

and parcel of the struggle against racism, for greater democratization and against the ultra-Right.

At the same time, it makes clear that *especially* Jewish progressives, including Communists, can and in fact *must* help win greater participation of the Jewish community in the struggle for peace, against U.S. policy in Vietnam, etc.

Progressive Jews often place the question: Where shall I work—in the peace organizations, the civil rights movement, the Human Relations Committee, the labor unions, etc., or in the Jewish organization and community? To place it in this way is wrong. No Jewish person should weaken his ties or activities in the labor unions, peace, civil rights movement or in other general fields of activity, although at times he may have to modify the scope of his activity.

The real problem that has to be tackled is, how can the Jewish community be more effectively won over to greater participation in all of the people's struggles—and by so doing would it not be easier to win the entire community, Jew and non-Jew, in the struggle against anti-Semitism? Any other approach means deserting the Jewish masses and leaving them under almost exclusive influence and pressure from the Jewish bourgeois, Right-wing and nationalist leadership.

The Soviet Jews

The last point I want to deal

with, if only briefly, relates to some questions concerning the Soviet Union and the Jewish people. A major anti-Soviet drive has been on foot, inspired, organized and led by the Right-wing in Jewish life, by certain bourgeois, nationalist and Zionist leaders. Alleging a Soviet policy of anti-Semitism, of Jewish persecution and discrimination, these forces have initiated petitions, placed ads in newspapers and organized numerous anti-Soviet meetings and picket lines. By spreading lies and distorting the actual conditions of Soviet Jews, these anti-Soviet provocateurs have been able to confuse and mislead many decent-minded people. It is extremely important that we fully understand the meaning, purpose and forces behind this anti-Soviet campaign and meet it head on.

To be most effective in combating the smear campaign, we have to be clear on some matters. Have mistakes, even crimes, been committed against Jewish people in the Soviet Union? The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was itself first to expose these and to admit that, yes, crimes had been committed in the USSR, especially during the latter part of the Stalin period. But to make things clear, the CPSU said such crimes were committed against the Soviet people *as a whole*, including the Jewish people. Now it is true that this does not make it easier for the Jewish people, but to speak about the mistakes and crimes as having been only or primarily against the Jewish people

feeds the idea that the source was anti-Semitism.

What is most important, at least to me, is that while six million Jews were wiped out by Nazism, while the Jewish community of Poland was almost completely destroyed, and while the Jewish communities in other parts of Eastern Europe, as well as in France and other Western European countries were seriously weakened, we can speak of the second-largest Jewish community in the world being in the Soviet Union. And since this is so, does not the Soviet Union deserve highest praise and respect for its policy of saving the Jews from the same fate, let us say, of Polish Jewry?

Coming back to the wrongs against the Soviet Jewish people, it is generally conceded that since the 20th Congress of the CPSU,

a process of rectification has taken place. Some people may be unhappy with the scope or tempo of this rectification. Some can argue for a Yiddish newspaper or a theatre. I am not against people having their opinions and expressing their thoughts on such matters. I would, however, prefer leaving these matters to be decided by the Soviet Union and its Jewish people.

What concerns me is how we are meeting the anti-Soviet campaign. Often I feel that because of the pressure of the Right-wing, some people take a defensive position. They will tell you the good things about the USSR, and then add a "but—" I feel that this section of the resolution needs strengthening, so that it takes a very positive position with no ifs or buts about the USSR.

D. N.

The Jewish Community Is A Reality

It would be unfortunate if the methods of work proposed in Irving Potash's criticism of the draft resolution were to gain wide acceptance. The position he takes would completely cut us off from the thinking of organized American Jewry. Thus the field would be left wide open for the nationalists and chauvinists.

Potash's Rejection

Potash rejects the concept of a

Jewish community as a distinct cultural entity in the U.S., although as the draft resolution correctly points out, it is a highly organized community, "possessing over 200 national organizations and thousands of local groups" as well as 20 Yiddish, 7 Hebrew and 144 Anglo-Jewish periodicals. He will not admit that this "Jewish Community" plays a significant role in the fight for peace and progress

"Which current, which trend or class pressure plays that role?" he asks, as though nothing has changed since the 30's and 40's.

