

Yiddish Socialism: The Early Years

~Paul Buhle

No body of literature, no cultural movement in the United States has been so infused with Socialist idealism and the desires to reconcile revolutionary social aims with cultural innovations, as in the Yiddish-speaking community from the 1890s to roughly the 1920s. The attainments, problems and importance of this community's cultural tendencies have remained unknown save to the devotees of Yiddishkeit (literally, "Yiddishness"): mainstream and Left wing journalists, social, cultural, and literary historians have written as if the subject did not exist. For decades, a small band of Jewish radicals kept the memory alive. Irving Howe's anthologies of Yiddish literature and his monumentally popular World of Our Fathers have opened up a new world of discussion. But only part-way. At this late date, the travails and small victories of Immigrant-Jewish culture seem destined to reach us only by way of nostalgia for naive ideals and for a people to ready to make revolution in an unrevolutionary land. The truth is deeper, more complex, and more serious for the problems of culture today.

Thus it is vital, and not only for the Jewish tradition, that a more dynamic portrait be offered. Within the limited con-

text of the Yiddish-speaking community and the labor-political movements it nourished, a Socialist culture grew up that could without embarrassment be compared with any in the capitalist world. This culture existed moreover not in the outlying areas (as with the nearest counterpart in proportionate strength and influence, the Finns) but in the metropolitan centers of modern civilization; and for that reason it found the mediation with American life at large crucial, sometimes tragically so, but always a matter for confrontation. No movement, no minority society could possibly survive the pervasive spread of "Americanization" -- public schools, popular culture, the careers offered to those who stepped out of the ghetto. But a perceptive cultural movement could measure its influence, and continually re-evaluated the implications for Socialism in the larger sense, not only as a political goal, but a way of life inside the old society.

The literature of Yiddishkeit offers an extraordinary insight into the broader culture. The entire development of Yiddish as a modern literary language was, for social and political reasons, compressed into little more than a half-century in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. The language of an impoverished people with no professional literateurs, Yiddish became a supreme instrument for raising the cultural level of the masses, for secularization and modernization. Its readers

plunged into the midst of metropolitan centers, Yiddish became no less a language of leisure reading, "popular culture". And yet it retained roots in the ancient traditions of Jews, its various functions always somehow connected to the Messianic promise of deliverance from oppression. Even so, some of its greatest literary talents refused to be confined to mere uplifting, and broke away from the limiting "social responsibility". In these divisions, and their implications, one can find an entire history of Left culture in its first crucial stages.

Any grappling with Yiddish literature requires a brief trip to the shtetl past. As Immanuel Wallerstein has shown, the isolation of Jews in the Eastern European commercial cities and villages presupposed the advancement of Western Europe into the center of commerce and culture, the colonization of the East as a backward reservoir of agriculture and peoples. With their distinctive history and Messianic faith, Jews adapted ambivalently -- unable and unwilling to assimilate, they developed simultaneously a rich community life among themselves, and increasingly (albeit often at a geographical distance) came in touch with the developments in metropolitan, gentile culture. Yiddish was derived from the outside world, principally Middle German, and evolved as a street-language below the dignity of the religious tongue (Hebrew), distinctively influenced nevertheless by Hebraic (from which its alphabet is taken) and a variety of other sources. From the High Middle Ages until nearly

the end of the nineteenth century, Yiddish occupied a curious status. Considered a vulgar tongue, it was utilized for the lowest literary purposes, as in the T'sena U'rena, a massively popular biblical exegesis which could be termed a "Woman's Bible" since it was believed women's only possible printed access to the Word. Jewish advocates of the Enlightenment determined to rid the community of its backwardness, including this "jargon", but ironically found Yiddish the only possible route to provide a modernizing mass education. Thus evolved a remarkable conception, Yiddish as a naturally deformed language, suited for farce, satire, malapropisms aimed at the Old Ways, destined ultimately to eliminate itself through what one scholar calls an "aesthetic of ugliness". Yiddish thereby emerged from the shtetl the very epitome of Popular Culture -- the vulgarian, the clown fit best to encompass mass life. If one believes in "deep meanings" for languages, none was better suited to the tasks of socialism.

