. It called on Communists to lobby for legislation to outlaw antisemitic incitement.<sup>69</sup>

The YCL during the Popular Front gave high priority to American antisemitism in its campaign to eradicate prejudice and discrimination. The guide issued to delegates attending the national YCL convention in April 1939 posed the question, “How can the YCL branch combat ideas of race and national superiority?” It then suggested that each YCL branch set up an “exhibit of anti-Semitic literature contrasted to [an] exhibit of achievement of Jewish people.”<sup>70</sup>

Although it was more concerned about antisemitism during the Popular Front than it had previously been, the CP remained wedded to its long-standing view that antisemitism was manufactured at the top of society, part of the bourgeoisie’s “program of dividing the masses” and thus was not as pervasive and deeply entrenched as many supposed. Antisemitism was merely one aspect of a larger persecution of working people. A *Daily Worker* columnist declared in May 1938 that there had never been a time in history when the Jews were persecuted that there had “not been a burden of oppression laid upon an even vaster section of the people – and Christian



people.” Indeed, Nazism was not merely “an attack upon the Jews” but “an attack as well upon the masses of German people.” He claimed that czarist pogroms had similarly been “merely a part – an especially brutal part – of the oppression of the Russian peasants and workers.” The same was the case in two other nations considered intensely antisemitic, Poland and Romania. Antisemitism was a largely upper-class phenomenon. The columnist claimed that when Léon Blum made his first appearance as French prime minister before the Chamber of Deputies, he was greeted with cries of “Jew” – “not from the representatives of the French workers, but from the frock-coated and top-hatted deputies of the French bankers and industrialists.” Working-class antipathy to antisemitism was illustrated by its absence in the Soviet Union, the world’s first workers’ state.<sup>71</sup>

The Soviets and the Comintern continued their strong opposition to Zionism during the Popular Front. They defined Zionism as “a pro-British imperialist movement” because Britain had issued the Balfour Declaration in November 1917, calling for a Jewish national home in Palestine. The GPU considered all Zionists British spies and arrested and imprisoned many of them during the purges of 1936–1938.<sup>72</sup>

During the Arab revolt of 1936–1939 in Palestine against Jewish immigration, the CP remained resolutely anti-Zionist, although its rhetoric was less aggressively anti-Jewish than in 1929.<sup>73</sup> It concentrated its attack on Britain’s divide-and-rule strategy. The CP denounced proposals to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states as “provocative folly” and opposed Jewish immigration. It issued a vague appeal for Jewish-Arab unity, urging both peoples to work out their problems in Palestine together. The CP pinned the blame for the turmoil largely on Britain, which stirred up “race hate” in Palestine to prevent the Jewish and Arab masses from joining in anti-imperialist revolt. It depicted the Zionist leadership as junior partner to the British, and the Jewish and Arab masses in Palestine as natural allies. Victims of tyranny and exploitation, they shared a common enemy: Britain. The *Daily Worker* noted that 400,000 European Jews had immigrated to Palestine to escape “the horrors of pogroms and oppression,” seeking a “peaceful, useful life” in the new land. The Arab masses, long oppressed by Western colonialists and large Arab landowners, longed for “the same happiness” the Jews found in Palestine. The *Daily Worker* acknowledged that some Arabs had embraced antisemitism, serving British or Italian Fascist interests and adamantly refusing any accommodation with the Jews. It claimed that the Zionists were similarly unwilling to consider friendly relations with the Arabs.<sup>74</sup>

CP general secretary Earl Browder, in a fiercely anti-Zionist speech in June 1936, portrayed the Arab uprising in Palestine as progressive and worthy of Communist support. He denied any similarity between the Arabs’ ongoing anti-Jewish pogroms in Palestine and those in Nazi Germany and Poland. Browder condemned pogroms in the Third Reich as part of a reactionary



German capitalist program to subjugate “the German people” and protect profits. Arab pogroms in Palestine, by contrast, were carried out by an “oppressed people fighting for its national independence.” Although misguided in targeting the Jews rather than the British, the Palestine pogroms were symptomatic of “a rising revolutionary movement,” a welcome sign of an Arab anticolonialist awakening. Browder described Arab revolutionists as confined in British concentration camps in the Palestinian desert, just like Jews in Germany. The Arabs would not be killing Jews if they clearly understood their interests. But the Zionists, determined to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine, made it difficult for the Arabs to shift their wrath to the British and the native feudal landlords.<sup>75</sup>

Browder emphasized that the CP demanded termination of “Zionist” (that is, Jewish) immigration to Palestine, whose purpose, he claimed, was “imperialist colonization.” The CP insisted that any Jewish settlement in Palestine require the approval of a joint committee of “Arab and Jewish toilers” in Palestine. Browder dismissed the argument that Palestine was a necessary place of refuge for Jews suffering severe antisemitic persecution in Nazi Germany, Poland, and Romania. If allowed into Palestine, Jews would only serve the British “as cannon fodder” in a “race war” against “native Arab revolutionists.”

Browder claimed that the only way to solve the Jewish “problem” was by a “revolutionary struggle of the Jewish masses shoulder to shoulder with the workers and toilers of each country.” He recommended that Jews pursue this strategy in Nazi Germany, Poland, and Romania, as well as in Palestine.<sup>76</sup>

Paul Novick, a leading CP authority on Jewish affairs, summarized the party’s position on Palestine in a 1936 pamphlet that characterized the 1929 Arab pogroms as a progressive anticolonialist uprising against British imperialism and its counterrevolutionary junior partner, Zionism. Novick claimed that Zionists welcomed antisemitism to argue that Jews had no future in Europe. He conceded that violent attacks on Jews in Palestine had occurred in 1929. But he presented them as marginal to the Arab anticolonialist revolt, as acts carried out by “agents-provocateurs – British, Zionist, Arab.” All sides shared the blame for these relatively minor incidents.<sup>77</sup>

Novick maintained that because Zionism was “the *enemy* of revolution,” the Zionist leadership closely collaborated with the Nazis. He declared that Zionism had even produced a Jewish version of Nazism: Jabotinsky’s “Brown-Shirted Revisionism.”<sup>78</sup>

Like Browder, Novick instructed the Jews to remain in the countries where they resided and build a revolutionary movement “with the toiling masses of all nationalities.” The impending socialist revolutions in Germany and Poland would “deal a death blow to Zionism” by transforming class relations, thereby eliminating the social basis for antisemitism. Novick recommended that Jews in Palestine call for a “democratic parliament” that would guarantee equal rights for the Jewish minority and permit “its

national development.” Jews should be prohibited from purchasing land in Palestine without the approval of the Arabs working the land.<sup>79</sup>

Simon Weber, co-city editor of *Morgen Freiheit* from 1932 to 1937, reported in 1939 that Melech Epstein had become deeply disillusioned with the CP on a trip to Palestine in the spring of 1936, when he observed the Palestinian Communist Party’s hostility to Jews. Epstein characterized the general secretary of the Palestine CP, an Arab, as “a bitter enemy of the Jews.” The general secretary told Epstein that all Jewish Communists were “secret sympathizers with the Zionist movement.” He was, as a result, driving most of the Jews out of the Palestine CP. Epstein was stunned to learn that the Palestine CP not only justified but joined in assassinations and bombings of Jews ordered by the mufti. He was particularly upset to discover that the party had assigned two Jewish Communist youths to toss a bomb into a Jewish meeting in Tel Aviv. Epstein’s distress over American CP authorities’ support for the Palestine CP’s anti-Jewish policies contributed to his resignation as *Morgen Freiheit*’s editor and decision to leave the party in 1939.<sup>80</sup>

The Communists’ solidarity with the Arab effort to prevent Jewish immigration to Palestine at a time when European Jews were in desperate need of a place of refuge undermined their attempt to gain influence in the AJCongress and World Jewish Congress (WJC). During the Third Period, the CP had refrained from involvement with mainstream Jewish organizations. The Popular Front strategy, however, called for Communists to infiltrate the AJCongress and the WJC, which were actively engaged in the anti-Nazi struggle. The AJCongress barred the Communists from joining the American delegation to the WJC conference in Geneva in 1936, ruling that by backing the Arab uprising “they had forfeited their right to be represented in any Jewish convention for the defense of Jewish rights.” The WJC reaffirmed this decision, refusing admission to the American Communists who sought to attend the conference.<sup>81</sup>

The Communists remained determined, however, to gain influence in the AJCongress. The YCL in 1937 made overtures to the AJCongress, which it considered “progressive” and “strongly anti-Nazi.” The YCL noted the AJCongress’s affiliation with most American Jewish youth organizations, ranging from the religiously orthodox to the Left socialist Zionists. The YCL leadership believed that its members’ involvement in the activities of the AJCongress’s youth section could provide it access to progressive middle- and working-class Jewish youth.<sup>82</sup>

#### ANTISEMITISM IN THE SOVIET PURGES, 1936–1938

Although the CP presented itself during the Popular Front as on the forefront of the struggle against antisemitism, during the Moscow trials of 1936–1938 it ignored how the Soviet prosecutors invoked negative stereotypes of Jews

to discredit key defendants and highlighted their Jewish origin. Exploiting the antisemitism widespread among the Soviet masses, the Stalin regime printed the original Jewish surnames of the accused in parentheses after the Russian surnames by which they had long been known – for example Trotsky (Bronstein), Zinoviev (Radomislanski), Kamenev (Rozenfeld). Soviet lead prosecutor Andrey Vyshinsky repeatedly referred to these principal defendants, along with Karl Radek, who was also of Jewish origin, as “people without a fatherland,” drawing on the long-standing image of the rootless Jew who lacked any attachment or loyalty to the country in which he resided. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* could well have inspired the prosecutors’ bizarre charge that Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other defendants of Jewish origin had joined with Hitler’s Gestapo in an effort to weaken and ultimately dismember the Soviet Union. The distributors of the *Protocols* claimed that unprincipled Jewish conspirators involved themselves in and used political movements of any kind to destabilize Christian society, in order to seize control of it.

Trotsky asserted that the Stalin regime “systematically exploit[ed] anti-Semitic prejudices” to discredit the Opposition. The Soviet press implied that the Opposition was “an outgrowth of the Jewish intelligentsia” by repeatedly referring to the defendants’ “artistic taste” and “[non-proletarian] social position.” Trotsky noted that all four of the “terrorists” whom the prosecutors alleged he had dispatched from abroad to carry out sabotage within the Soviet Union were Jewish.<sup>83</sup>

In 1937, the Stalin regime arrested Trotsky’s younger son, Sergei Sedov, who had never been involved in politics, for attempting to poison factory workers with generator gas, a charge resembling that leveled against fourteenth-century Jews who purportedly poisoned wells to spread the Black Death. Sedov’s accusers claimed he had been inspired and directed by his exiled father. Trotsky noted that after his son’s arrest, Stalin’s secret police, the GPU, had “announced in the Soviet and foreign press that the ‘real’ (!) name of my son is not Sedov but Bronstein.” He explained that both his sons had from birth used only their mother’s surname, Sedov, and no other. Trotsky himself had discarded the surname Bronstein thirty-four years earlier. He emphasized that he had lived his “whole life outside of Jewish circles” and did not even read Yiddish. Yet the GPU insisted on calling Sergei Sedov “Bronstein” to identify him (and his father) as a Jew.<sup>84</sup> Throughout the Moscow trials, the American CP never objected to the Soviets’ blatant appeal to antisemitism to defame defendants.

Nor did the CP seem to notice that the waves of arrests and executions of persons outside the higher echelons of Soviet leadership during the period of the Moscow trials “ragged with special ferocity among the Jews.” The Stalin regime arrested and condemned to death numerous Jewish writers, poets, and literary critics for “laxness in the building of socialism or adherence to Zionism.”<sup>85</sup>

In fact, American CP characterizations of Leon Trotsky drew on antisemitic concepts of the treacherous, demonic Jew, an enemy of the virtuous. Invoking medieval images of Jewish monstrosity, the *Daily Worker* published a cartoon of a bespectacled, goateed Trotsky as one of the fork-tongued heads of a hideous, bicephalous, scaly serpentine creature, whose other head was Hitler's. The CP depicted Trotsky as wielding fearsome power from the shadows, driven by hate and an insatiable desire to control and destroy. He used his formidable intellect and facility with words to deceive and manipulate honest, upright proletarians. *Daily Worker* columnist Mike Gold, one of the party's leading writers, denounced Trotsky as "the most horrible Judas of all history." A parasitic intellectual "crazy with egoism," Trotsky waged "murderous war on the working class" engaged in productive labor, to undermine its ability to resist the dark forces of fascism. Lacking "any spark of honor," this "morbid genius" ordered "train wrecks, poisonings, and assassinations" and then spun "beautiful, perfect literary phrases" denying his guilt. Trotsky even betrayed his own followers, calling them liars when they confessed. Unlike Trotsky, the defendants in the Moscow trials at least repented their sins before they were executed.<sup>86</sup>

The CP tried to deflect charges that the Moscow trials were antisemitic by denouncing Trotsky and his followers as enemies of the Jewish people and their culture. These charges conformed to the Comintern's more favorable view of ethnic identity during the Popular Front, a concession it made to assemble a broader coalition against fascism. In 1937, Moissaye Olgin, editor of the *Morgen Freiheit* and a leading CP spokesperson on Jewish affairs, condemned the Trotskyist "criminals" for "fostering forces of reaction" in an attempt to overthrow the Soviet regime, the only government in the world, he claimed, that provided the Jews a secure existence where they could develop their own culture. Olgin declared that Trotsky had betrayed the Jews by conspiring to detach the Ukraine from the Soviet Union and hand it over to the Nazis, who would unleash pogroms more savage than those of Denikin and Petlura after World War I.<sup>87</sup>

Olgin declared that the CP had never heard the Trotskyists express any interest in Jewish culture or the cultures of any of the other Soviet nationalities. The "true Bolshevik," unlike the Trotskyist, was concerned not just with the proletariat but with the "oppressed nationalities." Stalin, together with Lenin, had formulated "the theory of national self-determination" years before the Bolshevik Revolution and had "defended it against the Mensheviks and Trotsky." Olgin mocked Trotsky for having never shown interest in the Yiddish language and culture, and for never even learning to speak Yiddish. He commented: "For all we know he was a Great-Russian nationalist, an assimilator," just like "the other Trotskyite Jews."<sup>88</sup>

The purges of 1936–1938 had a devastating impact on Birobidzhan, disrupting immigration and ending any prospect that it would ever be elevated to the status of an autonomous Soviet republic, as its Jewish promoters and

migrants had hoped. Soviet prosecutors, drawing on the Christian theological stereotype of Jews as disloyal that dated to the time of Judas, accused most of Birobidzhan's Jewish leaders of conspiring against the government. In March 1937, the *New York Times* reported the arrest of Birobidzhan's president, the Jewish scholar Joseph Lieberberg, on charges of advocating "Trotskyism and counter-revolution." Lieberberg permanently vanished. The members of Birobidzhan's executive committee were arrested for "fomenting Jewish nationalism," which was defined as an "anti-Soviet" activity. The Soviet ambassador to the United States, Aleksandr Troyanovsky, informed Ambijan, an American group promoting and financing Jewish immigration to Birobidzhan, that because his government had uncovered an extensive Japanese espionage network in the Jewish Autonomous Region, the migration of Jews there must stop. In 1938, 321 citizens, mostly Jews, were disfranchised, apparently accused of involvement in a "separatist conspiracy" to detach Birobidzhan from the Soviet Union. The Soviet press claimed that Jewish conspirators "had operated schools for spies and wreckers in the interests of an unnamed power."<sup>89</sup>

The purges of 1936–1938 proved far more devastating for the Jews than for other Soviet nationalities. To be sure, the Kremlin liquidated leaders of other ethnic groups. But the Soviet authorities considered Jewish culture much more threatening and distasteful than those of the other nationalities. They targeted only the Jews' culture for eradication. Communist officials removed Yiddish books from libraries, regardless of their contents. Many who owned Yiddish books discarded them, fearing that possession would be cause for arrest. In this climate, the circulation of the Jewish Autonomous Region's only Yiddish newspaper, the *Birobidzhaner Stern*, dwindled to 1,000.<sup>90</sup>

#### IGNORING GRASSROOTS ANTISEMITISM: COMMUNIST AND TROTSKYIST RESPONSES TO THE KRISTALLNACHT

Communist reaction to the Kristallnacht pogroms illustrated the limits of the party's understanding of Nazism and concern about antisemitism. On the night of November 9–10, 1938, nearly all Germany's synagogues and more than 7,000 Jewish stores were destroyed. About 100 Jews were murdered, and the Nazis arrested 30,000 Jewish men and imprisoned them in concentration camps. The American CP urged the Roosevelt administration to move beyond verbal condemnation of the pogroms and impose a U.S. trade embargo against Germany.<sup>91</sup> But the CP's assessment of the Kristallnacht was confused, warped by its lack of awareness of the depth of German antisemitism. A *Daily Worker* editorial noted the Kristallnacht's unprecedented "depravity" and emphasized the ferocity of the Nazis' antisemitic violence: "Not even in the Middle Ages was such ... organized, widespread, and ruthless torture of a whole people perpetrated." Unwilling, however,

to acknowledge the uniqueness of the Jews' plight, it predicted that a Nazi pogrom against Catholics was imminent. CP general secretary Earl Browder even falsely claimed that Nazi anti-Catholic propaganda had precipitated during the Kristallnacht "the sacking of Catholic buildings simultaneously with the burning of Jewish altars, the murder of Catholic priests at the same time as the pogroms against the Jews."<sup>92</sup>

The American CP ignored reports in the U.S. press in the weeks after the Kristallnacht that Soviet trade with Nazi Germany was expanding greatly. In a November 26, 1938, article headlined "Hitler's Trade Booms with His Enemy, Russia," Sigrid Schultz, the Chicago *Tribune's* Berlin correspondent, reported that Soviet-German trade had reached such large proportions that Moscow was quadrupling the size of its commercial delegation in Berlin. As the American CP called for a boycott, the Soviets were purchasing large amounts of German manufactured goods and selling "great quantities of metal ores" to the Third Reich.<sup>93</sup>

The CP depicted innately progressive German masses recoiling in shock at the Kristallnacht's antisemitic violence. The *Daily Worker* editorialized that Nazi censorship could not conceal "the pained abhorrence of the German people themselves at the wretched crimes committed against the Jews." Earl Browder described Nazi control of Germany as precarious. The Soviet Union had become the first nation to take firm action against Nazism, having destroyed the "Trotskyite-Bukharinite" opposition, Hitler's "traitorous agents." If the United States followed the Soviets' lead and forcefully opposed the Third Reich, the inspired Germans would rise up and overthrow Hitler.<sup>94</sup> *Daily Worker* columnist Mike Gold alleged that the "many protests from [German] non-Jewish spectators of these [Kristallnacht] pogroms" foretold "the emergence of the ultimate battle in Germany – the people against the Nazis."<sup>95</sup>

The Trotskyists similarly greatly underestimated the extent to which the German masses embraced antisemitism. The SWP newspaper *Socialist Appeal* declared that Germany's workers "hate and despise Hitlerism with all their strength."<sup>96</sup> Two weeks after the Kristallnacht the SWP claimed that under the czars, "unarmed Russian workers with their bare hands used to drive the pogrom gangs away." It maintained that the German workers would have reacted to antisemitic violence in a similarly aggressive manner had social democratic and Stalinist betrayal not permitted the Nazis to achieve dictatorial control. Rendered helpless, the German workers during the Kristallnacht "whisper[ed] to foreign correspondents that the Nazi savagery does not represent the true Germany." The SWP insisted that a concerted grassroots struggle in the United States on behalf of "the refugees" would "inspire the German workers to regain their courage and manhood."<sup>97</sup>

The Trotskyists saw no real difference between the plight of Jews in Nazi Germany and in the Western democracies. SWP theoretician James Burnham

declared that the Kristallnacht was “the natural and normal harvest” of the same decaying capitalist system over which President Roosevelt presided in the United States. Capitalists everywhere stirred up “the most frightful and hideous racial and religious hatreds” to keep their “exploited slaves divided.” Burnham maintained that Nazi Germany’s rulers were morally no different from the leaders of the Western democracies: “The blood of the German Jews” murdered during the Kristallnacht, “dripping from the hands of Goebbels and Goering ... drips also from the ... hands of [British prime minister Neville] Chamberlain and Roosevelt.” The rulers of Nazi Germany, Britain, and the United States were all “cut-throats and murderers” who sustained a capitalist system that inflicted on humanity “a daily and continuous increase of torment and death.”<sup>98</sup>

Dismissing the impending war as merely a conflict between two rival imperialisms, the SWP would not support any effort by the Western powers to prepare for military confrontation against the Third Reich and its allies. It accused the Roosevelt administration of exploiting the Kristallnacht to justify “colossal armament plans” to pursue imperialist goals.<sup>99</sup>

The SWP warned that Germany’s Jews faced the imminent prospect of annihilation but argued that only proletarian revolution could save them. Following Trotsky’s lead, it expected that the war looming in Europe would precipitate workers’ revolutions across the continent. In the short term, the SWP demanded that the United States immediately permit unrestricted Jewish immigration from Europe. It joined the Socialist Party and the Lovestonite Communist splinter group in cosponsoring a demonstration at the German consulate in New York around the slogans “Open the Doors to the Refugees!” and “Only Working Class Action Can Smash Fascism!” and circulated petitions publicizing those demands. *Socialist Appeal* noted that the CP-controlled American Student Union (ASU) chapter at City College of New York (CCNY) had joined the campaign to remove U.S. barriers to Jewish immigration.<sup>100</sup>

Although the SWP ridiculed President Roosevelt for only shedding “pious tears” and neglecting to admit “all German Jews” to the United States, it assigned “the most shameful role” to the Stalinists. The SWP denounced the Soviet Union, vast areas of which were underpopulated, for refusing to provide asylum to German Jewish refugees.<sup>101</sup> It noted that Stalin would not even “take in ... a few thousand, or a few hundred Jews.” The SWP reported that the Soviet Communist Party newspaper *Pravda* had not published an article condemning the Kristallnacht pogroms until more than a week had elapsed, and even then it had not printed “a word about any aid to the persecuted Jews, not a whisper about permitting them into Russia.” The *Daily Worker* had reproduced *Pravda*’s article without comment.<sup>102</sup>

Although the Trotskyists strongly condemned the U.S. and Soviet governments for refusing Jews a haven, they vehemently opposed Jewish immigration to Palestine. With European Jewry on the verge of annihilation, the



SWP continued to denigrate Zionism, and to insist that there could be no Jewish homeland without a socialist revolution that dismantled “the whole imperialist system.”<sup>103</sup>

C. L. R. James, the SWP’s leading authority on Africa, similarly ruled out that continent as a place of refuge for beleaguered European Jewry. He claimed that Jewish emigration there meant an “extension of the Palestine policy to Africa” and the consequent “strengthening of European imperialism” on the continent. Jews residing in Africa would operate as bestial fascists: they would “be forced to occupy the position in Africa in regard to the Africans that the Nazis occupy in regard to the Jews in Germany.”<sup>104</sup>

Leon Trotsky angrily denounced the Communists for defaming Hershl Grynszpan, the Jewish youth whose assassination of a Nazi diplomat in Paris the Hitler regime used as an excuse to stage the Kristallnacht pogroms. The Communists charged that Grynszpan was a Nazi agent or “an agent of Trotskyists in alliance with the Nazis.” Trotsky cited the patently false accusations in the French Communist newspaper *L’Humanité* that Grynszpan had attended Trotskyist meetings in Paris, and that Gestapo agents he met there had persuaded him to carry out the assassination they needed as a pretext for launching the pogroms. (During the recently completed Moscow trials the Stalin regime had accused Trotsky of consorting with the Gestapo in an effort to undermine the Soviet Union.) Trotsky noted that as Marxists he and his followers considered acts of “individual terror inexpedient” in promoting “the liberation struggle of the proletariat as well as oppressed nationalities,” in this case the Jews. But he emphasized that their sympathies were with “self-sacrificing avengers” like Grynszpan, “even though they have been unable to discover the correct road” (mass action). At least they did something more than “fulminat[e] against injustice and bestiality.” Trotsky declared his support for the campaign waged by anti-Nazi journalist Dorothy Thompson to save Grynszpan from the guillotine. He called this effort “the elementary immediate task of the international working class.”<sup>105</sup> *Socialist Appeal* called the Stalinists’ defamation of Grynszpan “utterly revolting.”<sup>106</sup>

The American CP developed policies during the interwar period that were highly detrimental to Jews. To be sure, the CP formally opposed antisemitism, and at times energetically campaigned against it, especially during the Popular Front. Many Communists gave their lives in Spain in the first military effort to block fascism’s advance in Europe. Yet the CP also frequently minimized or ignored blatant antisemitism. On many important occasions it flatly denied that it existed at all, and sometimes it even promoted it. The American CP endorsed the Stalin regime’s persecution of Zionists in Russia. It justified the 1929 Arab pogroms against Jews. The CP backed Arab efforts to prevent Jews from immigrating to Palestine during the middle and late 1930s, when Europe was rapidly turning into a death trap for them. The



American CP never challenged the Stalin regime's use of antisemitism in the purges of the 1930s, even in Birobidzhan. The conspiracy theories the Soviets concocted during the Moscow trials provided a model for Eastern European Communist show trials during the late 1940s and early 1950s, which were suffused with antisemitism. The Communists' limited understanding of Nazism, reflected in their response to the Kristallnacht, led them to significantly underestimate the danger it posed to European Jewry. The Trotskyists, refusing to acknowledge the enormous differences between the First and the impending Second World Wars, came close to claiming a moral equivalency between the Allies and the Axis. The Communists would immediately adopt this position once the Second World War began. Both the Communists and the Trotskyists failed to grasp that a second world war would be a war against the Jews that could end in their total annihilation.

## World War II

### *The Limits of American Far Left Concern for European Jewry*

#### “COMMUNAZIS” AND THE MOLOTOV–VON RIBBENTROP PACT

The signing of the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in August 1939 caused Communists to completely reassess their position on Nazism and to strongly downplay the issue of antisemitism. Since 1935, the Communists had urgently appealed to the Western democracies to take immediate measures to block Nazism’s advance. Now, suddenly, they denied that Germany constituted a serious menace. The Soviets extended Nazi Germany’s foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, a cordial welcome when he flew to Moscow to sign the Pact, hoisting six swastika flags at the Moscow airport. The Soviet Revolutionary Army band struck up the Horst Wessel song for him, the Nazi anthem.<sup>1</sup> While meeting with von Ribbentrop in Moscow, Stalin toasted Hitler, declaring: “I know how much the German nation loves its Führer; I should therefore like to drink to his health.”<sup>2</sup> The Swastika flag was again “boldly in evidence” at the airport when von Ribbentrop departed from Moscow on August 24.<sup>3</sup> The Moscow band again played the Horst Wessel song “without a single slip” when von Ribbentrop returned on September 27 for further meetings with Stalin and Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov. When von Ribbentrop departed for Germany two days later, the members of the Soviet honor guard raised their right hands in the Hitler salute as he entered his airplane.<sup>4</sup>

In an abrupt about-face, the Communists denied that there existed any significant difference between the democracies and the fascist powers. They were merely two imperialist coalitions competing to control world markets. The Communists now insisted that it was the working class’s duty to “fight against its enemies at home,” that is, against its nation’s capitalists, “instead of serving as [their] gun-fodder.” As Arthur Koestler noted, this policy, “put into practice ... mean[t] [to] surrender France to Hitler and the French working class to the Gestapo.”<sup>5</sup> Having signed the



PHOTO 4. Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov shaking hands with Nazi SS chief Heinrich Himmler. German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop is to the left of Molotov; Dr. Robert Ley, head of the German Labor Front, is to the right of Himmler. (© Bettmann/Corbis)

Non-Aggression Pact, the CP announced that it no longer supported the boycott of German goods.<sup>6</sup>

The Soviets agreed in the negotiations to return to the Third Reich German and Austrian anti-Nazis who had taken refuge in the USSR. About a quarter of the refugees were Communists, and a large number were Jews. Many were already imprisoned in Soviet Arctic and Central and East Asian slave labor camps. The Soviets transported the anti-Nazi refugees in small groups to Brest-Litovsk, where at a bridge over the Bug River the GPU (Soviet secret police) handed them over to the Gestapo.<sup>7</sup> As Arthur Koestler so aptly put it: “This act of unfathomable baseness was one of the consequences, and at the same time the ignominious symbol of the Stalin-Hitler Pact.”<sup>8</sup>

The Kremlin’s jettisoning of efforts to build an anti-Nazi coalition in the West led it to bar International Brigades veterans from entering the Soviet Union. These volunteers from numerous countries had valiantly fought far better-equipped German- and Italian-backed Fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War. A majority of the Brigades’ soldiers were Communists or Communist sympathizers, and, as Koestler noted, “their officers and political commissars were exclusively members of the Party, directly responsible to the Party apparatus.” Because the Brigades offered the first

opportunity for armed struggle against fascism, a disproportionate number of the volunteers were Jews, about 15.5 to 17.5 percent of those from all nations, and 30 percent of the Americans. Many International Brigades veterans had survived Nazi concentration camps. Yet, as Koestler emphasized, not one of these veterans “was allowed to enter the Fatherland of the Proletariat, the country which had acclaimed them in hysterical hero-worship, which had boasted of having abolished unemployment and of having work for all.”<sup>9</sup>

Soviet policy instead resulted in the International Brigades veterans’ confinement in squalid internment camps in the south of France. They were “thrown on the rubbish heap ... to putrefy,” as Koestler put it. Koestler, who survived Fascist imprisonment in Spain, was himself interned in such a French camp, Le Vernet, during the period the Non-Aggression Pact was in force. He recalled that Le Vernet’s International Brigades veterans were kept in what was known as the “Leper Barrack,” because conditions there were so horrifying. The Leper Barrack was “infested with vermin and disease.” The veterans lived there “in complete darkness,” and “the smell was appalling.”<sup>10</sup>

Most of the other prisoners at Le Vernet, which Koestler described as a “Devil’s Island north of the Pyrenees,” were “politically active exiles” from all the Nazi- and Fascist-ruled nations of Europe, whom the Kremlin prevented from taking refuge in the Soviet Union because of its pact with Germany. Jews comprised a high proportion of these exiles. Many prisoners at Le Vernet had been engaged in the struggle against fascism “as far back as 1930 and even earlier.” These men, on whose behalf the Soviets would not intervene, “had drunk of Mussolini’s castor oil and had lain on the torture racks of the Siguranza in Bucharest and sat on the Ghetto benches of Lvov and known the steel whips of the S.S. in Dachau; ... had printed secret anti-Nazi leaflets in Vienna and Prague and, above all, had fought through the prelude to the Apocalypse in Spain.”<sup>11</sup>

The Non-Aggression Pact opened the way for Nazi Germany to invade Poland on September 1, 1939, endangering the very existence of Europe’s largest Jewish population. The Pact contained a secret protocol dividing Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union. Wehrmacht troops rode into Poland on trains marked with crude antisemitic caricatures and the slogan “We’re off to Poland – to thrash the Jews.”<sup>12</sup> After Poland surrendered, von Ribbentrop negotiated in Moscow a partition that awarded Germany all of Poland west of the Vistula River, the portion containing most of the nation’s industry and heavily populated areas.<sup>13</sup>

During the invasion, German forces slaughtered and tortured large numbers of Jews. In some towns they locked Jews into the synagogues and burned them alive. Yet the German Foreign Office reported in an internal memorandum that Red Army officers were forcing Polish Jews driven into Soviet territory back into German-occupied Poland.<sup>14</sup>

The Wehrmacht invasion of Poland caused Britain and France to declare war on Germany on September 3, but the CP adhered to its militant anti-war position and vociferous denunciation of the Western democracies. On September 28, the day after the Polish capital of Warsaw, which contained the second largest Jewish population of any city in the world, surrendered to Nazi Germany's armed forces, the Canadian government banned the importation from the United States of *Morgen Freiheit* and the German-language *Detroitter Abend-Post*. It declared both the Yiddish Communist and the German American newspaper "anti-British and anti-Canadian in content."<sup>15</sup>

In December 1939, a CP mass meeting in New York's Madison Square Garden attended by 16,000 to 20,000 people booed mention of a rally the American Jewish (AJ) Congress and the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC) had held to condemn the persecution of Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland a few days before. At the earlier rally, also staged at Madison Square Garden, AJCongress president Rabbi Stephen S. Wise "demand[ed] ... in the name of humanity that the Nazis stop their war ... of destruction [and] pogromization against Jews of the old Germany, against the Jews in the conquered and stolen Nazi territory [in Poland]." Many leading Jewish journalists spoke at the rally, including Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, and Dr. Samuel Margoshes, editor of the *Day*. New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia called the Nazi invasion of Poland a "throwback to barbarism" and former president Herbert Hoover expressed "his sense of outrage at the 'bestialities visited upon'" the Jews. The audience adopted a resolution that "urged action on behalf of the oppressed Jews in Nazi Poland." The CP was not willing to focus attention on the Nazis' antisemitic atrocities in Poland, which could only call into question the Soviets' Non-Aggression Pact with Germany.<sup>16</sup>

American Communists immediately mobilized after the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact to prevent U.S. intervention in a war against Nazi Germany. The CP coined a new slogan, "The Yanks Are Not Coming!" and established a front group, the American Peace Mobilization (APM), to "Keep America Out of the Imperialist War!" CP secretary-general Earl Browder wrote in May 1940 that "the Jewish people have nothing to gain from an Allied victory."<sup>17</sup>

The CP now claimed that little distinguished the actions and programs of the Western democracies and Nazi Germany. About two weeks after the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact, Browder suggested that President Roosevelt was a fascist who might well prove more menacing than Hitler: "Mr. Roosevelt has studied well the Hitlerian art and bids fair to outdo the record of his teacher."<sup>18</sup> A. B. Magil asserted on April 9, 1940, the day Germany invaded Denmark and Norway, that "the Allies are Nazifying both their foreign and domestic policies: abroad they threaten to invade small neutrals ... at home they eviscerate democratic rights and make the

people shoulder the economic burden of war.”<sup>19</sup> *New Masses* stated that Britain had interned hundreds of Jewish refugees in concentration camps for the duration of the war. After the German conquest of Poland, the British permitted that nation’s exiled government in London to publish four anti-semitic sheets.<sup>20</sup> *New Masses* reported that antisemitic vitriol in the U.S. Congress had “only grown more frequent since the outbreak of war.” It noted that Representative Michael Edelstein of New York had suffered a fatal heart attack after responding on the floor to Mississippi Representative John Rankin’s “vehement anti-Semitic outburst.” Moreover, President Roosevelt’s “defense” industries (which *New Masses* placed in quotes to suggest war-mongering) discriminated against Jews.<sup>21</sup>

The APM combined opposition to the European war with a campaign against what it called “the drive toward fascist rule in America,” which was allegedly spearheaded by President Roosevelt and the nation’s leading corporate magnates. The war had nothing to do with resisting Nazi tyranny. Its purpose was “to line the pockets of corporate interests at the expense of the peoples of the world.” The APM, like the right-wing isolationists, always referred to Britain as “the British Empire,” implying that its war objectives were as imperialist as Nazi Germany’s. The APM warned that the United States was turning rapidly into a fascist dictatorship: “Our trade unions are under attack.... We are being intimidated and spied upon. [We] ... are being seized without warrant. Our Constitutional rights are being taken away.” The APM emphasized in the spring of 1941: “This is how democracy was blacked out in Germany and in France, how it is being blacked out in England, and how it will be blacked out here.”<sup>22</sup>

At an APM rally in April 1941, Dr. Bella V. Dodd explicitly equated the United States and Nazi Germany. Dodd was then a fellow traveler of the CP and legislative representative of the Communist-influenced New York Teachers Union. She later stated that she “became associated with the Communist Party in 1932” and by 1936 “was not only cooperating with the party, but ... was under [party] discipline.” Dodd officially joined the party in 1943 and served as legislative representative for its New York district. She charged at the APM rally that the New York Board of Higher Education’s suspension of eleven members of the City College of New York (CCNY) faculty and staff, for allegedly advocating the violent overthrow of the U.S. government, “was comparable to what happened in Nazi Germany.” Dodd stated that the Nazis had falsely accused “prominent Jewish scientists, and scholars with international reputations” of subversive activities as a pretext for removing them from university faculties. New York’s Board of Higher Education was similarly discharging Jewish faculty members and staff to intimidate the universities into joining “the drive toward war and reaction.”<sup>23</sup>

The CP’s insistence that Britain was almost Nazified led to a softening of the party’s opposition to Jewish claims in Palestine. In April 1941 the CP accused Britain of reneging on the Balfour Declaration. It denounced its

1939 White Paper that severely restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, declaring that “the British authorities at Palestine turn back boatloads of Jews who have fled from Hitler’s persecution, but admit savagely anti-Semitic army officers from Poland.”<sup>24</sup> *New Masses* condemned “British imperialism” for reducing Jewish immigration to Palestine “practically to the vanishing point.” In December 1940, it praised the Yishuv for staging a “general protest strike” against British plans to deport at least 2,000 Jews who had fled the Nazis and “illegally” taken refuge in Palestine. *New Masses* noted that deportation proceedings were initiated almost immediately after an explosion on a refugee ship docked off Haifa, the *Patria*, killed a large number of Jews on board. The British had refused 1,771 Jewish refugees from two rundown tramp steamers, the *Milos* and the *Pacific*, “admission into what is supposed to be the Jewish homeland.” The British had transferred the Jewish refugees to the *Patria* and were preparing to ship them to a “penal colony” on Mauritius, an island in the Indian Ocean, for the duration of the war. *New Masses* reported that “committees of Palestine Jews pleaded with the British officials” to permit the refugees to land; Jewish “workers and small businessmen organized protest strikes, but to no avail.”<sup>25</sup>

The CP cited the *Patria* episode as clear evidence that British treatment of Jews differed little from that of the Nazis. *New Masses* declared that Britain’s Prime Minister Churchill “proved no more hospitable than Hitler” to Jewish refugees. It called the deaths of Jews on the *Patria* not just a horrible tragedy but a British crime. The British were similarly responsible for the deaths of another 200 “illegal” Jewish refugees who had perished in a storm in the Sea of Marmara attempting to reach Palestine in an unseaworthy ship. *New Masses* denounced as “imperialist barbarism” the British closing of Palestine to Jewish refugees.<sup>26</sup>

The Massachusetts CP appealed to Boston’s large Irish American population to oppose President Roosevelt’s “war budget” in a flier denouncing Britain’s hanging in February 1940 of two Irish Republican Army (IRA) terrorists convicted for assisting in a bombing in Coventry, England, that killed five people. The CP flier charged that “British imperialism” had murdered the two terrorists for “demanding Irish independence” and “refusing to fight” in Britain’s “war for plunder.” The Nazi press in Germany similarly denounced England as “the real murderer of Coventry” and expressed its solidarity with the executed terrorists.<sup>27</sup>

The CP vehemently opposed supplying Britain with war materiel or increasing American military preparedness. It denounced in the harshest terms President Roosevelt’s Lend-Lease legislation, which would provide Britain with much-needed destroyers. *New Masses* called the Lend-Lease Bill a “blueprint for fascism” that “would make America merchant of death to the world.” After Congress passed Lend-Lease in March 1941, the CP denounced Roosevelt’s plan to establish armed naval convoys to escort transatlantic merchant vessels bringing war supplies to Britain.



Communist-led unions staged strikes designed to halt production of tanks at Milwaukee's Allis-Chalmers plant and aircraft at North American Aviation in California.<sup>28</sup>

Like the conservative isolationists, the CP accused President Roosevelt of favoring the Allies over Nazi Germany. In October 1939, the CP condemned Roosevelt for prohibiting the European belligerents' submarines from entering U.S. territorial waters, while allowing access to surface warships. Britain held a significant advantage over Nazi Germany in surface vessels. *New Masses* noted that Germany's U-boats were critical to its plans for "smashing the British blockade" of its ports. It suggested that U.S. policy was "predicated on the assumption that America has a stake in a British-French victory." In emphasizing the Royal Navy's blockade, rather than the German submarine threat to Britain's transatlantic supply line, *New Masses* implied that Nazi Germany was the more vulnerable party, on the defensive.<sup>29</sup>

Equating World War II with World War I, the Communist-dominated American Student Union (ASU) joined the APM in denouncing the Roosevelt administration's "war hysteria" and assistance to Britain. While demonstrating in New York for "peace" in March 1941, the APM vowed to prevent the United States from waging a war "of conquest." The ASU campaigned on campus against U.S. entry into the "imperialist" war and against college courses on national defense. At campus "peace strikes" in April 1941, the CCNY ASU and Columbia University's Communist-dominated American Youth Congress chapter denounced the proposal for convoys. In a letter of solidarity to the ASU, Morris Schappes, a leading CP authority on Jewish affairs, seemingly equated Roosevelt and Hitler. He denounced the president for leading "the monopolists' drive to war" and helping "turn the campus into a dungeon for democrats."<sup>30</sup>

The Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact was not merely a non-aggression agreement but "a treaty of mutual assistance" involving both military and economic cooperation. Soviet statements on the war tacitly supported Germany's military campaigns in Western Europe. Alex Weissberg, an Austrian Jewish Communist whom the Soviets turned over to the Gestapo after signing the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact, recalled that he might have understood a Soviet policy of "neutrality [in the war] with marked sympathy for the Western powers as obviously the more progressive of the two warring camps." But he was aghast to learn that the Kremlin had issued "official instructions ... to report the war sympathetically for the Germans." Soviet denunciations of Britain and France as "'plutocracies' that had launched an imperialist war of aggression against Germany" seemed indistinguishable from the propaganda issued by Nazi propaganda minister Goebbels.<sup>31</sup> After the conquest of Poland, the Soviets provided Germany with a naval base near Murmansk for its submarines.<sup>32</sup>

In February 1940, not long before Hitler launched his spring offensive in Scandinavia and Western Europe, the Soviet Union signed a reciprocal trade



agreement with Nazi Germany in which it promised the Germans “rapid and extensive” deliveries of raw materials that they could use in their war effort, in return for German manufactured goods. These raw materials included oil, manganese, timber, wheat, cotton, and foodstuffs. The agreement freed Germany from having to procure these goods from the French and British spheres of influence. It also weakened the economic impact of the British naval blockade of German ports. Although this arrangement enhanced the Third Reich’s ability to wage war, the American CP supported it on the grounds that it benefited the Soviet economy. Leon Trotsky, by contrast, denounced Stalin as “Hitler’s quartermaster.”<sup>33</sup>

The Comintern implied its support for Germany’s foreign policy and sometimes even distributed Nazi-style antisemitic propaganda. In mid-September 1939 the Comintern began publishing a weekly German-language newspaper in Stockholm, *Die Welt*, which ran blatantly antisemitic cartoons and encouraged “a Franco-German alliance against England,” while criticizing living conditions in Nazi Germany. The Comintern published *Die Welt* to provide direction to Communist underground operatives in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and the countries the Nazis conquered in 1940. On October 11, 1939, *Die Welt* ran on its title page a caricature of former French prime minister Léon Blum, who was of Jewish origin, “wearing unmistakably the countenance and features of a Jewish black-marketeer, as the Nazis would picture one.” The next week’s title page displayed a map of Western Europe, with a French soldier shaking hands with a German soldier across their nations’ border in the background. This was not intended to suggest revolutionary fraternization, as Franz Borkenau noted, because in the foreground a French worker “point[ed] a revolver directly at London.” In the far background, a German worker “point[ed] a gun at a German profiteer, again drawn in *Der Stürmer*’s antisemitic fashion.” Borkenau reported that by November 1939 *Die Welt* had “dropp[ed] every pretense of an anti-Nazi attitude [and] engaged in a howl of rage against the Western Powers.”<sup>34</sup>

On October 31, 1939, Molotov, addressing the Supreme Council of the USSR, condemned Britain for announcing that its war aim was “the destruction of Hitlerism.” The British declaration was not only “senseless” but “criminal.” Molotov ridiculed the British and French intention to wage an “ideological war” against Nazi Germany, calling it “reminiscent of the religious wars of olden times.” Molotov claimed that ideologies could not be eliminated by war.<sup>35</sup>

In February 1940, Walter Ulbricht, a leader of the German Communist Party living in Moscow, implied in *Die Welt* that Nazi rule of Germany was preferable to the regime that a victorious Britain would impose on it. Ulbricht derided Britain’s claims that it fought for freedom, accusing it of “carrying on [a] war” against its own working class and building concentration camps. He maintained that “the progressive forces in Germany” did

“not wish to exchange the present [Nazi] regime for a regime of ... oppression by British imperialism.”<sup>36</sup>

Many American Communists and fellow travelers during the period of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact clearly favored Nazi Germany over Britain. American Communist and American Nazi merchant seamen, members of the National Maritime Union (NMU), joined together on June 17, 1940, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in a violent assault on British crewmen docked there. The NMU was an American Communist-led trade union. It included almost 2,000 German-born, Nazi seamen, many of them “strong-arm members of the German-American Bund,” the principal American Nazi organization. The German-American Bund organized a boycott of Jewish stores in the German American New York City district of Yorkville that drove many of them out of business. The Bund’s storm troopers savagely assaulted Jews in the streets of New York City and in northern New Jersey, where it had its largest following. Officers of the *S.S. Brazil*, an American liner docked in Buenos Aires, stated that Communist and Nazi NMU crewmen had assembled in a Buenos Aires waterfront bar and precipitated the brawl by shouting at the British seamen: “Your turn is next!” This taunt, hurled less than a week before France’s surrender to Hitler’s armed forces, meant that Britain would be Nazi Germany’s next conquest.<sup>37</sup>

In reporting the Buenos Aires brawl, the American social democratic publication *New Leader* noted that when the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact was announced, the NMU abruptly abandoned its support for collective security and tilted toward Nazi Germany. It became “violently anti-British and anti-Roosevelt,” denouncing the president as a “war-monger” and a “tool of Wall Street.” The NMU’s position was a “carbon copy” of the CP’s. The NMU leadership included in all bundles of literature it placed aboard ships for crews a pamphlet with Molotov’s speech before the Supreme Soviet, in which he called the Pact “a mighty bulwark of peace.” NMU president Joseph Curran expelled from the union two New York City business agents who objected to using the Molotov pamphlet as official union literature. The *New Leader* reported that passengers returning to the United States in July 1940 on the United States Lines *S.S. Manhattan* complained to company officials about the offensive pro-Nazi behavior of many of the NMU crewmen. Passengers claimed that “elated stewards burst into cabins to tell of Nazi military victories.” United States Lines officials responded by discharging known German-American Bund stewards on its ships. The NMU Stewards Division, however, sent “equally undesirable” (that is, Nazi) replacements. The *New Leader* noted that the *S.S. Manhattan*’s newspaper, edited by the ship’s radio operator, a member of the Communist-controlled American Communications Association, was “defeatist ... highlighting German victories and British reverses.”<sup>38</sup>

In early April 1940, the Soviet government intervened to protect Nazi Germany’s military interests on the eve of its invasion of Norway. Official

Moscow radio broadcast a vituperative attack on the Norwegian government, demanding the resignation of Carl J. Hambro, president of the Storting, the Norwegian parliament. One of Hitler's major objectives in invading Norway was to ensure control over the supply of Swedish iron ore, much of which was shipped to Germany from the northern Norwegian port of Narvik. Swedish iron ore was highly important in Germany's manufacture of armaments. The British government had recently sent to Stockholm the Storting president's cousin, Charles Hambro, head of one of England's leading banks, in an effort to terminate or sharply reduce Sweden's iron ore shipments to Germany. This undoubtedly precipitated Moscow radio's specific denunciation of Carl J. Hambro.<sup>39</sup>

During Nazi Germany's invasion of Norway, the *Daily Worker* strongly condemned "the gross violation by England and France of the neutrality of the Scandinavian countries," Norway and Denmark, which the Germans had already conquered. It praised the Comintern's "stirring call" for immediate "international working class action to end the imperialist war." The *Daily Worker* noted approvingly the Comintern's warning that the "British and French war-mongers," if victorious, would install in the industrial nations a "bankers' regime" as brutal and exploitative as any of their colonial governments.<sup>40</sup>

The American CP parroted the Soviet endorsement of the Nazi government's official justification of its invasion. German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop declared at an official press conference in Berlin that Britain and France, with the connivance of the Norwegian government, had themselves planned to invade Norway and seize its resources. Only Germany's military action at the last minute had thwarted the Allies' nefarious designs.<sup>41</sup> Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov agreed with the Germans that the British had provoked the invasion, declaring to Hitler's ambassador in Moscow: "We wish Germany complete success in her defensive measures."<sup>42</sup> Soviet press and radio blamed the British and French "war-mongers" for opening a new front in Scandinavia.<sup>43</sup> Three days after the Germans invaded Norway, the *Daily Worker* approvingly quoted the British Communist Party claim that the Allies had "provoked the extension of the war" into Scandinavia by laying underwater mines along Norway's coast. The *Daily Worker* alleged that the Allies intended to turn Scandinavia into a "Northern Battlefield," a military base from which to attack the Soviet Union and Germany.<sup>44</sup>

The German conquest of Norway not only provided it with valuable new resources for its war machine but also significantly increased Britain's vulnerability to attack. As *New Masses* itself admitted, it placed the entire British coast and much of the British fleet within easy striking distance of German air and submarine bases in Norway.<sup>45</sup>

During the year and ten months in which the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact remained in force, the American CP persisted in calling

World War II “the Second Imperialist War.” In 1940, the CP published a collection of Earl Browder’s speeches on the European conflict under that title. Browder repeatedly urged the American people to “take no sides, economically, morally, diplomatically, or militarily” in the war between Britain and Nazi Germany, both of which were “equally guilty.” The temporarily “hypnotized” German people had no strong allegiance to Nazism. In a September 11, 1939, address at Madison Square Garden, Browder predicted that they would soon launch a “successful democratic revolution” and overthrow the Third Reich.<sup>46</sup>

The American CP strongly endorsed the “People’s Convention” dominated by British Communists held in London on January 12, 1941, that called for Britain to negotiate a peace settlement with Germany. The British CP, like the American CP, opposed the war, even with Britain engaged in a desperate struggle for survival against the Nazi war machine. In Britain as in the United States, Communists caused factory work stoppages to hamper military production.<sup>47</sup> The People’s Convention called for the overthrow of the British government headed by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and for its replacement with a “People’s Government” that would offer the German people “a peace of no annexations and no reparations or indemnities.” The People’s Convention leadership was certain that “the German people, freed from the fears based on the declarations of British propagandists that if they are defeated their country will be dismembered and they will be taxed, humiliated and oppressed, will no longer be willing to fight and suffer for Hitler’s aims.” They would “accept such an offer if it be made by a People’s Government in whom they have confidence.”<sup>48</sup> The British Labour Party, which favored “pursuing the war for the defeat of Hitlerism and aggression,” and the official trade union movement repudiated the People’s Convention.<sup>49</sup>

American Communists shared their enthusiasm for the People’s Convention with its delegates. Those presiding at the People’s Convention podium in London announced that they had received “sympathetic messages and greetings” from American CP general secretary Earl Browder and from the American Student Union. The editors of *New Masses* praised the People’s Convention as “like a breath of fresh air ... like a lighthouse in the gloom” that could “bring low ... British imperialism, the fountainhead of world reaction.”<sup>50</sup>

At a mass rally sponsored by the Morning Freiheit Association in Madison Square Garden on May 11, 1940, a day after Germany launched its massive offensive against France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, Earl Browder warned Jews that the American Jewish press, which was strongly interventionist except for *Morning Freiheit*, was luring the Jewish people “to catastrophe.” He called on Jews to repudiate those who wanted “to plunge the Jewish people into the war at the cost of their own existence as a people.”<sup>51</sup> Browder implied that U.S. intervention would financially

strengthen big business, preparing the way for a fascist dictatorship like Germany's that would savagely persecute Jews. It followed, therefore, that only mass revolutionary uprisings in both the Allied and Axis nations could save European Jewry. A few weeks later the CP issued a statement accusing American Jewish leaders of "doing more to create anti-Semitism by their loud shouts for war than Father Coughlin ever did with his radio speeches."<sup>52</sup>

In September 1941, the antisemitic isolationist Charles Lindbergh similarly warned American Jews that they would bear responsibility for unleashing antisemitic violence. Speaking at an America First Committee rally in Des Moines, Iowa, Lindbergh declared: "Instead of agitating for war, the Jewish groups in this country should be opposing it in every possible way, for they will be among the first to feel its consequences."<sup>53</sup> Lindbergh threatened Jews that if they persisted in pressing for intervention, Americans would lash out at them for undermining the nation's interests. Browder did not explain how failing to confront the Nazi military offensives would protect European Jewry from catastrophe. He only implied that a victory by "Franco-British imperialism" would produce the same outcome. Browder claimed that Jews were safe only in the Soviet Union, where they were "permanently freed from the fear of persecution."<sup>54</sup>

As Nazi Germany's armed forces invaded Belgium and the Netherlands, the *Daily Worker* reiterated that Americans had no stake in a "criminal" war "between two gangster groups – British-French and Hitlerite." Americans need not concern themselves with Belgium and the Netherlands because they were "nations ruled by big capitalists," no different from Nazi Germany. The Dutch "slave-master (working for his imperialist banker bosses)" had extracted profits by "lashing the sweating backs of hundreds of thousands" in the Netherlands' East and West Indies colonies. Belgian "banker rule" had similarly brutalized the residents of the Congo.<sup>55</sup>

Like the Soviets, whose lead it followed, the American CP showed little interest in the outcome of the fighting in France. With Allied defeat looming, the Soviet Union made no move to open a second front against the Nazis in the East. Two weeks before the French surrender, the *Daily Worker*, again equating the Allies and the Nazis, declared, "The imperialist wolf, Bonnet [former French foreign minister], is the blood-brother to the imperialist wolf Goering. The hangman of Ireland [the British leadership] is the blood-brother of the hangman of Austria and Czechoslovakia [Hitler]."<sup>56</sup>

As the fighting raged in France, the American CP insisted that the majority of German workers opposed the Nazi government and its war effort. *New Masses* claimed that all over the Third Reich, "small underground groups fight actively against the [Hitler] regime."<sup>57</sup>

The Communists continued to oppose war against Germany after France's surrender in June 1940 left Britain as the only remaining obstacle to Nazi control of non-Soviet Europe, and its Jewish population. Anti-Nazi refugee Arthur Koestler, who was in France when it surrendered, conveyed the



PHOTO 5. Arthur Koestler. (Beinecke Library, Yale University)

bleakness of the situation in *Scum of the Earth*, his 1941 memoir about living there during the period when the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact was in force. Koestler had many friends and colleagues among the German and Austrian anti-Nazi exiles in France, who had been active for years in the struggle against fascism. He recalled that after the French surrender, the anti-Nazi exiles “thought that this time the defeat was final; we had been beaten out of one European country after another; this was the *coup de grâce*, journey’s end. We did not know that England would carry on the fight alone.”<sup>58</sup>

During the Battle of Britain in August 1940, U.S. Congressman Vito Marcantonio (New York), APM vice-chairman and fellow traveler of the CP, declared, “this is a rotten, big business war between a bunch of Nazis in Germany and a bunch of Nazis in England.”<sup>59</sup> He employed the CP’s terminology to establish a moral equivalency between Britain and Nazi Germany, claiming that those who supported the Lend-Lease Bill followed “the dictates of a new axis, the Wall Street-Downing Street Axis.”<sup>60</sup> Denying that there was even a “slight difference” between Britain and Hitler’s Germany, Marcantonio insisted that nothing in Europe “warrant[ed] the shedding of the blood of one American boy.”<sup>61</sup> Neither Marcantonio nor the CP displayed any concern about the implications for European Jewry of a Nazi conquest of Britain, which appeared very possible, even imminent, in the summer of 1940.



Following the CP line, in April 1941 Congressman Marcantonio rejected an appeal from Rabbi Stephen S. Wise to join the American Palestine Committee, which was then engaged in a desperate effort to help Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe escape to Palestine. Marcantonio explained that he was refusing because of “the position which your committee has taken on [supporting] aid to Britain.”<sup>62</sup>

In August 1940, CP-led trade unions helped organize the Emergency Peace Mobilization Rally in Chicago, the capital of American isolationism. The International Fur and Leather Workers Union, Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), newspaper *Fur and Leather Worker* announced that 20,000 delegates were gathering to prevent the United States from intervening in the European war. Joining Congressman Marcantonio as speakers were militant isolationist U.S. senators Gerald Nye and Bennett Champ Clark, leaders of the America First Committee.<sup>63</sup>

The CP was willing to collaborate in the antiwar campaign with persons like Senator Nye, who was known to hold antisemitic views. In 1941 Nye accused Jews in Hollywood of producing anti-Nazi movies in order to push the United States into the European war, and he launched a formal Senate investigation of alleged film industry prowar propaganda. He charged that Jews themselves were “the real instigators of anti-Semitism,” warning that the American public would hold them accountable for taking the country into the war. He announced his support for the claim of his America First Committee colleague Charles Lindbergh that “the Jewish people are a large factor in our movement toward war.”<sup>64</sup>

The *Daily Worker* published a favorable account of the April 23, 1941, anti-intervention rally at Yale University, in which 700 students assembled to hear Senator Nye “denounce convoys.” On that day Communists joined other anti-interventionist students in several campus antiwar gatherings, mostly in New York City. The ASU cosponsored the Yale event with eight other campus organizations. It circulated a petition at the rally demanding that the United States provide no convoys or troops to assist Britain in its war against Nazi Germany.<sup>65</sup>

At New York University, Communist inflexibility required campus “peace” forces to stage two separate rallies, with the non-CP-affiliated Peace Committee sponsoring one rally, and the Young Communist League (YCL) and ASU the other. The *New York Post* reported that the Peace Committee’s speakers included both isolationists and persons favoring some aid to Britain. By contrast, the YCL-ASU rally “heard only isolationists.”<sup>66</sup>

The CP and its fellow travelers vigorously opposed efforts to introduce conscription. In June 1940, Vito Marcantonio delivered a “fighting antiwar speech” broadcast on radio coast-to-coast, in which he charged that President Roosevelt’s proposal for conscription was “a page lifted out of the philosophy of *Mein Kampf*.” He urged the nationwide radio audience to vigorously protest conscription, declaring that “it is the first step ... against



PHOTO 6. American Peace Mobilization “No Convoys” rally, May 16, 1941. (United Automobile Workers of America, District 65. Photographs, Part I, Tamiment Library, New York University)

the youth of America. The second step is war and the third step is death.”<sup>67</sup> Marcantonio introduced a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives in September 1940 to repeal the Burke-Wadsworth Conscription Bill, which had introduced a military draft. Like the conservative isolationists, the CP insisted that the United States, because it had oceans protecting its borders, required only a small army. *Fur and Leather Worker* published a denunciation of the draft by Senator Burton Wheeler, an America First Committee leader.<sup>68</sup>

John Roy Carlson, who infiltrated American pro-Nazi and defeatist groups immediately before and during World War II, in his 1943 book *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America*, noted that the Communist *Daily Worker* and the “vermin press,” by which he meant the newspapers published by American Nazis and fascists, “found themselves in mutually embarrassing agreement.” Carlson emphasized that during the period of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact, “Nazi and Communist party liners ... composed a united front to sabotage national defense.” He cited the Burke-Wadsworth Conscription Bill as an example, quoting the nearly identical assessments of it from Charles Coughlin’s clerical fascist *Social*



*Justice*, the *Daily Worker*, and *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter*, organ of the Nazi German-American Bund:

*Social Justice*, August 12, 1940: "The Burke-Wadsworth Conscription bill is ... a bill to abolish the Constitution of the United States. That is why the Burke-Wadsworth communistic bill must be fought – now."

*Daily Worker*, August 16, 1940: "The Burke-Wadsworth Conscription Bill must be defeated. It includes within its confusing and misleading verbiage the basis for American fascism."

*Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter*, August 8, 1940: "Compulsory military service is a European institution.... Why should we adopt European fashions just to relieve the President of his unemployment problem."<sup>69</sup>

Both *Social Justice* and *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter* were virulently antisemitic.

The Boston Jewish Community Relations Council noted the striking similarity between the CP's condemnation of Britain's naval blockade of Nazi Germany and the German-American Bund's:

*Daily Worker*, October 27, 1939: "The Soviet Union was speaking for peace and the independence of nations when it said that the British blockade violates international law."

*Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter*, November 2, 1939: "The Soviet government ... is the only government that has voiced its protest against a form of warfare that no civilized government but the British has ever put into effect."<sup>70</sup>

In 1940 the CP assigned Bella V. Dodd to head a new labor antiwar front group, the Women's Trade Union Committee for Peace, which sent a mass delegation to Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress against sending aid to Britain. Dodd recalled that she and other Communists associated with the new front group "went on the air with pro-German speakers."<sup>71</sup>

The American Jewish community's outrage over the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact was "volcanic." In New York's heavily Jewish garment district, workers confronted Communists with mock Nazi salutes and calls of "Heil Hitler!" Labor journalist Benjamin Stolberg reported that in predominantly Jewish garment shops it was "unsafe for Communist propagandists to attempt to whitewash" the Pact. Enraged Jewish garment workers broke up Communist street meetings at which speakers tried to explain it. All across the city Jews hurled the taunt "Communazi" at the Communists.<sup>72</sup>

New York's entire non-Communist Yiddish press condemned the Jewish People's Committee (JPC), a Popular Front organization the CP had established in 1936 ostensibly to combat antisemitism, for undermining Britain's "heroic struggle" to prevent the Nazis from assuming control over all of non-Russian Europe. In March 1941, the JPC held its annual convention, which was devoted to denouncing President Roosevelt's "war program" and

the Churchill government in Britain. At the opening session Vito Marcantonio declared that “the Jewish people had nothing to gain from a victory by either side in the second imperialist war.” Every Yiddish newspaper in New York except for *Morgen Freiheit* ridiculed the JPC’s claim to be fighting antisemitism and warned the public against attending its convention. *Der Tog’s* editorial, entitled “When Communazis Fight Anti-Semitism,” was typical. It stated: “Avoid these traitors.” A month after the signing of the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact, as Poland fell to Nazi Germany’s armed forces, JPC national secretary Ephraim Schwartzmann resigned in protest from the organization and from the CP. Anticipating Polish Jewry’s extermination, Schwartzmann declared that he could no longer remain in a party “which condemned 2,500,000 Jews to pogroms, murder, and concentration camps.”<sup>73</sup>

The Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact caused many Jewish Communists and fellow travelers involved with *Morgen Freiheit* to sever relations with the CP. Benjamin Stolberg reported in the New York *Herald Tribune* that Jews were “rushing from the party as from a pest-house.” Melech Epstein, already upset with the CP’s Palestine policy, resigned as *Morgen Freiheit’s* editor and from the party after its leadership ordered him to write favorably about the Pact. Moishe Nadir, in resigning from *Morgen Freiheit’s* staff, declared: “Now even a blind man can see that Communism and Nazism are the two blades of the same shears, the purpose of which is to cut the throat of the democratic defense,” on which Jewish survival depended.<sup>74</sup>

The entire presidium of the recently founded Yiddish Cultural Alliance (Yicuf), a Communist front group, and the editorial board of its monthly literary journal *Yidishe Kultur*, resigned in protest against the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact. Dr. Chaim Zhilowsky, J. Opatashu, Perez Hirshbein, A. Mukdoni, B. Z. Goldberg, and H. Leivik in a joint statement called the Pact “a disaster for ... the Jewish people.” They declared that “the identification of Jewish Communists with the shameful Stalin-Hitler treaty ... makes impossible our work with them.”<sup>75</sup>

Both of the front groups the CP had established to promote colonization in Birobidzhan suffered a significant drop in membership as a result of the Pact. The primarily English-speaking American Committee for the Settlement of Jews in Birobidjan (Ambijan) stopped operating for a few years. By late 1940, the largely Yiddish-speaking Association for Jewish Colonization in the Soviet Union (ICOR) “was facing financial ruin.”<sup>76</sup>

Some CP activists of Jewish origin, after leaving the party decades later, expressed displeasure over having lined up with Nazi sympathizers while the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact was in force. Peggy Dennis, a CP activist from the 1920s until the 1970s and wife of Eugene Dennis, CP national secretary after World War II, recalled her discomfort in explaining to radicals outside the party “the abrupt end to our anti-fascist activities” after the signing of the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact. She noted glumly that the CP’s criticisms of Roosevelt “were too similar to those of the pro-Hitler, ‘America

First' reactionaries whose fascist sympathies placed them in opposition to the President's course in foreign affairs." George Charney, a CP member from 1933 to 1958 who served on the party's national committee, felt similarly embarrassed that the Communists, "adher[ing] resolutely and blindly to our position ... found ourselves in the company of the most reactionary isolationists grouped around the 'American First' crowd."<sup>77</sup>

From exile in Mexico City, Leon Trotsky mocked the Communists' refusal after signing the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact to condemn "the shocking bestialities inflicted by Hitler's gangs on the Polish and Jewish people!" After "crude[ly] fawning upon the democracies" during the Popular Front, the Communists now had not a "single word of condemnation" for Nazi Germany's conquest of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, and Norway. Trotsky sneered that the Communists had become so passionately anti-interventionist that they portrayed Hitler as "a peace-loving vegetarian continually being provoked by the Western imperialists."<sup>78</sup>

Nonetheless, Trotsky, who was assassinated in August 1940, and his followers in the United States viewed World War II as a conflict between rival imperialist camps that would precipitate socialist revolution in Europe, which was for them the only desirable outcome. The Trotskyists opposed supporting any capitalist governments in the war, including those aligned against Nazi Germany.

#### TROTSKYISTS RALLY AGAINST "THE SECOND IMPERIALIST WAR"

During the Popular Front period, the Trotskyists had opposed CP efforts to promote collective security, insisting that wars among capitalist nations were necessarily imperialist. The capitalists were the only beneficiaries. The Trotskyists thus rejected the Communists' Popular Front premise that Nazi Germany constituted a significantly greater menace to humanity than the leading Western democracies. Expecting imminent revolutionary apocalypse, the Trotskyists did not see any point in urging the nonfascist powers to take immediate steps to block German expansion. Nor did they consider the consequences for European Jewry of their outlook. Immediately after the September 1938 Munich crisis, Leon Trotsky denounced calls within the socialist movement to defend Czechoslovakia's independence as "social-patriotic sophistry." Czechoslovakia itself was "thoroughly imperialist," and within its borders its bourgeoisie oppressed several nationalities. Even if Czechoslovakia went to war against Germany alone, it would be fighting to maintain or extend "the borders of imperialist exploitation."<sup>79</sup> Shortly after the Munich Conference handed Hitler Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, the SWP urged collegians to break with and boycott as "pro-war" the left-leaning ASU, the leading campus voice for collective security. The SWP denounced ASU rallies staged around the slogan "Save Czechoslovakia" as "open war-mongering."<sup>80</sup>

During the summer of 1939, after Hitler had taken over the rest of Czechoslovakia, the SWP launched a campaign to prevent the United States from intervening in a European war without majority approval in a nationwide popular referendum. Accusing the Roosevelt administration of maneuvering the nation into war with Nazi Germany, the SWP urged that the power to declare war be taken away from the president and Congress. James Burnham, a leading SWP theoretician, declared that the American people "would vote against participation in any war ... on the horizon." He noted that a referendum would not stop a war precipitated by the crisis of world capitalism. But it might stimulate the development of revolutionary consciousness in the working class, hastening capitalism's overthrow. On August 25, 1939, *Socialist Appeal* published a large front-page cartoon showing a miniature President Roosevelt in striped pants and morning coat, standing before a microphone marked with a dollar sign, the proverbial capitalist, delivering a speech labeled "Down with the Dictators." Towering over Roosevelt as he denounced Hitler and Mussolini stood an enormous muscular worker in overalls, holding a sign reading "Let the People Vote on War."<sup>81</sup>

The Trotskyists' position during World War II did not differ appreciably from the CP's during the period of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact. Rigidly embracing the same position Lenin had adopted in World War I, Trotsky dismissed support for the democracies' military effort as contemptible "social patriotism," a form of class collaboration that would strengthen British and French colonialism. With capitalism "sliding toward the precipice," Trotsky considered any differences between capitalism and fascism inconsequential.<sup>82</sup> He believed in any event that the Western democracies were incapable of defeating Nazi Germany, and he did not support building up U.S. military capability.

