

Kremlin Assailed for Silence on Anti-Semitism

By Harry Ring

For three months a deeply troubled U.S. Communist Party membership has waited for an explanation from the Kremlin about admissions of governmental anti-Semitism under Stalin. They have met with a stubborn refusal to give such explanations and with disturbing new reports of continuing anti-Semitic practices.

Last April 4, *Folksstimme*, a Jewish paper published in Poland, revealed the shocking facts of the mass slaughter of the leaders of Jewish cultural and political activity in the Soviet Union. The Stalinist purge of Jews occurred in two waves: in the Thirties during the Moscow Trials and in the period following World War II up to 1953.

The silence of Khrushchev and his associates about these damning admissions is deliberate. This was demonstrated when *Pravda* on June 27 reprinted a statement on the 20th Congress by Eugene Dennis, secretary of the American CP, and deleted from it the phrase, "snuffing out the lives of more than a score of Jewish cultural figures," from Dennis' catalogue of Stalin's crimes.

The only official Kremlin comment on Soviet anti-Semitism to appear in this country thus far comes in the form of a flat denial of its existence. The denial appears in the *Progressive Party* weekly, the *National Guardian*, which June 25 featured an exclusive interview with Ekaterina Furtseva a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU, by *Guardian* correspondent Tabitha Petran.

"MANY PROMINENT JEWS"

The *Guardian* reports that Mrs. Furtseva "denied emphatically that there has ever been any sup-

pression of Jewish culture or repression of the Jewish people." She further assured Miss Petran that although she had not read the *Folksstimme* revelations, she was positive that if they were true "we would have published it ourselves and would not need to have it published in the Polish press." Jewish culture has developed freely in the Soviet Union, she asserted, and there are many prominent Jews in the arts and sciences.

Mrs. Furtseva conceded there had been talk of Soviet anti-Semitism based on a misunderstanding of government actions. It seems that "The government had found in some of its departments a heavy concentration of Jewish people, upwards of 50% of the staff. Steps were taken to transfer them to other enterprises, giving them equally good positions, and without jeopardizing their rights. All of this was in accordance with Lenin's principles on the national question, she said."

As final, bone-crushing proof of the absence of anti-Semitism, the Soviet bureaucrat pointed out that 80% of the musicians who played at the Kremlin reception for Tito were Jewish. Miss Petran does not report whether any of Mrs. Furtseva's best friends were Jewish.

The interview appeared in the *Guardian* under a banner headline, "High Soviet official in frank interview; denies Jewish cunts." Reaction to this brazen whitewash was quick and sharp. One angry letter in the July 9

Guardian said, "It is a remarkable commentary that, after almost 40 years of socialism, a member of the governing party's central committee should smugly deny anti-Semitism by 'pointing to many Jewish people prominent in science and the arts' . . . this is like a Washington official refusing the persecution of the Negro people by pointing to Ralph Bunche, George Washington Carver, Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong."

Another letter asks: "How do you find out there are too many Jews or any other except either by secret police or, just as bad, biased questionnaires which are anti-Semitic or anti-other minority, as any American who has fought for the elimination of such bias knows."

Freiheit, Stalinist Yiddish language newspaper published in New York, bitterly declared in a June 25 editorial: "When Ekaterina Furtseva asserts in the interview that nothing happened to Jewish culture, and that there are no problems of anti-Semitism, she unfortunately showed that she does not comprehend what the Jewish question is about."

Citing the Jewish schools, newspapers and theaters in the early days of the USSR, *Freiheit* asks: "Where is all this now? What has become of this magnificent edifice? It was destroyed! It fell victim to the crippling of Soviet democracy. It became a victim of terror, a victim of great-Russian chauvinism, which was so stubbornly fought by Lenin. In 1948 when the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was liquidated Jewish culture was completely eradicated."