History does not stand still and there have been significant changes in the class structure of the Jewish community in recent decades. The resolution makes that point clear when it states:

Members of the Jewish middle class who themselves, as workers, had participated in class battles in the past, are today allied with workers in current progressive struggles. Moreover, the existence of the menace of fascism and Nazism, which perils all Jewish people, and the memory of the slaughter of six million Jews—one-third of the world's Jewish population—create a deep impression among all sections of the Jewish community. This, together with the long history of persecution of the Jews, as well as the progressive traditions of the past, impels American Jews to participate in a high degree in the struggles for progress.

Yet Potash refuses to recognize a community as a community unless the overwhelming majority of people that make up that community are workers or socialists. Zionists—among whom are many workers active in civil rights and other struggles—are automatically excluded as "national chauvinists."

He writes: "The over 200 national Jewish organizations which include, on the one hand, such organizations as the Workmen's Circle and similar organizations

with a socialist background and, on the other hand, Zionist and other organizations with a national chauvinist outlook, do not constitute a 'community' even if all of them are also against anti-Semitism." It is sometimes hard to follow Potash's involved and illogical reasoning.

In Italy there is a powerful Catholic community (all classes—rich and poor are part of it). Yet I know of no statement by an Italian Marxist challenging the concept of an Italian Catholic community on grounds that among the great many Catholic groups there are some with a socialist background and others with a national chauvinist outlook, and arguing that such politically disparate organizations do not constitute a community even if all of them are also against anti-Catholicism.

The fact that there are classes within a community in no sense negates the existence of a community—Potash to the contrary notwithstanding. To deny the existence of a Jewish community is to reject among other things the 2,000 year-old Jewish cultural heritage which all Jews, irrespective of class, have in common.

In these critical times when it is essential that Marxist and progressive Jews develop dialogues with non-Marxist and even anti-Marxist Jews, and become more deeply involved in the political, social and cultural life and struggles of the Jewish community, it is incredible to find the "Jewish community" termed a

"false concept," "a throwback to historic national chauvinism reflected in such expressions as 'Jewishness' and 'Jewish spirit.' . . ."

A Liberal Community

The Jewish community, Potash goes on to say, has no "realistic meaning to the Jewish workers in the fur shops or garment shops where there is a daily sharp class struggle with their Jewish bosses or to Jewish workers in more basic industry controlled by big banks with rich Jews on the boards of directors." This is an over-simplification that will not bear close scrutiny. The assumption that Jewish shop or industrial workers are not participating in the peace and civil rights movements through their religious or secular mass organizations is false.

The Jewish community—widely acknowledged as one of the most liberal communities in the nation—includes the 100,000 member Zionist Organization of America which recently launched a nationwide campaign against neo-Nazism and the ultra-Right, pointing out that "the danger of assimilation and cultural disintegration which still looms large on the Jewish horizon must take a secondary place in the fight against bigotry."

It includes the Union of American Hebrew Congregations which calls upon Reform Jews and others not to allow the controversy

over "black power" to deter them from continued active participation in the civil rights struggle. It includes the American Jewish Congress which condemns the Rightist turn in West German politics, and the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations (representing 20 major Jewish organizations) which charged the other day that the Johnson Administration was complacent over the rise of neo-Nazism in Germany. It includes the Central Conference of American Rabbis which opposes the war in Vietnam.

Potash seems to have all the answers to all questions, but they are the answers of 1933 (harmful even at that time, and rejected by Dimitroff in 1935 when he warned progressives against national nihilism) not 1966. They are designed to help one stew in his own juice. They are hardly calculated to win friends and influence people.

