

Jewish Life

A PROGRESSIVE MONTHLY

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TOWARD PEACE FOR ISRAEL

by Louis Harap

RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by Max Siskind

REVOLUTION IN THE LITTLE SYNAGOGUE

a short story

by Abraham Reisin

MUSIC IN ISRAEL TODAY

by Ursula Wassermann

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Religion in Public Schools

A new move in New York to break down
separation of Church and State

By MAX SISKIND

ON November 29, 1955 the New York Board of Rabbis announced that it had requested the more than 500 rabbis in the city—Orthodox, Conservative and Reform—to use their sermons on the following Sabbath to warn their congregations against “the dangers of religion in the public schools of the city.”

This highly unusual step, reserved only for the most serious occasions, dramatically signalized the alarm felt by an aroused Jewish community at a plan being considered by the New York City Board of Education which would destroy the secular nature of the public school and inject religion into every phase of its curriculum. The plan, which went under the name of *Moral and Spiritual Values and the Schools—a Guiding Statement for Supervisors and Teachers*, had been unanimously approved by the Board of Superintendents on June 14, 1955 and was now before the Board of Education for final approval.

Although school officials have tried to maintain the pretense that they were not introducing “religion” but merely “moral and spiritual values,” it is very clear that their *Guide* is a frontal attack on the principle of separation of church and state, which is one of the foundations stones on which American democracy has been built. It is a giant step beyond the encroachments already existing in the schools—prayers, Bible reading, released time for religious education, sectarian holiday celebrations, etc. [see “Religion in the Public Schools,” by Morris U. Schappes, *JEWISH LIFE*, Nov., 1952.]

Teachers as Missionaries

As can be seen from the *Guide*, teachers are now being asked to become “full-time religious missionaries,” as the American Jewish Congress warned in a “Fact Sheet” on the Board’s plan, and to inject religion in every possible school subject and on every possible occasion. The AJ Congress “Fact Sheet,”

dated Sept. 23, 1955, declared flatly that "the program is an unconstitutional and illegal violation of the principle of separation of church and state and threatens the integrity and non-sectarianism of the public school system."

How far the Board's plan goes was emphasized by Rabbi Zev Zahavy in a sermon at Congregation Zichron Ephraim, New York City. "By attempting to relate the social studies, language, art, science and mathematics to divine and religious values," he said, "the public school curriculum will assume a more parochial character than many private religious schools where these secular subjects are taught in a strictly secular tone."

What is happening in New York is part of a national trend. For a number of years now the enemies of public and secular education have laid down a barrage against the public schools. These enemies claim that the schools are "spiritual wastelands and godless," that they are responsible for juvenile delinquency and that they fail to instruct children in character and spiritual values.

Unfortunately, these attacks have had their effect even upon many who are sincere supporters of the public schools. And many of those who support bringing religion into education are very far from being enemies of public education. But, basically, the drive to inject religion is led by a group which distrusts the

public school system and desires to substitute faith and indoctrination for the intellectual training that has always been considered the main goal of public education.

"Non-Sectarian" Education

An example of this view was given over "The Faith in Our Time" radio program sponsored by the National Council of Catholic Men in Wash., D.C., in 1952. According to the speaker, Dr. Frank Whalen, the main job of the teacher was not to develop the intellect but to "reveal the truth to the child."

What was the "truth" according to Dr. Whalen? It was this: "God made me to know Him, to Love Him, to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him Forever in Heaven. . . . All the evolutionary hypotheses, all the social contracts, all the equations of Einstein are inferior to this simple statement of the truth." (Brooklyn *Tablet*, Oct. 11, 1952).

It is shocking to think that this attitude towards the intellectual training given in the public school system was publicly held by a man who was at that moment an assistant superintendent of the largest public school system in the country—New York City!

Another spokesman, Father James Keller, in his book, *All God's Children—What Your Schools Can Do For Them*, published in 1953 under the imprimatur of Cardinal Spellman,

said the following:

"With God in education it is difficult enough to instill character in young people. Without God it is virtually impossible. Far more dangerous today than the Communists are those who prepare the way for moral disintegration by excluding God from education."

