

By Paul Novick

PERSPECTIVES

Soviet anti-Semitism gets official sanction

IT HAS LONG SINCE BEEN OBSERVED that the "anti-Zionism" of various books, pamphlets and articles that have appeared in the Soviet Union since 1963, when Trofim Kichko's book, *Judaism Without Embellishment*, was published, is really only a cover for anti-Semitism. In this article I shall deal with a new book, supposedly about Zionism, in which the author goes way back to the times of the Russian czars Nicholas I and Alexander II when no Zionist movement existed. This book "demonstrates" that not only is there no Jewish problem in the Soviet Union now, but that there was no Jewish problem in Russia under the czars.

It is, unfortunately, no longer news that this literature makes a defense of the czarist pogroms against the Russian Jews. The pioneer in this effort, Dimitri Zhukov, declared on Oct. 12, 1974, in the weekly magazine *Ogonyok*, a publication of the Moscow Pravda, that the anti-Jewish pogroms in czarist Russia were actually a form of the class struggle and that it was the exploited non-Jewish masses who resorted to this form of class struggle against their Jewish exploiters.

This theory was further elaborated by Valery Yemelyanov. On Oct. 14, 1979, the *Morning Freiheit* reprinted in its entirety the Yiddish translation of Yemelyanov's article that had appeared in the Moscow magazine *Our Contemporary* (No. 8, 1978), the organ of the Writers Union of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, the largest of the 15 republics of the USSR. Yemelyanov's article was a book review of the Vladimir Begun book *Invasion Without Arms*. In this review Yemelyanov upholds Begun's viewpoint on the anti-Jewish pogroms of the czarist era in this manner:

"If the anger of the people poured itself out on the Jewish usurers, tavern keepers, manufacturers, merchants and other exploiters, the reason for this must be sought not in the national [that is, ethnic—P.N.] antagonism, but first of all in the class antagonism. We will not reproach our fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers who fought for a just cause [with having] a powerless attitude toward their exploiters, regardless of their birth or national origin."

Thus we see that the attitude to the anti-Jewish pogroms in czarist Russia has been firm and "clear" for quite some time in the supposedly anti-Zionist, but actually anti-Semitic literature that has been published in recent years in the Soviet Union. Now I shall examine a newer book, which goes even further than the writings of Begun and Yemelyanov.

This new Russian book is entitled *Zionism As a Form of Racism and Racist Discrimination* and its author is Lydia Artemyevna Modzhorian. The book was printed in 1979 in Moscow by the publishing house Mezhdunarodnaia Otnosheniya (Interpeoples Relations) and it was on sale at the Four Continents Book Store on Fifth Avenue in New York.

Lydia Modzhorian cites the opinion of Yakov Brafman, who invented the tale that the pogroms in czarist Russia were a form of "class struggle." Here is how Lydia Modzhorian summarizes Brafman's viewpoint:

"The excesses [pogroms—P.N.] that had occurred were aroused not because of the national or religious affiliation of the Jews, but were a response to the exploitation to which the broad masses



Jews in flight from Russia find shelter in Austrian Lemberg, June 1882.

were subjected in the capitalist enterprises. If the workers in these enterprises came out against their bosses who were Christians or Moslems this was called a mutiny; but similar actions in enterprises where the bosses were Jews were termed 'anti-Semitic pogroms' by the press, which was financed by these same entrepreneurs."

Lydia Modzhorian describes the troubles that the Jews caused the czarist regime. The Jewish problem in czarist Russia was only "artificially created" to enable "the penetration of West European Jewish capital into the country," Lydia Modzhorian states. This is how the Jewish "usurer bankers" (her designation) continually interfered in czarist Russia as far back as the times of Nicholas I!

Libels and falsehoods.

Lydia Modzhorian also includes various tales of which we will note a few here:

1. The Alliance Israelite Universelle, the French Jewish philanthropic organization founded by Adolphe Cremieux in 1840, was supposedly, according to Yakov Brafman, "a political center of the entire Jewish people" (page 24). Actually the Alliance aided victims of anti-Semitism in various countries and sponsored modern schools for Jewish children in North African countries.

2. The B'nai B'rith, which was founded in 1843, is described as a sinister, "international organization of Jewish masons" with rituals, a secret membership, secret passwords and signs (page 26).

3. On page 27 Lydia Modzhorian again forgets all about Zionism and refers to "the political dogmas of Judaism," that

is, of the Jewish religion. One wonders what these political dogmas are.

