

Soviet Antizionism and its Legacy

What Is Antizionism?

- Antizionism is a form of anti-Jewish bigotry that manifests as hostility to Jewish peoplehood. Antizionists claim to not oppose the Jewish religion or Jews as an ethnicity but instead delegitimize Jewish self-determination. [1]

The Origins of Soviet Antizionism

- After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Soviet Union made antisemitism illegal, stating that ethnic prejudice had no place under communism. However, this law masked the ugly reality, that Soviet authorities were suppressing Jewish life and culture throughout the Soviet Union.
 - Synagogues and other Jewish community institutions, including Zionist organizations were shut down.
 - Teaching Judaism was banned and rabbis who did not comply were arrested and exiled.
 - Jewish schools were closed forcing Jewish children to attend state-run schools that indoctrinated children into communism.
 - Teaching Hebrew was banned.
 - University admission quotas were placed on Jews.
 - Jews were banned from certain civil service roles.
- In 1947, The Soviet Union supported UN Resolution 181, which partitioned the British Mandate for Palestine between Jewish and Arab States. The Soviets hoped that the new State of Israel would align with them, due to its socialist leadership. However, when Israel instead aligned itself with the West, the Soviet Union turned against Israel.
- After Israel's victory in the 1967 Six Day War, the Soviet Union ramped up its antizionist propaganda campaign against Soviet Jews.

Themes of Soviet Antizionism

- Although Soviet authorities insisted that they were not antisemitic, much of this propaganda recycled longstanding antisemitic tropes. It portrayed Jews as participants in subversive conspiracies and distorted the concept of Jewish "chosenness" to suggest that Jews believed themselves inherently superior to non-Jews.
- Much of Soviet propaganda was lifted from Tsarist antisemitic propaganda like The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Jews were just replaced with "Zionists" who were acting on behalf of "imperialism." The Soviets claimed that "Zionists" were running an international conspiracy to undermine communism.
- The main lies of Soviet antizionist propaganda were: Soviet Zionists were considered traitors for their loyalty to Israel; Israel was the heir to the Nazis as Zionism was rooted in alleged Jewish supremacy, and Zionism was an international imperialist anti-communist conspiracy.
- Soviet propagandist Trofim Kichko argued that "there is a direct connection between the morality of Judaism and the actions of the Israeli Zionists." He made this claim in Judaism and Zionism (1968), a book that alleged the supposedly sinister nature of Zionism was rooted in Judaism itself. Writing about the Six-Day War, Kichko asked rhetorically, "Weren't the actions of the Israeli extremists during their latest aggression against the Arab countries in keeping with the Torah?"
- In 1985, a group which was under the control of the KGB, the "Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public," published a brochure titled, "The Criminal Alliance of Zionism and Nazism." The brochure falsely claimed that Zionists had colluded with the Nazis to launch World War II and the Holocaust. Antizionist propaganda included cartoons that similar to those from Nazi newspaper Der Stürmer.

The Legacy of Soviet Antizionism

- In 1990, Pravda, a Russian newspaper, published an editorial admitting that antizionism had exacerbated antisemitism, but the damage was already done. Even as the Soviet Union collapsed, antizionism has remained alive amongst contemporary anti-Israel activists who falsely accuse Israel of the same lies the Soviets once did.
- Palestinian political leadership continues to be influenced by Soviet narratives. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas studied at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow where his thesis was titled, "The Other Side: The Secret Relationship between Zionism and Nazism."



From Soviet Magazine, Krokodil



From Judaism Without Embellishment, by Trofim Kichko

[1] <https://www.movementagainstantizionism.org/antizionism>