Four days after Nazi Germany launched its blitzkrieg against Poland, causing Britain and France to declare war against it, *Socialist Appeal* ran a banner headline on its front page that proclaimed: "Workingmen, This Is Not Our War! It Is a War of the Bosses!" The accompanying article denied that any significant difference existed between the two sides. Britain, France, and Nazi Germany all "rule[d] the overwhelming majority of [their] subjects with sword and whip." Britain maintained a vast empire whose 550 million inhabitants it "exploited unmercifully." France exercised dictatorial control over colonies where there were six "slaves" for every Frenchman. *Socialist Appeal* emphasized that the war in Poland was "being fought solely to decide which imperialist powers shall dominate the world."<sup>83</sup>

During the German invasion of France in the spring of 1940, the Trotskyists advocated a policy of revolutionary "defeatism," reflecting a shocking inability to grasp what Nazi conquest meant for Jews and for other European peoples. Lionel Abel visited SWP headquarters in New York during Nazi Germany's Western offensive in the spring of 1940, when

the Wehrmacht had broken through French lines, and asked the Trotskyists in the office “what their program was for France in view of Hitler’s military success.” Abel recalled that the Trotskyists seemed “a cheery lot at that moment of catastrophe” and “did not even admit to seeing a real problem.” They informed Abel that their program was the same as before the German breakthrough: to encourage mutinies in the French army. The Trotskyists also declared that they favored mutinies in the British navy, because they were “just as much against the British Empire as we are against Hitler.”<sup>84</sup>

Like the Communists, American Trotskyists sometimes collaborated with far right antisemites in agitating against U.S. assistance to Britain after the fall of France. In January 1941, SWP members in Boston joined with the Christian Front to disrupt a prointervention address by Mayo Shattuck, vice-chairman of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies. The New England Town Meeting, which hosted the address, called in two police riot squads to maintain order in the hall. Policemen were required to escort Shattuck from the premises after his talk.<sup>85</sup>

Trotsky believed that world capitalism’s imminent collapse rendered futile any effort to rescue European Jews. In early 1939 U.S. Representative Joseph Sabath, whose Chicago West Side district contained the city’s largest concentration of Jews, wrote to Trotsky asking him to receive attorney Harry Raskin to discuss how to save Europe’s endangered Jews. Raskin likely believed that Trotsky, because of his Jewish origin and attention to European affairs, would be interested in helping develop rescue plans and might offer useful contacts in Europe. But Trotsky informed Raskin that only worldwide socialist revolution could save European Jewry. Palestine offered no solution, because the Arabs would annihilate any Jews who escaped there. Even the United States, so long as it remained capitalist, could provide Jewish refugees no protection. Trotsky predicted that as American capitalism entered its death agony, antisemitism would become even more severe than in Germany. When world war broke out, a “good many” of America’s Jews would be exterminated.<sup>86</sup>

In April 1940 a minority of the SWP, about 40 percent of the membership, withdrew to form the Workers Party (WP), which adopted an even more intransigently antiwar position. The WP took control of the SWP’s theoretical journal *New International*. Following Trotsky, the SWP supported defending the Soviet Union in the event of attack by an “imperialist” power of either camp, insisting that it remained a “workers’ state,” albeit a degenerate one. The WP, by contrast, characterized the Soviet Union as “bureaucratic collectivist,” a new form of society, neither socialist nor capitalist. The Stalinist apparatus that ruled it constituted a new and oppressive class. To the WP, calling for the defense of the Soviet Union was “tantamount to giving ... political aid to one imperialist camp against another.” It threw its support behind a nonexistent “Third Camp” – the “Army of International Socialism.”<sup>87</sup>

The WP characterized World War II as a conflict among “bandit powers” competing to control markets. On May 20, 1940, in the midst of Nazi Germany’s massive Western offensive, the WP’s newspaper *Labor Action* denounced President Roosevelt for “pointing to the horrors of a Hitler victory.” It mattered not which side prevailed in the war; both an Allied and a Nazi victory would bring dictatorship and misery. Let Hitler fight the “British bankers” on the Maginot Line; the workers should “stay here and fight on the picket line!”<sup>88</sup>

During the first weeks after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, *Labor Action* proclaimed: “The War Today is the Same as Yesterday – Imperialist!” The Soviet Union had merely shifted from one imperialist camp, Germany’s, to another, that of Britain and France. The WP warned workers to beware of CP “Jingoes,” who now backed President Roosevelt’s “war drive.” The WP lambasted the CP for endorsing “the Lend-Lease law, the Atlantic ‘patrol’ and convoys, and ... aid to Britain.”<sup>89</sup>

*Labor Action* regularly published cartoons that were indistinguishable from those in militant pacifist publications. One showed a piper skeleton leading marching soldiers into a graveyard. Another depicted a giant skeleton striding through the sea towing a small ship marked “American youth” and was captioned “Convoyed to War!”<sup>90</sup> The WP was as indifferent as the SWP to the Nazi conquest of France, confident that the war would rapidly hasten capitalism’s overthrow. The *New Internationalist*’s August 1940 editorial ridiculed the “wails over the defeat of the French army” and the “intellectuals who moan and slobber over the capture of Paris.” Civilized values were not at issue: “Hitler is not Attila.” The Germans and the French had merely been engaged in a “struggle for imperialist mastery.” The Nazis were the “flesh of Europe’s flesh and bone of Europe’s bone,” the inevitable product of decaying capitalism.<sup>91</sup>

In November 1941, the *New Internationalist* published an article denouncing the Gaullist movement for its “anti-German” propaganda. Its author was identified only as “a revolutionary socialist.” He insisted that the key to liberating France was not the Allied military effort but proletarian revolution. The Gaullist focus on German oppression made exploitation by French capitalists seem acceptable. Proletarian revolution in France required support or neutrality from “at least a section of the German occupation troops.” But the “nationalistic” Gaullists incited hatred against the Germans, making it difficult for French workers to forge a revolutionary socialist alliance with Wehrmacht soldiers.<sup>92</sup>

The author was heartened, however, by what he claimed was a trend toward friendlier relations between French workers and Wehrmacht troops. In the period immediately after the Nazi conquest, no French citizen “spoke to a German unless he was forced to,” and French girls “seen on the streets with German soldiers were spat upon.” But the author was pleased to report that he had recently seen French garage mechanics fraternizing with German

officers whose military vehicles they repaired. The German officers were themselves Westphalian metalworkers. A German officer had “broken the ice” by crawling under a car to assist the French mechanics. Now the French workers and German soldiers were drinking together and exchanging tips about bargains on the black market. The French mechanics’ wives would mend a tear in a German soldier’s uniform, or sew on a button. When one of the better-liked Germans departed for the Russian front, the French workers “warmly embraced” him.<sup>93</sup>

The author detected “an awakening of revolutionary spirit” in France, although it was still “a long way from a new working class movement.” Even so, the German soldiers were already “war weary.” They continued to fight not for Nazism but to prevent the imposition of “another Versailles treaty,” which had brought them “misery.” The author’s implication was that the Allied goal of unconditional victory over Nazi Germany was prolonging a war that did not serve the interests of the working masses of either nation.<sup>94</sup>

Neither the WP nor the SWP was averse to seriously disrupting the Allied war effort to stimulate revolutionary consciousness in the working class. The WP theoretical organ *New International* in its April 1940 editorial “For the Third Camp!” praised the Irish Republican Army for “keeping green the traditions of the Easter Rebellion” by launching “a brilliant and implacable guerilla campaign against British authority in the heart of England.” It lauded Australia’s anticonscription rioters and “the millions” of rank-and-file workers “whose pressure is causing American labor chiefs to talk isolationism.”<sup>95</sup> In June 1941, after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the Trotskyist Fourth International, to which the SWP adhered, adopted a resolution, *For the Defense of the USSR*, which announced, “The imperialist Allies of the Kremlin are not our allies.” It vowed to “carry on the revolutionary struggle” in the “‘democratic camp.’”<sup>96</sup> After the United States entered World War II, both the WP and the SWP rejected the unions’ no-strike pledge, which the CP backed. Their members, many of whom took factory jobs, participated in wildcat strikes in war production industries.<sup>97</sup>

#### WORLD WAR II AND THE LIMITS OF THE COMMUNIST REDISCOVERY OF ANTISEMITISM

When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the CP immediately swung back to a Popular Front position, making victory over Hitler its central priority. It devoted its energies to mobilizing support for the war effort. Having downplayed antisemitism as an issue after the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact, the CP now made combating it a focus of its war work.<sup>98</sup> It considered the intensification of domestic antisemitism during the war a threat to the national unity needed to achieve victory over the Axis. The CP backed the appeals by the AJCongress and the Anti-Defamation



League for the city and state authorities in Boston and New York to stop the epidemic of street assaults on Jews by Irish American youth who had been inspired by the Coughlinite Christian Front. Massachusetts CP chairman Otis Hood collected numerous affidavits from Jewish victims to help document these attacks.<sup>99</sup>

When Otis Hood ran for the Boston School Committee during World War II, he made the authorities' indifference to the violent assaults on Boston's Jews a major issue in his campaign and called for the city public school system to initiate an educational campaign to combat antisemitism. Yet Hood's understanding of antisemitism was marred by the simplistic class analysis Communists favored. When asked later about why antisemitism was "so rife in Boston," he explained only that the "ruling class" used it to divide the working class.<sup>100</sup>

Peter V. Cacchione, a CP member who served on the New York City Council during World War II, repeatedly raised the need to aggressively combat antisemitism in the city. He pressured New York City commissioner of investigation William B. Herlands to immediately make public the information he had on the antisemitic violence in New York City so as to arouse public opinion against it, and to make it possible to swiftly punish the perpetrators.<sup>101</sup> Cacchione twice introduced a resolution in the city council calling on New York's mayor to discharge Brooklyn patrolman James Drew, known as an "avowed anti-Semite and distributor of pro-Nazi literature." He also called for exposing "every other anti-Semite on the [New York City police] force."<sup>102</sup> Cacchione brought to public attention the case of a Brooklyn public school teacher who made antisemitic comments in the classroom, explaining that it was "no rare incident." He declared, "It is high time that the Board of Education began to take steps to weed out such fascist-minded people from our schools."<sup>103</sup>

Cacchione introduced legislation in the New York City Council in March 1942 to prohibit the municipal government from advertising in newspapers that carried job notices that discriminated against Jewish or other minority applicants. The bill remained bottled up in committee, and the council never voted on it. Cacchione also denounced New York City employment agencies for repeatedly flouting a recently enacted city law that barred them from placing "Christians only" and other discriminatory job advertisements in newspapers without giving the employer's name.<sup>104</sup>

U.S. Representative Marcantonio became similarly involved in the campaign against domestic antisemitism. In July 1944, he made two radio broadcasts denouncing antisemitism to refute propaganda that Italian Fascists were circulating in New York City's Italian American community that World War II was "a Jewish war," and that Jews were shirking military service. He also attacked the antisemitic policies of the Mussolini dictatorship. During the war Marcantonio supported a campaign for federal legislation to outlaw



antisemitism, to which the CP devoted significant effort in the immediate postwar period.<sup>105</sup>

During November 1943, leaders of CP front groups testified before a subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives Post Office and Post Roads Committee in support of a bill proposed by Representative Walter Lynch of New York that would prohibit mailing antisemitic propaganda or any other material inciting hatred. The Lynch Bill set a maximum penalty of five years in prison and/or a \$5,000 fine for this offense. The JPC, one of the CP front groups lobbying for the Lynch Bill, emphasized that it was “only the first step” in the battle for equality. The JPC called for a federal law to “declare anti-Semitism a felony.” Although representatives of the AJCongress and the CIO also testified for the Lynch Bill, the JPC claimed in March or April 1944 that it had been “the only one in the field nine months ago.” Max Perlow of the JPC, an official of the Communist-dominated United Furniture Workers Union, along with five members of the International Workers Order, a Communist mutual benefits society, and Mike Quill, leader of the Communist-dominated Transport Workers Union, testified for the Lynch Bill before the subcommittee. Quill declared that five years in prison was too lenient a punishment for mailing antisemitic literature during wartime; he favored a life sentence.<sup>106</sup>

The JPC considered passage of the Lynch Bill essential in terminating the antisemitic rioting in Boston and New York. It emphasized that the street beatings of Jews were inspired by propaganda spread by Hitler’s agents in the United States, assisted by the Christian Front. The JPC sharply criticized New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia and Massachusetts governor Leverett Saltonstall for dismissing the antisemitic violence as isolated acts of “boys looking for excitement.” It joined the AJCongress, the Anti-Defamation League, and the CIO in emphasizing that the adolescents who assaulted Jews in the streets and parks and desecrated synagogues were strongly influenced by their parents and other adults, and by Christian Front and Nazi propaganda.<sup>107</sup>

The Stalin regime created the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee to help raise funds in the West for armaments, food, and supplies for the Soviet war effort but otherwise rarely mentioned the plight of the Jews. Soviet reluctance to display public concern for the Jews during the Holocaust was partly due to the Stalin regime’s antisemitism. The regime also feared that doing so would play into the hands of the invading Nazis, who exploited the antisemitism endemic in Russia, the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Baltic states to win over a sizeable proportion of the population. During the war the Soviet press and radio almost never reported the annihilation of Jews. On the few occasions that they did refer to mass killings, as Isaac Deutscher noted, they “mentioned them in such a manner that no one could guess that the Jews provided the main contingent of victims.”<sup>108</sup>

Soviet unwillingness to acknowledge the implications of Nazi antisemitism cost many Jews their lives during the German invasion of the USSR, even though Red Army wartime successes saved a significant number. Had the Soviets taken Jewish rescue more seriously, they could have saved considerably more than the several hundred thousand Jews they evacuated from territory overrun by Axis forces. During the period when the Soviets' Non-Aggression Pact with Germany was in force, they deliberately downplayed the persecution of Jews in the Third Reich and in German-occupied Poland. As a result, Jews on Soviet and Polish territory lacked sufficient information about Nazi intentions toward them. This facilitated the roundups of Jews by the invading German forces and their collaborators. Because the Soviet government soft-pedaled Nazi antisemitism during the Non-Aggression Pact and was itself unfriendly toward Jews, it neglected to plan for an organized evacuation of Jews during a German invasion. Solomon M. Schwarz noted that "the great majority of the Jewish population of the German-occupied areas were neither encouraged nor given an opportunity by the Soviet authorities to flee."<sup>109</sup> The Soviets were mostly concerned with removing able-bodied men, who were considered more useful to the war effort, and they remained indifferent to the plight of Jewish women, children, and the elderly.<sup>110</sup>

Many Jews from Poland and other German-occupied areas who took refuge behind Red Army lines encountered harsh treatment from the Soviets. Communist authorities suspected that the Jewish refugees brought with them "contaminating" influences such as Bundism, Zionism, or a commitment to Judaism. The Soviets therefore transported a considerable number of Jewish refugees in box cars to Siberian labor camps, where many died.<sup>111</sup>

The American CP ignored extensive collaboration by Russians, Ukrainians, and other Soviet nationalities with the Nazi invaders in the genocide of the Jews. Acknowledging their complicity might raise doubts about the Soviet Union as a suitable haven for Jews and encourage interest in Zionist emigration. The *Daily Worker* from early 1943 did report that German forces were engaged in a total extermination of Jews in conquered Soviet territory. It described mass shootings and the "wholesale burning of buildings containing Jewish men, women, and children."<sup>112</sup> But it overwhelmingly depicted the Soviet people as the Jews' protectors. In describing the mass slaughter of Jews after the German capture of Kursk in late 1941, for example, the *Daily Worker* emphasized that the "Russian people tried to save their [Jewish] compatriots. They hid them from the German pogrom-makers [and] fed them with their last crust of bread."<sup>113</sup>

In the United States during World War II, the Communists displayed almost no interest in pressuring the government to rescue Jews threatened with imminent extermination in Nazi-occupied Europe. Nor did they attempt to bring the rescue issue to public attention, even within the labor movement. Because the Communists' major priority and concern was the defense

of the Soviet Union, they argued for the entire duration of the war that only a swift Allied victory could save European Jewry. The CP devoted enormous energy to persuading the U.S. government to open a second front in Western Europe for the purpose of alleviating German pressure on the Red Army, insisting that this was the best way to speed Allied military success. The CP backed President Roosevelt unwaveringly, refusing to tolerate any criticism of his failure to take significant action to rescue Europe's Jews.<sup>114</sup>

Throughout World War II, the CP continued to propagandize against Zionism, urging Jews to embrace "the internationalist ideology of the working class." In early 1943, Alexander Bittelman, the American CP official most prominently associated with Jewish affairs during World War II, published a Yiddish pamphlet, part of which the *Daily Worker* ran in English translation, that denounced Zionism as a "bourgeois and petty bourgeois Jewish nationalist" ideology. In somewhat of a break with previous party policy, Bittelman supported building up the Yishuv, but he insisted that Palestine could not provide a refuge for a significant proportion of world Jewry. An alternative to Palestine would have to be found, with each nation's Jews determining an appropriate solution on its own territory. Only the Soviet Union, where "complete equality of all peoples and nations" prevailed, had solved the Jewish question. Soviet Jews not desiring to remain a minority had the option of migrating to Birobidzhan, where they could enjoy a "full national existence."

Bittelman strongly opposed calls to create a Jewish army composed of Jews throughout the world to fight alongside Allied forces. This would cause the countries in which the Jews lived to question their citizenship rights. Jews should join the armies of the Allied countries in which they were citizens, where they would continue to reside after the war.<sup>115</sup>

More than a decade after the war, Alexander Bittelman expressed profound regret for his "tragic failure" to realize that Nazism was "the special mortal enemy of the Jews as Jews." He recognized that the Jewish people's experience during World War II was unique, because they alone were targeted for total annihilation. Looking back, Bittelman believed that he and other "leading Jews" had "failed to arouse our people everywhere to the grave menace confronting their very physical existence." Bittelman wished that he, and, by implication, all Communists, had urged the Jews to arm themselves and to fight the Nazis "as Jews."<sup>116</sup>

Max Perlow, secretary-treasurer of the Communist-dominated United Furniture Workers Union and acting president of the JPC, wanted to press the U.S. military to grant Jews the opportunity to strike back at the Nazis as Jews, but the party did not advocate this. Addressing the JPC annual conference in June 1943, Perlow called for the formation of Jewish flying squadrons, all-Jewish air crews that would bomb German cities to "avenge their fallen brethren" – the European Jews slaughtered by the Nazis and their collaborators. He emphatically declared: "We must have a chance to

drop our bombs over that citadel of Nazism so that they will know that it is we, the Jews, who are striking back for the rivers of Jewish blood that flow in Nazi lands.”<sup>117</sup>

### **The Erlich-Alter Affair: Communist Conflation of Jews and Nazis**

During the war, the Stalin regime executed two leaders of the Polish Jewish Bund, Victor Alter and Henryk Erlich, on charges of appealing to Red Army troops to cease fighting the Wehrmacht, demanding a Soviet peace treaty with Germany, and “subversive activity and espionage” against the Soviet Union.<sup>118</sup> The Alter-Erlich affair illustrated again that the American CP would automatically rationalize and defend any of the Soviet leadership’s crimes against Jews, despite its professed concern about antisemitism. As in the Moscow trials, the Kremlin and its *Daily Worker* choristers drew on Christian theological antisemitism to depict Jews as entirely lacking in principle, eager to strike a bargain with the devil (the Nazis) to acquire power.

Both Alter and Erlich were known as committed anti-Nazis and anti-Fascists. From the time Hitler assumed power, Erlich in the Socialist International had urged the Western democracies to form an anti-Nazi bloc with the Soviet Union. He had repeatedly denounced any appeasement of Germany and Italy. In 1937, the Polish Central Committee of Trade Unions sent Alter to Loyalist Spain as a representative of Polish labor. On returning to Poland, Alter “started large-scale agitation to send help to the Loyalists.” The day after the Wehrmacht invaded Poland, Erlich and Alter issued a joint appeal to Jewish workers to defend Poland against the Germans.<sup>119</sup>

The Soviets first arrested Erlich and Alter while they were organizing resistance to the Wehrmacht after its conquest of Poland. Erlich was seized on October 4, 1939, in Brest-Litovsk, the day a joint Soviet-German military parade was staged there. At the time of his arrest, he was on his way to German-occupied Poland to direct Jewish underground resistance. While in Lublin, Alter had published calls in the Bund newspaper urging Jews to fight the Wehrmacht, and he had helped organize civilians for armed defense of the city, which had a substantial Jewish population. After Lublin was declared an open city, Alter followed the Polish army to Kowel, where the Soviets arrested him in late September. The Soviets accused the two men of “trying to create a united front” against Germany, with which the Kremlin had signed a non-aggression pact, and of spying. Only a short while before, when the Wehrmacht entered Warsaw, the Gestapo had also hunted Erlich and Alter, raiding their office and homes. After being imprisoned by the Soviets for two years, in July 1941 Alter and Erlich were sentenced to death; this sentence was then commuted to ten years’ imprisonment.<sup>120</sup>

Released in late August or September 1941, after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, in an amnesty covering many Polish prisoners, Erlich and Alter worked from Moscow to organize anti-Nazi resistance among world

Jewry, helping inspire the creation of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. The two men on release quickly appealed to Jews on Soviet territory to join the Polish army being organized in the Soviet Union.

In December 1941 Alter and Erlich vanished. Only in February 1943 did the Kremlin release a statement that the “Nazi agents” Alter and Erlich had been executed the month they disappeared.<sup>121</sup>

The *Daily Worker* endorsed the executions, boasting that “the bullets of Soviet justice did a good job against the helpers of Hitler.”<sup>122</sup> It claimed that Alter and Erlich, “although Jewish,” had been “caught in efforts to disrupt the advancing Red army as it was locked in battle with the Nazis.” The Bundist leaders had conspired with the reactionary “gang” that ruled Poland before the war, which was willing to make a deal with the Nazis to restore it to power.<sup>123</sup> The *Daily Worker* praised Mike Gold, one of the CP’s most prominent writers, for remarking that Alter and Erlich “must have been guilty, otherwise they would not have been convicted.”<sup>124</sup> Bruce Minton reported in *New Masses*, and in the *Daily Worker*, that “the two traitors” had provided Nazi military intelligence with information “of inestimable value to the German war machine.”<sup>125</sup>

The CP accused trade union and socialist leaders who condemned the executions of Alter and Erlich of engaging in a sinister campaign to rupture the Allied coalition and undermine the war effort, “just when the Red Armies are smashing Germany the hardest.” It branded the Jewish Labor Committee and such labor leaders as David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union; American Federation of Labor (AFL) president William Green; and CIO secretary James B. Carey “dupes” or even “agents” of Nazi Germany’s propaganda minister, Josef Goebbels, who was determined to “whip up suspicion and distrust” among the Allies. The *Daily Worker* implied that the socialist Yiddish-language newspaper *Forverts* had joined in a defeatist coalition with the stridently right-wing Hearst and Scripps-Howard newspaper chains, using the Alter-Erlich case to wage a “smear campaign” against the Soviet Union.<sup>126</sup> In an address delivered in Yiddish to the Morning Freiheit Association, Alexander Bittelman explicitly accused the *Forverts* editors of exploiting the Alter-Erlich case in a conspiracy with the reactionary isolationist publishers William Randolph Hearst, Colonel Robert McCormick of the Chicago *Tribune*, and Joseph Patterson of the New York *Daily News* to sow defeatism.<sup>127</sup>

The CP used the Alter-Erlich executions to justify the Moscow trials of 1936–1938 and to claim that Jews willingly served as agents of Nazism. The *Daily Worker* denounced Raphael Abramovitch, an exiled Russian Jewish Menshevik leader who publicly condemned the executions of Alter and Erlich, as a “reactionary parasite” who “schemed with the world’s darkest forces.” It declared that the Moscow trials had “caught and exposed the Nazi Fifth Column in the nick of time.” This had prevented Allied defeat in World War II. The execution of Alter and Erlich had eliminated similarly

dangerous “Fifth Columnists” engaged in sabotaging the war effort. The *Daily Worker* mocked skeptics who denied that Jews would aid the Nazis, pointing to Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Radek, Jews condemned in the Moscow trials as Gestapo agents.<sup>128</sup>

James Wechsler, an editor of the leftist New York tabloid *PM*, recalled that Communist sympathizers who dominated its editorial board by 1943 simply dismissed his defense of Alter and Erlich. They insisted that “even though it may have seemed implausible,” the Bundist leaders “were obviously guilty of the charges against them.” Despite *PM*’s sizeable Jewish readership, its editorial majority maintained what Wechsler called “a terrible and contemptible ... silence while two great Polish Jewish Socialist leaders were ruthlessly put to death by Stalin.”<sup>129</sup>

#### THE TROTSKYISTS: PORTRAYING THE GERMANS AS VICTIMS

The Trotskyists downplayed Nazi antisemitism more than the Communists. Throughout the war, they minimized the differences between the Axis dictatorships and the Western democracies, going so far as to imply a moral equivalency between the Nazis and the Allies. Unlike the CP, which during World War II focused on rallying support behind the Red Army’s military effort, the success of which would save the lives of considerable numbers of Jews, the SWP concentrated on promoting revolutionary upheaval in Europe. The Trotskyists argued that Europe-wide socialist revolution was the Jews’ only hope. Antisemitism was inextricably rooted in the capitalist mode of production, and only socialist revolution could eliminate it. Under capitalism, Jews’ heavy concentration in petty bourgeois occupations led gentiles to perceive them as hucksters exploiting hard-working proletarians. This occupational maldistribution made it easy for the “ruling class” to make scapegoats of Jews, keeping the masses divided. The Trotskyists failed to grasp the theological and cultural roots of European antisemitism and thus failed to recognize its prevalence and depth at the grass roots. As a result, they ignored the unwillingness of most occupied Christian peoples in Eastern Europe to collaborate with Jews in anti-Nazi resistance. Indeed, many of the Eastern European partisan groups fighting the Germans were as hostile to the Jews as the Nazis and joined them in murdering those they encountered.<sup>130</sup>

The SWP’s Jewish Committee, established in 1943, called on Jews “under Axis domination” to establish contact with German workers in order to join them – and the Polish, Romanian, Ukrainian, Baltic, and Hungarian workers – in a revolutionary alliance to overthrow the Axis governments. Of course, vast numbers of these workers were then engaged in slaughtering Jews. The annihilation of much of European Jewry was already well known in the West. The SWP also hoped for the simultaneous toppling of Britain’s democratic government. It instructed Europe’s Jews to join the German and

other European workers in staging “strikes [and] protests” to precipitate “the coming European revolution.” In exchange for Jewish support, the Germans and the workers of Eastern European nations would back the Jews’ struggle for “physical survival” and combat antisemitic propaganda.<sup>131</sup>

In November 1943, the plenum of the SWP National Committee unanimously adopted a resolution, “Perspectives and Tasks of the Coming European Revolution,” which claimed that an Allied victory in Western Europe, far from liberating the occupied peoples, would place them under a rule as “equally predatory” as that of the Nazis. But the SWP believed that any “bourgeois-democratic regimes” that Britain and the United States established in Western Europe would be short lived, because capitalism was in such an advanced state of decay. The plenum resolution proclaimed that “the revolutionary wave may be so overwhelming as to enable the workers to take power immediately following the collapse of the fascist dictatorship” when the war ended.<sup>132</sup>

Oblivious to the German masses’ fervid embrace of Nazi antisemitism, the Trotskyists assumed that the workers and soldiers of the Third Reich would join this imminent socialist revolutionary upsurge. SWP activist Mark Braden denied that “the proletarian sections of the German army ha[d] succumbed to Nazism.” How could they possibly forget “their class position, instincts, and capacities to fight for their own interests?” The “German masses” backed Hitler’s war effort only “out of desperation,” fearing that the Allies planned to impose “a more terrible Versailles” treaty on them.<sup>133</sup> Felix Morrow, a prominent SWP leader, similarly ignored the significance of European antisemitism. He claimed that Europeans found nothing appealing about Nazism and implied that the occupied peoples did not willingly support or cooperate with the Germans. The Germans, Morrow alleged, “had to subjugate Europe purely by means of military force.” They could provide “only the façade of native rule” in the occupied countries, whose population offered them “no support.”<sup>134</sup>

Leon Trotsky, assassinated in exile in Mexico City by a Soviet agent in August 1940, had maintained that if World War II did not precipitate revolution in the advanced industrial nations, then socialism could never be achieved.<sup>135</sup> As World War II drew to an end in Europe in the spring of 1945, Trotskyists grew puzzled at the failure of German workers to rise up and overthrow their Nazi “slave drivers.”<sup>136</sup> They assumed that the German masses were innately progressive, ready to turn on the Nazi leadership that had subjugated them by force.

The *Militant* blamed the German workers’ quiescence on both the Hitler regime’s repression and the Allies themselves. The “superbly armed,” highly disciplined, and mobile SS was trained to suppress any revolt. During the twelve years of the Third Reich, the Nazis had murdered or exiled “the flower of the working-class militants.” Wartime Allied carpet bombing of German cities paralyzed resistance against Hitler by destroying working-class



districts, killing remaining militants, and disrupting oppositional networks, which the Trotskyists insisted were widespread. Moreover, the German masses feared that the British, French, and Soviet workers would not come to their assistance if they staged a revolt. Isolated, they risked “slaughter at the hands of Hitler’s storm troopers.”<sup>137</sup>

When Germany surrendered in May 1945, the *Militant* began to portray the Allies as the new Nazis, tyrannical conquerors prepared to impose a “predatory peace” on Germany. It depicted the German masses as the Nazis’ victims, rather than as their supporters, ignoring their role in antisemitic atrocities. The *Militant* denounced the Allied press for inciting “a poisonous lynch spirit against the entire German people.”<sup>138</sup> The occupying powers – the United States, Britain, and “their Moscow accomplices” – were determined to “prevent the German people from taking their destiny into their own hands.” The *Militant* castigated the Soviets for ignoring what it alleged was a tradition of “valiant revolutionary struggle” among the German workers. Instead of encouragement, the Soviets offered only “hate and vengeance” to the German masses.<sup>139</sup>

The Trotskyists universalized the Nazi genocide, for which they held only Germany’s top leadership responsible. They angrily denounced the “Allied slanderers” who “harp on the theme that the majority of the German people must be held accountable for doing nothing about the concentration camps.” The *Militant* insisted that the German workers and the poor did “everything in their power to fight the Nazi regime.” In fact, with Hitler’s repressive apparatus destroyed, the Germans would soon demonstrate that they were more antifascist than the Allies. They would rise up and sweep “rotten capitalism into the garbage dump of history” and destroy fascism “in its roots” because “it is capitalism which breeds fascism.”<sup>140</sup> According to the *Militant*, those released from concentration camps, “prisoners of all nationalities,” expressed the “warmest” feelings for the German inmates, “who were the first ... to feel the barbarous whip of the Nazi oppressor.”<sup>141</sup>

While largely ignoring Nazi antisemitism and atrocities specifically targeting Jews, the *Militant* devoted considerable energy to detailing alleged Allied crimes during the war and under the occupation. Minimizing the significance of the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators, the Trotskyists vastly inflated the death toll from Allied bombing raids against German cities. Drawing on a Swiss newspaper account, the *Militant* on June 30, 1945, described what it called “the gruesome details of Allied destruction of the great German city of Hamburg” in late July and early August 1943. The *Militant* claimed that the bombing of Hamburg by the British and Americans had killed 400,000 Germans, half of whom were burned alive. The actual number of killed was between 40,000 and 50,000. This attack on “helpless civilians” demonstrated “the enormity of the crimes of capitalism against mankind.” Accompanying the *Militant*’s article was an illustration of two German mothers, each with a small child in her arms, and



another small boy and girl, standing helplessly waiting to die while bombs fell and buildings burned.<sup>142</sup>

The SWP depiction of Allied bombing as an atrocity was consistent with Axis claims, and those of far right Holocaust deniers in recent decades. William B. Dolph, a Washington, D.C., radio station general manager familiar with Axis transmissions, informed journalist Walter Winchell in June 1943 that “the chief Axis propaganda mechanism” consisted of radio broadcasts from Germany and Italy “beamed at the United States,” denouncing Anglo-American bombing of German cities for killing civilians. Dolph noted that it was Hitler who had initiated the bombing of civilians. He commented that the purpose of the Axis broadcasts was “to stir up sympathy in the United States among sentimentalist and pacifist groups,” so as to arouse “a mass protest in this country against the practice of bombing cities.” Dolph hoped that “no Americans are silly enough to be taken in by that propaganda.”<sup>143</sup> To be sure, the Trotskyists hardly qualified as sentimentalists or pacifists, and their condemnation of Allied bombing was rooted in their own characterization of the Anglo-American war effort as imperialist. But they were complicit in helping to reinforce the message of the Axis propagandists and their supporters in the United States during and after World War II.

Incredibly, the *Militant* claimed in November 1945 that “‘capitalist civilization’ has plunged to a still more bestial level in Germany under the rule of the Allied ‘democracies’” than it had under that of the Nazis.<sup>144</sup> By placing quotation marks around the words “civilization” and “democracies,” the *Militant* implied there was no difference between the American and British governments and those of the Axis powers.

The *Militant* drew an explicit parallel between Nazi war crimes and those it alleged were committed by the Allies during the immediate postwar period. It quoted an ambulance worker who claimed that under the Allied occupation “an appalling slaughter is going on.” It looked like “Belsen all over again.” The *Militant* charged that the Americans, the British, and the Soviets were “methodically stripping” Germany’s factories “and blowing up those they do not dismantle.” The Allies thus “doom[ed] millions of human beings to death.” The “deathly hand of Allied rule,” by undermining Germany’s productive capacity, was causing mass starvation. In addition, the Allies had uprooted “the colossal figure of 25 million” Germans from their homes. The *Militant* quoted a Pastor Gruber of the Commission of German Churches, who described this process as “mass murder.”<sup>145</sup> The implication was that the Germans had suffered as much as the Jews had during the Holocaust.

The Workers Party similarly portrayed the victorious Allies as almost morally equivalent to the Nazis, while absolving most Germans from responsibility for their nation’s policies and war crimes. In an article entitled “Who Are the Real War Criminals?” published a week before V-E Day, *Labor Action*’s assistant editor Mary Bell declared: “Britain has starved and

killed many more Indian slaves than Nazism could ever aspire to.... Stalin's concentration camps ... outnumber Hitler's."<sup>146</sup>

*Labor Action* editor Albert Gates declared that holding the German people responsible "for the crimes of their rulers" was the "most insidious doctrine" coming out of the war.<sup>147</sup> Two weeks after V-E Day, the Workers Party strongly objected to charging the "long-suffering" German masses with the "guilt of witness" – of "not protesting, not trying to prevent [Nazi] crimes." A *Labor Action* article entitled "The German Workers Are Not Guilty" depicted most of Germany's population as the Nazis' victims, who "hated [their] lack of freedom ... but [were] ground down under the iron heel."<sup>148</sup> Far from displaying enthusiasm for Hitler's war effort, the German troops – except for "an SS minority and youthful fanatics – was a slave army," driven into action by brutal Nazi overlords. *Labor Action* claimed there had been many efforts by German factory workers to sabotage war production, and to give "succor to the persecuted Jews."<sup>149</sup>

World War II revealed the severe limits to Communist and Trotskyist concern about antisemitism and the plight of European Jewry. From August 23, 1939, until June 22, 1941, the American CP claimed a moral equivalency between the Allies and the Axis in what it called a "criminal war" in Europe. CP general secretary Earl Browder went so far as to warn Americans that President Roosevelt might prove a more dangerous fascist than Adolf Hitler. During the period of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact, much of the American CP's propaganda against U.S. support for Britain was virtually indistinguishable from that of domestic fascists and reactionary isolationists. The CP joined the latter in lobbying aggressively against Lend-Lease legislation, the convoy system, and conscription, and for a negotiated peace with the Nazis. The CP impeded efforts to improve America's military capability by staging strikes in war industries. It appeared indifferent to the consequences of an Allied defeat for European Jewry and for the world. The CP defended Soviet trade with the Third Reich, which strengthened Nazi Germany's war machine. It blamed the Allies for provoking the German invasion of Norway and displayed no concern about the fall of France. Many Jewish members resigned from the CP in revulsion against the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact, presaging an even larger exodus in 1956 of Jews horrified by revelations about Soviet antisemitism.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, defeat of the Axis became the Communists' main concern. The CP became heavily involved in a campaign to eradicate domestic antisemitism, which it considered a threat to the war effort. The CP backed efforts by mainstream Jewish organizations and Jews at the grassroots level to combat antisemitic street violence and employment discrimination. It lobbied vigorously for legislation to ban the mailing of antisemitic material. The CP, however, ignored the extensive collaboration of Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and residents

of the Baltic states with the Nazis in the murder of Jews, because to acknowledge it would reflect poorly on the Stalin regime's ability to command public support. The CP greatly underestimated the amount of grassroots antisemitism in the Soviet Union during the war, and it would continue to do so in the postwar decades. It persisted in propagandizing against Zionism and did not promote efforts to rescue Jews from Europe. As in the Moscow trials, during the Alter-Erich affair the CP conflated Jews with Nazis, foreshadowing its aggressive defense of the Slansky trials in 1952, when Jews were again accused of serving as Hitler's agents.

During World War II the Trotskyists downplayed Nazi antisemitism even more than did the Communists. Both the SWP and the WP, representing the two currents of Trotskyism, considered the war an imperialist conflict between two essentially similar coalitions. They argued that the war would spark a revolutionary socialist uprising joining workers and soldiers across national boundaries, including the Germans. The Trotskyists considered Nazism a marginal influence among the laboring classes of Germany and Eastern Europe, and in most of the Wehrmacht. Like the CP during the period of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact, the Trotskyists throughout the entire war claimed that the Western allies did not differ morally from the Axis. To support their argument, they vastly inflated the death toll in Allied bombing raids against German cities, as the Nazis' supporters and apologists did.

The Trotskyists' conflation of the Nazi occupation with British and French colonial rule established an important precedent on the American far left. From the late 1960s onward, much of the American far left insisted that democracies conducted themselves in essentially the same way as dictatorships. The far left during this period has denied the uniqueness of the Holocaust, trivialized antisemitism, and often entertained apocalyptic fantasies similar to those of the Trotskyists during World War II.

## Abandoning Assimilation

### *Communist Resistance to Antisemitism and Celebration of Jewish Culture in the Immediate Postwar Period*

#### COMBATING RESURGENT ANTISEMITISM IN THE WEST

Expecting class conflict to intensify in the West, the Communists discarded the Popular Front strategy when World War II ended and adopted a more strident and sectarian approach. In early 1947, the CP magazine *Jewish Life* compared the situation in the United States to Germany's shortly before the Nazis came to power. It predicted that "a major economic crisis" was imminent. Big business would exploit the crisis to assume control over the state. The large manufacturers and financiers would disseminate antisemitic and racist propaganda to confuse and divide the working class, allowing them to install a fascist dictatorship to maintain their profits. *Jewish Life* cited the postwar emergence of antisemitic, neofascist groups like the Columbians and a revived Ku Klux Klan, along with continuing street assaults on Jews, as evidence that the United States was moving toward fascism. Ben Gold, Communist president of the International Fur and Leather Workers Union, called the 1947 Taft-Hartley "slave labor bill," which Congress passed over President Truman's veto, "the beginning of a police state."<sup>1</sup> Promoted by William Z. Foster, who became CP chairman in 1945, this apocalyptic perspective became known in the party as "the five minutes to midnight line."<sup>2</sup> As in the Third Period, the CP rejected alliances with socialists, often even conflating them with fascists.

The new outlook differed significantly from that of the Third Period on issues involving antisemitism and Jewish culture. The CP repeatedly drew attention to manifestations of antisemitism in the United States, Britain, and the Western occupation zones of Germany, claiming that they signaled the onset of fascism. It broke with its long-standing assimilationism and vigorously promoted Jewish culture. The CP argued that strengthening Jewish identity protected Jews from psychological damage in a climate of heightened antisemitism.

As the Cold War developed, antisemitism became a weapon the Communists used to discredit the West. They publicized violent assaults on

Jews on American city streets, the horrendous treatment of Holocaust survivors in displaced persons (DP) camps in the Western occupation zones of Germany, and the rapid release of Nazi war criminals by the Americans and the British. The CP also scrutinized caricatures of Jews in the Western media, claiming to detect signs of an emerging Nazi-style prejudice.

CP publications highlighted antisemitic street beatings as indicative of Jews' increasingly precarious situation in the United States. Although it declined somewhat after 1945, antisemitic violence remained significant in the immediate postwar period. The perpetrators of the attacks were usually Irish American youths inspired by the Coughlinite Christian Front to go "Jew-hunting." CP publications devoted attention to the assaults, which the mainstream press usually ignored, in part to offset damage caused by newspaper accounts of antisemitism in the Soviet bloc.

In 1946, the *Daily Worker* reported an antisemitic outbreak in the Coney Island section of Brooklyn, in which a policeman without provocation severely beat Jewish youths while they were in a boys' club studying for their Regents Exam. Two of the boys, who sustained injuries that required hospitalization, were falsely charged with resisting arrest and disorderly conduct, as was another Jewish youth who attempted to intervene to protect a boy being struck. CP and American Labor Party (ALP) activists in the neighborhood launched a protest calling attention to police brutality against Jews. The *Daily Worker* ran a photo of the injured Jewish boys above the caption "The whole neighborhood is aroused by the growth of anti-Semitic outbreaks against young and old." It noted that the Coney Island neighborhood was "seething with anger since an attack on an old Jewish man two days before the attack on the youngsters." The assailants had torn the old man's beard, a classic act of antisemitism, and "called him vile names."<sup>3</sup>

In 1948, the *Daily Worker* described a similar attack in a Philadelphia neighborhood identified as "a hotbed of Christian Front activity" as "the latest outbreak of anti-Semitic violence in the area." Antisemitic hoodlums had assaulted several Jewish youths, both male and female, as they were walking home from a Jewish social club. A fourteen-year-old Jewish boy who was among those beaten testified that as they approached, members of the gang shouted, "He's a Jew boy. Let's kill him!" Gang members threatened to burn another Jewish boy's face with a lighted cigar. They proceeded to strike him in the face, knocking him to the ground, where he was kicked. The *Daily Worker* reported that "several of the boys ... were severely hurt and one of the girls was pawed by an attacker." It ridiculed the magistrate presiding at the gang members' trial, who, on hearing the opening testimony, announced: "We all know that it was a general melee. I'm not going to let anyone bring in anything racial." The *Daily Worker* firmly backed the boys' parents' charge that the assault was motivated by "virulent anti-Semitism."<sup>4</sup>

In 1950, the Communist Party of Dorchester, a working-class, heavily Jewish district of Boston, vehemently denounced the city's police for

arresting twenty-five Jewish youths for physically defending themselves against marauding Irish American antisemitic gangs that had assaulted them several days before, on October 31, "with tire chains, lead pipes [and] baseball bats," inflicting serious injury. The Dorchester CP charged that after the October 31 attack, the Boston police "didn't lift a finger to arrest those guilty of anti-Semitic violence." Instead, the police had "ordered all Jewish youth indoors." The Dorchester CP claimed that a Boston policeman two days later had hurled antisemitic insults at two Jewish boys, and struck them. Because the police made no effort to apprehend the Irish American perpetrators of the October 31 assaults, the Jewish youths prepared to defend themselves. But when the antisemites launched their next attack, the police "speedily arrested" the targeted Jews, even though "they were guilty of no violence." The Dorchester CP immediately issued a leaflet entitled "Unite and Fight Against Anti-Semitism" that demanded "Drop All Charges Against the Twenty-Five!!"<sup>5</sup>

The CP considered police brutality against Dorchester's Jews a sign of incipient fascism. The Dorchester CP's leaflet declared that it was "no accident" that the Dorchester antisemitic attacks had occurred "less than a month after the Hitler-like McCarran law went into effect."<sup>6</sup> The McCarran law (officially the Internal Security Act), which was passed in September 1950 over President Truman's veto, required poorly defined "Communist-action" organizations and their members to register with the U.S. government. It also excluded from entry into the United States anyone ever affiliated with a Communist organization unless the individual could demonstrate that he or she had repudiated Communism.<sup>7</sup> Referring to CP leaders recently imprisoned under the Smith Act, the Dorchester CP leaflet stated that "when reactionary Congressmen, spokesmen for Big Business, start to put Communists behind bars, attacks on Jewish people are soon to follow." The leaflet noted that President Truman was "building up the Nazi army again under the leadership of the murderers of European Jewry." Drawing an explicit parallel between the United States in 1950 and Germany on the eve of Nazism, the leaflet concluded: "The American people today find themselves in the position of the German people before Hitler came to power. Then, too, anti-Semitic gangs beat Jewish men and women in the streets of Berlin while the German police turned their backs and smiled."<sup>8</sup>

To prevent further outbreaks of antisemitic violence, the CP pressed for legislation to criminalize the mailing of antisemitic and other hate propaganda, which it believed stimulated it. The CP also saw an opportunity to compare the United States unfavorably with the Soviet Union, which had made antisemitism illegal. It endorsed the Buckley Bill, introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in March 1947, which would have prohibited "the distribution in any form of all things which 'expose the Jews or any other group ... to hatred, contempt [or] ridicule,'" punishable by five years in prison, a \$5,000 fine, or both.<sup>9</sup> The CP also backed a similar measure

introduced in the New York state senate that year making “ridicule or discrimination against any Jewish person or member of any other racial or religious group” punishable by up to three years in prison or a maximum fine of \$5,000.<sup>10</sup>

The *Daily Worker* in October 1945 strongly backed mainstream Jewish denunciation of the New York *Daily News*, the tabloid with the largest circulation among the city’s newspapers, as antisemitic. It supported Rabbi Stephen S. Wise’s call to boycott the *Daily News*. The *Daily Worker* joined Wise and the Metropolitan Council of B’nai B’rith in condemning *Daily News* columnist John O’Donnell, who had claimed that Jewish leaders were responsible for General Eisenhower’s disciplining General George Patton because he had slapped a soldier he considered cowardly. Patton had responded angrily when he discovered the soldier had been hospitalized for frazzled nerves rather than a physical wound. O’Donnell falsely claimed that the soldier Patton slapped was Jewish, drawing on antisemitic stereotypes of Jews as unmanly (the soldier) and as inordinately powerful and manipulative (the Jewish leaders). The *Daily Worker* quoted New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia, who “blasted” the *Daily News* as “malicious [and] deliberate” in “spreading anti-Semitism.” It approvingly cited U.S. Representative Emanuel Celler’s statement at the opening of the B’nai B’rith Metropolitan Council conference in New York that “Americans must face the fact that a virulent anti-Semitism exists in this country.”<sup>11</sup>

Claiming that O’Donnell’s column was part of a long-standing pattern of antisemitic reporting at the *Daily News*, the *Daily Worker* referred to a story the tabloid had published in October 1942 anticipating German charges in the immediate postwar period that Jews dominated the black market in the occupied zones. The *Daily News* had headlined the story “OPA [Office of Price Administration] Ready to Stamp Out Kosher Beef Black Market.” Exaggerating a small increase in the proportion of beef classified as kosher, the *Daily News* accused Jews of causing a meat shortage. It claimed that because kosher butchers charged higher prices, they were able to divert much of the city meat supply to a Jewish black market. Implicitly contrasting gluttonous Jews with gentiles suffering deprivation, a staple of Nazi propaganda, the *Daily News* article depicted a Jewish wholesaler “in a well-stocked refrigerator,” above the caption “There’s plenty of beef here – it’s been kosher-killed.”<sup>12</sup>

The *Daily Worker* noted a similarity between the *Daily News* article and a Christian Front flier headlined “Stop Jewish Barbarism! Protest Against Kosher Slaughter” distributed at an October 1945 rally in Queens. The flier, which pictured a shochet wearing a yarmulke wielding a blood-drenched knife, accused kosher butchers of daily torturing defenseless animals to death: “Hoisted by a hind leg, its throat slashed, the kicking, gasping and sobbing creature is subjected to cruel agony of being slowly bled to death.”<sup>13</sup> The Christian Front’s accusation, also made by the Nazis, was undoubtedly





PHOTO 7. A demonstration against New York *Daily News* antisemitism. (Daily Worker/Daily World Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University)

intended to invoke the medieval blood libel that Jews kidnapped and tortured Christian children to express hatred of Jesus, extracting their blood to mix with Passover matzoh.

The Dry Goods Division of the Communist-led Local 65 of the Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Union, Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), adopted a resolution denouncing the *Daily News* "for its efforts to poison the minds of our American people with Nazi propaganda" so as to facilitate "the establishment of fascism in our country." The resolution condemned O'Donnell's "slandorous lies against the Jewish people" and called for a boycott of the *Daily News* "for the sake of the six million martyred Jews."<sup>14</sup>



The CP waged a major campaign against the British film *Oliver Twist*, based on Charles Dickens's novel, asserting that the image of the Jewish character in the film, Fagin, conformed to the Nazi antisemitic stereotype. Mainstream Jewish groups like B'nai B'rith and the New York Board of Rabbis also denounced the film, as did many rank-and-file Jews who, like the Communists, staged aggressive street protests. Jews in the British sector of Berlin rioted in 1949 after the British Military Government licensed the film for showing. Berlin policemen turned a fire hose on about thirty Jews, including displaced persons from Poland and Hungary, as they attempted to enter a theater to protest a screening of the film. When policemen charged them, swinging nightsticks, the Holocaust survivors unleashed a fusillade of stones and cut the fire hose with a knife. Despite a policeman's warning shot fired in the air, the Jews fought their way to the theater entrance and ripped advertisements for the film from the wall. They shouted "Gestapo swine!" and "This is like Hitler!" at the policemen. Protests caused the British Military Government to ban the film in the British occupation zone.<sup>15</sup>

The *Daily Worker* urged a boycott of *Oliver Twist* and quoted reviewer Albert Deutsch's statement that it contained, in the character Fagin, "probably the worst caricature of a Jew ever to be depicted in an English-speaking movie." Deutsch observed that Fagin "lisps, leers, wheedles, and prances.... He corrupts everything and everyone he touches." The *Daily Worker* stated that still shots of Fagin from the movie, published in *Life* magazine, were "unprintable in a progressive newspaper." Fagin was portrayed as "an ugly, avaricious creature with a powerful hooknose, fishy eyes, [and] unkempt beard," a caricature resembling those appearing in Gerald L. K. Smith's virulently antisemitic newspaper *The Cross and the Flag*.<sup>16</sup>

The CP highlighted its opposition to *Oliver Twist* when it staged a large rally on the New York docks to protest the arrival of British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin in March 1949. Communist pickets displayed signs marked "First Oliver Twist, Now Bevin" and "Britain, Keep Your Anti-Semitic Exports."<sup>17</sup>

When *Oliver Twist* was released in the United States in 1951, the CP unleashed a series of protests demanding that theaters withdraw the film and urging the public to boycott it. CP chairman William Z. Foster called *Oliver Twist* "fuel [for] the fire of anti-Semitism" and warned that screening it could inflict "catastrophic" harm on American Jews.<sup>18</sup> The CP picketed the film's showing in New York City. The Anti-Discrimination Committee of the CP-led International Fur and Leather Workers Union (IFLWU) asked the public to protest to the New York City Board of Education against the public school system's distribution to students of cut-rate tickets for the film.<sup>19</sup> Comparing the situation in the United States in 1951 with that of Germany immediately prior to the Nazi assumption of power, the *Daily Worker* declared: "The exhibition of *Oliver Twist* is part of the pattern of

advancing fascism ... under Truman and Acheson – part of the preparations for another mass slaughter.”<sup>20</sup>

Identifying itself as the vanguard of the struggle against antisemitism, the CP condemned two leading mainstream Jewish organizations, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), for failing to mount demonstrations against the film. It ridiculed the AJC and the ADL for arguing that protests would draw further attention to *Oliver Twist*, noting that New York’s Park Avenue Theatre, which had been running the film for more than two months, boasted that it had broken “all attendance records.” The *Daily Worker* also rejected the AJC and ADL argument that it was improper to censor a film of “high artistic quality,” quoting the Brooklyn *Jewish Examiner*: “That only compounds the crime, making its anti-Semitism the more deadly.” The *Daily Worker* derided the “conservative” Jewish organizations’ policy on *Oliver Twist* as “hush-hush” (*sha-sha*) and approvingly cited the *Jewish Examiner*’s headline describing their response: “Silence on *Oliver Twist* Seen Dictated by Fright.”<sup>21</sup>

The CP also sharply criticized the American Jewish (AJ) Congress for failing to use “its tremendous resources and influence” to shut down *Oliver Twist*. It noted that the AJCongress’s parent body, the World Jewish Congress, two years earlier had backed the German Jews’ protest against the film in the British Occupation Zone of Berlin and had demanded that the British Foreign Office terminate showings.<sup>22</sup>

The CP cited Bing Crosby’s film *Abie’s Irish Rose* as another ominous sign that Nazi-style antisemitism was emerging in the United States. *Jewish Life* equated what it considered antisemitic stereotypes in the film with those on the “cartoon-caricature pages” of Julius Streicher’s Nazi hate sheet *Der Stürmer*. It considered the film an insult to the Jews “suffering or dying in DP camps” in Europe. *Jewish Life* demanded that *Abie’s Irish Rose* be withdrawn from circulation.<sup>23</sup>

Morris Schappes cited the regular and unchallenged staging of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* in the United States as evidence of American insensitivity about antisemitism. He reported that Moscow Yiddish State Theater director Solomon Mikhoels had assured him that the play was not produced in the Soviet Union. Schappes noted that the word “shylock,” taken from the name of the play’s malicious Jewish character, a usurer, had been for three centuries “a symbol of all that is malignant and rapacious, and of the Jewish people.” The identification of Shylock with the Jews had inflicted “untold harm” on the Jewish people. Except for “Christ-killer,” “shylock” was the most vicious and frequently used antisemitic epithet.<sup>24</sup> William Z. Foster similarly called the character of Shylock “one of the worst pieces of anti-Semitism ever written.”<sup>25</sup>

The CP condemned American and British military authorities for their shocking indifference to the plight of Holocaust survivors. Earl Harrison, who was dispatched by President Truman in the summer of 1945 to observe

conditions at the DP camps, reported to the White House that “we seem to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them, except that we do not exterminate them.” Many Jewish DPs were living in former concentration camps.<sup>26</sup>

In June 1946, CP chairman Foster compared the camps for Jewish DPs with Nazi concentration camps. The Western powers had become the new fascists and were driving toward “another bloody conflict,” this time against the Soviet Union. Foster declared that it was no surprise that “American imperialism is quite content to put Nazis in charge of displaced persons” and “allow American soldiers to be infected with Nazi ideology.”<sup>27</sup>

The CP’s outrage at Western treatment of DPs even caused it to abandon its long-standing contempt for Judaism during the immediate postwar period. In October 1945, the *Daily Worker* printed an appeal by a U.S. Army medical corps officer for people to donate Jewish religious articles, including tallith and tephillin, and Hebrew religious books to the DPs.<sup>28</sup>

The CP argued that Britain’s harshly punitive measures against the Haganah and the Irgun in Palestine, and antisemitic comments by British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin, tore the “mask” of liberalism “from the face” of the Labour government, revealing its nakedly repressive, neofascist character. When Bevin commented at a British Labour conference in June 1946 that Americans were calling on Britain to admit 100,000 displaced Jews to Palestine because “they did not want too many of them in New York,” the *Daily Worker* denounced him as antisemitic. It approvingly quoted New York mayor William O’Dwyer’s comparison of Bevin to prewar fascist demagogue Joe McWilliams. Breaking with the wartime Soviet approach of minimizing the Jewish identity of those murdered in the Holocaust, the *Daily Worker* editorialized that the “anti-Semitic jibe” voiced by the “so-called ‘labor leader’” Bevin was “filled with malice toward a people whose sufferings have surpassed imagination.” Identifying the Labour government with fascism, the *Daily Worker* declared that the foreign secretary’s slur “would get a loud guffaw in the Nazi sports clubs and beer halls.”<sup>29</sup> Joseph Starobin, a CP leader, stated that no issue more clearly revealed the “fraudulent character of ‘Socialism’ as interpreted by Social Democrats” than Palestine. The “British mis-leaders of labor,” callous toward Jewish refugees trapped in Europe and indifferent to the “fate of the heroic Jewish community” in Palestine, concerned themselves only with promoting “imperialist interests.”<sup>30</sup>

The CP assigned Britain primary responsibility for the horrific pogrom at Kielce, Poland, in which forty-one Jews were murdered in July 1946, citing it as evidence that a Jewish national homeland should be created in Palestine. The *Daily Worker* did not explore the theological roots of the pogrom, which was sparked by a ritual murder accusation. It explained it as a product of an Anglo-American conspiracy to discredit the Polish government. The British Labour government and the U.S. State Department had

thrown their support behind the “fascist generals, Anders and Bor.” These “spokesmen for ... Polish reaction” served “Anglo-American imperialism” by inciting pogroms to “‘prove’ the [British and American] claim that Poland is disorderly and its [pro-Communist] government doesn’t have the support of the people.”<sup>31</sup>

The CP accused the U.S. government of barring admission of Jewish Holocaust survivors into the United States while favoring the entry of displaced persons from Eastern Europe sympathetic to fascism. It denounced mainstream Jewish organizations for failing to demand a “progressive” bill that would allow the entry of 100,000 Jewish displaced persons into the United States. *Jewish Life* charged that “hush-hush elements” in the American Jewish Committee were unwilling to support such a bill for fear it would stimulate antisemitism by making it appear that Jews were demanding “special privileges.” These mainstream Jewish leaders failed to recognize that Jews were deserving of special consideration as “the greatest victims of fascism.”

*Jewish Life* sharply criticized the Stratton Bill, which was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in April 1947 as a substitute for legislation designed to admit 100,000 Jewish DPs, because it failed to distinguish refugees “who ran *from* Hitler” from those who “ran *with* Hitler.” Sponsored by the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism, the Stratton Bill authorized the admission of a maximum of 100,000 displaced persons a year over a period of four years, making no special provision for Jews. It left existing immigration quotas intact. *Jewish Life* complained that the Stratton Bill’s “indiscriminate admission of ‘refugees’” would result in the exclusion of Jews, “while admitting boatloads of anti-democratic, anti-Semitic Poles, Ukrainians, Balts, Yugoslavs, and other political riff-raff who were pro-Nazi.” The Stratton Bill failed to make it out of committee.<sup>32</sup>

The CP charged that many of the non-Jewish DPs accorded priority immigration status had served in the Nazi armies or with antisemitic partisan units that had slaughtered Jews. Some had been guards in death camps. The CP forcefully denounced as antisemitic the Wiley-Revercomb Bill, passed by the U.S. Senate in 1948, which required that half the visas allotted to DPs go to persons with agricultural skills. This eliminated most Jews, few of whom had been permitted to work on the land prior to the Holocaust. The *Daily Worker* editorialized that the bill would admit Nazi “beasts” into the United States, while shutting out their homeless victims.<sup>33</sup>

The CP made clear the consequences of a policy that favored the admission into the country of Ukrainian and Polish DPs as “refugees from communism”: it created a “Hitler-like terror” on New York’s Lower East Side. American occupation authorities considered these intensely antisemitic Poles and Ukrainians “choice immigrants” because of their hostility to the Soviets. *Jewish Life* estimated that from 2,000 to 5,000 Ukrainian DPs had settled on the Lower East Side, where they formed “fascist gangs” that

launched “pogrom-like assaults” on Jews. *Jewish Life* reported that on the Lower East Side Ukrainian DPs boasted of having participated in pogroms in Eastern Europe and displayed watches and jewelry stolen from Jews during the Nazi occupation of the Ukraine. Many were veterans of General Anders’s antisemitic army in Poland.

In late 1952 and early 1953, the Communist periodical reported that Ukrainian and Polish DPs, “armed with sawed-off cue sticks, and nail-studded boards,” had violently broken up two ALP rallies on the Lower East Side, shouting “vile anti-Jewish remarks” and praise for Hitler. Esther Rand, local ALP chair and speaker at both meetings, was twice knocked to the ground at the first rally and was forced to adjourn the second.<sup>34</sup>

The Ukrainian and Polish DPs inspired and directed local American-born youths who attended their Ukrainian Orthodox and Catholic churches to roam the streets in bands looking for Jews to assault. *Jewish Life* reported that one such band attacked an elderly rabbi, knocking him unconscious and breaking his arm. Later that night, two members of the band severely beat the two daughters of another rabbi, screaming, “Hitler had the right idea – kill all the Jews.” Establishing a link with the antisemitic violence endemic in Eastern Europe, *Jewish Life* noted that during the previous Easter season, the “traditional time for pogroms in tsarist Russia, bomb threats were telephoned to two of the largest yeshivas on the East Side.”<sup>35</sup>

Although silent about Nazi war criminals granted positions of authority in Soviet-dominated areas, the *Daily Worker* repeatedly charged U.S. and British authorities with excessive leniency toward those in their occupation zones. In April 1949 the *Daily Worker* denounced an American tribunal in Nuremberg for granting light prison sentences, rather than the death penalty, to “19 Nazi leaders directly responsible for the organized murder of millions of Jews and other anti-fascists.” It made special mention of the tribunal’s seven-year sentence for Baron Ernst von Weizsaecker, Nazi Germany’s war-time ambassador to the Vatican, who had deported 6,000 French Jews to Auschwitz.<sup>36</sup>

*Union Voice*, the newspaper of Local 65 of the Distributive Workers Union, led by CP members and sympathizers, complained in an article entitled “Thoughts on Passover, 1950” that in the Western occupation zones of Germany, Hitler’s followers were “being steadily reinstated into positions of power and influence.” Former Nazis presided over courts established by the U.S. military occupation and released “scores of Nazi war criminals.” Two and a half years later, *Union Voice*, which had become the organ of District 65 of the newly formed Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers Union, led by fellow travelers of the CP, reported that Nazis were “all over the West German government.” It accused General Eisenhower of asking the world to forgive Germany’s war crimes. *Union Voice* warned that “this callous attitude is recreating a Frankenstein monster in Germany which eventually will turn on us in the United States.”<sup>37</sup>

In New York City, Communist protestors disrupted a speech by General Lucius D. Clay, former U.S. military governor in Germany, by shouting, "Let's ask General Clay about Ilse Koch and the human skin!" Known as the "Beast of Buchenwald," Koch, the camp commandant's wife, was convicted of committing atrocities against inmates. Witnesses charged that she had prisoners with tattoos murdered so their skin could be made into lampshades. Yet General Clay had reduced her life sentence to only four years. Even the *New York Times* ridiculed the U.S. Army's implication that Frau Koch "was merely a good wife who brought her husband his slippers and saw that he was well fed after a hard day at his butcher's office."<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, the CP became so identified with protesting the West's determination to minimize Nazi war crimes that New York City Council president Vincent Impellitteri denounced members of the right-wing Zionist youth organization Betar, Brith Trumpeldor, as "Communists" when they pelted German soccer players visiting the city in 1950 with rotten eggs and tomatoes. In a statement fully endorsing the protestors' action, the president of Brith Trumpeldor, a Revisionist Zionist group aligned with the Irgun, expressed outrage that Impellitteri had identified the young Zionists as Communists.<sup>39</sup>

The CP drew parallels between antisemitic violence in the postwar United States and in the American and British occupation zones of Germany, in an effort to demonstrate an ominous trend toward fascism in the West. The newspaper of the IFLWU reported in the spring of 1946 that German guards, armed with American weapons supplied by U.S. occupation authorities, had raided a Jewish displaced persons camp "in typical Nazi fashion, brutally beating and clubbing its occupants" and killing a Jew. Camp inmates recognized some of the American-appointed guards as former Nazis. Almost simultaneously, the Communist-led Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Local 65's *Union Voice* reported that the American Military Government had removed 800 apparently Jewish displaced persons from houses in Fuerth, Germany, and placed them in horse stables, claiming the houses were unsanitary. Two days later, the houses had been turned into residences for Germans.<sup>40</sup>

*Union Voice* editorialized on Rosh Hashanah in September 1949 that the New Year was opening on an ominous note in both Germany and the United States. In Germany, "anti-Semitic newspaper articles are freely published in Munich, and ... U.S. troops ... fire on the crowds protesting the scurrilous revival of Hitler talk." According to *Union Voice*, the situation in Germany was "matched here in our own backyard." It pointed to the recent Peekskill riot, "an anti-Jewish and anti-Negro display" and a sure sign of incipient fascism. Residents of the small town in New York's Westchester County had hurled bricks through the car windshields of persons who had attended a concert there by African American singer and radical civil rights activist Paul Robeson, beating several of them and inflicting serious injuries. The rioters, often encouraged by the police, shouted racist and antisemitic





PHOTO 8. A Communist-sponsored picket line protesting the German Exposition, New York City, April 1949. (Daily Worker/Daily World Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University)

epithets at the concert-goers. Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Local 65 even titled a workers' education course on the history of antisemitism it provided for its members "From Egypt to Peekskill," implying continuity between Pharaoh's slavery and American "fascism."<sup>41</sup>

The CP mounted aggressive protests during the late 1940s and early 1950s against U.S. government and media failure to take seriously Germany's Nazi past. In April 1949, a new CP front group, the Joint Committee to Combat Anti-Semitism, picketed the United States Military Government German Exposition at the Museum of Science and Industry in New York City. The Joint Committee protested that many of the German companies represented at the Exposition were owned and operated by Nazi industrialists and war criminals. The Exposition was the first showcasing of German products in the United States since World War II. Only products manufactured in the three Western occupation zones and the Western sectors of Berlin were exhibited. The Exposition was designed to revive Western Germany's export trade. The U.S. State Department, the Department of the Army, and General Lucius D. Clay endorsed the Exposition.<sup>42</sup>





PHOTO 9. A Communist-sponsored picket line at the German Exposition, New York City, April 1949. (Daily Worker/Daily World Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University)

The *Daily Worker* reported that many of the German manufacturers participating in the Exposition had provided valuable assistance to Nazi Germany's war effort and had stolen from Jews. The Lodenfrey Company had produced uniforms for the SS, the Sturmabteilung (SA), the Gestapo, and the Wehrmacht. Lodenfrey's partner Stalf in 1938 had expropriated the Jewish-owned clothing firm of Neuner and Basch. Rosenthal Porcelain Works was confiscated from its Jewish owners. Its management in 1949 was essentially the same as in the late 1930s. In 1938 the company placed a prominent advertisement with the Nazi party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* stating that its "management consisted of five Aryans, three of whom are old veteran fighters of the Nazi party." The Lanz Automotive Works was the first large company to begin rearming Germany, in violation of the Versailles Treaty. The W. M. F. Metalwares Works helped fund the

Nazi Party before it assumed power. Henkell Champagne had been owned by Nazi Germany's foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, who was hanged at Nuremberg for war crimes. At the time of the Exposition it was owned by von Ribbentrop's widow and family.<sup>43</sup>

Communist pickets at the Exposition's opening carried signs highlighting Nazi genocide: "How Much for Ilse Koch's Lampshades?" "Today the Volkswagen, Tomorrow the Death Wagon," and "Nazis Keep Your Bloody Goods." The *Daily Worker* reported that the pickets included ten former inmates of Nazi concentration camps and twenty gold star parents, some of whom bore placards reading "Our Sons Didn't Die to Rebuild Nazi Industries."<sup>44</sup>

The World Jewish Congress and the AJCongress opposed the Exposition but did not cooperate in the Communist protests. Dr. Robert S. Marcus, political director of the World Jewish Congress, called for postponing expositions promoting German products "until German industry was controlled by democratic elements." He warned that the Nazis had used trade fairs in the United States to promote their ideology before the war. Speakers at a meeting of the AJCongress's New York metropolitan division protested against holding the Exposition in New York. A dozen AJCongress members picketed the Exposition a week after it opened but made clear that their demonstration was not connected to the Joint Committee to Combat Anti-Semitism protest.<sup>45</sup>

The CP joined many Jewish and veterans' groups in denouncing the 1951 Twentieth Century Fox film biography *The Desert Fox*, starring James Mason, for its sympathetic portrait of Nazi Germany's General Erwin Rommel. *Daily Worker* film critic David Platt called *The Desert Fox* "propaganda for [West] German rearmament and the building of a new Nazi army," part of the West's "war preparations against the Soviet Union." Platt considered the film "one of the most degrading and immoral films" he had ever seen and called for it to be picketed and boycotted. He charged that *The Desert Fox* glamorized not only Rommel but almost the entire German general staff. The film put "its stamp of approval on a group of gangsters" that had turned much of the world "into a massive charnel-house." Platt noted that the film was drawn from the book of the same title by Desmond Young, whom he identified as "a British officer with fascist leanings." He speculated that Hollywood might soon make a movie glorifying Ilse Koch or a musical about the Nazi annihilation camp of Maidanek, with James Mason playing "the lovable commandant."

Platt was deeply offended that Hollywood would release a movie favorable to Nazi generals but refrained from producing films depicting Nazi barbarism. He reported that Hollywood had just discarded a plan to make a movie based on John Hersey's novel *The Wall*, which commemorated the heroism of the Warsaw ghetto fighters. The American public needed to see "a documentary film showing the atrocities committed by the Nazis," including



PHOTO 10. A demonstration at Globe Theatre, New York City, against showing the movie *Desert Fox*. (Daily Worker/Daily World Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University)

testimony from the Nuremberg Trials. Such documentaries existed, but the movie studios deliberately withheld them from the public.<sup>46</sup>

Many CP and ALP activists engaged in energetic picketing of theaters at various New York City locations and in Detroit. They carried signs reading “Rommel was a Nazi rat, not a desert fox” and others that denounced the film for insulting America’s war dead. The pickets were determined to make the public aware that *The Desert Fox* “glorif[ie]d the Nazi generals responsible for the deaths of six million Jews and the massacre of U.S. soldiers at Malmédy.” The demonstrations caused several New York City theaters to withdraw the film.<sup>47</sup>

Unwilling to criticize the Soviet bloc, the CP remained silent about East Germany’s leniency toward former Nazis, some of whom assumed important government posts. By contrast, very few Jews in East Germany ever occupied major positions. Although in the late 1950s West Germany agreed to pay reparations to Holocaust survivors, East Germany never did. East Germany followed the Soviets in refusing to acknowledge the centrality of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust or how deeply rooted antisemitism was among European workers and peasants. The Soviets and the Communist parties in

their satellites considered Nazism primarily a movement big business used to protect its profits and maintain control over labor. They viewed Jews as only one among a multitude of groups that the Nazis oppressed. Indeed, when referring to those murdered by the Nazis, Soviet bloc Communists used the amorphous term “victims of fascism,” making no specific mention of Jews.

The Trotskyists did condemn East Germany for coddling former Nazis, maintaining that it was as insincere about de-Nazification as West Germany. The SWP’s theoretical magazine *Fourth International* charged that East Germany’s Socialist Unity (Communist) Party harbored many former Nazis. The East German Stalinists “systematically favor[ed] ‘repentant’ Nazis, while brutally persecuting non-Stalinist socialists, many of whom had previously been imprisoned and tortured under the Nazi regime.” The *Fourth International* maintained that the Soviet-installed regime’s “favoritism to former Nazis” was a major reason the East German masses hated it.<sup>48</sup>

The American CP never questioned the purge, arrest, and imprisonment of East German Communist Party Central Committee member Paul Merker because the regime disapproved of his “writings and actions on behalf of the Jews.” During World War II, Merker had taken refuge with a small number of other German Communists in Mexico City, where he published articles that “placed anti-semitism and the Jewish catastrophe at the centre of the anti-fascist struggle.” In contrast, most of those who assumed leadership of the East German Communist regime in 1945 had spent the war years in Moscow and were minimally concerned with antisemitism. When they came to power, they focused on “establish[ing] their legitimacy as *German* leaders,” distancing themselves from Jews.<sup>49</sup> East Germany’s Socialist Unity Party expelled Merker in August 1950. The *New York Times* reported in January 1953 after Merker’s arrest that the East German regime had charged him with “such ‘heinous’ crimes as having favored restoration to German Jews of property confiscated from them by the Hitler regime.”<sup>50</sup>

George Lichtheim, writing the same month in the *Jerusalem Post*, noted that the East German government had officially described the “restitution of property to Jews who did not return to Germany” as “attempted theft of German national property.” Lichtheim called this “an obvious revival of Goebbels’ terminology.”<sup>51</sup>

With Merker’s arrest and denunciation as an agent of Wall Street, the East German regime began a purge of Socialist Unity Party leaders who had taken an openly anti-Nazi stand while exiled in France during the period of the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact. As Richard Lowenthal stated in the *Jerusalem Post*, these exiles had “tried to persist in fighting Hitler by the side of the Western Powers, despite the Nazi-Soviet Pact.”<sup>52</sup> In addition to Merker, prominent members of this émigré group included Franz Dahlem, in 1953 the Socialist Unity Party’s second-highest leader and former German political commissar in the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War, and Anton Ackermann, East Germany’s deputy foreign minister.<sup>53</sup>

Lowenthal noted that the regime's charges against the émigré group were phrased "to give an impression of cowardly surrender to Western imperialism." Speaking for the German Communist exiles, Dahlem had at the beginning of World War II written a letter to French prime minister Daladier declaring that the German Communists in France supported the French war effort against Nazi Germany and wanted to contribute by organizing a German antifascist legion. Dahlem made a second appeal to Daladier, even though he was fully aware that German Communist leader Walter Ulbricht, residing in Moscow, had branded all anti-Nazi supporters of France and Britain "agents of Western imperialism" in an article published in a Comintern newspaper.<sup>54</sup>

The American CP never commented when East Germany, driven by Cold War antagonism to the West in the early 1950s, equated the World War II Anglo-American bombing of German cities with Nazi crimes. This marked a sharp shift from the Communists' passionate support for the British and American wartime bombing campaign after Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Communists had cheered the bombing for relieving pressure on Soviet forces, damaging Germany's industrial and transportation infrastructure, and demoralizing its civilian population. By the early 1950s the East German regime was calling the British and American bomber crews who had carried out these attacks "Anglo-American gangsters in the skies," implying that they committed war crimes against German civilians.<sup>55</sup>

#### EMBRACING JEWISH CULTURE

During the years immediately following World War II, in a striking reversal of a far left commitment to assimilationism dating back to the nineteenth century, prominent Jewish members of the CP embraced secular Jewish culture and initiated measures to enhance American Jews' self-esteem. This presented a challenge for the party, because many of the Jews in it had been drawn to Communism at least in part by feelings of Jewish self-hatred. The CP and the rest of the far left had denigrated Judaism, denied Jews' claims to be a people, and placed little value on Jewish culture. Jews who entered the CP during the 1930s and 1940s were primarily second-generation Americans. If they had been born in Eastern Europe, they likely had immigrated to the United States as children. Many second-generation Jews who joined the party, like members of that generation in other ethnic groups, felt shame about their immigrant parents, who often had difficulty adjusting to American customs and the English language, and usually toiled in low-status jobs. Moreover, the far left since Marx's time had always scorned the petty bourgeoisie, the class in which many first-generation Jews were concentrated, as archaic and parasitical.

For Jews, these feelings of shame were reinforced in the public school system, which employed almost no Jewish teachers. The public schools, even



in cities with large Jewish populations like New York, devoted no attention in their curricula to Jewish culture or to Jewish achievements and contributions to the United States. Many schoolteachers inculcated antisemitism in the classroom. Paul Jacobs (born in 1918), a far left activist from the 1930s through the 1970s, stated in his autobiography that he had “a hunch” that he was unconsciously drawn to the Young Communist League (YCL) as a means of rejecting his Jewishness. He recalled that as a child he was “embarrassed by orthodox Jewish men with beards and earlocks or women with brown wigs when I saw them on the street or subway reading Yiddish newspapers.”<sup>56</sup>

Shame about Jewishness may have influenced the decision of Jewish Communists (and Trotskyists) to adopt anglicized party names, such as, for example, *Daily Worker* editor Johnny Gates (Saul Regenstreif), *Daily Worker* foreign editor Joseph Clark (Cohen), YCL leader Gil Green (Greenberg), and Workers Party leader Albert Gates (Glotzer). To be sure, the purpose was in part to make the CP and the Trotskyist groups appear more authentically “American.” Many Jews also bore names that Christians had imposed in Europe to humiliate them, suggesting that they were usurers (Geltman, for example) or like barnyard animals (Ochs, Gans). Still, as Paul Jacobs, who assumed the party name Paul Jackson in the YCL and as a Trotskyist, wondered in his autobiography, “even granting the legitimate need we felt to change our names in order to escape possible consequences, why was it that so many of the Jewish radicals took as their cover names ones that were conspicuously non-Jewish? No comrade Cohen ever adopted Ginsberg as a party name; instead he became Green or Smith or Martin.”<sup>57</sup>

However, joining the Communist movement did not require the full-scale repudiation of Jewishness necessary in converting to Christianity. Many second-generation Jews who became Communists retained a favorable view of some aspects of Jewish culture even before the Holocaust. They were able in the Communist movement to retain Jewish traits, values, and experiences that the public schools and much of mainstream society disdained and actively discouraged. These included a commitment to achieving social justice in this world, immersing oneself in a nonexclusionary milieu that included a significant number of Jews, expressing oneself with intensity, forceful argument (if not within the party, then with political opponents), and use of one’s hands when speaking. Communists also convinced themselves that they were championing the first society in the world to abolish antisemitism, the Soviet Union. Many Jewish Communists who became enamored of secular Jewish culture after the Holocaust were U.S. Army World War II veterans who had engaged in armed combat against the Nazis. Some had served in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War, fighting fascism in a country that had expelled its entire Jewish population centuries before.

In 1946 the CP signaled its abandonment of assimilationism by founding a new magazine, *Jewish Life*, specifically devoted to Jewish affairs and

culture. In the inaugural issue, the editors announced that it was dedicated to “reviving and spreading the progressive Jewish culture and tradition.” They went so far as to denounce not only ethnic “nationalism,” which they associated with a group’s isolating itself from the American mainstream, but also assimilationism as “bourgeois.”<sup>58</sup>

Mike Gold, one of the CP’s leading writers and a *Daily Worker* columnist, welcomed *Jewish Life* as a long-needed publication that could combat the drift toward “left-wing assimilationism.” Gold denounced Jewish radicals who denied the importance of Jewish identity and insisted that persecution of Jews was “only a smaller detail of the greater problem of capitalist imperialism.” From the time of the Enlightenment and Heinrich Heine, Jewish assimilationists assumed that they had solved the problem of antisemitism by hiding from it, “but the horror lived on.” Gold asserted that the annihilation of six million Jews had “shocked even the most abstract, universalized Jewish Communist” into an awareness of “being a Jew.” Confronted with “rising Hitlerism” in postwar America, Gold declared that every Jew needed to study “the wisdom and beauty of the great Jewish tradition.” Noting that his own sons had several times been “pushed around by schoolmates” who accused them of killing Christ, Gold maintained that Jews would be unable to defend themselves against antisemites if they remained ignorant “of the historic truths of Jewish life.”<sup>59</sup>

In its review of Hollywood’s *Gentleman’s Agreement* (1947), *Jewish Life* praised the film for demonstrating that there was considerable antisemitism among mainstream Americans but expressed irritation that it did not present any character with a well-defined Jewish identity. *Jewish Life* complained that “the conception of the American Jew that prevails in the film is epitomized by the Jewish scientist, Dr. Lieberman, who advances the assimilationist thesis that the only difference between the Jew and non-Jew is religious, and that the non-religious Jew is one only because he is pressed to make this identification by persecution.”<sup>60</sup>

To promote a “progressive” secular Jewish culture, the CP established the School of Jewish Studies in New York City in 1945. This was a time when American colleges and universities devoted almost no attention to Jewish studies. The same was true of the Soviet educational system. The school’s curriculum consisted mostly of courses on Jewish history and literature, many of them taught by prominent CP members, including Alexander Bittelman, A. B. Magil, and Morris Schappes. Courses were available in both Yiddish and English. The emphasis was on exploring and celebrating how Jewish culture had influenced Jews to assume a prominent role in improving conditions for all humanity. Although the students at the School of Jewish Studies were overwhelmingly working people, Mike Gold commented that it would also help Jewish writers and artists overcome feelings of Jewish self-hatred, enabling them to “fulfill themselves without mutilation.” In a striking departure from Communist assimilationism, the school encouraged its students



to study Jewish languages, offering not only Yiddish but Hebrew, which Communists had always scornfully associated with rabbis and Zionists. Some courses were even taught by rabbis. The school celebrated its opening by sponsoring a two-week exhibition of paintings and sculpture by leading Jewish artists, including Marc Chagall, Raphael Soyer, and Max Weber.<sup>61</sup>

Chaim Suller, the school's executive secretary and a CP expert on Jewish affairs who taught a course on political economy in Yiddish, noted that the school's Yiddish-speaking students were mostly immigrants deprived of education in Europe. They seized on the opportunity to acquire grounding in basic subjects like English, geography, and science, while also deepening their knowledge of Jewish culture. The English-speaking students, mostly second- and third-generation Americans, concentrated more on gaining instruction in Jewish fundamentals. They enrolled in such courses as *The National Question and Jewish Culture in the Epoch of Imperialism*, *Great Jewish Philosophers*, a two-semester sequence in American Jewish history, *Ancient Jewish History*, *Medieval Jewish History*, *History of Jews in the American Labor Movement*, *History of Soviet Jews and Birobidzhan*, *The Bible: A Social Analysis*, *Talmud: A Social Analysis*, *Survey of Jewish Literature*, *Jewish Folk Dancing*, and even *Jewish Children and Their Problems*. The language courses included Yiddish Stenography and Typesetting. In 1949, the school introduced a course called *Israel Today*, taught by A. B. Magil, who had covered Israel's War of Independence as a foreign correspondent.<sup>62</sup>

Morris Schappes, in his course *The National Question and the Jewish People* (spring semester 1949), although employing a Marxist perspective, deviated from orthodox Communist doctrine by defining the Jews as a people of long standing, despite their lack of a common territory and language. He also criticized "forced assimilation" (in the United States, not the Soviet bloc). Schappes nonetheless adhered to a simplistic class analysis in explaining both the persistence of Jewish identity and antisemitism. He argued that Jews had become a people by experiencing, and resisting, antisemitic persecution. In his course syllabus, Schappes dismissed theological explanations for antisemitism, claiming that the cause of anti-Jewish prejudice was the same in any era: "[The] need of [the] ruling class to protect itself by dividing the people." Hatred of Jews had existed in vastly different kinds of societies since ancient times because "at all times and in all places there were small ruling classes seeking to dominate large masses." Schappes identified the solution to the problem of antisemitism as the overthrowing of the "minority ruling class" that used it to maintain power. The course explored how the Bolshevik Revolution and thirty years of socialist construction had eradicated antisemitism in Russia.<sup>63</sup>

In 1948, the School of Jewish Studies joined other Communist front organizations, including the Jewish People's Fraternal Order and the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists, and Scientists, as well as *Jewish Life*, in sponsoring an "exploratory conference" in New York City on "Jewish

Culture in English in the United States.” The conference call was signed by many of the CP’s leading spokespersons on Jewish affairs, including Louis Harap, Morris Schappes, Howard Fast, Sam Pevzner, Samuel Barron, and Chaim Suller. It stated that assimilation, “the forsaking of Jewish life and culture,” had not “save[d] our people from annihilation” during the Holocaust. In contrast with the Soviet reluctance to name Jews as the primary victims of World War II genocide, the conference call noted that “in the darkest and most bitter moments of struggle against Hitlerism, in the partisan groups, in the underground, in the ghetto brigades, we fought as Jews.” The conference organizers emphasized that during the war the Jews had fought back against the Nazis and their accomplices with “arms and with culture.” By gaining a greater appreciation for, and attachment to, their Jewish cultural heritage, Jews could more effectively resist the West’s drift toward fascism and “the imperialist forces that menace our people in Palestine.”<sup>64</sup>

The conference call appealed to “Jewish writers, artists, composers, choreographers, critics of the arts, [and] scholars” to identify themselves as Jews, who as Jews had a unique cultural contribution to make. It asked participants to consider how a progressive Jewish culture could be developed “in the midst of a reactionary American culture which advances the myth of Anglo-Saxon superiority,” and to assess the relationship between American Jewish culture and Jewish culture in other parts of the world. The principal conference presentations were by Howard Fast, who spoke about the development of his own Jewish “national consciousness” and his use of Jewish themes in historical novels; Morris Schappes, on the evolution of progressive Jewish culture in the United States; Sam Morgenstern, composer of the orchestral work “Warsaw Ghetto,” on Jewish music; choreographer Edith Segal, on Jewish dance; and sculptor Aaron Goodelman, on Jewish graphic art.<sup>65</sup>

Conference speakers emphasized that the rise of Nazism, the destruction of European Jewry, and the birth of Israel had made them aware of the importance of preserving Jewish identity and culture in the United States. Howard Fast noted that four and a half years before, the *Contemporary Jewish Record* had asked him to contribute an article on the role of Jewish themes in his work. Fast had concluded then that he wrote “as an American and a Jew.” That statement now deeply embarrassed him. He informed the conference: “Today I see myself first as a Jew and then as an American.” Fast noted that in the past year he had produced four or five stories on completely Jewish topics. He would not have written his recent novel on the Maccabean revolt five years before: “So I can see that in myself I have changed.” Although a novelist, not a poet, he had been “moved to write a very long poem” about the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Fast declared: “For the first time in my life I had to express something in as near as I could get to a lyric sense ... because it reacted upon me as no American incident ever reacted upon me.” Fast told the conference that he had recently learned to speak Yiddish.<sup>66</sup>

Morris Schappes and Chaim Suller expressed concern about the paucity of “progressive” Jewish scholars in the United States, and Schappes encouraged graduate students to explore Jewish themes in their work. He told the conference that the School of Jewish Studies was unable to offer many courses because “we cannot find teachers ... equipped to give [them].” Schappes also noted that *Jewish Life* could not find qualified reviewers for many of the books it received. Suller stated that when he approached two distinguished Jewish philosophy professors about offering a course on Jewish philosophers at the School of Jewish Studies, they responded: “Chaim ... we don’t know enough about this field, it would take us months and months of preparation in order to be able to teach the course.”<sup>67</sup>

Schappes insisted on defining Jews as a people with a vibrant culture. He lamented that two of America’s leading “progressive” anthropologists, Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish, in their widely distributed pamphlet *The Races of Mankind*, had “afflicted us with the definition that the Jews are a religious group.” Schappes told the conference to vigorously combat that notion.

