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"Judaism Without Embellishment"

Recent Documentation of Russian Anti-Semitism

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Moshe Decter

FOR YEARS THE SOVIET PRESS has been full of articles that have systematically exploited traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes to project a viciously distorted image of the Jews and Judaism. This has been accomplished chiefly through atheist propaganda directed against Judaism as such and by the nationwide press campaign against economic crimes in which alleged Jewish criminals have been the main culprits.

But now an unprecedented volume has appeared, encapsulating all the anti-Semitic themes characteristic of the Soviet press. It is *Judaism Without Embellishment* by Trofim Korneyevich Kichko. The book was published in late 1963 by the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev. What makes it startlingly unique is its extensive series of anti-Semitic caricatures, beginning with the blood-curdling cover in color, which are worthy of nothing as much as Julius Streicher's *Der Stuermer*. The caricatures obviously speak for themselves; it should only be pointed out that nothing like them has appeared in the USSR for decades, and one has to look to the Nazi regime for their like.

The book is also significant in various other respects. Its size, for one thing. Atheist pamphlets attacking Judaism have appeared from time to time but never approximating the length of this one—192 pages.

Occasionally an atheist institute or a society for the dissemination of political knowledge would publish an item of this sort in one or another Soviet city. But this is the first time that such a publication has appeared under the official aegis of an Academy of Sciences. This sponsorship removes the anti-Jewish slanders from the rubric of propaganda and gives them the distinction of officially approved "science." Even the *Stuermer*-type cartoons thus become "scientific" documents.

Of course, the fact that this book appears in the Ukraine has its own special significance. For the Ukraine, of all the fifteen Soviet republics, is the one in which anti-Semitism is perhaps most deep-rooted and widespread. And this book appears in the Ukrainian language, for all to understand. It can be said that this volume bases itself on, and climaxes, the tradition of Ukrainian anti-Semitic literature that stretches back far beyond the Revolution. One may imagine how the Ukraine's one million Jews, and not least the approximately one-quarter of a million in the capital city of Kiev where the book was published, must feel when confronted with such a volume. All the more, when we consider the fact that the Ukraine has the highest rate of inflicting capital punishment on Jews for alleged economic crimes. For the USSR as a whole the Jews constitute 50–60% of the victims; in the Ukraine, they represent 80–90%.

Its importance is enhanced by the fact that it is published in an edition of 12,000—quite a large number for a “scientific” book from the Academy. Doubtless, the authorities wished to make sure that this science was well disseminated, for it is explicitly intended for party cadres and educators, as “a valuable manual for propagandists of atheism in their daily work. . . .” If this is how science is written in the ivory tower, it is not hard to imagine how it will be used by the grass roots cadres and propagandists “in their daily work. . . .”

A word about the author, T. K. Kichko. This is not his first venture into “Jewish scholarship.” A non-Jew, he has apparently become the leading Ukrainian “spetz” on all things Jewish. In 1957 he wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Jewish Religion, Its Origin and Essence* published by the Kiev Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge. It already contains all the seeds of the current blossom. It was on the whole well received by Ukrainian critics, though taken to task for occasional careless formulation and lack of profundity in certain matters. Presumably he has corrected these faults in his latest effusion, since his work has graduated from a propaganda society to the Academy of Science.

By 1962 he was a lecturer in the Technological Institute of Kiev. Precisely what he lectured on can only be surmised—undoubtedly political topics such as Marxism-Leninism, atheism, political economy. The quality of the instruction may perhaps be inferred from the fact that early that year he was awarded the degree of “Candidate in Philosophy”—the equivalent of the master's degree in England or America—for a dissertation on contemporary Judaism on which he had worked for three years. And in December 1962 he published a lengthy study, *What Does Jewish Ethics Teach*, in the official atheist organ of the Ukraine.

ALL THESE EARLIER EFFORTS may be regarded as precursors of the expanded scientific volume now at hand; his years of preparation have culminated in *Judaism Without Embellishment*, a volume whose scholarship as such—quite aside from its anti-Semitic style, tone and content—can only be described as puerile, irrelevant or actually non-existent. Its

scholarly "apparatus"—some footnotes based on a meager bibliography of secondary or tertiary sources—can fool only the willfully ignorant.

