

years? To both these questions the answer is YES!

The entire political situation in Britain is favourable to bringing into the Communist Party hundreds and thousands of men and women willing and able to help our fight. Millions are sick and tired of the cold war and want something done to ease the tension. A great movement has developed for nuclear disarmament, and throughout the country there is a deep-seated feeling of horror at the prospect of West Germany being given nuclear weapons.

For the first time in a generation youngsters are leaving school and marching straight to the Labour Exchanges because there is no work for them. The advocates of anti-communism are operating on an ever-narrowing basis as economic difficulties, aggravated by the gigantic expenditure on armaments, increase and intensify. The mighty advances of the Socialist countries are now more widely known and accepted and are a growing challenge to the capitalist world.

In such a situation bold public activity by the Communists will win a growing support. The more the workers hear our arguments and proposals and the more their experiences show the correctness of our policies, the greater will be our influence.

But the actual building of the Communist Party

is a serious political battle. The Communist Party won't grow of its own accord. It has to fight to grow. It must wage a powerful political battle to expand. That is why, as we develop and extend our public work, we need to take the offensive and strive consciously, deliberately and systematically to win new members, and to win them on such a scale as will ensure a registered membership of 30,000 by the end of this year.

That would place the Party in a favourable position for further advance to reach the 34,000 by the time of the celebrations for our Fortieth Anniversary in August 1960. This is a formidable task, but it can be done.

The need at this stage is for the greatest initiative and audacity in the public fight for the policy of the Party. To the extent that we succeed in this and fight for our policy in a bolder, non-sectarian and really popular way, the prospects for the growth of the Party will also improve.

If this public fight is accompanied by systematic planning and determined effort to win new fighters into our ranks, the Party will grow and the British working class will get more and more the kind of leadership it needs and deserves.

### Discussion contributions:

## On the Jewish Problem

*W. Gallacher*

**J**ACK ROSENBERG is quite correct when he puts the question, in connection with the State of Israel, "Should we not be examining the particular historic forms and inter-connections that gave it birth?" This is the vital question and to answer it in the affirmative will involve a study of Jewish history from the earliest days. For all that happened before the second dispersion had its bearing on what happened to the Jewish people in feudal Europe, and what happened in that period sowed the seeds that brought forth the evil growth of anti-Semitism and determined the conditions that gave rise to Zionism—the political parent of the Jewish State.

I have read, with a certain amount of diligence, the Old Testament, and *Antiquities of the Jews* and *Jewish Wars* by Josephus. Their wars, if we are to accept these, were many and varied. They were, in the main, a pastoral people, with a patriarchal form of society which involved them in many semi-tribal struggles, even while they were constantly

menaced by the more powerful Egyptians on one side and the "proud Assyrians" on the other.

True they had forty years of glory under the leadership of King David, and his son Solomon, the latter taking on the task so dear to the heart of his father, the building of the Temple. Great days for the Jewish people, and always they have lived in hope of their return.

Long before this "time of glory" they suffered deeply from the harsh domination of the Pharaohs. The Egyptians had many gods but none of them were of any help to the suffering Jews. But they discovered in the heavens, which were just a short distance overhead, a God of their own, the great and all-powerful Jehovah. He was a God of war, and would in due course subdue their enemies and make of them a great nation. This knowledge held the tribes together and gave them promise of happy days so long as they were obedient to his laws and gave glory to his name.

Thus, at their weakest, with ruthless, plundering forces on either side of them, when they were, it may be said, between the hammer and the anvil,

the thought of the mighty God who was watching over them enabled them to bear whatever suffering or indignity might be imposed upon them.

While there were occasional heroic uprisings against their oppressors, the Maccabees and the great revolt against Vespasian and Titus, they were often badly served by their own God-appointed leaders.

But within two or three centuries the Roman Empire itself showed all the signs of decay. Constantine, who embraced the Christian faith, moved the centre of his Empire from Rome to Byzantium, where he built a new First City of the Empire, which took his name, Constantinople.