Schappes warned against mainstream American Jewish historians’ neglect of antisemitism when writing about American history. To illustrate this, he described his recent encounter with an historian from Yeshiva College named Grimstein who had published a work on New York’s Jewish community. Schappes informed Grimstein about an “important document I had uncovered about the Jews in 1748 in the City of New York, right in his period.” But Grimstein expressed no interest because the document concerned “anti-Semitism [and] that’s not ... a problem for him.”<sup>68</sup>

Several conference attendees stated that the Jewish experience of the previous fifteen years had caused them to abandon their earlier commitment to assimilation. Eva Descher declared that she and many of her progressive friends “ha[d] been almost vitally assimilationist.” In 1948, “we now recognize ... we are killed as Jews, we suffer in large numbers as Jews.” Descher praised efforts to introduce Jewish folk dancing as a student activity in the New York City public schools. School sponsorship of Jewish folk dancing would “give dignity and recognition to the Jews as an American minority.” Henry Goodwin stated that assimilationism meant “lining up with reaction” and “denying everything Jewish, rejecting it in toto.” He urged American Jewish writers to “find room ... in their work for ... the Jewish character.”<sup>69</sup>

Chaim Berman of the Jewish Fraternalists of the Communist-dominated Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order (JPFO) stated that his organization had been unprepared for “the mass of Jewish youth” who after the war clamored for Jewish studies courses: “Lacking in the cultural materials our programs were at a minimum.” Berman declared: “We need cultural materials on Israel, for this is the Jewish question as far as the youth is concerned. We need ... materials on ... anti-Semitism ... [and] an interpretation of our history, showing the fighting, militant past of the Jewish people.”<sup>70</sup>

Not long after World War II ended, the CP initiated a campaign to establish a Jewish history week to educate the public about the Jews' important role in shaping American culture and promoting social justice. It was also designed to heighten Jewish self-esteem by promoting an appreciation for secular Jewish culture. Jewish History Week would help diminish anti-semitism, both by informing gentiles about Jews' valuable contributions to American society and by instilling pride in Jews about their Jewishness, enabling them to more effectively respond to provocations. It would enable Jews to combat "the sense of inferiority" that antisemites tried to instill in them. The Communist magazine *New Masses*, edited by A. B. Magil, spearheaded the effort to persuade influential Americans to support the creation of Jewish History Week.<sup>71</sup>

The IFLWU Furriers Joint Council in New York passed a resolution in 1946 urging Mayor William O'Dwyer and the New York City Council to establish Jewish History Week. It stated that it was important to celebrate how the Jews' outstanding record of achievement had enriched "human life" and promoted "democratic growth" in America. The Furriers Joint Council sponsored a photographic exhibit at its hall documenting American Jewish contributions in the sciences, music and art, labor and industry, the professions, sports, and in the nation's wars. Absent in the union newspaper's coverage was the usual Communist disdain for Jewish religious celebration and ritual. The newspaper noted approvingly that the section of the exhibit devoted to the Jewish role in America's World War II military effort depicted U.S. soldiers "holding a Passover service in the former home of Propaganda Minister Goebbels."<sup>72</sup>

CP members associated with Jewish affairs, most notably Morris Schappes, Nathan Ausubel, and Howard Fast, did make significant contributions to educating the public about Jewish history. Schappes, who held an MA degree from Columbia University and had done doctoral work there, requested permission from the CP leadership toward the end of World War II to edit a documentary history of Jews in America. Schappes had in 1944 edited a collection of the work of nineteenth-century Jewish essayist and poet Emma Lazarus at the request of the International Workers Order, a party front group. This led two commercial publishers to offer him a contract to produce the documentary history of American Jewry, while he was confined in Wallkill prison in Ulster County, New York, serving a sentence for perjury, for refusing to name Communists employed at City College of New York when he was a faculty member there. One publisher, Behman's, had received several favorable recommendations on Schappes from prominent Jews, including Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, leader of the Reconstructionist movement.<sup>73</sup>

In February 1945, Schappes received approval to compile the documentary history of American Jewry from Earl Browder, general secretary of the CP (temporarily known in 1944-1945 as the Communist Political



PHOTO 11. Morris Schappes in court. (Daily Worker/Daily World Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University)

Association). Gil Green, another CP leader, had recommended Schappes's project to Browder, stressing to him that the published book could prove "of invaluable political assistance in our ideological work amongst the Jewish people." Green suggested to Browder that the publication of this scholarly work would establish Schappes "as the outstanding American historian on the Jewish question," allowing him to wield significant influence in the Jewish community. Browder agreed that Schappes's work had "great merit."<sup>74</sup> The CP leadership underlined its commitment to American Jewish history by providing Schappes jobs with the English division of *Morgen Freiheit* and teaching posts at the School of Jewish Studies and the Jefferson School so that he could support himself while he compiled and edited the book.<sup>75</sup> Schappes's *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875* was published in 1950 by the Citadel Press, which was directed by CP member Philip Foner.

In his preface to the *Documentary History*, Schappes sharply criticized the American historical profession for promoting what he called the “oppressive theory of the ‘melting pot.’” Historians using this approach had “neglected, slighted, or misrepresented” the experience of Jews, African Americans, and various immigrant groups. According to Schappes, the persistence of virulent antisemitism in the postwar period demonstrated that America’s mainstream population would not permit Jews to assimilate, no matter how hard they tried. He lamented that “the gathering of data for and the writing of American Jewish history ... has been so unsystematic and casual” that no one had ever published a collection of documents concerning it. Schappes maintained that the documents he had gathered for the volume revealed that American antisemitism was more pervasive and intense than even its liberal opponents had imagined.<sup>76</sup>

Schappes’s *Documentary History*, although polemical in parts, received favorable comment from the two most prominent mainstream historians of American Jews of the time, Bertram W. Korn and Jacob Rader Marcus, and from the reviewer for the American Jewish Congress’s magazine *Congress Weekly*. It was reissued in several new editions by nonparty presses. Joshua Block, chief of the New York Public Library’s Jewish Division, contributed the preface.<sup>77</sup>

Schappes in 1946 called on union teachers to incorporate American Jewish history into the public school curriculum. This would provide students with valuable insights about the United States, where antisemitism had “deep roots.” Schappes considered contemporary American antisemitism “almost as pressing a problem as that of discrimination against the Negro people.” Non-Jewish students who studied the American Jewish experience would become less antisemitic as they learned how Jews had contributed to “every democratic advance our country makes.” By making Jewish students proud of their heritage, teachers would also combat “those evil tendencies to assimilation that spring from a sense of inferiority and fear” and “lead to the shame of denying one’s identity with one’s people.”<sup>78</sup>

Schappes also called for the establishment of a monthly journal on American Jewish history designed for the general public. He acknowledged that the American Jewish Historical Society had published thirty-six volumes containing valuable scholarship on American Jewish history, but he maintained that these works were “very specialized and forbidding to the general reader.”<sup>79</sup>

In January 1948, the CP published a pamphlet by Galician-born Jewish folklorist Nathan Ausubel that rooted the modern concept of social justice in Jews’ “ancient cultural heritage.” The pamphlet, entitled *Jewish Culture in America: Weapon for Jewish Survival and Progress*, was a further indication of American CP deviation from the long-standing Communist denial that Jews constituted a people, which Stalin had elaborated in 1913. Only a few months after the pamphlet appeared, the *New York Times* praised

Ausubel's *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore*, published by a commercial press, as a "magnificent composite portrait of the Jewish people" over two millennia. It described the 768-page volume as "one of the most ambitious and comprehensive" compilations "of the stories, traditions, legends, wit, wisdom and folk songs of the Jewish people to appear in English." The *Times* appreciated the importance of Ausubel's having "painstakingly collected" Jewish folklore from the "strange and remote ghettos of East Central Europe" when European Jewry had just "perished in the crematoria of Auschwitz and Maidanek." Ausubel had already published *The Story of Yiddish* serially in *Morgen Freiheit*.<sup>80</sup>

Ausubel's pamphlet credited the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud with formulating the "historically unprecedented" progressive ideas that undermined tyranny and oppression. These included the equality and brotherhood of man, a concept advanced in both the Book of Isaiah and in the Talmud, where "it is not written the 'poor man' but 'thy brother' to show that both of them are equal." The ancient Hebrews also contributed "the epoch-making view of the dignity of labor and of respect for the worker." Ausubel noted that "even the great Talmudic sages and teachers among the Jews worked at manual trades." Rabbi Hillel, "who taught the doctrine of love and brotherhood a hundred years before Christ, was a woodchopper; Rabbi Hanina was a shoemaker; Rabbi Yohanan a maker of sandals; Rabbi Yose ben Halafta a tanner." In an era when other people treated women "as mere chattels and breeding machines," the Jews accorded them a "high place." The Jews were the only people of antiquity to display a "humane attitude toward the slave."<sup>81</sup>

Ausubel denounced Jewish assimilationism in both its "bourgeois" and "progressive" forms. The bourgeois assimilationist was a "spineless opportunist." Too weak to endure "social scorn," he tried "to transform himself into his snobbish conception of an Anglo-Saxon Gentile." A "philistine," he was likely to align himself with reactionary enemies of the Jews and even join in hurling antisemitic insults at his own people. The progressive assimilationist possessed at most a superficial acquaintance with Jewish culture, oblivious that it provided the foundation that made human liberation possible. Believing Jewish culture to be religious and parochial, he dismissed it as "dead" and "moldy."<sup>82</sup>

Ausubel condemned contemporary American Jewish writers, including many considered progressive, for repeatedly disparaging Jews and Jewish culture. When serious American Jewish writers and dramatists deigned to address Jewish topics, they did not "write with ink but with venom." Their "dominant mood is gloom," their "guiding emotion – loathing." Ausubel declared that during the previous thirty years "the majority of so-called 'Jewish' novels, short stories, and plays ... have been about the most unattractive Jewish characters: finaglers, humbugs, money-grubbers, go-getters, hypocrites, lechers, and short-changers." He concluded: "It is



more than high time for the Jewish writer to give up his neurotic compulsion to beat the daylights out of his Jewish villains and to turn his gifts to the portrayal of the affirmative, the wholesome, the socially constructive in American life.”<sup>83</sup>

According to Ausubel, the Soviet Union, in contrast to the United States, was encouraging Jewish cultural life and the use of Yiddish. There were hundreds of thriving “Jewish cultural enterprises” there: “Schools and colleges, state publishing houses, theaters, museums, newspapers, and research institutes for the study of Jewish folklore and history.” Ausubel went so far as to claim that the Soviets valued even ancient Jewish religious texts. They had recently published an anthology of the Midrash, which, he claimed, they recognized as a “treasure-house of Jewish folk-wisdom and ethics.” The Soviets were also preparing to issue “a Talmudic anthology.”<sup>84</sup>

In the United States, there were hopeful signs, although “progressive Jewish culture” was much less advanced, “still in its swaddling clothes.” The CP had in the previous two years taken important initiatives to promote public awareness of Jews’ contribution to the struggle for human dignity. It had founded the School of Jewish Studies in New York, which Ausubel touted as the nation’s “only Jewish cultural educational institution of a progressive character.” Ausubel maintained that it was “the only Jewish school in America” that provided Jewish parents with the instruction necessary to “prevent in their children those terrifying neuroses” caused by the anti-semitism they would inevitably experience in a “morally sordid” capitalist society such as the United States. The CP’s year-old magazine *Jewish Life* had become this nation’s “most significant single force ... for progressive Jewish culture.”<sup>85</sup>

Ausubel emphasized Jewish culture’s vital importance in protecting world Jewry, which was “in the gravest danger.” The persecution of Jews in any country threatened Jews in every country. Anglo-American abuse of Jewish displaced persons in Germany and British and Arab depredations against Jews in Palestine affected all Jews. Jewish culture was a “weapon for survival,” according to the subtitle of Ausubel’s pamphlet. Only by developing an appreciation for their cultural heritage could Jews around the world unite as a people, and withstand the antisemitic attacks that were “becoming more brazen and aggressive from day to day.” Ausubel ended his pamphlet by quoting a lengthy passage from Midrash that illustrated the need for Jewish unity.<sup>86</sup>

Morris Schappes in correspondence in late 1949 and early 1950 with the CP’s Colorado chapter, which asked for his assistance in preparing a seminar on the Jewish question, maintained that Jews constituted a people “on a world-wide scale,” and he opposed pressuring them to assimilate, even under socialism. A distinct Jewish cultural identity should be preserved until “the epoch of world communism,” history’s final stage, when class divisions totally disappeared and “all nations, national minorities, national groups,

peoples, tribes, etc.” would “merge into one common humanity with even ONE LANGUAGE.”

Schappes strongly condemned “forced assimilation under capitalism,” which he defined as a process in which the “ruling class” destroyed, or attempted to destroy, many of the immigrants’ customs and beliefs, and language, and required them to embrace its Anglo-Saxon culture. Such “reactionary assimilationism” eradicated class consciousness developed in Europe and the creativity and vitality generated at the grass roots. It caused Jews to feel shame about their backgrounds. Schappes noted that in the United States Jews would even “*brag* they don’t know Yiddish.” He claimed that by contrast Soviet nationalities policy respected the cultural contributions and heritage of each people, while allowing the individual the opportunity to fully reject acculturation or to engage in it partially or fully.<sup>87</sup>

Schappes associated “reactionary assimilationism” with the Jewish bourgeoisie, whose leading organization he identified as the American Jewish Committee. Schappes noted that the U.S. census’s failure to classify Jews as a “national group” was “not accidental, but is the direct consequence of the insistence of the Jewish bourgeoisie, through the AJC, etc., that the Jews are only a religious group.” Jews who wished to “affirm their identity” were “compelled to answer a false question, wrongly put.” The census’s narrow religious definition resulted in a severe undercount of the number of Jews in the United States. By contrast, the CP on its application and registration cards asked for “nationality,” not religion, which had permitted Schappes to list himself as “Jewish-American.”<sup>88</sup>

Chaim Suller maintained that American Jews’ embrace of assimilationism was a form of self-hatred. Assimilationists considered maintaining a Jewish identity “in contradiction to being an American.” Contemptuous of their own culture and heritage, they assumed that the “Jewish people have nothing to offer.” They believed that “the only real and worthwhile culture is that of the dominating Anglo-Saxon group.”<sup>89</sup>

CP authorities involved in Jewish affairs expected a postwar Yiddish revival to accompany what Alexander Bittelman predicted would be “the flowering of a Jewish cultural life in English.” Writing in October 1944, as the Germans and their collaborators were annihilating European Jewry, Bittelman expressed confidence that Jews would survive and “carry forward their [Jewish] national heritage wherever they are.”<sup>90</sup> In his 1948 pamphlet *To Secure Jewish Rights: The Communist Position*, he called for a “joint struggle” in both English and Yiddish for a progressive American Jewish culture, which could never survive if either language was neglected. Bittelman hailed the founding of *Jewish Life* as an important contribution to this struggle, while simultaneously denouncing many progressives’ “refusal to recognize the crucial role of Yiddish as the mother tongue of large sections of the Jewish people and as the prime repository of modern Jewish culture.” Bittelman maintained that stimulating interest in Yiddish

in the United States was vitally important. Communists should make available more English translations of Yiddish works. But English translations could not fully substitute for American Jews reading the Yiddish “cultural treasures” in the original.<sup>91</sup>

Morris Schappes made a concerted effort to interest Communists in the Yiddish language and culture. Schappes acknowledged that American Jews’ acculturation prevented Yiddish from ever again becoming their primary language. But he argued that American Jews should be encouraged to learn Yiddish nevertheless, both to solidify their identity as a people and as “an act of political faith, an act of defiance against the enemy [the Nazis].” Concerned that almost no American colleges and universities offered Yiddish language or literature courses, Schappes urged that they be added to their curricula. This would elevate Yiddish’s prestige as a language, because many people believed that “what isn’t taught in college isn’t knowledge.” To make Yiddish more accessible to English-speaking Jews, and less intimidating, Schappes suggested that Yiddish writings be transliterated. Publishers should also issue translations of Yiddish books as “a stimulus to learning,” to instill a sense of Jewish pride, and to encourage respect for Yiddish culture.<sup>92</sup>

Schappes complained that few American Jewish literary and historical works provided the “progressive insight” he considered essential for the development of secular Jewish culture in the United States. He noted the conspicuous absence of “the class-conscious organized Jewish worker” in the twenty-six novels about Jews by American Jewish authors published in 1948 and 1949. Moreover, in the thirty-eight volumes the American Jewish Historical Society had issued since its founding in 1893, “not a single page has been given to the history of the Jewish working class.”<sup>93</sup> *Avreml Broide*, a novel by Ben Gold, a member of the CP’s national committee, published in 1944 by the Morning Freiheit Association, was exceptional in exploring the working-class Jewish experience. Written and published in Yiddish, the novel told the story of a young Jewish man who, like Gold, had immigrated from Bessarabia to the United States and become a fur worker. After the Nazis’ rise to power, the young Jewish working-class hero is determined to strike a blow for his people against fascism and volunteers to fight for the Loyalists in Spain, where he is killed.<sup>94</sup>

Schappes emphasized that the progressive Jewish author faced new postwar challenges in writing about the American Jewish experience. The vast majority of postwar American Jews had not experienced the immigrant’s adjustment to “capitalist relations” in the United States, a major theme in *Avreml Broide* and in Mike Gold’s *Jews Without Money* (1930). Nor was the Jewish worker in 1950 concentrated in industries in which Jews formed a majority of the labor force, even those employed in the needle trades. Progressive American Jewish writers would have to explore new and more relevant themes and settings.<sup>95</sup>

Leaders of the JPFO, part of the International Workers Order (IWO), a Communist-dominated fraternal benefit society, urged their membership at the 1947 convention to commit itself to preserving Jewish culture in the United States. Jewish Communist workers had organized the IWO after breaking away from the Socialist-led Workmen's Circle on Moscow's orders in 1930. Sam Pevzner, editor of the JPFO's magazine *Jewish Fraternalist*, proposed that JPFO children's schools, besides observing the Jewish liberation holidays of Purim, Passover, and Chanukah, administer quizzes on Jewish history and literature, celebrate a Jewish history month and a Jewish music month, and stage an annual memorial week for the Warsaw ghetto uprising. He encouraged JPFO districts to establish Yiddish theaters, along with English ones. Another JPFO spokesperson, Kalman Marmer, noted that the termination of Jewish immigration to the United States endangered American Jews' identity as a people. But he rejected "pessimistic and defeatist attitudes" and praised "modern, progressive Jewish culture" as "a priceless heritage" that Communists could "proudly give to our youth." Like Morris Schappes, the JPFO convention recommended that colleges and universities with significant Jewish enrollments introduce courses in Yiddish language and literature and Jewish history. It also called for "an energetic campaign" to persuade high schools in Jewish neighborhoods to introduce Yiddish courses in their curricula.<sup>96</sup>

Howard Fast, a CP member from 1943 to 1957 and its best-known author, wrote two heroic Jewish historical novels that challenged antisemitic stereotypes. His 1941 semifictional biography *Haym Salomon: Son of Liberty* charted the life of an eighteenth-century Polish Jewish immigrant who became a prominent American Revolutionary patriot. Achieving success as a merchant, he used his fortune to assist the American Revolutionary forces at a time when the colonies stood on "the verge of bankruptcy." Unlike the stereotypical grasping Jew, disloyal to his country, Salomon lent money to the Continental army without asking for security and sold it supplies at low prices. During the Revolutionary War he protected American spies and encouraged Britain's Hessian mercenaries to desert. After the war, he provided assistance to Revolutionary War veterans in distress. As a result of his generosity, Salomon died a poor man, "but he had helped to insure freedom to his country."<sup>97</sup> In 1948 Fast published *My Glorious Brothers*, a celebration of the ancient Maccabees' struggle to maintain Jewish identity and resist Hellenization.

Some Communists continued to celebrate Jewish culture despite the Soviet shift to an explicitly antisemitic policy in 1949 (discussed in [Chapter 5](#)). During Israel's 1956 Sinai campaign, Alexander Bittelman, reviewing Cecil B. DeMille's epic film *The Ten Commandments* in the *Daily Worker*, emphasized the relevance of the ancient Hebrews' contribution of the Law at a time "when Israel is once more arrayed against Egypt." Departing from the Left's traditional denigration of Judaism, Bittelman linked the

concepts of “freedom [and] equality in race, color, and creed” to the Ten Commandments, which were shaped by the Hebrews’ exodus from Egypt after four centuries in slavery. Bittelman complained that DeMille’s movie depicted ancient Hebrew culture as “rude [and] nomadic,” providing “no hint of the thought, literature, and art” of a people who rose out of bondage to create “a great system of moral law.”<sup>98</sup>

In *Jewish Life* Louis Harap in 1953 denounced the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism (ACJ), which was founded by a group of reform rabbis and wealthy acculturated Jews, for insisting that Jewish identity should be defined solely by religion, not culture. They discarded the valuable “progressive Yiddish tradition” in favor of a chauvinistic Anglo-Saxon culture. This hampered the struggle against antisemitism by weakening cultural bonds that strengthened and solidified the American Jewish community. By discouraging “Jewish action as *Jews*,” the ACJ weakened Jewish influence and prospects for group survival. Moreover, American culture itself had developed from fusing elements of disparate, ethnically distinct cultures. Harap emphasized that the United States “permits continuation within national groups of their own traditional cultures.”<sup>99</sup>

Morris Schappes, in the Communist magazine *Masses & Mainstream*, accused the ACJ of blaming the Jews themselves for antisemitism and dismissed it as entirely unrepresentative of American Jewish opinion. He quoted ACJ executive director Rabbi Elmer Berger as asserting that gentiles’ perception that Jews considered themselves a culturally distinct people made antisemitism possible. Berger’s assumption that Jews could avoid antisemitism by identifying only as a religious group was ridiculously naïve, because antisemites assailed Judaism and its institutions, both verbally and physically. Schappes described the ACJ as the mouthpiece for a small coterie of very wealthy Jews. Led by “multi-millionaire America First” Lessing J. Rosenwald, head of Sears, Roebuck, the ACJ expressed the concerns of “similarly cushioned Jewish magnates” who believed their fortunes would be better protected were the Jewish masses to assimilate into the mainstream population and to remain only marginally differentiated by a Reform Judaism that downplayed Judaism’s differences with Christianity.<sup>100</sup>

The American CP, to discredit the West during the immediate postwar years, placed considerable emphasis on exposing antisemitic outrages in the United States and in the American and British occupation zones of Germany. It expected America’s big industrialists to install a fascist dictatorship that would implement antisemitic policies as capitalism entered its final crisis. The CP, instead of urging Jews to assimilate, encouraged interest in secular Jewish culture. It now argued that a strongly defined ethnic identity enhanced Jews’ self-esteem, enabling them to more effectively withstand antisemitic provocations.

The CP's postwar concern about antisemitism set it apart from the New Left of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which also adopted an apocalyptic outlook and warned of incipient fascism. Former New Leftist Peter Collier stated in 1989 that he and his comrades had "talked about the 'revolution' constantly." He recalled prominent New Left activist Tom Hayden, a leader of the 1968 antiwar demonstrations at the Democratic Party convention in Chicago, telling him "without apparent regret" after Ohio National Guardsmen killed four students at Kent State University: "Well, fascism is here. There will be civil war soon." On Hayden's advice, Collier purchased a gun so he "could be armed when the revolution arrived."<sup>101</sup> The New Left, however, never associated the fascist dictatorship it predicted with antisemitism. Unlike the Communists of the late 1940s, it displayed very little interest in Jewish culture and certainly made no effort to promote it.

The CP from the end of World War II to the early 1950s vigorously protested the Western allies' lack of commitment to de-Nazification in Germany and their abuse of Jewish displaced persons. The CP energetically challenged antisemitic stereotypes and favorable portrayals of Nazis in the movies and accused mainstream Jewish organizations of responding too timorously. It promoted legislation to ban sending antisemitic materials through the mail. The CP denounced the admission into the United States of Nazi war criminals and collaborators while Jewish survivors of the Holocaust were prohibited from entering. The CP did not confine its protest to verbal condemnation but aggressively picketed.

Yet the CP never criticized the East German regime's minimization of antisemitism's importance in Nazi ideology or its equating Allied bombing of German cities with Nazi war crimes. The Trotskyists did accuse the East Germans of coddling Nazis but denied that antisemitism significantly influenced the German masses.

The Holocaust shocked many American Communists into a new appreciation of secular Jewish culture and caused them to reassess their commitment to assimilation. The CP broke far left precedent by founding a monthly magazine to promote Jewish culture, opening the School of Jewish Studies to instill Jewish pride and eradicate antisemitism, sponsoring a conference on Jewish culture, and lobbying for a Jewish history week to celebrate Jews' contributions to human advancement. It criticized mainstream American Jewish writers for disparaging Jewish culture. Prominent American Jewish Communists, formerly disdainful of the Jewish religious heritage, now credited Judaism for introducing the fundamental concepts of social justice. This was all the more remarkable because American academia at the time almost entirely neglected Jewish studies. The CP's new involvement in combating antisemitism and its embrace of Jewish culture paralleled a major shift in its position on establishing a Jewish state in Palestine.

## “Two, Four, Six, Eight, We Demand a Jewish State”

### *Communist Support for Partition and the Jewish War of Liberation, 1947–1948*

Following a sharp shift in Soviet policy, the American CP in May 1947 abandoned its decades-long opposition to creating a Jewish state in Palestine and threw its support behind partitioning Palestine into two states, one Jewish and the other Arab. In Israel's 1948 War of Independence, the CP and Communist-led trade unions enthusiastically supported the Israeli military effort to repel the invading Arab armies. The abrupt policy reversal occurred largely because the Kremlin believed that the Zionists' struggle to dislodge the British in Palestine and create a Jewish state would hasten the collapse of the British Empire and allow the Soviets to gain a foothold in the Middle East.

Adhering to the Soviet line, the American CP from 1945 to May 1947 favored making Palestine a homeland for Jews but did not officially call for establishing a Jewish state there. Like the Soviets, it advocated a binational state in which Jewish minority rights would be guaranteed. On several occasions during this period, however, the *Daily Worker* gave tacit support to creating a Jewish state. The CP called on the United States and Britain to allow Jews in displaced persons camps in their occupation zones in Germany to immigrate to Palestine. It viewed Palestine not just as a refuge for part of the remnant of European Jewry annihilated in the Holocaust. The CP also urged a “planned and organized immigration into Palestine of the hundreds of thousands of Jews now living in the Orient,” the Arab and Islamic lands of the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 1945, the CP became significantly engaged in demonstrations demanding the immediate abrogation of the 1939 British White Paper, to permit unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine. Most of these protest actions were led by mainstream Jewish or labor groups. Supporting unrestricted Jewish immigration brought the CP into direct conflict with the Arab nations. The CP strongly condemned the Arab leadership as reactionary feudalists who had collaborated with the Nazis during World War II.

In October 1945, the *Daily Worker* praised the 250,000 who participated in a massive rally against the White Paper in New York City for



their contribution to the "heroic struggle to rebuild the national life of the Jewish people and to restore dignity and honor to the broken remnants of European Jewry." The demonstration was conducted under the auspices of pro-Zionist Jewish organizations. The *Daily Worker* backed the demonstrators' pledge to fight for unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, which they made "with a tremendous swelling shout." It quoted approvingly the chairman of the New York State Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), who told the rally that "the spokesmen of the Arab League [representing the Arab nations] all speak with the accents of fascists." The *Daily Worker* proudly noted the participation of a 5,000-member contingent from the Communist-dominated International Fur and Leather Workers Union, CIO.<sup>2</sup>

In a November 1945 editorial, the *Daily Worker* declared that Arab consent should not be required for Jewish immigration to Palestine. In the same issue, it endorsed the statement of Zionist leaders Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and Dr. Abba Hillel Silver that surviving European Jews had nowhere to go but Palestine. While President Truman and the British Attlee government dithered, establishing "interminable commissions" that issued meaningless reports, the hungry and homeless Holocaust survivors faced "a winter of hardship and death."<sup>3</sup>

The CP itself in December 1945 staged rallies in the Brownsville and Flatbush districts in Brooklyn demanding the immediate lifting of all barriers to Jewish immigration to Palestine. Both districts contained sizeable Jewish populations.

The Brownsville CP advertised its rally under the slogans "Open the Doors of Palestine to Unlimited Immigration! Save European Jewry!" and "Jewish Blood is Worth More than British and American Oil!" suggesting that Anglo-American oil cartels dictated the West's Palestine policy. Morris Schappes and Philip Sandler, CP activists who devoted considerable attention to Jewish affairs, addressed the gathering in English and Yiddish respectively. The CP flier announcing the rally proclaimed that "80,000 Jews ... wandering on the snow-swept roads of Poland" and the "countless thousands still liv[ing] in the filthy misery of Concentration camps" were in danger of dying of starvation and disease that winter unless Britain opened the gates of Palestine to them. But rather than provide Jews a refuge in Palestine, Britain's "guns [were] spilling Jewish blood" there, and British agents "incite[d] the Arab world in violent anti-Jewish outbursts." For its part, the Truman administration had failed to provide the Holocaust survivors with urgently needed aid. All it had done was establish a commission to study conditions in the displaced persons camps, which was scheduled to report in 120 days. "How many Jews will die in December, January, February, and March," the CP flier asked, "while this committee seeks a 'correct picture of the situation?'" and it declared, "Action is Needed, Not Investigation!"<sup>4</sup>

The leaflet advertising the Flatbush rally accused President Truman of helping the British “ram the White Paper down the throat of world Jewry.” Headlined “6,000,000 Jews Murdered!!!” it declared that Jews had nowhere to go in Europe, “no shelter, no food, no clothes.” The British and American governments confined them in a “living graveyard.” The rally was addressed by Dr. Bella Dodd, vice-president of the New York State CP, and Max Perlow of the Communist-led United Furniture Workers Union, CIO.<sup>5</sup>

Indicative of Jewry’s increasingly desperate plight were the Anglo-American abandonment of de-Nazification efforts in Germany and indifference toward savage Arab pogroms against Jewish communities in North Africa. In the fall of 1945 the *Daily Worker* published articles on the Arab killing of more than 100 Jews and the wounding of several hundred more in Tripolitania, Libya, and the massacre of at least 10 Jews and wounding of 350 in Alexandria, Egypt. It reported that in Palestine British military patrols were inciting a “wave of terror” against the Yishuv, while the Attlee government permitted “Arab leaders who openly supported Hitler” to return there. The “heroic Jewish colonists around Jerusalem” were arming to defend themselves, “in the face of ... heavy British armor.” The conservative Chicago *Tribune* commented angrily that the “current communist line, laid down by the *Daily Worker* and followed obediently by other communist and communist-front publications [is] ... Stir up the Jews on the Palestine issue.... Fan the fires of hatred of the Germans.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1946 the CP established a new front group, the American Jewish Labor Council (AJLC), to mobilize support for unrestricted immigration to Palestine and, after the Soviet Union swung behind partition in 1947, for a Jewish state. The AJLC also pledged to fight antisemitism in the United States, which it declared was reaching a level parallel to Germany’s on the eve of Hitler’s accession to power.<sup>7</sup> It promptly launched a campaign to raise \$250,000 from trade unions, 35 percent of which would be used to combat antisemitism, and the rest of which would be used for the relief of Jewish Holocaust survivors in Europe.

The AJLC signaled its willingness to work with mainstream Zionist groups by having AJCongress leader Rabbi Stephen S. Wise address the founding convention.<sup>8</sup>

International Fur and Leather Workers Union (IFLWU) president Ben Gold was elected AJLC president at the founding convention. The IFLWU’s 110,000 members were about evenly divided between fur workers, who were largely concentrated in and around New York City, and leather workers, who were scattered over the East and the Midwest. Most of the fur workers were Jewish; the leather workers were primarily non-Jews. Gold was a member of the CP’s National Committee.<sup>9</sup>

Gold’s IFLWU staged a mammoth open-air rally on June 20, 1946, in the heart of New York’s fur market to demand that Britain remove restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine. Securing the support of the largely Jewish



PHOTO 12. State assemblyman Leo Isacson and New York City councilman Michael J. Quill, president of the Transport Workers Union, CIO, picketing the British consulate in New York City, June 24, 1946. The demonstration was sponsored by the Communist-led International Workers Order as the Communists moved toward supporting the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. (Daily Worker/Daily World Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University)

fur trade employers and leaders of the AJCongress and Jewish War Veterans, the IFLWU mobilized 20,000 demonstrators and at noon shut down the entire industry for two hours. The *Fur and Leather Worker* reported that "it was one of the first times that an entire industry stopped work in protest against anti-Semitism." Rabbi Stephen S. Wise joined Ben Gold in insisting on Jews' right to settle in Palestine. "In a voice that shook with emotion," he declared: "I'd fight 'til I died to get into my own home." IFLWU Furriers Joint Council manager Irving Potash condemned Britain for permitting "the Nazi Mufti of Palestine" to escape from France to Egypt.<sup>10</sup>

The CP considered the post-World War II mass demonstrations for unrestricted immigration to Palestine a "chapter of glory" in Jewish history. The continuing protests constituted "a new Maccabean struggle" that demolished the White Paper and the British mandate over Palestine, making possible the creation of Israel.<sup>11</sup>

The CP presented the postwar Jewish struggle for a homeland in Palestine as fundamentally anti-imperialist, which was a complete reversal of its position during the 1929 pogroms. In February 1946, African American Communist Dr. Max Yergan, executive director of the anticolonialist Council on African Affairs, accused Britain of spreading antisemitism among its African colonial troops and inciting them to attack Jews in the Yishuv. The *Daily Worker* reported approvingly how Yergan had emphasized the solidarity between the Jews of Palestine and the colonial peoples of Africa in their struggle “for independence from British domination.” It quoted Yergan as declaring to Lord Halifax, Britain’s ambassador to the United States, that “Africans in Britain’s colonies enlisted to fight against fascism and win world wide democracy, not to preserve Britain’s imperial interests” by fighting the Jews.<sup>12</sup>

In May 1947, as the United Nations (UN) opened debate over the future of the British mandate, the Soviets signaled a major policy shift when Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko declared that if Arab-Jewish tensions rendered a binational state unviable, his government was prepared to support the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. Gromyko asserted that, having failed to protect the Jews from the “Fascist hangmen,” the Western European nations had forfeited any right to oppose a Jewish state. A Hebrew newspaper hailed Gromyko’s speech as “the Soviet Balfour Declaration.”<sup>13</sup>

CP publications found the Arab delegates’ rhetoric during the debate deeply offensive. *Jewish Life* published an article by Soviet Yiddish writer Itzik Feffer that condemned the Arabs for spreading “anti-Semitic poison” at the UN. Feffer noted that the heir of Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini, Muslim leader in Jerusalem and a passionate supporter of Hitler during World War II, had rejected any cooperation with Jews in Palestine on the grounds that they had killed Jesus. He maintained that contemporary Jews were descended from Mongolians. The Syrian delegate similarly claimed that contemporary Jews had no connection to biblical Jews.<sup>14</sup>

The *Daily Worker* reported that the Nations Associates, which published the left-leaning *Nation* magazine, had accused the head of the Arab High Committee on Palestine, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, and three members of its six-man delegation to the UN session, of being Axis agents. The Arab League, which represented the Arab states, had set up the Arab High Committee to represent the Arabs in Palestine. The Nations Associates made the charges in a documented memorandum that it submitted to both UN secretary-general Trygve Lie and Lester Pearson, chairman of the General Assembly’s Political and Security Committee. It ranked the four men among the “worst of the Axis war criminals.” The Nations Associates attached to the memorandum thirty-five photographs of the grand mufti and other Arab leaders with Adolf Hitler, SS chief Heinrich Himmler, and Dino Alfieri, Mussolini’s ambassador to Nazi Germany. The memorandum

identified the grand mufti as a "full partner" of Hitler's "before and during World War II" and as "an escaped prisoner who has found asylum in the Palace of the King of Egypt."<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the grand mufti, the accused men included the delegation's head, Emil Ghouri; Wasef Kamal; and Rasem Khalidi, a former radio announcer on an Axis-Arab station. The latter two "were notorious for their long-term association with the Mufti and his Axis activities." The U.S. consul in Egypt had refused to grant Khalidi a visa to the United States because of his wartime collaboration with the Nazis in Germany. Ghouri was responsible for "terror against Arab opponents of the Mufti and Arabs who sell land to the Jews." He called for an independent Arab-controlled Palestine in which all Jews who had immigrated after 1918 would be without rights, considered foreigners. The fourth member of the delegation was a cousin of the mufti.<sup>16</sup>

Yugoslavia, Britain, and the United States indicted the grand mufti as a war criminal but, desiring to placate the Arab nations, had quickly abandoned their efforts to apprehend and try him. The French, who had refused to extradite him for trial, were complicit in his escape from Europe to Egypt. The grand mufti was considered "the most ardent Arab supporter of the annihilation of European Jews during World War II."<sup>17</sup> The mufti had incited the Arab revolt of 1936–1939 to terminate Jewish immigration to Palestine as the steady expansion of Nazi power rendered the plight of European Jews increasingly desperate. During the grand mufti's "Holy War," he encouraged his followers to display the swastika on their posters and fliers. Vehicles flying the swastika flag were ensured protection when driving through neighborhoods that the grand mufti's followers controlled. They taught children mobilized to back the revolt to give the stiff-armed Nazi salute in greeting. The Nations Associates reported that files of the German High Command in Flensburg captured by the Allies at the end of World War II revealed that Nazi Germany had supplied the mufti with the funds he needed to carry out the riots.<sup>18</sup>

The Nations Associates also charged that the mufti and his "henchmen" Kamal, Khalidi, and Ghouri had been "directly responsible" for the 1941 anti-Jewish pogrom in Baghdad. It noted that the Arab pogromists had "stabbed or brutally clubbed to death in the streets of Baghdad" nearly 400 Jewish men, women, and children.<sup>19</sup>

Ridiculing what it considered Stalinist confusion about the Middle East, the Trotskyist *Militant* noted that the American CP's image of the grand mufti was diametrically opposed to that of the Arab-dominated Communist Party of Palestine. The CP of Palestine adopted an aggressive Arab nationalist position, ignoring the grand mufti's rabid chauvinism and theocratic objectives. Its weekly *Al-Ittihad*, in an article praising the grand mufti after his escape from war crimes prosecution in Europe, reported approvingly that Arab Palestine "from end to end" had celebrated his triumphal return

to Egypt. By contrast, a *Daily Worker* editorial called the grand mufti “a notorious war criminal, who openly collaborated with Hitler.” The grand mufti’s record was “one of irreconcilable hostility to the Jewish people.” The *Daily Worker* complained that “instead of clapping him into jail,” the British “were about to shake hands with him around the conference table.”<sup>20</sup>

The American Communists and others with pro-Soviet sympathies applauded Zionist efforts to break the British blockade of Palestine, which was established to bar entry to Jewish immigrants. In a series of articles for *PM*, a left-wing New York tabloid then friendly to the Soviets, I. F. Stone provided a firsthand account of “illegal” Jewish immigration to Palestine. Stone traveled with Jewish Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe to Mediterranean ports. He then boarded a Haganah ship that tried to run the British blockade. Stone published the *PM* articles as a book, *Underground to Palestine* (1946), concluding that “full support of the so-called illegal immigration is a moral obligation.” European Jewry’s only hope lay in “filling the waters of Palestine with so many illegal boats that the pressure on the British and the conscience of the world becomes unbearable.”<sup>21</sup>

Stone cited strong Soviet Jewish support for the illegal immigration and praise for the achievements of the Yishuv. In Vienna, which Stone described as “the great crossroads of the Jewish exodus from Central and Eastern Europe,” a Soviet Red Army major told him: “We must support the building of Palestine. For many Jews in Eastern Europe west of the Soviet border there is no other way out.” Another Red Army officer quoted with pride “the famous remark made by the Soviet Union’s former Ambassador to Britain ... who commented after a visit to the Jewish collective settlements in the Holy Land, ‘We have reached socialism, but you have already achieved communism.’”<sup>22</sup>

CP publications denounced Britain’s deportation to Germany of more than 4,500 Jewish passengers on the *Exodus* 1947, which was seized by the Royal Navy as it approached Haifa, calling it a crime against the Jewish people and against humanity. The British transferred the *Exodus* 1947 passengers into the caged holds of three other ships for transport to France, instead of imprisoning them in greatly overcrowded Cyprus detention camps with the multitudes of Jews previously taken on the seas. When the captured Jews refused to disembark in France and the French government would not cooperate in removing them, the British transported the Jews to Hamburg, Germany, in their occupation zone. The British confined the Jews in two former concentration camps behind barbed wire. *Jewish Life* condemned as “callous, crass cruelty” Britain’s returning the “suffering Jews once more to the land of the crematorium and the gas chamber.” *Morgen Freiheit* called it an act of barbarism. The AJLC urged British union seamen not to serve on ships returning the *Exodus* 1947 Jews to Germany.<sup>23</sup>

In September 1947 the IFLWU staged a mass rally in New York’s fur district to express its members’ “burning resentment” of the British attack





PHOTO 13. Some of the more than 4,500 passengers the British seized from the *Exodus* 1947 as it sailed to Palestine, in the hold of the British transport *Runnymede Park* on its arrival at Port de Bouc, France, August 22, 1947. (AP Images)

on the *Exodus* 1947. Furriers Joint Council assistant manager Joseph Winogradsky compared the British to the Nazis, blasting the Royal Navy's "Hitler tactics." The assembled fur workers adopted a strongly worded resolution that stated: "British imperialism is continuing the policy of Hitler in the persecution of the Jewish people." It condemned President Truman, who had not denounced the British seizure of the Haganah ship, for his "guilty silence." The resolution also demanded the release of Jewish refugees from Britain's Cyprus "concentration camps" and their transport to Palestine and urged the establishment of a Jewish homeland there.<sup>24</sup>

During the fall of 1947, the American CP contrasted Soviet support for partition with the U.S. government's "evasive" stand. Shortly before the UN General Assembly voted on partition in November, Gromyko declared that the Holocaust survivors' homelessness and the Jews' long historical connection to Palestine justified establishing a Jewish state there. *Jewish Life*



praised the Soviets for treating Jewish aspirations with “dignity and respect” but criticized the United States for displaying uncertainty about partition.<sup>25</sup> In the UN General Assembly on November 29, 1947, the Soviet bloc joined the United States in voting for partition.

The press attributed the victory of American Labor Party (ALP) candidate Leo Isacson in February 1948 in a special election for U.S. representative in New York City’s 24th congressional district to the Left’s strong backing for a Jewish state in Palestine. It was seen as a rebuke to President Truman for wavering on partition. The largely working-class district in the southeast Bronx was half Jewish, about 20 percent African American, and 20 percent Puerto Rican; the remainder was Irish American and Italian American. Isacson trounced his Democratic opponent, Karl Propper, by a nearly two-to-one margin. Propper had been endorsed by Mayor William O’Dwyer and by Eleanor Roosevelt. The vote for the Liberal and Republican Party candidates was negligible.<sup>26</sup>

Isacson received strong and energetic backing from the CP, the *Daily Worker*, and the Communist-led trade unions, as well as from Progressive Party presidential candidate Henry Wallace, who campaigned for him. He was also endorsed by the strongly pro-Israel PM. Communists from across New York City descended on the district to campaign for Isacson door-to-door. An Isacson campaign pamphlet announced in Yiddish: “Truman spills Jewish blood for Arab oil.” Isacson joined Vito Marcantonio as the second member of the Communist-dominated ALP in the U.S. House of Representatives. Responding to the outcome, Edward Flynn, head of the Bronx’s Democratic Party machine, issued a statement asserting that “the Communist menace in this country is much greater than most people thought.”<sup>27</sup>

As an ALP U.S. representative, Isacson expressed militant support for Israel and denounced the leniency of the U.S. occupation authorities in Germany toward Nazi war criminals. In his “maiden speech” in the House of Representatives on March 5, 1948, Isacson introduced a resolution that called for lifting President Truman’s arms embargo on Jewish forces in Palestine and establishing an international police force to protect Jews there from Arab attacks. Glen Taylor, Henry Wallace’s proposed Progressive Party vice-presidential running mate, introduced the same resolution in the Senate. Isacson warned a few weeks later that unless Congress acted immediately to implement the measures he and Senator Taylor proposed, the Arabs would annihilate the 600,000 Jews in Palestine “in the most horrible of all pogroms.”<sup>28</sup> Isacson introduced a bill calling for the United States to extend recognition to a Jewish state in Palestine and a resolution to have the House Foreign Affairs Committee investigate U.S. oil corporations’ influence on the Truman administration’s decision to reconsider partition.<sup>29</sup>

Rep. Isacson met with Holocaust survivors confined in British detention camps on Cyprus. He reported that as he moved through the camps, he was



PHOTO 14. Jews confined behind barbed wire in a Cyprus detention camp, March 16, 1947. An armed British soldier in the watchtower guards the Jews. The British had denied the Jews admission into Palestine and deported them to Cyprus. They had been held in the camp since August 1946. (AP Images)

deeply impressed with the "oneness" of the Jews, who came "from many lands, speaking varying languages and reflecting varied customs and cultures," but who were "welded together in the quest of a new life [in a Jewish state in Palestine] and the terrible experiences of the Nazi era which had left its mark on all of them, symbolized now by the concentration camp numbers seared into their flesh."<sup>30</sup>

Isacson toured Israel during its War of Independence, reading his praise for the Jewish fighting forces into the *Congressional Record*. He identified himself as "a Zionist since boyhood." Before leaving the United States, Isacson took daily target practice with a high-powered rifle. He told the New York *Post*'s Bronx edition: "I feel strongly about the setting up of a Jewish state in Palestine. When I go there I am prepared to do anything I can to help its establishment. I really mean *anything*." The *Post* noted that Isacson was reluctant to elaborate for fear that disclosing "his intention to help Jewish military forces" might lead the British to bar him from Palestine.<sup>31</sup>

The Progressive Party published a condensed version of Isacson's remarks as a pamphlet, *Journey to Israel*, whose cover showed him standing with a



PHOTO 15. A campaign rally for Leo Isacson, denouncing President Truman's "double-cross" of Israel, 1948. (Daily Worker/Daily World Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University)

uniformed Israeli soldier, next to a machine gun. Isacson was confident the Israeli fighters would prevail despite enormous Arab superiority in numbers and military equipment, because their determination "has never been surpassed." They were prepared to "stand up to the very last man." By contrast, the Arab soldiers, "being tools of British imperialism," had "no fighting will of their own." Isacson described the Arab artillery pounding Jewish Jerusalem for days, with the Jews unable to respond because they were without guns or planes. Every day, as Jerusalem's gritty Jewish defenders held out, they whispered to one another: "Soon there will be American planes. Soon there will be American guns." But Truman never lifted the arms embargo.<sup>32</sup>

The *Daily Worker's* correspondent in Israel, A. B. Magil, reported Isacson's prediction from Tel Aviv in July 1948 that the American and British governments would attempt to impose a settlement on the Jewish state that would "restrict its territory [and] cripple its sovereignty." Isacson urged U.S. aid to Israel "without strings attached." He charged that both President Truman and his Republican opponent in the November election, New York governor Thomas E. Dewey, were only giving "lip service" to the Jewish state. Magil declared that Isacson was in Israel "to see first-hand the epic Israel fight for



PHOTO 16. A Leo Isacson campaign poster, urging sending of arms to Haganah, 1948. (Daily Worker/Daily World Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University)

liberation.” He quoted Isacson as comparing Israel’s cause with “the fight of the young American nation against imperial Britain.” Isacson promised that he would make U.S. government policy toward Israel the central issue when he ran for reelection in November.<sup>33</sup>

Representative Isacson spoke at two rallies in his Bronx district to protest Truman’s arms embargo and his “failure to implement the UN partition plan.” The rallies were accompanied by a half-hour evening power blackout, a coordinated protest against the president’s “betrayal” of Palestine’s Jews, in which thousands of the district’s stores simultaneously shut off their lights.<sup>34</sup>

In October 1948, Isacson led a picket line at New York’s Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, where General Lucius D. Clay, head of the American occupation zone in Germany, was speaking at a banquet. The pickets bore signs marked “General Clay, Have You Forgotten 6,000,000 Murdered Jews?” and “Stop Pampering the Nazis and Start Building the Peace.” Protesting General

Clay's reduction of Ilse Koch's sentence, they carried lampshades, symbolic of those she had made from the skin of Buchenwald inmates.<sup>35</sup>

The Democratic Party machine was able to unseat Isacson in the November 1948 general election by persuading the Liberal and Republican parties to join with it in backing the Democratic candidate, Isadore Dollinger. Although Edward Flynn had for several years refused to accept Liberal support for any Democratic candidate, he was determined to defeat Isacson, whom he considered a Communist. The Liberal Party, created by persons who had left the ALP as it assumed an increasingly Communist orientation, was willing to endorse any "anti-Kremlin" candidate to defeat Isacson.<sup>36</sup>

As the election approached, the *New York Times* reported that its outcome would be determined by which candidate the voters considered "the greater exponent of Zionism and the greater champion of the underprivileged."<sup>37</sup> The *Daily Worker* reported approvingly that in a campaign debate Isacson pilloried Dollinger for protecting President Truman, whom he charged with "betrayal of Israel." Isacson accused Truman of imposing an arms embargo to "choke Israel for the benefit of the oil magnates." Addressing Dollinger, he declared that it was time to "stop pussyfooting" and to explicitly identify Israel's "enemies," among whom he named the president, Secretary of State George Marshall, and Secretary of Defense James V. Forrestal.<sup>38</sup> Isacson predicted that the United States and Britain would attempt to strip the Negev from Israel and make it into a British military base. He claimed to have helped in the release of 11,000 Jewish refugees from Cyprus detention camps so that they could immigrate to Israel. Dollinger denounced Isacson for suggesting that he had Israel's endorsement, citing "the name of one of his campaign groups, 'The Committee for the Support of Israel through the Re-election of Leo Isacson.'"<sup>39</sup>

Simon W. Gerson, Communist Party and ALP candidate for New York City Council in 1948, made support for the Israeli war effort central in his campaign. Gerson, a long-time leader of the New York State CP, emphasized that the Jewish people had "earned statehood by their blood, sweat, and tears." With six million European Jews only recently murdered by the Nazis and their accomplices, the Jewish people's agony was beyond description. In a desperate stand against annihilation, the Israelis, "attacked by seven Arab nations," had "hurled the Arabs back, and stirred the hearts of men," demonstrating to the world "how a people fight for independence." The courageous Israelis prevailed against seemingly impossible odds, hobbled by an American arms embargo while Arab forces received considerable financial and military support from Britain and the United States. Gerson noted that antisemitic British officers held command positions in the Arab armies.

In a September 28, 1948, radio campaign speech, Gerson denounced the national Democratic and Republican parties for failing to provide necessary support to the embattled Israelis. He condemned the U.S. Congress for rejecting ALP Representative Marcantonio's resolution demanding de



jure recognition of Israel and U.S. shipment of arms to Israeli forces, and ALP Representative Isacson's resolution for lifting the U.S. arms embargo on Israel. He asked why neither the Truman administration nor Republican presidential candidate Thomas E. Dewey did "not once protest to their British puppets the training of Arab troops, the use of British officers, the sending of guns and planes to kill off the new state?" Gerson condemned General Lucius D. Clay for prohibiting Jewish men of military age confined in DP camps from going to Israel, where many wanted to join the armed forces. He concluded his address by declaring that "the Communist Party urges the American people to raise their voice for the lifting of the embargo on Israel. We urge full recognition of Israel. We demand that Israel be admitted to the United Nations."<sup>40</sup>

Gerson denounced the plan proposed in July 1948 by UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte to strip the Negev and the port of Haifa from Israel as a scheme "cooked up" by the British and American governments "to destroy Israel." The Bernadotte plan would have reduced Israel to about two-fifths the size projected in the original partition plan. Gerson charged that it would "cripple Israel economically," making it impossible for the already-tiny Jewish state to maintain its independence. He claimed Count Bernadotte admitted when pressed by the Ukrainian delegate to the UN Security Council that the plan bearing his name was actually conceived by the U.S. State Department and British Foreign Office, which were determined to "mutilate" Israel.<sup>41</sup>

In a radio campaign address on October 7, 1948, Gerson accused the U.S. government of encouraging Fascist antisemitism, noting that it supplied weapons to the Franco dictatorship in Spain that had banned the recently released Hollywood movie *Gentleman's Agreement* "on moral grounds." Gerson contrasted the Truman administration's willingness to arm Franco, "a fascist anti-Semitic butcher" who had provided bases for Axis submarines during World War II, with its weapons embargo on Israel. The ecclesiastical member of Spain's Film Censorship Board, who issued the order banning *Gentleman's Agreement*, explained that it was a Christian duty to "stimulate love," but not toward Jews. The banning order declared that "evil should be despised," but "to stimulate it" was different: "That is why it is asked of the Lord that He should deign to humiliate the enemies of his holy church and as such might Jews be considered." The order cited several "theological errors" as justification for the ban, including the movie's statement that Christians were not superior to Jews. It called this "poison" that might mislead millions of Spanish children. The order assailed the movie's view that being Jewish could be "a matter of pride," commenting, "Pride of what? The pride of being the people who put God to death? Of being perfidious, as they are called in the Holy Scriptures?" In a campaign radio address, Gerson denounced the banning order as "a vicious statement harking back to the Spanish Inquisition" and asked: "Was there any protest from our State

Department or Administration? From the Democratic or Republican high command? From Truman or Dewey?" He concluded: "Arms for Franco – embargo on Israel! This is the real policy of the Truman administration and its Republican twin."<sup>42</sup>

Gerson linked what he called the "Gentleman's Agreement of ... both major parties to ally America ... with the fascist butcher Franco" to their unwillingness to effectively back Israel. He noted that U.S. senator Chad Gurney, chair of the Armed Services Committee, "who recently conferred with Franco," had that day criticized the UN Palestine partition decision. Expressing Communist disdain for Arabist claims that Jews had displaced Palestinian Arabs from their homes, Gerson noted that Senator Gurney, "in a language that one might expect from an Abdullah, a Goebbels, or a Christian Front hoodlum," had charged that "300,000 Arabs had been pushed out of their homes by taking care of refugees from the [European] Continent."<sup>43</sup>

The CP's enthusiasm for a Jewish state was reflected in the highly influential role it assumed in Henry Wallace's Progressive Party presidential campaign in 1948. Wallace was easily the candidate most supportive of Israel immediately before and during its War of Independence, which began in the spring of 1948, early in the presidential campaign. In March 1948 Wallace charged that President Truman, beholden to the fiercely pro-Arab oil corporations, was doing nothing to protect the Yishuv: he "talks Jewish and acts Arab."<sup>44</sup> He compared the U.S. government's embargo on arms shipments to the Yishuv to its refusal to send weapons to the embattled Loyalists during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>45</sup>

Wallace opened a three-week campaign tour of the West in May 1948 by demanding that the Truman administration issue an ultimatum to the Arab nations at war with the newly declared state of Israel to lay down their arms. He denounced the Muslim leaders of the invading nations as "truly puppets of Anglo-American oil," which was determined to undermine the UN partition plan. Wallace asserted that "the Jewish pioneers in Palestine have been betrayed for the sake of oil and profits." Because it provided financial assistance to Britain, which supplied funds and military officers to the Arabs, the United States had blood on its hands.<sup>46</sup>

During the War of Independence, Wallace "injected a new issue into the presidential campaign" by calling for an embargo on U.S. loans and other financial aid to Britain as long as it continued to arm and fund Transjordan's Arab Legion. In a New York City campaign speech he also accused British troops of setting up road blocks to prevent Haganah troops from reaching a Jewish village under Arab attack.<sup>47</sup> The ALP, which served as the Wallace campaign apparatus in New York State, promoted a boycott of British goods and called on the U.S. government to stop lending money to Britain until it terminated military aid to Arab nations fighting Israel.<sup>48</sup>

The Progressive Party's Jewish Affairs Advisory Committee newspaper, *The Jewish Citizen*, highlighted as central campaign issues President Truman's



"betrayal" of Israel, mounting American antisemitism, and Allied abuse of Jewish DPs and leniency toward Nazi war criminals. *The Jewish Citizen* denounced the Truman administration for its arms embargo, for withholding de jure recognition from Israel, for failing to sponsor Israel's admission into the UN, and for warning American Jews that they would lose their citizenship if they enlisted in Israel's army. It charged that the Bernadotte plan would reduce Israel's size so drastically that it would be unable to absorb the homeless Jews languishing in Allied DP camps. Antisemitic groups that had "formerly worked with the Axis" were "operating unhampered in every major [American] city," but the Justice Department paid no attention. In the American and British occupation zones in Germany, prominent Nazis, responsible for "mass slaughter, butchery, and gas chambers," were acquitted or given light prison sentences.<sup>49</sup>

Wallace insisted that there was no alternative except Palestine for large numbers of European Jews. He predicted that if these Jews were denied a haven there, "they will go from concentration camp to concentration camp ... until they have been exterminated." The Americans and the British, then, "would have become the final agents of Hitler's campaign of genocide."<sup>50</sup>

The Progressive Party's standard bearer was deeply impressed with Zionist political and economic achievement in Palestine. Wallace called Israel "the most inspiring experiment in modern social and economic democracy which exists today." Israel's democracy would provide a model of what could be accomplished in the region for an Arab peasantry cruelly exploited by their Arab feudal overlords.<sup>51</sup> Wallace praised the Zionists for building thriving farming settlements on land previously considered too barren for cultivation. In late 1947, Wallace had traveled to Palestine on an extended fact-finding trip, with the particular intention of studying the Zionist "collective settlements," or *kibbutzim*. He wrote in the *New Republic* on his return to the United States: "I saw the magnificent efforts of the Jewish settlers" to build communities that could inspire "the entire Middle East.... I saw the potentialities of this ancient land as they were dramatically presented by the Jewish people in their everyday work."<sup>52</sup>

As the Arab nations prepared to launch a full-scale war against the Jews in Palestine, the CP organized demonstrations of solidarity with the Yishuv. In March 1948, at least 10,000 members of Communist-dominated trade unions in New York City's fur and garment district marched through a driving rainstorm to Madison Square Park to protest what they claimed was the U.S. refusal to proceed with the UN decision to partition Palestine. The Communist-edited *Union Voice* reported that the demonstrators "thunder[ed] a demand that should have echoed all the way to the White House: 'Two-Four-Six-Eight, We Demand a Jewish State.'"<sup>53</sup>

Robert Burke, Irish American director of Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU) Local 65's Warehouse Department, delivered a blistering speech in support of the Jewish state from the Madison



PHOTO 17. Henry Wallace with Jewish youth in Palestine, 1947. (Photograph by Samuel W. Bloom, Courtesy of Jon Bloom)

Square Park bandstand. He proclaimed to the marchers: “The members of our Union are mad and disgusted with the shame which the Truman administration is bringing upon our great nation by its double-crossing betrayal of the Jewish people.” Burke was blunt about why President Truman’s commitment to partition appeared to be wavering: “Once again the Wall Street money boys and the oil barons have shown that they dictate the policies of the White House.”<sup>54</sup>

Shortly after the New York march, a new CP front group, the United Committee to Save the Jewish State and the United Nations, brought 5,400 protestors, mostly members of Communist-dominated trade unions, to Washington, D.C., to rally for a Jewish state in Palestine, and to picket the White House. U.S. Representatives Vito Marcantonio and Leo Isacson, members of the Communist-led American Labor Party and prominent in the Wallace campaign, addressed the protestors. Rep. Isacson declared that President Truman’s embargo on the sale of arms to the Yishuv was “deliberately imposed for the massacre of the Jews.”<sup>55</sup>

Another indication of the strong support for Israel from fellow travelers was the New England Zionist Emergency Council’s selection of the

Rev. Donald Lothrop of Boston's Community Church, a radical Universalist minister, to join one of its members in presenting Israel's position in a radio debate with two pro-Arab speakers, scheduled for June 12, 1948. Two days before the debate, Isadore Zack, a New England Anti-Defamation League (ADL) official, notified ADL general counsel Arnold Forster in New York that the New England Zionist Emergency Council was seriously considering replacing Lothrop with another debater because he had "a record of playing ball with Communists and Communist front groups." Zack expected a last-minute change because "responsible parties" in the Jewish community were concerned that having Lothrop speak on Israel's behalf would "have a poor public relations result."<sup>56</sup>

After Israel declared itself a state on May 15, 1948, the CP celebrated Israel's determination to defend itself against six invading Arab armies. In June 1948, the *Daily Worker* quoted a passionate statement of support for Israel by Lorna Wingate, widow of the legendary (non-Jewish) British officer Orde Wingate, who in the 1930s had determined to transform the Haganah, which at the time was largely confined to guarding Jewish settlements, into a highly trained striking force prepared to take the attack to the Arabs. The mother of a four-year-old son, Lorna Wingate declared: "If I had gold and money, I would contribute them for the war which my husband foresaw. Not having them, I decided to send you my son to be educated in Israel and to be a loyal son of both Israel and Britain." In the same issue, the *Daily Worker* used a page-one photograph to document an Arab atrocity against the Haganah. It showed two soldiers next to a rock pile marked by a Star of David, the grave of twenty-nine Haganah fighters killed in the attack on the Arab fortress of Nebi Yusha. The caption stated that the Arabs had decapitated each of the slain Haganah soldiers.<sup>57</sup>

The CP referred to the Haganah's military effort to repel the Arab invaders as the Jewish "Liberation War." A. B. Magil, *Daily Worker* foreign correspondent in Israel during the fighting, called Israel's War of Independence "a people's war" waged to gain for Jews the right of self-determination. The CP depicted Israel's War of Liberation as a replay of the American Revolution, with the Haganah "minute men of '48" defying much better-equipped, numerically superior forces, and dealing British imperialism and its Arab "Hessians" another stinging defeat.<sup>58</sup>

Communist-led trade unions in New York City mobilized their members to assist the Haganah forces. David Livingston, vice-president of Local 65 of the Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Union, CIO, declared, "We want to send arms and men, if necessary, to aid the Haganah in halting the British-supported Arab invasion."<sup>59</sup> The union urged its members to donate blood for shipment to Haganah forces, and clothing for use in manufacturing uniforms for them. The *Daily Worker* publicized the campaigns of the AJLC and another CP front group, the Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order, to raise funds to purchase ambulances for the Haganah.<sup>60</sup>

The CP expressed pride in the Soviet bloc's shipments of desperately needed armaments to the Haganah. When the well-equipped Arab armies launched their invasion to wipe out the Jewish settlements, the Jews were at an enormous disadvantage. In 1947 the Haganah had no cannons or anti-tank weapons, only one heavy machine gun, and no air force or navy. The United States continued to maintain an arms embargo. With Soviet approval, Communist Czechoslovakia supplied the Haganah with weapons, although at a significant cost. Even though they were mostly obsolete, these weapons proved of considerable benefit to the Israelis. Jewish volunteers from around the world traveled to Czechoslovakia to be trained to pilot fighter planes manufactured there. Czechoslovakia ignored a U.S. State Department protest against sending weapons to the Haganah. When Austrian frontier police detected a shipment of Czech arms bound for Palestine, Soviet soldiers prevented them from confiscating it.<sup>61</sup>

On the eve of the war's outbreak, the *Christian Science Monitor's* Jerusalem correspondent reported that Communists from the Stern group, pro-Soviet Spanish Civil War veterans, and other pro-Soviet elements in Palestine had been hoping to form "an international pro-Zionist brigade" modeled on the International Brigades that had fought in Spain against Franco's Fascist insurgency. Jewish Communists in Palestine were alarmed that the well-equipped invading Arab armies had been able to recruit seasoned volunteers from Nazi Germany's Wehrmacht, Poland's fascist armies, and Britain, many of whom had been placed in high-ranking command positions. Some Communists promoted "as a countermeasure" the idea of an international volunteer force to fight for a Jewish state in Palestine, drawn largely from Soviet bloc nations. The *Monitor* reported that "pro-Communist agitators," exploiting the widespread disappointment with the American arms embargo on Palestine, initially detected "a not unfavorable response" to their proposal for a Soviet bloc international brigade "among the Jewish rank and file," although Jewish leaders vehemently opposed it. Any support rapidly dissipated, however, because of early Jewish military successes.<sup>62</sup>

Repeated Israeli military victories in 1948 over larger and better-equipped Arab armies confused Arab leaders conditioned to see Jews as innately weak and ineffectual, a stereotype deeply rooted in Islamic theology. Aware of the U.S. arms embargo on Israel, many Arab leaders attributed Israeli military success to Soviet officers leading Jewish forces in combat, a claim that was patently false. This charge drew on Soviet support for partition but was also heavily shaped by the decades-old antisemitic conflation of Zionism with Communism, which the Nazis had helped spread in the Arab world. King Abdullah of Transjordan charged in April 1948 that "many Russian officers and officials were working with the Haganah," and that some of these officers were commanding Jewish troops in battle. He predicted that as soon as the British vacated Palestine, "shiploads of Russian reinforcements" would arrive to back the Jews. King Abdullah announced that he

intended "to take active steps to go to the aid of the Palestine Arabs in their struggle against Jewish-Russian invasion." He declared, "The Anglo-Saxons will support the Arabs, and in this situation – another Spain – a third world war will be born." King Abdullah thus saw the conflict as another Spanish Civil War, with the Jews in the role of the Loyalists and the Arabs as the Falange. Arab military sources in Cairo stated that King Abdullah was sending troops from the British-officered 10,000-man Arab Legion into Palestine to counter the alleged "invasion."<sup>63</sup>

Other Arab leaders made similar charges, which, although more specific, were just as false. They were influenced by the tendency of most of the non-Trotskyist Left in 1948 to view Israel as the progressive force in the conflict. The same month King Abdullah made his charge, Syria's military liaison officer to the Arab League declared that fifty Soviet commanders based in the Haifa district led Jewish forces in northern Palestine, where Syrian troops were engaged, and that Red Army officers were participating in Haganah offensives on other fronts. The Arabs maintained that Soviet troops were fighting alongside Jews in a fierce battle for Mishmar Haemek, on the plains of Armageddon.<sup>64</sup>

Unlike the CP, the American Trotskyists remained consistently hostile to a Jewish state in Palestine. Compared to the CP, their influence was minuscule. According to the SWP, Palestine's Jews had to be made to understand that "the expulsion of imperialism from the Middle East" would be achieved "only through the Arab revolution and under the leadership of the Arab workers' movement." The Jews would have to become reconciled to residing in a state with an Arab majority. The SWP condemned the Haganah for pursuing what it called "the chauvinist and class-collaboration policies of Zionism," such as promoting "continued Jewish immigration." The Trotskyists insisted that no Jewish immigration to Palestine be permitted "against the wishes of the Arab masses." Like SDS and the Black Panthers twenty years later, the SWP equated the Zionists with the Nazis, accusing them of advocating "Jewish 'master race' poison." When Israel's War of Independence began, the *Militant* editorialized that "a Jewish state in Palestine and the Jewish war for this end – is reactionary and bankrupt."<sup>65</sup>

The Trotskyists fiercely denounced the UN partition plan as "reactionary" because it "stifles the rising tide of class struggle in Palestine." Partition stimulated "nationalist hysteria" among both Jews and Arabs, blurred class lines, and caused even Palestine's Communist Party to divide into two antagonistic national groups. It permitted the reactionary, chauvinist Arab League to divert the Arab workers and peasants from demanding "bread, land, and freedom" and to propel them into a racial war against the Jews. Partition would similarly turn Jewish workers against their Arab counterparts, thus prolonging their exploitation. The Jews' newly created "dwarf state" was unviable, constituting a "bloody trap" for its inhabitants, whom the Arabs would annihilate.

Applying a crude economic analysis, the SWP described partition as a scheme to profit the Jewish bourgeoisie at the expense of the Jewish and Arab working classes. Establishing a Jewish state in Palestine would ensure a “continuous flow of [Jewish] immigrants” bringing few possessions with them, providing a market for “the bourgeois producers to dispose of their expensive wares.” Massive numbers of Jewish immigrants would drive down wages in Jewish-sponsored industry. A Jewish state embroiled in constant military conflict with the Arabs meant a bonanza for Jewish war profiteers. It would also require a government bureaucracy, providing “thousands of smug berths for Zionist veteran functionaries.”

When Israel’s War of Independence began, the SWP called on both Jewish and Arab workers to adopt a policy of revolutionary defeatism, urging them to turn their guns against “the instigators of murder in both camps,” presumably the “Zionist bourgeoisie” and the Arab feudal elite. The SWP cited the appeal of German revolutionary socialists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in what it called another “imaginary national conflict,” World War I: “The enemy is in your own camp!”<sup>66</sup>

The SWP asserted that American imperialist machinations led the UN General Assembly to pass the partition plan. It alleged that the United States “influenced and bribed” the General Assembly delegations of Haiti, the Philippines, and other unnamed small countries to vote for the partition resolution. The SWP also declared that the U.S. government enabled the Haganah to circumvent its own arms embargo by allowing it “to be supplied with money” to purchase armaments from Czechoslovakia. The British, in their crown colony of Aden, roused antipartition demonstrators into an antisemitic frenzy, convincing them to attack Jews rather than foreign installations, including those of the Soviet Union, which had been targeted in other Arab countries. As a result, the demonstrators killed seventy-five Jews and wounded considerably more.<sup>67</sup>

The Trotskyists denounced Arab Communists’ willingness to comply with Soviet policy on partition, which they claimed allowed “the ruling reactionary governments of Syria and Iraq” to equate Zionism and communism. To be sure, the Soviets’ Palestine position caused many Arab Communists in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon to desert “to the camp of [Arab] ruling class reaction.” It gave Arab governments a pretext to destroy their nations’ Communist parties. Two weeks after the UN General Assembly passed the partition resolution, the Syrian government outlawed Syria’s Communist Party. The Iraqi government proceeded to execute leaders and members of that nation’s illegal Communist organization.

The reactionary Arab governments incited anti-Communist riots that severely damaged the minuscule Communist movement in the Arab Middle East. The day after the General Assembly voted to partition Palestine, Syria’s “ruling classes” persuaded antipartition demonstrators in Damascus to attack Communist Party headquarters. Unwilling to concede that Arab



ruling elements could easily mobilize Arab workers, the SWP implied that the fierce antisemitic riots in the Arab lands that followed the UN's partition vote were mostly perpetrated by "the urban petty bourgeoisie and the lumpen-proletariat of the big slums" of such cities as Cairo, Alexandria, Aleppo, Beirut, and Baghdad. Marxists considered these social classes natural allies of counterrevolutionary elites. Historically outmoded, they were fated as they declined to come into conflict with an advancing proletariat.

The SWP noted that the Egyptian government had erected "huge concentration camps" for "all who had communist records." When the Israeli army captured the Egyptian village of Abu-Ageila in December 1948, it discovered "an Egyptian concentration camp full of Arab Stalinists from Hebron, Gaza, and other places which had been occupied by the Egyptian army." Eager to allege a moral equivalence between Israel and Nazi Germany, the SWP claimed that the Israelis had transferred the imprisoned Arab Stalinists to an "Israeli concentration camp."<sup>68</sup>

Although the Workers Party (WP) shared the SWP's opposition to a Jewish state in Palestine, its anti-Zionism was not as strident during the immediate postwar period. In a 1946 resolution entitled "Free Immigration Everywhere: Free Palestine with Majority Rule," the WP gave what it called "conditional and critical support" to the Zionists' campaign for unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine. It even called those Zionist youth of Palestine engaged in direct action against British suppression of Jewish immigration "heroic."

The WP acknowledged that the plight of Jewish survivors was worse than that of any other nationality or ethnic group in Europe. The Allies herded the Jews into displaced persons camps not very different from the Nazi concentration camps they had survived. Europe's Jews felt the "lash of anti-Semitism" not only in the Allied-occupied territories but "in the Allied nations themselves." They saw no future for themselves in their old homelands. The survivors' yearning to be part of a state in Palestine with a Jewish majority was therefore understandable.<sup>69</sup>

Albert Gates emphasized in the September 1947 *New Internationalist* that the WP's recognition of the uniqueness of the Jewish plight in postwar Europe distinguished it from the SWP. He reported that the SWP had initially denounced Allied news accounts and photographs of the massacres at such concentration camps as Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen as fabrications, designed to promote support for the war.<sup>70</sup>

The WP dismissed what it claimed was the Zionist goal, "a Jewish state under capitalism," as a "reactionary Utopia." It alleged that such a state could only become "a wretched adjunct of one of the imperialist empires." Like the SWP, the WP insisted that "the effect of the Zionist movement is to divert the struggle of the Jewish proletariat and the Jewish people as a whole from the class struggle of the entire working class of the countries they live in." In Palestine, the WP, like the SWP, favored an independent revolutionary



socialist state with an Arab majority. To achieve this, the WP urged Palestine's Jews to join the Arabs in a joint struggle against the British.<sup>71</sup>

The WP allowed its members greater freedom in dissenting from party positions than the SWP, and a few supported partition. Leon Shields argued in the August 1946 *New Internationalist* that Arab and Jewish nationalisms had equally valid claims in Palestine. The only fair solution was to allow each people the right to its own state.<sup>72</sup> Albert Gates responded that "ancient history aside, the fact is that Palestine is an Arab nation." He denied that Jewish rights would not be respected in an Arab-ruled state.<sup>73</sup>

Fearing the Arabs' genocidal intentions during the 1948 War of Independence, the WP favored the defense of Israel against the reactionary invaders but opposed support for "Zionism or the [Israeli] government." The WP wanted to dismantle the Jewish state, where, it claimed, a self-styled "master race tolerat[ed] an alien minority." Arab refugees should be encouraged to return to Israel, undermining its Jewish character. Comparing Israeli Arabs to medieval Jews, the WP called for the "elimination of Arab ghettos in Israeli cities."<sup>74</sup>

On the campuses of the late 1940s, supporters of Zionism and Israel dominated the discourse on the Middle East conflict. Besides the highly active student Zionist organizations, the campus groups most supportive of the Jewish state were the Progressive Party's university branches, in which Communists were prominent. The Intercollegiate Zionist Federation of America (IZFA), which in 1948 had chapters on more than 100 campuses, sponsored numerous lectures by supporters of Israel, including persons engaged in breaking the British naval blockade of Palestine, such as crewmen from the *Exodus* 1947.

