

39 *Strength and Moods*

In the beginning, the Communist rank and file relaxed under the Democratic Front. The individual Communist was told to resemble the ordinary American in dress, manner and custom. The girls threw off their leather jackets and began taking care of their appearance. Communist couples went through the formality of legal marriage. The wife was no longer introduced as a comrade, and spending time at home with the family was not looked upon as an idle indulgence unbecoming a Communist.

On the whole, the party membership accepted the new orientation, some unreservedly, others—the majority—as a new expediency.

But the relaxation was of short duration. The world was drifting steadily toward a new war, and Communists all over were again being called upon to “assemble in protest” or to “march in protest.” (The serious border clashes in 1938 between Japanese and Soviet troops greatly increased Moscow’s fear of war, and the Communist parties redoubled their antiwar activities.) Still, these protests were different in character and form from the similar ones in the early 30’s. The Communists no longer had to sneak under the windows of consulates with their placards and then run away, or to be surrounded on a square by a cordon of police. Now they were not alone; all the protests, and, for that matter, the May 1st parades, were carried out jointly with non-Communists. And marching in company with good Americans for righteous causes—and they were clearly righteous—gave them emotional gratification.⁺⁸⁹

By the way, Americanized as the May 1st parades became, the

party could not desist from aping the Russians in carrying icon-like pictures of the leaders. Pictures of the members of the political committee, swaying like banners in the breeze, were perhaps the most ludicrous of all the decidedly Russian traditions taken over by the American party; Lenin, at the second Comintern congress, had warned foreign Communists against precisely such blind imitation.

THE MOOD FOR RAPPROCHEMENT

Uncensored news trickling out of Russia after 1934 showed a gradual economic improvement and a steadying of the popular mood. The country was registering notable advances in the sciences. The new constitution, affirming personal security under the law, adopted with great jubilation in 1936, was heralded in this country as an indication that the regime was moving away from dictatorship. Many liberals wishfully looked away from the ominous provision of the constitution banning any other party but the Communist.

The new constitution, paralleling Litvinoff’s sharp blast against the Hitler regime and Soviet aid to Loyalist Spain, was beginning to fix in the minds of some Jewish intellectuals the belief that the Kremlin was the only true foe of fascism, the mortal enemy of the Jewish people and of civilization. Filled with foreboding for the future of the Jews under the fascist darkness descending on Europe, they began losing confidence in Western Europe, and wavering in their anti-Sovietism.

This new mood was feelingly expressed by Dr. Abraham Koralnick, a learned Hebraist and one of the most educated essayists in Yiddish letters, formerly the Berlin correspondent of Professor Milukov’s paper, *Retch*. Dr. Koralnick, an unflinching and consistent anti-Marxist and anti-Communist, voiced his irritation over the intellectual and political shabbiness of Western Europe. “The old friends of Western Europe feel disheartened and disappointed,” he wrote in *The Day*. And commenting on the formation of the fascist Axis of Germany, Italy and Japan, announced in Tokyo November 15, 1936, with the avowed aim of forging a ring around Soviet Russia, he sounded a new approach to the Soviet Union:

“The question before us, . . . is entirely different; I say for us but I mean not only Jews, but especially the intellectuals of all countries, and particularly of America. . . . We also must forge a chain around Russia, a chain of defense. . . . For Russia was for

some of us physically the cradle, as it . . . has now reason to be the intellectual home for intellectuals the world over, a home that is gray and unfriendly, a home that is still to be built. . . . It is the only land in the world that is alive . . . for an ideal that concerns every human being. . . . On Russia one can still hope; that the first storm will pass, the waves will subside, the gray edges will be smoothed down—and Communism in a purified form can become the foundation and the goal of a new world order.

“. . . Between Communism in its purified form and the democracy in its last stages there is a bridge. But between democracy and fascism there is an iron wall—and against this wall we can all break our heads. . . .” *326

It was the brooding thought of a wise, sensitive man trying to brush away his deep skepticism with a new hope.