This virulent tract, a crude amalgam of falsehoods and distortions, purveys variants of two traditional anti-Semitic themes, one ancient and medieval, the other comparatively modern. The old one may be described as the "Shylock Theme"—the intrinsic connection between Judaism and money. The more modern one is based on elements of the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (whose 19th-century Russian origin is doubtless familiar to Kichko and his fellow Academicians)—the worldwide Jewish conspiracy of Judaism, Jewish wealth, Zionism, Israel and Western capitalism. In fact, of course, the two themes interlock and reinforce each other. The following excerpt from the book's Foreword touches on most of the variants of these themes:

Among the other religions which obscure the consciousness of the workers, not the least is Judaism. As is known from history, it always served the interests of the wealthy classes, using them to distract the attention of poverty-stricken Jews from struggling against social injustice. In recent times Judaism has acquired particularly reactionary coloration after the establishment of the State of Israel, where it was proclaimed the official religion.

Deceived by the enticing promises of bourgeois agitators, people from seventy-four countries assembled there. Although all are Jewish by descent, they have nothing in common except the Jewish religion. . . . Therefore, the Israeli government, more than any other, is assisting the flowering of religious obscurantism in every possible way, in the hope that it will aid in uniting the different groups of immigrants into "one" nation. On this platform, Judaism is not only closely tied to Zionism, but is, so to speak, the trump card in the dirty game being played by the Israeli bourgeois politicians who are trying to ensnare the greatest possible number of faithful common people: after all, the new capitalistic state needs cheap labor; it needs soldiers to accomplish its aggressive military plans.

Here the double theme that runs through the entire book is already announced: Judaism is reactionary and subversive not only historically but also contemporaneously, through its connection with Zionism, Israel and imperialism.

But now to history. Here is a characteristic segment (page 34) which, in two short paragraphs, hints at the politically subversive nature ("religio-nationalistic spirit") of Judaism, and elaborates the ancient anti-Semitic doctrine that Jews are encouraged to steal from non-Jews and to exploit them:

The Mishna consists of six chapters according to thematic principles. . . . The most important part of the Mishna is the Abot (Sayings of the Fathers) —a treatise "concerning principles." The texts here, just as in other treatises, are written in a religio-nationalistic spirit. . . .

Quite characteristic is the interpretation of the Decalogue—the Ten Commandments of the Bible: You may not steal from or cause any other damage to your *khavers* (neighbors) only— i.e., the Jews. As to how this applies to "goyim," to those of different religions, the Jews are free to take

from them, because, as Judaism teaches: "Jehovah delivered all of the wealth of non-Jews to the use of the Jews. If the Jews did not take everything into their hands, it was because in doing so they would have been deprived of many productive forces with the help of which the Jews profit from non-Jewish peoples without exerting any particular effort."

These complaints have echoed down through history from the medieval inquisition to Nazi propaganda. One may well wonder how, and on what basis, it found its way into the scholarship and propaganda of a "progressive socialist society."

We find another similar interpretation on pages 91-92—with the addition of the charge that Jews may also bear false witness, a hoary and cruel accusation particularly painful to the historical memory of Jews whose ancestors many centuries ago were tortured and murdered by the hundreds of thousands, with that charge flung at them by their executioners:

The Jews like to talk a great deal about the Commandment which forbids them to bear false witness. However, when the welfare of a Jew is in question, false witnessing and even false oaths are permissible. . . . While giving a false oath, it is only necessary, the "Holy Scripture" teaches, to negate the oath in the heart and soul, and therefore the oath is meaning-



В СИНАГОГАХ ЗНАХОДЯТЬ ПРИСТА-
НИЩЕ РІЗНІ ШАХРАІ І ПРОФ-
ДИСВІТІ



ХАПУГИ-СЛУЖИТЕЛІ СИНАГОГ НЕРІДКО ЗЧИНЯЮТЬ
БІЙКИ З ПРИВОДУ ПОДІЛУ ЗДОБИЧІ

Left: "All sorts of swindlers and cheats find refuge in the synagogue"
Right: "The swindlers in religious articles brawl among themselves over the division of the spoils in the synagogue"

less. But this must be done in such a manner that "the glory of the name of the God of Israel, the honor and worth of the Jewish religion and the people of Israel do not suffer."