Theories often give away more than the thinker recognizes. The ironic sense set so deeply in Jewish culture -- "God's Chosen People" seemingly always on the wrong side of History -- had in fact found a perfect instrument in the unpretentious Yiddish diction, its matter-of-fact tone and adaptability to the other cultures (languages) at hand. The early Jewish Socialists, who determined to ease Jewish assimilation into a "better" language, could hardly grasp the real possibilities. The literary language was created by popular demand, against the

orthodox religionists, the assimilationists and all those who doubted the existence of a Yiddishkeit, a people's culture which would not be "uplifted" out of self-identity but would retain its basic elements in the face of all opposition. The perceptive literary critic Baruch Rivkin called Yiddish a literary substitute for the geographic national identity denied Jews (until Israel); one might better say that Yiddish offered a linguistic world in which the mixture of ideological Messianism, material poverty and persecution might be reconciled, always aware that this reconciliation presented a possible illusion and offered a prophetic vision that might never be fulfilled. Perhaps no other language as Yiddish demanded, under the existing historical conditions, the success of Socialism as a precondition for its continued existence; none that I know express the problematic qualities of this hope in such ironic terms.

Early on, modern Yiddish writing took on a folkish quality and a realistic tone that it maintained almost throughout its history. Mendele Mokher Sforim ("Mendele the Bookseller", a pseudonym like most Yiddish authors' names) and Y.L. Peretz, in Russia of the 1870s-80s, captured public attention by writing short stories, really literary sketches which expressed perfectly the continuities and tensions of shtetl life. These tales were hardly one step removed from the semi-spontaneous, always improvised story-telling. The authors seem in constant dialogue with their listeners, laughing with their sufferings

as a fellow-member of their persecuted ranks, cajoling them about the unnecessary cruelties of their lives, holding up their potential accomplishments through common effort against the narrowness of their current status. Here, the detached observer might have seen a potentially great literature at its formative stage, authors able to reach straight into and out of the vernacular, delivering the heaviest spiritual messages without losing the immediacy of day-to-day language or the sophistication of their developing craft. Yiddish writers were swept along by the contemporary Realism and Naturalism in Europe, drawn naturally to the sense of social commitment in literature. But their writing nevertheless contained in general an element of fancy, as if the social experience of author and audience could not permit a complete commitment to the appearances of Reality.

The vast migration of Eastern European Jews to American shores offered new possibilities for Yiddish culture and afforded, through the popular media of the mass press, a way for literature to retain its folkish quality yet increase its circulation many-fold.

The millions who streamed to the New World found cause for bitter disillusionment about America and deep nostalgia for what they had left behind. Plunged into ethnic ghettos, confined to the garment trades and the lowest echelons of business and the professions, they experienced high mortality rates, tuberculosis ("the shop disease"),

suicides and family disorders -- both grinding poverty and the steady disintegration of ancient connective cultural elements. Within a few years of the mass migration, the center of the community (especially in New York's Lower East Side) tilted toward labor activity and radicalism. Despite the initial misgivings of intellectuals (who still hoped to convert the masses to "cultured" Russian or German), writers and activists touched a nerve with their direct Yiddish appeals. A Yiddish Socialist press appeared in the early 1890's, and gathering some of the outstanding talents in the ghetto, became a staple for a rapidly-growing audience. Here, culture had an established audience, but one that demanded its edification in doses that could be easily swallowed.

The effusion that followed had no precedent in Jewish or Socialist culture. When Eastern European Jews began, almost from their first day in the new land, to organize unions, constitute mutual benefit societies, and join radical parties, they learned much politically from the precisely organized German-American Socialists. But while radical Germans carried over to the United States a ready-made cultural perspective established by generations of literary and political experience, the Jews were formulating their culture in the heat of their struggle. A mass Yiddish Socialist propaganda and literary flowering that had been judged impossible in 1885 was fact ten years later. One could cite, for instance, the modest wedding bard Eliakum Zunser, whose lyrics

were so popular as to be considered folk-verse, "anonymous" among the ordinary people. As Edward King's contemporary novel Joseph Zalmonah describes a Zunser-like figure, the "people's poet" offers songs to a mass audience of workers in a desperate strike. Hungry and ragged, the workers are stirred to new sacrifices by the poetry, as a Greek audience might have been in antiquity. Every Socialist and Anarchist newspaper editor could tell the same story. Political poems by now-famous ghetto writers helped to launch the papers, called the workers to consciousness, brought new inspiration in moments of crisis. For an historic moment in the 1890's, the writers had all but recapitulated the ancient functions of poetry with the substitution of labor (or Socialist) victory instead of clan triumph, the mysterious force of the mass instead of God.