This inner crisis was not Dr. Koralnick's alone. These doubts and hopes were floating around, affecting other Jewish intellectuals.

There were, however, influential journalists, aside from those in the *Forward*, who did not succumb either to the anti-fascist thundering of Moscow or the sweet appeals for unity of the local Communists. They firmly resisted the United Front. One of them, Shmuel Rosenfeld, in *The Day*, January 3, 1936, put it succinctly, “The Communists offer us the choice of pogroms or Communism; we cannot accept either.”

Dr. Koralnick himself was the first to shake off the new illusions. The continuing purge did it. “Poor Russia, poor Europe,” he lamented after the execution of the Red Army generals. “Russia is tragic not merely because people died from bullets, but because the last spark of truth and reason is extinguished in a country which had so much promise. It is impossible that all the army leaders were traitors.” *327

Dr. Koralnick did not see the end of the bloody drama. He died a month after this article appeared. But most of those who collaborated with the Communists in the IKUF and ICOR were not swerved by the executions. For this break they had to wait for another hard blow from the Kremlin. And not all broke away then.

EARLY PURGE TRIALS BEWILDERING

The sudden staging of the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial, the summer of 1936, in which the former President of the Comintern, the former

Soviet Premier and other outstanding figures were accused of entering into a bloc with the “Trotskyite wreckers” to conspire with foreign powers to “bring back the rule of the capitalists and the landowners,” bewildered and confused a hitherto friendly public opinion. It was sharply out of focus with the hopes for tranquillity raised by the new constitution.

Accustomed to fair trials and ignorant of the physical and psychological torment inflicted in Soviet prisons, the West accepted the confessions of the accused, though reluctantly, as evidence of their plotting, ascribing them to inexplicable traits in the Russian nature. Only the Socialists, former Communists, and a few others, saw the trial as a bloody liquidation of Stalin's opponents. Quite a number of Communists, too, shook their heads in utter disbelief, confiding their doubts only to intimates.

Hardly had the heated controversy over the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial and execution died down when a second trial was suddenly announced, in January 1937. The accusation against the new defendants, Radek, Piatakov, Sokolnikov, Rakovsky and Krestinsky among them, were a repetition of those in the first trial, the only novelty being that the former followers of Trotsky had to confess that in all their long years of plotting crimes and treason they had acted under the direct instructions of Leon Trotsky, who was aiming to take over power in Russia and to form a triumvirate with Nazi Germany and militarist Japan to rule the world.

Several weeks later, and again without warning, came the terse announcement that eight of the leaders of the Red Army, most of them members of the general staff and some of them the most popular heroes of the civil war—Marshals Tukhachevsky and Yakir—were secretly tried on charges of high treason by a military court—lasting one day—and executed the following day. By this time the appalling scope of the purges was becoming unmistakable. Stalin was destroying the élite of the Communist Party and of the Red Army and all their friends and followers, many of whom had been the closest collaborators of Lenin. The barrage of scare spy stories that filled the Soviet press was clear evidence that the purges had extended far beyond the immediate active cadres of the party and the Red Army.

The Bukharin-Rykov trial, opened February 28, 1938, was the last of the staged trials. The spokesmen of the moderate Commu-

nist tendency were accused of entering into an alliance with Trotsky and committing all the frightful crimes enumerated in the previous trials. However, the center of the conspiracy was shifted from Western Europe to Japan and Nazi Germany; Stalin was still hoping for a military alliance with England and France. Bukharin was singled out, in addition, for the fantastic charge that he, jointly with Trotsky, had plotted the assassination of Lenin as yet in 1918, and that since then he had continued his plotting against the Soviet state.

" . . . AND HIS NAME MUST BE ANATHEMA AMONG JEWS "

As the trials and mass executions kept on, belief in the validity of the charges was fading. People who accepted the proceedings of the first trial were now openly voicing their disbelief and horror. The public hearing held in Mexico City, April 17, 1937, by the Committee for the Defense of Trotsky—John Dewey, chairman—entangled as it was in an airing of the doctrinaire differences between Stalin and Trotsky, was also instrumental in exposing the sham of the trials.