The editorial adds, "Can there be such a thing as a system of

quotas on government jobs — something which is impermissible if anti-Semitism is to be uprooted? . . . The interview given by E. Furtseva has only brought more unclarity and has further upset the friends of the Soviet Union."

Other developments show that Mrs. Furtseva was not simply speaking for herself. In his interview with a French Socialist delegation in Moscow last May, Khrushchev spoke of a disproportionately high number of Jews holding office in the early days of the Soviets and that the number of Jews in professional positions is now restricted to the relative proportion of Jews in the population. [*New York Times*, June 10.]

Khrushchev's statements on the Jewish question, coupled with his silence on this subject in his Stalin indictment, does not help to refute the charge made by C. L. Sulzberger in the July 9 *N. Y. Times* that Khrushchev bears much personal responsibility for Soviet anti-Semitism.

Sulzberger, a well-informed journalist, writes: "When Khrushchev was Prime Minister of the Ukraine after World War II he issued regulations barring Jews from important local positions. He was the first Premier of a Soviet republic to prohibit activity of Jewish theaters, schools and publishing houses."

RABBIS REPORT

The statements of Khrushchev and Furtseva also lend credence to the report of the American rabbis who returned from a recent visit to the Soviet Union. They said in the July 13 *N. Y. Times* that the conditions of the Soviet Jews have substantially

improved in the past several years but that there was still a complete absence of Jewish cultural institutions. Such institutions were absent, Soviet officials told the rabbis, because the Jewish people did not want them.

With a Jewish population of two-to-three million in the Soviet Union, the rabbis said, there is but one twice-weekly Yiddish paper, published in remote Birobidzhan, with a circulation of 1,000 to 2,000. They added that while each Jew has the word "Jew" stamped on his passport, he does not have any of the privileges accorded other Soviet national minorities.

The Khrushchev regime has also drawn the fire of *Folksstimme*. On July 7 the *Warsaw* paper declared that "so-called assimilation of the millions of Jews of the Soviet Union" as a reason for elimination of Jewish cultural institutions "cannot stand up under criticism and does not correspond to reality."

Folksstimme poses two questions: 1. "Why was the Jewish subject passed in silence in the speech by Khrushchev and in the discussion at the 20th Congress?" 2. "Why is there no full rehabilitation and revival of Yiddish cultural and social life in the Soviet Union?"

These questions explode *Folksstimme*'s original contention that the crimes against the Soviet Jews were the responsibility of one man—the hated secret police chief, Beria. This contention, which has been echoed here by the *Daily Worker* and *Freiheit*, does not hold water.

While Beria bears his share of guilt, he certainly was not alone. He did not have the power to lead the anti-Semitic purges of their

Thirties. Nor was it he who engineered the infamous "Jewish Doctors Plot" of 1953.

CULPRIT PROMOTED

The doctors frame-up was engineered on Stalin's orders by the then Minister of State Security, S. D. Ignatiev and his deputy Ryumin. After Stalin's death the case was reviewed by Beria, and Ryumin was shot for torturing "confessions" out of the doctors. Ignatiev escaped arrest and was restored to the party apparatus by Khrushchev. He is now first Secretary of the Bashkirian Provincial Committee.

Denunciations of the "Beria gang" do not explain anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union any more than they can explain frame-ups. Nor will reference to Stalin's personal aberrations be of any aid. What is required is a Marxist analysis of the reactionary politics pursued under Stalin as well as his successors.

These politics flow from the privilege seeking of a ruling bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union, and the need to defend the usurped power and privileges from the Soviet masses. The bureaucratic regime destroyed the workers' democracy of Lenin's time as well as the internationalist outlook of the Bolshevik party. Under the slogan of "building socialism in one country" it revived great-Russian chauvinism. And in direct proportion to such chauvinism the bureaucracy instituted oppression of national minorities. The Jews—as always under this form of reaction—were among the worst sufferers. This is the key to understanding the plight of the Jewish masses in the Soviet Union.