#### Conditions in Europe

In Europe the Empire was in an advanced state of dissolution. Powerful barons with mercenary armies were busily engaged grabbing territory and setting up their own authority. A new order of society, feudalism, had its birth with the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

But in the towns and cities the merchants and artisans had their own organisations, merchants' and artisans' guilds, which sought to protect their members from the rapacity of the feudal barons.

This was the Europe into which the Jewish wanderers came and pitched their tents. There was no possibility of work as artisans, as only guild members could engage in any of the crafts and only sons or nephews of members were accepted as apprentices. So the Jewish people, shut out from the guilds and as a consequence from the social life that centred around these, had to huddle together wherever they could find room, live their own life, and earn a living as best they might. All that was left to them was to confine themselves to domestic industry and leave it to more ingenious members of the community to find ways and means of disposing of the product of their labour. Many of these latter were able to accumulate a considerable amount of money. With this they were at an advantage. Usury was prohibited by the Church but it didn't affect the Jews. They were ready to make loans where there was hope of a substantial return. They became known as experts in financial transactions of one kind and another. This was the undoing of the Jewish people in Europe.

I always remember a phrase in Sismondi's *The Rise of the Italian Republics*, a very striking phrase, "The rising merchant class of Italy", he says, "knew how to turn national disaster into public good". What did he mean? If the feudal lord went to war and got defeated, that was national disaster. But he returned bankrupt and had to borrow from the merchants; they would only agree to a loan provided he signed an extended political franchise—that was public good.

Cutting right across this convenient (for the merchants) state of affairs, came the Jews. No longer were the impoverished barons dependent on the merchants; they could get, or force, more favourable loans from the Jews without any trouble about new franchises. This brought the Jews into direct conflict with the new rising class. Yet they could not refuse loans to the powerful barons without facing the danger of torture and extortion. So they were once again between the hammer and the anvil, between the Barons and the merchants, blocking the forward advance of the latter.

#### Financial Basis

Not only was there this to arouse the enmity of the merchants, there was the fact that some of the barons saw the advantage of using financial Jews to act as their tax-collectors—a most unpopular occupation. *Jew Suss* portrays such a character who, ably serving his master, was treated by the latter with tolerant contempt, while attracting the hatred of those who had to supply the cash towards himself and the Jewish people. For while such a serviceable Jew could expect the protection of the Duke, there was no protection for the Jewish people. They were exceptionally vulnerable and could be, and were, attacked with impunity.

This "buffer" position of the Jews is brought out quite clearly in "Shylock". I don't know what exactly Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote it, if he did write it, but despite the seemingly anti-Jew impression that the title and some of the expressions might create, I get the feeling that he was conscious of the hypocrisy of the bourgeois and of the inherent dignity of the Jews.

For the famous speech, "The quality of mercy is not strained", is full of cant, the stuff you can always rely on getting from the bourgeois when there's some particularly dirty work being prepared. Certainly none of those in the court had any intention of showing mercy to Shylock. Whether or no it fell "like gentle dew from heaven" it wasn't going to fall on him. The cant is carried into the verdict. The Duke tells him that they are going to be more merciful than he was, his life will be spared but half his goods will go to the merchant, the other half to the state. In a couple of short sentences Shylock, in one of the finest passages in the play, spurns this robber's sentence:

"Nay, nay, take my life and all, pardon not that.  
You take my house when you do take the prop  
That doth sustain my house,  
You take my life when you do take  
The means whereby I live".

But whatever may be thought of the play, the lesson is clear, the Jew was caught between the Duke and the merchant. And all through it can be seen the hatred of merchants, even while they are

proposing to make use of him. It has been noted, and often remarked upon, that anti-Semitism has never been active in England. The reason for that is clear. The London merchants, alive to what was happening, were strong enough to force the King to expel the Jews from England, so there never was any question of the Jews, in the formative period of the rise of the merchants, on the road to the new order of capitalism, coming in between the merchants and their political advance. It wasn't until capitalism was well under way and the banking experience of the financial Jews became a valuable asset to the new order that the gates of England were once again opened to the Jewish people.