Speakers on campus presented Israel as the progressive, democratic force in the Middle East and condemned Arab authoritarianism, intolerance, and reaction. While lecturing at Harvard, R. H. S. Crossman, British Labour Party M.P., declared that the Yishuv constituted "a tremendous, model socialist experiment." Its success would doom "every Arab feudal regime in the Middle East."<sup>75</sup> At UCLA, Unitarian minister Hugh Weston "attacked the reactionary arguments" of the Arabs and declared that "Arab ideology is akin to fascism."<sup>76</sup> During the 1948 war, the Harvard *Crimson* editorialized that when the Arab League had launched its reactionary "Holy War against the infant state of Israel, the entire civilized world shuddered." It warned that the Arabs had "dedicated themselves to the complete extermination of the new Jewish nation," in short, a second Holocaust.<sup>77</sup>

In November 1949, Rudolph Augarten, Harvard class of 1949, spoke about his experiences as a fighter pilot in the fledgling Israeli air corps during the War of Independence, when he shot down four Egyptian planes. Already a seasoned fighter pilot, having flown 101 missions over Germany during World War II, Augarten left Harvard immediately after final exams in the spring of 1948 for Czechoslovakia. There he was trained to fly the Messerschmitts

manufactured at the Skoda works outside Prague. He arrived in Israel in July. In December 1947 the Harvard *Crimson* interviewed three other Harvard students, one of them a former marine, who were preparing to fight in defense of the Jewish state when the Arabs launched their Holy War.<sup>78</sup>

During the late 1940s, when World War II veterans comprised a significant proportion of university enrollments, the American Veterans Committee (AVC), founded after the war as a progressive alternative to the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, strongly backed Israel on the campus. At Harvard in February 1948, the AVC cosponsored with the Harvard and Radcliffe Zionist societies a lecture supporting partition by the Rev. David Hunter, who had toured Palestine the previous summer and found the Arabs to be "deeply anti-Semitic." Hunter reported that the Arabs believed the Jews to be of "diabolical design." At New York University (NYU), six AVC members opened the Red Mogen David's blood campaign for Israeli military hospitals.<sup>79</sup>

Among the presidential campaigns on the campuses, Henry Wallace's gave Israel the most emphasis and the most ardent support, even though President Truman and Governor Dewey also backed a Jewish state. The College Progressive Party chapters denounced Truman for failing to accord Israel *de jure* recognition, which the Soviet Union had extended, and for maintaining an arms embargo against Israel.<sup>80</sup> At a Young Progressives meeting at NYU's downtown campus, former assistant attorney general O. John Rogge condemned the Truman administration for remaining indifferent to Israel's defense: "We seem to feel that the remaining Jews are expendable to protect the interest of the big oil companies!"<sup>81</sup>

Organized campus opposition to the UN partition plan and support for the Arab war effort in 1948 was confined to a small number of college administrators and faculty members, all of whom were hostile to the Left. The most notable were Virginia Gildersleeve, dean of Barnard College, and the Rev. Henry Sloane Coffin, president emeritus of Union Theological Seminary. Acting as chair and vice-chair, respectively, of the pro-Arab League Committee for Justice and Peace in the Holy Land, they used code language favored by antisemites in their anti-Zionist tirades. Gildersleeve, the committee's chair, charged that fear of the "Jewish vote" had caused politicians to "bully" the Arabs into admitting a "huge influx of alien foreigners" (her term for Jews) into Palestine. Like the far left of the 1960s, Gildersleeve, Coffin, and the other leaders of the committee denied the significance of Arab antisemitism. During the 1948 War of Independence, they charged that American Zionists, by standing up for Jewish rights in Palestine, were "encouraging anti-Semitism" and endangering the "national unity." Coffin also denounced the right-wing Israeli fighting force Irgun for purchasing arms from the Soviet Union.<sup>82</sup>

At Harvard, William Yandell Elliott, Leroy B. Williams Professor of Government, directly linked Zionism with Communism in a lecture

denouncing the partition plan before the university's United Nations Council. If a Jewish state were established in Palestine, it would be one "celebrating the virtues" of Karl Marx. Elliott warned of the danger of allowing 100,000 Jews from Eastern Europe into Palestine, a plan President Truman supported, because they came "from carefully indoctrinated countries" and would bring Communism with them.<sup>83</sup>

The British Foreign Office similarly exploited the antisemitic stereotype of Jews' Communist proclivities and Mossad use of Soviet bloc Black Sea ports on the eve of the War of Independence to suggest that a Jewish state in Palestine would align itself with Moscow. The British drew a "suggestive connection" between the arrival of the newly acquired Mossad ships *Pan York* and *Pan Crescent* in the Romanian port of Constanza, a Red fleet naval base, and the Soviet push for partition in the UN. Moscow did not object to the operation but was wary of becoming too openly involved, and so the Mossad for the embarkation used the Bulgarian port of Varna, which was less conspicuously associated with the Soviets.

When the *Pan York* and the *Pan Crescent* sailed for Haifa in late December 1947 with about 15,000 mostly Romanian Jews aboard, the British Foreign Office claimed that the vessels, the largest the Mossad had acquired, were full of Communist infiltrators dispatched by the Soviets to carry out their objectives in Palestine. It maintained that the refugees would "make a big difference in the ideological content of Palestine." The Jewish Agency called the British charge ridiculous and described those on board as fleeing the intense antisemitism that still prevailed in Romania.<sup>84</sup>

Although the Western press sometimes referred to the voyage of the *Pan York* and the *Pan Crescent* as the "Red Aliya," few of the refugees expressed any sympathy for Communism after arriving in Israel. Robert Levy, biographer of Ana Pauker, Romania's foreign minister at that time, cited a joke told about the episode: "The only thing that turned red as a result of this immigration was the Black Sea, with all of the red party cards the immigrants threw overboard immediately after their departure."<sup>85</sup>

Throughout Israel's War of Independence and in its immediate aftermath, American Communists and their fellow travelers remained strongly committed to the Jewish state. In an article equating the CP and Progressive Party platforms, the *New York Times* in late July 1948 quoted the CP's platform as calling for "full support to the new Jewish state, Israel." The Progressive Party demanded "immediate recognition of Israel, admission to the United Nations, [and] lifting by Presidential proclamation of [the] arms embargo." It asked the United States to "take the lead in calling for economic and diplomatic sanctions against nations guilty of or abetting aggression against Israel." The Progressive Party supported the Soviets in rejecting the proposal by UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte that required Israel to relinquish the Negev, which had been awarded to it under the UN partition plan. In October 1948 Henry Wallace declared that "the oil monopoly that rules

both Dewey and Truman" was causing them to "stab Israel in the back." He claimed that the Democratic and Republican presidential delegation to the UN was pressuring Israel to give up the Negev.<sup>86</sup>

The newly founded Stalinist weekly *National Guardian* asserted that the Arab nations and the oil corporations feared the destabilizing influence of democratic and prosperous Israel, "which by its example would give ideas" to the Arab masses throughout the Middle East. The *National Guardian* reported that Palestine's Arabs had not taken part in the 1948 war against Israel, having benefited from rising living standards because of the Jewish presence. The 300,000 refugees who fled their homes in Palestine did so "under the urging of the ex-Mufti, Haj Amin el-Husseini," expecting "to return behind triumphant Arab armies." The *National Guardian* predicted that the Arab nations would refuse to admit the refugees, fearing that they would resent the lower living standards there.<sup>87</sup>

A. B. Magil, in his book *Israel in Crisis*, published by the CP in 1950, similarly emphasized Palestinian Arab refusal to join the war against Israel. He asserted that any discussion of the Arab refugee issue "must start with one fact of towering significance: *with relatively few exceptions, the Palestinian Arabs did not participate in the war against the Jews.*" He also maintained that the grand mufti and the British had incited the Arab flight from Israel during the war.<sup>88</sup>

Many American Communists did not immediately embrace the new Kremlin policy of antagonism toward Israel initiated after the War of Independence. In late 1949, the Soviet Union joined the Arab nations (except for Jordan) and the Vatican in calling for the internationalization of Jerusalem under UN control. The *Daily Worker*, although it endorsed internationalization, did not appear fully comfortable with it, choosing to emphasize past strong Soviet support for Israel. It credited the Soviet Union with having thwarted American and British efforts to impose the Bernadotte plan. This would have left Israel "truncated," forced into an economic union with Britain's reactionary puppet King Abdullah of Jordan. The *Daily Worker* reminded its readers that Czech-supplied weapons had been vital in ensuring Israel's survival during the War of Independence. It recalled the U.S. State Department's "terse note ... to Czechoslovakia demanding that it cease sending arms to Israel." The *Daily Worker* noted that Israeli soldiers, marching in review the previous week in Tel Aviv, carried Czech rifles on their shoulders, "the basic weapon of the Israeli army." The *Daily Worker* found understandable "the widespread sentiment" among American Jews "for the absorption of the New City of Jerusalem" by Israel. But it insisted that internationalization was preferable to what it claimed was the alternative that the United States and Britain would otherwise impose: a divided Jerusalem with King Abdullah in control of the Old City.<sup>89</sup>

In *Israel in Crisis*, A. B. Magil maintained that the internationalization of Jerusalem under UN auspices was designed to extend "the Anglo-American

domain in Palestine.” The plan had been put before the UN by its Conciliation Commission, which “Washington held in the hollow of its hand.” It placed Jerusalem under a UN commissioner responsible to the General Assembly, where the United States was “in a position to dictate” a policy detrimental to Israel’s interests. It permitted the “British puppet,” King Abdullah of Jordan, to retain Jerusalem’s Old City “and the other fruits of his brutal aggression against Israel,” including most of the area of Palestine that, under the partition plan, was supposed to have comprised the new Arab state. This rendered Israel vulnerable to being overrun in a future Arab attack, because “Abdullah’s British guns” would continue to menace Israel from the Old City and Jordanian-controlled Palestine. The U.S. government dismissed Israel’s pleas that internationalization be restricted to Jerusalem’s Holy Places, and that Israel be assigned the New City, “which had been so heroically defended by Jewish arms.”<sup>90</sup>

The Trotskyist *Militant* chortled that Soviet support for the “Vatican-inspired” proposal to internationalize Jerusalem had “the American Stalinists squirming.” It noted that both the *Daily Worker* and its Yiddish counterpart the *Morgen Freiheit* were facing the unenviable task of defending the new Kremlin position to their Jewish readers.<sup>91</sup>

The *National Guardian* and New York’s Communist-dominated ALP both called for the entire city of Jerusalem to become part of Israel. In an article entitled “Our People Will Never Let Jerusalem Go,” the *National Guardian* declared that the internationalization of Jerusalem under UN auspices was “an attempt to take away part of the Jewish state won in long struggle and bloodshed.” It would allow the powers that allegedly dominated the UN, the United States and Britain, to control Jerusalem and use it “as a base against Russia.” The *National Guardian* expressed concern that Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion could “bow to U.S. demands” on Jerusalem. Should Ben-Gurion do so, it warned, he “would have to answer to the Israeli people who are determined to hold Jerusalem.”<sup>92</sup>

In December 1949, the New York State executive committee of the ALP, chaired by Vito Marcantonio, adopted a resolution calling on the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union to work for a UN agreement that would incorporate all of Jerusalem into Israel. The resolution stated: “Jerusalem belongs to Israel. That is now and always has been the American Labor Party’s position.”<sup>93</sup>

W. E. B. Du Bois, a prominent African American leader and scholar and ALP candidate for U.S. Senate from New York in 1950 remained a strong supporter of Israel through the 1950s. Du Bois admired Josef Stalin, praising him after his death as a “great man” who had been “slandered as few men of power have been.” Biographer Gerald Horne noted that prior to 1948 Du Bois had “used his considerable stature and contacts to lobby for the creation of Israel.” The 1950 ALP platform on which Du Bois ran “lambasted the arming of the Arabs against ‘the young state of Israel’” and denounced

"the renazification and remilitarization of Germany." Du Bois considered Israel the progressive force in the Middle East and "criticized Arabs for their alleged 'widespread ignorance, poverty, and disease and a fanatic belief in the Mohammedan religion.'" <sup>94</sup>

Voicing the Communist view that the United States was in imminent danger of becoming fascist, Du Bois declared that blacks and Jews would be the new dictatorship's first victims. It was imperative and logical that the two minority groups forge an alliance and back each other's cause: "The Negro people have an obligation to support the fight for a free Israel as the Jewish people have an obligation to support the fight for a free Africa." <sup>95</sup>

In late 1948, Du Bois denounced UN Palestine commission mediator Ralph Bunche, an African American, at a mass meeting at Madison Square Garden for supporting the Bernadotte plan, which would have taken the Negev from Israel. Du Bois "offered an apology to the Jewish community on behalf of the Negro community" for Bunche's advocacy of the Bernadotte plan. Bunche responded by lashing out at what he called Du Bois's "dangerous racialism." He exclaimed that "Dr. Du Bois inferred that as a Negro in the position of UN mediator I was obligated to crusade in the Jewish cause.... As a Negro I owed a debt to the Jewish people because they are persecuted." In 1951, Bunche refused an invitation to become a sponsor of a testimonial dinner for Du Bois, citing Du Bois's "insult" at Madison Square Garden. <sup>96</sup>

In 1950, U.S. Representative Vito Marcantonio, who, like Du Bois, was prominent in the Communist-led ALP, announced his opposition to any congressional appropriations for the Atlantic Pact on the grounds that Britain would transfer armaments it received from the United States to "Arab Fascist Legions in the Middle East ... to make war on the peoples of Israel." Marcantonio vowed to press vigorously for amendments to prevent Britain from providing its Arab clients with any American-supplied weapons. He was convinced that Britain was "the chief conspirator against the independence and territorial integrity of Israel." Angered that the U.S. State Department had "appease[d] the Hitlerite Arabs in Palestine" prior to the War of Independence, Marcantonio was horrified that it now assisted Britain in undermining the Jewish state. <sup>97</sup>

The AJLC also continued to support Israel in 1950, although it was concerned that Israel had aligned itself with the pro-Western camp. The AJLC billed its Fifth Annual Labor Bazaar, held for five days in mid-December 1950, as a "great demonstration against anti-Semitism," like its April 1949 picketing of the U.S. Military Government German Exposition. The bazaar offered for sale "furniture, shoes, clothing, furs, household utensils, toys, fine jewelry, leather goods, and other items manufactured in New York City." The AJLC pledged that the bazaar's proceeds would go "to combat anti-Semitism and discrimination and for aid to Israel." The money sent

to Israel was to be used to fund kibbutzim and Jewish schools, children's homes, and cultural institutions.<sup>98</sup>

Soviet support for a Jewish state proved critical in achieving passage of the UN partition plan and in enabling Israel to survive a British-backed invasion of six Arab armies. Soviet-authorized arms shipments to the Haganah helped ensure Israel's success in the War of Independence. A. B. Magil compared the Soviet contribution to Israel's victory to France's critical intervention on behalf of the American colonists during the Revolution. The staunchly anti-Soviet Arthur Koestler, a correspondent in Israel during the War of Independence, stated: "Without Czech arms, Israel would be sunk."<sup>99</sup>

The American CP after World War II shifted abruptly to an ultraleft sectarianism reminiscent of the Third Period but deviated from it on the Palestine issue. It joined in the mammoth demonstrations in New York City against the British White Paper organized by mainstream Zionist and Jewish organizations. It remained consistent, however, in castigating Britain's Labour government as quasi-fascist for barring Jewish immigration to Palestine. The CP completely reversed its Third Period support for the 1929 Palestine pogroms and condemned the postwar Arab massacres of Jews in North Africa. The CP viewed Israel as a haven not only for the remnants of European Jewry but for the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East, to whose plight the far left of the next generation remained oblivious.

The CP's backing of the Jewish state became complicated, however, after Eastern Europe came fully under Communist control, a process completed by 1948. The CP then became concerned that Zionism's appeal in Eastern Europe undermined the "people's democracies'" claim to provide a safe environment for Jews in which Jewish culture would flourish. Zionism remained illegal in the Soviet Union throughout the entire period in which the Kremlin backed partition and Israel.<sup>100</sup>

In the United States, the CP, its front groups, trade unions it controlled, and the Progressive Party, in which it wielded major influence, campaigned tirelessly for Israel and vehemently condemned the U.S. arms embargo and failure to extend Israel *de jure* recognition. The Communists and their fellow travelers equated the armed defense of the Jewish state against Arab invasion in 1948 with the embattled Loyalists' fight to save the Spanish Republic from Fascist conquest more than a decade before. Progressive Party nominee Henry Wallace was the presidential candidate in 1948 most strongly supportive of Israel. ALP candidate Leo Isacson's upset victory for a U.S. House of Representatives seat in a Bronx district was credited to the pro-Communist Left's strong pro-Israel stand. The AJLC transported many members of CP-affiliated trade unions to Washington to pressure the U.S. government to strengthen its support for Israel. It intensively lobbied the U.S. Congress and picketed the White House on Israel's behalf. The CP



condemned the Bernadotte proposal, arguing that a greatly shrunken Israel could not absorb Jewish immigrants from around the world. The Progressive Party's university chapters were among the most prominent forces championing Israel on American campuses. On the far left, for the time being, only the tiny, fragmented, and nearly invisible Trotskyist movement continued to oppose the Jewish state.

## “Fiends in Human Form”

### *Taking Conspiratorial Antisemitism to a New Level*

In yet another abrupt shift, the Soviet Union in late 1948 and 1949 began virulent attacks on Israel and Jewish culture, unleashing a torrent of anti-semitic propaganda that drew on centuries-old conspiracy fantasies. Like the Nazis, for whom the Jews were the primary force behind both capitalism and Communism, the Soviets leveled contradictory charges, denouncing the Jews both as “bourgeois nationalists,” their term for Zionists, and as “cosmopolites” (internationalists). During the next several years, Jewish emigration from the Soviet bloc was for all intents and purposes terminated, Soviet Yiddish writers were murdered by the state, and Yiddish culture was permanently destroyed. Soviet satellites staged show trials that cast Israel and the Zionist movement as their mortal enemy. State prosecutors invoked the vilest stereotypes of Jews to discredit defendants. The American CP again adjusted its position to conform to the Soviet line. Until 1956, it adamantly denied charges of official antisemitism in the Soviet Union and served as apologist for patently antisemitic Soviet bloc show trials and frame-ups.

The Soviets initiated the new antisemitic campaign in the fall of 1948 with an article by Jewish writer Ilya Ehrenburg, a Stalin protégé, in which he denounced Zionists as “mystics” and Israel as “bourgeois.” Echoing the argument Stalin advanced in 1913, Ehrenburg denied that “there was any affinity between Jews in different countries.”<sup>1</sup> Thus Jews could not be considered a people.

Almost simultaneously, the Kremlin denounced Soviet Jewish writers and intellectuals as “cosmopolites” who were incapable of displaying national allegiance. The Nazis had used the same word as an antisemitic slur, to make the same charge. Soviet Jews were thus condemned as both nationalists (Zionists) and internationalists (cosmopolites). The Kremlin alleged that both Zionists and cosmopolites promoted the interests of “American imperialism.”<sup>2</sup>

The Stalin regime quickly stamped out Soviet Yiddish literature by imprisoning nearly every major Yiddish writer and banning the publication of Yiddish books and newspapers. In April 1949 the regime disclosed



PHOTO 18. Itzik Feffer, Eddie Cantor, and Solomon Mikhoels, 1943. (Daily Worker/Daily World Photographs Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University)

that the five most prominent Soviet Yiddish writers – David Bergelson, Itzik Feffer, Samuel Halkin, Peretz Markish, and Der Nister – were in prison. Except in the case of Bergelson, who was arrested because of his support for Israel, the regime did not disclose the charges. It executed most of the imprisoned Soviet Yiddish writers on the same day, August 12, 1952. Some of them, like Nister, had already died in confinement. Instead of arresting Solomon Mikhoels, the regime murdered him and then claimed he had died in an automobile accident. It honored him with a state funeral. The Soviet government apparently believed that because Mikhoels was more widely known outside Jewish circles than the other Soviet Yiddish writers, and had contacts in the West, imprisoning him might precipitate damaging publicity. By early 1949 the regime had disbanded the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, under whose auspices Mikhoels and Feffer had visited the West in 1943 to build support for the Soviet war effort.<sup>3</sup>

The intensifying official Soviet antisemitism and hostility toward Israel was reflected in the new, second edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, which included a volume with an entry on Jews published in 1952. This entry differed markedly from the one in the twenty-fourth volume of the

first edition, published in 1932. The changes in the *Encyclopedia* elicited no public comment at the time from American Communists. The new entry on Jews was much shorter than the one in the earlier edition. It lacked a bibliography, although the entry on the Nentsy, a tiny Arctic group, included one, as did a separate entry on the Nentsy language. The new entry on Jews failed to mention nearly all of the numerous Soviet Yiddish writers, artists, and intellectuals whose contributions were described in the first edition. Moreover, the new entry emphasized that Jews did not constitute a people and claimed that throughout history they had assimilated into the dominant population of the country in which they were living. It reported that this process was underway in the Soviet Union and the “people’s democracies.” The *New York Times* noted that this assertion indicated that the long-range Soviet goal was the elimination of the Jews as a separate group.<sup>4</sup>

The new *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* denounced Zionism and other forms of what it called “Jewish bourgeois nationalism,” labeling Israel “a reactionary state” that was becoming an American “war base.” It identified the Jewish Bund as “an agency of the bourgeoisie within the working class.”<sup>5</sup>

*Morning Freiheit* published an English translation of the *Encyclopedia*’s article on antisemitism under the title “The Hoax of Soviet Anti-Semitism.” The article denied antisemitism existed in the Soviet Union but alleged that it was intensifying in the West, signaling fascism’s imminent triumph there. Antisemitism lacked significant working-class roots. It was essentially a device beleaguered ruling classes used to deflect the masses’ antagonism onto a scapegoat. When Russia’s czarist regime at the end of the nineteenth century propagated antisemitism in an effort to suppress the revolutionary movement, it “met a sharp repulse ... [from a] wide strata of Russian workers and peasants.” The Russian and Jewish workers banded together to combat antisemitism. The Bolsheviks eliminated antisemitism by overthrowing the “exploiting classes” that had “nourished and supported” it. All Soviet peoples now enjoyed equal rights. By contrast, in the West the “Anglo-American imperialists,” marching in “the footsteps of their German predecessors,” fomented antisemitism and prejudice against “Negroes, Chinese [and] Slavs” in a desperate effort to undermine working-class militancy.<sup>6</sup>

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the American and British press, and major American Jewish organizations, publicized the steadily worsening plight of Jews in the Soviet bloc. In February 1951, the Jewish Labor Committee issued a detailed report on Jewish life in Russia that stated: “No trace is left of Jewish culture. All Jewish schools have been closed; Yiddish newspapers and periodicals silenced; Yiddish writers have been liquidated.”<sup>7</sup> The editors of the Labor Zionist magazine *Jewish Frontier* in December 1951 challenged *Jewish Life*’s editors to provide proof that even one issue of a Yiddish newspaper had been published in Birobidzhan during 1951.<sup>8</sup>

In May 1951, the American Jewish Committee announced that the Communist regimes in Poland, Hungary, and Romania had "largely pauperized" the Jews there. It reported that those regimes were subjecting the Jews "to a reign of terror aimed at eradicating Zionist sentiment and discouraging emigration to Israel."<sup>9</sup>

Speaking at a protest rally staged by the Jewish Labor Committee in New York City in November 1952, James B. Carey, president of the International Union of Electrical, Radio, and Machine Operators, Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), declared that "Communist anti-Semitism has permeated every phase and facet of Russian life," including the government, the army, the schools and universities, and the youth organizations. Carey noted the significance of the changes in the coverage of Jews in the new edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. He reported that Jews were almost completely absent from the higher echelons of Soviet government. The Presidium, the highest government body, consisting of twenty-five members and eleven alternates, contained only one Jew. Whereas Jews in 1937 comprised 5.6 percent of the lower chamber of the Supreme Soviet and 2.6 percent of the upper chamber, by 1950 their percentage had declined to less than 0.3 percent and less than 0.5 percent respectively. The Soviet government purged most Jews from the highest army command positions, including many with distinguished records in World War II. It would not permit the hiring of Jews in any teaching positions that opened up at any level of the educational system and discharged many Jewish professors. The Kremlin had not posted a Jewish ambassador in any world capital since 1943, when it recalled two of its most talented diplomats, Maxim Litvinov and Ivan Maisky, from Washington and London respectively. The *New York Times* reported in 1949 that almost no Jews remained in the Soviet diplomatic service.<sup>10</sup>

In early February 1953, the *Jerusalem Post* reported that the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites had removed nearly all the Jews assigned to their diplomatic offices in Israel. It noted that they had also ordered home all non-Jewish personnel "suspected of being sympathetic to the Jews."<sup>11</sup>

By 1951 it had become nearly impossible for Soviet Jews to conduct religious services in the open or to provide children with a Jewish education, either religious or secular. Yeshivas had disappeared entirely, so it was no longer possible to train rabbis. Small groups of Jews in Moscow and other Soviet cities held secret services in homes and maintained clandestine Hebrew schools in which children had to memorize what teachers presented, because there were no textbooks. The few synagogues permitted to operate were closely watched by the secret police and riddled with informers. The government persecuted rabbis who were observed emphasizing Zion and Jerusalem in prayers.<sup>12</sup>

Circumcision and kosher slaughtering also had to be performed clandestinely in the Soviet Union and its satellites. Eva Lustig, wife of a high-ranking

Romanian Foreign Ministry official, recalled her alarm when Foreign Minister Ana Pauker, who was of Jewish origin, entered the room when she was changing her infant son's diaper in 1948 and noticed that he was circumcised. Lustig feared for her husband's job when Pauker asked her, "In 1948, you're still doing this?" and was amazed when she did not discharge him. Lustig emphasized that "no one at that time circumcised their boys, not even the 'lowest' Jews in the party apparat." In early 1953 Pauker was arrested and purged, charged with "transmitting secrets to the United States through its principal agent, 'International Zionism.'" <sup>13</sup>

Like Ana Pauker, some American Communists welcomed the disappearance of Soviet Jewish culture. Joshua Kunitz, a leading Communist authority on Jewish affairs, wrote in late 1951 or 1952 that Marx, Lenin, and Stalin had assumed the dissolution of Jewish distinctiveness under socialism. He claimed that socialism's advance, not coercion, caused the rapid Jewish acculturation in the Soviet bloc. Socialism eroded the occupational, religious, and educational differences between Jews and gentiles, undermining an archaic Jewish culture that lacked any redeeming features. Nobody in the Soviet Union associated Jews any longer with petty capitalism, because "no merchants or traders" remained in the "land of socialism." Soviet economic progress had fully integrated Jews into industry and agriculture, dispersing them widely throughout the occupational structure. Religion was no longer divisive because nearly the entire Soviet population embraced atheism. Modern schools and universal literacy enabled all Soviet citizens to develop the same appreciation for education that Jews had always displayed. Whatever popular antisemitism remained in the Soviet Union could not persist for long, because there was "nothing in the objective situation to ensure its survival."

Kunitz considered Jews' "fusion" with the rest of the Soviet population highly desirable, an inevitable result of the Soviet march toward Communism. Fusion, he explained, was not the same as assimilation, a "bourgeois" concept. Assimilation implied that the government or the majority population pressured a minority group to give up its distinct identity, instilling in it a sense of cultural inferiority. Fusion, by contrast, was a natural process made possible by capitalism's overthrow, which removed the conditions that separated one people from another. Kunitz claimed that Jewish fusion was proceeding rapidly and voluntarily in the Soviet Union and the "people's democracies." Any effort to preserve Jewish identity in the Soviet Union, Kunitz intoned, was "quixotic, self-deceptive, and doomed." For those who lamented the Jews' disappearance as a people, it was just "too bad!" <sup>14</sup>

American Communists heatedly disputed charges that the new Soviet Jewish policy was antisemitic. The *Daily Worker* declared that charges of Soviet antisemitism were "a complete fabrication, a cruel cheat," noting that antisemitism was illegal in the Soviet Union. It quoted a British Communist

recently returned from a visit to Soviet bloc countries, who said that there was "no alarm" among the Jews there, "no sign even of apprehension."<sup>15</sup>

The *Daily Worker* even defended the blatantly antisemitic practice of the Soviet press of printing their "original Jewish names" beside the names of Soviet intellectuals whose writings it denounced as "decadent [and] bourgeois." According to the *Daily Worker*, when a writer used a "pseudonym," it was common in the Soviet Union to print "his or her original family name" next to it.<sup>16</sup>

In January 1953 the *National Guardian* justified the ban the Soviet Union and the "People's Democracies" had imposed on Jewish emigration to Israel on the grounds that Israel had moved into the Western orbit. Israel was hypocritical in protesting the ban because it "never tried to impose [its] salvation on the Jews of the West," where the Communists claimed antisemitism was rife. Its real motivation was to weaken the "People's Democracies" by hiring away their "skilled labor and technical experts." The *National Guardian* quoted Israeli Communist leader Moshe Sneh, who declared that there was no reason for Jews to leave countries that had made antisemitism "a punishable crime."<sup>17</sup>

Morris Schappes claimed that the American media accused the Soviets of antisemitism to justify U.S. war preparations and to instill anti-Soviet hostility in Jews and African Americans, the two groups most concerned about discrimination. He also argued that the charge of Soviet antisemitism was designed to facilitate the spread of anti-Jewish prejudice in the United States. People would reason that if antisemitism still prevailed in the nation that set an example for the world by legally abolishing it, then it was hopeless to expect its disappearance in the United States, whose government had never seriously considered such action.<sup>18</sup>

Soviet bloc antisemitism reached its peak of intensity during the Slansky show trials of fourteen leaders of Czechoslovakia's CP, eleven of them of Jewish origin, in Prague in late 1952, and with the arrests in January 1953 of nine Soviet physicians, six of them Jewish, charged with murdering high Soviet officials. As Peter Meyer noted in *Commentary*, "the Prague trial with its lurid tale of a 'Zionist conspiracy' recalled the Czarist-invented and Nazi-popularized legend of the Elders of Zion," while the accusation against the physicians "harked back to the Middle Ages with their charges of Jewish poisonings and ritual murder."<sup>19</sup> Yet the American CP and its fellow travelers insisted that the defendants were guilty.

The Slansky trial was foreshadowed in September 1949 by that of László Rajk, a long-time (non-Jewish) leader of the Hungarian Communist Party, the first postwar Soviet bloc show trial in which defendants were accused of participating in a "worldwide Zionist conspiracy." Rajk, the lead defendant, was Hungary's former minister of foreign affairs and minister of the interior, and a Spanish Civil War veteran. This "Judas" (a term suggesting Jewish treachery and deicide) and his accomplices, also high-level Hungarian



Communists, were alleged to have wallowed in the “ideological sink” of “Trotskyism, fascism, Zionism, and anti-sovietism.” They were forced to confess to having conspired with Yugoslavia’s Tito regime, U.S. intelligence, and “world Zionism” to overthrow the Hungarian Communist government. Three of Rajk’s six codefendants were Jews. Béla Fábíán, former president of Hungary’s Independent Democratic Party, noted that the president of the court “emphatically played upon anti-Semitic sentiment.” He asked each defendant for his father’s and grandfathers’ names to detect whether Jewish ancestry was concealed under an accused man’s Magyar surname. Although the Trotskyists had always been fiercely hostile to Zionism, the trial concluded with a defendant confessing to having been a member of a “Trotskyite Zionist movement.” Linking Tito with Zionism was equally peculiar, because Yugoslavia had been the only Communist nation not to vote in favor of the UN partition plan. Rajk and two other defendants, both Jews, were hanged. The *Daily Worker* endorsed the prosecutors’ accusations linking “the Zionists” with the “American espionage attempts to overthrow the people’s governments.”<sup>20</sup>

The Rajk trial’s antisemitic undertone was apparent not only in its focus on a nefarious Zionist conspiracy but in the prosecutors’ denunciation of Spanish Civil War International Brigades and French Resistance veterans. As in the Soviet antic cosmopolite campaign, the Hungarian Communist regime considered persons who had any sustained contact with the West contaminated, transmitters of subversive ideas. The International Brigades and French Resistance veterans were therefore suspect, even though Communists had provided significant support to both causes. The Rajk trial initiated a systematic purge of Spanish Civil War and French Resistance veterans that soon spread to other Soviet satellites. Mátyás Rákosi, general secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, notified Romanian Communist leaders shortly after Rajk’s arrest that “everyone who fought in Spain and France was an American agent.” International Brigades veterans who had spent World War II in the Soviet Union (known as “Muscovites” as opposed to “Spaniards”) were not persecuted at first, but even they became suspect in the Soviet bloc.<sup>21</sup>

Linking the “Spaniards” to a treasonous Zionist conspiracy reinforced the long-standing antisemitic stereotype of Jews as disloyal, while dismissing the Jewish contribution to the struggle against fascism. The Spanish Civil War had a special meaning for Jews, who were desperate to block fascism’s advance in Europe. The International Brigades made the first organized armed stand against fascism, confronting not only Franco’s Falangist army but also the heavily armed forces Hitler and Mussolini sent to support it. Spain, the country of the Inquisition, had permanently expelled Europe’s largest Jewish population, a thousand-year-old community, in 1492. Jews were vastly overrepresented in the International Brigades, comprising about one-quarter of their ranks, all of whom were volunteers. This was the highest



PHOTO 19. László Rajk in the dock. (AP Images)

proportion of any nationality or ethnic group in Europe.<sup>22</sup> Many Jewish International Brigades soldiers from Eastern Europe “had a keen awareness of their Jewishness” and “wanted it to be known to all, friend and foe, that *they* fought Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco as Jews.”<sup>23</sup>

Many of the Hungarian and other Eastern European International Brigades veterans resided in the West for a prolonged period after the Loyalist defeat because they were confined in internment camps after crossing into France. A large proportion were already exiles from their countries of origin when they went to Spain and, even if not interned, would have been unable to return home after the war. The Hitler and Mussolini regimes prevented International Brigades veterans from Germany and Italy from reentering those countries. A sizeable proportion of the volunteers from Germany were Jews. Poland’s rightist dictatorship stripped Polish Jews who

fought for the Loyalist cause of their citizenship, forcing most to remain in the West. Many of the interned veterans joined the French Resistance after the German conquest.<sup>24</sup>

The Slansky trial in Czechoslovakia in November 1952 provided the clearest illustration yet of state-sponsored antisemitism in the Soviet bloc. The fourteen defendants were charged with participating in a “Jewish nationalist-Zionist-imperialist conspiracy” to wreck the economy, overthrow the government and restore capitalism. The indictment explicitly identified eleven of them as “of Jewish origin.” Prosecutors repeatedly mentioned the defendants’ Jewish background during the trial and associated Jews with the accumulation of money. For defendants who bore Czech-sounding surnames, the indictment listed in parentheses their original Jewish names: for example, Rudolf Slansky (Salzmann), André Simone (Otto Katz), and Ludvik Frejka (Ludwig Freund).

In publishing the original Jewish name of a defendant after his adopted Czech surname, the Slansky prosecution implied that Jewish origin was an immutable character defect that predisposed the individual to “deception and treachery.” Stalin had engaged in this practice during the Moscow trials, accusing Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev of betraying the Soviet “workers’ state” by conspiring with its fiercest enemies, Germany and Japan, to undermine and dismember it. The Stalinists advanced a secularized version of the Spanish Inquisition’s racialized antisemitism, rooted in the notion that all Jews, in Jesus’s time and in every succeeding generation, were indelibly stained by the crime of deicide, driven by demonic urges and incapable of moral behavior. Thus the Spanish conversos, even though they were practicing Christians and fully assimilated into Catholic-dominated Spanish society, remained Jews, along with their descendants. Ironically, it was the intensely antisemitic White Russians during the Civil War of 1918–1921 who had introduced in Russia the practice of publishing in parentheses discarded Jewish surnames to “unmask” assimilated Jewish Bolsheviks, in their effort to discredit Lenin’s government as Jewish-dominated. Conservative newspapers in the West also printed Jewish names Bolshevik leaders had abandoned, as when the London *Times* in 1920 referred to Zinoviev by his mother’s maiden name (which he had once used in the underground): “Apfelbaum, who masquerades as ‘Zinovieff.’” The Nazis similarly emphasized the Jewish origin of various Soviet leaders with Russianized names to associate Bolshevism with Judaism, adding in parentheses “Bronstein” after “Trotsky,” “Rosenfeld” after “Kamenev,” “Sobelson” after “Radek,” and “Valakh” after “Litvinov,” whom Stalin removed as Soviet foreign minister in deference to Nazi antisemitic prejudice as he considered making overtures to Germany in mid-1939.<sup>25</sup>

In the Slansky trials, defendants were forced to testify that their alleged Jewishness had caused their estrangement from, and contempt for, Czechoslovakia’s working class, the foundation of its “people’s democracy.”

Each defendant of Jewish origin claimed to be of bourgeois background. The prosecution portrayed the defendants' heinous acts as rooted in Jewish arrogance and disdain for Czechoslovakia's gentile workers, whom they targeted for exploitation. The indictment attached to the name of each of the eleven such designations as "son of a big merchant," "son of a merchant and tavern keeper," and "son of a manufacturer." Defendant Vavro Hajdu told the court that his upbringing in "a Jewish bourgeois family" led him into "the camp of the enemies of Socialism." He not only had "no contact with the toilers," but he "despised them." Defendant Otto Sling similarly claimed that his "Jewish bourgeois-nationalist education" drove him to commit hostile acts against Czechoslovakia. Sling identified himself as an "alien" in Czechoslovakia's Communist Party, a loaded term suggesting Jews' inability to display loyalty to the nation in which they lived. Defendant André Simone claimed that he had always considered the working class "strange" and considered a worker "an inferior human being."<sup>26</sup> The prosecution accused defendants of arranging export deals from which Czech Jewish émigrés and "other Zionists" collected enormous "usurer's profits."<sup>27</sup>

As in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an early twentieth-century forgery of the czarist secret police that depicted a Jewish cabal at a Zionist congress in Basel concocting a plot to take over the world, the Prague prosecutors charged that the "Zionist-imperialist" scheme to seize control of Czechoslovakia originated at a closed-doors conference in Washington, D.C., in 1947. Allegedly participating were President Truman, U.S. under-secretary of state Dean Acheson, former U.S. secretary of the treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. (who was Jewish), and David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett, who at the time of the Slansky trial were Israel's prime minister and foreign minister, respectively. Together they formulated what the prosecutors called the "Morgenthau Plan": in exchange for U.S. support for Israel, "Zionist organizations" would carry out espionage and economic sabotage within Czechoslovakia. The prosecutors specifically named the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC), which conducted relief work for Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe, as so engaged. Drawing on anti-semitic stereotypes of Jewish greed, duplicity, and disloyalty, they claimed the AJJDC used charitable activities as a cover to engage "in espionage, sabotage, black market currency machinations, profiteering and smuggling" and other "large-scale subversive activity."<sup>28</sup>

Rudolf Slansky and other defendants in the Slansky trials were made to utter statements that closely resembled those in the *Protocols*. Slansky, the secretary-general of Czechoslovakia's CP (the number-two party post) and the "chief conspirator," testified that he had directed "careerists" to infiltrate Czechoslovakia's CP to draw it away from the working class. Protocol 15 stated that the Jewish conspirators "shall have no difficulty" using careerists "to wind up the mechanism of the machine [they] devised." Protocol 10 called on the conspirators to place in high posts persons who had "in their

past some dark, undiscovered stain." Fearing exposure, such persons "will be trustworthy agents for the accomplishment of our plans." Defendants were forced to confess that they had kept secret their service to the Gestapo or Leon Trotsky, or both. Protocols 20 through 22 outlined how conspirators could wreak havoc by manipulating foreign loans and investments. Defendant Evzen Loebel confessed that he had arranged for Czechoslovakia to borrow money from Western capitalist nations "at exorbitant rates of interest," severely damaging his nation's economy.<sup>29</sup>

The prosecutors identified as important conspirators Jews prominent in Western business and finance, such as Bernard Baruch and Baron Rothschild, as well as Eastern European Communists of Jewish origin, including recently purged Romanian foreign minister Ana Pauker and Moshe Pijade, a top lieutenant of Marshal Tito. They also named Georges Mandel, a Jewish hero of the French Resistance arrested by the Vichy regime and murdered by order of the Gestapo in 1944.<sup>30</sup> Defendant André Simone was made to testify that since contacting "the Jewish nationalist" Mandel in Paris in 1930, he had worked with his "Jewish spy network which was an agent of the big Jewish Capitalists."<sup>31</sup>

In denouncing the defendants, Czechoslovakia's Communist Party chairman Klement Gottwald and the prosecution drew on antisemitic passages in the Christian Bible. Because the accused initially denied their guilt, Gottwald called them "stiff-necked," a term Christian theologians used to describe Jews' "stubborn" refusal to recognize Jesus as the messiah. Invoking demonic imagery from the Christian Bible, the prosecutor in his summation declared that "the verdict of the judges must fall like an iron fist on this nest of snakes." Gottwald similarly described the defendants as "a ball of snakes." The gospel of Matthew had Jesus denounce Jewish leaders, "the scribes and the Pharisees [who] occupy the chair of Moses," as "serpents, [a] brood of vipers."<sup>32</sup> In the Christian Bible, serpents were the devil's instruments, placed among humans to promote evil.

The Czechoslovak Communist Party newspaper *Rudé Právo* excoriated the defendants in terms the Nazi press used to describe Jews during the 1930s. It characterized them as "creatures who long ago lost the right to be called men" and declared, "when looking [at] them one is reminded of the pictures from Korea of the spiders, bugs and rats carrying with them the plague, typhoid and cholera."<sup>33</sup>

Long periods of torture and threats against the defendants' families extracted "groveling confessions" and "fantastic tales." Slansky told the court that to conceal the "Zionist-imperialist plot" he had proposed "a campaign ... against anti-Semitism" and then denounced "the people who pointed to the hostile activities of Zionists" as antisemites. This, too, appeared lifted from Protocol 9, which called on conspirators to accuse those who challenged their activities with antisemitism. This suggested that antisemitism was "the creature of Jewish plotting, purposefully conceived,

organized and spread by Jews themselves to camouflage their world-wide conspiracy." Eleven of the defendants were hanged, and the others sentenced to prison terms.<sup>34</sup>

To establish a direct link between the defendants and Israel, the Czechoslovak government arrested in Czechoslovakia Mordechai Oren, a leader of Israel's pro-Soviet Mapam Party, and charged him as the courier transmitting instructions from leaders of the "worldwide Jewish conspiracy" in Israel to the Slansky group. The court sentenced Oren to fifteen years in prison. Oren had declared that Israeli workers would never agree to fight against the Soviet Union.<sup>35</sup> Prague radio accompanied its broadcast of Oren's "confession" with blatantly antisemitic invective, describing him as having "the dwarfed figure and typical face of the international apache."<sup>36</sup>

The charge that the Slansky defendants were part of a Zionist conspiracy was absurd, because all of them were militant anti-Zionists. Slansky and other defendants in recent years had denied exit permits to Jews wishing to emigrate from Czechoslovakia to Israel and had drastically limited the amount of property and funds the few allowed to leave could take with them. Defendant Otto Fischl, assistant minister of finance, had been so zealous in enforcing these restrictions that he made trips to Prague's railroad station to personally search the luggage of Jews departing for Israel. Although during the 1948 War of Independence Slansky authorized the shipment of Czech weapons to Israel and permitted some Jews to move there, he had, according to American experts on Eastern Europe, "acted against his personal inclinations and on orders from Moscow."<sup>37</sup>

Arthur Koestler recalled his "painful shock" on reading defendant André Simone's (Otto Katz) last statement before the court, which was clearly intended as "a camouflaged message" that he had been made to confess to imaginary crimes. During the 1930s, when Koestler was a Communist, Katz had been his "intimate Party comrade." Katz was the anonymous author of the *Brown Book*, which documented Nazi atrocities in the early period of Hitler's rule. At that time Katz was the chief lieutenant of Willy Münzenberg, the Comintern's Western European propaganda chief. Published in 1933, the *Brown Book* "contained the first comprehensive report on the German concentration camps (including statistics and lists of victims) [and] on the persecution of Jews." It also systematically refuted the Nazis' account of the Reichstag fire. Koestler commented that Katz's *Brown Book* "probably had the strongest political impact of any pamphlet since Tom Paine's *Common Sense*." Katz had also served as Comintern propagandist for republican Spain during the Civil War of 1936-1939.<sup>38</sup>

In his last statement at the Slansky trial, Katz, repeating his confession, drew from the last speech of Nikolai Rubashov, the main character in Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*, which was based on the infamous Soviet show trials of 1936-1938: "I ... belong to the gallows. The only service I can still render is to serve as a warning example to all who, by origin or



character, are in danger of following the same path to hell. The sterner the punishment ...' (Voice falls too low to be intelligible.)" Koestler remarked that perhaps Katz had hoped his "influential former friends in London, Paris, and Hollywood," Communists and fellow travelers "who had once admired and fêted" his antifascist agitation, would recognize this disguised appeal and "raise their voices in protest." If so, Katz was entirely mistaken. Koestler noted that "not one voice was raised [on Katz's behalf] among the editors, journalists, social hostesses and film-stars who had swarmed round Otto in the romantic, pink days" of the Popular Front.<sup>39</sup>

Although the antisemitic character of the Slansky trials was obvious, the *Daily Worker* proclaimed that the witnesses had destroyed "the smokescreen of antisemitism" created by Western "pro-war organs" and "produced unassailable factual evidence of the guilt of the defendants." In his pamphlet *The Truth About the Prague Trial*, *Jewish Life* editor Louis Harap insisted that Zionism, a form of "bourgeois nationalism," naturally served the interests of the "owning class." This explained Israel's "subservience to Washington, the leader of world capitalism." Embracing America's "anti-Soviet global policy," Israel eagerly joined its "espionage and sabotage conspiracies" in Czechoslovakia. *Jewish Life* also published an article charging that the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the principal U.S. intelligence agency during World War II and the immediate postwar period, had "explicit instructions to concentrate on work with the Jews." Applying the antisemitic stereotype of Jews as disloyal profiteers, the article accused the "conspirators" of "trad[ing] on their positions as 'victims of fascism' to export millions of dollars of goods out of a country which is recovering from war damage."<sup>40</sup>

A. B. Magil also wrote an article for *Masses & Mainstream* largely devoted to dismissing charges that the Slansky trials were antisemitic. He argued that these trials were not ordinary criminal proceedings but part of a concerted effort to uproot "foreign imperialist" spies and saboteurs. Because Israel and Zionist organizations had assumed considerable responsibility for undermining Czechoslovakia's economy and military security at the 1947 secret meeting in Washington, it was not surprising that the defendants were largely Jews, because nearly all Zionists were Jews. Magil went so far as to claim, moreover, that the presence of so many Jews in the dock demonstrated the *absence* of antisemitism in Czechoslovakia. Slansky, a Jew, had become general secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and the other Jewish defendants had occupied high government or party positions. At the same time, he noted, in the United States no Jew had ever served as chairman of the Democratic or Republican parties, and there were no Jews in President Eisenhower's cabinet.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, a *National Guardian* editorial complained that because most of the defendants were Jewish, "the whole noisy machinery of the U.S. government and press and radio" made "a big Thing out of 'anti-Semitism behind



the Iron Curtain.'" It was, however, preposterous to charge a Soviet bloc nation with antisemitism. These nations had "abolished the economic basis of racism in any form" and made antisemitism illegal. Moreover, the Prague defendants "confessed their guilt in open court."<sup>42</sup>

*Morning Freiheit*, the English section of the CP's Yiddish newspaper, approvingly quoted stridently antisemitic statements by Klement Gottwald, who in condemning the "anti-state conspiracy," invoked long-standing images of amoral, avaricious Jews. Gottwald accused the Zionist organizations "of all shades" of exploiting for pecuniary gain the suffering Hitler had inflicted on the Jews: "They want to make fortunes out of the ashes of Oswiencim and Maidanek."<sup>43</sup>

American Communists did not dispute the Czechoslovak government's conflating of Zionism and Nazism. *Rudé Právo*, in an editorial, condemned Zionism as the equivalent of antisemitism. Both were forms of "racial chauvinism ... remnant[s] of ... inhuman morals ... characteristic of the era of cannibalism ... expression[s] of the MOST REPULSIVE BARBARISM."<sup>44</sup> Like New Leftists of the late 1960s and early 1970s, *Rudé Právo* blamed the Zionists for the deaths of massive numbers of Jews in the Holocaust. It claimed that the Zionists "allied ... with Mussolini, with Hitler" and "remained silent" as "millions of Jews died in concentration camps." As a movement of the Jewish bourgeoisie, Zionism was concerned only with promoting the interests of world capitalism. Obeying their "imperialist masters," who wished to weaken the Soviet Union, the Zionists had allegedly refrained for much of World War II from demanding the opening of a second front in Western Europe, the only measure, according to *Rudé Právo*, that could have saved European Jewry. The *Prague News Letter*, an official Czechoslovak government organ, linked Zionism with Nazi genocide by accusing the small, anti-British Stern group in Israel of demanding "the extermination of the Arab population."<sup>45</sup>

Shortly after the Slansky trials, the organ of the Soviet writers' union similarly claimed that Israel's government, "following Hitler's example ... had erected a 'ghetto for the Arabs and deprived them of freedom of movement.'"<sup>46</sup> This depiction of Jews as the new Nazis and Arabs as the new Jews became another major theme of New Left propaganda during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In a lecture at Columbia University, Morris Schappes, a *Jewish Life* editor and lecturer in Jewish history at the CP's Jefferson School of Social Science and the School of Jewish Studies, called the Slansky trial "a service to the American people." He accused the American press of falsely injecting the issue of antisemitism. The defendants were convicted because they were "U.S. intelligence agents." There was, in fact, "no anti-Semitic movement in Eastern Europe." There was only antagonism toward ideas that were "contrary to the interest of the working class," including "bourgeois nationalist doctrines" such as Zionism. Schappes cited a recent American-Israeli

military assistance pact as “evidence” that Israel continued to conduct espionage for the United States.<sup>47</sup>

Responding to Schappes, a speaker at another Columbia forum, sponsored by the Intercollegiate Zionist Federation of America (IZFA) and Students for Democratic Action, asserted that the Soviets had used the Slansky trial to mobilize neo-Nazi elements in Germany behind them, a view widely held in the West. The trial was also designed to solidify Soviet control over Eastern Europe, where antisemitism was endemic, and to appeal to the Arab world.<sup>48</sup>

From January to March 1953, in public lectures sponsored by *Jewish Life* and *Morgen Freiheit*, Schappes devoted considerable energy to attacking what he called the “slandorous campaign” to discredit the Slansky trials as antisemitic. At a Jewish cultural center in Cleveland, Schappes insisted that the defendants were guilty because they had confessed. There could be no antisemitism in a “people’s democracy” where it was a “punishable crime.” Schappes claimed that Jewish newspapers were defending “admitted criminals” to “further the war aims” of the U.S. State Department. A flier advertising his lecture on the Slansky trial in the heavily Jewish Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, headlined “The Charge of Anti-Semitism!!!” listed individuals of Jewish origin in high government positions in the Soviet Union and other Communist countries in Eastern Europe (such as Mátyás Rákosi of Hungary, a notorious antisemite), as “proof” that there was no state-sponsored antisemitism in the Soviet bloc.<sup>49</sup>

Communist references to Soviet bloc statutes making antisemitism illegal, which were repeatedly used to deflect charges of persecution of Jews, were highly misleading, because the Soviet Union and its satellites were quite lenient with offenders on the rare occasions when they were willing to apply the law. The Soviet press provided almost no coverage of these infractions, and Soviet legal journals and textbooks were vague in describing them. The same was undoubtedly the case in the satellites, the so-called people’s democracies, which took their lead from the Soviets. By the early 1930s, the Soviet government no longer recorded data specifically on antisemitic offenses, subsuming them under the category “great-power and local chauvinism.”<sup>50</sup>

Liberal journalist Murray Kempton, a former Communist, covering a CP symposium (sponsored by *Jewish Life*) in New York City that was called to defend the Slansky verdicts, noted “a new kind of Bolshevik audience, one frightened, shaken and full of sharp questions.” The panel consisted of three of the CP’s leading authorities on Jewish affairs, all of them Jewish: Morris Schappes, Louis Harap, and Sam Pevzner. The audience discomfort over the trials foreshadowed the CP’s turmoil during 1956 and 1957, when the continuing revelations of Soviet bloc antisemitism became a major cause of mass resignations from the party. Kempton declared that the “language of the [Slansky] trial reeked of Nuremberg” and observed that “it must have

shaken [CP] loyalists here as nothing has since the Nazi-Soviet pact." He asserted that "the Soviet satellites' recent exercises in Jew-baiting have damaged party morale more than Joe McCarthy ever could." Kempton described the audience pressing the panelists to answer such questions as why so many of the accused were Jews, why Zionism was equated with Trotskyism and Titoism, and why "selling goods too cheap to Israel" was a "hanging offense."<sup>51</sup>

The CP made a concerted effort to draw attention away from the Slansky trials by significantly escalating its campaign to free the accused atom spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, claiming that their prosecution was motivated by antisemitism. The CP had ignored the Rosenbergs' trial, and the *Daily Worker* had not covered it. There was considerable evidence against the Rosenbergs, and the judge, the prosecutors, and the major prosecution witnesses were Jewish. No mainstream Jewish organization offered the Rosenbergs any support. The *Daily Worker* did not issue a report on the case until the day after the jury returned the guilty verdict, and even then it was only three sentences long. A year later the *Daily Worker* claimed that a "pogrom-like atmosphere" had hovered over the Rosenberg trial but still did not give the case much attention. The CP made the Rosenberg case a principal focus of its agitation only at the time of the Slansky trials. In December 1952, Herbert Aptheker, a leading CP spokesperson, ridiculed those who asserted that the Slansky defendants were innocent and the Rosenbergs guilty, arguing that the former had confessed, whereas the latter insisted on their innocence. A *National Guardian* editorial the next month used exactly the same reasoning in justifying the Slansky verdicts and challenging the Rosenbergs' convictions.<sup>52</sup>

In January 1953, the Kremlin imprisoned nine physicians, six of them Jewish, who treated Soviet leaders, on charges of having murdered two high party officials, one by poisoning, on the orders of American and British intelligence and the AJJDC. Denounced as "devils in white" and "fiends in human form," they were also accused of conspiring to undermine Soviet defenses by murdering military leaders.<sup>53</sup> In medieval Christian belief, demons ("fiends") serving Satan were capable of assuming human or animal guise. The charges of a "doctors' plot" drew on the medieval antisemitic fantasy that demonic Jews poisoned wells to deliberately spread plague among Christians, and on the long-standing libel that Jews' allegiance was to a nefarious international conspiracy, never to the country in which they lived.

American CP leaders rushed to pronounce the accused physicians guilty, ridiculing charges of an antisemitic frame-up. In the *Daily Worker*, Joseph Clark insisted that the Kremlin had attacked the "plotters" not as Jews but as "bourgeois nationalists." He noted that they had confessed to "murdering" and "plotting" on behalf of U.S. and British intelligence.<sup>54</sup> A. B. Magil declared that because U.S. intelligence had assigned an American Jewish organization, the AJJDC, a central role in the conspiracy against the Soviet

leadership, it was not surprising that most of the arrested physicians were Jews. Magil stated that because of “its international character,” the AJJDC, “like the Zionist movement [and] the Freemasons,” could be readily used by “imperialist intelligence services.”<sup>55</sup> Johnny Gates, editor-in-chief of the *Daily Worker* until leaving the CP in 1957, recalled that although the charge about “an international ‘Zionist conspiracy’ to poison the Soviet leaders” was “fantastic,” he had “accepted it as gospel truth.”<sup>56</sup>

Following the Slansky trial and the doctors’ plot, the CP lashed out at Jewish trade union leaders who had been long-time party members or sympathizers but continued to support Israel and promote Jewish culture after the switch in party line. In March 1953, the *Daily Worker* denounced Arthur Osman, a founder and president of what was then the largely Jewish Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers Union, District 65, in New York City, for publishing an article in District 65’s *Union Voice* that declared: “We as Jews are justifiably incensed at the insults and slanders leveled at us in Prague and in Moscow.” Osman called on each Jewish member to “renew his efforts to raise funds for [the] United Jewish Appeal, and do everything else he possibly can to enable more Jews to emigrate to Israel.”<sup>57</sup>

Like the prosecutors at the Slansky trial, the *Daily Worker* in its attack on the trade union “renegades” invoked images of sinister Jewish conspiracy and criminality. It called Soviet antisemitism a “hoax” that the American Jewish Committee (AJC) “concocted and organized” at a secret meeting in 1947 and “fed to the press.” The *Daily Worker* sneered: “Now that Osman discloses himself as a Zionist, he has forgotten entirely the theory of the class struggle he upheld for many years.” It declared: “The Moscow doctors [and] the Slansky group ... submitted themselves to as vile and criminal a service as one can sink to.... Osman has not produced one iota of information to discredit [their] confessions.”<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, the CP’s theoretical journal *Political Affairs* made use of the antisemitic stereotype of the Jewish huckster in a lengthy diatribe against “opportunism” in District 65. The union represented workers in New York’s dry goods industry, in which both employees and employers were Jewish and often worked together. Such conditions had led a once “fighting militant union” to collaborate with management and adopt its petty bourgeois outlook. The prevailing “atmosphere of shady dealing and black marketing” encouraged everyone “to rook whomever you can for as much as you can.” “The powerful pressure of Zionism” in the largely Jewish industry further “obscure[d] class lines.” The union joined with management to raise funds for Israel and for Jewish charities, retarding the development of proletarian consciousness among the workers.<sup>59</sup>

When flying squads of East German Communist police hunting “Zionist spies” raided the homes of nearly all the 2,800 Jewish survivors of Nazi extermination camps in January 1953, it seemed to many a chilling reminder of the Gestapo. But the American CP justified the raids and denied that

they had any antisemitic purpose. Western commentators believed the raids were motivated at least partly by the desire of East German authorities to solidify support for their regime among former Nazis. A Jewish leader in West Berlin declared that the launching of the campaign against "Zionist agents" shattered any hope that East Germany would restore Jewish property confiscated by the Nazis. This impression was reinforced by reports that the imprisoned former East German Communist leader Paul Merker had confessed to being a "Zionist agent." Merker had called for property expropriated by the Nazis to be returned to its Jewish owners. East German Jews who managed to escape to West Berlin reported that agents of the East German security service had interrogated them about "Jewish aspects of their life" and involvement with Zionism or with the AJJDC, which had provided parcels and other forms of relief to virtually all of East Germany's Holocaust survivors, who were destitute.<sup>60</sup>

Communist denunciation of the AJJDC in the Slansky trial and the East German Zionist "spy hunt" forced it to shut down its last remaining office in Eastern Europe, in Budapest, in late January 1953. The "Joint," established in 1914 to provide relief to Jews suffering persecution or displacement and loss of property during wartime, had previously been forced to stop functioning openly in Eastern Europe because of the Nazi occupation. But it had continued underground operations in some localities, including the Warsaw ghetto. It now opened camps in West Berlin to assist the influx of Jewish refugees from East Germany.<sup>61</sup>

The East German "anti-Zionist" campaign was so virulent that persons of only partial Jewish ancestry were reported fleeing to the West, another frightening parallel with the Nazi persecution. These refugees, many of whom had only one Jewish grandparent, feared that "even such a remote connection endangered their existence under the communist regime."<sup>62</sup> The American Jewish Committee reported that East German authorities had disbanded remaining Jewish community organizations and had gone so far as to register all Jews and "half Jews" in a special police roster. Those registered were barred from most jobs.<sup>63</sup>

Another sign of East German Jews' increasing vulnerability was the dissolution in late February 1953 of the Victims of Fascism organization, to which all the nation's Jews belonged. This meant that Jews could no longer wear the red-and-silver lapel button, which had accorded them "official respect ... as victims of Nazi terror."<sup>64</sup>

The American CP's response to these alarming developments was dismissive. Louis Harap, one of the party's leading spokespersons on Jewish affairs and editor of *Jewish Life*, rejected any suggestion that the East German regime's actions were antisemitic. The "frantic" reports in the Western press about significant numbers of Jews leaving East Germany should "be taken with a healthy dose of salt." The regime was not persecuting Jews. It had merely determined to "rout out all criminal activities against the state."

As a result, some East Germans, including Jews, “with guilty consciences” because they had engaged in subversive activity, had fled to West Berlin. *Jewish Life* also quoted East German composer Hanns Eisler’s denial that antisemitism existed in East Germany and his claim that many Jews occupied prominent positions there.<sup>65</sup>

The CP even used its tenth anniversary commemoration of the Warsaw ghetto uprising to denounce Western “hysteria” over Soviet bloc antisemitism and to brand as reactionary Zionist and Jewish “right-wing social democratic groups,” by which it meant the Jewish Labor Committee, the Jewish Bund, and the needle trades unions. In 1947 the CP had been seriously embarrassed when Jews attending an American Jewish (AJ) Congress-sponsored fourth anniversary memorial meeting responded with outrage to the speech of Juliusz Katz-Suchy, secretary-general of Communist Poland’s UN delegation, who denied the specifically Jewish character of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Katz-Suchy’s position was consistent with Soviet policy on the Holocaust, which ignored the centrality and uniqueness of the murder of six million Jews and viewed Jews only as members of the nations in which they had resided. When Katz-Suchy declared that the Warsaw ghetto fighters had given their lives “for Poland’s freedom and independence,” the crowd booed and heckled him, shouting, “We say, why did they die?” Isolated from the mainstream Jewish community, the Communists held their own commemoration in 1953. It featured speeches by Polish ambassador Joseph Winiewicz and W. E. B. Du Bois.<sup>66</sup>

*Jewish Life*’s editorial on this event, reflecting the CP’s postwar “left-sectarian” orientation, defamed the vast majority of Warsaw ghetto fighters as well as the Slansky defendants and those accused in the doctors’ plot. It blamed all the Jewish groups in the Warsaw ghetto “dominated by middle-class nationalistic principles,” a euphemism for both Zionism and Bundism, for delaying and weakening the uprising by allegedly resisting unity with “progressive working-class groups,” meaning the Communists. *Jewish Life* asserted that the slain Warsaw ghetto fighters would recoil in horror at the Jews “exposed” in the Slansky trial “as having served the Gestapo and betrayed anti-fascists to the Nazis,” and at the Jewish doctors who plotted the “murder of Soviet leaders.” They would recognize such “criminals” as “of the same mold as the Judenrat and the Jewish police in the ghetto” who collaborated with the Nazis.<sup>67</sup>

In March and April 1953, Joshua Kunitz published a two-part article in the independent Marxist journal *Monthly Review* blaming the Jews, in part, for the “growth of anti-Semitic sentiment among the Soviet masses.” Kunitz admitted that “popular” antisemitism had increased in the Soviet Union during and after World War II but flatly denied that “official” antisemitism existed.<sup>68</sup>

Kunitz located popular Soviet antisemitism in “the most backward sections” of the population, which reacted to wartime distress by

scapegoating the Jews, a traditional Russian habit. Annexation of the Baltic states, Bessarabia, the western Ukraine, and western Belorussia in 1939–1940 had incorporated into the Soviet Union twenty to twenty-five million people who had previously lived under “semi-fascist regimes,” like Poland, “notorious for their Judophobia.” Many of these new citizens brought anti-semitic beliefs into the Soviet Union. Nazi wartime indoctrination in occupied areas of the Soviet Union reinforced popular antisemitism.<sup>69</sup>

Kunitz invoked long-standing Marxian antisemitic stereotypes of Jewish hucksterism and tribalism, holding Jews from the annexed areas partly responsible for the growth of popular antisemitism in the Soviet Union. He claimed that the great majority of this new Jewish population consisted of “non-workers” – “petty tradesmen [and] speculators” – “*luftmenschen*” who could not adjust to life in a “workers’ state.” Coming into the Soviet Union from “semi-fascist” countries, they identified only as Jews. The “fervor” of wartime Soviet patriotism “had not touched them.”<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, many of the Jews who had entered the Soviet Union during the war were “ardent Zionists,” committed to a “bourgeois nationalist” movement that was “separatist, divisive, and ... reactionary and counter-revolutionary.” According to Kunitz, Zionism’s “reactionary character” was “embodied in its bourgeois leadership ... its political and economic alignment with Western imperialism [and] its contempt for the needs and aspirations of the Arab masses.” The Zionists undermined Jews’ allegiance to the Soviet Union by arguing that Jews around the world constituted one people. By blurring class divisions among Jews, Zionism “serve[d] the ends of capitalism.” Israel’s alignment with the West in the Cold War called into question Jewish loyalty to the Soviet Union. Kunitz went beyond the standard antisemitic charge of dual loyalty to accuse the Jews of treason: “A Jew in a socialist country who succumbs to Zionism is a double traitor – he betrays his country and he betrays socialism.”<sup>71</sup> Kunitz also noted that “a great many of the intellectuals and the working class leaders” among the Soviet Union’s new Jewish citizens “had long been associated with the social democratic and bundist movements, and as such were ancient foes of Bolshevism and Leninism-Stalinism.”<sup>72</sup>

Kunitz justified the Soviet government’s dissolution of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFC) and suppression of Yiddish literature. The JAFC had encouraged Soviet Jews to forge friendly ties with Jews in other countries, including Zionists. This stimulated “a Jewish consciousness that transcended territorial and ideological boundaries,” weakening Jewish commitment to world Communism’s struggle against the West. Postwar Soviet Jewish literature “was saturated with nationalism,” which “embrace[d] all the Jews of the world, past, present, and future.” The dangerous “Zionist idea of ‘one people,’ one culture, one destiny was gaining a firm hold in the Yiddish publications.” The connections to “the Jewish tradition, and the Jewish life outside the Soviet Union” that the Bolsheviks had severed



in 1917 “were being rebuilt now with unprecedented fervor.” Moscow’s Yiddish publishing house had even planned to issue Yiddish translations of the Hebrew Bible and parts of the Talmud. Kunitz declared that it made no sense to preserve Yiddish, a language he asserted was “historically doomed” the moment Jews left the ghetto.<sup>73</sup>

In a letter to *Monthly Review* editor Leo Huberman, Stewart Meacham, a reader of the journal, compared Kunitz’s arguments to “pre-war justifications of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany.” Meacham drew a parallel between Nazi apologists in the West who distinguished between “good” German Jews and “bad” Polish and Russian Jews and Kunitz’s claim that Eastern European Jews in newly annexed Soviet areas provoked antisemitism. Both Kunitz and the Nazis accused the Jews of dual loyalty. Kunitz and other Communist assimilationists joined Nazi apologists in blaming the Jews for insisting on maintaining a distinct cultural identity.<sup>74</sup>

Although, as Meacham noted, Kunitz’s intention was to present the situation of Jews in the USSR “in the best possible way ... from the Soviet point of view,” many “disciplined CP members” were so upset by his acknowledging the existence of any antisemitism in the Soviet Union that they canceled their subscriptions to *Monthly Review*. One angry reader reacted by telling Huberman that *Monthly Review*’s editors “not only think ‘dangerous’ thoughts, you publish them.” He denounced Kunitz’s references to popular Soviet antisemitism as “undocumented” and called them “fuel for rabid McCarthyism.”<sup>75</sup>

Following the Soviet government’s lead, the CP continued to tout Birobidzhan as a dynamic and bustling model settlement where Jewish culture thrived, long after it was obvious that neither Soviet nor world Jewry was interested in the project, and that the colony would always remain a barren frontier outpost. The Soviet government briefly devoted attention to Birobidzhan after World War II, having absorbed displaced remnants of Eastern Europe’s Jewish population, persons whose families had been murdered and homes destroyed or confiscated by their Christian neighbors. But Birobidzhan failed to attract significant numbers of Jewish migrants for the same reasons as before the war. Jews who survived the Holocaust put their efforts into reaching Palestine, and, after 1948, Israel.

Birobidzhan’s Jewish institutions were largely liquidated during the Soviet government’s antisemitic campaign of the late 1940s and early 1950s, and harsh living conditions persisted. Jews remained a minority of the population, steadily diminishing in proportion during the 1950s. In 1948, *New York Times* reporter C. L. Sulzberger described the Jewish Autonomous Region as “in decay.” Except for Birobidzhan’s capital, a town of that name with a population of about 30,000, it consisted of only a few villages. Sulzberger noted that even in the capital, most families lived “primitively,” in wooden apartment buildings housing ten to twenty families with interior courtyards containing a lavatory pit and garbage dump. The buildings lacked water or

sewer connections. All the streets were dirt, except for three that were cobbled. During the late 1940s, the Soviet government shut down Birobidzhan's Yiddish theater and dismantled the regional museum's Jewish division. Local officials burned the bulk of the public library's Judaica collection.<sup>76</sup>

The Stalin regime severed communication between Birobidzhan and the rest of the world for several years after 1948, leaving Jews in the West and Israel with no sense of what was transpiring there. In February 1951, Zionist leader Hayim Greenberg published a letter to the Soviet ambassador to the United States in the Labor Zionist magazine *Jewish Frontier*, complaining that no one knew whether any Jewish school or newspaper existed in Birobidzhan. Prominent Yiddish writers had vanished without a trace. Greenberg noted that the entertainment columns of Moscow newspapers no longer mentioned the once-thriving Yiddish theater, either in Birobidzhan or elsewhere in the Soviet Union. The Soviet embassy had not replied to inquiries about these matters from Jewish organizations.<sup>77</sup>

Much of Birobidzhan's Jewish leadership was decimated in a new round of purges during the late 1940s and early 1950s, during which the leaders were executed as "bourgeois nationalists" and "rootless cosmopolites." The Soviet government replaced many of them with non-Jews. Jewish leaders were accused of betraying the Soviet people by accepting relief packages from the American Birobidzhan support organization Ambijan. The Kremlin charged that such contact spread pro-American feeling in the Soviet Union and implied that the Soviets required help from the West. Most strikingly, the Soviet government accused the Jewish leaders of "fostering Jewish culture" in Birobidzhan, and of implying that the Jewish Autonomous Region was the only place in the Soviet Union in which Jews could live well.<sup>78</sup> This antisemitic campaign resulted in an estimated two-thirds of the Jewish Autonomous Region's Jews renouncing their Jewish nationality.<sup>79</sup>

Like Nikita Khrushchev, who characterized Birobidzhan in 1954 as "the pearl of the Far East," the American CP throughout the postwar period described the Jewish Autonomous Region in glowing terms, dismissing Western journalists' reports of the dismal situation there as politically motivated "smears." The *Daily Worker* disputed the Western press's description of Birobidzhan as a "barren wasteland" and described it as "a land with bountiful soil, a modern capital city," mechanized industry and agriculture, schools, libraries, and a vibrant Jewish cultural life. American Jews were clamoring to migrate there. J. M. Budish, in a 1947 *Jewish Life* article, similarly boasted of Birobidzhan's natural abundance, rapid industrial progress, and high standard of living. The Jewish Autonomous Region could absorb hundreds of thousands of immigrants. Its Yiddish school system was unparalleled; the Jewish State Theater was "the pride of the region." The Sholom Aleichem Library's Judaica collection contained 29,000 volumes. Six years later, another *Jewish Life* article excitedly described Birobidzhan's "wealth of fish ... valuable fur-bearing animals ... and fertile land." Factories were

busy, making excellent use of the region's "abundant forest resources." There were numerous schools, libraries, and museums promoting Jewish culture and the Yiddish language. "Far from having 'died,'" the article concluded, "the Jewish Autonomous Region shows continuing health and growing strength."<sup>80</sup>

By contrast, Harrison Salisbury, reporting on Birobidzhan in the *New York Times* after his visit there in 1954, stated that it had clearly "lost its significance as a Jewish centre a long time ago." He "could not see that the place had any special Jewish character." The head of the provincial government told Salisbury that Birobidzhan's Jews, "except for insignificant older elements," preferred to use Russian rather than Yiddish. The former Yiddish theater had been converted into a youth club. Birobidzhan's Jews never asked Salisbury any questions about "Jews abroad, Israel, Zionism or other matters of Jewish interest." Salisbury reported that Soviet officials told him that "this reflected a lack of interest on the part of Jews in such matters." The Manchester *Guardian* stated in 1953 that Birobidzhan had died during the 1930s "after a great deal of suffering among settlers in this inhospitable region."<sup>81</sup>

#### SUPPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET ANTISEMITISM

Howard Fast claimed in his 1990 memoir *Being Red* that leaders of the American CP's Jewish Section as early as 1949 were greatly alarmed by Soviet antisemitic policies, although they would not reveal this publicly. Fast's account of his conversations with Paul Novick and Chaim Suller, two of these leaders, about Soviet antisemitism demonstrates that he and others prominent in the CP allowed Soviet interests to override what they claimed were strongly held principles. Fast was raised in a Jewish family isolated in an overwhelmingly Irish and Italian Catholic New York City neighborhood. His most searing childhood experience was being repeatedly assaulted in the streets by "two, or three, or five" antisemitic toughs, who denounced him as a Christ-killer, "a kike, a sheeny." Fast described the antisemitism in his neighborhood as "maniacal." He viewed Israel's "fighting for its life" during the 1948 War of Independence as a great "exhibition of moral courage." Fast considered antisemitism "the meat of hate and murder, not of socialism."<sup>82</sup> But what was most important to him was that the Soviet Union, which he considered the world's leading progressive force, not be discredited.

According to Fast, Novick and Suller approached him in the spring of 1949 as he was about to depart for the Communist-inspired Paris Peace Congress and asked that he present on behalf of the CP's Jewish Section a formal charge of antisemitic practices against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Novick and Suller specifically noted to Fast "the virtual abolition of all Yiddish-language institutions [and] the closing of Yiddish-language papers," as well as the murders and disappearances of prominent Soviet

Jews, including highly decorated Red Army officers. At first a bewildered Fast pleaded that the charges must be false. But Fast was persuaded when Novick told him that he and Suller had "ample proof," and he agreed to present the charges to the Soviets in Paris.<sup>83</sup>

Fast was frustrated, however, when he detailed the charges to Alexander Fadeev, a writer who headed the Soviet delegation in Paris. Although Fast pressed Fadeev to respond to the charges, the Soviet insisted that "there is no anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union."<sup>84</sup> Fadeev explained that such charges had been manufactured as part of a vast "Zionist-Joint plot against socialism."<sup>85</sup> Incredibly, Fast became plagued with doubt. After all, he pondered, the Soviets had suffered an enormous death toll in beating back the Nazi invaders, and in so doing had saved the lives of many Jews. Fast now wondered: "Had I brought a valid accusation to Paris, or had I put my foot in my mouth?"<sup>86</sup> In 1991, Gedalia Sandler, who attended the 1949 Paris Peace Congress, recalled that Fast had declined the American delegation's request that he speak on the floor about the postwar "Jewish question."<sup>87</sup>

Fast was still confused in January 1953 when Jacob Auslander, who had been imprisoned as a result of his service with the Spanish Refugee Appeal, told him that the charges in the doctors' plot were fabricated. Fast could only respond that what Auslander claimed sounded "impossible," although he did not know what to think. He then described to Auslander his 1949 mission at the Paris Peace Congress, the first time he had disclosed it to anyone other than his wife. When a shocked Auslander asked why Fast had not written about his meeting with Fadeev, Fast replied, "Because the party asked me not to."<sup>88</sup>

Soviet interests remained paramount for Novick and Suller as well. When Fast informed them of Auslander's consternation that he had not made public his conversation with Fadeev, the two Jewish Section leaders, who had presented him with documented proof of the charges, replied that it was inadvisable to openly accuse the Soviet Union of antisemitism. The public should not be informed of anything that would damage the Soviet Union's stature as "a socialist country." As a parting slap, Chaim Suller accused Fast, a writer and not a genuine proletarian, of "looking for perfection," which he called "a romantic fault."<sup>89</sup>

Fast remained in the CP for several years after the Soviet leadership at the end of March 1953, following Stalin's death, officially repudiated the doctors' plot charges as false and arrested the prosecutor. When Fast resigned from the party in 1957, he told Paul Novick: "I have lied to myself and to all my principles for many years." He could not understand "how people of any integrity and character" could "continue to support a monstrous murder-machine that includes anti-Semitism as only one of its vices."<sup>90</sup>

During the last years of Stalin's reign, known as the Black Years, the American CP became a willing apologist for antisemitic conspiracy fantasies

derived from medieval Christian theology and Nazism. During this period, the world Communist movement established a precedent that guided the far left from the late 1960s onward by portraying Jews and Zionists as the Nazis' allies and collaborators. It adopted the far right's practice of using "Zionist" to mean "Jew," as the Black Panthers later did, applying the term to militant opponents of a Jewish state. The Communists accused "Zionists" of engaging in sinister plots to destroy the Soviet Union and the "people's democracies." They anticipated the later New Left's inversion of Jews and Nazis by accusing Zionists of intending to exterminate Arabs. The American CP never publicly questioned Soviet and satellite depictions of demonic Jews drawn from the Christian Gospels or medieval Christian folk beliefs. Nor did they challenge the Czechoslovak Communists for their Nazi-like references to Jews as insects and microbes. American Communists not only ignored Soviet bloc prosecutors' repeated characterizations of Jews as parasites obsessed with money, but also on occasion even invoked such stereotypes themselves. The American CP even defended the East Germans' Gestapo-like roundup of Jewish Holocaust survivors as "Zionist spies," a charge inspired by long-standing antisemitic belief in Jewish treachery.

