

East bloc revolutions a threat to appeasers

by Mark Burdman

The revolutions in Eastern Europe are beginning to hurt those influentials in the Anglo-American establishment who have advanced their careers by appeasing communist dictators. One of the early victims of this process is the KGB-linked British publishing magnate Robert Maxwell. Another could soon be Canadian liquor baron Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress.

On Jan. 26, West Germany's daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported that Maxwell had made an offer to help non-communist political groups in Czechoslovakia set up new publishing ventures. His offer was categorically rejected; the relevant Czech interests refused to deal with Maxwell, no matter what concessionary conditions he offered. To add insult to injury, Maxwell, born Jan Ludwig Hoch, is himself of Czech origin.

Some people, it seems, recall with abhorrence Maxwell's affections for East bloc dictators over the years. His Pergamon publishing house has published the biographies of East Germany's Erich Honecker, Leonid Brezhnev, and others. These books have been filled with the oozing prose one finds in the officially sanctioned biography of Maxwell himself, written by Joe Haines, an underling at the Maxwell-owned *Mirror* newspaper chain.

In the Haines biography, there is a photograph of Maxwell standing next to Bulgaria's Todor Zhivkov. In an Aug. 5, 1988 interview with Israel's *Jerusalem Post*, he described Zhivkov as "a good personal friend." British sources assert that Maxwell had a soft spot in his heart for Ludmila Zhivkova, Zhivkov's late daughter, who was one of the cultural mavens of the communist world, renowned for her occult and mystical proclivities.

Regrettably, the trial of Zhivkov now mandated by the post-Zhivkov Bulgarian "communism with a new face" regime in Sofia, is shaping up as a 1990s version of a classic Stalinist show trial. Were a real trial of the Zhivkov clique to be held, some of the dark secrets of the "Bulgarian Connection" to international drug trafficking and terrorism would certainly be revealed. Were that to happen, what might the world discover about Robert Hoch-Maxwell!

Precisely at the moment that East Germany's revolution was reaching dramatic peaks in the autumn of 1989, Maxwell travelled to the G.D.R. and praised Erich Honecker as the great father of the East German "nation." Maxwell's comments received banner coverage in the state media, since they

were among the very rare pro-Honecker declarations being made in those days.

By the end of January, Honecker was being put behind bars. What does that presage for his chief admirer in Great Britain? In Britain, a campaign was initiated by some parliamentarians for Maxwell to, in effect, pay reparations to the East Germans, because of his past backing for Honecker. This campaign comes in the form of parliamentary Early Motion No. 257, which reads, "That this House calls upon Robert Maxwell, former member of this House, to publicly apologize to those East Germans who fought for freedom and democracy against the former regime under harsh and repressive circumstances, for describing Erich Honecker as the Father of the Nation and to donate generously from his wealth, as some very limited recompense, a substantial sum of money to assist the restoration of democracy in East Germany."

The Jan. 19, 1990 issue of the British magazine *Private Eye* challenged Neil Kinnock, head of the British Labour Party, to endorse this motion "condemning Maxwell for his supine support of one of the most odious men in the modern world." The magazine ran a spoof calling him "Robert Maxwelllescu," which began, "Yesterday millions of sight-seers queued round the clock in a remote part of the countryside to see for the first time the fabled palace of the world's most hated dictator, Robert Maxwelllescu."

There is, certainly, much more to the Maxwell dossier. Some European insiders consider him the modern-day Willi Münzenberg, the German Communist Party publisher who built a vast publishing empire that served the Comintern in the 1920s and 1930s.

Trouble for Bronfman?

Edgar Bronfman could soon also be in deep water. In 1988, he received the highest "Order of the East German State" from Erich Honecker. Under Bronfman's leadership, the World Jewish Congress has collaborated intimately with networks of the Soviet KGB and the East German Stasi intelligence service, in concocting propaganda campaigns about a "revival of neo-nazism" in West Germany.

On Jan. 30, the West German daily *Die Welt* ran a commentary by Israeli analyst Ephraim Lahav, which charged that, in receiving the medal from Honecker, Bronfman was re-enacting the biblical story about selling one's patrimony for a "mess of pottage". For the mere promise of East German reparations money for the Nazi holocaust that the East German regime had no intention of paying in any case, Bronfman was willing to sell out the interests of the West.

Both Lahav and Munich-based Jewish professor Michael Wolffsohn charged that Bronfman has become a tool in a cynical game, in which the East German communists cultivate Israeli and diaspora-Jewish individuals and organizations opposed to German reunification, in order to contain the momentum toward German unity.