The writers' very success stirred the first rebellion against suffocating political orthodoxy, foreshadowing all those uprisings by Left writers against their political masters in the following generations. Whereas struggles over style and the autonomy of literature had been practically unknown among the German-American Socialists, the assertion of artistic autonomy and the formation of new extra-party journals and magazines punctuated the Jewish cultural 1890's. Morris Winchevsky, the zeyde (grandfather) of Socialist writers, editor of the first Yiddish

◆ IN THE FACTORY

ALL day in the shop the machines roar so wildly
That often I sink and am lost in the din;
Sunken and lost in the terrible tumult,
The soul in me ceases. . . . I am a machine.
I work and I work and I work without reckoning,
Making, creating—endless the task!
For what? And for whom? I know not, I ask not;
Machine cannot answer, machine cannot ask.

No, here is no feeling, no judgment, no reason;
This labor, the bloody, the endless, suppressed
The noblest and finest, the truest and richest,
The highest, the purest, the humanly best.
The minutes, the hours, the days and the seasons,
They vanish, swift-fleeting like straws in a gale.
I drive the wheel madly as though to overtake them,
I chase without wisdom, or wit, or avail.

The clock in the workshop, it rests not a moment;
It points on, and ticks on: Eternity—Time.
And once someone told me the clock has a meaning—
Its pointing and ticking has reason and rhyme.
And this too he told me—or had I been dreaming?—
The clock wakens life in us, forces unseen;
And something besides. . . . I forget what; oh, ask not!
I know not, I know not, I am a machine.

At times, when I listen, I hear the clock plainly;
The reason of old—the old meaning—is gone.
The maddening pendulum urges me forward
To labor and labor and still labor on.
The tick of the clock is the voice of my master;
The face of the clock is the face of my foe.
The clock—I can hear, I can hear, how it drives me!
It calls me "Machine!" and it cries to me "Sew!"

At noon, when about me the wild tumult ceases,
And gone is the master, and I sit apart,
And dawn in my brain is beginning to glimmer,
The wound comes agape at the core of my heart;
And tears, bitter tears flow; tears that are scalding;
They moisten my dry, meagre dinner—my bread;
They choke me—I cannot! my bread lies uneaten;
Oh, heavy the labor! Oh, bitter the need!

The workshop at mid-day—it is not a workshop:
A battlefield—bloody; a lull on the plain.
Around and about me the corpses are lying,
And out of the earth cries the blood of the slain.
A moment—and listen! The signal is sounded:
The dead rise again, and renewed is the fight.
They struggle, these corpses; for strangers, for strangers!
They struggle, they fall, and they sink into night.

I gaze on the battlefield; wrath flames within me,
And Vengeance and Pain stir their fires in me.
The clock—now I hear it aright!—it is crying:
"An end to the bondage! Arise, and be free!"
It quickens my feeling, it quickens my reason;
It points to the moments, the precious, that fly.
Oh, worthless am I if I longer am silent,
And lost am I, lost! if in silence I die.

The man in me sleeping begins to awaken;
The thing that was slave into slumber has passed:
Now, up with the man in me! Up and be doing!
No misery more! Here is freedom at last!

When sudden: A whistle!—the boss—an alarm!—
I sink in the slime of the stagnant routine;
There's tumult . . . they struggle. . . . Oh, lost is my ego—
I know not, I care not, I am a machine! . . .

~Morris Rosenfeld
(1862—1923)

English version by Rose Pastor Stokes

Socialist newspaper in London during the 1880's and early 1890's, demonstrated in his career the earnest striving to balance political commitments and artistic integrity.