The American CP as always embraced the new Soviet line, even though it involved an abrupt shift on Israel, the significance of antisemitism, and whether Jews constituted a people. But mounting evidence of Soviet persecution of Jews and Soviet bloc show trials suffused with antisemitism instilled doubts about the Soviet Union in many American Communists and helped prepare the way for the mass exodus from the party in 1956–1957.

## The Jewish Question Discarded

### *Far Left Hostility to Jews and Israel,* 1956–1973

When Khrushchev's February 1956 secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) denouncing Stalin's crimes became available in the United States in June, there were rumblings of dissatisfaction within the American CP over Soviet unwillingness to acknowledge the severe damage that had been inflicted on Jewish cultural institutions in the USSR. Khrushchev's secret speech made no mention of persecution of Jews under Stalin, the destruction of Yiddish culture, or the murder of Soviet Jewish writers and poets. Soviet hostility to Israel also distressed many CP members.

In 1956, Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin, concern about Soviet antisemitism, the Kremlin's strong backing of Egypt in the Suez War, and the Soviet invasion of Hungary precipitated the greatest crisis in the CP's history, resulting in the departure of an even larger proportion of the membership than after the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact. This massive departure permanently relegated the CP to the margins of the far left. A younger generation uninterested in antisemitism assumed control of the far left when a radical movement again emerged in the United States during the next decade.

In April 1956, the Communist Yiddish-language newspaper *Folksshtimme*, published in Warsaw, Poland, reported that the Soviet government had shut down Yiddish theater, presses, and newspapers and executed Jews prominent in literature and the theater. The Soviet Foreign Ministry's press chief Leonid Ilyichev denounced these claims as "slandereous."<sup>1</sup>

Many Communists and their fellow travelers continued to support the Kremlin position that there was no official Soviet antisemitism. Shortly after Americans learned of Khrushchev's secret speech, the *National Guardian* provided a platform for Ekaterina Furtseva, a member of the CPSU Central Committee and one of its eight secretaries, to deny "emphatically that there had ever been any suppression of Jewish culture or repression of the Jewish people" in the Soviet Union. She explained that when Jews became

too heavily concentrated in particular departments, the government shifted them to other “equally good” positions in the bureaucracy. Such transfers, a clear indication of government Jewish quotas, were “in accordance with Lenin’s principles on the national problem.”<sup>2</sup>

*Folksshtimme*’s disclosures about Soviet persecution of Jews greatly disturbed Joshua Kunitz, who had downplayed Soviet antisemitism in his 1953 *Monthly Review* articles. Revisiting the issue in the July 1956 *Monthly Review*, Kunitz expressed dismay that the revelations about Soviet suppression of Jewish culture and murder of Jewish writers had been “leaked to an obscure Yiddish paper in Warsaw instead of being emblazoned on the front pages of the Soviet papers.” He took sharp issue with Khrushchev’s claim to a French socialist delegation, reported in the *Jewish Daily Forward*, that “the Soviet Union restricted the number of Jews in professional positions to the relative proportion of Jews in the population.” Kunitz called this statement “truly frightening” and compared the Soviet quota to “the notorious *numerus clausus* used by the Tsars.” He concluded that the anti-Communist *Forward* had quoted Khrushchev accurately, because the Soviet premier “stubbornly refuses to discuss the Jewish question in the open.” Kunitz noted that all of the Soviet leaders displayed Khrushchev’s “lack of forthrightness in dealing with the Jews.”<sup>3</sup>

However, not long after Khrushchev’s speech, questions about Soviet Jewish policy were openly voiced within the CP. *Daily Worker* foreign editor Joseph Clark sharply criticized *Pravda* for deleting from an article by CP general secretary Eugene Dennis his charge that Stalin had killed “more than a score of Jewish cultural figures.” Clark asked for an explanation from the Soviet leadership “about the physical annihilation of the top Soviet writers and poets in the late 1940s.” *Morgen Freiheit*’s editors, while refusing to acknowledge that the Soviet regime was antisemitic, complained that under Stalin’s leadership Yiddish culture had been “liquidated.”<sup>4</sup>

The SWP noted that the Soviet leadership had refused to provide “a deeply troubled” CP membership an explanation about state antisemitism during Stalin’s reign, which persisted under his successors. The Trotskyist explanation for Soviet antisemitism resembled the Marxist analysis of Nazism: it largely emanated from above, as the ruling elite maneuvered to maintain control by deflecting the masses’ antagonism away from itself to a minority group. To consolidate its power, the Soviet bureaucracy had exploited a residual antisemitism among the masses to defame the Left Opposition, whose leaders – Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev – were of Jewish origin. The Soviet bureaucracy’s great Russian chauvinism reflected its conservative insularity. It feared Jews because their disproportionate representation in the intelligentsia positioned them to voice damaging criticism of bureaucratic privilege.

The *Militant* noted that the only official Kremlin comment on antisemitism advanced in the United States was Ekaterina Furtseva’s flat denial of its



existence in the *National Guardian*. Mocking Furtseva's claim that Soviet Jews were prominent in government and in cultural activities, the *Militant* commented that the *National Guardian* had not reported "whether any of Mrs. Furtseva's best friends were Jews." It quoted a letter by a *National Guardian* reader that compared its claims of contemporary Soviet Jews attaining success in the arts and sciences to a U.S. government official "refuting the persecution of the Negro people by pointing to Ralph Bunche, George Washington Carver, Cab Calloway, and Louis Armstrong." The *Militant* joined the mainstream and social democratic press in denouncing the Soviet government's use of quotas to restrict Jews' access to jobs, the stamping of the word "Jew" on internal passports, the publication of Jewish writers' original surnames in parentheses after their Russianized surnames, and Khrushchev's suppression of Jewish schools and the Yiddish press and theater.

Like the Communists in the early 1930s who assumed that Nazism was a transitory phenomenon that impending proletarian revolution would sweep away, the Trotskyists in 1956 expected that Soviet antisemitism would be short lived. Ignoring antisemitism's deep, centuries-old roots in Russian Orthodox and Central Asian Islamic theology, the Trotskyists assumed that it would soon vanish after the ruling "bureaucratic caste" that encouraged it was overthrown. The restoration of the "Soviet democracy" that they alleged had existed under Lenin would allow an innately progressive proletariat to quickly eradicate any prejudices carried over from czarist rule that persisted in backward segments of the population.<sup>5</sup>

#### COMMUNIST AMBIVALENCE OVER SUEZ, 1956

The CP was ambivalent about the Suez War, torn by pressure to support emerging anti-Western insurgencies in Africa and Asia and a lingering concern about reactionary tendencies in Egypt and the other Arab countries. In January 1953, the *Daily Worker* ran a lead front-page article that branded Egypt's ruler Mohammed Naguib a "fascist" who provided a haven for many of the 600 Nazi fugitives Arab governments were harboring. Naguib was selected as ruler by the colonels' group that had overthrown King Farouk the previous year. The article stated that Egypt had incorporated officers from Nazi Germany's armed forces into its army and navy and employed them to train paratroopers.<sup>6</sup> The *Daily Worker* also on occasion denounced as reactionary Naguib's successor, Gamal Abdel Nasser, a leader in the colonels' coup.

The *Daily Worker* reported that Naguib had surrounded himself with German Nazi military advisers, the most prominent of whom it claimed was former SS Obergruppenfuehrer Eichmann, architect of the system for transporting Jews to annihilation camps during the Holocaust. It quoted Eichmann's statement: "I will go to my grave laughing, for I have destroyed

5 million Jews.” The article noted that the Egyptian dictatorship had given important responsibilities to other former SS leaders: Voss, formerly in charge of the Skoda munitions works during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, advised it on technical matters, and Tiefenbacher trained Cairo’s police. Von Stuhler, Hitler’s ambassador to Fascist Spain, directed the Nazis’ activities in Egypt. A German military mission headed by former Colonel Kriebel of the Wehrmacht’s general staff supervised the training of the Syrian army.<sup>7</sup>

In March 1955, *Jewish Life* condemned Nasser’s Egypt for executing two Jewish youths accused of “sabotage and espionage” on behalf of Israel. Another defendant allegedly committed suicide in prison, whereas six others were sentenced to prison for seven years to life. *Jewish Life* called the hangings “savage judicial murder” by a “reactionary regime,” carried out “to inflame the Egyptian people against Israel” as a means of strengthening its dictatorial control. *Jewish Life* praised the “immense wave of protest” from around the world against the death sentences. It approvingly quoted American civil libertarian Roger Baldwin, chair of the International League for the Rights of Man, who had carefully studied the case in Cairo and concluded that none of the defendants had been involved in any serious acts of espionage or sabotage. He warned that Egypt would “suffer in world opinion for this vindictive judgment.”<sup>8</sup>

Shortly afterward, however, the CP praised the April 1955 Bandung Conference, attended by representatives of twenty-nine Asian and African nations, despite its exclusion of Israel. *Jewish Life*, the CP organ for Jewish affairs, did express disappointment that Israel, “an Asian-African country,” had not been invited. But its editorial disputed charges that the conference was anti-Israel advanced by American Jewish organizations and the non-Communist Yiddish and English-language Jewish press.

*Jewish Life* was hopeful that the emerging Afro-Asian bloc would welcome Israel as a member and assist in persuading the Arab nations to accord recognition. It considered the conference’s proposal to implement UN resolutions on Palestine “an important advance” in this direction, because it implied support for partition. *Jewish Life* also interpreted the conference statement endorsing “the peaceful settlement of the Palestine question” as a rebuke to the Arab leaders, who had often threatened to destroy Israel militarily. It suggested, moreover, that Communist China, which had been active in organizing the conference, would influence emerging Asian and African nations to assume a friendlier posture toward Israel. By inviting Israeli officials to visit and discuss trade possibilities between the two countries, the Communist Chinese implicitly repudiated Arab threats to eradicate Israel by armed force and the Arab economic boycott.<sup>9</sup>

In February 1956, the CP published a pamphlet by A. B. Magil that strongly backed Israel’s right to exist but blamed “foreign imperialism,” rather than the Arabs, for the Arab-Israeli conflict. Magil claimed that

before the British gained control of Palestine under the League of Nations mandate, Jews had “lived there as well as in other Middle Eastern countries for centuries without serious friction” with Arabs. The British “invented” the Arab-Jewish conflict, stirring up ethnoreligious hatred as part of their divide-and-conquer strategy to maintain control of Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>10</sup>

Without commenting on the fierce Arab opposition to partition, Magil denounced both Britain and the United States for attempting to sabotage the creation of a Jewish state, both diplomatically and militarily. Britain flatly opposed partition, and the U.S. State Department “exerted the strongest possible pressure” on the leaders of the Yishuv “to persuade them not to proclaim a state.” Pressure from the oil corporations and the Pentagon caused the Truman administration to waver on partition at a critical moment.<sup>11</sup>

After the UN General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state, Britain tried to destroy Israel, while the United States remained indifferent as it faced annihilation by invading Arab armies. Britain “instigated, armed, and financed” the Arab states’ war against Israel. The United States “sought to hamstring” Israel by imposing an arms embargo. Only the Soviet Union, “whose initiative had made possible” passage of the UN partition resolution, and its allies stood firmly by Israel’s side during its “liberation struggle of 1948–49.” Communist Czechoslovakia “came to Israel’s rescue by providing the weapons of victory.”<sup>12</sup>

Magil expressed concern that although Israel had aligned with the West, to his chagrin, Britain remained determined to dismember it. He cited a November 1955 *New York Times* interview with David Ben-Gurion, in which the Israeli prime minister charged that Britain wanted Israel to cede the Negev – more than half its territory – to provide “a large secure base for the British Middle East forces.”<sup>13</sup>

Unlike the American far left in 1967 and after, the CP during the 1956 Suez War reiterated that Israel had a right to exist and to engage in reprisal raids against Arab fedayeen, who had repeatedly attacked its population from bases in Egypt. (This was why Israel had joined the British and French attack on Egypt.) The *Daily Worker* called the fedayeen “marauders.” A. B. Magil in the *Daily Worker* recalled the Egyptian aerial bombardment of defenseless Jewish civilians during the 1948 War of Independence, and the “heroism of the people of Israel who, aided by Czechoslovak arms, hurled back the armies of five Arab states.” The *Daily Worker* editors condemned the Arab states’ refusal to recognize Israel, their vow to exterminate the Jewish state, their border raids against it, and Egypt’s barring of Israeli ships from the Suez Canal.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time the CP justified Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal and condemned the British and French attack. It considered the Nasser government a progressive anticolonialist force. The CP acknowledged that Israel had “legitimate grievances” against Egypt but claimed this

did not justify "its aggression" with Britain and France. It urged the Big Four (the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France) to persuade the Arab countries to negotiate with Israel, hoping that this would result in recognition of the Jewish state and Israeli access to the Suez Canal.<sup>15</sup>

The Suez conflict caused friction within the CP, with some members openly criticizing *Daily Worker* editors as too favorable to Israel. On November 22, 1956, the *Daily Worker* ran a long opinion piece by Edward Strong that sharply criticized three of its editorials published in the early days of the war for deviating "seriously from a Marxist-Leninist analysis with respect to the underlying causes for Arab-Israeli differences." He equated the *Daily Worker's* position with that of Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion: "Egyptian and Arab provocations led Israel to launch the war." Strong conceded that "Egypt and other Arab nations have conducted unjustified raids against Israel" but claimed that Israel had launched "her own share" of such raids. The *Daily Worker's* use of the term "marauders" for fedayeen was "chauvinist." Strong argued that Communists should support Egypt and the Arabs because they were "anti-imperialist" and had negotiated arms agreements with the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, whereas Israel was now aligned with the West. Nasser deserved credit for championing Arab unity and instilling in Egyptians pride in their Islamic cultural heritage.<sup>16</sup>

Few CP activists, however, were willing to publicly deny Israel's right to exist. Strong did not explicitly do so, calling only for Israel to embrace neutrality and the principles of the Bandung Conference (from which it had been excluded). Alice Jerome, wife of Victor Jerome, longtime editor of the CP theoretical journals *Political Affairs* and *The Communist*, praised the "eloquent" and "courageous" United Nations (UN) delegates from Syria and Jordan, who "so justly" condemned Israel for "letting itself be used by the imperialists" (Britain and France). She remarked: "It's great to hear these colonial Arab voices in the great hall of the UN, and the applause they receive." Alice Jerome derided Israel's UN delegate Abba Eban for talking "for half an hour in his standard Oxford accent on his country's victimization."<sup>17</sup>

Alice Jerome informed her husband, who was imprisoned at the time with other party leaders for violation of the Smith Act, that she had engaged in "quite an argument over Israel" with *Morgen Freiheit* editor Paul Novick, who "feels so sympathetic with her [Israel's] national aspirations." Like the *Daily Worker* editors and many in the British Labour Party, Novick drew a sharp distinction between the role of Israel, which he believed had a right to respond to Egyptian and fedayeen aggression, and that of Britain and France. Alice Jerome herself declared that she supported Israel's "national survival and integrity." She claimed, however, that Israel's national interest lay in alliance with "the colonial world" rather than with "the imperialists."<sup>18</sup>

Victor Jerome from his penitentiary cell claimed Israel had served as "a pawn to this re-colonizing scheme of two Western powers." Jerome was

concerned that Israel's Sinai campaign would "prove a grievous setback" to its efforts to achieve "a *modus vivendi* with the surrounding Arab states," which he considered "vital" to Israel's "very existence."<sup>19</sup>

During the Suez War, the CP balked at endorsing the charges of the major American Jewish organizations that Egypt was engaged in the mass persecution of its Jewish population. A. B. Magil in the *Daily Worker* conceded only that Egypt might have "adopted measures" against some Jewish citizens, especially Zionists. Magil did assert that "any discriminating measures against Jews in Egypt under whatever pretext deserve to be condemned" as "racist." But he proceeded to condemn Israel in stronger terms, claiming that Nasser's record on the treatment of Jews prior to the war was better than Ben-Gurion's treatment of Arabs.<sup>20</sup>

About a year after the Suez conflict ended, the Ohio CP's State Board issued a statement that echoed the *Daily Worker's* editorial position on the war. The Ohio CP claimed that under Ben-Gurion Israel had become "an instrument of imperialism" and condemned it for joining Britain and France in "an aggressive war against Egypt." But the Ohio Communists maintained that it was also "necessary to consider sympathetically [Israel's] many grievances." These included Egypt's blockading the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping and fedayeen attacks on Israel from Egyptian territory. The Ohio CP declared that "Israel's efforts to rectify these grievances merit the support of all progressive forces."<sup>21</sup>

*Monthly Review*, the nation's leading Marxist journal during the 1950s, published articles sympathetic to Israel around the time of the Suez War. Leo Huberman, one of the journal's two editors, justified Israel's Sinai campaign, arguing that Egypt had been converting the peninsula "into a springboard for a full-scale military attack." He emphasized Israel's vulnerability to invasion on several fronts by vastly better-equipped Arab armies. Huberman noted that fedayeen attacks launched from Egypt "had never stopped since the state of Israel was born." He quoted Cairo Radio's declaration to Israel in August 1955: "The day of your extermination draws near." With a large-scale Arab invasion imminent, Huberman wrote: "For Israel, the only question now was whether the battleground was to be in the desert or, as Nasser's radio had boasted, in the heart of Israel." Israel therefore had no choice but to strike at Egypt. Shortly after the Suez War, *Monthly Review* also published the contrasting views of K. B. Thakore, an Indian hostile to Israel, and Gilles Martinet, a French left-wing socialist who supported the Jewish state.<sup>22</sup>

#### CONFLICT OVER SOVIET ANTISEMITISM WITHIN THE CP

In October 1956, several of the CP's leading authorities on Jewish affairs, joined by other "progressive" Jewish labor and community activists, sent a memorandum to N. A. Bulganin, chairman of the Council of Soviet

Ministers, and Soviet president K. Y. Voroshilov, voicing deep concern about manifestations of antisemitism in the Soviet Union. The *Daily Worker* published the memorandum. Signers included Morris Schappes, Paul Novick, Louis Harap, and Sam Pevzner. The memorandum complained that the Soviet government had made “no authoritative statement on the disappearance of Jewish cultural and communal institutions or on the execution and jailing of so many Jewish leaders.” It expressed the signers’ “anxiety in respect to the reconstruction of Jewish communal and cultural life” in the Soviet Union. The signers stated their strong dissatisfaction with Ekaterina Furtseva’s remarks in the *National Guardian* denying the existence of Soviet antisemitism: “We are greatly concerned that such a prominent leader is not even aware of the undeniable facts.” The memorandum sharply criticized the new edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* for sharply reducing the coverage of Jews, as compared to the 1932 edition: “Great figures in Soviet Jewish life as well as world-renowned Yiddish writers ... have disappeared from all volumes of the new edition ... published so far.” It noted that the new edition of the *Encyclopedia* did not even refer to the Jews as a people.<sup>23</sup>

The CP itself nonetheless remained optimistic about the prospects for a revitalization of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union. In a March 1957 resolution on “Jews of the USSR,” the New York State CP convention denounced charges of official Soviet antisemitism as “slander.” It acknowledged that many Soviet Jewish writers and artists had been “unjustly and secretly executed” and the Yiddish press and theater disbanded. The convention did not accept the Soviets’ argument that Jewish acculturation and assimilation rendered the restoration of Soviet Jewish cultural life and institutions unnecessary. But the resolution concluded by expressing faith that the Soviets would abandon Stalin’s “Great Russian chauvinism” and support secular Jewish culture.<sup>24</sup>

Later that year the Ohio CP’s State Board acknowledged that Stalin’s “liquidation of Jewish culture” came “as a great shock to all friends of socialism,” but it refused to concede the existence of official Soviet antisemitism. The Ohio CP claimed that Jews were prominent in the upper echelons of Soviet government and were well represented on Soviet university faculties and in the sciences. Like the New York CP, the Ohio Communists maintained that the Soviet government intended to restore Soviet Jewish culture.<sup>25</sup>

Soviet antisemitism was a primary reason for the departure from the CP of a sizeable proportion of its membership, including party leaders and *Daily Worker* staff. Johnny Gates, *Daily Worker* editor-in-chief until he left the CP in 1957, recorded in his 1958 autobiography his anger over the Soviet government’s suppression of Yiddish culture and murder of Soviet Jewish writers. He denounced its refusal to support the resuscitation of Yiddish literature, theater, and education. Rejecting as “spurious” the Kremlin’s explanation that there was no reason to offer support because Soviet Jews

avored assimilation, Gates pointed out that “the Jewish people were never consulted on the matter.” Its failure to vigorously protest Soviet Jewish policy revealed the American CP’s “moral and political bankruptcy.” Gates concluded: “For centuries the Jewish question has been the acid test of the ... humanity of societies ... the failure on this score by the Soviet Union ... is the most shameful blot on its record.”<sup>26</sup>

Novelist Howard Fast, the only writer in the CP with a significant readership among the American public, left the party in 1957 largely for the same reasons. That year he wrote: “The whole Soviet attitude on the Jewish question is compounded of ignorance ... and latent anti-Semitism.” Fast noted: “To this date, no explanation of the utter destruction of Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union has been forthcoming, much less some comprehensible account of why the cream of Jewish writers and critics were put to death.” He characterized the Soviet refusal to grant exit visas to Jews as “the mass imprisonment of a people.”<sup>27</sup>

The Soviets responded to Fast’s resignation from the CP with a blistering attack in their leading literary newspaper, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, that was filled with antisemitic invective. *Literaturnaya Gazeta* called him a “swindler,” an “opportunist,” a “savage,” and a “deserter,” terms that drew on hoary antisemitic stereotypes of Jewish deceit, lack of principle, and disloyalty. It denounced him as a “militant Zionist” and apologist for Israel’s “transgressions.” The diatribe covered more than one page of the four-page newspaper.<sup>28</sup>

Boris Polevey, a prominent Soviet writer of Jewish origin and longtime friend of Fast, wrote to him in June 1957 to mock his claims of Soviet antisemitism. Polevey maintained that the discredited “scoundrel” Levria Beria bore sole responsibility for any episodes of antisemitism in the Soviet Union. Beria had been a leading member of the Politburo and head of the secret police before being purged in June 1953 during the struggle for power after Stalin’s death, and imprisoned. His execution was announced in December 1953. According to Polevey, the treacherous Beria had attempted to revive antisemitism to undermine Soviet influence in the world. Polevey maintained, however, that the “monster’s” victims included persons of many nationalities, of whom Russians were the most numerous. Beria had fabricated the charges against the accused doctors, but they had been rehabilitated. Since the Soviet government had disposed of Beria and “his gang,” antisemitism was no longer an issue. Polevey also ridiculed Fast’s support for Israel, denouncing its “aggression against Egypt.”<sup>29</sup>

The CP hard-liners, led by chairman William Z. Foster, used Fast’s denunciation of the Kremlin’s antagonism toward Israel to gain leverage over the faction led by Gates, Joseph Clark, and *Daily Worker* managing editor Alan Max, who were raising questions about Soviet policy toward Jews. After Fast condemned Moscow’s anti-Zionist campaign and its persecution of Jews, Foster’s “Muscovite” group, which gained full control of a considerably



shrunk CP in 1957, accused the Gates faction of “Jewish bourgeois nationalism” for publicizing Fast’s views and “treating him gently rather than severely in *Daily Worker* columns.” The *New York Times* reported that African Americans prominent in the CP, most notably former New York City councilman Benjamin Davis, Jr., were emphasizing the “Jewish issue” to discredit the Gates faction as “deviationist,” that is, failing to adhere to the Soviet position. Davis and the other African American hard-liners were especially critical of what they considered “the inadequate support” the *Daily Worker* gave Egypt in the “Egyptian-Israeli dispute.”<sup>30</sup>

In the fall of 1957, Howard Fast and *Morgen Freiheit* editor Paul Novick engaged in an angry exchange over Fast’s open charges of Soviet antisemitism. Fast asked Novick why he was not bothered that neither of them had “even whispered” when the Soviets murdered the Yiddish novelist David Bergelson: “Have you no heart? No reason? No conscience?”<sup>31</sup> Bergelson had been the first Soviet writer to establish permanent residence in Birobidzhan. He had toured the Soviet Union in 1937, promoting Jewish emigration to the new “Jewish National Home.”<sup>32</sup> Fast told Novick he could no longer tolerate Jewish Communists who continued to support “the bloody killers in the Kremlin.” He emphasized that Soviet persecution of Jews had not ended with Stalin’s death. Noting that Joseph Clark, who resigned from the CP in 1956, had told him that Khrushchev “was the bloodiest hangman of them all,” Fast concluded: “Yet you support him. God help you.”<sup>33</sup>

Novick accused Fast of “hysterics” and expressed optimism about the prospects for reviving Jewish culture in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev. *Morgen Freiheit* was working “ceaselessly for the proper rehabilitation” of Bergelson and “the other martyred Jewish writers.” It would struggle against what Novick referred to as “the remnants” of antisemitism in the Soviet Union, which he associated with the Nazi wartime occupation and the late Stalin period. In a parting shot, Novick reminded Fast that as a Stalin Prize winner he could have exerted influence with the Soviet leadership on behalf of the persecuted Jewish writers but had chosen not to do so.<sup>34</sup>

The events of 1956 – Khrushchev’s secret speech, the Suez War, and the Soviet invasion of Hungary – along with anger over Soviet bloc antisemitism, disillusioned much of the CP membership, resulting in mass resignations that left the party “a shambles.” After 1956, it was never more than a negligible presence on the American Left. By 1959, CP membership was about 4 percent of what it had been in 1945, and the party was almost bankrupt. The *Daily Worker* ceased publication in January 1958, after thirty-four years, and the CP shut down its schools. *Jewish Life* was terminated in 1957, although several of its editors joined in forming a new left-wing Jewish magazine, *Jewish Currents*, that was not affiliated with the CP. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had several years before expelled the CP-dominated trade unions, and even many of their officials had left the party. The CP never again wielded any significant influence in the labor

movement. The Progressive Party disbanded after a disastrous presidential campaign in 1952, and the American Labor Party dissolved in 1956.<sup>35</sup>

#### PERSISTENT TROTSKYIST HOSTILITY TO ISRAEL

The Trotskyists, unlike the Communists, remained fiercely hostile toward Israel during the Suez War, casting it as Western imperialism's agent in the Middle East, "denounced [as such] throughout the Moslem world." The SWP reiterated its long-standing position that only socialist revolution could end the persecution of Jews. Israel was a "reactionary utopia" fated to collapse as world capitalism entered its "death agony." The Trotskyists predicted that newly mobilized Arab masses would push emerging nationalist movements in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan toward revolutionary socialism, sweeping aside the "bourgeois" Nasser and the Ba'athists. Israel's Jews (at least the "toilers" among them) would retain their homes in the forthcoming Arab-dominated revolutionary socialist Palestine if they joined the Arabs' anti-imperialist struggle.<sup>36</sup>

For the moment, the Trotskyists considered Nasser progressive, a rallying point for anticolonial forces in Asia and Africa. Egypt had defied U.S. "imperialism" by procuring arms from Communist Czechoslovakia in 1955. Nasser was a "typical Bonapartist," balancing himself "between the nationalist masses and imperialism, constantly shifting his weight from one side to the other." Frustrated with such equivocation, the Egyptian masses were beginning to express their "anti-imperialist aspirations." The SWP claimed that Israel, by contrast, was fully wedded to Western imperialism.<sup>37</sup>

The SWP staunchly defended Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal and condemned the British-French-Israeli offensive against Egypt as a "treacherous attack" by "gangsters." Anticipating the 1960s far left, the SWP National Committee identified democratic Israel, Britain, and France with the Axis, calling their offensive a "blitzkrieg" of the sort "perfected by the German and Japanese imperialists."<sup>38</sup>

SWP presidential candidate Farrell Dobbs alleged that Israel had joined the British-French offensive to conquer Egyptian territory in the Sinai Peninsula, primarily for the oil deposits. He entirely ignored years of Arab guerilla attacks on Israeli civilians, launched from bases in Egypt and the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip; Nasser's repeated threats to obliterate Israel; Egypt's refusal to allow Israeli ships to pass through the Suez Canal; and its closing of the Straits of Tiran and blockade of Israel's southern port of Eilat.<sup>39</sup>

Dan Roberts, an SWP spokesperson on the Middle East, in a letter that SWP national secretary Farrell Dobbs circulated to all members and alternates on the party's National Executive Committee, dismissed Zionist concerns about Arab persecution of Jews in North Africa as "demagogic hullabaloo." Roberts charged that the "Zionists" advanced this "outrageous

slander” against “the Arab national struggle” in hopes of encouraging North Africa’s Sephardic Jews to immigrate to Israel.<sup>40</sup>

The other American Trotskyist group, the Independent Socialist League (ISL), was also stridently anti-Israel during the Suez War. The Workers Party (WP), realizing that its small membership did not justify its claim to be a party, had renamed itself the Independent Socialist League in 1949. The ISL adhered less rigidly to Trotsky’s teachings than the SWP. It maintained the WP’s “Third Camp” position, denouncing both the West and the “bureaucratic collectivist” Soviet Union as imperialist. By contrast, the SWP insisted that the Soviet Union remained a “workers’ state,” albeit a “degenerate” one, and was not imperialist.

The ISL’s view of the Suez War did not differ appreciably from the SWP’s. Max Shachtman, the ISL’s leader, emphatically declared: “We Independent Socialists are unreservedly on the side of Egypt.”<sup>41</sup> The ISL newspaper *Labor Action* called the British-French-Israeli offensive against Egypt “as gross an imperialist aggression against a small country as any in the history of colonialism.” Equating the offensive with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, *Labor Action* denounced it as a “crime” that would “live in infamy.” To be sure, *Labor Action* called Nasser’s Egypt an “oppressive dictatorship,” whose threats to destroy Israel and support of fedayeen attacks on Israeli territory had damaged its standing with other nations. But *Labor Action* found most fedayeen attacks justified, or at least understandable. It claimed that the majority were carried out by Palestinian Arabs “cruelly driven out or kept out of their native homes.” *Labor Action* insisted, moreover, that Israel deliberately provoked Egypt by escalating fighting along the border.<sup>42</sup>

*Labor Action* implied that Israel was a barbaric theocracy that harbored genocidal intentions toward the Arabs. It equated Israel’s treatment of the Arabs with the New England Puritans’ slaughter of the Indians, citing a statement it attributed to Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas: “First they fell on their knees and then they fell on the aborigines.”<sup>43</sup>

The ISL published two communications on the Suez War from its minuscule sister group in Israel, the “Third Force,” that compared Israel to the Nazis. *Labor Action* headlined the communications “An Honest Voice from Israel.” The “Third Force” defined itself as “a socialist anti-Zionist group which stresses Jewish-Arab unity.” It denounced Israel for provoking Arab hostility by forcing “hundreds of thousands of people from their native country” and “oppress[ing]” and “humiliat[ing]” those who remained. Israeli Jews had become not just “shock troops” for Western imperialism but the new Nazis: “Victims of Hitler emerge as his heirs.” Israel was not just “a tool in criminal imperialistic hands” but “a tool that *seeks* to be used by wicked hands.”<sup>44</sup>

The ISL’s youth group, the Young Socialist League (YSL), staged demonstrations in Chicago and New York against what it called “the imperialist outrage being perpetrated by Britain and France and their pawn Israel upon

Egypt.” YSL members picketed the British consulate in Chicago carrying signs marked “No Arms to Israel.” They distributed more than a thousand leaflets at the University of Chicago and Roosevelt University proclaiming that to support Egypt was to be on “the side of the peoples” against “imperialism.” The YSL’s newspaper *Challenge* boasted that its Chicago chapter was “the only organization [in the city] to publicly express itself in opposition to the imperialist assaults against both Egypt and Hungary.”<sup>45</sup>

#### THE AMERICAN FAR LEFT’S INVISIBILITY ON CAMPUS DURING THE SUEZ WAR

During the 1956 Suez War, unlike in 1948, the far left had almost no presence on campus. McCarthyism had severely hobbled the far left. The CP was in disarray, as a sizeable proportion of its membership was leaving or preparing to leave. The Trotskyists, a tiny splinter group, had almost no campus chapters. Nor did the Suez crisis elicit the fierce campus confrontations and riots between supporters and opponents of the British-French-Israeli offensive that occurred at British universities.

Although there were some on the campuses who cheered Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal as an assertion of Afro-Asian independence, most continued to view Israel as the progressive force in the Middle East. Symposia on the Suez War were held on major university campuses. Several speakers denounced Nasser as a fascist, noting his authoritarianism, determination to destroy Israel, and the protection he extended to Nazi war criminals, many of whom occupied high Egyptian government and military positions.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, during the Sinai campaign, the Israeli army revealed that captured Egyptian officers carried with them as “standard equipment” a paperback Arabic translation of Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*.<sup>47</sup> Arab students and a few Arab faculty members sometimes defended Egypt’s position in these symposia, but the campus alliance between Arab student organizations and the far left, which was highly significant after 1967, had yet to be forged.

#### ISAAC DEUTSCHER AND THE IMPACT OF THE HOLOCAUST

Isaac Deutscher (1907–1967), a leading revolutionary Marxist scholar and a Polish Jew, who had been prominent in the European Trotskyist movement during the 1930s, reassessed his long-standing hostility to Zionism after the Holocaust. After the Six-Day War in 1967, however, he reverted to his earlier hard-line anti-Zionism. Deutscher published widely read biographies of Josef Stalin and Leon Trotsky (in three volumes) and wrote prolifically about Soviet affairs. Many of his articles were published in mainstream newspapers and magazines. Deutscher was expelled from the Polish CP in 1932 for “spreading panic about Nazism” and became involved with

Trotskyism before assuming a more independent Marxist position. He left Poland for Britain in April 1939.<sup>48</sup>

The Holocaust had a major personal impact on Deutscher, whose family of origin was Hasidic. His parents, brother, and sister were murdered in Auschwitz. The only member of his immediate family who survived was a half-sister who had immigrated to Palestine before World War II.<sup>49</sup> Having joined the Polish army in Scotland in 1940, Deutscher spent most of his wartime military life “in punitive camps as a ‘dangerous and subversive element’” – the consequence of “his unending protests against the antisemitism rampant in that army.”<sup>50</sup>

In 1954 Deutscher confessed in the American magazine *The Reporter* that his earlier ardent anti-Zionism had been based “on a confidence in the European labor movement, or more broadly, in European society and civilization, which that society and civilization have not justified.” Deutscher now saw “the Jewish state [Israel] ... [as] an historic necessity,” in the short term. He confessed that “if, instead of arguing against Zionism in the 1920s and 1930s I had urged European Jews to go to Palestine, I might have helped to save some of their lives that were later extinguished in Hitler’s gas chambers.”<sup>51</sup>

In the same essay, Deutscher sympathized with Israelis who claimed that the “‘civilized world’” had no “moral ground to stand on when it ... sermonize[d] or threaten[ed] Israel for any real or imagined breaches of international commitments.” After all, the nations condemning Israel were indifferent to European Jewry’s plight during the Holocaust and shared responsibility for its fate.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, as a Marxist internationalist, Deutscher saw Jewish nationalism as only a temporary expedient. In his 1958 essay “The Non-Jewish Jew,” he celebrated universalism and dismissed the nation-state as an anachronism. Deutscher’s essay focused on six “non-Jewish Jews” whom he identified as “great revolutionaries of modern thought”: Baruch Spinoza, Heinrich Heine, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. Each of these “found Jewry too narrow, too archaic, and too constricting” and explored “beyond its boundaries.” Shaped by the Jewish tradition, the non-Jewish Jew’s marginality in a Christian-dominated world exposed him or her to a wide range of cultural influences, providing insights unavailable to gentiles. Deutscher hoped that Jews would become acquainted with the “moral and political heritage” of his six non-Jewish Jews: “The message of universal human emancipation.”<sup>53</sup>

Although Deutscher was non-Zionist, he did acknowledge the failure of his non-Jewish Jews to grasp the depth of antisemitism and its implications. Deutscher credited only Heine among his six thinkers with having “the premonition of the Jewish tragedy” to come. He noted Trotsky’s shock over Stalin’s use of “anti-semitic innuendo” against him and Soviet Communist Party cells’ “vicious allusions to his Jewishness.” But Deutscher nonetheless

maintained that Trotsky's belief "in the ultimate solidarity of mankind" was justified.<sup>54</sup>

#### THE COLLAPSE OF BIROBIDZHAN

In 1958, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, in an interview with the Paris newspaper *Figaro*, finally admitted that Birobidzhan had been a failure, but he blamed the Jews for the outcome, in blatantly antisemitic terms. Irving Howe stated in the social democratic journal *Dissent* that the *Figaro* interview revealed Khrushchev to be "a vulgar anti-Semite." Under the headline "Les Juifs ne Savent Pas S'Organiser En Collectivités" ("The Jews Do Not Know How to Organize Themselves Collectively"), Khrushchev claimed that the Soviet Union, the first society ever to assist the Jews "as a people," had been exceedingly generous to them. It had consigned Birobidzhan to the Jews, which was a land as fertile as any, with a temperate climate, abundant mineral resources, and rivers full of fish. And yet, Khrushchev admitted, very few Jews who migrated to Birobidzhan had remained there.<sup>55</sup>

Khrushchev ascribed Birobidzhan's failure to Jews' excessive individualism and intellectualism. Because of these peculiar cultural characteristics, he pontificated, Jews had never cohered as a people either politically or culturally. They had always preferred to live dispersed. The Soviet premier claimed that Jews just did not like group work or discipline. This had been the case for "tens of centuries." Disliking collective work, the Jews had shunned the construction and metallurgical trades, which were essential to building a community in eastern Siberia. Intellectual by nature, the Jews' interests were too far ranging. They needed to discuss everything in depth and never considered themselves sufficiently educated. Jews held contradictory opinions and could never forge a consensus. That was Khrushchev's answer as to why there were no Hebrew schools in Birobidzhan.<sup>56</sup>

The CP, with most of the Gates faction departed, did not criticize Khrushchev for his antisemitic explanation for Birobidzhan's failure. Neither the leadership nor the party's weekend newspaper *The Worker*, which had replaced the defunct *Daily Worker*, made any comment. The Yiddish *Morgen Freiheit*, however, did challenge Khrushchev's statement and asserted that the Soviet government had not taken sufficient action to acknowledge and remedy "the injustices inflicted on the Jewish people during the last years of the Stalin regime." Khrushchev's "regrettable interview" revealed that Soviet government antisemitism remained a problem. *Morgen Freiheit* was particularly concerned that anti-Communists could use Khrushchev's antisemitic slurs to tarnish the Soviet Union's image in the West. The *Militant*, in an editorial entitled "Khrushchev's Anti-Semitism," denounced the Soviet premier's comments as "outrageous" and "reactionary" and noted that he had not mentioned the damage Stalin's purges had inflicted on Birobidzhan.<sup>57</sup>

Khrushchev branded Israel a failure for reasons similar to those he gave for Birobidzhan. He claimed the Soviets had received numerous letters from Jewish immigrants to Israel expressing their “sadness” there. Khrushchev attributed this to the inability of Jews coming from many different parts of the world to form a cohesive society, implying again that they were not a legitimate nationality. Israel was also foundering, he stated, because of a lack of housing and Jews’ unfamiliarity with agriculture, a result of their peculiar occupational preferences. Khrushchev maintained that Jews could not live together in Israel, much less forge a viable nation, when all they had in common was a sense of returning to the country of the “ancestors of their ancestors.”<sup>58</sup>

By the late 1950s, Birobidzhan’s Jewish character had been almost entirely erased. In 1959, fewer than 15,000 Jews remained among a population of 163,000—less than 9 percent. By 1970, the proportion of Jews in Birobidzhan’s population had dropped to 7 percent (11,452 persons). The only surviving Yiddish-language newspaper published in the Soviet Union appeared in Birobidzhan three days a week, but it was almost devoid of Jewish content. Not a single class was taught in the Yiddish language in any of Birobidzhan’s schools. The regional museum had no exhibits on Jewish culture and did not mention the Jewish contribution to founding Birobidzhan.<sup>59</sup>

#### SOVIET ANTISEMITISM: CP DENIAL, NEW LEFT DISINTEREST

Although the Soviet destruction of Yiddish culture and murder of prominent Jewish writers caused severe distress among many Communists and caused a considerable number to leave the party, the youth who dominated the far left of the 1960s were never much concerned about the oppression of Soviet Jews. They did not call for the resuscitation of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union or press the Kremlin to allow Soviet Jews to emigrate. The moribund CP continued to insist that Soviet antisemitism was a myth.

In 1962 the CP published a pamphlet by Herbert Aptheker, editor of its theoretical journal *Political Affairs*, which denounced as fraudulent charges of pervasive Soviet antisemitism by such leading American Jewish organizations as the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and Workmen’s Circle, the New York *Herald Tribune* and New York *Post*, and New York’s U.S. senators Jacob Javits and Kenneth Keating. Repeating the CP’s arguments of the late 1940s and early 1950s, Aptheker maintained that the Soviet government, by making antisemitism illegal and waging a concerted campaign against it, had transformed the USSR into a “land ... singularly devoid” of antisemitism. By contrast, Aptheker claimed that the United States was plagued by a “deep and chronic anti-Semitism,” with widespread discrimination against Jews in employment, housing, and education.<sup>60</sup>

Aptheker rationalized the Soviet arrests and executions of Jews for “economic crimes against society”; denied that a quota system existed for



Jews in Soviet universities, despite a precipitous decline in Jewish enrollments since the mid-1930s; and defended a 1962 Soviet government ban on state bakeries' making matzoh as a legitimate part of an effort to separate church and state.

Jews had constituted a very large proportion of the Soviet authorities charged with "economic crimes" and more than 55 percent of persons sentenced to death for them. "Economic crimes" included gold and foreign currency speculation, black marketing, and embezzlement. These accusations drew on the traditional Marxist stereotype of the Jewish huckster. The Soviet press referred to the defendants' "vulpine passion for profit," drawing on the hoary antisemitic image of the predatory Jew. Britain's Manchester *Guardian* noted that the Soviets implicated the Jewish religion in the crimes and that even in cases in which non-Jews were charged, Jews were "specifically singled out as the major offenders both in newspaper reports and in the severity of their sentences." In the Ukraine, which staged many trials of speculators, readers in Lvov "had no rest from Jewish names in the paper." The *New York Times* disclosed that in a recent case the Soviet press, to emphasize the accused speculators' Jewishness, had claimed that "they had concealed illicitly obtained foreign banknotes in a Torah," and that a rabbi adjudicated disputes among them. The London *Observer* noted that the Communist Party newspaper in Lvov, Ukraine, forced the closing of the local synagogue by publishing a series of articles claiming it was a black market center.<sup>61</sup>

Aptheker insisted that the arrests, prosecutions, and executions had "nothing at all to do with anti-Semitism." In a society advancing toward Communism, "economic" crimes, whose perpetrators embraced a capitalist ethic, were "the worst forms of criminality." Severe punishment, including execution, was therefore fully appropriate in many cases.<sup>62</sup>

Aptheker saw nothing antisemitic in the Kremlin's denunciation of dissident (non-Jewish) Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poem "Babi Yar," which protested the Soviet government's failure to erect a memorial to the more than 33,000 Jews whom the Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators slaughtered in two days in September 1941 at the Babi Yar ravine. The city of Kiev used part of the ravine as a garbage dump, and its municipal council made plans in 1962 to build a sports center on the site.<sup>63</sup>

Soviet guides refused to take tourists visiting Kiev to Babi Yar, where the murdered Jews lay buried in a mass grave. British journalist Edward Crankshaw reported in December 1961 that the Kiev Intourist director (the Soviet official in charge of tourism in Kiev) told him that his request to visit Babi Yar was "both offensive and suspicious." When Crankshaw persisted in asking to go, the Intourist director responded: "I don't know where Babi Yar is, and anyway you can't go there. Why do you want to look at a lot of dead Jews? There are still far too many live ones in the streets."<sup>64</sup>

Aptheker echoed Premier Khrushchev's denunciation of Yevtushenko's "Babi Yar" for placing "undue stress on Jews." Parroting the Soviets' denial

that Nazi treatment of Jews differed qualitatively from that of Russians and Ukrainians, he declared that the poem “fail[ed] to note the many non-Jews slaughtered with the Jews in the Soviet Union.” Aptheker maintained that the Soviets were justified in criticizing “Babi Yar” for not mentioning the Soviet “struggle against anti-Semitism,” and for implying that antisemitism persisted in the Soviet Union. He noted that it was a sign of Soviet freedom that *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, organ of the Soviet Writers’ Union, published “Babi Yar,” but he neglected to mention that its editor-in-chief was fired as a result.<sup>65</sup>

The SWP, whose efforts to discredit Stalinism included periodic charges that antisemitism persisted in the Soviet Union, condemned the Soviet government’s suppression of Yiddish culture and challenged its handling of the economic crimes and Babi Yar controversies. In 1963, the *Militant* argued that the Soviet bureaucracy, like the czars, used antisemitism “to divert popular unrest” from itself “onto the Jews.” It noted that Stalin had made antisemitism a weapon in defeating the Left Opposition, whose leaders – Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev – “were Jewish.” Having become a “selfish nest of privileged officials” under Stalin, the party continued to find antisemitism useful in maintaining its power by persuading Soviet workers that the Jews, rather than the bureaucrats, were their exploiters.<sup>66</sup>

The *Militant* supported Yevtushenko’s call for criminal proceedings against Soviet officials who had devised and implemented antisemitic policies. It mocked Khrushchev’s claim, made in a speech in March 1963, that “there is no Jewish question in our country.” The *Militant* remarked that Soviet laws against antisemitism, which the American CP repeatedly cited to refute charges of Soviet persecution of Jews, seemed “to be of little more avail against ‘local custom’” than the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which had failed to protect African American civil rights in the Southern United States.<sup>67</sup>

The SWP charged that the Khrushchev regime had failed to denounce Stalin’s destruction of Soviet Yiddish cultural institutions during the late 1940s and early 1950s, noting that it had officially condemned other “negative features” of Stalin’s rule.<sup>68</sup> In June 1957, the *Militant* editorially endorsed *Morgen Freiheit*’s complaint that the Kremlin denied Soviet Jews the right to publish newspapers in Yiddish. Like *Morgen Freiheit*, the *Militant* wondered why Volga Germans and Crimean Tartars who had collaborated with the Nazi invaders during World War II were allowed to publish newspapers in their languages, while the Jews, “a people that demonstrated outstanding heroism” in the war against fascism, were not. A year later, the *Militant* again backed *Morgen Freiheit* when it protested against Premier Khrushchev’s attribution of the failure of Birobidzhan to Jews’ excessive individualism and intellectualism. The *Militant* called Khrushchev’s remarks “slurs upon the Jewish people” and condemned the CP’s newspaper *The Worker* for its silence. The *Militant* also took issue with Khrushchev’s claim

that the demise of Soviet Yiddish culture could be explained by Jews' desire to assimilate. It cited *Morgen Freiheit's* comment that the Soviet government designated Jews as a nationality on their passports and in statistical records.<sup>69</sup>

The SWP sharply differed from the CP on Yevtushenko's "Babi Yar," which the *Militant* called a "moving poem against anti-Semitism." The *Militant* noted that the poem had been omitted from Soviet editions of Yevtushenko's work. It approvingly quoted Yevtushenko's statement to Khrushchev: "We cannot go forward to Communism with such a heavy load as Judeophobia."<sup>70</sup>

In 1964, the SWP endorsed Bertrand Russell's open letter, signed by eleven other Western intellectuals, scientists, and writers, expressing grave concern about the Soviet government's persecution of Jews. Signers included physicists Linus Pauling and Max Born, philosopher Martin Buber, and playwright Arthur Miller. The *Militant* reported sympathetically the signers' distress that the Soviet government had not sufficiently encouraged the revival of Jewish cultural institutions suppressed under Stalin. It noted that the signers were deeply disturbed that Jews comprised 60 percent of those the Soviet government had executed for economic crimes, and that Jews were sent to prison for baking matzoh. The *Militant* also quoted the open letter's statement: "We are deeply troubled that there should be articles in Soviet journals ... using such terms as 'vermin,' 'blood suckers,' [and] 'parasites,' in combination with caricatures of Jews."<sup>71</sup>

The emerging New Left of the early and middle 1960s displayed very little sympathy for the plight of Soviet Jews. In 1965 former CP member William Mandel, longtime Soviet affairs commentator on the leftist Radio Pacifica system and a mentor for many young radicals, told the Berkeley *Barb* that he opposed a vigil against Soviet persecution of Jews that Jewish campus and community groups had recently staged at Oakland City Hall. Both Radio Pacifica and the *Barb* were left-wing countercultural media. Their audiences consisted largely of youth, especially students and other residents of university communities. Voicing a view increasingly common on the far left, Mandel declared that such protests against Soviet policy would be acceptable only "when [America's] hands are clean." At the time, according to Mandel, "the overriding moral questions" for Americans were "what are we doing to Vietnam and about Watts." Long after top *Daily Worker* editors had expressed open revulsion when confronted with revelations about Soviet antisemitism, Mandel insisted that radicals should not concern themselves with Soviet policies toward Jews.<sup>72</sup>

Although Mandel, who was prominent in Berkeley's countercultural left, had resigned from the CP in 1957, his naïveté about Soviet intentions appeared unshaken. In 1949, he gave one of the principal addresses praising Stalin at the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship's celebration of the dictator's seventieth birthday.<sup>73</sup> Mandel now claimed that there was

no official antisemitism in the Soviet Union, only isolated acts by individuals. He insisted that the Soviet government actively combated such acts. Americans who spoke out for Soviet Jewry, Mandel implied, were hypocrites: their vigils “only serve[d] to revive the cold war.” He asked the participants in the Oakland vigil for Soviet Jewry to explain what they were doing to protest against the Vietnam War and conditions in the Watts ghetto.<sup>74</sup> Of course, the Hitler regime had similarly claimed that Americans had no right to criticize Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany because minorities experienced discrimination in the United States.

#### THE SIX-DAY WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH: FROM DEBATE TO CONSENSUS ON THE FAR LEFT

The by then largely campus-based far left made Israel a major focus of antagonism in the years immediately following the Six-Day War. It gave only Vietnam more attention. Hostility toward Israel became a central defining issue for the far left, as the nation’s leading liberals staunchly backed the Jewish state. In its first issue after the outbreak of the Six-Day War, the *Militant* denounced two of the nation’s most prominent opponents of the Vietnam War, Eugene McCarthy and Wayne Morse, as “pro-Israel hawks.” It complained that numerous critics of the Vietnam War, including the well-known intellectuals and writers H. Stuart Hughes, Michael Harrington, Charles Silberman, Murray Kempton, Hannah Arendt, and Dwight Macdonald, had signed an appeal in the *New York Times* calling on the United States to break Egypt’s blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, which denied Israel access to the Indian Ocean. The *Militant* also condemned Martin Luther King, Jr., for signing what it called a “bellicose” statement backing Israel on the eve of the Six-Day War.<sup>75</sup>

The Six-Day War sparked a sudden interest within SDS in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which it had largely ignored since its founding in the early 1960s. Several resolutions on the subject were proposed for consideration by the SDS National Council (NC) at the organization’s 1967 convention, but there is no record that the NC adopted any of them. The proposals reflect a sharp antagonism toward Israel within SDS. The SDS newspaper *New Left Notes* published one that compared Arab hostility to Israel to black South African opposition to white majority rule. The proposed resolution employed a crude economic analysis implying that Israel’s motivation for occupying the Sinai was not concern for its security but a desire to extract its oil. It alleged that Israel wanted to control the Dead Sea because it was “one of the wealthiest mineral producing areas in Asia.”

The proposed resolution concluded that “a historically more appropriate place for the sons of Zion” would be “in the vicinities of Stuttgart, Liverpool, and Kiev.” Asking Jews to settle in Germany or the Ukraine among intensely antisemitic populations in places where millions of Jews had been

slaughtered reflected a lack of sensitivity about the Holocaust among New Leftists during the late 1960s. It ignored that half of Israel's Jewish population came from Arab lands. The resolution reflected a lack of awareness about Islamic antisemitism that pervaded the New Left.<sup>76</sup>

Another proposed resolution called on Israel to withdraw its forces to the 1949 truce boundaries and for Arab recognition of "the right of the Hebrew nation" to exist. But it also insisted on the right of Palestinian Arabs to return to land within the 1949 lines, which would make it impossible for Israel to survive as a Jewish state. The reference to the "Hebrew" (rather than Jewish) nation implied rejection of a state to which Jews from around the world could emigrate.<sup>77</sup>

A third resolution, submitted as a minority report of SDS's Foreign Affairs Workshop, condemned "the American role in the creation of Israel." It stated "that political Zionism and classical anti-Semitism are two sides of the same coin: both affirm that Jew and non-Jew should not live together."<sup>78</sup> By 1969 this would be the dominant position on the Arab-Israeli conflict within SDS.

*Monthly Review's* two editors, Paul M. Sweezy and Leo Huberman, in the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day War, strongly condemned Israel but expressed concern over the Arabs' annihilationist threats. Sweezy (born in 1910) repeated his long-standing opposition to the Jewish state. He considered Arab hostility to Israel "as natural as black hostility to the white settler states of Africa." Sweezy claimed that Israel and the "imperialist [Western] powers" saw their interests as "essentially parallel and often identical." He called on the Arabs to abandon threats to annihilate Israel, although like the *National Guardian* he considered them "largely empty." Ignoring Islamic antisemitism entirely, Sweezy called on the Arabs to ally with "the Israeli proletariat" in a "people's war" against "imperialism." He went so far as to suggest that Sephardic and Mizrahic Jews, refugees from brutal antisemitism and pogroms in Arab lands, often "ha[d] more in common with Arabs" than with Ashkenazic Jews.<sup>79</sup>

Leo Huberman (born in 1903) insisted that socialist doctrine did not support the Arabs' aim in the Six-Day War: "The liquidation of a state and the annihilation of its people." He quoted Fidel Castro's statement, published on September 22, 1967, that "true revolutionaries never threaten a whole country with extermination.... We have spoken out clearly against Israel's policy, but we don't deny her right to exist."

Huberman agreed with Sweezy, however, that Israel was "an outpost of imperialism" and implied that he opposed its remaining a Jewish state. He praised the "small number" of Israeli "left revolutionaries" not just for opposing Israel's "pro-imperialist policies" but because they "ha[d] always struggled ... for a bi-national state." Huberman claimed that "the Arabs have a just case against the Israelis on many counts." He even engaged in some conspiracy theorizing similar to the later New Left's, declaring that

“a good case can be made for the argument that the state of Israel was planted on Arab land by the imperialist nations in league with the Arab feudal monarchs precisely for the purpose of keeping themselves in power.”<sup>80</sup>

After Huberman's death in 1968, *Monthly Review's* anti-Israel bias became even more pronounced. In the summer of 1970, the journal devoted an entire issue to an article by Ahmad el Kodsý denouncing “the permanent aggression of Israeli colonialism” and celebrating Al Fatah's “armed struggle in occupied Palestine.” The emergence of the Palestinian guerilla movement marked the opening of a new “epoch of joint struggle” by the Arab people “against imperialism and Zionism.” *Monthly Review* featured another fiercely anti-Israel article by Arab contributor Mahmoud Hussein in its November 1971 issue. Hussein denounced the Jewish state as a genocidal “foreign conquering power” established in the “very heart of the Arab world.” Israel's intention was to “liquidate the Palestinian Arab people” and “stifle Arab impulses toward liberation and unity.”<sup>81</sup>

The other two leading American independent radical journals, *Ramparts*, which boasted by far the largest circulation of the three, and *New Politics*, maintained some balance on the Arab-Israeli conflict after the Six-Day War before gravitating to hard-line anti-Israel positions during the 1970s. *Ramparts's* contributors were a mix of Old Leftists, younger radicals, and left-liberals. During the period immediately after the war, *Ramparts* tilted toward Israel, but most of its contributors maintained that it was up to Israel to seek reconciliation with the Arabs. They assumed that if Israel took the initiative for peace, its conflict with the Arabs could be easily solved. Their proposals, however, were vague.

In an editorial published the month after the war, *Ramparts* declared that Israel had an “absolute right ... to exist and use international waterways” but called on it to “accept responsibility for the resettlement of the Arab refugees.” *Ramparts* did not indicate the number of Arab refugees it wanted resettled, or where they should be placed. The editorial conceded that Arabs had “terrorized Israeli border communities” but criticized Israel for discriminating against its Arab population.<sup>82</sup>

Paul Jacobs (born in 1918), a former Trotskyist, published an article largely sympathetic to Israel in the same issue. He justified Israel's 1956 Sinai campaign as a response to escalating fedayeen attacks and Egypt's prohibiting Israeli ships from entering the Gulf of Aqaba. Two years before, in his autobiography, Jacobs had strongly condemned Israel's role in the Suez War, noting that he had reacted to Israel's “utterly irresponsible” Sinai offensive with “indignation and horror.” Jacobs's abrupt reversal after the Six-Day War undoubtedly reflected a fear among many older radicals, who remembered the Holocaust, of the Arabs' annihilationist intentions.

Jacobs was almost alone on the post-Six-Day War far left in drawing attention to the antisemitism that pervaded the Arab world. He declared: “I first sensed how irrational the Arabs were about Israel during the Eichmann

trial" (in 1961). Jacobs noted that Arab radio stations had denounced the trial; one had urged that Eichmann be awarded a medal "for what he had done to the Jews." Jacobs emphasized the significance of Arab support for Nazi Germany during World War II, recalling that "as Rommel advanced further into Egypt, Arab jubilation rose."<sup>83</sup>

Like *Ramparts's* editors, Jacobs was vague in proposing a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although Jacobs had reassessed his earlier opposition to Israel's 1956 Sinai campaign, he argued that peace could never be achieved by military force. He criticized Israel for "refus[ing] to consider taking back any sizeable number of Arab refugees."<sup>84</sup>

Although Jacobs expressed sympathy for Israel in July 1967, he was willing in 1968 to run for the U.S. Senate in California as the candidate of the Peace and Freedom Party, whose ticket was headed by Eldridge Cleaver, the virulently anti-Israel Black Panther minister of information. Cleaver and his wife lived with Jacobs and his wife for a short time. During his senatorial campaign, the Los Angeles *Times* reported that although Jacobs tried to "combat anti-Semitism among Negroes," he used antisemitic rhetoric himself. It quoted Jacobs as "casually denounc[ing] former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Arthur Goldberg for 'riding up to the U.N. in his Jew-Canoe to defend the Vietnam War one day, only to criticize it the next.'" Jacobs explained to the *Times* that "the term 'Jew-Canoe' is used by some black nationalists to refer to a Cadillac."<sup>85</sup>

I. F. Stone, a longtime supporter of binationalism, contributed an article to the July 1967 *Ramparts* proposing the formation of "some kind of confederation" linking Israel to an Arab state populated by refugees, "perhaps also including Jordan." He insisted that Israel "cannot defeat the Arabs, She must join them." Stone claimed that a confederation would permanently end both the Arab refugee problem and Israel's vulnerability to attack. He was vague about the level of integration of the Jewish and Arab populations within such a confederation. Stone maintained that the Arabs were justified in "feel[ing] anti-Semitic Europe solved its Jewish problem at Arab expense."<sup>86</sup> As was typical on the far left, Stone implied that Israel's population was entirely of European origin and neglected the long-standing persecution of Jews in Arab lands.

Harvard faculty members Michael Walzer and Martin Peretz presented a strong defense of Israel in the July 1967 *Ramparts*. Both authors, however, were associated with the moderate left and were highly critical of the far left. Walzer and Peretz challenged point by point the standard far left arguments denying Israel's legitimacy. Israel was not a colonialist state like South Africa or Rhodesia; Jewish immigrants performed their own labor rather than exploiting the Arabs. Unlike the other *Ramparts* contributors, Walzer and Peretz pointed out that a majority of Israel's population was of Afro-Asian origin. Israel had integrated these Sephardic and Mizrahic Jews; the Arab nations had been unwilling to absorb displaced Palestinian Arabs.



The imperialists, far from creating Israel, had opposed its establishment: the British, the U.S. State Department and military establishment, and the Western oil corporations were against partition. Walzer and Peretz declared that Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist was a precondition for settling the refugee and boundary issues.<sup>87</sup>

In the September 1967 *Ramparts*, French journalist Jean Lacouture endorsed establishing a Palestinian state on Israel's eastern and western borders, which he implied would serve as a step toward binationalism. Lacouture worried about Israel developing a "cult of power" and "fantasies of racial superiority." He suggested that peace could be achieved by drawing Israel and the Palestinian state together in a confederation, but he provided no specifics about its political or economic structure or military forces. Lacouture hoped that the two "Semitic states" would forge friendly relations similar to those he imagined prevailed between India and Pakistan.<sup>88</sup>

That month, *Ramparts* managing editor Robert Scheer insisted that the "major responsibility" for peace "rest[ed] with Israel," which must "identify with the needs and aspirations of the Arabs." Scheer expressed the prevalent far left view that Israel should turn away from world Jewry and integrate itself into the Arab Middle East.<sup>89</sup> Those advancing this view assumed that antisemitism was no longer significant, in the Middle East or elsewhere.

By 1969 *Ramparts*'s editors had no problem publishing Michael Lerner's blatantly antisemitic review of anti-Zionist Isaac Deutscher's *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*. In his review, Lerner invoked images of Jews as evil and formidable conspirators and materialists who repudiated their own prophets' teachings. He accused a "Jewish literary establishment" of employing its "awesome power" to ensure that no "major magazine" reviewed Deutscher's anthology. Lerner claimed that Israel's Jews, exiles themselves, had "created a million new exiles; those who were the people of the book now rally around the flag, the gun and the dollar." He condemned Jewish nationalism as an "anti-progressive force."<sup>90</sup>

After Sol Stern's "My Jewish Problem – And How I Solved It" in 1971, *Ramparts*'s Middle East articles were mostly anti-Zionist, often stridently so. Fawaz Turki, for example, in a period of escalating Palestinian terrorism against Israeli civilians, credited Palestinians' "armed violence" for gaining the Palestinians worldwide recognition as a people. Turki criticized Egypt and Jordan for moving toward face-to-face negotiations with "the Zionists."<sup>91</sup>

*New Politics* provided a forum for different far and moderate left-wing perspectives on the Arab-Israeli conflict during the 1960s and early 1970s, after which it became increasingly antagonistic to Israel. The journal was founded in 1961 by Julius Jacobson and Phyllis Jacobson, both of whom had been prominent in the Workers Party and its successor, the Independent Socialist League. Julius Jacobson had served as editor of the WP's theoretical

organ *New International*. The Jacobsons were anti-Zionist but willing to publish views with which they disagreed.

*New Politics*'s most frequent contributor on the Arab-Israeli conflict was Hal Draper, a member of the journal's small editorial board, whose hard-line anti-Zionist views resembled those of the Jacobsons. Draper was also a WP/ISL veteran and had edited *Labor Action* during the Suez War, when it was stridently anti-Israel. Draper denied that *New Politics*'s leading pro-Israel contributor, Abe Friend, was a legitimate radical, branding him a "liberal (i.e., social-democrat – same thing)."<sup>92</sup>

During the early 1960s, when the New Left largely neglected the Middle East, *New Politics* published two articles on Israel, a mixed assessment by Paul Jacobs in 1962 and a sympathetic portrait the next year by Abe Friend. Jacobs denied that Israel was socialist and mocked it as "ADAland" – comparing its domestic policies to those of the liberal, anti-Communist Americans for Democratic Action in the United States. But he maintained that there were also "many admirable features of Israeli life," without identifying them. Friend claimed that Israel's "egalitarian" kibbutzim strongly influenced the tone of Israeli life, and he praised them as a model for socialist society.<sup>93</sup>

The Six-Day War precipitated a spirited debate in *New Politics* on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Shortly after the war, Hal Draper fiercely denounced Israel as "stridently militarist" and Zionism as "tribal blood-mystique" in an article entitled "The Origins of the Middle East Crisis." He derided the notion that Jews were a people "no matter where they live." Draper denied the significance of antisemitism in the Middle East and North Africa, claiming that in the early twentieth century "there was an Arab nation in Palestine, in whose midst Jews had lived for 2000 years in relative peace." Draper made another spurious claim widely repeated on the far left in subsequent decades: he accused Israel's leaders of exploiting the Holocaust "to deflect the attention of world public opinion from the crimes committed in Palestine."<sup>94</sup>

Abe Friend, by contrast, called for a peace treaty that would include Arab recognition of Israel as a legitimate state with defensible boundaries. He urged Israel to take in "a substantial number" of Arab refugees, with "international funds" provided to the Arab nations to absorb the remainder.<sup>95</sup>

In March 1968, *New Politics* featured a vituperative exchange between Draper and fellow anti-Zionist Bernard K. Rosen over Draper's "The Origins of the Middle East Crisis." Rosen conceded much of Draper's argument, denouncing Zionism as "tribalism" that "preaches the mystique of a distinct Jewish people." Zionism "inculcate[d] an anti-humanistic bias." It had "unquestionably ... played a sordid and reactionary role in the Middle East and ... aided British imperialism." In Palestine under the British mandate, "the Arab anti-imperialist political movement, with all its faults ... was progressive and Zionism, opponent of Arab rights, was reactionary." Like

Draper, Rosen claimed that the Zionist movement pressured the U.S. government to prevent the admission into this country of Jewish refugees from Nazism, viewing them as “the human material ... to dispossess the Arab nation of Palestine.”<sup>96</sup>

Rosen argued, however, that Israel had legitimate reason to fear Arab annihilationist threats. He defended Israel’s 1956 Sinai campaign as necessary to protect itself against “a mortal enemy.” Rosen drew a parallel with Trotsky’s urging the Soviet Union to mobilize its forces after Hitler assumed power and consider a preventive war against Nazi Germany. He implied that Israel’s preemptive strike against Egypt in June 1967 was similarly justified.<sup>97</sup>

Draper responded by condemning Israel’s actions in the Suez and Six-Day Wars, and accusing Rosen of being “unable to question a single fact in the rather damning historical record of Israeli chauvinism.” He claimed that Zionism, like Nazism, went “qualitatively beyond” the disparagement of another people. Draper denied Rosen’s claim that both sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict were responsible for creating refugees, and that a “de facto exchange of populations” had taken place. He maintained that Jewish populations had been uprooted from the Arab lands as a result of deliberate pressure by “Zionist missions” and “growing Arab hostility” caused by the “Israeli crime” of dispossessing Palestinian Arabs.<sup>98</sup>

In the aftermath of the Six-Day War, Isaac Deutscher relapsed into strident anti-Zionism. In an interview with the British journal *New Left Review* on June 23, 1967, shortly before his death, Deutscher defined Arab nationalism as progressive and Jewish nationalism as reactionary. He was heartened by what he perceived as a “radicalization of the political mood in Arab countries.” Deutscher saw this alleged awakening of the Arab masses as part of the same anti-imperialist thrust as the National Liberation Front’s struggle against the United States in Vietnam. He claimed that Israel’s foreign policy, at least as early as 1956, centered on “irreconcilable hostility to Arab aspirations to unity and national emancipation from the West.” The Israelis had become “the Prussians of the Middle East.” Deutscher accused Israel’s leaders of exploiting the memory of the Holocaust to justify hard-line policies. He condemned Israel for refusing to consider the Arab refugee issue unless the Arab nations recognized Israel. Deutscher criticized Arab leaders for announcing their intention to destroy Israel and exterminate its Jews but pronounced these threats “empty.”<sup>99</sup>

At the National Conference for New Politics (NCNP) held in Chicago from August 29 to September 4, 1967, the American New Left formally embraced militant anti-Zionism. The New Left demonstrated at the NCNP that by 1967 most of it was prepared to follow the lead of black nationalists on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The NCNP convened shortly after SNCC’s release of its virulently anti-Zionist newsletter equating Israel with Nazi Germany. *Ramparts* reported that the NCNP “was the biggest and most

representative gathering of America's left opposition in over two decades," and the most widely covered in the American press. SDS, the SWP, and the CP were actively engaged in it. The 2,200 delegates voted overwhelmingly to acquiesce to the 300-member Black Caucus's demand that it be given 50 percent representation on all convention committees and in plenary sessions.<sup>100</sup>

"With joy and fanfare" the NCNP passed by a nearly three-to-one vote a thirteen-point resolution submitted by the Black Caucus, which it insisted be accepted without revision. The Black Caucus resolution put the NCNP on record as condemning Israel for having the previous June waged an "imperialistic Zionist war" against the Arabs. The convention voted to deny the floor to Robert Scheer when he tried to propose an amendment calling on Israel to revert to prewar borders in exchange for Arab recognition.<sup>101</sup>

The Black Caucus resolution also called for the establishment of "white civilizing committees" to "humanize the savage and beast-like character that runs rampant throughout America, as exemplified by George Lincoln Rockwells and Lyndon Baines Johnsons."<sup>102</sup> Equating American Nazi Party leader Rockwell with President Johnson, a liberal Democrat, was reminiscent of the extremism of the CP's Third Period, when the party considered socialists no different from fascists and compared President Roosevelt to Hitler. It reflected a similar misunderstanding of Nazism and trivialization of antisemitism.

*Ramparts* reported that most mainstream reporters left the convention "in a state of shock," but even the more sophisticated far left journals refrained from condemning the Black Caucus's vicious denunciation of Israel's role in the Six-Day War. James Aronson, a founder and editor of the *National Guardian*, who covered the NCNP for *Monthly Review*, was pleased that the white radical majority had "passed the test in Chicago." Voting down the Black Caucus resolution "would have amounted to a rejection of all hope of new politics at this time." Aronson supported the NCNP's harsh denunciation of Israel. He denied that Israel had fought a war of self-preservation in June 1967 and pointed to the minuscule number of Israeli Communists "who vigorously condemned their own government's action and sought unity with radicals in Arab countries in a common fight to replace both the capitalist government of Israel and the feudal rule of the Arab oil baronies." Nor did Aronson consider it in bad taste to link President Johnson with the leader of the American Nazi Party – after all "a simple question could be asked: 'How many kids – American and Vietnamese – did Rockwell kill?'"<sup>103</sup>

Sidney Lens in *New Politics* praised the convention, which he called "the largest New Left assemblage since the term New Left entered the American lexicon," as "the epitome of democracy in its functioning." Lens, who had been a Trotskyist in the 1930s, offered a confused assessment of the NCNP. He hoped it had bridged racial and generational divisions on the left but feared it might drive liberals away from joining a coalition with radicals, a

goal he supported but most young radicals rejected. Lens was uneasy about the phrasing of the stridently anti-Israel resolution, primarily because it would hamper forging such a coalition.<sup>104</sup>

*Ramparts* introduced its symposium on the convention by stating that “amidst all of the hurly-burly ... and the inflammatory revolutionary rhetoric, something serious was happening.” Delegates grappled with Lenin’s question, “What is to be done?” SDS community leader Clark Kissinger declared in the symposium that it “warmed the cockles of my heart to see middle-class respectables voting to support all wars of national liberation at home and abroad” (including that of the Palestinian guerillas). Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver and NCNP Black Caucus chair Carlos Russell considered the convention a success because the Black Caucus was accorded 50 percent of the vote and its resolution passed overwhelmingly. But several contributors were critical of the NCNP, citing the white “self-flagellation,” chaos, and lack of a constructive program.<sup>105</sup>

Strangely, *Ramparts* neglected to give any attention to the delegates’ overwhelming vote to “condemn the imperialistic Zionist war.” Among the eleven contributors, only Ted Weiss – a liberal, not a radical – criticized the convention’s condemnation of Israel. He called it “nonsense” and stated: “I will not ... [as a Jew] treat with understanding any effort to trample on my ... dignity.”<sup>106</sup>

The SWP largely approved of the Black Caucus’s role at the NCNP but criticized many of the delegates’ “reformist” proposals. It sent its presidential and vice-presidential candidates for 1968, Fred Halstead and Paul Boutelle, to the NCNP and boasted of selling nearly 200 copies of its new, fiercely anti-Zionist pamphlet, “Zionism and the Arab Revolution,” at the convention.<sup>107</sup>

In SDS’s *New Left Notes*, Rennie Davis and Staughton Lynd praised the black nationalists’ efforts at the NCNP while criticizing what they considered white middle-class intellectuals’ excessive influence in the organization. Davis and Lynd declared that “black people must lead an American radical movement.” A national radical organization like the NCNP would be appropriate “only when regional radical networks, with black leadership, call it into being.”<sup>108</sup> This implied full support for the Black Caucus resolution, including its anti-Israel plank.

Disputing the dominant American far left characterization of Israel as an instrument of Western imperialism, forty prominent French left-wing intellectuals, who identified as neither Communist nor Trotskyist, issued a public letter supporting the Jewish state on the eve of the Six-Day War. The signers, who included Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, identified themselves as “opponents of American Imperialism.” Most were a generation older than the New Leftists. Their public letter stated that “the State of Israel is at this time demonstrating a desire for peace and calm.” The signers declared: “It is beyond comprehension ... that a section of opinion

can believe that Israel is identified with imperialism and aggression and the Arab countries with socialism and peace, while forgetting at the same time that Israel is the only country whose existence is at stake, and that threatening declarations come daily from Arab leaders." The signers appealed to the French public "to vigorously reaffirm" the "security and sovereignty of Israel" and its "freedom of navigation in international waters."<sup>109</sup>

During the Six-Day War, which occurred toward the very end of the universities' spring semester in June 1967, campus sentiment strongly favored Israel, and the far left was marginalized and largely unnoticed. Indeed, William Mandel declared about a week after the war ended: "It is appalling to me that the anti-imperialist groups in America have so far not organized one single meeting in defense of the Arabs."<sup>110</sup> Students viewed Israel as the progressive beacon in the Middle East, and many Jewish collegians, on completion of final exams, flew there to offer assistance by working on kibbutzim or in factories. One student volunteer, Stephen Lerner, executive editor of the Harvard *Crimson*, wrote shortly after the Six-Day War: "Thousands of Jews all over the world reacted to this war in the same way that an earlier generation of idealists had reacted to the Spanish Civil War."<sup>111</sup>

The far left increasingly gave priority to supporting the Arab effort against Israel as the United States reduced its troop commitment in Vietnam after 1969. However, the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Southeast Asia, completed in January 1973, eliminated the issue that had most energized the far left, causing its ranks to shrink precipitously. The far left was also severely debilitated in the late 1960s and early 1970s by its excessive stridency, dogmatism, and bitter factionalism, reminiscent of the CP's Third Period.