One of the Commandments of Judaism is "do not steal." However, as the *Khoshen Mishpat* interprets it, it is only from *khavers* (i.e., from your Jewish neighbors) that you must not steal. But you may steal everything from others—because, as it is written in the "Holy Scriptures," Jehovah handed over to the Hebrews all the wealth of the non-Jews. If the Jews did not take everything into their own hands, it was because they did not want to lose the labor power of non-Jewish workers. Moreover, Judaism teaches the believer that his exclusive purpose is to study the Torah, and if the Jews always engaged themselves only in studying the laws of Moses, then God would force other people to work for them.

Although the commandments of Judaism teach not to steal, nevertheless in many places of the Old Testament recommendations are made for the people to resort to common theft.

The following passages sharpen and clarify the theme of the inextricable relationship between Judaism and money. But this is not a matter of mere theory and doctrine; these same passages bring the doctrine closer down to the everyday reality recognizable to a Ukrainian anti-Semite. From page 37:

In humiliating working people, the Talmud at the same time glorifies persons of wealth; in downgrading agriculture, it praises trade and usury. According to the Talmud, even the prophet Moses made a fortune through trade machinations which he practiced by speculating with community property. "Moses grew rich by selling pieces of sapphire which broke off during the cutting of the stones for the Ten Commandments," says the Talmud.

The Talmud morally corrupts people, instilling in them the spirit of commerce and extortion. An example of practitioners of extortion are the priests themselves, the teachers of the law—the rabbis, who supervise adherence to the religious prescriptions which permit common people "to be cleaned like fish."

In his daily newspapers, the Ukrainian reads countless stories of present-day descendants of Moses who allegedly "made a fortune through trade machinations practiced by speculating with community property." Now he learns here that it goes all the way to the beginning of the Moseses. It is, thus, no mere accident. . . .

From page 40: "The Talmud is saturated with contempt for work and for workers, for the common people. . . . The Talmud takes an especially negative position toward the work of peasants. . . ."

As do the Jews who live among us good, loyal, hard-working, non-cheating pure-blooded, 100-percent Ukrainians?

No less "contemporary" and succinct is the following brief passage from page 93:

The ethics of Judaism do not condemn such disgraceful actions as hypocrisy and bribery. The well-known commentator on the Talmud, Rashi, teaches: "Based on Biblical teachings, the Jew at the very outset must work

with bribery in order to tempt his enemy, and in other cases he must resort to a variety of artifices."

And now, finally, to the nub of the matter, from pages 86-87:

Judaism considers a person to be moral if, not working for the good of society, he devotes all of his free time to prayer and to the performance of religious rites. For Judaism, not work but prayer is the highest manifestation of morality. Furthermore, all of Judaic ideology is impregnated with narrow practicality, with greed, the love of money, and the spirit of egoism.

"What is the temporal basis of Judaism?"—wrote K. Marx. "Practical necessity, self-interest. What is the temporal cult of the Jew? Commerce. Who is his temporal God? Money. What was the actual basis of the Jewish religion? Practical need, egoism. The God of practical need and self-interest—is money. Money—is the jealous god of Israel before whose face there must not be any other god."

The entire Judaic cult—is the translation of trade and commerce into religious language. The sale of matzah, the auction of chapter-readings of the Torah ("Aliye"), burial rites, circumcision, marriage and divorce—in all of these money is of prime importance, as is contempt for productive work."

What is alarming in all this is of course *not* that Karl Marx should have written that egregious passage (for whatever twisted psychological reasons), but that in the country where he is venerated as the omniscient Founder of the Faith a contemporary writer should deem it necessary to quote *this particular passage* in a treatise on Jews and Judaism. The intention is unmistakable, the implication undeniable: Money, money, money—is the god of the Jews today, as it was in olden times and in Marx's time. So that the following passage from page 96 is but one of the many contemporary reflections of the Jew's quintessential commercial spirit:

Speculation in matzah, pigs, thievery, deception, debauchery—these are the real characteristics of many synagogue leaders. Shrewd operators convert the synagogues from religion into their own personal feeding-grounds; they make free with the contributions of the believers, and become wealthy from them.