(Trotsky, who requested the hearings, was primarily interested in a platform from which to expound his own road to Communism, rather than to arouse public opinion against Stalin.⁺⁹⁰ As Dewey and John F. Finerty, counsel of the committee, did not put any limit on the scope of the hearings, Trotsky's ideological discussions greatly diminished the public interest originally focussed on the proceedings in Mexico City.^{*328} Incidentally, Trotsky was evasive on the questions put to him by the counsel as to his stand on political democracy.

(Two months earlier, Trotsky had lost his first opportunity for a wide appeal against Stalin. He was scheduled to deliver a speech over the telephone from Mexico City to the mass meeting in the old Hippodrome in New York City, February 9th, called by his followers to exonerate him and his executed friends from the absurd accusations. Mexican Communists cut the telephone wires as he entered the telephone booth to begin his speech. However, Trotsky had mailed a copy to be read in case of such an eventuality. The speech, a discourse on the aims of his Fourth International, lacked the old Trotsky fervor, and failed to impress the capacity audience.

Moreover, they were bewildered by the other Trotskyite speakers who condemned Stalinism but praised the Socialist achievements in the Soviet Union.)

The CP had no difficulty, in 1937, in lining up a large number of writers, artists and others to sign a statement to discredit the Committee for the Defense of Trotsky. The document and the list of 88 signers were printed in *Soviet Russia Today* March 1937.⁺⁹¹

The growing disgust in the Jewish community penetrated the Communist periphery. The printed word was not sufficient to calm down the doubts nagging at the minds of many followers. To meet this emergency, the entire *Freiheit* staff as well as the functionaries of the auxiliary bodies were mobilized during March and April to deliver talks at friendly organizations justifying the executions of the Trotskyites. Their instructions were to tie in the Trotsky menace to the Soviet Union with its danger to the Jewish people. Olgin, the "authority" on Trotskyism, with his usual lack of restraint, concluded an article in English, "Trotsky is an Enemy of the Jewish People," with ". . . and his name must be anathema among Jews."^{*329}

THE PARTY FEELS EFFECT OF CHILL AIR

The atmosphere around the party after the Bukharin-Rykov trial was becoming chilly. Many of those whose names decorated the letterheads of auxiliary agencies dropped out. Others publicly expressed their bewilderment and disgust. H. Leivick was moved to write, "My brain cannot receive or encompass all this. . . . I feel shame and revulsion at it all, and for the crimes they have confessed." He ended with the despairing plea, "Spare lives; don't kill!"^{*330}

(Upton Sinclair was one of the very few writers to defend the validity of that trial. Replying to an open letter by Eugene Lyons, Sinclair admitted that the thing which had happened in Russia had caused him "many a heartache," but he still believed that "the Soviet regime [was] the best hope for the workers of Russia. . . .")^{*331}

The party felt the urgency for arresting the mounting disillusionment, and Browder and Foster made coast to coast speaking tours in the summer of 1938 to explain the trials. The local party units were told that these meetings were their greatest "concentration

point," and that they had to bring the largest number of non-party people.

In Los Angeles, the Olympic Auditorium was hired for that meeting. Posters were plastered throughout the city. Nearly 8,000 people came. Browder's entire speech was a leaf out of early American history, dealing with the treachery of Benedict Arnold and Aaron Burr. His labored attempt to place the entire Bolshevik old guard on the same level with Arnold and Burr left the audience cold.*³³² Even stalwart party comrades were unmoved by Browder's far-fetched analogy. And reports from the Browder meetings in other cities did not show much difference in audience reaction.

CONFUSION AND APPREHENSION IN PARTY RANKS

It is exceedingly difficult to gauge the depth of a feeling among Communists running contrary to the party stand. Hardly anyone would volunteer an opinion critical of a basic policy. It was especially risky to question the veracity of the staged trials. If one were to judge solely by the party press, the party orators and the resolutions of party units, one would conclude that the membership to a man was solidly behind the purges. But they were not. Many Communists were inwardly shaken, and quite a number flatly refused to believe in the guilt of the accused.