#### PROPAGANDIZING FOR THE PALESTINIAN GUERILLAS: FROM THE SIX-DAY WAR THROUGH THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

The far left by the early 1970s enthusiastically championed the Palestinian guerilla movement that emerged as a well-publicized force after the Six-Day War because of its unrelenting determination to destroy Israel. The far left feared that the Arab states' shock at their catastrophic military defeat in June 1967 might weaken their commitment to wage war against Israel. It remained suspicious even after the Arab states emphatically declared at a summit conference at Khartoum in September 1967 that there would be no peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, and no recognition of Israel. The *National Guardian* published an article by an Arab complaining that Egypt after the Suez War had "abandoned its policy of encouraging commando raids" against Israel. The author denounced Egypt for permitting the UN to place personnel near the Straits of Tiran, reopening them to Israeli shipping. Although far left youth seemed solidly in the Arab camp, the author noted that "latent pro-Israeli sympathies ... exist among much of the older readership of the *Guardian*." During the Yom Kippur War, the *Militant*

asserted that the only solution to the Middle East crisis was “the overthrow of the Zionist state of Israel and the return of Palestine to the Palestinians,” but it complained that “this course is rejected by Cairo and Damascus.”<sup>112</sup>

After the Six-Day War, the SWP and its youth arm, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), devoted considerable energy to attacking the CP, which was no longer a significant part of the American Left after 1956, as not sufficiently hostile to Israel. In 1966, the CP in its “Draft Resolution on the Jewish Question” had softened somewhat its antagonism toward maintaining Jewish identity and grudgingly acknowledged Israel’s right to exist. Lucy Dawidowicz, analyzing the draft resolution for the AJC, noted the absence of the pejorative term “bourgeois nationalism,” the CP’s euphemism for Zionism during the early 1950s. In another noticeable shift, the CP resolution found it “understandable” and justifiable that an American Jewish Communist might “feel kinship with Jews throughout the world.” Its “full fury” was directed against “national nihilism,” a “‘left sectarian’ deviation” that “rejects the continued distinct existence and role of the Jewish people.” Dawidowicz believed that the CP’s new positive emphasis on Jewish identity was related to current Soviet charges that the People’s Republic of China was oppressing its ethnic minorities.<sup>113</sup>

The Trotskyists boasted that, unlike the Communists, they had “struggle[d] ceaselessly against Zionist colonialism” ever since partition in 1947. In 1973, the *Militant* published an article from the Belgian Trotskyist newspaper *La Gauche* that denounced the Soviet Union for taking the lead in extending de jure recognition of Israel and for permitting Czechoslovakia to send weapons to the Haganah in 1948. The Soviets were therefore “fully responsible for the tragedy of the Palestinian people.” The *Militant* referred to the War of Independence as “Israel’s 1948 colonial war against the Palestinians and the other Arab peoples.” During the Yom Kippur War, it derided the CP’s Pacific Coast weekly *People’s World* for declaring that “the path for peace” in the Middle East included “guarantees for Israeli existence.” The *Militant* denounced the CP for supporting a Soviet-backed cease-fire. It proclaimed that the Palestinian guerillas “will not agree to a cease-fire ... and will continue fighting no matter what Egypt and Syria accept.”<sup>114</sup>

In 1970, the SWP’s Pathfinder Press published the first U.S. edition of an anti-Israel screed by Belgian Trotskyist Abram Leon that explained medieval and modern antisemitism as rooted in abhorrence of Jewish usury. Leon’s *The Jewish Question* first appeared in French in 1946. An English translation was issued in limited edition in Mexico City in 1950 and was regularly advertised in the *Militant*. Many far leftists of the early 1970s were attracted to Leon’s combination of anti-Zionist invective and crude economic antisemitism, popularized by black militant groups like SNCC and the Black Panthers. Leon argued that the Jewish population had been widely dispersed across the Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean long before 70 CE, with Judaea containing only the “smallest” and “least vital part.” This



appealed to radicals who wanted to delegitimize the Jewish claim to a homeland in Israel. Leon declared that Jews in antiquity were privileged. Their condition in the Roman Empire was “quite enviable.” He maintained that anti-Jewish prejudice stemmed from the natural antagonism people engaged in production harbored toward merchants. Contemporary scholars, however, believe that economic antisemitism was not a feature of the ancient world. Most Jews were poor, eking out a living as artisans, laborers, or farmers.<sup>115</sup>

Leon similarly explained medieval antisemitism as rooted in resentment over Jews’ usury. The English nobility, angry over “the extremely high rates of interest” that caused them to lose property, “avenge[d] itself by organizing massacres of the Jews.” Leon ignored medieval Christian theology as a significant source of anti-Jewish prejudice. In Western Europe, an expansion of the money supply and the growth of cities allowed a “native” merchant class to emerge. As a result, the nobility was able to “throw off the yoke of the usurer.” As a capitalist economy developed, the kings no longer considered the Jews’ moneylending services essential and turned against them. Becoming petty usurers for the masses, the Jews incurred their wrath, sparking pogroms. As the emerging capitalist economy absorbed the non-Jewish population, it rejected usury, which was identified only with the Jews. As a consequence, the Jewish population was expelled from Western Europe, a process complete by the end of the fifteenth century. But the Jews moved to Eastern Europe, where they thrived as tradesmen.<sup>116</sup>

Leon went beyond previous Marxist writers in declaring that medieval prohibitions against Jews owning land or working as artisans or in certain commercial pursuits were “a fable.” He asserted that Jews were psychologically drawn to moneylending. Leon claimed that in Western Germany, where the largest Ashkenazic communities were located, Jews “enjoyed the same civil rights” as Christians. Guilds that excluded Jews were not motivated by “religious animosity or racial hatred.” They did not want Jews because they considered usury and peddling dishonest.<sup>117</sup>

Leon asserted that Eastern European antisemitism resulted from peasant resentment of the Jews’ role in usury and as the lords’ agents in extracting wealth from those who worked the land. This was the cause of the horrific Chmielnicki massacres of 100,000 Jews in the Ukraine in 1648 and 1649.<sup>118</sup>

Oddly enough, although Leon was writing during the Holocaust, and was himself murdered in Auschwitz, he devoted almost no attention to it, or to Nazi Germany’s policies before the war. Leon ascribed the refusal of the world’s nations to admit Jewish refugees to the inability of decaying capitalist societies, plagued by collapsing markets and mounting unemployment, to absorb any immigrants.<sup>119</sup>

Shortly after the Six-Day War, far left and Arab student groups began working together to defame Israel on campus and promote support for the

Palestinian guerillas. Arab students took the initiative in forging an alliance with the far left by approaching campus radicals at the SDS national convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan, during the summer of 1967. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) reported during the spring semester of 1969 “a wave of anti-Semitic, anti-Israel propaganda” on the Wayne State University campus in Detroit, originating with the Organization of Arab Students (OAS) and “abetted by campus and off-campus adherents of the New Left.” The propaganda consisted of “anti-Israel, anti-Jewish blasts” in the campus newspaper, *South End*, and “reams of anti-Israel material publicly displayed in the University library.” The Wayne State OAS praised *South End*’s “opposition to Zionism as an exploitative racist movement.” JTA described *South End*’s editor as a “militant New Leftist.” The Arab students and New Leftists also joined in a symposium “in which Israel was excoriated and the Arab terrorist organization El Fatah glorified.” There was criticism in the Detroit area of the Wayne State librarian for “refusing to remove the anti-Semitic propaganda from the library” and of Wayne State president William R. Keast for only mildly admonishing *South End*’s editor.<sup>120</sup> Under strong public pressure, Keast eventually criticized the campus newspaper for publishing “attacks upon Jews, Poles and other ethnic groups that are disturbingly reminiscent of Hitler’s Germany.”<sup>121</sup>

A *South End* opinion piece entitled “Jewish Racism” combined theological with economic antisemitism in a manner common in the late 1960s far left and black nationalist movements. It accused Jews of holding gentiles in contempt and maintaining an “economic stranglehold” over both American ghetto blacks and Palestinian Arabs. The author described Detroit’s inner city as under “Jewish occupation.” A “Zionist hand” confined blacks to deteriorating slum housing. Jewish teachers “mis-educated” black children. Jewish storekeepers either overcharged blacks or joined “the Zionist movement” out of the inner city. The author declared: “If this Jewish Community is an example of what the Arabs are getting from Israel, God save the Arabs.” He concluded by asking: “Are the Jewish people so arrogant in their so-called superiority that they don’t realize how racist they are?”<sup>122</sup>

The YSA in particular engaged in joint actions against Israel with Arab student groups. During the period between the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, pro-Israel students often effectively challenged these propaganda efforts. In May 1969, on the twenty-first anniversary of Israel’s independence, about thirty-five people, mostly members of the YSA and the OAS, picketed the Israeli consulate in Boston in support of Al Fatah. YSA members identified themselves by carrying signs with such slogans as “The Young Socialist Alliance Calls for End to Zionist and Other Imperialist Interventions in the Middle East.” Nearly as many counterdemonstrators were present, distributing a prepared pro-Israel statement. Most of the anti-Israel pickets wore Al Fatah pins, which several of the Arab students tried to sell to passersby. The anti-Israel demonstration was poorly organized, and the pickets lost

forty minutes when they assembled at premises that the Israeli consulate had vacated about two months before.<sup>123</sup>

In February 1970, the YSA organized a symposium with Arab students at Boston University that was heavily biased against Israel, although some of the panelists were not yet ready to call for Israel's dissolution as a Jewish state. The symposium's title was "Can Israelis and Palestinians Unite for a Socialist Middle East?" The Trotskyist and Arab sponsors called themselves the Coalition of Middle Eastern Revolutionaries. The first speaker was Massachusetts Institute of Technology linguist Noam Chomsky, who called for a federation between a Jewish state and a Palestinian state, rather than a binational state, a position he embraced soon afterward. Boston University political science professor Irene Gendzier also spoke in favor of such a federation. Georgetown University professor of Middle East studies Hisham Sharabi denounced Zionism as "imperialistic" and urged armed struggle against Israel. Emmanuel Dror, a member of Israel's quasi-Trotskyist Matzpen sect, "questioned the validity of Israel as a state." Only Zev Katz, an Israeli then teaching at Harvard, supported "Jews' right to have a Jewish state." Seemingly oblivious of Arab intentions toward Israel, however, Katz "urged the abandonment of force by all parties" and proposed that Israel and the Arabs cut their ties "with outside forces." An observer from the Anti-Defamation League reported that the audience of 700 consisted of 50 to 75 Arab students and Trotskyists and a similar number of pro-Israel students, with the remainder "neutral or in the middle."<sup>124</sup>

When the movement against the Vietnam War, which had occupied much of the far left's attention, began to wind down after peaking during the campus strikes against the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in May 1970, the YSA further strengthened its bonds with the OAS. In September 1970, speakers from the YSA and the OAS participated in a week of anti-Israel rallies and "teach-ins" at George Washington University and the University of Maryland. That December, OAS members and representatives of Palestinian guerilla groups appeared on a Middle East discussion panel at the YSA national convention. This far left alliance with Arab student organizations, spearheaded by the YSA, came to full fruition during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in jointly sponsored anti-Israel forums and rallies at such universities as UCLA, the University of Texas, Wayne State University, and San Diego State College.<sup>125</sup>

The Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAAUG) invited the YSA's parent group to participate in its national convention, held in Boston in October 1971. The AAAUG was founded shortly after the Six-Day War, "for the purpose of getting out the facts about the Arab national liberation struggle, especially the Palestinian resistance." The *Militant* reported approvingly that AAAUG president Dr. Naseer Aruri, in the convention's opening address, explained that Zionism was "a racist doctrine which ranks human beings in accordance with their religious beliefs

and ethnic origins.” The SWP’s vice-presidential candidate in the 1968 election, Paul Boutelle, spoke on a panel on “the American left and the Arab struggle.”<sup>126</sup>

During the Yom Kippur War, pro-Israel activism on the major campuses overshadowed efforts by far left groups and the Arab student organizations with which they allied. While the Arab student population was growing on American campuses, the far left groups steadily diminished in size and influence during the early 1970s. At Columbia, the student newspaper, the *Spectator*, reported that campus Jewish organizations reacted immediately to the Arab attack by raising a sizeable amount of money for Israel. Students canvassed neighborhoods adjacent to the university, collecting funds, and mounted a blood drive for Israel’s armed forces. During the war’s first week, Jewish students staged a campus rally and a symposium (attended by almost 200 students) to demonstrate solidarity with embattled Israel. By contrast, Arab students at Columbia whom the *Spectator* contacted “said they were not planning any immediate actions to express support for the Arab position.” The *Spectator* reported that “the Arab-India Club, which has represented Arab students, [is] currently inactive.” Organized Columbia student involvement on behalf of the Arab war effort appears to have been confined to an off-campus demonstration involving about 100 participants from the New York City area, which included “a small contingent” from the Barnard-Columbia Attica Brigade, a Maoist splinter group that supported the Palestinian guerillas.<sup>127</sup>

The situation was similar at Harvard, where Israel also commanded more public support than the Arabs, and the far left–Arab student alliance staged its major demonstration off campus. Two Harvard professors, Nathan Glazer and Seymour Martin Lipset, joined Professor Edward Shils of the University of Chicago in drafting a statement appealing for worldwide support for Israel, directed primarily at a European audience and signed largely by European academics. Harvard professors Frank Freidel and Franklin Ford and Radcliffe president Martina Horner joined Glazer and Lipset in placing their names on the statement. Three other Harvard professors, Daniel Bell, Michael Walzer, and Martin Peretz, signed another statement published in the *New York Times* that called for “continued United States support for Israel.” During the war’s first week, six Harvard professors – Peretz, Walzer, Benjamin Schwartz, Jacob Katz, Doris Kearns, and David Landes – addressed about 120 students at a forum urging support for Israel. Peretz, the moderator, “charged not only Egypt and Syria but also American oil industries and the American left with responsibility for the war.”<sup>128</sup>

Far leftists were among about 100 persons who held an off-campus anti-Israel rally at Boston’s Government Center. The radicals participating, not all of whom were affiliated with area universities, were from the SWP and the Spartacist-Revolutionary Communist Youth Organization, a Trotskyist splinter group.<sup>129</sup>

The UCLA student newspaper commented that a majority of students on that campus appeared to back Israel in the Yom Kippur War. Four hundred people attended a rally sponsored by UCLA's Student Zionist Alliance (SZA), which was addressed by several Jewish speakers and an African American state senator. Arab and Iranian students briefly interrupted the proceedings by loudly chanting "Down with Zionism." By contrast, a YSA rally "to express solidarity with the Arabs" attracted only "a sparse, disinterested crowd." The YSA's keynote speaker labeled Israel a dictatorship and denounced the Soviet Union for supplying the Arabs with only "token amounts of war materiel."<sup>130</sup>

In fact, not only had the Soviet Union supplied Egypt and Syria with large quantities of advanced weaponry before the war, but its wartime airlift, which began before that of the United States to Israel, carried 15,000 tons of military supplies to those nations. Soviet personnel provided the Syrians with direct technical assistance, assembling and repairing weapons and other military equipment. Egypt was able to cross the Suez Canal and gain a foothold in the Sinai because the Soviets had supplied it with highly sophisticated antiaircraft and antitank weaponry, along with powerful water pumps that blew gaping holes in the sand embankments the Israelis had built to defend the east bank of the canal.<sup>131</sup>

Another pro-Arab rally at UCLA a few days later did draw a larger audience than the YSA's, but "a shouting confrontation" between members of the militant rightist Jewish Defense League (JDL) and Arab supporters "frustrated any attempts at discussion." The rally's speakers included an Arab UCLA professor and members of the Iranian Student Organization, the YSA, and the Maoist Fanshen group.<sup>132</sup>

The Berkeley campus was fiercely divided, as "violent arguments broke out ... between Jewish and Arab students ... with mistrust and animosity running high on both sides." Although many Jews, both on and off campus, quickly mobilized behind Israel, Arabs appeared to draw significant support only from the far left. A Berkeley OAS spokesperson explained that "the wealthy Arabs in San Francisco have forgotten their loyalties. They would as soon give money to the Israelis."<sup>133</sup>

Far left Berkeley campus groups joined with Arab and Iranian students to form the Committee for National Liberation in the Middle East to promote the Arab cause. Committee affiliates included two Stalinist-Maoist groups, the Revolutionary Union and the October League; the OAS; and the Iranian Students Association. The Committee picketed the Israeli consulate in San Francisco and then, strangely, proceeded to the Standard Oil building to stage an anti-Israel rally, unaware that the oil corporations shared their hostility to the Jewish state. The committee appears to have been the sponsor of a full-page advertisement in the student newspaper that rehashed the anti-Israel allegations circulated by both far left and Arab student groups. It repeatedly equated Israel with Nazi Germany, charging that it had "created

a form of apartheid” out of fear that people who were “not Jewish ... might infect the local [Israeli] population.” Israel had confined a million Palestinians to refugee camps for life, only “stopp[ing] short of having them tattooed on the fore-arm with a yellow Star of David to mark them off.” It had erected “a large concentration camp” in the Gaza Strip, imprisoning “400,000” people. The “Zionist establishment” used torture and collective punishment to control the Arabs, just as the Nazis had against the Jews and occupied populations during World War II.<sup>134</sup>

There was no need for a Jewish state, according to the statement, because antisemitism was not as serious a problem as Israel’s supporters claimed. It attributed to Zionists the view that “anti-semitism is something inherent in people (like a disease) and that therefore the Jews can never live among Gentiles.” The Zionists failed to grasp that “antisemitism could be the product of ... certain capitalist institutions.” In the Soviet Union, where these had been eliminated, “Jews [had] started integrating in Russian society.” A similar process was even occurring in the United States, an advanced capitalist society. Israeli prime minister Golda Meir was worried, because “she rightfully recognized” that the assimilation of Jews in these two societies “could eventually destroy Zionism.”<sup>135</sup>

Khrushchev’s secret speech in 1956 denouncing Stalin’s crimes, which did not address antisemitism, came as a jolt to many American Communists, causing them to think more critically about the Soviet record. During 1956–1957 some of them finally admitted that they had deceived themselves in denying that antisemitism was official Soviet policy. Many American Communists left the party in 1956 and 1957 after at last acknowledging the Kremlin’s total destruction of the Soviet Union’s Yiddish cultural institutions and murder of its leading Jewish writers and poets. This was the case with top leaders like Johnny Gates and the party’s most prominent writer, Howard Fast. The Soviet Union’s harsh antagonism toward Israel during the Suez War greatly disturbed many Communists and contributed to their decision to drop out of the party.

The CP no longer retained any significance on the far left after the crisis of 1956–1957, although the departure of dissident members brought it much more into line with the rest of the far left. After the departure of the dissidents, the party reverted to angrily disputing any charge of Soviet antisemitism. It insisted that the post-Stalin Soviet leadership supported secular Jewish culture and suppressed any “residual” antisemitism dating from the czarist period or implanted by the Nazi invaders. The CP brushed aside concerns about the disappearance of Soviet Jewish institutions and culture with the claim that Soviet Jews desired assimilation. Its spokesperson Herbert Aptheker defended the Soviet government’s blatantly antisemitic prosecution and execution of Jews for “economic crimes” and denunciation of Yevtushenko’s poem “Babi Yar.” The Trotskyists, with only a tiny following

during the 1950s and early 1960s, did criticize Soviet persecution of Jews but ignored Arab antisemitism and savagely denounced Israel.

The cohort that became active in American far left politics during the late 1960s differed markedly from Communists of the previous generation in its indifference toward Jewish issues. It was not concerned with enhancing or even preserving Jewish identity and institutions. Unlike older Communists, these young radicals did not take antisemitism seriously and displayed no interest in the oppression of Soviet Jewry.

The late 1960s far left effected an alliance with militant anti-Israel Arab groups that persists to this day. In 1970, the SWP, parent organization of the YSA, the most significant American far left campus group during the early 1970s, published the first U.S. edition of Abram Leon's *The Jewish Question*, arguably the most influential antisemitic tract the far left had ever issued.

Although there was some debate over the Arab-Israeli conflict in the major independent radical journals – *Monthly Review*, *Ramparts*, and *New Politics* – in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, even the most sophisticated far left contributors almost entirely overlooked many issues of critical importance, notably, (1) Arab and Islamic antisemitism and the plight of Sephardic and Mizrahic Jews in Arab lands and (2) Egypt and Syria's protection of hundreds of Nazi war criminals, many of whom assumed governmental and military posts, in which they could carry on their war against the Jews; moreover, they (3) failed to take seriously Arab genocidal threats against Israel, even when acknowledging them; (4) ignored the war waged by the Arab-dominated Sudanese government against the black populations of southern Sudan, armed by Israel, the so-called outpost of imperialism; and (5) failed to examine in any depth the consequences were Israel to grant a full Arab "right of return" (and lack of concern for the Sephardic and Mizrahic Jews, who could never return to their previous homes).

Although the far left was largely university-based by the late 1960s, its view of the Arab-Israeli conflict had little support in the campus mainstream. That, however, would soon change.



## Shaping the Next Generations

### *The Persistence of Far Left Antisemitism,* 1973–2012

The American far left remained fragmented and marginalized in the four decades following the New Left's collapse in the early 1970s. It never commanded more than a small fraction of the New Left's following. Nonetheless the far left continued to disseminate virulently anti-Zionist propaganda laced with antisemitism, serving as junior partner to Muslim student organizations and black nationalist groups that became the driving forces in an ever-expanding campaign to denigrate Israel and Jews. In the post-Vietnam era, the far left gave the Palestinian cause greater emphasis than any foreign policy issue. Mainstream liberals, particularly in academia, increasingly embraced much of the far left view of Israel. They often remained indifferent to manifestations of blatant antisemitism and even sometimes excused or shared responsibility for them.

By 1972, the New Left's demise was acknowledged even by many of its most committed long-term activists. In the summer of that year, the two lead articles in *Radical America*, one of the New Left's most prominent journals, were entitled "The Eclipse of the New Left: Some Notes" and "Beyond Reminiscence: The New Left in History." *Radical America's* editor, Paul Buhle, began the first article with the comment that the New Left no longer existed as a political movement: "Several years after the disintegration of the American New Left, there remains no significant political interpretation of [its] appearance, disappearance, and final meaning." In the second article, James O'Brien similarly referred to the movement's "disintegration" after 1969. He noted that the dominant mood among radical activists was one of "extreme pessimism and collective self-denigration."<sup>1</sup>

The principal reason for the New Left's precipitous decline as a political movement was the winding down and termination of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, the issue that attracted most of the movement's following after 1965. The shift in 1969 to a draft lottery and then to an all-volunteer military in 1973 defused a major New Left mobilizing issue. The far left never succeeded in expanding its appeal beyond middle-class youth on the

college and university campus, either during the New Left's heyday or afterward. The persistence of difficult economic conditions after the downturn in the fall of 1973, which ended the longest sustained period of prosperity the United States had ever enjoyed, caused youth to concentrate on developing careers, reducing the time available for campus activism. The less favorable economic climate also made college youth less willing to take risks. The declining fertility rate after 1957 resulted in a significant reduction in college and university enrollments beginning in the early 1970s, undermining the New Left's recruiting base.

The New Left's principal organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which claimed 100,000 members at its peak, splintered apart at its June 1969 convention in Chicago, and no far left organization ever again came close to approaching its size and influence. During the late 1960s, SDS embraced increasingly extreme positions. At its 1969 convention it was divided into two principal factions. The Weatherman group, which controlled the SDS National Office in Chicago, was aligned with the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) II group, opposing the Worker-Student Alliance (WSA) faction. Despite the bitter factional conflict raging in SDS, the Arab-Israel conflict was never an issue of dispute. Both factions proclaimed their strong support for the Palestinian guerillas' war to destroy Israel and denounced the Jewish state as "Nazi" and "genocidal."

Weatherman and RYM II considered the revolutionary anti-imperialist movements in the Third World the principal force for radical change and favored alliance in the United States with militant black nationalists willing to work with whites, most notably the Black Panthers. Weatherman believed it could spark a revolutionary upsurge in the United States by initiating violent provocations. The more conventionally Marxist-Leninist RYM II did not place as much emphasis on terrorism as a vehicle for radicalizing the masses in the United States, although it justified the Palestinians' use of it. RYM II openly embraced Stalinism. Its leader Mike Klonsky, who had served as SDS's national secretary in 1968, declared that he considered it a compliment to be called a Stalinist.

WSA insisted that the industrial working class was the principal vehicle for revolution, which it believed was imminent in the United States. It operated as the youth wing of the Progressive Labor (PL) Party, a small sect that left the Communist Party in 1962 because it objected to Khrushchev's de-Stalinization policy and backed China in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

At SDS's 1969 convention, the Weatherman-RYM II coalition announced the expulsion of WSA as "counterrevolutionary," although the latter appeared to have more support on the floor. Weatherman-RYM II retained control of the SDS National Office in Chicago, whereas WSA established headquarters in Boston. Each faction insisted it was the true SDS. Soon afterward RYM II split away from Weatherman. By the spring of 1970, when President Nixon's invasion of Cambodia precipitated a wave of campus antiwar strikes and

demonstrations, SDS had faded into insignificance. That left YSA, with only about 2,500 members, as the largest campus radical organization.<sup>2</sup>

Since the 1970s, the American far left has consisted of only a few very small sects. Exact memberships are hard to determine, but it is unlikely that after the mid-1980s any of them had more than a few hundred members. By contrast, the CP at its peak in 1939 contained as many as 100,000 members.<sup>3</sup>

The CP after 1956 was never again a significant part of the American Left. When the New Left emerged in the 1960s, it displayed no interest in either working with or seeking advice from the CP, dismissing it as “old, stodgy, and conventional.” The CP itself “made little effort to capitalize on the campus ferment” of that time.<sup>4</sup> Nor did it attract New Left activists when that movement fell apart in the early 1970s. By 1976, the FBI estimated the combined membership of the CP and its youth arm, the Young Workers Liberation League, at 4,500, down from 20,000 in 1956. The Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991 deprived the CP of considerable funding and demoralized much of the ever-dwindling membership, and it all but disappeared. Daniel J. Leab, general secretary of the Historians of American Communism, told the *New York Times* in 1994 that “you can’t even use the name as an epithet anymore. If I called you a Communist, who the hell cares?” The CP continued to maintain a decaying headquarters in New York City, which contained a display case holding “gifts from Syria’s ruling Baath Party and the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.”<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the CP, the Trotskyist and Maoist sects recruited a few veterans of the New Left during the early and middle 1970s. But by the late 1970s, only about 2,000 people belonged to the SWP, the largest of these groups. By 1981, SWP membership had dropped to 1,350, and it fell below 1,000 in 1985.<sup>6</sup> The far left groups’ visibility and support has continued to decline since then.

Although the CP had grudgingly acknowledged Israel’s right to exist in 1966, its anti-Israel rhetoric became increasingly vituperative after the Six-Day War. The CP supported the 1975 Soviet-backed UN Security Council resolution that denounced Zionism as a form of racism, and it parroted Soviet claims that Israel was a tool of American imperialism. It joined the other far left groups during the 1970s and 1980s in equating Zionism with Nazism. For example, Herbert Aptheker, considered the CP’s leading intellectual, called Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon a “blitzkrieg” and compared Israeli defense minister Ariel Sharon’s speeches to those of Adolf Hitler.<sup>7</sup>

The CP’s strong backing of the Arabs in the Six-Day War and its continual denial of Soviet antisemitism precipitated a break in the early 1970s with the Yiddish Communist daily newspaper *Morgen Freiheit*. The CP had been associated with *Morgen Freiheit* since founding it in April 1922.<sup>8</sup> *Morgen Freiheit*’s editor-in-chief, Paul Novick, had long been uneasy about the Soviets’ suppression of Jewish culture. In 1964, he expressed concern

about the “forcible” assimilation of Soviet Jewry. After the mass resignations from the CP in 1956–1957, few in the party expressed interest in this issue outside of the small group of middle-aged and elderly Jews involved with *Morgen Freiheit*, many of them born in Eastern Europe. In 1969 *Morgen Freiheit* claimed a circulation of about 6,000. The issue of the oppression of Soviet Jewry was not even raised within the other far left groups. To be sure, Novick claimed that the Soviets since the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 had “rehabilitated” Jewish culture “to a certain degree.” But he complained that there was no longer any Yiddish publishing house in the Soviet Union. Nor were there state-supported schools for training teachers of Yiddish and Jewish history. Novick criticized Soviet officials for assuming that Soviet Jews’ declining use of Yiddish meant that they were assimilating as a nationality. He maintained that Jewish identity was rooted in not only language but history, customs and traditions, family ties, religion, and the centuries of persecution culminating in the Holocaust, “when six million Jews were murdered – *because they were Jews*, murdered without any distinction.”<sup>9</sup>

Novick declared that the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust had heightened Jewish “national consciousness” in the Soviet Union, and he implicitly criticized Soviet refusal to devote specific attention to Jewish suffering. Novick named “Auschwitz ... Treblinka ... Maidanek ... Babi Yar ... Ponar” and referred to the “many other death factories” in which the Jews were murdered. He noted that a million Jewish children during the Holocaust were “slaughtered in a most unbelievably barbaric manner, buried alive, burned alive.” The Soviet government’s refusal to acknowledge that Jewish suffering differed from that of other “victims of fascism” led it to attack “that *pride* of Soviet literature, Evgeni Evtushenko, for his poem ‘Babi Yar.’”<sup>10</sup>

During the late 1960s, the CP’s National Committee sharply criticized *Morgen Freiheit* for having during the Six-Day War “joined with bourgeois and Zionist circles” in arguing that Israel was fighting a “war of self-defense” and deserved support. The CP, by contrast, had “strongly condemned” Israel, which it claimed had launched “a war of aggression” against the Arab countries. The CP National Committee complained that *Morgen Freiheit* portrayed the Arabs as “bent single-mindedly on the destruction of Israel,” while depicting Israel’s leaders “in the most favorable light.” It denounced *Morgen Freiheit* for refusing to back the “West Bank [Arab] refugees’” “right of return” to Israeli territory.<sup>11</sup> Novick, speaking at *Morgen Freiheit*’s forty-seventh anniversary banquet in April 1969, drew an ovation from the audience of 1,400 when he declared that “Israel is here to stay and its existence is in the interest of all progressive nations.”<sup>12</sup>

The CP National Committee also condemned a *Morgen Freiheit* editorial that denounced the machine-gunning by Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine terrorists of an El Al passenger airline as it taxied for takeoff at Zurich airport. A pilot trainee in the cockpit was seriously wounded in the attack, and five other crew members and passengers were injured. The CP

National Committee blasted *Morgen Freiheit*'s editorial for omitting "any reference to Israeli responsibility in the whole picture."<sup>13</sup>

The CP National Committee denounced *Morgen Freiheit* for what it called its "obsession with the false issue of 'black anti-Semitism'" in the 1968 New York teachers' strike. It leveled the same charge against the monthly magazine *Jewish Currents*, founded in 1958 after *Jewish Life* was terminated the previous year because of the controversy raging within the party about Soviet antisemitism. *Jewish Currents* was not affiliated with the CP from the beginning, and it identified as an "independent leftist" publication. It was staffed largely by Jews who left the CP during the turmoil of 1956–1957, and its editor-in-chief was Morris U. Schappes. *Jewish Currents* adopted a position on Israel during the Six-Day War similar to that of *Morgen Freiheit*.<sup>14</sup>

The CP joined New Left groups in unqualifiedly opposing the 1968 strike by predominantly Jewish New York City teachers who protested infringement of union rights by African American- and Puerto Rican-controlled school districts, which took charge of hiring and firing teachers and curricula. The CP National Committee condemned both *Morgen Freiheit* and *Jewish Currents* for claiming that there was "justice on both sides" of the strike and condemning "hotheads and extremists" in both camps. *Morgen Freiheit* and *Jewish Currents* both denounced the antisemitic invective of some of the teachers' black militant opponents. The CP National Committee, however, berated the two Jewish publications for "condemning equally the victims of racism [black militants] and their oppressors [the Jewish teachers' union leadership and rank and file]." It accused them of joining with the "forces of reaction ... to generate within the Jewish community in New York a racist hysteria of alarming proportions."<sup>15</sup>

In April 1973 the CP Political Committee announced the expulsion of eighty-one-year-old Paul Novick, who had served as *Morgen Freiheit*'s editor-in-chief for more than thirty years and was one of its founders, because of his positions on Israel and on African American and Soviet antisemitism. It accused Novick of "cling[ing] to the view that the 1967 war was one of self-defense on Israel's part" and ruled him "guilty of opportunist capitulation to the pressures of Jewish nationalism and Zionism." At the time of the Six-Day War in June 1967, the CP National Committee issued a statement branding Israel the aggressor, with only Novick dissenting.<sup>16</sup> It declared a few years later that Novick's views had so little support within the CP that not one delegate at the party's national convention in May 1969 had nominated him for reelection to the National Committee.<sup>17</sup> The CP Political Committee accused Novick of interpreting UN Security Council Resolution 242 "as calling not for withdrawal [by Israel] from all occupied territories, but only to 'secure and recognized borders.'" This meant that he supported "the effort of Israeli ruling circles to retain a substantial part of these territories, contrary to the party's position."<sup>18</sup>

The CP Political Committee declared that Novick's charges of official Soviet antisemitism in the *Morning Freiheit* were slander. His claims resembled those of "avowed anti-Soviet 'crusaders.'" Novick complained about the Soviets' "stifling of Jewish culture," their refusal to permit Jewish emigration, and the "anti-Semitic overtones" of their anti-Zionist campaign. He worried that these policies provided the enemies of the Soviet Union with ammunition to discredit it. But the CP remained in denial about Soviet antisemitism and would not tolerate such criticisms.<sup>19</sup>

The CP Political Committee denounced Novick for attributing a progressive outlook to the American Jewish community. It claimed that his view "ignore[d] the fact that Jewish bourgeois circles have *already* turned sharply to the Right and have exerted an increasingly reactionary, racist influence on the Jewish masses."<sup>20</sup> The CP would not take seriously Jewish concern about the alarming increase in African American antisemitism, promoted particularly by black nationalists. Contrary to the CP's view, working- and lower middle-class Jews expressed more anxiety than affluent Jews about black antisemitism and the fulminations of black militants generally. Nor could these concerns be dismissed simply as racist.

Novick began his September 1971 response to the CP Political Committee's charges against him and *Morgen Freiheit* by affirming *Morgen Freiheit's* strong support for the Soviet Union. He boasted that *Morgen Freiheit* published "more Soviet materials than any other newspaper in the U.S.A., portraying the building of socialism and the participation of Jews in it." Such articles appeared "almost daily." Novick presented *Morgen Freiheit* as an important counterweight to America's two leading Yiddish newspapers, the *Forward* and the *Day Morning Journal*, whose "anti-Soviet hysteria" knew "no bounds."<sup>21</sup>

Novick maintained that *Morgen Freiheit* was "constantly fighting racism" and took issue with the CP's charge that the American Jewish community had abandoned its "liberal and progressive traditions." He pointed out that Jews were disproportionately involved in the civil rights and antiwar movements.<sup>22</sup>

Novick warned the Political Committee that the American Jewish community would completely ostracize the CP because of its strong and unrelenting hostility toward Israel. He reminded the Political Committee that in 1929 the CP's support for the Arab killings of Jews in Palestine had brought it "into a head-on collision with the Jewish community." Novick implied that the CP's current and 1929 positions on the Middle East conflict were equivalent. He noted that although *Morgen Freiheit's* circulation had been much higher in 1929, it "paid dearly" for following the CP secretariat's orders to back the Arabs' anti-Jewish attacks and deny they were pogroms. By endorsing the CP's position, *Morgen Freiheit* lost "a great many" readers and "weakened [its] mass base." Novick called the 1929 Palestine crisis "child's play compared to the present one in the Middle East ... when there

is a Jewish State and after the Jewish people lost six million men, women, and children during World War II." He declared to the Political Committee that were *Morgen Freiheit* to adopt the pro-Arab position it had agreed to embrace in 1929, it would lose its readership and cease to exist.<sup>23</sup>

Novick maintained that the CP's militant support of the Arabs would drive away those participating in its affiliated Jewish organizations. No other American far left group so closely associated with radical Jewish cultural and educational institutions. The CP maintained a working relationship with "progressive" schools for both children and adults, summer camps, reading circles, and "choruses and mandolin orchestras." Novick claimed that Jewish organizations enjoying a fraternal relationship with the CP had 12,000 members, and that "scores of thousands" participated in their activities, which included concerts, classes, May Day demonstrations, and "Soviet celebrations."<sup>24</sup>

After Novick's expulsion, *Morgen Freiheit* gravitated toward Eurocommunism but questioned the Italian, French, and Spanish Communist parties' lack of interest in the oppression of Jews. At a banquet in New York City celebrating Novick's eighty-fifth birthday in April 1977, *Jewish Currents* editor-in-chief Morris Schappes endorsed *Morgen Freiheit's* criticism of these parties' failure to speak out "against anti-Semitism and compulsory assimilation in the USSR." Schappes praised Novick's opposition to "national nihilism" and the "sha-sha" (hush-hush) policy of some mainstream Jewish organizations that feared responding to antisemitic provocations. He placed Novick in a progressive Jewish tradition dating back to Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiva, leaders of the last Jewish national revolt against the Romans in 132–135 CE. Schappes included in this tradition August Bondi, a Jewish member of John Brown's armed abolitionist band in Kansas during the 1850s; early twentieth-century Yiddish sweatshop poet Morris Winchevsky; and Itzik Feffer and David Bergelson, Soviet Yiddish writers murdered by Stalin.<sup>25</sup> Several weeks later Novick and his *Morgen Freiheit* coeditor Chaim Suller joined Schappes and Itche Goldberg, editor of the monthly *Yiddishe Kultur*, in sending a memorandum to Soviet officials denouncing policies that "can lead only to the eventual and inevitable total disappearance and obliteration of Jewish life in the Soviet Union."<sup>26</sup>

In May 1977, the CP published a 2,000-word denunciation of *Morgen Freiheit* as "having slid in the last decade into 'open service in the interests of United States imperialism.'" The CP's Central Committee called on *Morgen Freiheit* supporters to force Novick's removal as editor. Novick, Chaim Suller, and other *Morgen Freiheit* editors held a public meeting in New York City to defend their newspaper against the CP's attack. Speaking in Yiddish, Novick charged the CP leadership with "hatred for Israel so profound it borders on anti-Semitism."<sup>27</sup>

During the last four decades, the American far left, which the CP dominated until the 1960s, has been largely composed of small sects that identified



as Trotskyist or Maoist, or evolved from groups that once did. Since the New Left's collapse, the far left has never reconstituted itself as a viable or cohesive social movement, and its following has steadily diminished. Far left groups remained consistently hostile to Israel and trivialized and often propagated antisemitism. Their views of Israel strongly resemble those of the far left in the period from 1967 to 1973. The contemporary American far left probably devotes more attention to propagandizing against Israel than to any other issue.

Contemporary far left groups share the same basic assumptions about Israel and antisemitism, whatever their disagreements on other issues. They all maintain that antisemitism today is of little or no importance, both in the West and in the Middle East. None of the far left groups believe that there is any need for a Jewish state. The far left views modern Zionism from its inception as an instrument of Western imperialism. Except for the fragments that remain of the CP, far left groups consider the partition of Palestine illegitimate. They refer to the rebirth of Israel in 1948 by the Arabs' term for it, "Nakba," or catastrophe. The contemporary far left continues to regard Israel as a European colonial-settler state and frequently compares it to apartheid-era South Africa and Nazi Germany. It considers Israel the aggressor against the Arabs in every war and military conflict in which it has been involved. Every far left group calls Israel expansionist and genocidal. As in the period from 1967 to 1973, the far left often invokes economic and theological antisemitic stereotypes in its propaganda.

All of the far left groups consider prejudice against Muslims and Islam, which they call "Islamophobia," much more serious a problem than antisemitism, and they devote considerable attention to it. The contemporary far left's analysis of Islamic culture differs strikingly from that of Old Left Communists, especially during the Popular Front period and the late 1940s. Like the CP during the late 1960s and 1970s, contemporary far left groups often act as apologists for African American antisemitism, although they react differently to some of its more extreme manifestations.

The most active surviving far left groups with a Trotskyist background are the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the SWP, the Spartacist League, and the Workers World Party (WWP), all of which aggressively propagandize against Israel. Like all far left groups today, they have tiny memberships, and their activity is confined almost entirely to the college and university campus. The ISO, probably the most visible of the contemporary far left groups, is a descendant of the Workers Party, which renamed itself the Independent Socialist League (ISL) in 1949. With only 389 members in 1947, the Workers Party recognized, unlike other far left "parties" with equally minuscule memberships, that it was just a propaganda group and renamed itself accordingly.<sup>28</sup> A "left" faction uncomfortable with the ISL's 1958 merger with the Socialist Party reconstituted itself in the 1960s as the Independent Socialist Clubs and then as the International Socialists (IS).

In 1976 a dispute within the IS resulted in some members breaking away to form the ISO. The ISO viewed the Soviet Union and other Communist countries as “state capitalist,” in contrast to the IS, which considered them “bureaucratic collectivist.” Several years later the IS dissolved. The ISO has probably never had more than a few hundred members.

The SWP had started to downplay its Trotskyist identity to compete with New Left groups for young recruits in the late 1960s and instead highlighted its support for Castro’s Cuba, African American and Third World nationalism, and identity politics. Trotskyism seemed outmoded by the 1960s, too “Old Left.” During the 1980s, the SWP gravitated even further away from Trotskyism, while continuing to emphasize militant opposition to Israel. SWP membership today is probably also just a few hundred.

The other two sects, the Spartacist League and the WWP, are even smaller and hardly visible today. The Spartacist League considers itself more truly Trotskyist than the SWP. It was established in 1966 with seventy-five members, most of whom had been expelled from, or had departed, the SWP, because they were disenchanted with the SWP’s embrace of the “petty bourgeois” Castro regime and black nationalism. By mid-1969, Spartacist League membership had declined to about forty. It has persisted to this day, but with a very small membership. The WWP was established in 1959 by SWP dissidents who gravitated toward Maoism during the 1960s. By the 1980s, the WWP had shifted to a more pro-Soviet position. It was also enamored of Third World and African American nationalist movements.<sup>29</sup>

The ISO put forward the standard antisemitic charges against Israel in its magazine *International Socialist Review* (ISR) in 2001 and 2002. The other far left groups published the same inaccuracies about Israel, echoing those of Weatherman and the Black Panthers decades before. *ISR* claimed that the modern Zionist movement allied itself from the beginning with “world imperialism.” It used South Africa as a model to racially subjugate and segregate an indigenous nonwhite population. Zionists collaborated with the Hitler regime. They saw a “definite upside” to the Nazis’ rise to power, because Jewish immigrants and their “assets” might “come flooding into Palestine.” *ISR* overlooked the Nazis’ confiscation of the property of Jewish refugees. It was unaware of the Zionists’ role in initiating, mobilizing, and leading the mass anti-Nazi street demonstrations and rallies in 1933 that helped bring Nazi atrocities to world attention. *ISR* also neglected the critical role of Zionists in launching and conducting the boycott of German goods and services during the 1930s.<sup>30</sup>

The *ISR* claimed Israel started the 1948 War of Independence to conquer Arab land and accused it of committing atrocities. Unlike the CP in 1948, it made no mention of Arab massacres of Jews. The *ISR* denounced what it called the “criminal” 1947 UN partition plan, which it claimed gave the Zionists a “green light” to launch a “terrible war of ethnic cleansing.” In 1948, “through systematic terror and murder, they drove 800,000

Palestinians off their land.” The *ISR* ignored entirely the Arabs’ “ethnic cleansing” of North Africa and the Middle East, carried out by expelling and massacring centuries-old Jewish populations.

Like the other far left groups, the ISO dismissed as completely unfounded Israel’s concern about Arab threats to drive the Jews into the sea. It accused Israel and its supporters of using the memory of the Holocaust as “emotional blackmail” to justify Israel’s “brutal” actions. The ISO claimed that Arabs and Muslims posed no significant danger to Jews in Israel or elsewhere. It blamed most of the antisemitic violence in Europe on “white Europeans,” especially “right-wing skinheads [and] neo-Nazis,” and it downplayed the involvement of Muslims. The ISO claimed that anti-Muslim prejudice was much more serious in Europe than antisemitism.<sup>31</sup>

When Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yassir Arafat died in November 2004, *ISR* published an article by Snehal Shingavi denouncing him for selling the Palestinians “the snake oil of the peace process.” His organization, Al Fatah, was guilty of “rank opportunism and compromise.” Arafat was “the best partner that America and Israel could have hoped for in negotiating a settlement on their terms.” Shingavi also condemned Arafat as an appeaser for allegedly accepting a two-state solution and reigning in the intifada.<sup>32</sup>

In 2010, *ISR* published an interview with Tikva Honig-Parnass, a militant Israeli anti-Zionist formerly active in the defunct quasi-Trotskyist Matzpen sect, who denounced Israel as “apartheid,” a “colonial-settler state” and “enforcer of U.S. imperialist interests.” She expressed sadness that the “anti-imperialist struggle” against Israel had not been led by “left” forces. But Honig-Parnass praised Hezbollah and Hamas, reactionary Islamist groups that cited the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to explain Israeli policies and the nefarious qualities of Jews. She urged the Left to “recognize that Hezbollah and Hamas are by now the only organized forces that fight against Zionist Israel, the United States, and the collaborative Palestinian and Arab leaderships.” Honig-Parnass credited Hezbollah, a proxy of the Iranian theocracy, with “play[ing] the most genuine role in fighting for the national independence of Lebanon.” She emphasized that Hamas came to power through democratic elections. Denouncing “Islamist movements like Hezbollah and Hamas” was nothing “but a call to support the U.S.-Israeli efforts to intensify the fragmentation of the people throughout the Middle East.” Honig-Parnass concluded the interview by asserting that “the right of Israel to exist is in fact the right of the Zionist apartheid state to continue its project of eliminating the Palestinian people.”<sup>33</sup>

The ISO was very active in the campus campaign launched in 2002 to pressure American colleges and universities to divest their holdings in corporations that did business in Israel, as were most of the far left groups. It joined the divestment movement in promoting a boycott of Israeli products, cultural groups, and universities. The boycott was a long-standing weapon

antisemites used against Jews. Almost immediately after assuming power in Germany in 1933, the Nazis organized a nationwide boycott of Jewish stores and offices, staged on April 1 of that year. The Nazis demonstrated in one day through the boycott that they could completely strangle Jewish economic activity.

The divestment and boycott campaign is directly modeled on the Arab League boycott inspired by its leader, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, a close ally of Hitler who collaborated in the Nazi genocide of Balkan Jews during World War II. The grand mufti, in leading the violent Arab uprising in Palestine to terminate Jewish immigration, declared a boycott of “everything Jewish.” After Israel became a nation in 1948, the Arab League imposed a sweeping boycott on all corporations doing business with it, hoping to delegitimize the Jewish state and strangle it economically.<sup>34</sup>

Today’s boycott is similarly designed to turn Israel into a pariah rejected by the rest of the world and to cause havoc in its economy. Like the Arab League, most of the boycott’s leaders and participants hope a boycott will inflict sufficient economic and political damage to cause Israel’s dissolution as a Jewish state. The ISO’s newspaper *Socialist Worker* denied that anti-semitism influenced the “Palestinian solidarity activists” who promoted the divestment movement and boycott. What motivated them was disgust over the Jewish state’s “apartheid laws” and “unconscionable crimes.” *Socialist Worker* accused the Jewish state of the crimes of “dispossession, systematic racism, collective punishment, and wholesale warfare on a population guilty of nothing other than their own existence.” These were all policies associated with Nazi Germany.<sup>35</sup>

The ISO and other far left groups have recently used the boycott to rally opposition against Israel’s blockade of Hamas-run Gaza. The blockade is designed to prevent Hamas from importing military equipment into Gaza, from which it repeatedly fires missiles at Israeli population centers. Gaza is also a launching area for Arab terrorist ground attacks against Israel. Most of the contemporary far left has backed the campaign by anti-Israel activists to sail flotillas of boats to Gaza through the blockade. The flotilla activists conflate the navy of the Jewish state with the antisemitic Royal Navy of the 1930s and 1940s, which prevented Jews from entering Palestine.<sup>36</sup> They equate today’s Gazans with Jews confined in British detention camps on Cyprus after the Holocaust.

Journalist Christopher Hitchens, a moderate leftist, noted that the flotilla activists “work in reasonably close harmony with Hamas,” which officially endorses the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and has “close ties with two of the most retrograde dictatorships in the Middle East,” Iran and Syria. Hitchens called the *Protocols* “a disgusting fabrication [that] is a key foundational document of 20th century racism and totalitarianism.” He was appalled that “any ‘activist’ claiming allegiance to human rights could cooperate at any level with the propagation of such evil material.”<sup>37</sup>

An ISO member at Columbia University presided over a lecture there by University of Edinburgh student Jess Chilton McConnell devoted to encouraging university divestment from “companies that are complicit with Israel’s actions in Palestine.” McConnell described the six-day occupation at her school, staged by anti-Israel students calling for the university to divest from companies supporting “the [Israeli] occupation of [ Hamas-run] Gaza.” The ISO was actively engaged in the Columbia Palestine Forum, which sponsored McConnell’s lecture. The Columbia Palestine Forum was established during Israel Apartheid Week in 2009 “to educate people about the nature of Israel as an apartheid system.”<sup>38</sup>

The SWP similarly gave very high priority to celebrating and backing the Arab struggle to dismantle Israel as a Jewish state, which it calls “an important front in the worldwide fight against the imperialist order.” The *Militant* predicted in 2002 that Israel would “suffer the same fate as Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa, other racist colonial settler-states established by the imperialist powers.” The SWP warns Jews that Israel will be their “death trap,” repeating the same argument it made in discouraging Jewish immigration to Palestine when Nazi Germany was expanding its control over Europe. It also aggressively promotes the Palestinians’ “right of return.” The SWP’s hostility to Israel was so intense that in 2002 it even welcomed Palestinian suicide bombings designed to indiscriminately murder large numbers of Israeli civilians – men, women, and children.<sup>39</sup>

The SWP has maintained its alliance with anti-Israel Arab and Muslim groups forged during the late 1960s. It joined them in a national student conference on the Palestine solidarity movement at the University of Michigan in 2002 that demanded a termination of U.S. aid to Israel and university divestment from companies doing business with it. The *Militant* reported that many conference panelists and participants “equated Israel with the apartheid state of South Africa.” The SWP candidate for lieutenant governor of Ohio, a conference participant, denounced Zionism as “chauvinist” and Israel as “expansionist.”<sup>40</sup>

Although remaining virulently anti-Israel, the SWP very recently moved away from its long-standing support for the boycott-divestment movement. It now claims that this movement “provides a cover for anti-Semitism.” The *Militant* expressed alarm in 2009 that the international campaign to boycott enterprises trading with Israel increasingly targeted Jewish-owned businesses. It called this “part of the deepening pattern of Jew-baiting and anti-Semitism in the middle-class left worldwide.” It conceded that “modern anti-Semitism often comes draped in an anticapitalist and even socialist cloak.” The *Militant* was alarmed that the international anti-Israel boycott movement had made Starbucks, whose owner was Jewish, a focus of its campaign. On January 10, 2009, 200 supporters of the boycott campaign looted a Starbucks coffee shop in London near the Israeli embassy. The *Militant* expressed disgust that one of the protestors had “posted a video

of the looting on YouTube under the header ‘How to really boycott Israeli products.’” At its 2010 convention, the SWP reiterated that the call to boycott Israeli products was “a dangerous concession to anti-Semitism.”<sup>41</sup>

The SWP’s reversal on the anti-Israeli boycott may be related to mounting distaste for the radical Islamist groups Hamas and Hezbollah, which most of the other far left groups do not share. The *Militant* in 2009 noted that radicals in the anti-Israel boycott movement – in particular, members of the ISO and WWP – were increasingly expressing support for Hamas. The *Militant* quoted an ISO leader’s remarks about the Hamas political bureau head in Damascus, capital of its sponsor, Syria: “There is little in what he says that I disagree with.” It then noted that the Hamas covenant, written in 1988, declares that the Jews were responsible for the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, and World War I.<sup>42</sup>

In another major reversal, the SWP recently ceased claiming that Israel is an apartheid state. The *Militant* maintained in 2009 that “there are sweeping differences between the apartheid regime in South Africa and the capitalist regime in Israel – in terms of organization of labor, the character of the regimes, and the historical conditions under which they emerged.”<sup>43</sup>

The Spartacist League has remained consistent in comparing Israel to Nazi Germany. During the 1982 Lebanon War, thirty members of its youth group, the Spartacus Youth League (SYL), picketed a lecture at Harvard’s Institute of Politics by Israeli ambassador Moshe Arens. An SYL spokesperson told the Harvard *Crimson* that the pickets were there to protest the “Zionists’ genocide.”<sup>44</sup> In 2002, the Spartacist League’s Len Meyers spoke at Harvard to an audience of fewer than twenty people, offering “a revisionist history of Zionism and Israel.” The Harvard *Crimson* reported that Meyers “compared Israeli leaders to Nazis and terrorists.”<sup>45</sup> In May 2011, the Spartacist League newspaper, *Workers Vanguard*, declared that, ever since what it called the “Nakba” in 1948, Israel had treated the Palestinians like “*untermenschen*,” German for “subhumans.” In still another attempt to equate Israel with the genocidal Nazis, *Workers Vanguard* claimed that Israel had driven the Palestinians into “ghetto-like enclaves.” It concluded by accusing “the Zionist butchers” of “slaughter[ing]” Palestinians “in the Gaza ghetto” during Israel’s 2009 war with Hamas.<sup>46</sup>

The Workers World Party claimed in 2009 to have joined “the most militant Black liberation forces,” as a tiny group in the 1960s and 1970s, in standing “almost alone in the U.S. in defending the Palestinian and Arab people against the U.S.-armed and funded Israeli war machine.”<sup>47</sup> This was not accurate. As shown in [Chapter 1](#), the larger and more significant far left groups of that era actively propagandized and demonstrated, quite vociferously, in support of the Arab campaign to delegitimize and obliterate Israel. In 2009, the WWP sent a delegation to visit five Palestinian camps in Lebanon as guests of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which it called Marxist. Its newspaper quoted favorably Islamic Jihad’s condemnation of

the Palestinian Authority for “defeatism” and “lack of will.”<sup>48</sup> The WWP claimed that the “racist, apartheid settler state called ‘Israel’” was “nothing but a giant U.S. military base dividing Asia from Africa,” created by imperialists to impede Third World unity, “a loaded gun pointed at the Arab people.”<sup>49</sup>

Like the Trotskyists, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), America’s only Maoist sect since the mid-1980s, denies Israel’s legitimacy as a state and condemns its policies as criminal. In its view Israel resembles the Mafia, brutish and uncivilized; it is American imperialism’s “global hitman.”<sup>50</sup> Drawing on centuries-old images of satanic Jews propagated by theological antisemites, the RCP claims that “whenever there is something too obscene, too bloody, too obviously immoral, that if the U.S. did it, it would look bad ... the U.S. can always count on Israel [to do it].”<sup>51</sup>

The RCP opposed Mao’s successors as “revisionists” and supported the “Gang of Four,” leaders of the 1960s Cultural Revolution whom the Chinese government imprisoned for “counter-revolutionary” activities. It considers the Soviet Union to have been Communist under Stalin but claims that his successors restored capitalism. Although much enamored of Stalin, the RCP considers Soviet support for the UN Palestine partition plan in 1947–1948 a “serious error.”<sup>52</sup>

The RCP’s “analysis” of the Arab-Israeli conflict is virtually indistinguishable from that of the other groups on the far left. It claims that Israel was “built literally on the blood [and] bones ... of the Palestinian people” on land “stolen through terrorist ethnic cleansing.” Israel’s rebirth constituted “a great legal and moral crime.”<sup>53</sup> This view led the RCP in 2010 to vociferously call for the reinstatement of Helen Thomas, the White House correspondent discharged for demanding that the “Jews get the hell out of Palestine” and go to Poland and Germany.<sup>54</sup> The RCP is as ignorant as Thomas of the fact that half of Israel’s Jewish population is of Afro-Asian origin, and as insensitive in demanding that Jews of European origin return to where the Holocaust was perpetrated.

The RCP identifies Israel with Nazi barbarism, maintaining that the Holocaust and the creation of Israel were similar “crime[s] of imperialism.”<sup>55</sup> In June 2010, the RCP newspaper highlighted a quote from Bob Avakian, the sect’s chairman since its founding in the 1970s: “After the holocaust, the worst thing that has happened to Jewish people is the state of Israel.”<sup>56</sup> (The spelling of “holocaust” with a lowercase “h” was designed to deny its uniqueness, a common practice today both on the far left and in the academic mainstream.)

In a direct antisemitic threat, the RCP warned American Jews that unless they “loudly and unequivocally” denounced Israel’s “crimes,” they deserved condemnation for them.<sup>57</sup> Ruth Wisse has noted that from the mid-1970s the Arab propaganda campaign, in which the far left joined, “attacked the Jews in democratic countries with charges of corrupt association.” This



blatantly antisemitic tactic has often effectively intimidated many Jews, particularly in academia, who try to “win back their own popularity by proving their innocence.”<sup>58</sup>

The behavior of Jewish anti-Zionists on contemporary university faculties can be compared to that of many Jews who attempted to enter the professoriate during the interwar period, who felt that they had to discard “any ‘Jewish traits,’ convert to Protestantism, or pass as WASP” to gain acceptance. Having gained admission to the professoriate in recent decades, Jewish anti-Zionists, many of whom are aligned with the far left, may “believe that acceptance requires ridding themselves of any *Zionist* traces, or better, conversion to anti-Zionism.”<sup>59</sup>

MIT linguist Noam Chomsky, the most prominent anti-Israel speaker and writer with a far left outlook, shares the radical sects’ view of Israel as an aggressively expansionist tool of American imperialism, dismisses its security concerns, and opposes its existence as a Jewish state. Chomsky has vituperatively denounced Israel in campus lectures and in the media since the 1970s. In a November 1972 speech to an audience of 400 at the MIT Student Center, which was cosponsored by the MIT Arab Club, Chomsky declared that “the establishment of the State of Israel was ‘wrong and disastrous.’” He asserted that “the concept of a democratic Jewish state is a contradiction in terms” and concluded, “there is not now and never will be democracy in Israel.”<sup>60</sup>

In his book *Middle East Illusions* (2003), Chomsky stated that since 1947 he had favored a socialist binationalist state as a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. He reiterated his support for a “binational solution” in a 2010 book, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel’s War Against the Palestinians*, written with Ilan Pappé, a supporter of Israel’s minuscule Communist Party and the “one-state solution.” In an interview with Chomsky published in this book, he called the demand that Hamas “recognize Israel, or in a more extreme form, Israel’s right to exist” the “legitim[izing] of Palestinians’ expulsion from their homes.”<sup>61</sup>

Like the radical sects, Chomsky draws parallels between Israel and Nazi Germany, referring, as the Black Panthers did, to Israeli “concentration camps.” He equated Israel’s claim that it had the right to use the preemptive strike as a means of self-defense with the Third Reich’s aggression against Czechoslovakia, which Hitler had called “a dagger pointed at the heart of Germany.” Chomsky compared Israeli military actions against Arab terrorists to Gestapo attacks on resistance forces in occupied Europe, arguing that the latter also described its targets as terrorists.<sup>62</sup> In *Gaza in Crisis*, he referred to Israelis as “those who wear the jackboots” and quoted approvingly Richard Falk’s characterization of Israeli policies in Gaza as “a prelude to genocide.” He called the United States Israel’s “partner in crime.”<sup>63</sup>

Chomsky calls for “carefully targeted [anti-Israel] boycotts” instead of a blanket boycott for tactical reasons. He explained that “the preparatory

educational and organizing work” required to make a blanket boycott effective “has scarcely been done.” Chomsky recommended in 2007 pressing instead for “university divestment from corporations that are involved in U.S.-Israeli repression and violence.”<sup>64</sup>

Chomsky went beyond even the far left sects in defending French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson, purportedly on free speech grounds. Chomsky would not acknowledge that Faurisson’s insistence on calling the Holocaust a “Zionist lie” made him antisemitic. He declared: “Is it antisemitic to speak of Zionist lies? Is Zionism the first nationalist movement in history not to have concocted lies in its own interest?”<sup>65</sup>

Chomsky’s militant anti-Zionism is linked with trivialization and denial of antisemitism. He maintained in 2002 that antisemitism “is no longer a problem” and attributed sinister motives to those who took it seriously. He claimed that the issue of antisemitism was “raised because privileged people want to make sure they have total control not just 98% control.”<sup>66</sup> “Privileged people” can be seen as a euphemism for wealthy Jews.

In the 1971 anthology *The New Left and the Jews*, Chomsky insisted that SNCC’s infamous anti-Zionist newsletter published after the Six-Day War was “hardly an illustration of anti-Semitism.” The SNCC newsletter drew on the hoary antisemitic stereotypes of enormous Jewish wealth and Jewish conspiracy to subjugate nations and continents that was propagated in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It depicted the Rothschilds as a central force in the Zionist movement, accusing them of controlling “the wealth of many European nations” and “much of Africa’s mineral wealth.” In the same volume, the distinguished labor Zionist scholar Marie Syrkin denounced Chomsky as an apologist for black militants’ antisemitism denial.<sup>67</sup>

The American far left ignored the blatant antisemitism that pervaded the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. It condemned the United States and Israel for walking out in protest. The conference, which the UN ostensibly convened to analyze racism and other forms of prejudice, quickly degenerated into “a raucous hate-fest against Israel.”<sup>68</sup> Many of the nongovernmental organization (NGO) delegates, who made up a majority of the conference attendees, energetically propagated antisemitism. These NGOs considered themselves human rights groups. Elie Wiesel called Durban a “conference of shame.” Wiesel declined the UN’s invitation to attend after reading the anti-Israel invective in the conference’s working paper. He explained that “his presence would have legitimized the work of the delegates.”<sup>69</sup>

“Shell-shocked” Jewish officials reported that the virulent antisemitic and anti-Israel episodes at the conference were “too numerous to count.” Gregg J. Rickman, who became the first U.S. special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, stated that “Jewish delegates were greeted in conference

sessions by shouts of ‘Jew, Jew, Jew’ and calls to take responsibility for killing Jesus.”<sup>70</sup> The Arab Lawyers Union distributed on the conference grounds pamphlets that combined the most vicious antisemitic stereotypes, including the blood libel and Jewish lust for wealth. They were “filled with grotesque caricatures of hook-nosed Jews depicted as Nazis, spearing Palestinian children, dripping blood from their fangs, with missiles bulging from their eyes or with pots of money nearby.” The Jewish Telegraphic Agency noted that “attempts to have the group’s UN accreditation revoked were refused.” There was a Palestinian march at the conference with thousands of participants, in which a placard was held up that stated: “Hitler Should Have Finished the Job.”<sup>71</sup>

The NGOs drew up a declaration on racism that denounced Israel as an apartheid state guilty of genocide and called for international sanctions against it. Robert S. Wistrich noted that the NGOs “also made sure to insert deliberately relativizing references to genocides in general,” referring to holocausts (with a small “h”). Their purpose was to minimize the significance of the Holocaust. For the twenty-five Jews at the NGO meeting held to discuss the declaration, the “last straw” came when a delegate proposed eliminating a section protesting prejudice against Jews. All twenty-five Jews walked out. Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, called the NGO declaration “the worst anti-Jewish document since World War II.”<sup>72</sup> In the tent where the NGOs drew up the declaration, fliers were discovered with Hitler’s photograph and the question: “What would have happened if I had won? There would be no Israel, and no Palestinian bloodshed.”<sup>73</sup>

The UN and NGOs’ denigration of Israel and the conference’s pervasive antisemitism prompted the United States and Israel to leave the conference. The UN draft documents claimed that Zionism was based on the concept of racial superiority.

The American far left groups denounced the U.S. and Israeli walkout and made no criticisms of the Durban conference. None of them condemned the vile antisemitic pronouncements at Durban or even commented on them. The SWP praised the conference for displaying “sympathy for the Palestinian struggle.”<sup>74</sup> The WWP denounced the “U.S.-Israeli efforts” at Durban “to depict solidarity with Palestine as ‘anti-Semitism.’” It was pleased that the conference condemned “Israeli apartheid.”<sup>75</sup> The RCP endorsed the conference drafts’ statements that Zionism was based on the notion of “[Jewish] racial superiority,” and references to Israel as an apartheid state. It complained that the American and Israeli delegates found these charges “absurd, perverse, intolerable ... blah, blah, blah” and had “at the first opportunity ... walked out.”<sup>76</sup> At Wellesley College, Angela Davis, twice CP candidate for vice-president of the United States (in 1980 and 1984) and a prominent leader of the moribund party until leaving in 1991 to help establish an independent communist sect, the Committees of Correspondence, “roused a

campus audience with an impassioned endorsement of the vicious hostility directed at Israel and Jews” at Durban.<sup>77</sup>

Many far leftists today make overtures to militant Islamists, whose outlook is intensely antisemitic, and excuse Muslim customs that Communists once denounced as reactionary. In the central conflict of the post-Cold War world, the far left clearly prefers militant Islamism over the United States and its allies. Sympathy for militant Islamism is certainly consistent with the Comintern’s position during the 1929 Palestine pogroms. And during the early 1920s, a Bolshevik regime isolated by the collapse of the short-lived revolutionary upsurge in Central and Eastern Europe allied with Muslim anticolonial movements in an effort to destabilize British and French rule in southern Asia. Theoretically, according to Lenin, Communists were only to back anticolonial struggles led by the “progressive bourgeoisie,” but during the 1920s they often allied with reactionary clerics and feudal landowners, as in Palestine.<sup>78</sup> The contemporary far left outlook toward militant Islamism, however, differs strikingly from other earlier Communist responses, particularly during the mid- and late 1930s, when the Soviets waged a concerted campaign to undermine Muslim influence in Central Asia, and during the 1940s, when they denounced Arab opponents of the UN partition plan as reactionary feudalists, and they highlighted their antisemitism.

To be sure, the far left from at least the time of the Suez War of 1956 has expressed solidarity with predominantly Muslim nations that claimed to be waging an anti-imperialist struggle against the West. But the far left convinced itself that these nations’ leaders were secular nationalists, and that the masses were only slightly influenced by Islam. Although it on occasion championed militant Islamic Third World movements as anticolonialist, it refrained from defending traditional Islamic culture. That has recently changed.

Many contemporary far leftists now excuse traditional Muslim customs that the Old Left detested. In a clear break from the Old Left, many far leftists now endorse Muslim campaigns to defend the veil and burka for women, which the Bolsheviks had tried to suppress. As part of its formal commitment to women’s emancipation, the Soviet government in an effort to suppress the veil terminated its manufacture and prohibited its importation into the USSR. Reuben Levy, prominent Cambridge University scholar of Islamic culture, noted in 1957 that Central Asian Muslims thwarted Soviet efforts to uncover women’s faces by making veils from perforated tablecloths.<sup>79</sup>

In *Dawn over Samarkand: The Rebirth of Central Asia* (1935), the American Communist Joshua Kunitz celebrated Soviet efforts to destroy the theocracy and customs of the “Moslem East” – “fanatical, obfuscated” Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizstan, and Tajikistan. The Communist weekly *New Masses* published as a two-part article a section of the book on the Soviet liberation of Muslim women. Kunitz expressed

strong contempt for what he considered Islamic authoritarianism, antisemitism, and severe oppression of women. He reported that when the Red Army entered Bokhara in 1920, the emir abandoned his 100 wives and fled, accompanied by “several of his comeliest *bachi* (young boys)” and several mullahs. During the emir’s reign, Bokhara’s Muslim clergy was “omnipotent ... crushing any signs of ... intellectual heterodoxy.” Bokhara’s schools, all mullah-controlled, provided an “education” that consisted mostly of memorizing and reciting Koranic verses.<sup>80</sup>

Before the Bolsheviks assumed control, the women of Muslim Central Asia were denied any rights and dignity. They were “living corpses,” chained to a “remote past.” The mullahs required them to wear the “monstrous” paranja, a “formless cloak” that covered them from head to toe, with a “thick, black, horse-hair net suspended in front of the face.” Even nine- and ten-year-old girls were forced to wear it. Kunitz noted that many Muslim mothers considered the paranja some protection against the emirs’ procurers, who abducted the most attractive girls for harems. He explained that the paranja degraded the woman, depriving her of individuality and enforcing silence. It was also unhealthy. The paranja was “filthy and insect-ridden” and the “cause of multifarious eye and skin diseases.”<sup>81</sup>

Soviet commissars and factory managers had shattered the mullahs’ authority and replaced mosques with secular schools offering modern subjects, libraries, and women’s clubs, liberating many Muslim women from “slavery.” Kunitz reported excitedly that Communist parades through Muslim settlements were inspiring women to discard their veils and paranjas. He noted that younger women in “bobbed hair” and “the khaki uniforms of the revolutionary youth” were increasingly appearing on Central Asian streets, among the veiled women in paranjas. In the Soviet future, the oppressed Muslim woman would be freed from her “gray or dark-blue coffin,” the paranja, and from polygamy and confinement to the “*ichkari* – woman’s section of the house.” The Communists were determined to abolish sharia – Muslim religious law – which Kunitz explained permitted a husband to punish his wife by “discreet use of corporal punishment” and confinement to the house.<sup>82</sup>

Kunitz also highlighted the Bolshevik campaign against Islamic antisemitism in Bokhara, explaining Muslims’ long-standing humiliation of Jews in the region, and the savagery of post-World War I Bokharan pogroms. Kunitz explained that until recently, Bokharan Jews were confined to a ghetto and prohibited from entering the Muslim section of the city after sunset. To instill a sense of inferiority in Jews, the Muslims forbade them to ride horses. They did not permit Jews to appear in public without a rope around their waists as a sign of shame, or at times without special “headgear of prescribed form, color, and material.”<sup>83</sup>

*Dawn over Samarkand* reported that the emir had responded to the Red Army’s invasion of Bokhara in 1920 by inciting a pogrom against the region’s



PHOTO 20. Muslim women in Tashkent, Soviet Central Asia. (Beinecke Library, Yale University)

Jews, whom he claimed were responsible for bringing in the Bolsheviks. As the emir prepared to flee, he ordered the wealthiest Jewish merchants decapitated and confiscated their funds. He had “the prettier Jewish women ... seized and distributed among his followers.”<sup>84</sup>

Contemporary far left responses to militant Islam differ dramatically from Kunitz’s, most obviously concerning Jews and women. The far left has entirely ignored Muslim antisemitism, at least since the Suez War. It refuses to acknowledge that antisemitism influences Arab or Iranian intentions toward Israel. Far left publications never refer to the numerous antisemitic pogroms in the Arab world, Arab desecration of Jewish cemeteries, or the post-1948 expulsion of Jews from Arab countries, which paralleled that from Spain in 1492. The far left has never shown any interest in compensating Sephardic and Mizrahic Jews for their property confiscated after Arab and Muslim nations forced them to leave. Nor does it consider the implications of Arab and Iranian endorsement of Holocaust denial and the blood



libel, which is often found in the highest levels of government. The same is true of Arab and Iranian political and religious leaders' calls to restore Jews to what they consider their proper condition of humiliation.<sup>85</sup>

The far left today tolerates and often serves as apologist for militant Islamists, whose objective is the establishment of a worldwide caliphate. Its publications do not mention the militant Islamists' circulation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, forged by the *czarist Russian* secret police. They usually overlook, and sometimes even endorse, militant Islamist efforts to spread practices the Old Left condemned as reactionary and oppressive. The contemporary far left gives more attention to aggressively defending Islamist threats against critics of reactionary Muslim practices than it does to criticizing them. The far left also tempers what criticism it voices by insisting that Islam does not differ significantly in its practices from any other religion, all of which it deems reactionary.

In June 1982, both the American CP and the SWP sent representatives to the General Congress of the World Center of the Resistance to Imperialism, Zionism, Racism, and Reaction, hosted by Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi in Tripoli. Gaddafi had proclaimed himself the leader of the Green (Muslim) Revolution. The General Congress in Tripoli was convened to encourage the formation of an anti-Western alliance of Third World nations. In a speech on the conference's first evening, Gaddafi emphasized that the Communist countries were not part of the "World Center," but he welcomed their attendance. There were delegates from eighty countries. At least twenty Communist parties sent representatives, including those of France, Greece, Portugal, and several Latin American nations. The Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites "were represented by either solidarity committees or other non-party formations." Several Trotskyists were present, in addition to the SWP representative. There were delegates from the Palestine Liberation Organization and numerous other so-called liberation movements, some of them so obscure that the American CP representative had never heard of them.<sup>86</sup>

No one at the General Congress mentioned Libya's horrific antisemitic measures, pogroms, and expulsion of its Jewish population. After Gaddafi became Libya's dictator in 1969, he introduced extremely repressive measures against Libya's 200 Jews, who were all that remained from a centuries-old community that numbered 38,000 in 1948. During the Six-Day War, savage anti-Jewish pogroms broke out in Tripoli, partly incited by Radio Cairo broadcasts calling on its residents to murder the Jews. Mobs slaughtered Jews in Tripoli's streets, and in their homes and shops, many of which they looted and burned. When the pogroms ended, the Libyan government expelled more than 4,000 Jews from the country, seizing their property and bank deposits. Soon after Gaddafi assumed power, he arrested all the Jewish men left in Libya and confiscated Jewish property. The Libyan press, drawing on Islamist theology, denounced Jews as "our enemies from time immemorial."



A few years later, Gaddafi permitted Libya's Jews to leave the country, and he destroyed twenty-one Jewish cemeteries and all the country's synagogues. By 1982, there were only ten Jews left in Libya.<sup>87</sup>

The American CP delegate, Jim West, provided a largely favorable assessment of the Gaddafi-led General Congress for the party leadership in the United States. He recommended that the CP take an "understanding and sympathetic" view of the General Congress. West emphasized its importance as "a gathering of anti-imperialist forces." He noted that the Libyan leadership had developed a friendlier attitude toward Communist countries.<sup>88</sup>

West expressed some discomfort, however, with conference attempts to reconcile Marxism with Islam. He was pleased that Islamic nations were displaying an increasingly favorable attitude toward the Soviet bloc. But the American CP delegate was bothered by the sexism he observed in Libya and at the conference itself. He noted that Gaddafi's *Green Book*, his revolutionary manifesto, "puts woman's place in the home." Although West observed some Libyan women driving trucks and wearing army uniforms, he saw "few women and lots of men" in the streets. "Male supremacist thinking" pervaded the conference hall, which was packed with delegates from the anti-imperialist Third World and Communist nations. West informed the party leadership that he had been the only speaker at the conference who "addressed himself to brothers and sisters – all others stopped at brothers, except for representatives of 2 African governments, who spoke of 'Ladies and Gentlemen.'" <sup>89</sup>

When confronted with a choice between supporting militant Islamists or the United States, the contemporary far left will choose the former and will align itself even with a reactionary theocracy like Iran because it considers it anti-imperialist. In April 2011, the New School University in New York City hosted a conference of left-wing radicals organized around the question "U.S. Empire, Islamic Fundamentalism ... Both Deadly. Is There Another Way?" The RCP newspaper reported that most attendees "agreed that between the U.S. empire and Islamic fundamentalism, it is the United States that has by far committed the greatest crimes against and poses the greatest threat to the people of the world." It noted that many attendees objected to the conference title because it seemed to equate Islamic fundamentalism with American imperialism. They alleged that it validated the "U.S. ruling class's attempts to make a bogeyman out of Islamic fundamentalism and rationalize its wars." Other participants questioned Islamic fundamentalism's failure to fully break with imperialism, and its "violent patriarchy and enshrining of ignorance."<sup>90</sup> It appeared that no one at the conference raised the issue of Islamic fundamentalists' fanatical antisemitism.

The WWP and the SWP rationalized and even defended militant Islamist practices. The WWP denounced a Danish newspaper's "vicious mockery of Mohammad," referring to their publication of cartoons of him that Muslims considered offensive. It called for a boycott of Danish products to protest

the cartoons.<sup>91</sup> The SWP condemned the French government's effort to ban the veil in state schools and to prohibit the wearing of the burka (what Kunitz called the *paranja*) in public places. It considered banning the veil and the burka an infringement on "democratic rights," although the veil connotes a woman's enforced silence, and the burka the suppression of her individuality. The SWP denounced French CP leader André Gerin for supporting the veil and burka ban, and for asking, "How can a Western secular republic accept keeping a woman's face in a cloth prison?" The SWP blasted the French CP for not disassociating itself from Gerin's open letter. It condemned the French CP newspaper *L'Humanité* for having "joined in the chorus denouncing the *burqa* as a 'social problem' in France."<sup>92</sup>

In 2010, the SWP opposed as "reactionary" proposed legislation in Quebec that required veiled Muslim women to uncover their faces when engaged in transactions with the provincial government. It claimed that the purpose of the proposed law was to foster distrust of Muslims among Canadian workers.<sup>93</sup>

Like the WWP, the ISO denounced what it considered the "relentless" denigration of Islam in the West and strongly objected when President George W. Bush called Hezbollah an "Islamofascist" organization. The ISO opposed French state schools' ban on the *hijab* (the scarf covering a woman's hair) as a restriction on religious rights. It denied that the ban was a "step forward for women," arguing that they should have the right to choose whether to wear them.<sup>94</sup> In 1934 *New Masses* had disagreed. Its article by Joshua Kunitz celebrating how the Soviets had transformed women's lives in Central Asia contained an illustration of a woman aviator on her plane wearing a pilot's headgear. A liberated woman, she had discarded her *hijab*. The ISO did not consider whether many Muslim women lacked freedom of choice because of male threats and pressure. Soviet Communist campaigners against the veil in Central Asia found that even Muslim women who became party activists and discarded it were often forced by Muslim males to resume wearing it.