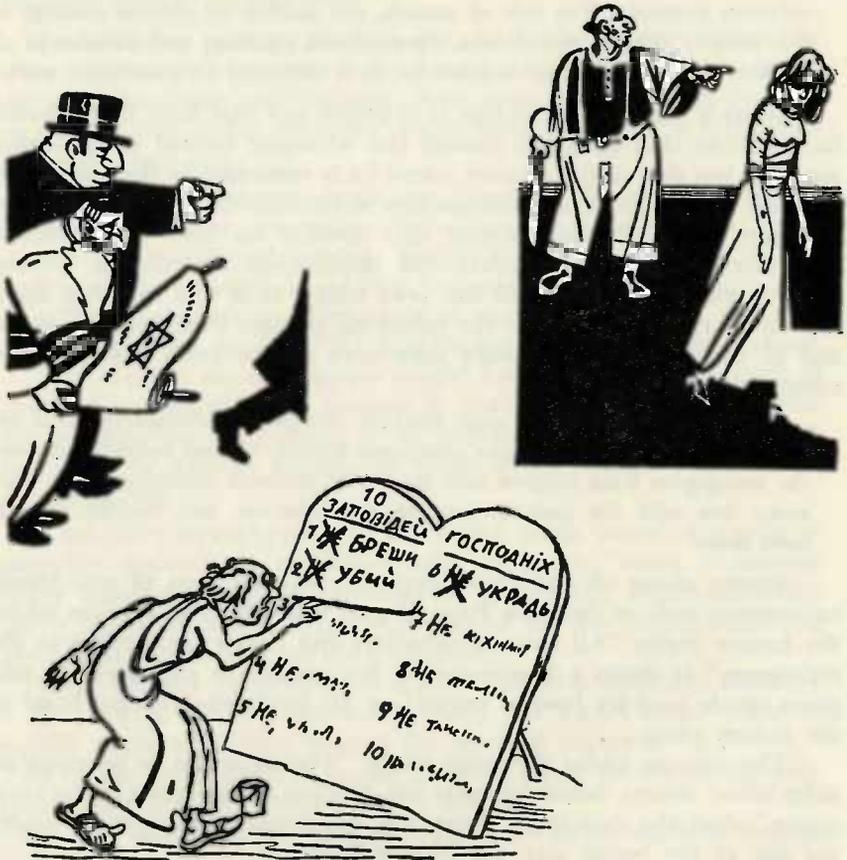
Strewn about all the above pages are various sorts of anti-Jewish caricatures, such as those on Page 94 and Page 96. The caption under the former reads: "All sorts of swindlers and cheats find refuge in the synagogue." It shows a *Stuermer*-style Jew wearing a phylactery [a religious article used by Jews at prayer] on his forehead—with his hand in the money plate. . . .

The caption under the latter reads: "The swindlers in religious articles brawl among themselves over the division of the spoils in the synagogue." And the caricature shows the synagogue Jews fighting—under the sign of the Jewish star, the Mogen David. . . .

Or the *Stuermer*-style caricature that accompanies the chapter title, "Opium for Some—Pocket Money for Others," on Page 123—showing a religious Jew wearing a *yarmulke* [skull cap] and a *talis* [prayer shawl] on his shoulders.

THE ANCIENT STEREOTYPE brought up to date will unquestionably be familiar in a Ukrainian context. It is calculated to infuriate, to incite to hatred of the Jew in more or less traditional terms. But the second theme—that of the Jewish conspiracy—is calculated more to frighten and unsettle the audience. And this is perhaps the more ominous impact, for it gives rise to the truly primitive notion of the Jew's alien-ness, it conjures up fears of political infiltration and subversion, and makes the Jew quintessentially suspect. The following passage (Page 61) sets the stage for this theme:

The Talmud sanctified and continues to sanctify dividing people into masters and slaves: it developed legislation for the caste system; it divided people into distinguished persons and common people who were limited in their rights. The Talmud implants the thought that poverty is supposedly a method of obtaining a better fate in heaven, in the other world, and to cast off poverty—is a sin.