If Father Keller was right, then New York City Acting Mayor Joseph Sharkey was also right when, at the dedication of a parochial school, he criticized the public schools because they "do not teach the word of God." And he added: "It seems a shame to pour hundreds of millions of dollars" into these schools. (*N. Y. Herald Tribune*, Oct. 15, 1951)

It is not surprising that Father Keller could say these things about the public schools. It is surprising, however, that the superintendent of the public schools of New York City, Dr. William Jansen, could endorse his book as "a book that must command the attention of all who are seriously interested in public education." Although the superintendent's endorsement, quoted on the book jacket, said, "This is no sectarian plan," Father Keller's introduction to the book summed up the kind of "non-sectarian" education he had in mind:

"The youth of this nation can receive an education based upon American traditions and ideals. . . . From the very beginnings of our

nation, Americans have for the greater part recognized that all men are children of one God who is their Father and are destined to be truly brothers with Christ, the Divine Son."

"Non-sectarian!"

The same point was made by George A. Timone, at that time a member of the New York Board of Education and now a justice of the Domestic Relations Court.

Timone was the moving spirit in the New York school witch-hunt, which has driven from their profession more than 250 outstanding teachers—almost all of them Jewish. He is now bending his energy to the attempt to bring religion into the schools. As head of a New York Catholic Lawyers Guild Committee on juvenile delinquency, Timone recently recommended that released time for religious instruction be increased to an hour and a half a week and be extended to the high schools. (*N. Y. World-Telegram & Sun*, Sept. 27, 1955) His Committee even went so far as to recommend that the public schools give graduation credit for religious instruction taken outside the schools!

The Jewish People are Opposed

The Jewish people, who have always been the first to suffer from any breach in the separation of church and state, have been quick

(Continued on page 41)

TOWARD PEACE FOR ISRAEL

Latest developments in the Middle Eastern
crisis and the path toward solution

By LOUIS HARAP

THE urgency of action to relax the tension in the Middle East and to begin motion toward a solution continues unabated. Genuine concern for the people of Israel requires that the developments of the past weeks be viewed constructively.

The hasty calling together of the Baghdad pact states exposes the hollowness of the "alarm" expressed by John Foster Dulles and Sir Anthony Eden over the Israel-Egypt crisis. For this meeting showed how unrelated the State Department-sponsored Baghdad pact is to Middle Eastern peace or peace in the world. For a few days after November 20, representatives of Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and Britain, with United States "observers" present, took steps to coordinate their anti-Soviet military plans. The cold war intentions of the pact were clearly stated. "The defense organization being set up," said an Associated Press dispatch from Baghdad (*N. Y. Times*, Nov. 21), "ties the Middle East with the Atlantic alliance in the west through Turkey and to the Southeast Asian system on the East through Pakis-

tan." Not the promotion of peace but preparations for war emerge from this pact.

The implications for Israel were even more directly stated by Iraqi Premier Nuri Said on Nov. 21. "Iraq will not hesitate," he declared, "to use its resources [largely supplied by the State Department] for the assistance of any Arab country subjected to Israel aggression." Iraq, it will be recalled, is still in a state of war and is the only Arab state that has not even signed an armistice agreement with Israel. The warlike objectives of the Baghdad pact, formed and developing under the pressure of Dulles, bode no good for peace of the Middle East, as the Israeli people are aware, any more than for the peace of the world.

How popular is this pact with the people of Iran? The following dispatch by Kennett Love from Baghdad is revealing. "The Iranian Army . . . (has) recently undergone a sweeping purge of subversives in its officer cadres [who opposed the Baghdad pact], unfortunately losing many of its ablest and therefore most danger-

ous young men to prisons and firing squads." (*N. Y. Times*, Nov. 27) The people of Iran are not taking their government's surrender to the oil moguls from Britain and the United States lying down.

Eden has once again tried to control the situation by his offer, completely shared by Dulles, to "mediate" the issues between Israel and the Arab states—that is, by forcing Israel to give up the Negev. This "mediation" offer was promptly rejected by Israel, for the Israeli people are familiar with Eden's "impartiality" in the Middle East.

Four-Power Talks

Eden's contribution to peace in the Middle East can be judged by his refusal (*N. Y. Times*, Nov. 23) to invite the Soviet Union to four-power negotiations. In reply to a Labor MP's proposal that "the Soviet Union be invited to discuss a complete

arms embargo to the Middle East," he replied that this would not serve any "useful" purpose. Such an invitation would not serve any "useful" purpose only if one's objective is building an anti-Soviet arms base in the Middle East.

But the solution still lies in four power negotiations over the acute problems of the Middle East. As B. Z. Goldberg has said in the *Yiddish Day* (Nov. 20), "A four-power guarantee, comprising America, England, France and the Soviet Union, is necessary for peace in the Middle East." The case was stated dramatically in Israel itself by the veteran Zionist leader and member of the first Israel government, Yitzhok Greebaum. Writing in *Letste Neies* (Latest News) of Tel Aviv on Oct. 28, he said that just as the state of Israel was born under an understanding among the big four, "so all four great powers should in accordance

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with law and justice guarantee the security and present borders [of Israel]."