The ISO responded to charges of sexism against Islamists by insisting that all religions oppressed women. The ISO claimed that Islam had inherited its "misogynistic" practices from neighboring Christian and Jewish societies Muslims had conquered. It equated restriction of abortion services and of the "morning after pill" in some parts of the United States with Islamic countries' sweeping denial of women's rights.<sup>95</sup>

The far left's support for the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979 illustrates how it prioritizes propagandizing against the United States over criticizing a reactionary, virulently antisemitic theocracy. The Spartacist League, whose slogans in 1979 were "Down with the Shah! No support to the mullahs! No to the veil!" claimed that its position "stood in sharp opposition to the rest of the left's capitulation to mullah-led reaction."<sup>96</sup> The SWP, ISO, and WWP welcomed the revolution that brought the Ayatollah Khomeini

to power, without concerning themselves with its implications for Jews. The Shah had been protective of Iran's Jews, but his overthrow by Islamic fundamentalists placed them in real danger.<sup>97</sup> As Robert S. Wistrich noted, the Ayatollah Khomeini immediately introduced "an Islamic 'universalizing' antisemitism" that cast Jews everywhere as "the perpetual enemy of Islam and of humanity" since the Prophet Muhammad's time. Like the Nazis, the Iranian leadership "equated Jews with everything bad including vice, immorality ... homosexuality, mass pornography, and the death of 'spiritual personality.'" In 1979, the ayatollah introduced a holiday, Al-Quds Day, "to call for Israel's annihilation."<sup>98</sup> The Iranians continue to celebrate it every year with massive demonstrations. The current Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is a Holocaust denier who threatens to wipe Israel off the map and sponsors Hezbollah, which disseminates virulently antisemitic propaganda like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Yet the SWP, ISO, WWP, Spartacist League, and RCP have all opposed U.S. efforts to discourage Iran from developing nuclear capability.

The SWP worried that Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial might convince people in the West that Iran posed a serious danger to Israel and that Jews needed a state. It did condemn the Iranian government's convening of a conference of Holocaust deniers in Tehran in December 2006, calling it "an assembly of apologists for the Hitler murder machine." But what upset the SWP most was that the Iranian regime, by staging the conference, had handed "imperialist governments from Washington to Berlin" an opportunity to deny Iran "the right to develop nuclear power." The Iranians had also given Israel's defenders a reason to label its opponents antisemitic.<sup>99</sup>

The SWP tried to place Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust during his 2007 invited presentation at Columbia in the most favorable possible light. It reported that he had "avoided some of the blatant anti-Semitism he has expressed in the past" and "instead argued that there ought to be 'different perspectives' on what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany."<sup>100</sup> Of course, no responsible person would ever question that the Holocaust occurred. It is common on the far left to refer only to Germany when mentioning the Holocaust, ignoring the widespread collaboration of other European peoples. Many antisemitic black nationalists also follow this practice as a means of minimizing the Holocaust.

In 2007, the RCP at the University of California at Berkeley disrupted a showing of the film *Obsession*, a documentary about militant Islamists and terrorism that provided analysis by world-renowned scholars of antisemitism, including Robert S. Wistrich, Sir Martin Gilbert, and Bernard Lewis. RCP members and their allies appeared at the film screening wearing orange jumpsuits and hoods to display solidarity with accused Muslim terrorists held at Guantanamo. One protester stood up during the film, removed his hood, and announced to the audience that although *Obsession* compared militant Islamists to Nazis, it was "very similar to Nazi propaganda." He

claimed it “prepare[d] people to accept and justify torture and unending war in the Middle East.” Campus police arrested him for disrupting the screening. The RCP and its allies at Berkeley that week also disrupted a lecture by Nonie Darwish, an Arab feminist, opponent of antisemitism, and critic of militant Islam.<sup>101</sup>

Although the far left commands little influence today, its contempt for Zionism and Israel and toleration of antisemitism have increasingly become part of mainstream opinion. This is particularly obvious within academia and the mass media, in which antisemitism is rarely taken seriously, either in the United States or elsewhere. It is now often mainstream liberals who depict Israel as monstrous, sometimes labeling it “apartheid.” In fact, liberals on some important occasions have been more willing than the far left to serve as apologists for antisemitism, as was the case during Louis Farrakhan’s “Million Man March” in October 1995. Several liberal U.S. senators refused a request from two scholars to send to their Senate colleagues the American Historical Association (AHA) 1996 Resolution and Statement denouncing the Nation of Islam’s charge that Jews had disproportionate involvement in American slavery and in the slave trade. By contrast, Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma, a conservative Republican, was pleased to send it to every member of the Senate.<sup>102</sup>

During the 1960s, liberals differed sharply with the far left over Israel and were much less likely to trivialize or to propagate antisemitism. The ultraconservative Freda Utey bitterly denounced John F. Kennedy during the 1960 presidential campaign for praising Zionist “labor and sacrifice” in Palestine, which he said had transformed a “wasteland” into a thriving nation.<sup>103</sup> During their nationally televised debate before the June 1968 California primary, Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy, the two staunchly liberal anti-Vietnam War candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination, both called for strong U.S. political and military support for Israel. McCarthy insisted that the United States had a particular moral obligation to support the Jewish state, because it had barred Jewish refugees from entering during the Holocaust. McCarthy even criticized President Lyndon B. Johnson for not providing strong enough support for the Jewish state during the Six-Day War.<sup>104</sup> During the 1968 Oregon primary, which preceded California’s, Kennedy urged the United States to sell fifty Phantom fighter jets to Israel “without delay.” In 1967, he called Israel a “gallant democracy,” a “tiny nation” with a population less than that of the borough of Queens, whose courage enabled it “to defeat the armies of nations with total populations of millions.”<sup>105</sup>

Paul O’Dwyer, Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate in 1968, who was known as very liberal and one of the most outspoken critics of the Vietnam War, was also a militant supporter of Israel. O’Dwyer denounced his Republican opponent Jacob Javits for having backed President Eisenhower’s demand that Israel evacuate the Sinai Peninsula, Egyptian territory that it

occupied during the Suez War. During Israel's 1948 War of Independence or in the period immediately preceding it, O'Dwyer had run guns to the militant Zionist Irgun, in defiance of the U.S. arms embargo.<sup>106</sup>

In recent decades the Republican Party has often appeared friendlier toward Israel than the Democratic Party. Former Democratic president Jimmy Carter even published an anti-Israel book in 2006 entitled *Palestine Peace Not Apartheid*. To be sure, in some presidential elections, notably 1992 and 1996, the Democratic presidential candidate, Bill Clinton, was more sympathetic to Israel than his Republican opponents, George H. W. Bush and Bob Dole, respectively. Without question, however, the predominantly liberal news media, particularly the major television networks and influential newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, have become relentlessly critical of Israel. The *New York Times* Pulitzer Prize-winning Middle East correspondent Thomas Friedman's reference to Israel as "Yad Vashem with an air force" mocked Israel's security concerns and Holocaust memory in a manner reminiscent of the far left. America's major newspapers during the 1950s and 1960s were more sympathetic to Israel, and leading broadcasters such as Edward R. Murrow, the nation's most respected television and radio journalist; Howard K. Smith; and Walter Cronkite were strongly supportive of the Jewish state. Biographer Alexander Kendrick referred to Murrow's "love affair" with Israel.<sup>107</sup>

Mainstream politicians and the news media were considerably more favorable than the far left to the so-called Million Man March held in Washington, D.C., in October 1995, organized and led by America's most prominent antisemite, Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam (NOI). It was obvious that the march was designed to make Farrakhan America's preeminent black leader. The virulently racist and antisemitic NOI taught that several thousand years ago a mad scientist with a Jewish name, Yacub, had created the white race, which was inherently incapable of good behavior. Jews were the most evil of this "devil" race, and Allah would soon target them for destruction in a massive attack by saucer-like aircraft launched from a massive spaceship, the Mother Wheel. The NOI taught that the United States would be entirely destroyed in this attack and rendered uninhabitable for centuries. Britain would also be a primary target of the attack because of its sponsorship in 1917 of the Balfour Declaration, promising the Jewish people a homeland in Palestine.

The antisemitic undertone of the march was clearly noticeable. Probably more antisemitic literature was distributed at the march than on any single day in American Zion history. The hate propaganda included the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a staple in NOI bookstores, and the *Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, authored and published by the NOI's Historical Research Department, which made the completely unfounded charge that Jews controlled the slave trade. Two Jewish counterdemonstrators who showed up on the National Mall protesting the NOI's antisemitism were

“at various times” surrounded and menaced by between fifty and a hundred NOI supporters. The NOI supporters spat on the Jewish counterdemonstrators and taunted them by shouting: “Hitler should have finished you off; The Jews control the world, you can’t control this day” and “We’re going to get you – go home, Jew, go home, Jew.” National Park Police tore signs from the counterdemonstrators’ hands and ordered them to leave the Mall. The crowd that the *New York Times* described as “relaxed [and] dedicated” also ripped signs from the counterdemonstrators and warned them to leave while they were still able to walk away.<sup>108</sup>

As Michael Walzer noted in the democratic socialist magazine *Dissent*, Farrakhan and the NOI tightly controlled the march. They staged the press conferences, handled the publicity, supplied uniformed Fruit of Islam marshals, and selected the speakers. Farrakhan’s keynote address lasted two and a half hours, five times as long as any other speaker’s. Walzer described the Million Man March as “a far right rally led by a man with obvious authoritarian and autocratic ambitions” that “crowned Louis Farrakhan as the most effective leader of black America.” He noted that “sponsoring and supporting organizations – like the Congressional Black Caucus” – oddly “made no bid at all for a share in controlling it.” Farrakhan “wholly determined” the march’s politics.<sup>109</sup>

The Million Man March received favorable and extensive coverage from the mainstream news media, and very few mainstream politicians condemned it. The Congressional Black Caucus endorsed the march, and some prominent African American leaders, like Jesse Jackson, participated in it. Although somewhat uncomfortable with Farrakhan’s control of the march, President Clinton was unwilling to denounce him by name. In 1996, Republican vice-presidential candidate Jack Kemp went so far as to praise the march and Farrakhan’s keynote address.<sup>110</sup>

Most of the far left, by contrast, denounced the Million Man March, mostly for its reactionary program. Some far leftists in criticizing the march mentioned their distaste for Farrakhan’s antisemitism but did not give it much emphasis. Angela Davis of the Committees of Correspondence condemned the march at a news conference a few days before it took place as “retrograde” and “narrowly sexist.”<sup>111</sup> Trotskyist groups, especially the SWP, detested the NOI for its vilification of Malcolm X. Malcolm X had drawn close to the SWP even before breaking with the NOI and had spoken at its Militant Labor Forums.<sup>112</sup> The NOI’s demonizing and continuous harassment of the isolated Malcolm X somewhat resembled the Kremlin’s vicious denigration of Trotsky. The Trotskyists also undoubtedly saw a parallel in the assassination of both men.

The ISO, SWP, Spartacist League, and RCP reacted similarly to the Million Man March. The ISO denounced the march as “unabashedly conservative” and sexist. Its message to black men was “repent for [your] laziness.” The ISO concluded that despite the march’s significant turnout, it was



“a step backward” for the radical movement. It noted that Farrakhan had denounced Malcolm X as a man “worthy of death.”<sup>113</sup> The SWP declared that Farrakhan’s demagoguery “echoe[d] many of the same reactionary themes often used by capitalist politicians to justify attacks on the working class.” It criticized “many liberal supporters of the march” for trying “to sidestep ... [its] broad anti-woman overtones.”<sup>114</sup> The Spartacist League condemned the march’s program of “self-help” and “black capitalism” as “retrograde,” “bankrupt,” and “petty bourgeois.” It commented: “No wonder that march met with favor from Bill Clinton’s White House.”<sup>115</sup> The RCP stated that Farrakhan appeared “outwardly and seemingly militant” but was actually “a very conservative force” who “blame[d] the masses instead of the system” for their problems.<sup>116</sup>

The SWP noted that among the march’s most enthusiastic backers was Lyndon LaRouche, a notorious antisemite of the far right whom it called a “fascist.” The mainstream media had overlooked LaRouche’s involvement. Farrakhan’s principal lieutenant in organizing the march, Benjamin Chavis, in a friendly interview with LaRouche’s newspaper *New Federalist*, credited a member of LaRouche’s organization, James Bevel, with calling the march a “Day of Atonement.” Chavis had been discharged as executive director of the NAACP for using \$332,000 of the organization’s funds to settle a sexual harassment suit against him without consulting the NAACP board. The *Militant* noted that “repeated references by the [*New Federalist*] interviewer ... to a Jewish conspiracy to oust Chavis as head of the NAACP were unanswered in the printed version of the interview.”<sup>117</sup>

There was, to be sure, some sympathy and even praise on the left for the Million Man March, as well as trivialization of the NOI’s antisemitism. Salim Muwakkil, who wrote frequently on African American affairs for the moderate leftist periodical *In These Times*, claimed, oddly, that the NOI was “perhaps the most influential black organization of the 20th century” and called the Million Man March “an unprecedented success.” He objected to characterizing Farrakhan as a “ranting demagogue.” Muwakkil criticized Farrakhan’s detractors’ “preoccupation with antisemitism,” which he considered peripheral to his appeal among African Americans.<sup>118</sup> *In These Times* was arguably the most prominent American left-wing radical periodical in the 1990s, with a circulation higher than those of the far left sects’ newspapers.

The WWP also supported the march, claiming that, unlike the leaders, most participants did not favor individual self-reliance and the subjugation of women. The WWP criticized the NOI’s “attitude toward other [non-black] nationalities” but did not explicitly condemn its antisemitism.<sup>119</sup>

Gabriel Schoenfeld noted that when Al Sharpton, a man of “anti-Semitic proclivities” who “proudly associated with Louis Farrakhan,” became a presidential candidate in the fall of 2003, he was “treated by the Democratic party [whose nomination he sought] as a member in good standing and by



the media as a respectable politician.” His fellow candidates during televised debates “never subjected [him] to a word of reproach or even a hint of criticism.” Sharpton had stirred up antisemitism in a speech immediately following the Crown Heights riot in Brooklyn in 1991 in which a rampaging black mob had chanted “Kill the Jews” and praised Nazi genocide. A member of the mob stabbed to death a young Orthodox Jew, Yankel Rosenbaum. Sharpton drew on the Black Panthers’ stereotype of the nefarious Jew enriching himself by exploiting black African resources and labor, while linking Israel with apartheid-era South Africa. He launched into a tirade against “[Harry] Oppenheimer in South Africa [who] sends diamonds straight to Tel Aviv and deals with the diamond merchants here in Crown Heights.”<sup>120</sup> Oppenheimer was an Anglican, not a Jew, and his Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa was well-known for its antisemitic hiring policies. Antisemites, invoking the medieval stereotype of the bloodsucking, money-obsessed Jew, have long depicted any wealthy diamond merchant as Jewish. Many black nationalists in the 1960s repeatedly referred to Oppenheimer as a Jew and continued to do so despite being corrected time and again.<sup>121</sup> The Nazis had also often described non-Jews they despised as Jewish.

Long after its disappearance as a force of any significance, the American far left’s outlook toward Jews and Israel exerts considerable influence on the college and university campus, arguably now the principal arena in the United States for the propagation of virulent anti-Zionism laced with antisemitism. Long-standing far left arguments delegitimizing the Jewish state, often combined with antisemitic stereotypes invoked decades ago, are now repeated at campus rallies and demonstrations, by invited speakers, and in the campus press. Campus propagandists, most of whom are not associated with the far left, trivialize or ignore the Holocaust and invert it by portraying Jews as the new Nazis, committing genocide on Arabs. Many in the political mainstream have come to accept far left claims that Israel is colonialist, ruthlessly expansionist, and an apartheid state.

University courses on European, American, and Middle Eastern history have rarely addressed the issue of antisemitism, or even the Jewish experience. It is likely that most students, faculty members, and administrators consider antisemitism today inconsequential, and many therefore see no need for a Jewish state. Most American and European history textbooks neglect antisemitism and display an anti-Israel bias. Few acknowledge the uniqueness of the Holocaust. The field of Middle Eastern Studies in the United States has become strongly anti-Israel, and faculty positions in it are essentially off limits to Jews, except for a few who are ardently anti-Zionist.

Universities offer anti-Israel propaganda courses that ignore academic standards and make no pretense of balance. Students are presented with the hackneyed arguments about Israel popularized by far leftists and black nationalists during the late 1960s and early 1970s and now mainstreamed. For example, in 2002, the University of California at Berkeley English

Department authorized a course on “The Politics and Poetics of Palestinian Resistance,” which it listed with the warning “Conservative thinkers are encouraged to seek other sections.” The course description read: “The brutal Israeli military occupation ... since 1948 has systematically displaced, killed, and maimed millions of Palestinian people. And yet, from under the brutal weight of the occupation, Palestinians have produced their own culture and poetry of resistance.”<sup>122</sup> The course instructor, then a Berkeley graduate student, is currently a professor at the University of Texas at Austin.

During the 1960s the New Left had helped undermine public perception of the Holocaust as unique by accusing the United States of waging a genocidal war in Vietnam. This implied that the United States committed crimes “as monumental as those of the Nazis.” As the Vietnam War became increasingly unpopular during the late 1960s, many in the political mainstream similarly came to believe that it was genocidal. As antiwar sentiment grew in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and again during the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it became increasingly acceptable in the political mainstream to equate the destruction inflicted by Allied bombing of German cities during World War II with the murder of European Jews in the Holocaust, just as the Trotskyists had done at the time.

Kurt Vonnegut drew on this antiwar sentiment in his best-selling novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, published in 1969 during the Vietnam War, to suggest that the British and American bombing of Dresden on February 13–14, 1945, was a war crime morally equivalent to those of the Nazis. Vonnegut called it “the greatest massacre in European history” and grossly inflated the death toll to 250,000, the figure presented by Nazi propagandists at the time. Scholars estimate the number killed at about 20,000 to 25,000.<sup>123</sup> The Allies targeted Dresden because it was an important communications center and railroad hub, through which the Germans were shifting troops to battle areas. When Dresden was bombed, Allied troops were still situated west of the Roer River, a formidable structural barrier protecting the Rhineland, which Hitler was determined to defend. American troops who staged the Roer crossing on February 23 engaged in some of the fiercest fighting of the war. The Rhine River, a massive obstacle impeding Allied troop movement, lay ahead. Moreover, Germany had initiated the bombing of civilian populations. German V-2 rockets had also repeatedly slammed into London and Antwerp, inflicting sizeable civilian casualties.

Nonetheless, the American press in recent years has accepted as accurate the vastly inflated estimate of German deaths sustained during the Dresden bombing, which was fashioned by Nazi Germany’s wartime propagandists. In 2008, for example, *USA Today*, reviewing Vonnegut’s *Armageddon in Retrospect*, repeated Vonnegut’s claim of 250,000 deaths without comment. The *New York Times Sunday Book Review* published the same figure in its review of the book. Neither newspaper was willing to print a correction.<sup>124</sup>

Students outside the far left have adopted its habit of disrupting lectures when they find the speaker's views objectionable. As a result, pro-Israel speakers often require heavy armed security on campus and are unable to complete their lectures. In February 2011, for example, eleven Muslim students shouted down Israel's ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, a prominent historian, at the University of California at Irvine. Yelling out "mass murderer" and "war criminal," the Muslim students forced Oren to leave the stage twice, "scuttling parts of the speech." These insults, conflating Israel with Nazi Germany, resembled those the far left had developed during the late 1960s. Oren could not conduct the scheduled question period. Thirty University of California Jewish Studies faculty members, few of whom were affiliated with the far left, signed a petition stating that they were "deeply distressed" that the county district attorney had filed criminal charges against the "Irvine Eleven," even though this was an obvious case of disorderly conduct, and the students had planned the disruption in advance. Defense attorneys called the disruption a "principled protest" and declared, "We need more students like this."<sup>125</sup>

Many university administrators have embraced a "Third World" multiculturalism that the far left helped popularize after the Bandung Conference in 1955, which often led them to ignore antisemitic provocations on campus. They take harassment of minorities they consider nonwhite much more seriously. The Bandung Conference, whose objective was to forge unity among Asian and African nations, had excluded Israel, an Asian nation half of whose population is of African and Asian origin. University affirmative action programs, which have assumed enormous importance in administrative, faculty, and staff hiring and in student admissions, give preference to the four protected ethnic/racial categories the federal government established in 1973: African American, Puerto Rican/Latino, Asian American, and Native American/Pacific Islander. This classification defined Jews as "privileged whites" and considered them part of the group that had oppressed the people in the four protected categories.<sup>126</sup> It also denied the Jews an identity as a people, like most of the far left traditionally did. This was the new view of Jews that many black nationalists had propagated during the 1960s. Many mainstream Americans similarly concluded that Jews in Israel were privileged whites oppressing a darker-skinned minority.

University administrators practice what Benjamin Ginsberg has called "First Amendment opportunism," applying the Bill of Rights selectively. They tolerate egregious violations of free speech by Muslim students while quickly clamping down on critics of radical Islam. Ginsberg noted that San Francisco State University's administration threatened to discipline students who had expressed opposition to terrorism by stepping on "images of the flags used by *Hamas* and *Hezbollah*." The administration charged the students with "attempting to create a hostile environment" and "incivility," violations of the Student Code of Conduct.<sup>127</sup>

Of course, administrators consistently ignore situations when campus opponents of Israel create a hostile environment for Jewish students. At Columbia, for example, many Jewish students reported that some members of the Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures (MEALAC) Department repeatedly denounced Israel in the classroom and insulted and intimidated students who voiced support for the Jewish state. One student testified that her Islamic studies professor told her she was not “Semitic” because “she had green eyes” and that she therefore “had no claim to the land of Israel.” Only racists like the Nazis classified people as “Semites” (or “Aryans”). A Columbia professor of Hebrew literature stated that “scores of Jewish students” had complained to him of being “browbeaten, humiliated, and treated disrespectfully for daring to challenge the idea that Israel has no right to exist as a Jewish nation.” Yet the committee the Columbia administration appointed to investigate the matter claimed to find no evidence of faculty propagandizing in the classroom. Both Columbia and Princeton canceled at the last minute lectures by Nonie Darwish after Muslim student groups protested.<sup>128</sup>

Since the 1960s, the American far left, composed largely of youth, in contrast to earlier radical cohorts, has not acknowledged antisemitism as a problem worth addressing, either in the United States or elsewhere. For the last century, nearly the entire American far left has advocated assimilation for Jews, except for the Communists during the Popular Front and the period immediately after World War II. The radicals of the late 1960s and of subsequent cohorts, however, shared none of the ambivalence toward secular Jewish culture or toward Israel expressed by some older Communists. These more recent cohorts were unaware of or indifferent to the intense, steadily increasing, and often violent American antisemitism of the decades preceding 1945. Far leftists who became politically active during the late 1960s and afterward were profoundly influenced by stridently anti-Zionist black and Arab nationalists and often served as apologists for their antisemitism.

The revelations about Communist bloc antisemitism and hostility to Israel that contributed significantly to the precipitous drop in CP membership in 1956–1957 meant little to those who became active in the far left in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the last period in which it exerted any influence, and in subsequent decades. Radicals from the late 1960s onward often drew on antisemitic stereotypes. Unlike some Communists of the preceding generation, these far leftists never viewed Israel as the progressive force in the Middle East. They even sometimes excused or defended Islamic practices that Communists during the 1930s and 1940s had condemned as reactionary, even barbaric. Unlike some older Communists, the recent far left remained indifferent about Islamic antisemitism and Arab persecution of Jews in the Middle East.

Since the late 1960s, the American far left has not even expressed ambivalence about Israel. It has accepted Palestinian guerilla claims that the Jews are merely a religious group and not a people. Like the CP during the 1929 Arab pogroms, this far left demonized Zionism, condemning Israel with increasing fervor after 1967 and calling for its destruction. It assumed a prominent role in the campus campaign to delegitimize Israel by pressuring universities to divest from corporations with investments there, and it promoted a general academic and economic boycott of the Jewish state. Largely uninformed about the Holocaust and Islamist theology, and contemptuous of democracy, far leftists since the late 1960s have remained unconcerned about what would result from Israel's destruction. Purporting to favor modern secular values and equality of peoples, they backed forces that, if successful, would replace Israel with an Arab dictatorship unwilling to extend rights to minorities and women. This far left shared the naïveté of its predecessors about authoritarian regimes and movements.

Decades after its demise, the far left outlook on Jews and Zionism has entered the mainstream, where it exerts significant influence especially at colleges and universities. Campus newspapers, invited speakers, and many faculty members, especially in Middle East studies programs, denigrate Zionism as stridently as the Communists during the 1929 Palestine pogroms. It has become increasingly acceptable in the mainstream to criticize Israel exclusively, while ignoring or downplaying heinous atrocities and suppression of human rights by the multitude of dictatorial regimes around the world. University administrators facilitate antisemitic hate speech on campus by consistently ignoring it, just as their counterparts during the 1930s declined to respond when the exchange students and prominent officials they welcomed from Nazi Germany disseminated antisemitic vitriol.<sup>129</sup> The far left's relentless propagandizing against Israel and Zionism, replete with classically antisemitic concepts and images, has outlived the movement that fashioned it. American colleges and universities are ensuring the transmission of antisemitism to the next generation.

## Notes

### 1 Promoting a Socialism of Fools: The New Left's Debt to the Old Left

1. *New Left Notes*, February 28, 1969.
2. *Black Panther*, January 4 and August 30, 1969, and November 10, 1973.
3. *New York Times*, August 15, 1967; *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1967; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 267–269. The article was published in the June–July 1967 *SNCC Newsletter*, which appeared in August.
4. American Jewish Committee, “The American Jewish Committee Trend Analysis Division Memorandum,” August 28, 1967, Records of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council [hereafter, NJCRAC], American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Center for Jewish History [hereafter, CJH], New York, NY.
5. Carson, *In Struggle*, 340.
6. *New York Times*, August 16, 1967; Carson, *In Struggle*, 268; *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 17, 1967. The African American press “generally condemned the SNCC position [on Israel] editorially and ... reprinted the repudiations of it by Negro leaders.” Donald Feldstein, National Community Relations Advisory Council to Member Agencies, “Anti-Semitism and Negro Extremism,” September 7, 1967, Records of the NJCRAC, AJHS, CJH.

Fearing withdrawal of Jewish donations, SNCC's New York office, responsible for fund-raising, claimed that the *Newsletter* had not presented SNCC's “official” position. However, officers at SNCC's national headquarters in Atlanta immediately staged a press conference to affirm the organization's endorsement of the anti-Israel article. *New York Amsterdam News*, August 19, 1967; Carson, *In Struggle*, 268. Stokely Carmichael informed Cairo's official news agency on September 11, 1967, that “we feel that Israel should not be considered a state because it is no state.” He stated that SNCC had “sent people to join the [anti-Israel] Arab student demonstrations in the United States.” In a speech in Syria later that month, Carmichael denounced “the Zionist-imperialist aggression against the Arab homeland.” “Stokely Carmichael's Comments on Middle East Situation (August–October 1967) and Itinerary,” November 1, 1967,

confidential file [hereafter, CF], White House Central Files: Middle East [hereafter, WHCF], box 9, Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson, Lyndon Baines Johnson [hereafter, LBJ] Library and Museum, Austin, TX. SNCC remained firmly committed to its virulently anti-Israel position as long as it existed.

Black nationalists, to justify rejecting integration, often charged that Jews, the whites considered most sympathetic to civil rights, were no different from other whites, or were even the most racist whites. If all whites, even Jews, were hopelessly racist, there was no point in forging an interracial civil rights coalition. SNCC's adoption of a hard-line anti-Israel position in 1967 and its espousal of antisemitism were central to redefining itself as a black nationalist organization.

7. *Militant*, September 4, 1967.
8. *Ibid.*, July 10, 1967.
9. *New Left Notes*, September 11 and October 2, 1967.
10. Daniel Berrigan, "The Middle East: Sane Conduct?" *Liberation*, February 1974, 10–13.
11. Arthur Hertzberg, "Response to Daniel Berrigan on 'Settler Regimes,'" *American Report*, November 12, 1973, 7. Berrigan's charge that American Jewish leaders had supported the Vietnam War was patently false. In the previous presidential election (1972), in which Vietnam was a central issue, 66 percent of Jews voted for the Democratic antiwar candidate George McGovern, running against Republican president Richard Nixon, who was conducting the war. McGovern received less than 40 percent of the popular vote. Jewish leaders were undoubtedly even more likely to have supported McGovern. Major Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Congress, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the Labor Zionist Alliance, had taken formal stands against the war. More Jewish leaders adopted an antiwar position than Protestant and Catholic leaders. Michael Novak, "The New Anti-Semitism," *Commonweal*, December 21, 1973, 310; Hertzberg, "Response to Berrigan," 7.
12. Dave Dellinger, "The Berrigan Debate: Bringing It All Back Home," *Liberation*, February 1974, 6.
13. Stephen H. Norwood, *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower: Complicity and Conflict on American Campuses* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 105, 130.
14. *Black Panther*, November 3, 1973.
15. Berkeley *Barb*, June 16–22, 1967; *Militant*, June 15, 1973.
16. *New York Times*, August 14, 1970; *UCLA Daily Bruin*, October 18, 1973; *Fire*, November 21, 1969.
17. *Militant*, June 26, 1967; *Fire*, November 21, 1969; *Black Panther*, October 20, 1973.
18. *Black Panther*, August 30, 1969, and November 16, 1968.
19. *Union Voice*, February 15, 1948.
20. Nathan Glazer, "Jewish Interests and the New Left" in Mordecai S. Chertoff, ed., *The New Left and the Jews* (New York: Pitman, 1971), 160.
21. *Militant*, October 26, 1973.
22. *New Left Notes*, April 17, 1969; *Militant*, September 20, 1968.
23. *Militant*, November 2, 1973, and June 19, 1967.
24. *Militant*, October 26, 1973.



25. *Black Panther*, November 24, 1973. See also issues of January 4 and August 9, 1969, for similar statements.
26. *Washington Post*, March 8, 1969.
27. Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith [hereafter, ADL], "Danger on the Left," *Facts*, November 1972, box 3, Julius Bernstein Papers, Tamiment Library [hereafter, TL], New York University [hereafter, NYU], New York, NY.
28. *Fire*, November 21, 1969. *Fire*'s article was reprinted from Tricontinental, part of Cuba's propaganda service.
29. *Black Panther*, November 3, 1973.
30. *Fire*, November 21, 1969. The *Black Panther* approvingly cited the statement of an Arab senior editor of a Beirut newspaper that Zionism assumed "the irreconcilability of Jew and man." *Black Panther*, July 7, 1973.
31. *Fire*, November 21, 1969.
32. *Militant*, October 26 and November 2, 1973.
33. Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Socialism of Fools," *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, January 3, 1971, 26.
34. ADL, "Danger on the Left."
35. *Daily Californian*, September 28, 1972.
36. *Black Panther*, September 30, 1972. The Black Panthers claimed that "heads of state" were responsible because West German authorities ordered police sharpshooters to fire on the terrorists. During the shooting the terrorists murdered the Israeli hostages.
37. *Black Panther*, October 24, 1970; *New Left Notes*, March 7, 1969.
38. Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 711–712.
39. *New Left Notes*, March 13, 1969.
40. *Militant*, June 19, 1967.
41. *National Guardian*, July 29, 1967.
42. Sol Stern, "My Jewish Problem – and Ours: Israel, the Left, and the Jewish Establishment," *Ramparts*, August 1971, 30–40; Sol Stern, "Israel Without Apology," *City Journal*, Summer 2003. In 1975 *Ramparts* did publish an article by Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit blaming Israel and the Arabs equally. Margalit called for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, Arab recognition of Israel, and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with Jerusalem serving as capital of the two states. Margalit denied that a Palestinian state would extend recognition only for tactical reasons, to restrict Israel to boundaries it could not defend in order to destroy it. Avishai Margalit, "Breaking the Mideast Deadlock," *Ramparts*, April 1975, 26–30.
43. Stern, "My Jewish Problem," 30.
44. *Ibid.*, 30–31. John Bagot Glubb, a quintessential British imperialist and the commander of Transjordan's Arab Legion against the Jewish forces during the War of Independence, was intensely antisemitic and regarded the creation of Israel as "a crime." The conservative Glubb's views on Israel were strikingly similar to those of the far left of the late 1960s. He claimed that Jews had "invent[ed] the idea of the 'master race'" in ancient times and that Nazi racial theories shaped the Zionists' view of the Arabs. Robert S. Wistrich, "A Deadly Mutation: Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism in Great Britain" in Eunice G. Pollack, ed., *Antisemitism on the Campus: Past & Present* (Boston: Academic Studies Press,

- 2011), 56. Wistrich notes that “at least four decades before it became fashionable on the British Left, Glubb was describing Zionism as a combination of ‘Judaism and Nazism.’”
45. Stern, “My Jewish Problem,” 31.
  46. Freda Utley, “Malmédy and McCarthy,” *American Mercury*, November 1954, 53–55.
  47. Freda Utley, *Will the Middle East Go West?* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1957), *passim*. Henry Regnery was a publisher known for issuing conservative and ultraconservative books.
- The *New York Times* drew similar parallels between far left and far right anti-Zionism, comparing the SNCC Newsletter’s anti-Israel diatribes in 1967 to those published in the newspaper of the white supremacist National States Rights Party, *The Thunderbolt: The White Man’s Viewpoint*. Like SNCC, *The Thunderbolt* had “rushed to the defense of the Arabs with a cluster of attacks that charged: ‘Israel napalmed civilians’ [and] ‘Press suppressed atrocity news.’” *New York Times*, August 15, 1967. The Boston *Globe* titled its editorial denouncing SNCC’s anti-Israel rant “KKK of the New Left.” Boston *Globe*, August 16, 1967.
48. Utley, *Will the Middle East Go West?*, 137–138, 155, 157–158.
  49. *Ibid.*, 142, 153.
  50. *Ibid.*, 123, 138, 162.
  51. Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International, 1975), 172.
  52. *Ibid.*, 170, 174.
  53. Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 172–173.
  54. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 417, 419.
  55. Robert S. Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky* (London: George S. Harrap, 1976), 7, 9–10.
  56. Robert S. Wistrich, “Marxism and Jewish Nationalism: The Theoretical Roots of Confrontation” in Robert S. Wistrich, ed., *The Left Against Zion: Communism, Israel, and the Middle East* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1979), 12.
  57. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed. Trotsky: 1879–1921* (New York: Vintage, 1965 [1954]), 72–75.
  58. Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews*, 195.
  59. Josef Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* (New York: International, 1934), 35–37, 39, 42–43.
  60. Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 65.
  61. Lipset, “Socialism of Fools,” 34.
  62. Conan Fischer, *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 59.
  63. István Deák, “Jews and Communism: The Hungarian Case” in Jonathan Frankel and Dan Diner, eds., *Dark Times, Dire Decisions: Jews and Communism, Studies in Contemporary Jewry XX* (2004): 38–61. (Quotes on pp. 48–49.)
  64. Deák, “Jews and Communism” in Frankel and Diner, eds., *Dark Times, Dire Decisions*, 49; Washington *Post*, May 24, 1946; *New York Times*, July 19, 1946.

65. Deák, “Jews and Communism” in Frankel and Diner, eds., *Dark Times, Dire Decisions*, 49. Rákosi and the other three top leaders of Hungary’s Communist government, Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas, and József Révai, were of Jewish origin but nonetheless held antisemitic views. Nor did they consider themselves Jewish. In 1952, for example, when a Jewish delegation appealed to Gerő to lift the government’s prohibition against Jewish emigration from Hungary, hoping that as a person of Jewish origin he might be sympathetic, he denied being a Jew and dismissed the delegation. *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 1952.
66. Deák, “Jews and Communism” in Frankel and Diner, eds., *Dark Times, Dire Decisions*, 49–50; *New York Times*, August 2, 1946.
67. *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1967.
68. *Ibid.* Stokely Carmichael similarly implied a connection between what he alleged was American “Jewish business owners’” exploitation of African Americans and “the crimes committed by Israel and Zionism against the Palestinian people” in his September 11, 1967, interview by Cairo’s official news agency. “Carmichael’s Comments on Middle East,” CF, WHCF, box 9, Papers of Lyndon B. Johnson, LBJ Library and Museum.
69. *Black Panther*, May 19, 1970.
70. Hillel Halkin, “The Return of Anti-Semitism,” *Commentary*, February 2002, 31.
71. Norman Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks: A Political Memoir* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 330.
72. Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism*, 7.
73. Eunice G. Pollack, “Preface” in Pollack, ed., *Antisemitism on the Campus*, vii.
74. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession*, 62.
75. Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism*, 8.
76. Gabriel Schoenfeld, *The Return of Anti-Semitism* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004), 146.
77. Nation of Islam (NOI) leader Louis Farrakhan in 2007 credited Malcolm X “with promoting the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and putting it on blacks’ essential ‘reading list.’” The *Protocols*, a forgery of the Russian czarist secret police, purported to detail the methods Jews planned to use to take over the world. It is one of the most pernicious pieces of antisemitic propaganda in history. Malcolm X became an adherent of the NOI while a convict (1946–1952) and formally joined after his release in 1952. He became one of its most prominent figures. Malcolm X left the NOI less than a year before his assassination in 1965 at the age of thirty-nine. His statements about Jews as an orthodox Muslim during the last months of his life continued to be suffused with antisemitic images of the Jew as “bloodsucker.” Toward the end of his life Malcolm X became close to the SWP, which published his speeches, in part because he shared its virulent anti-Zionism. He spoke at the SWP’s Militant Labor Forum several times. Eunice G. Pollack, “African Americans and the Legitimization of Antisemitism on the Campus” in Pollack, ed., *Antisemitism on the Campus*, 217, 225.
78. Mainstream Jewish groups were deeply concerned that the public schools ignored Jewish history and culture in their curricula. In June 1971, Milton I. Goldstein, commission chairman of the National Jewish Community Relations Council, notified member agencies that “the failure of public school textbooks

adequately to reflect the place of Jews and Judaism in American and world history was once again on the agenda of the steering committee of our Commission on Church-State and Interreligious Relationships at its April 2 meeting.” Goldstein informed the member agencies that commission representatives were meeting with textbook publishers to discuss this. He urged member agencies to press local and state school officials “to reject and discard unacceptable texts now in use.” Goldstein recommended that they consult a study sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League documenting the omission of Jewish history and culture from school textbooks. Milton I. Goldstein to Member Agencies, June 10, 1971, Records of the NJCRAC, AJHS, CJH.

79. Daniel Bell, *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967 [1952]), 143, 147; Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York: Vintage, 1986 [1960]), ix–x, 468; Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 373; Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974 [1957]), 529.
80. Bell, *Marxian Socialism*, 145; Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974 [1961]), 138. The CIO expelled ten unions for being “Communist dominated” in 1950: the American Communications Association; Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers; International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America; International Fur and Leather Workers Union; International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union; International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers; National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards; United Office and Professional Workers of America; and United Public Workers of America. Anti-Communists in the United Furniture Workers of America overturned its Communist leadership at the same time. In 1949, the CIO expelled two other unions as Communist-dominated, both of which had recently withdrawn: the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers and the United Farm Equipment and Metal Workers. Steve Rosswurm, “Introduction” in Steve Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO’s Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 1–2. The Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers Union was Communist led for a time. The powerful New York City Transport Workers Union was led by Communists and fellow travelers until 1948.
81. In the 1932 presidential election campaign – which took place during the Third Period, when the CP had considerably fewer members and supporters than in the Popular Front, World War II, or the late 1940s – a large group of prominent American writers and literary critics endorsed the CP ticket of William Z. Foster and James Ford. The group included John Dos Passos, Sherwood Anderson, Langston Hughes, Sidney Hook, Edmund Wilson, Granville Hicks, Malcolm Cowley, Erskine Caldwell, Matthew Josephson, James Rorty, Newton Arvin, Robert Cantwell, and Waldo Frank. Bell, *Marxian Socialism*, 142. Dos Passos, Anderson, Caldwell, Hughes, Theodore Dreiser, Richard Wright, James Agee, Jack Conroy, and Ernest Hemingway contributed articles to the CP’s cultural magazine *New Masses*. Hicks served as literary editor. David Caute, *The Fellow-Travelers: Intellectual Friends of Communism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988 [1973]), 176, 228; David Peck, “New Masses” in Mari

- Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992 [1990]), 527.
82. Paul Buhle, “New Left” in Buhle, Buhle, and Georgakas, eds., *Encyclopedia*, 517.
  83. Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 306.
  84. Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, 446.
  85. Products of the whiteness school include Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998). Mark Naison (born in 1946) held this view as an SDS activist in the 1968 Columbia student uprising and later in the Weathermen. Naison recalled in his memoir that he had considered American Jews far more advantaged than African Americans, and not subjected to significant prejudice or discrimination: “I had ... experienced so little anti-Semitism that to equate it with racism seemed ludicrous.... Describing Jews as ‘victims’ seemed to be dishonest and self-serving.” The previous generation did not share this perspective. Naison’s parents told him about

their experiences with anti-Semitism, which had dominated their lives from the time they were children. They encountered it on the streets of New York, where they had been chased and harassed by Irish teenagers. It came up when they searched for jobs or looked for a place to stay while on vacation, and it colored their treatment by colleagues and administrators in the New York City public schools during the Depression.... For them the Holocaust was not something remote. Both had lost relatives to the Nazis and had suffered the additional horror of knowing that a good many Americans supported Hitler’s policies, at least in the beginning.

Mark Naison, *White Boy: A Memoir* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 29–30.

## 2 American Communists’ Tangled Responses to Antisemitism and Nazism, 1920–1939

1. Stephen White, “Communism and the East: The Baku Congress, 1920,” *Slavic Review* 33 (September 1974): 494–497; *London Times*, September 23, 1920.
2. White, “Communism and the East,” 499–500.
3. John Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920 – First Congress of the Peoples of the East* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1993), 147.
4. *New York Times*, August 17, 1920.
5. White, “Communism and the East,” 499–500, 502; *London Times*, September 23, 1920.
6. Gregory J. Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 41; White, “Communism and the East,” 507–508; Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn*, 204–207.
7. Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn*, 286.
8. Fannina W. Halle, *Women in the Soviet East* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1938), 34, 82–83, 167, 170–172, 297–298; Massell, *Surrogate Proletariat*, 133–139,

- 229–233, 262–263, 320. Halle notes that during the 1920s “most of the *mul-lahs* in central Asia represented unveiling as a sufficient reason for a woman to roast in hell to all eternity.” Massell notes that Soviet women organizers visiting Muslim Central Asia for the first time found most revolting not the “poverty, illiteracy, and disease,” but what they perceived as “monstrous, openly humiliating [Muslim] customs emphasizing [rank female] inferiority at every turn.” He states that in Muslim Uzbekistan men poured human excrement on unveiled women and, considering them prostitutes, gang-raped them. Muslim men savagely beat and murdered other women who discarded the veil, sometimes stoning them to death. The *New York Times* in 1927 reported that Soviet police in Samarkand, capital of Kazakhstan, found a Muslim woman whose husband had chained her to a stake in the yard for five years because “she had ventured to enter a bazaar veiless.” Halle, *Women in the Soviet East*, 175; Massell, *Surrogate Proletariat*, 134–135, 281; *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1927; *Washington Post*, May 1, 1927; *New York Times*, March 22, 1927.
9. Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn*, 288–290.
  10. *Ibid.*, 282–291. Most Communists denied the unique nature of Jewish suffering in Russia during the Civil War immediately following World War I, just as the Soviets did with the Holocaust. Joshua Kunitz, a leading American Communist authority on Jewish affairs, expressed the typical view: “Russia was an ocean of blood, in which Jewish blood was relatively speaking but a drop.” Joshua Kunitz, “Soviet Jewry: Is it Doomed?” [1951 or 1952], box 1, Joshua Kunitz Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library [hereafter, RBML], Columbia University [hereafter, CU], New York, NY.
  11. J. B. Schechtman, “The U.S.S.R., Zionism, and Israel” in Lionel Kochan, ed., *The Jews in Soviet Russia Since 1917* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 105, 112; *New York Times*, May 19, 1920.
  12. *New York Times*, May 19, 1920, and June 27, 1921.
  13. Marie Syrkin, “Slow Learners on the Left,” *Midstream*, May 1982, 39; *Washington Post*, March 1, 1921; Schechtman, “The U.S.S.R., Zionism, and Israel” in Kochan, ed., *Jews in Soviet Russia*, 104–106.
  14. *New York Times*, September 13, 1927, and August 5, 1929; Schechtman, “The U.S.S.R., Zionism, and Israel” in Kochan, ed., *Jews in Soviet Russia*, 112.
  15. *New York Times*, June 11 and July 15, 1928.
  16. Yehoshua A. Gilboa, “Hebrew Literature in the U.S.S.R.” in Kochan, ed., *Jews in Soviet Russia*, 217–218.
  17. Joshua Kunitz, “Jews in the Soviet Union,” *New Masses*, August 28, 1934, 21.
  18. Jerold S. Auerbach, *Hebron Jews: Memory and Conflict in the Land of Israel* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 66, 68–72; Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 173–174; *New York Times*, August 26 and 28 and September 1, 1929; *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1929.
  19. Sachar, *History of Israel*, 174.
  20. Auerbach, *Hebron Jews*, 75.
  21. *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1929.
  22. *Atlanta Constitution*, October 17, 1929, and *New York Times*, September 8, 1929.



23. Melech Epstein, *The Jew and Communism: The Story of Early Communist Victories and Ultimate Defeats in the Jewish Community, U.S.A., 1919–1941* (New York: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee, 1959), 223–224; *Daily Worker*, August 30, 1929.
24. *Daily Worker*, August 24 and 30, 1929; Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 224–225.
25. *Daily Worker*, September 3, 1929.
26. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 225–227, 231–232; *Daily Worker*, August 29, 1929.
27. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 226–227; *Daily Worker*, September 4, 1929.
28. *Daily Worker*, September 25, 1929.
29. *Ibid.*, August 29 and 30 and September 4, 1929; Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 226.
30. *Daily Worker*, September 4 and 5, 1929.
31. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 225, 233.
32. Leon Trotsky, “On the ‘Jewish Problem’” [Interview published in February 1934] in Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on the Jewish Question* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 18.
33. *Daily Worker*, November 3, 1933.
34. Joseph Nedava, *Trotsky and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972), 9, 211, 213–214; *London Observer*, October 6, 1929; *Manchester Guardian*, July 27, 1934; *New York Times*, May 10, June 3, and August 26, 1934.
35. Robert S. Wistrich, “Anti-Zionism in the U.S.S.R.: From Lenin to the Soviet Black Hundreds” in Robert S. Wistrich, ed., *The Left Against Zion: Communism, Israel, and the Middle East* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1979), 277.
36. U.S. House of Representatives, “Supplemental Statement of Dr. Solomon M. Schwarz,” *Seventh Interim Report of Hearings Before the Select Committee on Communist Aggression*, Part 5, *Treatment of Jews by the Soviet*, 83rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1954, 120.
37. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 177.
38. Israel Cohen, “The Jewish Republic of Biro-Bidjan,” *Jewish Chronicle* Supplement, June 1934, v; *Manchester Guardian*, July 27, 1934; *New York Times*, August 26, 1934; Doris C. Kaplan, “Passage to Siberia” in Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds., *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 42.
39. *Manchester Guardian*, July 27, 1934.
40. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 177.
41. Kaplan, “Passage to Siberia” in Kaplan and Shapiro, eds., *Red Diapers*, 43; *New York Times*, March 7, 1937.
42. Judel Mark, “Jewish Schools in Soviet Russia” in Gregor Aronson, Jacob Frumkin, Alexei Goldenweiser, and Joseph Lewitan, eds., *Russian Jewry, 1917–1967* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1969), 255–257; Solomon Schwarz, “Birobidzhan: An Experiment in Jewish Colonization” in Aronson et al., eds., *Russian Jewry, 1917–1967*, 376, 382.
43. Chimen Abramsky, “The Biro-Bidzhan Project, 1927–1959” in Kochan, ed., *The Jews in Soviet Russia*, 72–73; Schwarz, “Birobidzhan,” in Aronson et al., eds., *Russian Jewry, 1917–1967*, 394.



44. Cohen, "Jewish Republic," iv; Manchester *Guardian*, July 27, 1934.
45. R. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution: A Study of the Economics and Politics of the Extreme Stages of Capitalism in Decay* (New York: International, 1935), 203–204, 213.
46. John L. Spivak, *Plotting America's Pogroms* (New York: New Masses, 1934), 8, 10, 12, 17–19, 24–26, 73–79, 92. The *New Masses* editorial, which appeared on December 4, 1934, was included in the pamphlet.
47. *Ibid.*, 93–94.
48. John L. Spivak, *A Man in His Time* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), 271–272.
49. "Hear Spivak Expose Anti-Semitism," *New Masses*, December 11, 1934, 31.
50. Spivak, *Plotting America's Pogroms*, 94–95.
51. Franz Borkenau, *World Communism: A History of the Communist International* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962 [1939]), 290.
52. Robert Gessner, "Brown Shirts in Zion," *New Masses*, February 19, 1935, 11–13.
53. Communists played a significant role in the street protests on Beacon Hill in Boston against Hitler emissary Friedrich Schoenemann when he spoke at Ford Hall Forum in November 1933; in the demonstration in Charlestown's City Square against the visit to Boston of the German battle cruiser *Karlsruhe*, which sailed into port flying the swastika flag in May 1934; in the protests in Harvard Yard and in Harvard Square against the warm reception the Harvard University administration extended to Hitler's foreign press chief, Ernst Hanfstaengl in June 1934; and in the demonstrations the next year against the arrival in New York of the German passenger liner *Bremen*. Each of these protest actions climaxed in fights with the police and in arrests. Stephen H. Norwood, *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower: Complicity and Conflict on American Campuses* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 27–28, 42–55; *New York Times*, July 27, 1935.
54. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 286.
55. Norwood, *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower*, 12, 14–15, 18–19, 26–27.
56. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 286.
57. *Daily Worker*, October 27, 1933.
58. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1933.
59. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 286.
60. Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 269–270.
61. *Ibid.*, 270.
62. Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent*, January 18, 1935.
63. John L. Spivak, "The Underground Speaks," *New Masses*, December 31, 1935, 9–12; John L. Spivak, *Europe Under Terror* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), 5–6, 96, 114, 116–118, 121–122.
64. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 255. *Morgen Freiheit* was at that time the only American Jewish newspaper to appear on the high holidays. During the Third Period, the only classic Yiddish writer that the Communist press published or praised was Sholem Aleichem. The CP ignored the Jewish content of his work and presented him only as an advocate of the poor against the rich. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 255.
65. Editors' response to Ann Seaver, "Our Readers' Forum," *New Masses*, February 25, 1936, 21; A. B. Magil, interview by Alan Thompson, January 5, 1994, New

- York City, Oral History of the American Left Collection [hereafter, OHAL], Tamiment Library [hereafter, TL], New York University [hereafter, NYU], New York, NY; A. B. Magil, *The Truth About Father Coughlin* (New York: Workers Library, 1935).
66. William Cunningham, “Stay Out of the Olympics!” *New Masses*, October 8, 1935, 9–10; “For a Counter-Olympics,” *New Masses*, December 31, 1935, 4–5.
  67. “How to Begin: Report of Gil Green. Delivered at January 1936 Conference of the National Executive Committee of Y.C.L.,” 21, box 6, Communist Party of the United States of America Printed Ephemera Collection, PE 031, TL, NYU.
  68. Bruce Minton, “Our Olympics: Made in Germany,” *New Masses*, November 5, 1935, 13–14. Minton’s figure of 8 percent is confirmed by the World News Service statistics on the 1932 Olympics. Memo to Walter Winchell, n.d., 4Zg42, Walter Winchell Papers, The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX. Bruce Minton was the pseudonym of Richard Bransten.
  69. “Speakers’ Notes No. 7,” February 15, 1939, box 3, Robert Minor Papers, RBML, CU, New York, NY.
  70. “Delegates Guide for Participation in National Convention. Panel – Discussions,” Prepared by 9th National Convention Arrangements Committee, Young Communist League, USA, April 1939, 5, TAM 132, box 42, Communist Party [hereafter, CP] Papers, TL, NYU.
  71. *Daily Worker*, May 19, 1938.
  72. Alex Weissberg, *Conspiracy of Silence* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1952), 350.
  73. Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 479; Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974 [1961]), 153–154.
  74. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 479; *Daily Worker*, July 11, 1938.
  75. Earl Browder, *Zionism* (New York: Yidboro, 1936), 3–5, 12–15, 17.
  76. *Ibid.*, 21–23.
  77. Paul Novick, *Palestine: The Communist Position; the Colonial Question* (New York: Jewish Buro of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, 1936), 25–27.
  78. *Ibid.*, 27.
  79. *Ibid.*, 24, 26.
  80. *Socialist Appeal*, June 6, 1939. Epstein was unable to persuade the American CP’s Central Committee to consider his criticisms of the Palestine CP. Instead, party authorities instructed him to appear before a sub-committee that “confronted [him] with a ready-made resolution” backing the Palestine CP.
  81. *New York Times*, July 14 and August 10, 1936.
  82. *Yearbook, Young Communist League of America 1937*, 37, TAM 132, box 42, CP Papers, TL, NYU.
  83. Trotsky, “Thermidor and Anti-Semitism” in Trotsky, *Trotsky on the Jewish Question*, 27; Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967 [1949]), 605; Albert Glotzer, *Trotsky: Memoir & Critique* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989), 222.

84. Trotsky, *Trotsky on the Jewish Question*, 25, 28; *New York Times*, January 28, 1937.
85. Adolph Held, "An Indictment Against the Liquidators of Jewish National Life, the Murderers of Jewish Writers," n.d., roll 188, Jewish Labor Committee [hereafter, JLC] Papers, TL, NYU.
86. *Sunday Worker Magazine*, February 14, 1937; *Daily Worker*, February 12, 1937.  
 This was not the first time that American CP leaders' denunciations of opponents within the Communist movement were tinged with antisemitism. Joseph Freeman, a *New Masses* editor who left the CP in the late 1930s, recalled that the American CP faction led by William Z. Foster used antisemitism to defeat Jay Lovestone's group, its rival for control of the party during the late 1920s. Freeman told writer Daniel Aaron in 1958 that the Foster faction "attacked the Lovestone group during the twenties on the ground that [its leaders] 'were COLLEGE MEN—bourgeois!' and 'that they were JEWS.'" Freeman reported that "this slimy campaign was conducted by word of mouth." Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left: Episodes in American Literary Communism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 132.
87. *Daily Worker*, February 10, 1937; Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 381–383.
88. *Daily Worker*, February 10, 1937.
89. *New York Times*, March 7, 1937, and June 15 and October 3, 1938; Nedava, *Trotsky and the Jews*, 215; Schwarz, "Birobidzhan"; Manchester *Guardian*, November 2, 1937.
90. Schwarz, "Birobidzhan" in Aronson et al., eds., *Russian Jewry, 1917–1967*, 378–380. In 1939, by contrast, the Jewish Autonomous Region's Russian-language newspaper had a circulation of 14,700.
91. *Daily Worker*, November 12, 1938.
92. *Ibid.*, November 15, 1938.
93. *Chicago Tribune*, November 26, 1938; *New York Post*, November 29, 1938.
94. *Daily Worker*, November 15, 1938.
95. *Ibid.*, November 17, 1938.
96. *Socialist Appeal*, November 19, 1938.
97. Education Department, Local N.Y. SWP – 4th International, "Bulletin No. 2 – Open the Doors," November 25, 1938, box 13, George Breitman Papers, Tamiment Library [hereafter, TL], New York University [hereafter, NYU], New York, NY.
98. *Socialist Appeal*, November 26, 1938.
99. *Ibid.*
100. *Ibid.*; Cannon to all locals and branches, November 18, 1938, box 13, Breitman Papers, TL, NYU.
101. *Socialist Appeal*, November 26, 1938.
102. "Bulletin No. 2 – Open the Doors," Breitman Papers, TL, NYU.
103. *Socialist Appeal*, November 26, 1938.
104. *Ibid.*
105. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1939.
106. *Ibid.*, December 17, 1938.

### 3 World War II: The Limits of American Far Left Concern for European Jewry

1. Manchester *Guardian*, August 24, 1939. The *Guardian* headlined its article on von Ribbentrop's arrival in Moscow to sign the Pact, in an airplane with a "huge Swastika painted on the rudder": "ELABORATE RECEPTION FOR THE GERMANS: Swastika Flags and Top-Hats." When von Ribbentrop returned to Moscow in late September to discuss the Polish situation with Soviet officials, the Moscow airport was "gaily decorated with intertwined Swastikas and Red Flags." Manchester *Guardian*, September 28, 1939. On the Soviet Revolutionary Army band's playing the Horst Wessel song, see Arthur Koestler, *Scum of the Earth* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 18.
2. "Memorandum of a Conversation Held on the Night of August 23rd to 24th, Between the Reich Foreign Minister, on the One Hand, and Herr Stalin and the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Molotov, on the Other Hand" in Raymond James Sontag and James Stuart Beddie, eds., *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939–1941* (New York: Didier, 1948), 75.
3. Manchester *Guardian*, August 25, 1939.
4. David J. Dallin, *Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy, 1939–1942* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942), 76–77.
5. Koestler, *Scum of the Earth*, 45.
6. Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974 [1957]), 404.
7. Alex Weissberg, *Conspiracy of Silence* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1952), 12, 484–485, 493–494, 497; Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power, 1933–1939* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 693–694.
8. Arthur Koestler, Preface to Weissberg, *Conspiracy of Silence*, x.
9. Koestler, *Scum of the Earth*, 121. On percentages of Jews serving in the International Brigades, see Albert Prago, *Jews in the International Brigades* (New York: Jewish Currents reprint, 1979), 4, 6.
10. Koestler, *Scum of the Earth*, 119, 122.
11. Arthur Koestler, *The Yogi and the Commissar and Other Essays* (New York: Collier Books, 1945), 79–80.
12. Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War* (New York: Henry Holt, 1985), 84.
13. Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1989), 16.
14. Gilbert, *Holocaust*, 85–87; "Memorandum by the State Secretary in the German Foreign Office (Weizsäcker), December 5, 1939" in Sontag and Beddie, eds., *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, 128.
15. *New York Times*, September 29, 1939.
16. *New York Times*, December 14 and 19, 1939. The Communists were also annoyed that the AJCongress/JLC rally denounced the Red Army's attack on Finland, which the Pact had assigned to the Soviet sphere of influence.
17. Daniel Bell, *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967 [1952]), 184; Melech Epstein, *The Jew and Communism: The Story of Early Communist Victories and Ultimate Defeats in the Jewish*

- Community, U.S.A., 1919–1941* (New York: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee, 1959), 359–360; Arthur Liebman, *Jews and the Left* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), 508.
18. Howe and Coser, *American Communist Party*, 391.
  19. A. B. Magil, “Who’s Afraid of Peace?” *New Masses*, April 9, 1940, 3.
  20. “Anti-Semitism Spreads” and “Foxhunting for War Aims,” *New Masses*, April 8, 1941, 21.
  21. “Anti-Semitism in Congress,” *New Masses*, June 17, 1941, 21.
  22. “Call to American People’s Meeting, New York City, April 5–6, 1941,” Working Conference for Peace and American Peace Mobilization, 4Z840, Walter Winchell Papers, The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
  23. *Daily Worker*, April 23, 1941; “Testimony of Bella V. Dodd,” U.S. House of Representatives, *Investigation of Communist Activities in the Columbus, Ohio, Area: Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities*, 83rd Cong., 1st sess., 1953, 1742, 1744.
  24. “Anti-Semitism Spreads,” 21.
  25. “Tragedy in Palestine,” *New Masses*, December 10, 1940, 20, and “Unrest in Palestine,” *New Masses*, December 24, 1940, 20. On the *Patria* episode, see Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008 [1998]), 105–109; Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfilment: Palestine, 1917–1949* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 60–61.
  26. “Tragedy in Palestine,” 20, and “Unrest in Palestine,” 20.
  27. CP of Massachusetts, “Irish Patriots Hung: Chamberlain Is the Hangman,” box 5, Communist Party of the United States of America [hereafter, CP] Printed Ephemera Collection, Tamiment Library [hereafter, TL], New York University [hereafter, NYU], New York, NY; *New York Times*, December 15, 1939, and February 7 and 8, 1940; *Manchester Guardian*, December 15, 1939, and February 8, 1940.
  28. “The Lend-Lease Dictatorship,” *New Masses*, January 21, 1941, 18; Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 84; Bell, *Marxian Socialism*, 184. Isserman notes that the Communists made “No Convoys!” “their slogan of the hour.”
  29. “Friends of Imperialism,” *New Masses*, October 31, 1939, 15.
  30. American Peace Mobilization, “We Have Just Begun to Fight! There Must Be NO AEF!” March 1941; American Student Union, “Don’t Mourn for Peace – Organize!” February 1941; “Peace Rally Hits Convoys, Probe; Nation-Wide Strikes Split on Aims, Many Campuses Have Two Rallies,” *The Reporter*, April 28, 1941, box 9, and Morris U. Schappes to Maia Turchin, May 7, 1941, box 7, Morris U. Schappes Papers, American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Center for Jewish History [hereafter, CJH], New York, NY.
  31. Weissberg, *Conspiracy of Silence*, 475.
  32. Adam B. Ulam, “A Reply to Mr. Maisky,” *New York Times*, September 23, 1971; Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–67* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 285.
  33. Sergei Kudriashov, “L. D. Trotsky and the Second World War” in Terry Brotherstone and Paul Dukes, eds., *The Trotsky Reappraisal*

(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 89; *New York Times*, February 13, 14, and 16, 1940; Manchester *Guardian*, February 13 and 14, 1940. Even during the Popular Front, Soviet trade with Nazi Germany was significant. In a November 26, 1938, article headlined “Hitler’s Trade Booms with His Enemy, Russia,” Sigrid Schultz, the Chicago *Tribune*’s Berlin correspondent, reported that Soviet-German trade had reached such large proportions that the Soviet trade delegation in Berlin was being quadrupled. The Soviets were selling “great quantities of metal ores” to the Third Reich and purchasing German manufactured goods.

34. Franz Borkenau, *European Communism* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 246–249.
35. Koestler, *The Yogi and the Commissar*, 134.
36. Borkenau, *European Communism*, 249–250.
37. Charles Yale Harrison, “Maritime Union Works with Gestapo,” *New Leader*, August 3, 1940, 1.
38. *Ibid.*, 1, 8.
39. Ludwig Lore, “Norwegian Labor Attacked by Soviet,” *New York Post*, April 6, 1940, clipping in box 35, Robert Minor Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library [hereafter, RBML], Columbia University [hereafter, CU], New York, NY.
40. *Daily Worker*, May 1, 1940, box 2, Minor Papers, RBML, CU.
41. *New York Times*, April 28, 1940, clipping in box 39, Minor Papers, RBML, CU.
42. “The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, April 9, 1940” in Sontag and Beddie, eds., *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, 138. Soviet collusion in the German military effort against Britain was evident in a September 16, 1940, communication between German foreign minister von Ribbentrop and the German ambassador in Moscow, Schulenburg. As the Battle of Britain raged, von Ribbentrop instructed Schulenburg to inform the Soviets in advance that Germany was stationing an anti-aircraft battalion with equipment in northern Norway to combat “the continued penetration of English planes into Germany and into the territories occupied by Germany.” Schulenburg was to tell the Soviets that the Germans would land the anti-aircraft equipment near the Swedish port of Haparanda, very close to the Finnish border, for transport to Norway. The Non-Aggression Pact had consigned Finland to the Soviet sphere of influence. Von Ribbentrop telegraphed Schulenburg: “We assume ... that the Soviet Government will keep this communication strictly secret.” “The Reich Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), September 16, 1940” in Sontag and Beddie, eds., *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, 188–189.
43. Dallin, *Soviet Russia’s Foreign Policy*, 208.
44. *Daily Worker*, April 7, 9, and 10, 1940. A *New Masses* editorial similarly claimed that the German invasion of Norway was “the Nazi answer to the [British] mining of Norwegian territorial waters.” “The War Spreads,” *New Masses*, April 16, 1940, 22.
45. Alter Brody, “Scandinavia in Flames,” *New Masses*, April 23, 1940, 6.
46. Earl Browder, *The Second Imperialist War* (New York: International, 1940), 102–103, 111, 116, 119, 213–214.

47. Editors of *New Masses*, "The Britain We Want to Aid: An Open Letter to the People's Convention," *New Masses*, January 14, 1941, 4–5; *Manchester Guardian*, December 20, 1940.
48. *London Times*, January 13, 1941; *Manchester Guardian*, January 13, 1941; *New York Times*, January 13, 1941.
49. *London Times*, January 13 and 22, 1941; *Manchester Guardian*, January 21, 1941.
50. *New York Times*, January 13, 1941; Editors of *New Masses*, "The Britain We Want to Aid," 5.
51. *Daily Worker*, May 13, 1940.
52. "Who Fights Hitler?" June 1940, box 5, CP Printed Ephemera Collection, TL, NYU.
53. *New York Times*, September 12, 1941.
54. *Daily Worker*, May 13, 1940.
55. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1940.
56. Koestler, *The Yogi and the Commissar*, 175; *Daily Worker*, June 6, 1940.
57. Lillian Grey, "Nazi Middletown," *New Masses*, May 28, 1940, 26–27.
58. Koestler, *Scum of the Earth*, 205–206.
59. "Quotations," Speech of Vito Marcantonio Before Brooklyn Community Peace Congress, August 14, 1940, in International Labor Defense, "War-Conscription-Civil Liberties," box 44, Vito Marcantonio Papers, New York Public Library [hereafter, NYPL], Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York, NY.
60. Vito Marcantonio, "Speech Recorded for Student Peace Meetings," box 68, Marcantonio Papers, NYPL.
61. "Quotations," Speech of Vito Marcantonio Before Brooklyn Community Peace Congress. The leftist, prointerventionist New York newspaper *PM* declared that, during the period of the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact, Marcantonio, "plac[ing] his talents at the disposal of isolationism," had put forward "the same line used in the wealthy clubs and the fine mansions, on the street corners and in the back alleys." It thereby associated him with ultraconservative upper-class anti-semites and the Christian Front and Christian Mobilizers, quasi-fascist groups that incited violence against Jews. *PM*, March 5, 1942, in box 18, Minor Papers, RBML, CU.
62. Emanuel Neumann to Vito Marcantonio, March 7, 1941 and Marcantonio to Neumann, April 19, 1941, box 3, Marcantonio Papers, NYPL.
63. *Fur and Leather Worker*, August 1940.
64. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 129; *Chicago Tribune*, September 10, 1941; *Washington Post*, September 21, 1941.
65. *Daily Worker*, April 24, 1941.
66. *New York Post*, April 23, 1941.
67. *Daily Worker*, June 23, 1940.
68. Adam Lapin, "Prelude to M-Day," *New Masses*, August 6, 1940, 12; "Conscription," *New Masses*, September 24, 1940, 17; *Fur and Leather Worker*, August 1940.
69. John Roy Carlson, *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1943), 245. John Roy Carlson was the pen name of Armenian American journalist Arthur Derounian.



70. Comparison of *Daily Worker* and *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter*, box 93, Records of the Boston Jewish Community Relations Council [hereafter, BJCRC], American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Boston, MA.
71. Bella V. Dodd, *School of Darkness* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1954), 126.
72. Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 349–351, 361–363; New York *Herald Tribune*, November 27, 1939. The *Herald Tribune* published Stolberg's six-part series about the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact's impact on the CP, entitled "Collapse of Communism in U.S.," beginning on November 26, 1939.
73. Boston Jewish Community Relations Council, untitled documents on Jewish People's Committee convention, March 22 and 27, 1941, box 94, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS; "Schwartzmann Quits Reds, Holding Hitler-Stalin Pact Condemns 2,500,000 Jews to Pogroms," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, September 25, 1939; *Daily Worker*, March 24, 1941.
74. "Ex-Members of the Communist Party and Communist Innocents," n.d., box 93, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS; New York *Herald Tribune*, November 26, 1939.
75. "Ex-Members," box 93, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS; Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 433.
76. Henry F. Srebrnik, "The Jews Do Not Want War!": American Jewish Communists Defend the Hitler–Stalin Pact, 1939–1941," *American Communist History* 8 (June 2009): 50–52, 60, 62, 67. ICOR did manage to publish a pamphlet during the period of the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact justifying the Soviet Union's refusal to admit Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. The author, S. J. Aronsberg, claimed that when he visited the USSR in 1940, Soviet Jews informed him that nearly all of the German Jewish refugees were "bourgeois or bourgeois-minded" and would only cause trouble if allowed to enter the USSR. Srebrnik, "The Jews Do Not Want War!" 60.
77. Peggy Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist: A Personal View of a Political Life, 1925–1975* (Berkeley, CA: Creative Arts Book Co. and Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1977), 140; George Charney, *A Long Journey* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 4, 125–127. Charney ridiculed the claim of the Pact's apologists that it provided time for the Soviet Union to prepare for a German military attack: "The huge losses of manpower, civilian population, and resources suffered ... in the surprise attack makes a shambles of [that] argument.... What preparation?" Charney ruefully observed: "It is still difficult to measure the moral setback suffered by the Communist movement in the West as a result of the pact."
78. Leon Trotsky, "Imperialism and Anti-Semitism" in Leon Trotsky, *Trotsky on the Jewish Question* (New York: Pathfinder Press), 31.
79. Leon Trotsky, "Social-Patriotic Sophistry," *New International*, November 1938, 328. "Social patriotism" was a derogatory term applied by the far left to socialists who supported their nation's war effort and was widely used in World War I. Those targeted were accused of collaborating with the capitalists and betraying the working class.
80. *Socialist Appeal*, October 8, 1938.
81. *Ibid.*, July 25 and August 1 and 25, 1939.
82. Albert Glotzer, *Trotsky: Memoir & Critique* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989), 313.

83. *Socialist Appeal*, September 5, 1939.
84. Lionel Abel, "As Through a Glass Darkly," *Dissent*, September 1981, 446–447; Robert S. Wistrich, "Leon Trotsky's Theory of Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11 (October 1976): 178–179. Defeatism meant that overthrowing the social order had priority over defending the government (as opposed to "defensism," the reverse).
85. Henry Levy to Joseph Roos, January 17, 1941, box 56, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS.
86. Glotzer, *Trotsky*, 229–230.
87. *Ibid.*, 288, 312; Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer ... : The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 36, 44–46; Max Shachtman, "The Soviet Union and the World War," *New International*, April 1940, 68–72.
88. *Labor Action*, May 20, 1940.
89. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1941.
90. *Ibid.*, June 10, 1940, and May 5, 1941.
91. "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, 1789–1940: An Editorial," *New International*, August 1940, 131.
92. "France After the Defeat," *New International*, November 1941, 269, 271, 273.
93. *Ibid.*, 271, 273–274.
94. *Ibid.*, 274.
95. "For the Third Camp!" *New International*, April 1940, 68.
96. Glotzer, *Trotsky*, 314.
97. Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer*, 46–47; Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 149–150.
98. All of the world's Communist parties naturally made the same shift. For its part, Axis propaganda also changed significantly in emphasis, although of course it remained virulently antisemitic. Throughout the period of the Molotov–von Ribbentrop Pact, Nazi propagandists had made "Judaeco-capitalism" and "Jewish plutocracy" the central focus of their tirades. Once Germany invaded the Soviet Union, they concentrated on linking Jews and Communism. Breslau radio, over which the Hitler regime broadcast "an unceasing flood of incitement against the Jews" in Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian, announced to the Soviet people that German forces were "coming as liberators of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples from Stalin and his Jewish clique." Breslau radio claimed that Lazar Kaganovich, the only person of Jewish origin with a high position in the Soviet government, wielded more power than Stalin and was conducting a "Jewish policy." "Nazis Launch Radio Drive on Soviet Jews; Urge Russian Troops to Turn Bayonets on Jews," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, June 24, 1941.
99. Stephen H. Norwood, "Marauding Youth and the Christian Front: Antisemitic Violence in Boston and New York During World War II," *American Jewish History* 91 (June 2003): 233–267.
100. Otis Hood, interview by B. Schechter, March 24, 1981, Boston, MA, Oral History of the American Left Collection, TL, NYU.
101. Councilman Peter V. Cacchione to William B. Herlands, October 21, 1943, roll 2, Peter V. Cacchione Papers, TL, NYU.

102. "Councilman Cacchione's Statement on the Drew Case," January 12, 1944, roll 2, and Councilman Peter V. Cacchione, "It Happened in City Hall: The Fight Grows Sharper," February 20, 1944, roll 1, Cacchione Papers, TL, NYU.
103. Cacchione, "It Happened in City Hall: The Fight Grows Sharper."
104. Unidentified clippings, May 14 and 15, 1942, box 42, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
105. Leonard E. Golditch to Congressman Vito Marcantonio, June 20, 1944, box 3, Marcantonio Papers, NYPL.
106. U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads on H.R. 2328 and H.J. Res. 49*, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, iii, 1, 32; Jewish People's Committee, "To Delegates and Friends," March or April 1944, box 54, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH; *New York Times*, November 17, 1943. The JPC was established in 1939 after the American Jewish Congress had barred members of the Communist-led International Workers Order (IWO) from joining. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America*, 434.
107. Jewish People's Committee, "To Delegates and Friends," box 54, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
108. Arkady Vaksberg, *Stalin Against the Jews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 117–119; Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967 [1949]), 605–606.
109. Gregor Aronson, "The Jewish Question During the Stalin Era" in Gregor Aronson, Jacob Frumkin, Alexis Goldenweiser, and Joseph Lewitan, eds., *Russian Jewry, 1917–1967* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1969), 184–186, 188; Solomon M. Schwarz, *The Jews in the Soviet Union* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1951), 197.
110. Anatole Goldstein, "The Fate of the Jews in German-Occupied Soviet Russia" in Aronson et al., eds., *Russian Jewry, 1917–1967*, 102.
111. Aronson, "The Jewish Question" in Aronson et al., eds., *Russian Jewry, 1917–1967*, 185–186; Epstein, *The Jew and Communism*, 374–375.
112. *Daily Worker*, February 27, 1943.
113. *Ibid.*, March 3, 1943.
114. David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York: New Press, 2007 [1984]), 320.
115. *Daily Worker*, February 28, 1943. Bittelman found the formation of a Jewish army in the Yishuv acceptable. He stipulated, however, that the Allies "guarantee" the Arabs in Palestine and throughout the Middle East and North Africa "the same right to participate, in a full degree, in the war against fascism." This qualification reflected Communist concern that Jews not acquire too much of a military advantage over Arabs in Palestine.
116. Alexander Bittelman, "My Return to Jewish Life," 571, n.d., box 1, Alexander Bittelman Papers, TL, NYU.
117. "Report Delivered by Max Perlow, Acting President at the Jewish Peoples Committee Conference," June 6, 1943, box 54, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
118. Vaksberg, *Stalin Against the Jews*, 111–112; *New York Times*, March 4, 1943.
119. Halina Chybowska, "Alexander Erlich Speaks of His Father," *Polish Review*, 7, 11, March 29, 1943, box 40, Morris U. Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
120. *Ibid.*, 11; Vaksberg, *Stalin Against the Jews*, 106.

121. Vaksberg, *Stalin Against the Jews*, 106–112; Deutscher, *Stalin*, 606; Chybowska, “Alexander Erlich Speaks,” 11, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU; James B. Carey, “The New Barbarism,” November 21, 1952, roll 188, Jewish Labor Committee [hereafter, JLC] Papers, TL, NYU; Chicago *Tribune*, March 4, 1943.
122. *Daily Worker*, April 11, 1943.
123. *Ibid.*, December 24, 1952.
124. *Ibid.*, April 1, 1943.
125. *Ibid.*, March 27, 1943.
126. *Ibid.*, March 9, 25, and 31 and April 1 and 3, 1943.
127. Alexander Bittelman, “The War, the Jews, and the Jewish Assembly,” April 11, 1943, reel 10, Earl Browder Papers, Microfilm Edition.
128. *Daily Worker*, March 8, 9, and 31 and April 3 and 11, 1943.
129. James Wechsler, “Freedom for All” in *Jewish Labor Fights Communism*, October 1, 1950, roll 189, JLC Papers, TL, NYU.
130. On the obstacles to Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, see Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Bantam, 1975), 311–340.
131. “The Jews and the Revolutionary Party,” ca. 1944, box 15, George Breitman Papers, TL, NYU.
132. “Perspectives and Tasks of the Coming European Revolution: Resolution Adopted by the Fifteenth Anniversary Plenum of the Socialist Workers Party, November 2, 1943,” *Fourth International*, December 1943, 330–331; M. Stein, Acting National Secretary, to the Non-Resident Members of the N.C., January 3, 1944, box 2, Bert Cochran Papers, TL, NYU.
133. Mark Braden to the P.C., September 26, 1943, box 2, Cochran Papers, TL, NYU.
134. Felix Morrow, “The First Phase of the Coming European Revolution” [1943], box 2, Cochran Papers, TL, NYU.
135. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast. Trotsky: 1929–1940* (New York: Vintage, 1965 [1963]), 516.
136. *Militant*, April 14, 1945.
137. *Ibid.*, April 14, July 14, and December 22, 1945.
138. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1945.
139. *Ibid.*, April 14, 1945. The CP, following the Soviet line, by contrast favored a strong postwar Allied military occupation of Germany that would “crush forever Prusso-German reactionism” and eliminate “Germany’s powerful industrial potential for future aggressions.” Occupation authorities would have to reeducate a younger generation of Germans “poisoned by Nazi doctrines.” Report of Victor Jerome’s lecture in “What to Do with Germany?” *Canadian Tribune*, January 6, 1945, series II, box 20, Victor J. Jerome Papers, Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT. See also Jerome’s *The Treatment of Defeated Germany* (New York: New Century, 1945).
140. *Militant*, July 14, 1945.
141. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1945.
142. *Ibid.*, June 30, 1945. R. A. C. Parker, *The Second World War: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1989]), 155–156.
143. William B. Dolph, General Manager, WOL Radio Station, to Walter Winchell, June 18, 1943, 4Zg43, Winchell Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

- 144. *Militant*, November 17, 1945.
- 145. *Ibid.*, October 6 and November 17, 1945.
- 146. *Labor Action*, April 30, 1945.
- 147. *Ibid.*, April 2, 1945. Albert Gates was Albert Glotzer's party pseudonym.
- 148. *Ibid.*, May 21, 1945.
- 149. *Ibid.*, May 7, 1945.

