

COMMUNISM & The FRENCH INTELLECTUALS (1914-1960) by David Caute
The MacMillan Company, New York

Chapter Seven Four Themes: 1. Nationalism. 2. Anti-Semitism?
3. Colonialism. 4. The Defence of French Culture

(p. 201)

" 2. Anti-semitism? Stalin's early teachings on the Jews are not without a certain macabre relevance to later happenings. It was not possible, he wrote in 1913, to speak of the Jews in Russia as a single nation. They LACKED a common territory and only three or four per cent of them had roots in the soil. Stalin denounced Zionism, and also the Bund (/The Union of Jewish Socialist Workers) for demanding national autonomy and for refusing to merge with the social-democrats (i.e. the main Marxist party). What use, he asked, were such demands under the Tsarist autocracy, with its incessant pogroms? The only viable course was united proletarian action: then, under a workers' state, there would be no more pogroms.² (2 J. Stalin, Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, p.39)

Forty years later the problems still remained. So did the Bund, in exile. In 1947 the Soviet Union recognized Israel, with the basic purpose of embarrassing the British. But, by the following year, with the influx of Jews from all over the world into Israel, a new problem arose. A mass exodus of Russian Jews - and there is no doubt that such an exodus would have taken place had not the authorities intervened - would have been an unthinkable loss of face for a state which prided itself on its happy assimilation of its multiple national groups. The Jews were now seen as part of a wider conspiracy whose centre of wealth and power lay in the U.S.A. In September 1948, Pravda published an article by the Jewish writer Ilya Ehrenburg attacking Zionism, the state of Israel and the idea of a common bond between the world's Jews.³ (3 P. Meyer, 'Stalin follows in Hitler's Footsteps', in E. Cohen (ed.), The New Red Anti-Semitism, Boston, 1953, p.14) Thereafter the anti-Zionist campaign rapidly intensified, fusing with the general drive against cosmopolitanism and all American-supported supra-national schemes. But it was not until the Slansky trial and the case of the nine doctors in 1952-53 that the specifically Jewish issue forced itself upon the communist intellectuals in France."

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(p. 212) "4. The Defence of French Culture. As the 'Party of France', the communists claimed to be the guardians of the French enlightenment, the apex of a great cultural tradition. This claim they always upheld. But the extreme patriotism associated with the Popular Front period led to a further development of the theme, for was not the enlightenment itself the heir to a greater cultural glory?"

(p. 243) "For Sartre, as for so many other intellectuals, the Resistance was a formative experience, crystallizing his notions of guilt and social responsibility. Yet commitment, in itself a simple enough impulse, assumed agonizing complexities when applied in the world of real political choices. He and his close colleagues emerged from the war convinced simultaneously that historical materialism supplied the only valid interpretation of the past and that existentialism provided the only concrete approach to reality.⁵ (2 J-P Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism, Paris, 1945, p.22) Man exists first and defines himself afterwards. L'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'il se fait. At this period Sartre was resolutely opposed to any determinism; man was free, the incarnation of liberty, alone, and without excuses. One could be sure of nothing, even the eventual triumph of the proletariat. But the personal freedom of choice to which man was condemned,

12849

"far from providing an excuse for a retreat into nihilism or relativism, carried with it an immense social responsibility. The choice had to be made - the right choice - and then fought for.

Sartre's post-war break with the communists was in the first instance philosophical, and only later overtly political. Roger Garaudy, his most persistent adversary and denigrator, denied that man, or the worker, was free to submit or revolt; the class factor, he argued, was largely determinant. "Between myself and freedom there is knowledge. ~~Knowledge~~.... (p. 248-249) Literature, he wrote, could only realize its full essence in a classless society, only then would the writer be aware of no difference between his subject and his public, only then would his situation be universal. 'Literature is, in essence, the subjectivity of a society in permanent revolution. He was anxious not to stand on the sidelines;"

(p. 279) "An example of the new technique was provided by the Party's response to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Les Aventures de la dialectique, a criticism of the pro-communist stand adopted by Sartre in Les Communistes et la Paix. Six philosophers were mobilized, Cogniot, Garaudy, Desanti, Cavaino and Kanapa, with Henri Lefebvre, now on the verge of breaking with the Party, a misfit sixth. They delivered their orations as a team, and published them as a team."

Article of 15/11/46 has a discrepancy but who to write in 1946, 1955, and not 15 neither to show that fact. However, in the passage of philosophy of technical discrepancies, the answer is not clear. The question is all the more person when it comes to conceptual concepts because then what is which may have been decided as a typical case of the abstract mind process and what is of June 10