The *N. Y. Post* asked editorially on Nov. 9 why the West does not consider a UN guarantee of the area to supplant the Big Three declaration of 1950. The Soviet Union has already on several occasions since the Czech arms sale told the world that it is ready and willing to participate in a four-power conference on the crisis.

Obstacles to such negotiations do not come from the Soviet Union but from Dulles and Eden. As Walter Lippmann wrote (*N. Y. Herald-Tribune*, November 3), "The real problem is not this threatened war [between Israel and Egypt] which the great powers must and which they can prevent. The real problem is that the Soviet Union is by way of acquiring a diplomatic base in Egypt. . . . Whether we like it or not, the Soviet Union will now be present and participating on equal terms in the diplomacy in the Middle East." Refusal of Dulles and Eden to enter into negotiations on the issue is preventing the peaceful solution of the problem.

Israel and Neutralism

In self-defense the government of Israel would do well to recognize this fact, too. It continues to plead for a "security pact" with Washington, which would in reality be a cold war anti-Soviet military pact and

hence not at all conducive to peace.

Yitzhok Greenbaum did some straight talking to the people of Israel when he wrote in *Letste Naies* on Oct. 7, "Can there be any doubt that our loyalty to the United States has brought us nothing but trouble? Can there be any doubt that we must change our foreign policy?" Such a change would be in the direction of neutrality and would immeasurably contribute to the maintenance of peace and security of Israel. Such a policy would bring closer the four-power negotiations together with Israel and the Arab states which can open the way to settlement of the Middle Eastern crisis.

Zionist leaders clamor for a "mutual security" pact between the United States and Israel on the ground that Israel is a "bastion" and outpost of "Western democracy." But such a pact would not solve the present crisis because Israel would then become a Western "island" in a sea of Middle Eastern and Asian neutralism, which regards "Western" as colonialist and oppressive. Such a pact would only expose Israel to new and greater dangers. Only a four-power negotiations of the problem will issue in peace and stability.

Americans can help to bring this about by urging the State Department to enter such negotiations in the Geneva spirit. They can rally their organizations to espouse this action. In the American Jewish Congress, members can support the posi-

tion expressed on Nov. 3 by their president, Dr. Israel Goldstein, for four-power talks on the issue. And Jews can try to clarify the thinking

of their fellow-citizens on the urgency for such a measure. The welfare of Israel's people hangs on such negotiations.

ON THE BORDERS

By ABRAHAM LEV (Israel)

Adapted from the Yiddish by Max Rosenfeld

The mountain range along the border
throbs with courage and with terror.
Nightly here the sacrificial victim falls
among the hunched and huddled hills;
by dawn the hard-trod
cliffs are spattered red
with blood of Arab, blood of Jew.
But is it not the truth
that blood of both beat hot with life,
that flesh of both cried out with pain,
that every mother weeps alike—
the same dead sobs will choke
our grieving mothers here, and those beyond
the hills, at dawn.

The barbs of enmity have entered deep.
How much longer will this silent slaughter creep
through barricaded valleys, bristling border walls,
each man seeking vengeance
and his neighbor's final fall.

Each side waits . . .
The dark brings death,
the morning, murder.
And through all the agonizing nights
I dream of hands,
hands outthrust,
hands entwined across the hills,
bringing peace . . .to them, to us.

"LOOK" SCANS U. S. JEWS

The national magazine conveys many facts
but also sows some illusions

By JERIMIAH LESSER

THE popular picture magazine *Look*, which is read by millions of Americans, featured in its November 29, 1955 issue a long, well-illustrated article on "The Position of the Jews in America Today." Author William Attwood, national affairs editor of the magazine, gives a rather full picture of Jewish life. The general reading public will get many facts about many aspects of the Jewish community from the article. However, they will also derive some false notions about the situation of American Jews.

Attwood correctly denies the widespread fallacy that Jews are different from other Americans only in religion. His definition of the Jews has valid elements and goes in the right direction. "A Jew," he writes, "is a member of a historical community held together by common memories, religious tradition and external pressure." Although he does recognize anti-Semitism ("external pressure") as a force for continuing differentiation of Jews from non-Jews, he does not give the primary place to this force that it actually holds. Nor

does Attwood realize the full extent to which the persistence of anti-Semitism is responsible for the high degree to which the Jewish community is organized as a measure of defense. For it is quite likely that if anti-Semitism and discrimination were not so prevalent, interest of Jews in present organizations, including religious ones, would fall off drastically.