Zinoviev-Kamenev were hardly known to party comrades in the 30's. But Radek was. This short and homely man, born in Austrian Galicia, had a sarcastic and incisive pen. He was the most popular commentator on international affairs, and editors of party papers the world over were always glad to reprint his articles. Radek was a steady "contributor" to the *Freiheit*; readers waited for his opinion. Bukharin was known here, too. Many Communists were aware of the tremendous popularity Bukharin enjoyed in the Russian party. And while Tukhachevsky, Yakir and the other marshals and generals never cut great figures as Communists, their execution as saboteurs and foreign agents was no less disturbing than that of Radek and Bukharin. Yakir, the only Jew to rise from the ranks during the civil war to a marshal of the Red Army, was a hero to the Jewish Communists and their friends. The *Freiheit* had reprinted many Soviet poems eulogizing him.

After the execution of the generals, the *Freiheit* was bombarded

with letters from rank-and-file men and women asking despairingly, "Whom can we now trust?" They were ready to accept the trials at face value, but having been indoctrinated in the belief that the Communist Revolution had created a new man, a happy builder of Socialism, they were now deeply worried by the discovery of such gigantic and far-flung treachery at the very top of the Soviet command. To all these worried people the *Freiheit* had but one stereotyped answer: The class struggle was not over in the Soviet Union; and the country, not living in a vacuum, was subjected to the corrupting influence of the surrounding capitalist world. The paper also tried a more "humane" explanation, that these former leaders were weakened by the difficulties of industrialization and collectivization and lost faith in the party's policies.

Those Communists who sensed a frame-up behind the trials tried to impute them to the purely Russian "features" of Communism and not to Communism itself. What these Communists said to console themselves or their close friends was said publicly by John Strachey in his debate on Communism with Dr. William J. Durant, the philosopher, in New York City, 1937. The essence of Strachey's argument was that the executions in Russia should not be attributed to the nature of Communism, but to the violent expression of a country that had lived for 300 years under the despotic rule of the Romanoff's. Internal tension among the Russian people, he said, had always flared up in bloodshed. But in the West, with its democratic tradition and local self-government, internal disagreement, however deep-going, would never, under Communism, assume a violent form.*³³³

PARTY WRITERS DID NOT BELIEVE THEMSELVES . . .

The laudatory pieces on Stalin's vigilance in exterminating the traitors and saboteurs did not, in most cases, reflect the sincere beliefs of those who wrote them. The author can confirm this statement with a few instances of his own experience on the *Freiheit*. He was greatly surprised to find out later that the news editor, a man in his early 30's, a devout Communist given to bombastic phrases, would, in the company of trusted members of his news staff, bitterly exclaim over a cup of coffee in the cafeteria, "When will the butcher stop his killings!" But at this desk he would write

the most inciting pro-Stalin headlines over the news of the trials. And this dual morality did not seem to disturb this young man, nor his coworkers who agreed with him. For this loyalty he was promoted to managing editor of the paper. His name was Irving Freed.*³³⁴

On his return from Spain at the end of 1936, the author went to visit an old friend, an important member of the staff, then ill in bed. He found him reading the *Pravda*. Suddenly the sick man burst out, "They shoot them in bunches!" He was immediately frightened by his own words. But his visitor was quick to reassure him. The same man was among the loudest and meanest in the party press in denouncing the accused old Bolsheviks and in praising the watchfulness of the Soviet security organs. Only a few years earlier he had lived in Russia, he knew the situation there well, and was himself involved in Right deviations. Had he remained in Russia, he would surely have been among the first to be liquidated, as many of his friends were. His name was Moishe Katz. Like his younger colleague, Freed, he continues his loyal service to the cause to this day.

Come to think of it, there may have been only two people on the entire *Freiheit* staff who were gullible enough to believe in the guilt of the executed. And there is no reason to assume that their number was larger in the *Daily Worker*.