#### 4 Abandoning Assimilation: Communist Resistance to Antisemitism and Celebration of Jewish Culture in the Immediate Postwar Period

- 1. Editorial, "Anti-Communism, Anti-Semitism, and America," *Jewish Life*, February 1947, 3; *Fur and Leather Worker*, September 1950.
- 2. Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer ... : The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 6.
- 3. *Daily Worker*, June 21, 1946.
- 4. *Ibid.*, June 6, 1948.
- 5. Communist Party of Dorchester, "Unite and Fight Against Anti-Semitism. Drop All Charges Against the Twenty-Five!!" [1950], box 62, Records of the Boston Jewish Community Relations Council [hereafter, BJCRC], American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Boston, MA.
- 6. *Ibid.*
- 7. David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy so Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (New York: Free Press, 1983), 173; David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 38–39.
- 8. Communist Party of Dorchester, "Unite and Fight Against Anti-Semitism," box 62, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS.
- 9. "Outlaw Anti-Semitism!" *Jewish Life*, May 1947, 11; *New York Times*, November 20, 1947.
- 10. *New York Times*, February 16, 1947.
- 11. *Daily Worker*, October 16, 21, and 22, 1945; Martin Blumenson, *Patton: The Man Behind the Legend, 1885–1945* (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 210–215.
- 12. *Daily Worker*, October 21, 1945. On Nazi images of Jewish gluttony and "Aryan" deprivation, see, for example, Ernst Hanfstaengl's film *Hans Westmar*. Stephen H. Norwood, *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower: Complicity and Conflict on American Campuses* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 49.
- 13. *Daily Worker*, October 21, 1945.
- 14. *Union Voice*, October 28, 1945.
- 15. *New York Times*, February 21 and 22 and March 25, 1949; *London Times*, February 22 and 23, 1949; *Daily Worker*, June 3, 1949. *Life* magazine noted that between the time Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* and the release of the movie version "history had interposed the ghosts of six million murdered Jews." It could not fathom why the producers of *Oliver Twist* had insisted on adhering so closely to the novel's depiction of Fagin. *Life* found it "harder still to guess why the authorities had not only permitted exhibition of the picture in Germany but refused to withdraw it immediately after the inevitable reaction came." "Fagin in Berlin Provokes a Riot," *Life*, March 7, 1949, 38–39.

16. *Daily Worker*, June 3, 1949, and September 9, 1951.
17. *Ibid.*, March 31, 1949.
18. Bill [William Z.] Foster to Betty, September 25, 1951, series I, box 5, Victor J. Jerome Papers, Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.
19. *Daily Worker*, October 4, 10, and 23, 1951. *New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther, reviewing *Oliver Twist*, which had arrived “at long last” in the United States “past the protests of pressure groups,” noted that “the prerequisites of the Production Code administrators” had required “that some scenes showing Fagin be cut.” *New York Times*, July 31, 1951.
20. *Daily Worker*, September 26, 1951.
21. *Ibid.*, October 4, 1951.
22. *Ibid.*, September 26 and October 23, 1951.
23. “Abie’s Irish Rose,” *Jewish Life*, February 1947, 6.
24. Morris U. Schappes to Jerry, n.d., and Schappes, “Merchant of Anti-Semitism,” *Morning Freiheit*, March 22, 1947, box 67, Morris U. Schappes Papers, American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Center for Jewish History [hereafter, CJH], New York, NY. Schappes was distraught that even some American Communists used the term “shylock” in their writing. He noted that Gil Green had used it in a *Political Affairs* article “to express part of the viciousness of United States imperialism.” When Schappes complained to Green, Green agreed it was offensive. Schappes to Jerry. Schappes also stated that “it came as a shock” to him that *Daily Worker* columnist Bernard Rubin used the epithet “in describing a raid on a Long Island dice game: ‘Loans ... were made to players each night by the shylocks at five percent’” (issue of January 28, 1947). Schappes, “Merchant of Anti-Semitism.”
25. Foster to Betty, September 25, 1951, series I, box 5, Jerome Papers, Sterling Library, Yale University.
26. I. F. Stone, *Underground to Palestine* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978 [1946]), 4; D. D. Guttenplan, *American Radical: The Life and Times of I. F. Stone* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 207.
27. *Daily Worker*, June 22, 1946.
28. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1945.
29. *Ibid.*, June 13 and 14, 1946.
30. *Ibid.*, June 15, 1946.
31. *Ibid.*, July 6 and 8, 1946.
32. “Refugees or DP’s,” *Jewish Life*, July 1947, 4; *New York Times*, May 13, 1947, and June 19, 1948.
33. *Daily Worker*, June 9 and 10, 1948; *New York Times*, May 29 and June 4, 1948.
34. Theodore Jacobs, “Anti-Semitic Fury on the East Side,” *Jewish Life*, September 1952, 7–8; Betty Stevens, “Anti-Semitic Wave on the East Side,” *Jewish Life*, January 1953, 28–29.
35. Stevens, “Anti-Semitic Wave,” 28.
36. *Daily Worker*, April 15, 1949.
37. *Union Voice*, March 26, 1950, and September 21, 1952.
38. *New York Times*, September 17, 18, and 21 and October 10 and 18, 1948, and May 25, 1950.
39. *Ibid.*, May 6, 1950.

40. *Fur and Leather Worker*, April–May, 1946; *Union Voice*, May 12, 1946.
41. *Union Voice*, September 25, 1949.
42. *Daily Worker*, April 8 and 10, 1949; *New York Times*, April 8, 9, and 10, 1949.
43. *Daily Worker*, April 8, 1949.
44. *Ibid.*, April 11, 1949; *New York Times*, April 10, 1949.
45. *New York Times*, April 8 and 19, 1949.
46. *Daily Worker*, October 23, November 7, and December 11, 1951.
47. *Ibid.*, December 12 and 28, 1951; *New York Times*, December 9, 1951.
48. Charles Hanley, “The Two Germanies,” *Fourth International*, October 1949, 270, 272.
49. Jeffrey Herf, “East German Communists and the Jewish Question: The Case of Paul Merker,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 29 (October 1994): 627–633.
50. *Jerusalem Post*, January 16, 1953; *New York Times*, January 8, 1953.
51. *Jerusalem Post*, January 6, 1953.
52. *Ibid.*, January 16, 1953.
53. *Ibid.*; *New York Times*, August 9 and 15, 1953.
54. *Jerusalem Post*, January 16, 1953. Dahlem recanted when threatened with expulsion from the party. Another member of the German émigré group, Central Committee member Lex Ende, was expelled and joined the French Resistance. He was allowed to reenter the party in 1945 but was again expelled, with Merker, in 1950.
55. Robert G. Moeller, “The Third Reich in Post-War German Memory” in Jane Caplan, ed., *Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 255.
56. Paul Jacobs, *Is Curly Jewish?* (New York: Vintage, 1973 [1965]), 9, 20.
57. *Ibid.*, 20.
58. “Jewish Life,” *Jewish Life*, November 1946, 3.
59. *Daily Worker*, March 16, 1947.
60. Louis Harap, “Breaking Down the Gentleman’s Agreement,” *Jewish Life*, January 1948, 29. Voicing the party line that antisemitism was a symptom of American “imperialist aggression,” Harap criticized the film for failing to connect it to “the broader socio-economic drive for an ‘American Century.’”
61. *Daily Worker*, October 12, 17, and 24, 1945; “Answer to Our Need: The School of Jewish Studies,” *Jewish Fraternalist*, box 2, Morris U. Schappes Papers, Tamiment Library [hereafter, TL], New York University [hereafter, NYU], New York, NY. The Gold quote is from an unidentified clipping, n.d., in box 4, Schappes Papers.

The Samuel Adams School for Social Studies, a CP front adult education school operating in Boston at the same time as the School of Jewish Studies, also offered Jewish studies courses. Its catalogue for the 1945 winter term listed the course History and Problems of the Jewish People. The course was taught by Sol Vail, executive secretary of the JPFO, IWO, New England, one of the CP’s Jewish front groups. It surveyed the “main currents in Jewish life,” with emphasis on Jewish life in contemporary America. The course also covered “developments in Palestine and in the Soviet Union.” It gave “special attention ... to anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic organizations and to the role of the various groups and forces combating them.” During another semester, Jack Weinman, also of the JPFO, taught Survey of Jewish Culture, which extended from Biblical times to the



- present. Like the School of Jewish Studies, the Samuel Adams School was placed on the attorney-general's list of subversive organizations, classified as Communist. "The Samuel Adams School, Winter term 1945" and "The Samuel Adams School for Social Studies, Course of Study," box 94, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS.
62. School of Jewish Studies, course catalogue, October–December 1947, box 4, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
  63. Morris U. Schappes, syllabus, "The National Question and the Jewish People," School of Jewish Studies, Spring Semester 1949, box 29, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
  64. "A Call to a Conference on Jewish Culture in English in the United States," June 18–19, 1948, box 4, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
  65. *Ibid.*; *Daily Worker*, May 17 and June 17, 1948.
  66. "Lectures and Speaking Engagements – Conference on Jewish Culture Transcripts, 1948," box 13, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
  67. *Ibid.*
  68. *Ibid.*
  69. *Ibid.*
  70. *Ibid.*
  71. Morris U. Schappes, "Why Not a Jewish History Week?" *Morning Freiheit*, n.d., box 38, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH; A. B. Magil to Morris U. Schappes, December 11, 1945, box 2, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
  72. *Fur and Leather Worker*, April–May 1946.
  73. Morris Schappes, "Memorandum on a Project for a History of Jews in the United States," January 27, 1945, box 24, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
  74. Gil Green to Earl Browder, February 6, 1945, box 24, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU. Browder's penciled response is at the bottom of the letter.
  75. Morris U. Schappes to State Secretariat, October 30, 1945, box 24, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
  76. Morris U. Schappes, ed., *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654–1875* (New York: Citadel Press, 1950), ix, xii.
  77. Dr. Bertram W. Korn to Lester Blickstein, February 26, 1955, and "Jewish Scholars Honor Schappes in Cleveland," clipping, *Daily Worker*, June 16, 1955, box 13, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH; Schappes to Lee M. Friedman, March 5, 1949, "Announcement by Philip S. Foner," April 5, 1950, and *Congress Weekly*, March 19, 1951, box 24, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU; and "Schappes's Important New Book," *Jewish Life*, November 1950, 5.
  78. Morris U. Schappes, "Teaching History," unidentified clipping, June 29, 1946, box 13, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
  79. Schappes, "Why Not a Jewish History Week?" *Morning Freiheit*, n.d., box 38, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
  80. Nathan Ausubel, *Jewish Culture in America: Weapon for Jewish Survival and Progress* (New York: New Century, 1948), 8; *New York Times*, June 27, 1948.
  81. Ausubel, *Jewish Culture in America*, 9–10.
  82. *Ibid.*, 13–14.
  83. *Ibid.*, 21–24.
  84. *Ibid.*, 18–19.
  85. *Ibid.*, 29–30.

86. *Ibid.*, 3, 31–32.
87. Morris U. Schappes to Maia [Scherrer], December 5, 1949, box 60, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
88. Schappes to Scherrer, February 4, 1950, box 60, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
89. Chaim Suller to Victor Jerome, August 25, 1949, series I, box 9, Jerome Papers, Sterling Library, Yale University.
90. Alexander Bittelman, “We Shall Build a New World,” *Freedom*, October 14, 1944, box 30, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
91. Alexander Bittelman, *To Secure Jewish Rights: The Communist Position* (New York: New Century, 1948), 25–26.
92. “Second Class,” December 1, 1943, box 30, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
93. Morris U. Schappes, *Problems of Jewish Culture* (New York: School of Jewish Studies, 1950), 10.
94. Walter Bernstein, “Furriers’ Gold,” *New Masses*, May 6, 1947, 14, box 51, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH; *Fur & Leather Worker*, April 1944.
95. Schappes, *Problems of Jewish Culture*, 11–12.
96. “Minutes of the 7th National Convention of the Jewish People’s Fraternal Order I.W.O.,” Camp Kinderland, NY, June 12–15, 1947, box 30, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU; *New York Times*, February 6, 1951. The Jewish People’s Fraternal Order provided Morris Schappes \$2,000 to help him write *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States*, with the understanding that it would publish the work if he was unable to reach an agreement with a commercial press. George Starr to Morris U. Schappes, January 15, 1946, box 24, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
97. *New York Times*, April 27, 1941. *Union Voice*, newspaper of the Communist-led Local 65, United Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Workers Union, CIO, similarly celebrated Haym Salomon as a selfless patriot to undermine the widely prevalent view of Jews as mercenary and not truly American: “Outstanding was the work of Haym Salomon ... imprisoned by the British for helping the American cause. ... Shortly after the war he died of consumption, penniless and bankrupt, giving his life for his country as any soldier on the battlefield.” *Union Voice*, May 27, 1945.
98. *Daily Worker*, December 19, 1956.
99. Louis Harap, “What Is the Council for Judaism?” *Jewish Life*, July 1953, 23, 25.
100. Morris U. Schappes, “Myths About Anti-Semitism,” *Masses & Mainstream*, October 1948, 53, 55.
101. “Peter Collier: Coming Home” in Peter Collier and David Horowitz, eds., *Second Thoughts: Former Radicals Look Back at the Sixties* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1989), 61.

5 “Two, Four, Six, Eight, We Demand a Jewish State”: Communist Support for Partition and the Jewish War of Liberation, 1947–1948

1. Alex Bittelman, “The Jews and the San Francisco Conference,” *Morning Freiheit*, April 21, 1945, box 30, Morris U. Schappes Papers, Tamiment Library [hereafter, TL], New York University [hereafter, NYU], New York, NY.
2. *Daily Worker*, October 25, 1945.

3. *Ibid.*, November 15, 1945.
4. Brownsville Communist Party, “Open the Doors to Palestine! Save European Jewry!” box 1, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
5. “6,000,000 Jews Murdered!!!” box 54, Morris U. Schappes Papers, American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Center for Jewish History [hereafter, CJH], New York, NY.
6. *Daily Worker*, November 2, 3, 5, 10, and 15, 1945; *New York Times*, November 3, 1945; *Chicago Tribune*, February 17, 1947.
7. *Daily Worker*, June 17, 1946.
8. “Jewish Labor Convention Decides to Raise \$250,000 to Fight Anti-Semitism and Aid Jews,” *JTA News*, June 18, 1946, box 94, Records of the Boston Jewish Community Relations Council [hereafter, BJCRC], American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Boston, MA.
9. Walter Bernstein, “Furriers’ Gold,” *New Masses*, May 6, 1947, 11, box 51, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH. Gold insisted that *Who’s Who in Labor* (1946) list his CP membership as a condition for his inclusion in the volume.
10. *Fur and Leather Worker*, July–August, 1946.
11. A. B. Magil, *Israel in Crisis* (New York: International, 1950), 18–19.
12. *Daily Worker*, February 12, 1946, clipping in box 22, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
13. *Daily Worker*, May 15, 1947; *New York Times*, May 16, 1947.
14. Itzik Feffer, “Gromyko’s Ray of Light,” *Jewish Life*, September 1947, 11; *Daily Worker*, May 15, 1947.
15. *Daily Worker*, May 12, 1947; *New York Times*, May 12, 1947.
16. Nations Associates, *The Arab Higher Committee. Its Origins, Personnel and Purposes. The Documentary Record Submitted to the United Nations*, May 1947, 7–9; *New York Times*, May 12, 1947.
17. Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 700; Matthias Küntzel, “Islamic Antisemitism and Its Nazi Roots,” *Antisemitism International*, 2004, 46–47.
18. Küntzel, “Islamic Antisemitism,” 46; Nations Associates, *Arab Higher Committee*, 5.
19. Nations Associates, *Arab Higher Committee*, 5, 7–8.
20. *Militant*, September 7, 1946. The *Daily Worker* editorial appeared August 28, 1946.
21. I. F. Stone, *Underground to Palestine* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978 [1946]), 223–224.
22. *Ibid.*, 96, 99.
23. “Barbaric Act,” *Jewish Life*, October 1947, 4; *Daily Worker*, July 31, 1947; *New York Times*, August 31, 1947; Jon and David Kimche, *The Secret Roads: The “Illegal” Migration of a People, 1938–1948* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955), 187–192. Richard Yaffe, *PM’s* foreign editor, noted that some of the Jews on the *Exodus* 1947 were liberated from Auschwitz before the Nazis could murder them. They now had “the dubious honor of being the first inmates of Britain’s first concentration camp on German soil.” *PM Sunday Magazine*, September 21, 1947.
24. *Fur and Leather Worker*, October 1947.

25. Arnold Krammer, *The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc, 1947-1953* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 20-21; Moses Miller, "The Fate of Palestine in the Balance," *Jewish Life*, November 1947, 3-4; *Daily Worker*, October 14, 1947.
26. *New York Times*, February 6 and 18 and October 21, 1948; "They Voted Against Us," *Time*, March 1, 1948, clipping in box 4, Leo Isacson Papers, TL, NYU. Both Isacson and Propser, speaking on the same platform at a Bronx Zionist rally immediately after the election, attributed the ALP victory to President Truman's arms embargo and "vacillation" on partition. *New York Post* and *The Home News*, February 19, 1948, clipping in box 4, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
27. "They Voted Against Us," *Time*, March 1, 1948, clipping in box 4, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU; *PM*, February 19, 1948, clipping in box 2, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU; Michael Straight, "What Happened in the Bronx?" *New Republic*, March 1, 1948, clipping in box 4, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU. Wallace spoke at an Isacson rally in the Bronx on February 15, 1948, with American Labor Party supporters Paul Robeson; Mike Quill, head of the Transport Workers Union; Zionist activist James Waterman Wise, son of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise; and Congressman Vito Marcantonio. The flier advertising the rally was headlined "NO CONSCRIPTION NO WAR! LIFT THE EMBARGO ON PALESTINE! OUTLAW DISCRIMINATION IN JOBS!" Flier, "Peace and Freedom Rally: In the Fighting Spirit of Lincoln, Roosevelt, Wallace," box 2, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
28. *New York Herald Tribune*, March 6, 1948; *New York Post* and *The Home News*, April 30, 1948, clipping in box 4, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
29. Rafael Medoff, *Jewish Americans and Political Participation: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 294-295; *PM*, March 24, 1948.
30. Leo Isacson, *Journey to Israel* (New York: Progressive Party, 1948), 4, box 2, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
31. *Ibid.*, 2; *New York Post* and *The Home News*, April 28, 1948, clipping in box 4, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
32. Isacson, *Journey to Israel*, 9, 14, box 2, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
33. *Daily Worker*, July 6, 1948, clipping in box 4, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
34. Philip J. Kanter, "Bronx Blackout Rallies Hit US Stand on Zion," n.d., unidentified newspaper, box 2, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
35. *New York Times*, October 22, 1948.
36. *Ibid.*, October 21, 1948.
37. *New York Times*, October 21, 1948.
38. *Daily Worker*, October 21, 1948, clipping in box 2, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
39. *New York Times*, October 21, 1948.
40. "Text of Speech by Simon W. Gerson, Communist and American Labor Party Candidate for City Council, over Radio Station WMCA, Tuesday, September 28, 1948, 9:05-9:15 PM," box 2, Simon W. Gerson Papers, TL, NYU.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*; "Text of Address by Simon W. Gerson, Communist and American Labor Party Candidate for City Council, over Radio Station WMCA, Thursday, October 7, 1948," box 2, Gerson Papers, TL, NYU; *New York Times*, September 30, 1948.

43. "Text of Address by Simon W. Gerson," box 2, Gerson Papers, TL, NYU.
44. *New York Times*, March 7, 1948.
45. Henry Wallace, "Palestine: Civilization on Trial," *New Republic*, February 16, 1948, reel 44, Henry A. Wallace Papers, University of Iowa Library, Iowa City, IA.
46. *New York Times*, May 17 and October 29, 1948.
47. Article by Robert Spivak, no title, n.d., box 2, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
48. *New York Times*, July 16, 1948.
49. *The Jewish Citizen*, October 1948, box 2, Isacson Papers, TL, NYU.
50. Henry A. Wallace to Dr. Ralph E. Cloward, June 14, 1948, reel 45, Wallace Papers.
51. Henry A. Wallace to John R. Haile, June 17, 1948, reel 45, Wallace Papers.
52. Wallace, "Palestine: Civilization on Trial"; *Palestine Post*, October 7 and 20, 1947, reel 44, Wallace Papers.
53. *New York Times*, March 12, 1948; *Union Voice*, March 28, 1948.
54. *Union Voice*, March 28, 1948.
55. *Washington Post*, April 16, 1948; *Union Voice*, April 25, 1948.
56. Isadore Zack to Arnold Forster, June 10, 1948, box 123, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS.
57. *Daily Worker*, June 4, 1948.
58. Magil, *Israel in Crisis*, 14. Magil used the term "Liberation War" for the 1948 War of Independence in his index.
59. *New York Times*, June 1, 1948.
60. *Union Voice*, June 20, July 4, and September 26, 1948; *Daily Worker*, June 2, 1948.
61. Krammer, *Forgotten Friendship*, 54-55, 62-63, 68, 70, 90, 123; *New York Times*, November 6 and 8 and December 14 and 20, 1948.
62. *Christian Science Monitor*, April 21, 1948.
63. *London Observer*, April 18, 1948; *California Daily Bruin*, April 19, 1948; *Washington Post*, April 19, 1948. King Abdullah's grandson, Jordan's King Hussein, continued to associate Israel with Communism even after the Suez War, during which the Soviet Union had vigorously supported Egypt. In April 1957 King Hussein denounced Israel as "this cancer in the heart of the Arab world." He charged that Jordanian Communists took their orders from Tel Aviv, "the center of communism." King Hussein complained that the Jordanian Communists were "calling for peace with Israel." He stated that he had wanted to go to war against Israel when it sent troops into the Sinai, but Jordan's premier, Suleiman al-Nabulsi, whom he called "pro-communist," had restrained him. Louis Harap, "Jordan and the Doctrine: The Recent Coup of King Hussein and Its Implications for Israel," *Jewish Life*, June 1957, 17-18; *Manchester Guardian*, April 26, 1957.
64. *New York Times*, April 19, 1948; *Wall Street Journal*, April 19, 1948.
65. *Militant*, July 27 and August 3, 1946; January 25, May 24, and September 8, 1947; and May 31, 1948.
66. "Against the Stream: The Trotskyist Position on Palestine," *Fourth International*, May 1948, 86-88.
67. S. Munier, "Zionism and the Middle East: The Aftermath of the Jewish-Arab War," *Fourth International*, October 1949, 277.

68. *Ibid.*, 280–282.
69. National Committee, Workers Party, “Free Immigration Everywhere: A Free Palestine with Majority Rule [May 1946],” *New International*, November 1946, 265.
70. Albert Gates, “The Jewish Problem After Hitler: Palestine and the Fourth International,” *New International*, September 1947, 206–210.
71. National Committee, Workers Party, “Free Immigration Everywhere,” 264–266.
72. Leon Shields, “For Self-Determination in Palestine: Against the Slogan of Majority Rule,” *New International*, August 1946, 180–181.
73. Albert Gates, “The Meaning of Self-Determination: A Reply to Leon Shields,” *New International*, August 1946, 181–182. In January 1948, after the UN partitioned Palestine, Al Findley maintained in the *New International* that “there can be no real independence for small states, let alone splintered states like partitioned Palestine.” They would inevitably fall under imperialist control. Findley called for the reunification of the Palestinian Arab and Jewish states the UN had created. Al Findley, “What’s Ahead for Palestine? Arab-Jewish War or Voluntary Union?” *New International*, January 1948, 18–20.
74. “The Jewish Question and Israel: Resolution Adopted by the Independent Socialist League,” *New International*, July–August 1951, 227–228.
75. Harvard *Crimson*, November 1, 1946.
76. *California Daily Bruin*, April 25, 1947.
77. Harvard *Crimson*, November 16, 1948. In 1948, Azzam Pasha, secretary-general of the Arab League, confidently predicted that the war against Israel “will be like the Mongol invasions. We will utterly destroy them. We will sweep them into the sea.” Bernard Lewis, “The New Anti-Semitism,” *American Scholar* 75 (Winter 2006): 31.
78. Harvard *Crimson*, November 10, 1949, and December 2, 1947.
79. *Ibid.*, February 26, 1948; *Washington Square College Bulletin*, November 23, 1948.
80. *Columbia Spectator*, October 14, 1948.
81. *Washington Square College Bulletin*, December 21, 1948.
82. Stephen H. Norwood, *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower: Complicity and Conflict on American Campuses* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 130; *New York Times*, November 21, 1947, and June 18 and November 29, 1948.
83. Harvard *Crimson*, February 18, 1948.
84. Kimche and Kimche, *Secret Roads*, 193–211; *New York Times*, December 28, 1947, and January 1 and 2 and February 1, 1948.
85. Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 333.
86. *New York Times*, July 28 and October 29, 1948; *Chicago Tribune*, July 12, 1948.
87. *National Guardian*, January 10, 1949.
88. Magil, *Israel in Crisis*, 146.
89. *Daily Worker*, December 16, 21, and 22, 1949. Under the UN Palestine Conciliation Commission plan, neither Israel nor Jordan would retain jurisdiction in Jerusalem; the UN would control the city. Jerusalem was to be divided

- into a Jewish and an Arab zone. These zones would be allowed considerable local autonomy. A general council in which Jews and Arabs had equal representation was to administer the city. Neither Israel nor Jordan found this plan acceptable. The Israeli government proposed a compromise to internationalize only Jerusalem's Old City (comprising 6.5 percent of Jerusalem's municipal area). This compromise permitted Jews to return to the Jewish Quarter and provided universal access to many Holy Places. The UN rejected this compromise. Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 242.
90. Magil, *Israel in Crisis*, 33–34.
  91. *Militant*, December 26, 1949.
  92. *National Guardian*, November 14, 1949.
  93. *Daily Worker*, December 19, 1949; *Militant*, December 26, 1949.
  94. Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 140–142, 283, 316–317; Cedric Belfrage and James Aronson, *Something to Guard: The Stormy Life of the National Guardian, 1948–1967* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 19, 137–138. During the years following Du Bois's endorsement of Henry Wallace's presidential bid in 1948, he had “no journalistic outlet – not even for a letter-to-the-editor – except for the *Guardian*.” Belfrage and Aronson, *Something to Guard*, 139.
  95. Horne, *Black and Red*, 283–284.
  96. *Ibid.*, 154–155; *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 8, 1949.
  97. Vito Marcantonio to M. Danzis, February 14, 1950, and Marcantonio to Malcolm Baptiste, April 5, 1948, box 51, Vito Marcantonio Papers, New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York, NY.
  98. *The [Sunday] Worker*, October 15, 1950; *Daily Worker*, October 16 and 23, 1950.
  99. Magil, *Israel in Crisis*, 18; Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfilment: Palestine, 1917–1949* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 257.
  100. R. Saltzman, “Looking to the Future: Report of the General Secretary to the Seventh National Convention of the Jewish People's Fraternal Order, IWO,” June 12–15, 1947, box 30, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU; Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets* (New York: Macmillan, 1976 [1964]), 267–268.

## 6 “Fiends in Human Form”: Taking Conspiratorial Antisemitism to a New Level

1. *New York Times*, September 22, 1948.
2. Walter Bedell Smith, *My Three Years in Moscow* (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1950), 273–274; *New York Times*, March 27, 1949.
3. Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets* (New York: Macmillan, 1976 [1964]), 273–274; Leonard Schapiro, “The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and Phases of Soviet Anti-Semitic Policy During and After World War II” in Bela Vago and George L. Mosse, eds., *Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe, 1918–1945* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1974), 294.



4. Yehoshua A. Gilboa, *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry, 1939–1953* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 209–211; Carey, “The New Barbarism,” November 21, 1952, roll 188, Jewish Labor Committee [hereafter, JLC] Papers, Tamiment Library [hereafter, TL], New York University [hereafter, NYU]; *New York Times*, February 7, 1953. When the new *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*’s first volume was published, the American Jewish Congress’s periodical *Congress Weekly* noted that among the “over twenty editors, contrary to the previous [edition], not one is left of Jewish origin.” Arie Tartakower, “Jewish Fate and Future in Russia,” *Congress Weekly*, October 29, 1951, 8.
  5. Gilboa, *Black Years*, 212–213; *New York Times*, February 7, 1953.
  6. “The Hoax of Soviet ‘Anti-Semitism,’” *Morning Freiheit*, February 7, 1953, box 47, Morris U. Schappes Papers, American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Center for Jewish History [hereafter, CJH], New York, NY.
  7. *New York Times*, February 17, 1951. The suppression of the Yiddish press was so complete that the American CP’s *Morgen Freiheit* was not available in the Soviet Union. Victor Lasky, “Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union: Stalin Uses Jews as Scapegoats to Direct Wrath from His Regime,” *National Jewish Monthly*, 337, box 40, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
  8. Shlomo Katz to Morris U. Schappes, December 18, 1951, box 40, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
  9. *New York Times*, May 26, 1951.
  10. Carey, “The New Barbarism”; Gilboa, *Black Years*, 247–248; Arkady Vaksberg, *Stalin Against the Jews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 139, 147; *New York Times*, May 2, 1949.
  11. *Jerusalem Post*, February 2, 1953.
  12. *New York Times*, January 2, 1951, and *London Times*, December 12, 1951; Gilboa, *Black Years*, 218, 220.
  13. Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 180.
  14. Joshua Kunitz, “Soviet Jewry: Is It Doomed?” [1951 or 1952], box 1, Joshua Kunitz Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library [hereafter, RBML], Columbia University [hereafter, CU], New York, NY. This unpublished manuscript is mislabeled “ca. 1956.”
- Kunitz apparently left the CP during the late 1930s or 1940s but remained close to it. He continued to contribute to CP and other Communist publications until the late 1970s. The CP magazine *New World Review* published a very flattering obituary of Kunitz when he died in 1980. Alan M. Wald, *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 127; Joshua Kunitz, “Literature as a Mirror of Soviet Society: How Jewish Characters Are Portrayed,” *New World Review*, November–December 1978, 12–15; Jessica Smith, “Joshua Kunitz: Legacy for Our Times,” *New World Review*, July–August 1980, 28–30. Smith described Kunitz in the obituary as a “brilliant scholar, writer, teacher, lecturer and historian” who “was well equipped to teach his students and the public the truth about the Soviet Union and answer the lies scattered as widely and wildly about it then as now.” Smith, “Kunitz,” 28.
15. *Daily Worker*, January 19 and 25 and February 16, 1953.
  16. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1949.

17. *National Guardian*, January 8 and March 5, 1953.
18. Morris U. Schappes, "Lies About Anti-Semitism in USSR" [handwritten notes], July 6, 1949?, box 40, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
19. Peter Meyer, "Soviet Anti-Semitism in High Gear," *Commentary*, February 1953, 116.
20. Paul Lendvai, *Anti-Semitism Without Jews: Communist Eastern Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 307–308; Béla Fábíán, "Hungary's and Rumania's Nazis-in-Red: Hitler's Graduates Staff Stalin's New Order," *Commentary*, May 1951, 471; *London Times*, June 20, 1949; *Chicago Tribune*, June 20 and October 16, 1949; *New York Times*, September 20, 1949; *Daily Worker*, September 20, 1949.  
The president of the court during the Rajk trial, Vilmos Olty, had been an extreme rightist prior to the Soviet occupation of Hungary. During World War II, the Germans had sent him to Munich for indoctrination in Nazi ideology. Olty joined the Hungarian CP after Soviet forces entered Hungary. As a Hungarian Ministry of Justice official in 1941 he confiscated mills owned by Jews. Fábíán, "Hungary's and Rumania's Nazis-in-Red," 471.
21. *New York Times*, September 15, 1949; Levy, *Ana Pauker*, 153, 323–324.
22. Joshua Rothenberg, "The Jewish Naftali Botwin Company," *Jewish Frontier*, April 1980, 14; Albert Prago, *Jews in the International Brigades in Spain* (New York: Jewish Currents reprint, 1979), 19.
23. Rothenberg, "Jewish Naftali Botwin Company," 15.
24. *Ibid.*, 18–19; Prago, *Jews in the International Brigades*, 5, 7.
25. Gilboa, *Black Years*, 159; *London Times*, September 23, 1920.
26. Gilboa, *Black Years*, 263–264; Peter Meyer, "Stalin Follows in Hitler's Footsteps," *Commentary*, January 1953, 1–2, 11–12.
27. *Manchester Guardian*, November 27, 1952.
28. Lendvai, *Anti-Semitism Without Jews*, 245; Joseph L. Lichten to Lester J. Waldman, December 1, 1952, roll 188, JLC Papers, TL, NYU; "Zionism in the Service of Imperialism: Enemy of the Working Class," *Prague News Letter*, December 4, 1952, box 60, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
29. "The Protocols and the Purge Trial: A Report of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Analyzing the Prague Purge Trial and Communist Propaganda Use of an Infamous Forgery: The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion," box 22, Julius Bernstein Papers, TL, NYU.
30. *The Anti-Semitic Nature of the Czechoslovak Trial* (New York: Library of Jewish Information, American Jewish Committee, n.d.), box 22, Bernstein Papers, TL, NYU.
31. *Jerusalem Post*, November 23, 1952, clipping in box 68, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
32. Klement Gottwald, "The Prague Treason Trials," *Political Affairs* 32 (February 1953): 46, 49; *Harvard Crimson*, December 8, 1952; "Matthew 23: 1–3, 33–34" in *The Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966).
33. *New York Times*, November 27, 1952; Morris Schappes's handwritten notes on Slansky trial, box 60, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
34. *New York Times*, November 22 and 23 and December 4, 1952; *The Anti-Semitic Nature* and "The Protocols and the Purge Trial."

Defendant Artur London, released from prison in 1956, published an account of his ordeal in 1968 that described the fanatical antisemitism of his interrogator, Major Smola. London, a Spanish Civil War veteran of Jewish origin, had become under-secretary of foreign affairs in Czechoslovakia in 1949. On first encountering London, Major Smola grasped him by the throat and shouted: “We’ll get rid of you and your filthy race! . . . Not everything Hitler did was right, but he destroyed the Jews, and he was right about that. Too many of you escaped the gas chamber. We’ll finish what he started.” London commented: “These words were uttered by a man who wore the [Communist] Party badge in his buttonhole, before three other men, in uniform, who tacitly agreed.” Artur London, *The Confession* (New York: William Morrow, 1970), ix, 50. *The Confession* was first published in France in 1968 as *L’Aveu* (Paris: Editions Gallimard).

35. *New York Times*, March 24 and November 23, 1952; Herbert Felix, “Mordechai Oren Returns,” *New Leader*, June 25, 1956, 13.
36. Felix, “Mordechai Oren Returns,” 13. In the charges, Oren was described as “a distinguished Zionist swindler.” *Jerusalem Post*, November 23, 1952.
37. *New York Times*, November 28 and 29, 1952; *Jerusalem Post*, November 26, 1952; Lichten to Waldman, December 1, 1952, and Text of Address by Dr. Jaroslav Profous, December 21, 1952, roll 188, JLC Papers, TL, NYU.
38. Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 194, 198–199, 405. Koestler had served as a researcher and translator for the *Brown Book* project. Michael Scammell, *Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic* (New York: Random House, 2009), 105.
39. Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, 405. Most Communists and fellow travelers missed Katz’s “concealed message” because they avoided reading Koestler, a man they considered an anti-Soviet apostate. Czech writer Antonin Liehm noted this after a 1970 interview with Slansky defendant Artur London, who had been released from prison in 1956. Liehm expressed surprise that London, who still considered himself a Communist, albeit a dissident one, had uttered Koestler’s name to him. Liehm commented that in doing so, London had violated a Communist taboo. Liehm reported that French actress Simone Signoret, who had been close to the Communists prior to 1956, had told him that this taboo still affected her. Signoret had stumbled across a copy of *Darkness at Noon* in a secondhand bookshop while in France shooting *The Confession*, the film version of London’s published account of the Slansky trial that highlighted its antisemitism and the fraudulent nature of the charges. Signoret told Liehm that on touching the book she immediately “threw it aside as if a viper had bitten me.” She then asked herself: “What is wrong with you? Here you are in Lille, filming *The Confession*, and you still have this conditioned reflex.” Antonin Liehm, “An Interview with Artur London,” *New Politics*, Spring 1971, 48.
40. *Daily Worker*, November 30, 1952; Louis Harap, *The Truth About the Prague Trial* (New York: Jewish Life, 1953), 11; Eleanor Wheeler, “Why So Many Jews at Trial?” *Jewish Life*, March 1953, 17.
41. A. B. Magil, “Wall Street, Zionism, and Anti-Semitism,” *Masses & Mainstream*, March 1953, 14–15, 20–22.
42. *National Guardian*, January 22, 1953.

43. *Morning Freiheit*, February 7, 1953, box 47, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
44. *Volkenblatt*, clipping, December 4, 1952, box 60, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
45. *Ibid.*; “Court Proceedings Against Anti-State Conspiratorial Centre in Czechoslovakia,” *Prague News Letter*, December 18, 1952, box 60, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
46. *Jerusalem Post*, February 18, 1953.
47. *Columbia Spectator*, March 5, 1953.
48. *Ibid.*, March 27, 1953; George Lichtheim, “Will Soviet Anti-Semitism Teach the Lesson?” *Commentary*, March 1953, 225; *New York Times*, November 28, 1952.  
 Béla Fábíán wrote in 1951 of a Communist-Nazi “marriage of convenience” in Eastern Europe. He noted that “former Nazis have been swarming into the East European Communist parties,” which received them “with open arms.” With Germany defeated, the Nazis needed “a place of refuge,” while the Communist parties, installed as a result of Soviet occupation, badly needed to increase their memberships. Fábíán reported that Mátyás Rákosi, while deputy prime minister of Hungary in 1945, had told two correspondents for an American news agency that the Hungarian CP accepted former Arrow Cross members who admitted they had belonged to that antisemitic fascist organization and pledged to be faithful to the CP. He declared: “How else could one build up a Communist party in this country? How else could I find enough Communists?” Fábíán, “Hungary’s and Rumania’s Nazis-in-Red,” 470.
49. “The Facts About the Trials in Czechoslovakia Will Be Presented by Morris Schappes,” January 8 [1953] and “The Charge of Anti-Semitism!!!” box 1, Morris U. Schappes Papers, TL, NYU. Another prominent CP Jewish affairs spokesperson, *Morgen Freiheit* editor Paul Novick, joined Schappes as a speaker on “the current slanderous campaign about ‘anti-Semitism’ in the Socialist lands” at another New York City meeting scheduled a few days after the one in Williamsburg. Invitation card from the *Morning Freiheit*, box 1, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
50. Solomon M. Schwarz, *The Jews in the Soviet Union* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1951), 274, 276, 278–279, 284.
51. Murray Kempton, “Black Is White, See?” clipping, *New York Post*, December 23, 1952, and Louis Harap and Morris U. Schappes to James A. Wechsler, December 26, 1952, box 68, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
52. Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, *The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), 348–350, 551–552; Oliver Pilat, “Anti-Semitism and the Atom Spy Trial,” *ADL Bulletin*, March 1952, box 93, Records of the Boston Jewish Community Relations Council, American Jewish Historical Society, Boston, MA.
53. J. B. Salsberg, “Talks with Soviet Leaders on the Jewish Question,” *Jewish Life*, February 1957, 37; Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 82; *National Guardian*, January 22, 1953.
54. *Daily Worker*, January 19, 1953.
55. Magil, “Wall Street, Zionism, and Anti-Semitism,” 14, 22.
56. John Gates, *The Story of an American Communist* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1958), 152.

57. *Union Voice*, February 22, 1953; *Daily Worker*, March 2, 1953.
58. *Daily Worker*, March 2, 1953.
59. Alex H. Kendrick and Jerome Golden, "Lessons of the Struggle Against Opportunism in District 65," *Political Affairs* 32 (June 1953): 27–28, 33.
60. *Washington Post*, January 20 and April 19, 1953, and *New York Times*, January 6, February 1, and March 22, 1953.
61. *New York Times*, February 1, 1953; *Manchester Guardian*, January 14, 1953.
62. *Chicago Tribune*, February 13, 1953.
63. *New York Times*, September 21, 1953.
64. *Washington Post*, February 23, 1953.
65. Louis Harap, "The Charge of Anti-Semitism and the Cold War. I.: Progress of a Slander," *Jewish Life*, March 1953, 7–8; "News of East European Jews," *Jewish Life*, May 1953, 7.
66. Editorial, "Ten Years After," *Jewish Life*, April 1953, 5; *New York Times*, April 18, 1947; *Daily Worker*, April 17, 1953.
67. Editorial, "Ten Years After," 5.
68. Joshua Kunitz, "The Jewish Problem in the USSR, Part I," *Monthly Review*, March 1953, 402, 406, and "The Jewish Problem in the USSR, Part II," *Monthly Review*, April 1953, 464–467.
69. Kunitz, "Jewish Problem, Part I," 405–406.
70. *Ibid.*, 406, 410.
71. *Ibid.*, 410, Kunitz, "Jewish Problem, Part II," 457–458.
72. Kunitz, "Jewish Problem, Part I," 406–407.
73. Kunitz, "Jewish Problem, Part II," 461–462, 469. Kunitz remained in denial about Soviet antisemitism a quarter of a century later. In 1978 he declared that the American press labeled statements in Soviet publications antisemitic that "usually turn out to be Soviet condemnations of Zionism as a reactionary ideology whose adherents deny the human rights of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples and conduct anti-Soviet activities including within the USSR itself." Kunitz claimed never to have seen "a Jewish person portrayed negatively by a Soviet author." Kunitz, "Literature as a Mirror of Soviet Society," 12–13.
74. Stewart Meacham to Leo Huberman, October 31, 1953, box 1, Kunitz Papers, RBML, CU.
75. Meacham to Huberman and Dwight Spencer to Huberman, February 6, 1953, box 1, Kunitz Papers, RBML, CU.
76. *New York Times*, February 15, 1948; *Manchester Guardian*, January 15, 1953; Robert Weinberg, *Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 13, 84.
77. Library of Jewish Information, American Jewish Committee, "Jews Behind the Iron Curtain," May 1951, 1–2, box 40, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
78. Weinberg, *Stalin's Forgotten Zion*, 82–84.
79. *Forward*, September 13, 2002.
80. *Daily Worker*, December 19, 1949; J. M. Budish, "A Jewish State Rises in Birobidjan," *Jewish Life*, November 1947, 22–25; Andrew Rothstein, "The Facts About Birobidjan," *Jewish Life*, October 1953, 23–24.
81. Weinberg, *Stalin's Forgotten Zion*, 85; *New York Times*, June 22, 1954; *Manchester Guardian*, January 15, 1953.

82. Howard Fast, *Being Red* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 34, 36, 194.
83. *Ibid.*, 206–207.
84. *Ibid.*, 217–219.
85. Howard Fast to Paul Novick, September 5, 1957, box 48, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
86. Fast, *Being Red*, 219. Fast noted that after Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, revealing Stalin's crimes, Fadeev "put a pistol in his mouth and blew his brains out."
87. Morris U. Schappes, notes on conversation with Gedalia Sandler, February 3, 1991, box 48, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH. Sandler stated that W. E. B. Du Bois volunteered to speak on the Jewish question after Fast refused.
88. Fast, *Being Red*, 323.
89. *Ibid.*, 326.
90. Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Vintage, 1960), 543; Howard Fast to Paul Novick, September 5, 1957, box 48, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.

#### 7 The Jewish Question Discarded: Far Left Hostility to Jews and Israel, 1956–1973

1. *New York Times*, April 12, July 3, and September 17, 1956.
2. *National Guardian*, June 25, 1956.
3. Joshua Kunitz, "Khrushchev and the Jews," *Monthly Review*, July 1956, 93, 98–99.
4. *New York Times*, July 3 and September 17, 1956.
5. *Militant*, July 23 and August 6, 1956.
6. *Daily Worker*, January 26, 1953.
7. *Ibid.*
8. "Savage Judgment in Egypt," *Jewish Life*, March 1955, 3; *New York Times*, February 4, 1955.
9. Editorial, "Bandung and Israel-Arab Peace," *Jewish Life*, June 1955, 3–5.
10. A. B. Magil, *Crisis in the Middle East: Which Way Israel?* (New York: New Century, 1956), 7.
11. *Ibid.*, 9–10.
12. *Ibid.*, 3, 7, 10.
13. *Ibid.*, 20.
14. *Daily Worker*, October 31 and November 1, 2, 6, and 11, 1956. K. B. Thakore, "An Asian View of Egypt and Israel," *Monthly Review*, April 1957, 428–431 and Gilles Martinet, "A Left-Wing French View of Israel and Egypt," *Monthly Review*, May 1957, 17–23.
15. *Daily Worker*, October 31 and November 2 and 11, 1956.
16. *Ibid.*, November 22, 1956.
17. *Ibid.*; Alice Jerome to Victor Jerome, November 1, 1956, series I, box 13, Victor J. Jerome Papers, Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.
18. Alice Jerome to Victor Jerome, November 4, 1956, series I, box 13, Jerome Papers, Sterling Library, Yale University.
19. Victor Jerome to Fred Jerome, November 1, 1956, series I, box 13, Jerome Papers, Sterling Library, Yale University.

20. *Daily Worker*, November 30, 1956.
21. Ohio State Board, C.P., “Comments on the Jewish Question,” [probably September 1957], box 3, Morris U. Schappes Papers, Tamiment Library [hereafter, TL], New York University [hereafter, NYU], New York, NY.
22. Leo Huberman, “Report from Israel,” *Monthly Review*, February 1957, 367–371; Thakore, “An Asian View of Egypt and Israel,” 428–431, and Martinet, “A Left-Wing French View of Israel and Egypt,” 17–23.
23. *Daily Worker*, October 29, 1956.
24. “CP Resolution on Jews of the USSR,” *Jewish Life*, May 1957, 28–30.
25. Ohio State Board, C.P., “Comments on the Jewish Question,” box 3, Schappes Papers, TL, NYU.
26. John Gates, *The Story of an American Communist* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1958), 163.
27. Howard Fast, *The Naked God: The Writer and the Communist Party* (New York: Praeger, 1957), 126.
28. Press and Publications Division, American Committee for Liberation, “Howard Fast Challenges Soviet Detractors to Publish His Reply,” n.d., box 48, Morris U. Schappes Papers, American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Center for Jewish History [hereafter, CJH], New York, NY; *New York Times*, January 31, 1958. Fast recalled in his autobiography that the Soviets refused to acknowledge that he had ever written his 1948 novel on the Maccabees, *My Glorious Brothers*. The book was never reviewed in the Soviet Union, and when Soviet scholars prepared bibliographies of Fast’s work, they deliberately omitted it, while listing even his most obscure articles. Fast, *The Naked God*, 144.
29. Boris Polevey to Howard Fast, June 6, 1957, box 48, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH; *New York Times*, December 24, 1953.
30. *New York Times*, March 18, 1957.
31. Howard Fast to Paul Novick, September 5, 1957, box 48, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
32. Joshua Kunitz, “Soviet Jewry: Is It Doomed?” [1951 or 1952], and Joshua Kunitz, “Jewish Writer Describes Birobijan,” *Moscow News*, May 5, 1937, in box 1, Joshua Kunitz Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, NY.
33. Fast to Novick, September 5, 1957, box 48, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
34. Novick to Fast, October 16, 1957, box 48, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.
35. David A. Shannon, *The Decline of American Communism: A History of the Communist Party of the United States Since 1945* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 4, 257–258, 260, 359.
36. Dan Roberts to S., January 6, 1956, box 17, George Breitman Papers, TL, NYU; *Militant*, April 23, 1956.
37. Roberts to S., box 17, Breitman Papers, TL, NYU.
38. *Militant*, November 19, 1956, and January 7, 1957.
39. *Ibid.*, November 12 and 19, 1956; Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008 [1998]), 310, 312.
40. Roberts to S. and Farrell Dobbs to All NC Members and Alternates, March 19, 1956, box 17, Breitman Papers, TL, NYU.
41. *Labor Action*, December 10, 1956.
42. *Ibid.*, November 12, 1956.



43. *Ibid.*, November 19, 1956. Norman Thomas, six-time Socialist Party presidential candidate (in the elections from 1928 through 1948), was a persistent critic of Israel who, on at least two occasions, in 1949 and 1958, addressed meetings of the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism (ACJ). In 1949, Thomas told the ACJ that “it will be a tragedy if any religion is equated or identified with any nationalism,” which implied his opposition to Israel as a Jewish state. During the Suez War, Thomas denounced Britain, France, and Israel for “aggression” against Egypt. Although Thomas acknowledged that Israel had “received ‘great provocation’” from Egyptian dictator Nasser, he declared: “She did not come into court with clean hands on the basis of her own record in the Middle East.” Thomas did criticize the Arab nations for refusing to recognize Israel and called on them to negotiate with it for peace and a settlement of the refugee problem. *New York Times*, April 19, 1949, November 6, 1956, and May 20 and 21, 1958. The Socialist Party was part of the moderate left, not the far left, and the party’s official position was more favorable toward Israel than Thomas’s.
44. *Labor Action*, November 26, 1956.
45. *Challenge*, November 19, 1956.
46. See, for example, *Square Journal* (New York University), November 9, 1956, and *Daily Californian* (University of California at Berkeley), November 15, 1956.
47. Gilbert, *Israel*, 325.
48. Daniel Singer, “Armed with a Pen” in David Horowitz, ed., *Isaac Deutscher: The Man and His Work* (London: Macdonald, 1970), 11.
49. *Ibid.*, 54.
50. Tamara Deutscher, “Isaac Deutscher, 1907–1967” in Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), viii.
51. Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew*, 111–112. The *Reporter* article is reprinted in this volume.
52. *Ibid.*, 112.
53. *Ibid.*, 25–41.
54. *Ibid.*, 37; “The Non-Jewish Jew: Dr. Deutscher’s Controversial Address,” *Jewish Chronicle* [London], February 14, 1958.
55. Serge Groussard, “Propos Libres avec N. Khrouchtchev,” *Figaro*, April 9, 1958; Irving Howe, “Khrushchev and the Jews,” *Dissent*, July 1958, 217.
56. Groussard, “Propos Libres avec N. Khrouchtchev.”
57. *Militant*, May 12, 1958.
58. Groussard, “Propos Libres avec N. Khrouchtchev.”
59. Robert Weinberg, *Stalin’s Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Jewish Homeland* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 85; *New York Times*, May 3, 1970.
60. Herbert Aptheker, *The Fraud of “Soviet Anti-Semitism”* (New York: New Century, 1962), 1, 3–5.
61. Manchester *Guardian*, October 5, 1962; Arkady Vaksberg, *Stalin Against the Jews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 286; *New York Times*, October 4, 1962; *London Observer*, January 13, 1963.

In December 1950, the Soviet satirical magazine *Krokodil* published an article over its editor’s signature portraying the Jew as speculator and parasite.

It focused on Sara Shmerkovna (the daughter of Shmerkes), who engaged in black market activities during the war and now “attempts to spoil other people’s work and life.” She cannot get along with her neighbors, constantly complains, and “just wants to live at other people’s expense.” The American Jewish Committee noted: “Sara and Shmerkes are typical Jewish names, and the accusation of black market activity and parasitic behavior leveled against Sara Shmerkovna, as well as the charge of pathological complaining, evoke the well-known anti-Jewish stereotypes.” Library of Jewish Information, American Jewish Committee, “Jews Behind the Iron Curtain,” May 1951, 3–4, box 40, Schappes Papers, AJHS, CJH.

62. Aptheker, *The Fraud of “Soviet Anti-Semitism,”* 13–14. Moshe Decter directly associated economic crimes charges against Jews with Soviet state-sponsored antisemitic tracts in analyzing a book published in late 1963 by the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. This book “encapsulate[d] all the anti-Semitic themes characteristic of the Soviet press.” Its author, Trokim Kichko, described Jews as parasites living off gentiles’ labor. He claimed that Judaism taught that God “delivered all of the wealth of non-Jews to the use of the Jews.” The Talmud morally corrupted the Jews and instilled in them “the spirit of ... extortion.” Decter noted that in the Ukraine, 80 to 90 percent of persons executed for alleged economic crimes were Jewish. Decter was editor from 1958 to 1960 of the *New Leader*, a hard-line anti-Communist social democratic magazine. Moshe Decter, “‘Judaism Without Embellishment’: Recent Documentation of Russian Anti-Semitism,” *New Politics*, Winter 1964, 102–112.
63. Aptheker, *The Fraud of “Soviet Anti-Semitism,”* 11–13; *New York Times*, February 8, 1962, and January 12 and March 11, 1963.
64. *London Observer*, December 3, 1961.
65. Aptheker, *The Fraud of “Soviet Anti-Semitism,”* 11–13; Vaksberg, *Stalin Against the Jews*, 288.
66. *Militant*, April 29 and December 30, 1963.
67. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1963.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*, June 10, 1957, and May 12, 1958.
70. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1963.
71. *New York Times*, February 18, 1964; *Militant*, March 9, 1964.
72. Berkeley Barb, September 24, 1965.
73. *New York Times*, December 21, 1949. Julius Jacobson, editor of the left-wing socialist magazine *New Politics*, noted that William Mandel’s behavior at the first Socialist Scholars Conference, held in New York City in September 1965, confirmed his reputation as “an old-time pro-Communist hack.” In the conference’s keynote address, Marxist scholar Isaac Deutscher “delivered a resounding attack on Stalinism,” which came “as a bit of a shock to some of those responsible for the Conference.” Jacobson reported that Mandel “promptly had himself booked for a meeting to answer Deutscher.” Mandel chose as “the title for his diatribe: ‘The Ignorance & Viciousness of Isaac Deutscher.’” Julius Jacobson, “Isaac Deutscher as Theoretician,” *New Politics*, Spring 1966, 49.
74. Berkeley Barb, September 24, 1965.
75. *Militant*, June 12 and 19, 1967.

76. Roy Dahlberg, "Suggested Middle East Resolution," *New Left Notes*, June 19, 1967. The proposed resolution found "most discouraging ... the number of American students expressing the desire to fight for Israel."
77. Lawrence Caroline, Larry Estridge, Doug Hainline, and Danny Schact, "Proposed Resolution on the Arab-Israeli Conflict," reel 20, Students for a Democratic Society [hereafter, SDS] Papers, Microfilm Edition.
78. Bob Weiland, Bob Speck, Henry Bucher, and Philip J. Hardy, "Resolution on the Middle East," June 29, 1967, reel 20, SDS Papers.
79. Paul M. Sweezy, "Israel and Imperialism," *Monthly Review*, October 1967, 1–8.
80. Leo Huberman, "Israel Is Not the Main Enemy," *Monthly Review*, October 1967, 8–10.
81. Ahmad el Kodszy, "Nationalism and Class Struggles in the Arab World," *Monthly Review*, July–August 1970, 1–61; Mahmoud Hussein, "Nasserism in Perspective," *Monthly Review*, November 1971, 38.
82. Editorial, "Arabs & Jews," *Ramparts*, July 1967, 2–3.
83. Paul Jacobs, "A Time to Heal," *Ramparts*, July 1967, 3, 6; Paul Jacobs, *Is Curly Jewish?* (New York: Vintage, 1973 [1965]), 230.
84. Jacobs, "A Time to Heal," 8, 11.
85. Los Angeles *Times*, October 10, 1968.
86. I. F. Stone, "The Future of Israel," *Ramparts*, July 1967, 42, 44. In his 1946 book *Underground to Palestine*, Stone declared: "I myself would like to see a bi-national Arab-Jewish state made of Palestine and Trans-Jordan, the whole to be part of a Middle Eastern Semitic Federation." I. F. Stone, *Underground to Palestine* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978 [1946]), 222.
87. Michael Walzer and Martin Peretz, "Israel Is Not Vietnam," *Ramparts*, July 1967, 11, 14.
88. Jean Lacouture, "Mideast Prognosis," *Ramparts*, September 1967, 14.
89. Robert Scheer, "Egypt," *Ramparts*, September 1967, 70A.
90. Michael P. Lerner, "Marx and the Zionists" (review of Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*), *Ramparts*, September 1969, 67–68.
91. Fawaz Turki, "Thoughts of a Palestinian Exile," *Ramparts*, September 1972, 42–43, 45.
92. Hal Draper, "Anatomy of the Pro-Zionist Apologist," *New Politics*, Fall 1967 [issue published August 1968], 63.
93. Paul Jacobs, "A Political Baedeker to Israel," *New Politics*, Spring 1962, 102, 110; Abraham Friend, "Israel: A Political Portrait," *New Politics*, September 1963, 78, 85, 87.
94. Hal Draper, "The Origins of the Middle East Crisis," *New Politics*, Winter 1967, 13–15.
95. Abraham Friend, "The Middle East Crisis," *New Politics*, Fall 1966 [issue printed in July 1967], 36.
96. Bernard K. Rosen, "Socialist Policy in the Middle East," *New Politics*, Spring 1967 [issue published in March 1968], 74, 77, 81–82.
97. *Ibid.*, 75.
98. Hal Draper, "A Brief Tour of Social-Chauvinism," *New Politics*, Spring 1967, 82–85, 87.
99. Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew*, 149–150.
100. "Symposium: Chicago's 'Black Caucus,'" *Ramparts*, November 1967, 99.

101. Sidney Lens, "The New Politics Convention: Confusion and Promise," *New Politics*, Winter 1967, 9–10. Lens noted the "demagoguery used by Communists ... in defending the bloc vote," and "their boisterous and inflamed language." Lens, "New Politics Convention," 11.
102. James Aronson, "The New Politics of Black Power," *Monthly Review*, October 1967, 15.
103. "Symposium: Chicago's 'Black Caucus,'" 99; Aronson, "New Politics of Black Power," 15, 20.
104. Lens, "New Politics Convention," 4, 10.
105. "Symposium: Chicago's 'Black Caucus,'" 99, 101–102, 106–114.
106. *Ibid.*, 102, 106.
107. *Militant*, September 11, 1967.
108. *New Left Notes*, September 4, 1967.
109. Public letter signed by Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques Madaule, Denise M. Meyer, and 36 other French intellectuals, May 29, 1967, reel 20, SDS Papers.
110. Berkeley *Barb*, June 16–22, 1967.
111. Harvard *Crimson*, June 5 and August 11, 1967.
112. *National Guardian*, June 3, 1967; *Militant*, October 26, 1973.
113. Lucy Dawidowicz, "American Communists Zigzag Again," American Jewish Committee Information Service, August 25, 1966, box 7, Julius Bernstein Papers, TL, NYU.
114. *Militant*, June 15 and November 2, 1973.
115. Abram Leon, *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 71–72, 95–96; Shaye J. D. Cohen, "'Anti-Semitism' in Antiquity: The Problem of Definition" in David Berger, ed., *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 44. Cohen notes that "no ancient text assigns an economic motive to the hatred of Jews."
116. Leon, *The Jewish Question*, 82–83, 145–146, 152–153, 160, 171–173.
117. *Ibid.*, 141.
118. *Ibid.*, 192.
119. *Ibid.*, 250.
120. *Militant*, September 4, 1967; "Assail Anti-Semitic, Anti-Israel Propaganda at Wayne State University," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, February 18, 1969, box 123, Records of the Boston Jewish Community Relations Council [hereafter, BJCRC], American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter, AJHS], Boston, MA; *South End*, February 21, 1969.
121. *New York Times*, February 11, 1969; *Detroit Free-Press*, February 12, 1969.
122. *South End*, February 27, 1969.
123. Robert Lapidus, "Report of a Rally in Support of the Palestinian Terror Groups," May 15, 1969, and Iz Zack to Abe Foxman, May 19, 1969, box 123, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS.
124. Memorandum, New England Regional Office, Anti-Defamation League. From: Lawrence Weinstein. To: Isadore Zack, February 26, 1970. Subject: COMER (Committee of Middle Eastern Revolutionaries) Meeting at Boston University, February 25, 1970, box 94, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS.

125. ADL, "Danger on the Left," box 3, Bernstein Papers, TL, NYU; *Militant*, September 4, 1967, and October 26 and November 2, 1973; *UCLA Daily Bruin*, October 17, 1973.
126. *Militant*, November 19, 1971, clipping in box 123, Records of the BJCRC, AJHS.
127. *Columbia Spectator*, October 9, 10, 11 and 17, 1973.
128. *Harvard Crimson*, October 11 and 20, 1973.
129. *Ibid.*, October 26, 1973.
130. *UCLA Daily Bruin*, October 9, 15, and 17, 1973.
131. Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter that Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Schocken, 2004), 29–30, 35–36, 324–325, 491; Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 759–760.
132. *UCLA Daily Bruin*, October 17 and 19, 1973. UCLA Jewish activists sharply criticized the JDL's disruptive tactics. In a letter to the *Daily Bruin*, two rabbis denounced the JDL on free speech grounds for disrupting the Arab professor's "hate-filled" speech. The rabbis noted that pro-Arab demonstrators had behaved similarly at the SZA's earlier pro-Israel campus rally, and two years before had disrupted Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban's speech at UCLA.
133. *Daily Californian*, October 10 and 12, 1973.
134. *Ibid.*, October 24 and 25, 1973.
135. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1973. Reflecting the merging of the Arab student and far left outlook, the statement ended with a suggested reading list of Marxist tracts. These included *The Other Israel: The Radical Case Against Zionism*, edited by Arie Bober, a leader of Matzpen; French communist Maxime Rodinson's *Israel: A Colonial Settler-State?*; and works published by Cuba's Tricontinental Press and the Marxist Monthly Review Press.

## 8 Shaping the Next Generations: The Persistence of Far Left Antisemitism, 1973–2012

1. Paul Buhle, "The Eclipse of the New Left: Some Notes," *Radical America*, July–August 1972, 1, and James O'Brien, "Beyond Reminiscence: The New Left in History," *Radical America*, July–August 1972, 11–12.
2. O'Brien, "Beyond Reminiscence," 39–40. On the collapse of SDS, see also Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 380–388.
3. Harvey Klehr, *Far Left of Center: The American Radical Left Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), 5–6, 61.
4. *Wall Street Journal*, October 29, 1976.
5. *Ibid.*; *New York Times*, December 21, 1994.
6. Klehr, *Far Left of Center*, 61.
7. *Ibid.*, 45.
8. *Ibid.*, 44.
9. Paul Novick, *Assimilation and the Jewish People* (New York: Morning Freiheit, 1964), n.p.; *New York Times*, March 30, 1969.
10. Novick, *Assimilation and the Jewish People*, n.p.

11. "Letter to the Membership on the Jewish Question and Internationalism – From the National Committee, CPUSA," box 3, Communist Party [hereafter, CP] Papers, Tamiment Library [hereafter, TL], New York University [hereafter, NYU], New York, NY.
12. *New York Times*, April 7, 1969.
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35. *Socialist Worker*, October 7, 2010.
36. Jerold S. Auerbach, "Inventing 'Palestine,'" *Jewish Press*, August 12, 2011.
37. Christopher Hitchens, "Boat People: Some Questions for the 'Activists' Aboard the Gaza Flotilla," *Slate*, July 4, 2011, <http://www.slate.com/id/2298332>.
38. *Columbia Spectator*, March 3 and 4, 2009.
39. *Militant*, April 6, 2002.
40. *Ibid.*, November 4, 2002.
41. *Ibid.*, April 6, 2009, and July 12, 2010.
42. *Ibid.*, April 6, 2009.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Harvard Crimson*, October 20, 1982.
45. *Ibid.*, July 26, 2002. The *Crimson* noted that the Spartacist League had no Harvard affiliation and had rented a room in the university's Science Center for the presentation.
46. *Workers Vanguard*, May 27, 2011.
47. *Workers World*, November 24, 2009.
48. *Ibid.*, October 16, 2009.
49. *Ibid.*, November 24, 2009.
50. *Revolution*, October 31, 2010.
51. *Ibid.*, June 13, 2010.
52. *Ibid.*, October 10, 2010. On the RCP, see Klehr, *Far Left of Center*, 92–96.
53. *Revolution*, October 10, 2010.
54. *Ibid.*, June 13, 2010.
55. *Revolution*, October 10, 2010.
56. *Ibid.*, June 13, 2010.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Ruth R. Wisse, *If I Am Not for Myself: The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 34.
59. Eunice G. Pollack, "Preface" in Eunice G. Pollack, ed., *Antisemitism on the Campus: Past & Present* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011), xiv. For insight into academic antisemitism during the interwar period, see Andrew S. Winston, "'Objectable Traits': Antisemitism and the Hiring of Jewish Psychologists, 1920–1950" in Pollack, ed., *Antisemitism on the Campus*, 94–120.
60. *Harvard Crimson*, November 30, 1972.
61. Noam Chomsky, *Middle East Illusions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 40; Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010), 8. Chomsky has been willing to endorse a two-state solution only as a step toward binationalism.
62. Paul Bogdanor, "The Devil State: Chomsky's War Against Israel" in Edward Alexander and Paul Bogdanor, eds., *The Jewish Divide over Israel: Accusers and Defenders* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2006), 77–78, 88. Unlike the radical sects discussed, which identified as Communist, Trotskyist, or Maoist, Chomsky's political outlook was influenced by anarchism.



63. Chomsky and Pappé, *Gaza in Crisis*, 7–8, 199.
64. *Ibid.*, 15–16.
65. Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 16.
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68. Robert S. Wistrich, “Durban and the Apartheid Analogy,” *Jewish Press*, June 17, 2011, 4.
69. New York *Jewish Week*, September 7, 2001.
70. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, September 5, 2001; Gregg J. Rickman, “The Irony of It All: Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism, and Intimidation on South African University Campuses” in Pollack, ed., *Antisemitism on the Campus*, 280.
71. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, September 5, 2001.
72. Wistrich, “Durban and the Apartheid Analogy,” 4; *New York Times*, September 3 and 4, 2001.
73. Wistrich, “Durban and the Apartheid Analogy,” 4; *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, September 5, 2001.
74. *Militant*, September 17, 2001.
75. *Workers World*, September 13, 2001.
76. *Revolutionary Worker*, September 16, 2001.
77. Jerold S. Auerbach, “Wellesley College: Antisemitism in White Gloves” in Pollack, ed., *Antisemitism on the Campus*, 34.
78. Franz Borkenau, *World Communism: A History of the Communist International* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962 [1939]), 289–291.
79. Reuben Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 128.
80. Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn over Samarkand: The Rebirth of Central Asia* (New York: Covici Friede, 1935), 19, 21–22, 248; Kunitz, “New Women in Old Asia” [Part I], *New Masses*, October 2, 1934, 23–27; Kunitz, “New Women in Old Asia” [Part II], *New Masses*, October 9, 1934, 15–19.
81. Kunitz, *Dawn over Samarkand*, 274–275, 278.
82. *Ibid.*, 14, 248–249, 274, 276, 282–283, 296. The Bolsheviks established the women’s clubs in Central Asia to “draw the [Muslim] woman out of her seclusion.” Kunitz, *Dawn over Samarkand*, 296.
83. *Ibid.*, 20, 41.
84. *Ibid.*, 20.
85. For example, Syria’s minister of defense, Mustafa Tlass, in 1983 published a book, *The Matzah of Zion*, that endorsed the blood libel. In 1991, Syria’s representative at the UN Human Rights Commission recommended that all commission members “read this very important work that demonstrates unequivocally the historical reality of Zionist racism.” Martin Gilbert, *In Ishmael’s House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 308–309.  
 Egyptian dictator Gamal Abdel Nasser, Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, Hamas, and Hezbollah distributed the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Nasser was a Holocaust denier, as is current Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

- Anwar Sadat, who succeeded Nasser as Egypt's dictator, in April 1972, about a year and a half before launching the Yom Kippur War, delivered a speech in which he promised "to crush Israel and return it to 'the humiliation and wretchedness established in the Koran.'" Jane S. Gerber, "Anti-Semitism and the Muslim World" in David Berger, ed., *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 89.
86. Jim West to comrades Henry Winston, Gus Hall, and Helen Winter, June 24, 1982, box 2, CP Papers, TL, NYU. Winston was the CP national chairman, Hall was national secretary, and Winter was international affairs director.
  87. Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House*, 283–286.
  88. West to Winston, Hall, and Winter, box 2, CP Papers, TL, NYU.
  89. *Ibid.*
  90. *Revolution*, May 15, 2011.
  91. *Workers World*, February 8, 2006.
  92. *Militant*, October 5, 2009.
  93. *Ibid.*, April 26, 2010.
  94. Deepa Kumar, "Islam and Islamophobia," *International Socialist Review*, March–April 2007.
  95. Kumar, "Islam and Islamophobia."
  96. *Workers Vanguard*, July 3, 2009.
  97. Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House*, 348.
  98. Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 860–861.
  99. *Militant*, January 29, 2007.
  100. *Ibid.*, October 8, 2007.
  101. *Revolution*, November 4, 2007; *Daily Californian*, October 23 and 26, 2007. The disrupters appeared flustered by taunts from audience members about their "Halloween costumes."
  102. In 1995, the *Journal of American History* (JAH), published by the Organization of American Historians, the leading professional association of scholars of American history, assigned for review Tony Martin's *The Jewish Onslaught*, an antisemitic diatribe published and distributed by the author, as though it were a scholarly book. The JAH's reviewer, Clayborne Carson, a Stanford University professor, celebrated "academic freedom [for] function[ing] as it should have to protect" Martin's assigning *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, one of the twentieth century's most vicious antisemitic tracts, in his African American history survey course at Wellesley College. The *Secret Relationship*, anonymously authored by the Historical Research Department of the Nation of Islam, used consistently fraudulent methods. It regularly cited and misquoted scholars in support of the very positions they refuted. It drew inferences that flouted all rules of logic. In *The Secret Relationship*, notorious antisemites became "respected historical authorities" and long-discredited myths used to justify pogroms were presented as fact. Carson falsely accused distinguished historians who had denounced *The Secret Relationship* with not having read it. Clayborne Carson, review of Tony Martin, *The Jewish Onslaught: Dispatches from the Wellesley Battlefield* (Dover, MA: Majority Press), *Journal of American History* 81 (March 1995): 1856–1857; Eunice G. Pollack and Stephen H.

- Norwood, Letter to the Editor, *Journal of American History* 82 (December 1995): 1332–1334. See also Harold Brackman, Letter to the Editor, *Journal of American History* 82 (December 1995): 1332.
103. *New York Times*, September 10, 1960.
104. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1968.
105. *Ibid.*, June 6, 1968.
106. Sidney E. Zion, “Says Paul O’Dwyer, ‘The Times Seem to Have Caught Up with Me,’” *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, August 11, 1968.
107. Alexander Kendrick, *Prime Time: The Life of Edward R. Murrow* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 439, 534.
108. Moshe Maoz and Ronn Torossian, Letter to Editor, *New York Times*, October 20, 1995. See also Daniel Kurtzman, “Behind the Headlines: Strains of Anti-Semitism Waft Among the Marchers,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, October 18, 1995.
109. Michael Walzer, “The Million Man March,” *Dissent*, Winter 1996, 99, 101.
110. *New York Amsterdam News*, October 1, 1995; *Afro-American Red Star* [Washington DC], October 14, 1995; *New York Times*, October 13 and 17, 1995; Matthew Dorf, “Kemp’s Praise of Farrakhan Draws Sharp Jewish Reaction,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, September 11, 1996.
111. *New York Times*, October 14, 1995.
112. The SWP had been more favorable to the NOI before Malcolm X’s falling out with it. In 1963, before Malcolm X left the group, SWP leader Fred Halstead denounced James Jackson, the African American editor of the CP’s newspaper *The Worker*, for stating that “the Muslim organization in general and Malcolm X in particular, are ultra-reactionary forces.” *The Worker* called the NOI the most “counter-revolutionary force among the organizations in Negro life today.” Halstead condemned another African American prominent in the CP, Claude Lightfoot, for charging that “one could well suspect” that the NOI “is financed by the reactionary Texas oil billionaires,” because the NOI “preach[ed] the same doctrine” of “separation of the races.” Halstead objected to Lightfoot equating the black supremacist NOI with white racists. Neither Halstead nor Lightfoot and *The Worker* mentioned the NOI’s antisemitism. *Militant*, March 11 and August 5, 1963; *The Worker*, July 7, 1963; Claude Lightfoot, *Turning Point to Freedom Road: The Fight to End Jim Crow Now* (New York: New Century, 1962), 16.
113. *Socialist Worker*, October 13 and 27, 1995.
114. *Militant*, October 9, 1995.
115. *Workers Vanguard*, October 25, 1995, August 6 and September 3, 2004, and October 14, 2005.
116. *Revolutionary Worker*, July 27, 1997.
117. *Militant*, October 9, 1995.
118. Salim Muwakkil, “The Charmer Meets the Messenger,” *In These Times*, April 14–27, 1997, and Muwakkil, “The Farrakhan Factor,” *In These Times*, May 16, 1999. In 2006, with Farrakhan suffering from prostate cancer, Muwakkil commented: “Those who welcome Louis Farrakhan’s retreat from the national stage may not have fully considered the implications of his absence.” He declared that Farrakhan “is regularly charged with inciting anti-Jewish sentiments among African Americans, but few realize that [his] voice is a relatively

- conciliatory one in the Black Nationalist community.” Muwakkil, “Farrakhan Steps Back,” *In These Times*, November 2006.
119. *Workers World*, October 19 and 26, 1995.
120. Gabriel Schoenfeld, *The Return of Anti-Semitism* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004), 117–118.
121. Stephen H. Norwood, Letter to the Editor, *CommonQuest*, Summer 1997, 2. Five years after the Crown Heights riot, Sharpton told interviewer Jonathan Rieder, “I don’t have a right to attack Oppenheimer, I’m anti-Semitic?” Jonathan Rieder, “Crackers and Other Interlopers – A Chat with Rev. Al Sharpton,” *CommonQuest*, Fall 1996, 5.
122. Norwood, *Antisemitism in the Contemporary American University*, 25.
123. In October 2008, a special German commission composed of thirteen prominent professors, archivists, and military historians concluded that the Allied bombing had killed “no more than 25,000 people.” *Dallas Morning News*, October 2, 2008; *Washington Post*, October 2, 2008; *London Telegraph*, October 2, 2008. Frederick Taylor in 2004 estimated the German death toll at 25,000 to 40,000. Taylor, *Dresden: Tuesday, February 13, 1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 448.
124. *USA Today*, April 24, 2008; *New York Times Sunday Book Review*, May 4, 2008. The author asked both newspapers to publish a correction, but they declined to do so.
125. “Drop Charges Against ‘Irvine Eleven,’ Jewish Faculty Urges,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, March 9, 2011; Josh Keller, “UC-Irvine Suspends Muslim Student Group for Disrupting Speech,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 14, 2010; *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 2011; Norwood, *Antisemitism in the Contemporary American University*, 25; “Jewish Studies Faculty’s Support,” <http://www.irvine11.com/jewish-studies-faculty-at-the-university-of-california>.
126. Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 149–150.
127. Benjamin Ginsberg, “Why University Administrators Tolerate Antisemitism” in Pollack, ed., *Antisemitism on the Campus*, 4, 17.
128. Norwood, *Antisemitism in the Contemporary American University*, 22–23; Stephen H. Norwood, “Shades of 1938: Colleges Quiet a Critic of Islam,” *New York Daily News*, November 29, 2009.
129. Norwood, *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower*. Norwood, *Antisemitism in the Contemporary American University* draws parallels between American university administrations’ refusal to take a principled stand against Nazi antisemitism for much of the 1930s and their indifference and inaction in the face of antisemitic propaganda and harassment on American campuses today.

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