Optimism on Anti-Semitism

Attwood is unduly optimistic about the state of anti-Semitism. It has "become more of an irritant than a problem," he says. In support of this optimism he repeats an assertion that an American Jewish Committee statement expressed recently that "the last barrier" between Jews and non-Jews is a "social one." This is an underestimation both of the deep-rootedness of anti-Semitism and discrimination in our society and of the available facts about discrimination, which hardly confirm the view of the problem as an "irritant" merely.

About the same time as the article appeared, the American Jewish Congress released a study, "Employment Discrimination Against Jews in the United States—1955," which summarizes the published evidence on the question. The study concludes that discrimination is "widespread" and that there exists "sufficient evidence of discrimination against Jews to prevent undue optimism concerning prompt elimination of that evil." The Jews are "largely excluded from many of the basic industries," the report says. The same is true of the white collar field. A survey in Chicago in 1955 of 20,000 job orders placed with commercial employment agencies in that city showed that in the two previous years over 20 per cent of the job requests explicitly excluded Jews. (*Indiana Jewish Chronicle*, December 2, 1955.)

A 1955 survey of placement offices of seven Middle Western states in 151 colleges and universities showed that more than half have difficulty with placement because of discrimination on account of race, religion or national origin. While Jimcrow against Negroes was first, "religious bias," that is, discrimination against Jews, was second in significance. (*Chicago Sentinel*, November 24, 1955.) Such figures hardly confirm the assertion in the article that "Jews will eventually have the same social and economic status as other Americans in a few short years."

Where Are the Jewish Workers?

In the opening paragraph of his article Attwood says that the Jew is a "business man, a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, possibly a farmer." Where are the Jewish workers? Attwood shows his view on this point when he says later on that "The Jewish working class has all but vanished, having ascended into the middle-income bracket." But that writes out of existence many hundreds of thousands of American Jews. It is true, as Attwood points out and as numerous recent surveys have shown, that there has been a large-scale movement of Jews into higher income groups. In small towns and cities it is true that the Jewish worker has almost "vanished." But the Jews are largely concentrated in the large cities—about half of all United States Jews live in the New York City area alone—and it is in these cities that there are still hundreds of thousands of Jewish workers at the machine and at low-income jobs at desks. A walk through the garment center and the fur markets in New York or the poorer districts of New York and other cities makes this obvious.

The shortcomings of the Attwood article noted here are serious. Yet the article has performed a service in making available to the masses of the country many important and relevant facts about the Jews.

BIRTH OF A GIANT

**Dr. Israel Goldstein greets the labor merger
and points to some democratic objectives**



*George Meany (left) and Walter Reuther jointly open the AFL-CIO
unity convention.*

The merger of the AFL and CIO early in December was an event of incalculable significance for the future of the American people as a whole. For a powerful labor movement can assure the future of democracy. The cause of civil liberties, of the liberation of the Negro people, of the rights of the Jewish people and other minority groups can receive impetus from a united labor movement that rises to its potentialities.

The naming of two Negroes to vice presidencies of the merged labor group represents an advance. But much remains to be done to realize full democracy in the labor movement itself and to wield the potential influence of labor on political life, on the movement for Negro equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination. It is to be hoped that this great new force will lend its support to winning peaceful co-existence. Regrettably the leadership has not always acted in consonance with the members' desire for peace.

One of the many speakers from various sections of American life who addressed the unity convention was Dr. Israel Golstein, president of the American Jewish Congress. Below are some excerpts from his speech.—Eds.

I am confident that religious leadership in America welcomes this merger of the two labor giants. It regards this event not only as a great day for American labor but as a great day for America. It is nothing new that religious leadership and spokesmanship, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish, regard the position of labor as one of the touchstones of American democracy. They have stood at labor's side in many a crucial test as far back as the 1920's, crucial years for the labor movement, when the steel industry and the railroads were shaken by industrial disputes. The churches and synagogues then and since have

played a not [un] important part in educating public opinion on the merits and the principles of industrial democracy.

Speaking as a rabbi, I deem it appropriate to recall not only the Mosaic and Prophetic tradition of social justice which has served both as text and inspiration to generations of dedicated servants of humanity, but also the role of the Jew, long oppressed and underprivileged, as pioneer in the struggle for a better day for all men. The American labor movement, on this historic day, has reason to pay grateful tribute to the memories of Samuel Gompers and Sidney Hillman among the architects

of our industrial democracy. . . .