A cosmopolite, Winchevsky had drawn from the German poets a rich sense of continental Socialist culture -- the workers' hymns, the call to class war, the sentimental dirges over the proletarian victims -- but also a sense of the paradox in the role of the revolutionary artist. Among his greatest influences in London was William Morris, whose dreamy prose and a devotion to handicraft could never be fitted neatly into contemporary Socialist categories. Through observation of Morris and others, Winchevsky wrote bitter-sweet short stories of revolutionaries' tragic lives and loves, and on his venturing to the United States in 1894, commenced a newspaper column signed the "Crazy Philosopher" (Meshugina Filosof) -- observations on the absurdity and sadness of contemporary life, as well as the necessity for a Socialist solution. In his own Socialist cultural newspaper in America, the Emes (The Truth), he declared, "The Party is more important than our newspaper, but Socialism is more important than the Party, and the truth is more important than everything else." This could only be political heresy. Winchevsky soon played a key role in the Jewish Social-

ists' revolt against the narrow and sectarian leadership of the Socialist Labor Party.

More than any other metropolitan group, they hailed the alliance of immigrants with the grassroots Socialists -- indigenous, folksy, and sentimental -- led by Eugene Debs. The writers found freedom by locating the "folk" forces closest to themselves.

This liberation coincided with the formation

of a daily Yiddish press destined to reach beyond the Socialist followers to the Jewish masses sympathetic to labor's cause, and beyond any kind of orthodoxy in style and content to the most remarkably popular radical daily papers that America had yet seen. The Jewish Daily Forward, directed by Abe Cahan for half a century, uniquely among Socialist newspapers outdistanced its rivals (both ethnic and English-speaking) in circulation and influence, competing successfully with the bourgeois Yiddish press

§from the Big Stick (Groysser Kundes), c.1914. Professor "Art" proposes to divide the Forward (Abe Cahan) from Madame "Shund," trashy art. Cahan protests: don't cut, the two cannot live apart for a minute.

דער "סיאמעזשער צווילינג"



פראפעסאר, "קונדס": ס'איז נא יוז טאקינג, באיעלע, מע'ט מוזען שניידען!
 "פארזוערטס": פליען, פראפעסאר'ל, "קונדס", שניידט ניט! זי און איך זיינען איינס. אהן איהר קען איך
 ניט לעבען א מינוט'עלע.

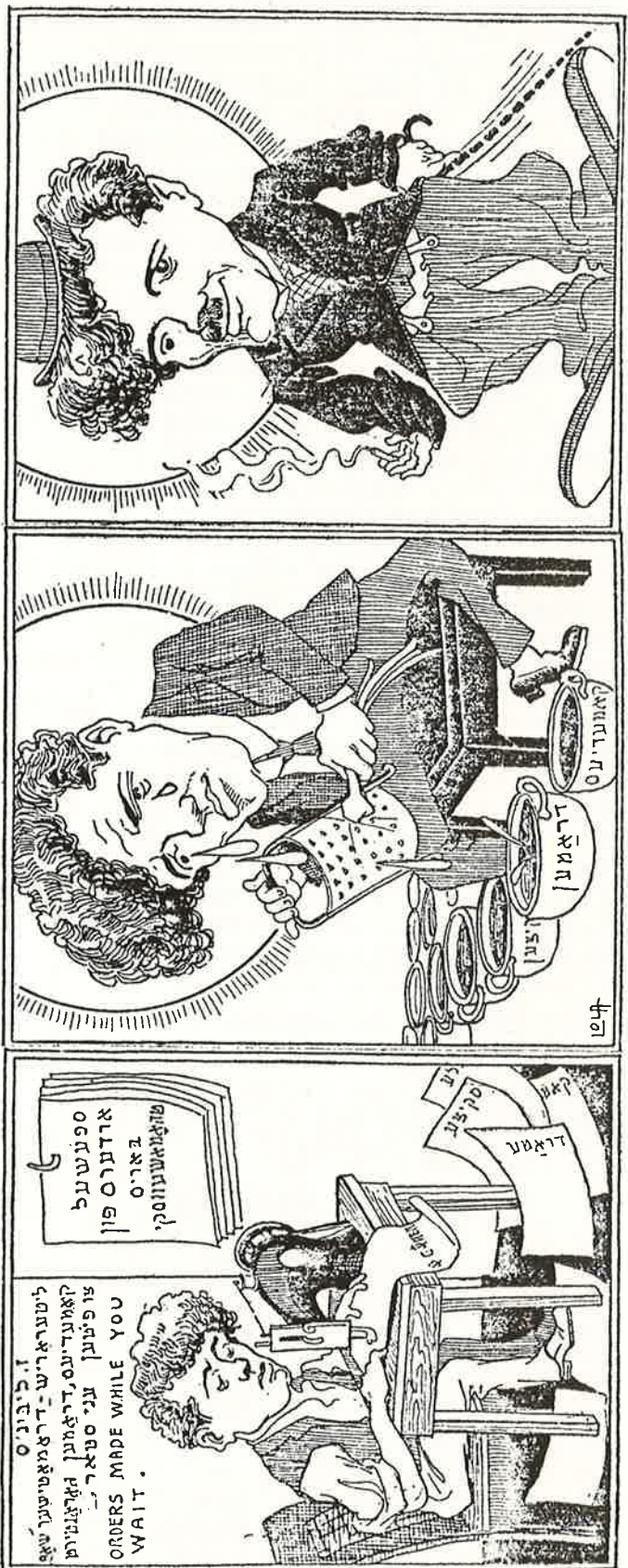
by adapting many of the mainstream techniques.