The Ecumenical Spirit

Compare Potash's dogmatic assertions on the Jewish question with the ecumenical spirit present to a high degree in the thinking of the French Communist leader Roger Garaudy in relation to Christian affairs. "Christians and Communists constitute two of the major forces shaping the world today, and there is much they can learn from each other," he was quoted as saying in the *New York Times* of December 1.

"In an age when mutual extermination is possible, we must abandon the spirit of the crusades, the urge to convert the world to our own position. Instead we must learn to accept each other as we are," and to reject claims to have "unique, definitive and absolute truth." Dr. Garaudy called for a continuation of current Marxist-Christian dialogues. "A Christian can become a better Christian and a Marxist a better Marxist if we can learn from each other how best to develop our own beliefs," he said.

It is not difficult to identify with Dr. Garaudy's deep and astute remarks. (Note that unlike Potash who sneers at the idea of "Jewishness" and the "Jewish spirit," Dr. Garaudy has only the profoundest respect for the "Christian spirit.")

Clearly, Marxist and non-Marxist Jews—both religious and secular—also have much to teach and much to learn from one another. And there is no question that dialogue such as this will strengthen the forces of peace, democracy and progress.

Therefore, I support the draft resolution's entire section on the Jewish community, as I share Paul Novick's concern with the "wrong, harmful, nihilistic approach" to Jewish work on the part of some progressives (*Political Affairs*, October 1966). They seem to know so very little about our Jewish community of nearly six million, concentrated in the major cities, exerting an influ-

ence politically, economically, culturally.

Jewish Culture in the USSR

Potash has a theory—a very narrow and wrong theory about the Jewish community. Very often when the reality fails to fit his theory he makes it fit, as when he makes the ridiculous charge that there is no Yiddish theater in the U.S. or Israel and that the *Morning Freiheit* does not campaign for Yiddish theaters. Thus he makes the fantastic statement that there is "more Jewish culture in the Soviet Union than in any country, including Israel." How I wish it were true. Then there might not be a Soviet Jewish problem. Further, he criticizes the draft resolution for "re-affirming its agreement with the approach in the editorials of *Political Affairs* of June and July 1964 with reference to combatting remnants of anti-Semitism in the USSR, the approach to religion and anti-religious propaganda." The situation today, he writes, is quite different from 1964. How is it different? Among other things Potash states that the Schaknowitz anti-religious pamphlet has been withdrawn. But this pamphlet was only recently published. It has not been withdrawn. Remnants of anti-Semitism persist. The Soviet Jewish problem is still very much with us. The *Political Affairs* editorials of June and July 1964 still apply.

The Jewish community is a living reality. It is highly organized. "Shall it be left to the nationalists, the chauvinists, the obscurantists to hold sway over it?" Novick asks. "Or should progressives try to exert their influence by building progressive Jewish culture in Yiddish and in English, by keeping alive progressive Jewish traditions of the Jewish labor movement, of heroic figures in Jewish history, in the freedom struggles and revolutionary movements over the generations down to the fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto?"

The section of the draft resolution on Soviet Jews is on the right track, despite Potash's insistence that there is no Soviet Jewish problem and that the

writers of the draft resolution "reflect national chauvinist tendencies" for calling for the "full restoration of the administratively suppressed Jewish cultural institutions."

The resolution of course needs strengthening. I recommend incorporating Novick's call for a "broad, theoretical evaluation of the national and colonial questions existing in 1966, taking into consideration of what transpired after the October Revolution, during and after World Wars I and II and as a result of the historic upsurge of the nations and nationalities in Asia and Africa, etc."

Until this evaluation is made, I am afraid the Soviet Jewish problem will continue to hurt.

The coming together of the different groupings of the ultra-Right and their increased use of racism has increased the danger of both the ultra-Right and of racism. This union also adds a new dimension to the use of anti-Semitism as a tool of reaction. It points to the inherent unity of the struggles for civil rights and civil liberties, of the struggles against ultra-Right, racism and anti-Semitism, and the key role of these struggles in the overall battle for democracy.

Gus Hall, *Toward a Peace Ticket in 1968*, p. 18.