

THE FUTURE ANTI-SEMITISM

"Even the great French revolution began with the beating of the Jews. This is some sort of sad fate which is unavoidable. The Jews, as Karl Marx used to explain so well, being an historically unfortunate people and long oppressed, have become a highly nervous and impressionable people; they reproduce in themselves, as if in a mirror, all of the vices of the surrounding milieu and all the evils of a specific social structure; so that when the anti-Jewish movements begin one can be assured that they conceal a protest against the entire order, and that a much more profound movement is beginning."

The above statement run in a leading Russian revolutionary journal of its day (1883), Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) is a key not only to Soviet anti-semitism, but to the future of anti-semitism in the world.

The tone, you will note, is sorrowful: "Some sort of sad fate which is unavoidable." Thus: it is too bad that history has done this to the Jews, but as a group they have come to epitomize and symbolize everything evil in society; therefore anti-semitism is inevitable. Such anti-semitism, while unfortunate, is healthy; this theme is repeated in modern Soviet journals.

The theme of modern and future anti-semitism is political rather than religious. It is more likely to be tied to "socially progressive" slogans than to "reactionary" slogans. It is even likely to be tied to anti-fascist slogans. And it is very likely that it will be a quite different model than the German Nazi model.

"Progressive anti-semitism" is built not only on the revolutionary theme quoted above, but also on the related belief that group, ethnic and national differences should disappear (except for such cute mementoes as ethnic food and folk-dancing). This is a perverse extension of egalitarianism. It is also a means by which political control (for "progressive" purposes, of course) can be centralized and made total, minus interfering group loyalties.

In this way are "Progressive Anti-Semitism" and anti-Israel activity joined both in the USSR and America. S.V. Mikhalkove, the Chairman of the Russian Writer's Union recently explained that "one of the tasks of our counter-propagandistic literature is to expose the racist theories of Zionism," particularism being defined as racism. And it is one of the reasons that the Soviets have systematically cut off the study of serious Jewish culture.

Underground Ulpans for learning Hebrew have existed in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Kishinev and Vilnius for at least five years. But there are no public facilities for the teaching of Hebrew, except as part of the Oriental studies curriculum in several Soviet institutions of higher learning. And the private teaching of Hebrew is discouraged and hazardous. Hebrew textbooks are confiscated; and, as you know, Josef Begun, who privately taught Hebrew, is now in a Soviet prison, convicted of "parasitism."

As you can see by a full-page ad elsewhere in this paper, large numbers of people in San Francisco, Marin and the Peninsula are engaged in an exciting new project to help keep Soviet Jews in touch with their Jewish culture and particularity. Over 60 organizations and synagogues are actively involved in this community-wide project. It is not only a grass-roots service to Soviet Jews; it is a statement against the homogenizing

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impulse which is central to modern "progressive anti-semitism."

Nor can we be lax about that impulse in our own country. While we are staring fixedly at one horizon of danger, watching for the deadly swastika, we are liable to be clobbered from another direction.