Cahan and others were quick to see newspapers as the only reading matter the great mass of proletarians would ever read, and to adapt literary styles accordingly. The first Yiddish Socialist papers established the story-length of a single column, just enough for the attention-span of the barely literate worker, perhaps, or for the distraction of the trolley (and later subway) ride. To create a whole story within that length required the will, and ability, to speak directly to the reader's experience. Thus a writer like Z. Libin, a cap-maker by trade, who better than any other author exemplified the proletarian relating the misery of shop- and home-life. His weeping at his own lost child, his hours spent over a sewing machine, his observations of daily sorrows all suffuse his work. His writing, dedicated to making Socialists of his readers, became, as B. Rivkin says, a kind of Red Soap Opera.

Caricature of S. Libin, as seen by his friends, his enemies, and as he really is.

§ Groysser Kundes, 1912.

(Read Right to Left)



זיינע פריינד האלטן אים פאר'ן גרויסען אידשען קאביקער, א רעגלעך משפילי משפילן.

זיינע שונאים זאגן, אז ער טוהט אויף קלאגען.

דער אמת איז, אז ער איז א הארשסטער ארבייטער אין זיין אייגענע שפאקע.

So, too, the writings of the "Sweatshop Poets", known as the "Teardrop Millionaires" because of their wealth of sorrow. More than any other, Norris Rosenfeld apotheosized the sentimental potentialities in slum life and fashioned them into a tapestry of suffering and hope.

This literary unfolding would have been remarkable enough in any Socialist newspaper. But Cahan placed alongside these writers translations from all the popular writers of the day, Socialist or not -- Arthur Conan Doyle along with Hugo, Poe, and Mark Twain, "High" and "Low" culture indiscriminately. The German-American Socialist press had never really seriously aspired to popular culture. The Forward was infused in popular life looking in at Socialists while at the same time a Socialist beacon was looking out over the masses. The weekend Forward, with its literary supplement, might better be compared with the popular literature magazines in the mainstream, like McClure's, Munsey's and Colliers, in the midst of a technological price-cutting revolution to offer literature for popular prices.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this contact between "Socialist" and "popular" culture. If Jewish Socialists could maintain the momentum of their movement, they might shape that culture, clarify the aims of popular life as identical to Socialism (at least among the Jews). The backwardness of American Socialism relative to its European counterpart, due in no small part to the lack

of a traditional, stable working class culture, might conceivably be reversed through the mechanisms of the system itself. Why shouldn't the masses seize up the opportunity of popular learning and turn it to their advantage against the exploiters?