There were always a few devoted souls who delighted in eavesdropping and reporting on their comrades. The Control Commission of the party was kept busy during those tense years with cases of Communists reported to have expressed disbelief, even disgust, with Stalin's doings. The author was hailed before the Commission twice in one year, 1937. As a rule, the Commission was not eager to delve deeply into such cases. It was content with a formal denial by the defendant. Charles A. Dirba, the chairman, a Lett, was too clever not to know that if he had followed up complaints based on what Communists said in private, he could have lost a great part of the membership.

FREIHEIT MUM ON DISAPPEARANCE OF WRITERS

The Jewish Communists had, in addition, to face the disappearance without a clue of a number of leading Jewish writers and public

men in Russia, Communists and non-Communists. Among the former were Moishe Litvakov, editor of the *Emes*, Alexander Khashin, chief editorial writer, Issie Kharik, the most talented young poet, Max Erick, the essayist and historian, Professor Yasha Bronshtein, a critic, Esther Frumkin, head of the Jewish division of the Communist University, S. M. Dimandshtein, formerly chief of the Jewish Section of the party, and many more. Among the non-Communists who suddenly ceased to exist were the noted historian, Dr. J. Zinberg, the novelist, Moishe Kulback, and Professor Zvi Friedland.

The Jewish press demanded an explanation of their whereabouts. But without the formality of a trial and without any official mention of their arrest, to say nothing of their execution, the *Freiheit* could not rush to the defense of Stalin's justice by calling them spys and saboteurs. Nor could it deny their liquidation. It had to keep mum. For the same reason, the *Freiheit* had to maintain silence when the *Emes* in Moscow and the monthly *Der Shtern*, in Khar-kov, had ceased publication in 1938; no official word of their closing appeared anywhere.

The *Freiheit* and the other publications did fight back the "calumnies," but by devious means. To distract attention from the purges, stories of anti-Semitism here and in Eastern Europe were handled in a manner to scare the readers. And to bolster the ebbing confidence in the Soviet Union, they featured reports of a blossoming Jewish culture there, even inventing the story that "Jewish operas are being written there." Above all, criticism of Moscow was labeled Red-baiting, and Red-baiting was tied in with Jew-baiting. Anyone who attacked Moscow or the Communists was thus an ally of Gerald L. K. Smith and his like. "Anti-Communist lies," wrote M. Katz, "are water to the mill of anti-Semitism."*³³⁵

This playing upon Jewish sensitivity was not too helpful. The damaging impact of the purges on Jewish Communism and its agencies was greater than on the party. A few quietly left the party; more moved out of the periphery altogether. However, the greatest harm was done to the spirit of the rank and file. This was immediately reflected on the money-raising campaigns of the *Freiheit*. The financial drives in 1937-1938 were unsuccessful; 1938 was worse than 1937. A few days before the close of the 1938 campaign, only \$32,272 had been raised out of a quota of \$70,000. This despite two

months of heartrending appeals to keep the paper alive.*³³⁶ The *Freiheit* was late in appearing many times, held up by stoppages in the composition room for non-payment of wages. Stoppages of this sort had always plagued the *Freiheit*, and each time the paper was saved by advance checks secured from other party institutions. But in the spring of 1938 they were more frequent and longer lasting. A personal appeal by Browder and other party leaders to the readers of the *Freiheit*, on March 12th, failed to improve the response. And the vigorous campaign for monthly trial subscriptions was admittedly a failure. Only 107 such subscriptions were taken.

THE CONFERENCE OF JEWISH COMMUNISTS, 1938

Acutely apprehensive over the sagging buoyancy of the movement, the Bureau carefully staged the 1938 National Conference of Jewish Communists. No effort was spared to turn this usually insignificant gathering into an imposing affair to encourage its followers and attract attention in the community.