БЕН-ГУРІОН ЗА РОБОТОЮ

Top: Typical caricatures introducing chapters of the book.
 Bottom: "Ben-Gurion at work" He is erasing the word "not" from the Commandments "Thou shalt not lie," "Thou shalt not commit murder," "Thou shalt not steal."

In the hands of the rabbis, these ideas are the chief spiritual weapon with whose help even today reactionary ideas are propagated, nationalistic illusions are implanted about the exclusiveness and God-like image of the Jewish people—which in essence supports an ideology inimical to our people.

The ground is laid—with such weighted words as “nationalistic illusions,” “exclusiveness,” “inimical” to “our” people—for the presentation of the Jew as the stranger, the alien, with aims other than “our” own. . . . This attitude is surely not far removed from that revealed by the Soviet leadership in explaining, several years ago, the increasing exclusion of Jews from a wide range of professional employments—on the ground that the Jews had to make way for “our own” intelligentsia. After all, the Jews have been living on what is now Soviet soil for many centuries; how long does it take for them to become considered native . . . ?

Here now, in the same spirit, is Kichko’s treatment of the ancient rite of circumcision (Page 144):

The cruel rite of circumcision has been filled with a reactionary meaning by the Jewish religion. It proclaimed circumcision as a unique mark of Jewish nationalism itself; in other words, it endowed it with a clearly expressed religious-nationalistic character. It is not difficult to substantiate the latter again by texts from the Bible. Acquiring a mark of belonging to “their own people,” to the Jews, a mark which would simultaneously inculcate them with contempt and even hatred toward those who do not possess this rite—this is the basic meaning of the rite.

This unconscionable distortion comes with the most ill grace from a Soviet propagandist or “scholar.” For the USSR is, after all, a country that prides itself not least on having solved its nationalities problem—by encouraging the nationalities to retain and take pride in their national character and distinctiveness. It encourages all, that is, but the Jews, who, if they dare abide by an ancient sacred rite of *their* distinctiveness are accused of thereby showing contempt and hatred for non-Jews.

Another of the great Jewish traditional observances—the holiday of Passover—is assaulted on two grounds here (Page 135):

Under modern conditions the Passover holiday harms us in a great number of ways, through engendering disrespect for work and fostering elements of nationalism among the Jewish workers. In celebrating the Passover, the believers do not go to work for several days; thus they hinder production plans and violate work discipline.

The celebration of the Passover is especially harmful because the entire Passover legend, all the prayers, orient the believing Jews toward returning to Israel, which is now the center of Judaism and Zionism. The Passover prayers urge the believing Jews: “May God grant that we meet in Jerusalem next year.” Invitations summon the Jews to move to Israel, where they—free workers of our country—will become slaves, will become cannon fodder for Ben-Gurion’s clique and for his imperialistic masters.

In the above passage, more clearly than before, is the theme of po-

tential Jewish disloyalty injected subtly: *Passover*, *Israel*, *Ben Gurion*, *imperialism*. *Passover* is indeed the crucial holiday asseverating Jewish identity, which is why it, more than any other holiday, is subjected to such virulent and ominous abuse—why it is subjected to a process of attrition even to the extent of denying *matzah* (unleavened bread indispensable to the holiday's proper observance) to the Soviet Jews.

THE BOOK MOVES INEXORABLY toward its climax, first linking Judaism and Zionism and so making the Jews a security risk group. From Page 143:

Foreign Judaists, together with Zionists, are attempting in every possible way to activate nationalistic propaganda among the believers in our country. . . .

The Israeli Zionists are openly striving to use Judaism for the activation of Zionism, are trying to incline believing Jews toward a useless expectation of a fictional Messiah, toward cosmopolitanism and anti-patriotism, and are trying to divert the believing Jews of our country from the cause of building communism.

There we have it—two of the deadliest words in the Soviet lexicon: “cosmopolitanism” and “anti-patriotism.” No one who remembers or knows of the use of the word “cosmopolitanism” to cover the wicked anti-Semitic purges and liquidations of Stalin's last five years can see the word in the present context without the greatest qualms.