This hope had two great flaws. The Jewish community's rebellious spirit ran ahead of the organized labor movement. After defeats and bitter disappointments, the Jewish Socialists went into decline, not to rise again until after the strike waves of 1907-1909. With the defeat, an inner flaw of Jewish adaptation became apparent. While Socialist veterans complained of their isolation, the Forward trained its sights on appealing to a public politically indifferent, seeking entertainment of the kind afforded by "yellow journalism". Just when (and whether, for that matter) Abe Cahan made a conscious decision to feature shund (trash), why he came to abuse, tyrannize and alienate the most creative Socialist writers in the community, may never be known. One thing is clear. In the absence of a revolutionary political continuity, a leading element in Yiddish Socialist culture drifted rightward, into acceptance of American bourgeois society and the norms it fostered, as a virtual finality. Rebellious youth began to seek ideals rather than an assimilated Socialism.

No one had anticipated the threat of a stultifying new orthodoxy as clearly as the Anarchists. Unlike the

Socialists, they had warned that the creation of institutions might become another layer of defense around the system; Socialism, enshrined in community values, could well serve as an agency to placate workers with sweet words, easing the Americanization of the ambitious worker into the "all rightnik" lawyer or small businessman. A leading anarchist poet (and sometimes editor of the popular anarchist weekly, Freie Arbeiter Shtimme), I. Bovshover, symptomized this opposition on political and aesthetic grounds. A fur-worker by trade, Bovshover has been called the first bohemian of Yiddish-American literature: writing fierce tirades against Capitalism, he held part of himself back from the collective struggle of the day, searching in Whitman and the study of poetics some greater principle above and beyond the prospects of the immediate class conflict. Bovshover himself did not survive this plunge into so many different areas of contradictions. He went mad and died in a mental institution decades later.

◆ REVOLUTION

I COME like a comet ablaze, like the sun when the dawn is awaking.
I come like tumultuous tempest, when thunder and lightning are breaking;

I come like the lava that rushes from the mighty volcanoes in motion;

I come like the storm from the north that arouses and angers the ocean.

I come because tyrants have put up their thrones in place of the nations;

I come because rulers are foddering peace with their war preparations;

I come because ties that bound people together are now disconnected;

I come because fools think that progress will stay in the bounds they erected.

I come because out in the wastes made by rulers I arose to existence;

I come because despots have roused me to anger and armed resistance;

I come because life is too real to be murdered by foolish endeavor;

I come because freedom can nowhere be chained and ensnackled forever.

I led the downtrodden and tyrannized peoples of past generations;
I helped them to throw off enslavement, and gain their complete liberations;
I marched with the spirit of progress, and aided its every endeavor;
And I shall march on with the peoples, until I shall free them forever.

You money-bag saints, you crowned cut-throats, anointed with strife and contentions;

I come to destroy you, your laws, and your lies and your foolish conventions;

Your hearts that are thirsting for blood, I shall pierce till the life in them ceases;

Your crown and your sceptres, your little gold toys I shall break into pieces.

And pluck off your purples and tear them to rags, and then hurl to damnation;

The baubles which people bow down to like fools with their loud jubilation;

The glittering pride of your false frozen world I shall melt till it vanish,

Like snow when the sun breathes upon it, like night that the day comes to banish.

And I shall destroy all your spider-web morals, the lies you determine;

Your priests with their darkness and falsehoods I come to root out like the vermin;

Your heavens and hells, and your saviors and prophets, your gods and your devils,

I come to destroy them, to free all the earth and air from their evils.

So hang me or shoot me, your efforts are futile—a waste of endeavor;

I fear neither prisons nor tortures, nor scaffolds nor awe whatsoever.

Anew I shall rise from the earth, and its surface with weapons shall cover,

Until you sink down in your graves, till your power for evil is over.

~ Basil Dabl (Joseph Bovshover)
(1872—1916)

English version by J. Leftwich
from Graham §

But Bovshover's point

was not lost. His successors were younger men who emigrated after the turn of the century, influenced on the one hand by the Russian pogroms against Jews, on the other by L'Art pour Art, the search for inner meaning beyond political definitions of poetry and fiction. They found in their Jewishness, in the European identity they retained even while in the midst of American culture, a voice that the literal propagandists like Z. Libin and Morris Rosenfeld could not have expressed.