The conference opened September 24th in—of all places—Carnegie Hall. The hall was not filled despite the widely advertised musical program. Joseph Sultan, secretary of the National Council of Jewish Communists, the new name of the Bureau, in his long and dull report, reiterated that the Communists were “the best sons of the Jewish people.” The chief task was to fight anti-Semitism, which was growing everywhere except in the Soviet Union. His lame and repetitious arguments—and every paragraph was anchored to a quotation from Browder—lost their last ounce of conviction when he warned: “The Trotskyite and Lovestonite agents of fascism in the United States are seeking to infiltrate Jewish life with their disruptive and destructive activities. The struggle against these agents . . . is an integral part of the successful struggle against anti-Semitism.”*³³⁷

The constant reference to the Trotskyite and Lovestonite agents was wearing thin even for ordinary Communists. Many of them faced these “agents” daily across the work table in their shop, or as neighbors in their apartment houses. The insincerity of Sultan’s “warning” was barefaced.

Perhaps the only fresh note sounded by Sultan was the one on

the native-born. “. . . One of the great tasks of building the People’s Front is the problem of the English-speaking who are now beginning to play a significant role in the life of the Jewish people. . . . There were times when the Jewish youth had its back turned on Jewish life . . . growing reaction and fascism have taught them otherwise, and today we observe a return of the Jewish youth to their people. . . . The first task . . . is to create a journal of opinion which would address itself to the English-speaking. It should not and cannot be a Communist magazine . . . but a wide democratic front.”*³³⁸

For the first time, the delegates heard a report and a discussion of the work among the native-born. And to underline the value of this activity, three young native-born Communists were elected to the National Council, all three under assumed names.

Jack Stachel’s speech reflected the efforts of the party to convince the Jewish people of their community of interests with the CP. “A good Communist can also be a good Jew loyal to his people,” he asserted. “. . . The program of the CP is providing clarity and hope to the Jewish masses in their present dark times. . . .”*³³⁹

(The same Stachel, during his short stay in Detroit as party organizer in 1927, was maneuvering to close the three Left Wing Jewish *shules* as “nests of nationalism.” “The only place for the children,” he said, “are the party’s Pioneer clubs.” The Jewish Communists and sympathizers resisted his efforts, and Stachel had to resort to a trumped-up charge of white chauvinism against the teacher, David Flakser, and his wife. Both were expelled from the party, and only then were the *shules* and a cultural club closed. Flakser’s appeal against his expulsion remained unanswered. But two years later, Stachel met him on the street in New York, and said, “Now you can rejoin the party.”)*³⁴⁰

The conference was impressive only in its numbers. There were 439 delegates and 34 fraternal delegates, from 32 cities, also from Canada and Cuba. Only 43 delegates were charter members of the party. It was the last attempt at such a grand gathering.

LOW SPIRITS; THE DEFEAT IN A BIG UNION

The confusion created by the purges, the helplessness in the face of the Nazi occupation of Austria and Czechoslovakia and the

armed fighting in Madrid, March 1939, between the Communist troops and those of the Republican Commander-in-Chief, General Miaja, previously portrayed in the Communist press as a dependable friend, was leaving a residue of gloom in many a heart; the Communist periphery was shrinking. The response to the frequent calls for "action" was smaller, and the turnover in the party units alarmingly greater.

(On returning to New York from his "exile" in California in the spring of 1939, the author was informed by the girl in charge of changing party books, whom he knew, that the turnover in the last membership drive in New York had reached an all-time high of 67 per cent.)

A meaningful indicator of the slackening Communist impetus was the defeat of the administration ticket in Local 117, an important Jewish affiliate of the ILGWU, composed of Communists and Right-Wingers, the latter known as the Tolerance Group. In March 1937, this group, headed by Louis Levy and Rubin Zuckerman, had entered into a working agreement with the Communists in the belief that the complexities of the industry required unity of all active elements, and that the changed Communist attitude made this unity desirable. The Communists were more than willing to become a part of the leadership. Their greatest asset was Joseph Boruchowitz, a man with considerable influence among the workers.