And now, the climax of the doctrine: the massive interlocking world Jewish conspiracy; international Jewish capital; the Rothschilds; international Jewry and Zionism; oil, Palestine (Israel) and Western bankers. The amalgam is complete; it might well have been taken from a pre-Revolutionary anti-Semitic tract (Pages 171–172):

Taking advantage of the legends of the Old Testament, the Jewish capitalists and their ideological parasites—the Zionists—together with the rabbis in Israel, kindle religious-nationalistic passions, and incite the Jews against other peoples who inhabit Palestine. . . .

A union between the financial oligarchy of the West and Zionism has been in existence for several decades. As is known, the English and American monopolists subjugated Zionism when it first appeared, when it only dreamed of creating a bourgeois Jewish state in Palestine. Long before the Second World War, after the reorganization in 1929 of the executive committee of the International Organization of Zionists which began to call itself the “Jewish Agency,” the Rothschilds, Jewish bankers, backed the Zionist organization in England. They also financed the French Zionists. Oskar Wasserman became the supporter of the “Jewish Agency” in Germany; he was the director of the German bank which at one time controlled the concession for constructing the Baghdad railroad. All of these Zionist businessmen invested their capital in Palestine with the aim of obtaining colonial gains at the expense of the Jewish as well as Arab population.

American bankers, just like their English, German and French partners,

viewed Zionism as a convenient colonial business. Founding in 1926 the syndicate, "Palestine Economic Corporation" (PEC), the American-Zionist colonizers engaged in creating a modern state of Israel.

The history of relations between American capital and Zionism cannot be understood if one does not consider the affairs of the billionaire Rothschilds, who for several decades had been attempting to grab a part of Palestine—the Negev desert and its oil deposits. In 1919, immediately after the First World War, an agent of the American Petroleum Combine, "Standard Oil," and a technical employee of the commission for developing American policy for Palestine, declared that although England would obtain a mandate in Palestine, with the help of the Zionists the U.S.A. would actually rule there.

And that is what happened. After World War II, the Zionists in Palestine discontinued recognizing the supremacy of English imperialism, while the Rockefellers became strongly entrenched. At the present time,



БОНН — ГУРІОН



В РОКИ ГІТЛЕРІВСЬКОЇ ОКУПАЦІЇ ВЕРХОВДИ-СІОНІСТИ ПРИСЛУЖУВАЛИ ФАШИСТАМ

Top: "Bonn-Gurion" On paper: "An agreement to supply arms to the Bundeswehr." Note that "Bonn-Gurion" is restrained by the ghost of a short-nosed inmate of Auschwitz.

Bottom: "During the years of the Hitlerite occupation, the Zionist leaders served the fascists"

Israel, and its Zionism and Judaism, is considered as its outpost by American imperialism, as a reserve cannon for bombarding the Arab world.

What is this if not an updated and refurbished version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*? And to drive the point home, another *Stuermer*-style caricature of the Jewish capitalist-imperialist and the religious Jew accompanies the chapter heading "Life Denies the Zionist Lies." This caricature is reproduced on page 108 of this article.

Unquestionably the most unspeakable of the caricatures is that on Page 161, showing the Jew . . . servilely about to kiss the Nazi boot. The theme is reminiscent of the incredible story Chairman Khrushchev told at the meeting of the Party leadership and the intelligentsia on March 8, 1963—of the Kiev Jew (Kogan, a former Komsomol leader, no less) who served as an interpreter for the German Marshal von Paulus at Stalingrad. Khrushchev introduced the story by saying, "There were cases of treason on the part of people of different nationalities. I can mention the following instance." And he went on to cite the only one he could think of—the Jew, Kogan. . . .

From Moscow to Kiev, it would seem, it has become permissible—nay, fashionable—to be both anti-Nazi and anti-Semitic at the same time. The fact that Soviet anti-Semites were also anti-Nazi during the war is precious little consolation to the contemporary Ukrainian Jew. For his religion is uniquely depicted as the embodiment of the spirit of capitalism and subversive nationalism; and the character of his Jewishness is also uniquely viewed as alien, suspect and actually or potentially disloyal.

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