### The Ghetto Jew

But while the financial Jews were able to take their place with the high and mighty, the Ghetto Jews were still forced, by the limitations placed on them by history, to continue huddling together, confining themselves to domestic industry and petty trading.

Through centuries of suffering, these latter, much more so than the others, had it borne in on them that where there were progressive people, or progressive movements, there was friendship and a complete absence of anti-Semitism. Where reaction held, or sought to secure, power, the danger was very great.

Thus the Ghetto, or working class Jews, drew more and more towards progressive movements and wherever opportunity offered, openly participated in them, in the course of time providing such movements with a considerable element of their leadership.

So we may sum up this part with two lessons that should be ever in the minds of the Jewish people:

- (1) Never become a buffer between two opposing forces, for there lie the roots of anti-Semitism; and
- (2) Recognise that the future of the Jewish people, a future of peace and security, free from any threat of anti-Semitism, lies in full association with the progressive forces, with those who seek to change the world, and never with the reactionaries who are desperately striving to hold on to what is still left of their rapidly decaying system.

So far I have been dealing with two trends in Jewish history, domestic industry and banking. Workers and financiers. But there is another and very important trend in the long story of the Jewish people.

### "Golden Age"

Great was the glory of the Jews in the days of David and his son Solomon, but even greater, from the point of view of service to humanity, were the centuries when, with the Moors of Spain, they brought light and learning into Europe and ultimately ended the Dark Ages of that continent, which had lasted for a thousand years. It will not dwell at length on this "Golden Age" of Jewry; it is, or

should be, sufficiently well known. Enough to say that not only did the Jews participate in the general administration of the country, not only did they develop agriculture and industry, but they specialised in education, medicine, and science. Teachers, doctors, scientists, and philosophers in the schools, the surgeries, and the universities, were for the most part Jews. Great and glorious was Moorish Spain while Europe lay mentally dead under the wretched opiate of sordid superstition.

So, the very nobles who were persecuting Jews throughout Europe were sending their sons and daughters to Cordova to be educated by Jewish teachers and philosophers. From this four centuries of incalculable service, there comes the third trend in Jewish life, medicine, science and philosophy. And, in comparison to their numbers, they occupy in all these spheres an outstanding foremost place. And what lesson is there in this? It should be clear, service to humanity brings with it integration with the main army. Jewish teachers, doctors, scientists and philosophers take an active and very often a leading part in the associations connected with these various branches of learning.

No one could ever dream of a teachers' or a doctors' voluntary Ghetto. They belong to their respective associations just in exactly the same way as their Gentile colleagues. Thus the key to integration is service to humanity; when Jew and Gentile are engaged in this great task there can be no such evil growth as anti-Semitism.

But anti-Semitism was rampant in Europe last century and the people of the Ghettos had to face not only daily insults but periodic pogroms of the most brutal and bestial character. It's a fearsome story of human suffering.

It was this that started Herzl on his campaign for emigrating Jews to Palestine. The wealthy Jews were to supply the resources, but the emigrants would be the tortured Jews of the Ghettos. The movement he started interested Jewry, but had little or no impact outside of Jewish circles, until the First World War brought about a situation which made Britain desperate to get American support, and for this purpose the Jews of America were a very important counter. So the Balfour Declaration was sent to the Zionist leader, Weizmann.

### The Balfour Declaration

This declaration promised a national home for the Jews in Palestine at the end of the war. But, of course, nothing was said about the fact that Lawrence of Arabia had been instructed to make a similar promise of Palestine to the Arabs.

With the victory of the Allies there began a steady flow of Jews towards Palestine, while the Zionists kept pressing for the implementation of the Balfour Declaration. In the course of this campaign a

favourite argument of the Zionists was that "a Jewish Palestine would be a valuable outpost in the Middle East for Western civilisation"—"Western civilisation" should read Western imperialism, which means that the Zionists were actually, and deliberately, proposing to place the Jewish people in Palestine as a buffer between the imperialist oppressors of the Arabian people and the liberation forces in the Middle East. As a consequence of initial betrayal of true Jewish interests, the leading Jews in Palestine have looked on themselves as a part of the West, and not as a Middle East country with its future tied up with the liberation and progress of its Arab neighbours.