They shunned the "rhyming departments" of the labor and Socialist movements as too constraining. And yet they were themselves proletarians -- paperhangers, waiters, fur-workers, housepainters, and so forth -- experiencing the sorrows and expectations of the community. As later novels suggest, they wandered through the ghetto social life, feeling half-friend and half-stranger, drawn by Socialist idealism and at the same time repelled by the concessions made to existing conditions. They were the first generation of American proletarian writers who experienced the dread possibilities of popular culture (even Socialist popular culture) and drew back, taking the pilgrim's role instead.

In the decade after 1909, all the political and cultural contradictions came together. The Jewish working class, now joined in struggle with other ethnic groups, fought

bitter and ultimately successful struggles for union recognition in the garment trades and associated industries. Cahan, defending his property in a paper whose circulation ran above 100,000 daily, sought social peace to continue his trade. The garment workers' march on the Forward office marked another turning point in Jewish political and cultural life. Cahan, hell-bent on assimilation, still wrote of the eventual elimination of Yiddish that he had done so much to establish, and obviously planned the integration of Jewish labor into a stable "system". Revolutionaries looked elsewhere.

The failure of world Socialism in the first great war, the Red Scare and the defeat of most unions in the United States, then consolidation of the Russian Revolution foreclosed one set of possibilities and opened others. While the community matured, and faced threats of nativism and anti-semitism, revolutionary sentiment turned sharply inward. By an historical conjunction, Communism appealed both to Russian homeland nostalgia and to Jewish messianism, to the rejection of American culture as it existed and to the determination to find an honorable destiny for Jewish idealism in the United States.

Even in the revolutionary optimism of the Third International's opening year, the prospect of immediate, Russian-style Revolution in the United States demanded considerable credulity. Left to their own devices, most Jewish radicals might have chosen a heterodox Communism -- support of Russia and self-definition of Jewish responsibility. The Morgen Freiheit, launched in 1922, was first thought to be the newer organ of popular Left thought and culture that the Forward should have been without the political opportunism and assimilationism of Cahan. But the choices had already been narrowed by the failure of World Revolution. And Russian-led Communism could appeal to fundamental sentiments. An element in Jewish culture denied now as before any easy acceptance of individualistic prosperity that material advancement through

assimilation could bring; and the shadows of a cultural obliteration darkened the hopes of people who recalled the Old World simplicity and piety.

Out of these sentiments, the last great literary genre emerged. On the one hand, writers of all kinds increasingly gave their best work to depicting the "Old Days" in the homeland. One could almost believe in reading their work that the miserable

shtetls were real and American life an illusion, a chaos to rend up any coherent image for the writer's pen. On the other hand, success in America smelled of corruption, bringing spiritual unhappiness in its wake.

Abe Cahan of all people drew in his novel, The Rise of David Levinsky, a veritable archetype of his own "all rightnik" tendencies: the prospering clothes manufacturer suffers from unexplainable melancholy, and wonders if religious life might have been a better road to follow. Through the 1910's and 1920's, such literature continues. David Pinski's The Generations of Noah Edon is perhaps the ultimate statement: the children of the rich but pious Noah have no values, no character to speak of, and end their lives in horror and meaninglessness. ■

❖ YIDDISH SOCIALIST HUMOR, 1890s ❖

Heikl and Michael are two characters, Yiddish-speaking immigrants, whom Morris Winchevsky created and through whom he made some of his pointed comments on the American scene. The selections below, except for the last, appeared in various issues of the Emes (Boston) §

Heikl: Have you ever seen an honest word in an American newspaper?

Michael: See them every day.

Heikl: Namely?

Michael: The date and the price.

Heikl: How much does a policeman get in America?

Michael: As much as he can take.

Heikl: How come the cantor of your synagogue doesn't have a voice anymore?

Michael: Last November he sold his voice.

Heikl: Where does the word "Sheeny" come from?

Michael: From Gentile mouths.

Heikl: It seems in America they are always boasting of their dead heroes.

Michael: They don't have any current ones.

Heikl: Who among us made the rule that a rabbi, a widower, must not remain without a wife?

Michael: The rabbis.

Heikl: Everyone yells things are bad in America, still no one returns to the old country.

Michael: Fools, most of them don't have the means to return.

❖ Translation and Intro by Sid Resnick.