A number of Right-Wingers were opposed to cooperation with the Communists. But they had no alternative; to split their ranks was unthinkable at that time. The lowering of Soviet prestige and the weakening of Communist morale encouraged these Right-Wingers, in the spring of 1939, to put up their own list of candidates against the Tolerance-Communist bloc, thus causing a rift among the Right. And to the amazement of many, they unseated the administration. This defeat was an irreparable loss to the Communists. They were never given another chance. Benjamin Kaplan, who led the revolt against the Tolerance Group and their Communist allies, was elected manager of the union. He is now a vice president of the ILGWU.

Another sign of the emotional exhaustion was the poor showing at the *Freiheit* anniversary celebration, May 1939, arranged in Madison Square Garden with the express purpose of creating an air of festivity to dispel the spreading apathy.

HOPES ON MOSCOW AND WARNINGS AGAINST THEM

Not all Jewish public men were cured by the purges of their credulity in the Soviet regime as a trustworthy foe of anti-Semitism and fascism. As the tragic Jewish reality in Central and Eastern Europe became more apparent, they clung in despair to the Soviet Union as a potential life saver.

As yet in 1937, the *Forward*, replying to a letter signed by 12 readers, stated, "In case of a war between Hitler Germany and the Soviet Union, we and all our *genossen* will support Russia with all our heart. There can be no difference of opinion and no different sentiment." *341 And, in the fall of 1938, Ab. Cahan, commenting on the proposed trip of Chamberlain and Daladier to Hitler, paused to consider the possibility that Hitler might prove to be intractable, thus making a war inescapable.

"In the event that Soviet Russia should fight on the side of Czechoslovakia, England and France," he went on, "what would the attitude of our *Forward* people be? There is only one answer—we have expressed this view several times before—stern enemies of Bolshevism that we are . . . in the flame of the bloody clashes between the Allies and Nazi Germany, our criticism of Stalin's bloody dictatorship would have to be postponed. . . . We would probably be asked, 'And what if after such a war Stalinism would gain in prestige and power?' Our answer would be, 'Yes, this is possible, and we would regret it. However, the immediate problem today is how to crush the Hitler power, which menaces not only us Jews . . . but the entire civilized world and civilization itself. And if Soviet Russia will enter the war on the side of the Allies in a sincere manner and with the energy that its huge size and resources provide it, without any ulterior thoughts, it will be an enormous power and all our objections to Stalin's blood-stained hands will have to be postponed until after the war.'" *342

The old fighting editor was careful to add that this possible moratorium did not extend to the domestic Communists. Utterly destructive, they had to be fought to the very end.

Jacob Gladstein, who never wavered in his condemnation of Communism, posed the question, in 1938, of revising the anti-Soviet position exclusively from a Jewish viewpoint. He reasoned: ". . . Still, there is no anti-Semitism in Russia. . . . In the present awful

times this is a consolation. . . . The question is not whether to accept the Soviet misdeeds in good coin. It is a matter of establishing a mental diplomatic contact with an existing government which is, despite its misdeeds, a part of our Jewish map. We have there more than three million Jews, and they are still better off than those in Poland, and incomparably better off than those in Nazi Germany." *343

The "mental diplomatic contact" did not include the Jewish Communists. They, wrote Gladstein, were "manufacturing Jewish issues to suit their party needs."

Another voice was heard, too, firmly warning against any illusions regarding a reformed Communism or a changed Kremlin. Dr. Iser Ginsberg, a respected publicist, observed that the "so-called struggle against anti-Semitism can lead to the strengthening of Communist influence." He was fearful lest "the impression will be created among non-Jews that Communism and Judaism are synonymous. . . . The Communists are shouting and making noise about anti-Semitism, but really they don't care; they are only out to gain a few dozen followers." *344

Another popular commentator, Jacob Fishman, editor of the *Morning Journal*, contradicted the reasoning that the struggle against Communism now was tantamount to aiding reaction and anti-Semitism.

"There are a number of well-meaning people," he wrote, "among them Jewish writers, who accept each manifestation among Americans against Communism as a sign of reaction. According to them, the democracies should confine their fight to fascism and Nazism. . . . I believe that this opinion is false and harmful. Communism today is no less a menace for the world than it was at the beginning." *345

The test came in the same year. Ginsberg and Fishman were fully borne out.