This attitude made them the enemies of progress when the liberation movement got going in Palestine in the twenties. The Arabs wanted the British out, the Jews wanted them to remain. There they were, despite the lessons of history, between the British imperialists and the Arab nationalists, and getting the worst of both worlds.

The Communists urged the Zionists to join with the Arabs for an independent Palestine, for a binational state, but they wouldn't listen to us.

They didn't want an independent Palestine while they were in a minority; they had suffered too much as minorities in other countries, and they weren't going to take any chance in Palestine. With the backing of the West and, particularly in Britain, with the backing of the Labour Party, the immigration would advance until their ambition was achieved and Palestine would become free with a majority Jewish Government. It sounded fine in Jewish ears, but there were many snags they never cared to discuss. They were to come up against them later on.

The Jewish minority was in a much better position to win the support of the Arab fellahin, than the effendi minority. But when they opposed independence, when they took their place with the imperialists, and adopted the superior pose of representatives of Western civilisation, with a consequential attitude of contempt for the "backward" Arabs, they drove the fellahin back into the arms of the effendi. These latter, although they were ruthlessly exploiting their more unfortunate brethren, were nevertheless carrying on a progressive struggle in the fight for independence, a fight that should have been led by the more politically conscious Jews.

Instead of that, their attitude to the Arabs was in many respects similar to that of the anti-Semites towards their own people. For them the Arabs were of no account; their affiliations were towards the West, and they looked to Britain to make the path easy for them to reach their cherished goal—a Jewish Palestine.

The Labour Party was committed to Zionism, and its leaders missed no opportunity of attending Zionist gatherings where they gave the most solemn

pledges on this all-important Jewish question. In such a situation the Zionists could afford to ignore the warnings of the Communists.

In 1945 the Second World War was over, and the Labour Party was returned in the general election with a resounding majority. The Zionists were delighted. Palestine was as good as theirs. Britain got the mandate for Palestine, and with Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary, it looked as though all would be well; but they got a rude awakening.

### The Mandate

The Mandate laid it down that when the mandatory power was relinquishing the Mandate, special consideration would be given to the situation in Transjordan, a recognised part of Palestine, much larger than Palestine proper, sparsely occupied by Arab tribesmen under the rule of Sheikh Abdulla. In breach of the Mandate, Bevin handed over Transjordan to the Sheikh, transformed it into a Kingdom, and transformed the Sheikh into King Abdulla.

Quite a unique achievement for a Socialist minister representing a Socialist Government! It became only too obvious that the Zionists were betrayed, or fooled again, and so, instead of Britain and the Labour Party opening the way for mass immigration and a Jewish Palestine, they opened up the way for a new Jewish war—war against Britain.

Then came the discussions in the United Nations, leading eventually to the partition and the setting up of a small Jewish State. Had the Zionists learned any lessons from these various betrayals? Not them. When they took over, the imperialists appeared to be strong and firmly entrenched in the Middle East; the Arabs weak and seemingly helpless with their countries occupied or under imperialist control. So they staked their future on alignment with the imperialists. They failed to see the course history was taking when Egypt forced Britain to withdraw its troops, thereby ending the long domination under which that country had suffered. So little did they seem to understand what was going on, they conspired with the French and British imperialists for an attack on Egypt which aroused the most bitter hostility against them on the part of every Arab country. Now the historical process is becoming very much clearer, will they read the signs and act accordingly? Will the Jewish State live with its Arab neighbours, or will it decline and die with the decline and death of imperialism in the Middle East? That is the question that confronts Zionism and the leaders of the small Jewish State. "There is always something becoming and something passing away", and there can be no doubt about what is happening in the Middle East. It may be one year, two years, or ten years, but history has served notice: each year the Arab countries will grow stronger, each year the imperialists will lose ground until they are out completely and for

good. With such a situation developing there is no future for the small State of Israel other than in friendship and collaboration with its Arab neighbours. Our Party comrades in Israel have put this line clearly in the Knesset but Ben Gurion cannot see beyond dollars from America.