4. On page 74 she quotes a statement, supposedly from the Chumash (Pentateuch), one of the religious Jewish texts, that Jews may take interest only from non-Jews and that it is written in the Chumash: "And you will give loans to many peoples and you yourself will take loans and rule over many peoples and they will not rule over you."

Whether this is a correct quote or not is immaterial. One can find in centuries-old religious books of all kinds—Judaic, Christian or Musulmanic—many obscurantist statements which are irrelevant to present-day relations among peoples. In fact, similar fanatical and obscurantist statements in old Judaic religious books were used by the czarist prosecutor in the infamous ritual murder case against Mendel Beilis in Kiev in 1913. Even the czarist court rejected them as "evidence" and Mendel Beilis was set free.

5. On pages 84-85 and on page 148 she writes that Simon Wiesenthal, the famed hunter of Nazi war criminals and murderers of the Jews, is linked to the American and Israeli espionage services and that his behavior during World War II "aroused suspicion." Wiesenthal's Documentation Center in Vienna, with its voluminous files on Nazi war criminals, she terms "a spy network." Thus Lydia Modzhorian joins the Nazis and their apologists in defaming Wiesenthal's efforts to ferret out Nazi war criminals and murderers who are still at large.

6. On page 99 she writes of Israel's war for independence in 1948 when the Socialist states provided Israel with arms

and when the Soviet representative Andrei Gromyko denounced the Arab aggression in the UN. Despite this, Modzhorian claims: "Many facts attest that Israel was the aggressor in this war."

Astonishment and shock.

From all that is said in her book, one fact emerges: This book is a defense of czarism. According to Lydia Modzhorian, there was no Jewish problem in czarist Russia at all. It was "artificially created" by "foreign Jewish capitalists"; there were no anti-Jewish pogroms, but Jews continually interfered in the affairs of czars Nicholas I, Alexander II and Nicholas III. What is going on here?

To whom shall one cry out? We are asked to forget about Tolstoy, Turgeniev, Chekhov, Gorky, Korlenko and all that was noble in Russian literature. We are asked to forget about all those who fought against the pogroms on the Jews, to forget about the revolutionary Russian workers and students who joined the Jewish self-defense units against the pogromists. We are asked to forget Lenin's denunciations of the pogroms in Kishinev and Bialystok and to forget Lenin's famous gramophone address of March 1919 in which he said:

"When the accursed czarist monarchy was living its last days it tried to incite ignorant workers and peasants against the Jews. The czarist police, in alliance with the landowners and the capitalists, organized pogroms against the Jews.... Shame on accursed czarism which tortured and persecuted the Jews. Shame on those who foment hatred toward the Jews, who foment hatred towards other nations."

Yevgeny Yevtushenko, in his historic poem, "Babi Yar," recalled Alfred Dreyfus, Anne Frank and the pogrom in Bialystok and called out:

*Oh, my Russian people,
I know that you are internationalist
by nature,
But often those whose hands are
unclean
Made use of your irreproachable
name.*

What is happening there? Is socialism possible with czarism? Had the socialists and the revolutionaries once gone in vain to prison camps because of their struggle against czarism?

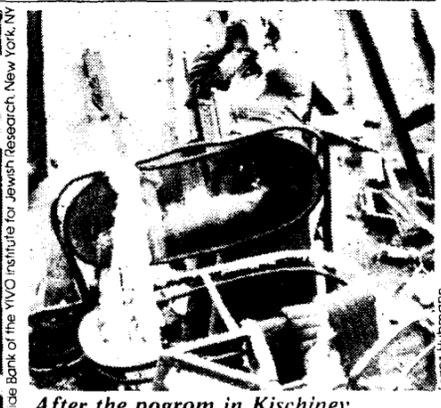
When a country continually engages in anti-Semitic propaganda, regardless of which country it is, our obligation is to demand that this propaganda be halted. This must be done where capitalist countries are concerned and it certainly ought to be done if these are countries that claim to be Socialist, and most certainly it ought to be done if this is the country which after the October Revolution gave the Jews and the Yiddish culture opportunities never seen before in the entire history of the Jewish people. This is the very same country where anti-Semitism was once outlawed and in which Lenin with fiery scorn assailed anti-Semitism and the anti-Semites as the deadly enemy of socialism and the October Revolution.

In behalf of the future of the Jewish people, in behalf of socialism, of detente and peace, we must fight against the promoters of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and the official line of publishing and circulating anti-Semitic literature in that country and abroad.

Paul Novick is editor of the *Morning Freiheit*, where a longer version of this article appeared.



Jewish defense groups organized in 1905 in Pinsk, then a part of Russia, against pogroms.



After the pogrom in Kishinev, Bessarabia, during Easter, 1903