### Yiddish

Regarding the question of Yiddish in the Soviet Union: I took a considerable interest in this, and on several occasions raised it with our Soviet comrades. Comrade Waterman and other Jewish comrades feel strongly on this issue, although they have to admit that it is not such a question as should affect our faith in the Soviet Union or in Socialism as the ultimate solution to all the evils of anti-Semitism. Comrade Waterman puts the question thus: "Should Marxists attempt by artificial means to eliminate a living language and culture, by 'administrative measures', instead of allowing the historical process of cultural integration to take its natural course?"

If this means anything, it means that Yiddish in the Soviet Union is passing away, but that it hasn't yet reached the stage of decline that can justify the decision that was taken to stop subsidising the Yiddish theatre and the Yiddish press. For that was the "administrative measure". The comrades with whom I discussed this assured me that in Moscow, as distinct from Kiev, the process of integration had advanced very far, and that support for Yiddish had declined accordingly. Surely Comrade Waterman will agree that integration has made a very great advance from 1917 till 1948?

Also he must take note of the fact that since 1948 Yiddish, outside the Socialist countries, could make no claim to represent the workers or poor Jews.

As for the statement by Comrade Ramelson, taken up by Comrade Waterman, that "Wherever the Ghetto walls were broken down—as in Western Europe and America—Yiddish ceased to develop"—are the Ghetto walls broken down in Europe or America? If the Ghetto walls are broken down, why isn't there integration? Isn't it clear that centuries of Ghetto life have left their legacy, the form and much of the psychology, and, for the older people, the language of the Ghetto?

But Comrade Waterman indignantly repudiates the idea that Yiddish was a "Ghetto language". He exclaims, "Ghetto language indeed! One may as well call Negro culture in the U.S.A. Ghetto culture".

Negro culture in the U.S.A. has taken a specific form arising out of conditions of slavery and the discriminations and persecutions that have followed on its ending. It has taken the form of Negro spirituals with an accompanying heartbeat of their ancient tribal life in Africa. It expresses the sufferings

and aspirations of the millions of American Negroes and is therefore a living and progressive cultural expression, dear to all who believe in Socialism—in the Brotherhood of Man. So with Yiddish, as Comrade Waterman says, "It became a weapon of the working class and poor Jews, embraced and loved by them, sinking deep into their consciousness and daily life."

No one could claim that for Yiddish publications today. The language of working class and "poor Jews" is the language of the trade union and broad Labour movement, which includes the Communist Party.

Thus the only question at issue is, to use the words of Comrade Waterman: Has "the historical process of cultural integration" advanced sufficiently in the Soviet Union to make necessary the decision to discontinue subsidising a diminishing language culture, or has that stage not yet been reached? There may be a difference of opinion on that without making it a major issue. The big question is the menace of Zionism, as a tool of imperialism, to the Jewish State and to the Jews in every capitalist country.

### Michael Cohen

IN introducing his article "An Old Problem Re-discussed", Bert Ramelson refers to anti-Semitism as the essence of the problem. I would like to draw attention to a new aspect of the question, which, if not the essence, is nevertheless of interest.

Marxists are, I think, agreed that socialism is the only real answer to anti-Semitism. Socialism, in smashing the economic base of anti-Semitism, liberates Jewish citizens of the new society for the fullest participation and assimilation in the building of Communism.

The question that I am thinking of is: Does it follow from the general Marxist analysis made by Bert Ramelson and others, that in time this process of assimilation will really be *complete*? In five or six generations will no citizens of a Communist society be in a position to distinguish themselves as of Jewish descent?

These projections into the future may appear to be academic and of little importance. I feel, however, that a consideration of this question from a Marxist point of view might help us to see the question of Jewish culture more clearly.

Many Jewish Communists appear to think that Jewish culture can be equated with Yiddish culture. This is not so. Although the origins of the Yiddish language go back to the influx into Eastern Europe of Jews (particularly from Germany) in the Middle Ages, its poetry and song