America has a tremendous stake in a labor movement that is strong, free and united. Being strong, labor will see to it that the gains which have been made are maintained and advanced. Labor conditions have reached a fairly high plateau, the result of more than two decades of continuous progress. But it is not a uniform plateau and it will not be straightened out until the reactionary Taft-Hartley law is revoked from the statute books and the phoney "Right to Work" laws have been exploded wherever they exist.

Moreover the plateau is only a relative one, relative to the cost of living index. If the index rises the plateau must rise. Labor's concern is not merely one of self interest, though self interest is the natural and legitimate starting point for all human activities. But there is a difference between self interest and selfish interest. There is a self interest which fits into the public interest just as in a series of concentric circles the diameter of the inner circle is part of the diameter of the larger circle if the circles fit properly one into the other.

On the other hand selfish interest is ready to disregard, defy and violate the interests of the community as a whole. I believe it can be said for organized labor which is here represented that it represents a socially conscious and a socially res-

ponsible force, that in times of crisis for the nation it has proved itself worthy of its power, and that its leaders, Mr. George Meany and Mr. Walter Reuther, and their associates respectively are not only industrial statesmen but leading American patriots.

The American people as a whole, however, must recognize that a nation's prosperity which is not based on a good living wage for labor is false prosperity because it lacks a broad consumer's base. . . .

Permit me to say, however, that democracy like charity begins at home. Every group in American life which looks upon itself as a force for democracy must make certain that its own inner credentials are beyond cavil, not only because the instrument must partake of the character of the end which it proposes to serve, but also because democracy as a way of life, if taken seriously, should be a way of life on all levels of association. Therefore I am pleased to see in your constitution that while the preamble sets forth the larger, overall aims to which your newly formed organization is dedicated, the statement of objects and principles in your constitution spells out larger, overall aims also in terms of the labor ranks themselves, "to encourage all workers without regard to race, creed, color or national origin to share in the full benefits of union organization. . . ."

Another important area in which the labor movement can see to it that democracy begins at home, is that of civil liberties. The labor



AFL-CIO emblem

movement has not done all that is within its power to do, to protect its own members. There are many thousands of employees working for government contractors or employed as seamen and longshoremen, who are subjected to arbitrary security risks and are often discharged without a hearing on the basis of so-called confidential information, confidential because it cannot stand the light of day.

Indeed there are efforts on foot in Congress to extend the Security Program to any industrial establishment which may be classified as a defense facility. If this trend continues, every trade unionist will soon have a dossier in the FBI files complete with his fingerprints, photography and life history of himself and his close relatives. This device

can be readily used for union busting. It must be resisted not for that reason alone but because on all fronts it is high time that the American people recovered its sanity without relaxing its vigilance. It is for labor to insist upon a reevaluation of our entire Internal Security Program and a close scrutiny of the abuses committed in its name. . . .

Permit me to single out for a special observation the present immigration policy of the United States. You should be congratulated for the stand you have taken before the President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization in urging an increase in the rigid numerical ceiling imposed by the McCarran-Walter act. But labor must do more. It must speak out against the fundamental evil of this act, the National Origin Quota System with its built-in racist discrimination principle which gives the right to entry into the United States, not on the basis of character or technical skill or family relationship to American citizens, but on the accident of place of birth. It brands the stamp of inferiority upon races from which a large segment of American labor stems and upon stock from which many of America's foremost citizens originate. Labor should lead in the fight to rescind the racist immigration law which is a blemish on America's credentials in the eyes of the civilized world. . . .

A blow against Jimcrow housing

Cleveland Jewish leaders take action to stop gouging by Jimcrow real estate agents

By Abe Strauss

IF your landlord told you that he would raise the rent for your six rooms from \$65 to \$190 a month, what would you think? You would either be startled out of your wits or think it a poor joke.

But two articles in the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* (June 29 and 30) by its leading reporter, Eugene Segal, give names and addresses of dozens of Negro families who are victims of just such a "racket." Segal reports how white landlords in the old "Hauf" district "abolished" Jimcrow and rented rooms to Negro workers in old, run-down apartment houses.

What softened the hearts of these landlords so suddenly? Eugene Segal reports that these landlords are now driving white occupants out of their apartments in order to rent them to Negroes. The landlords dare not ask white tenants to pay more than \$65 a month. But now they rent the same six-room apartments to a Negro family for \$190. And they rent single rooms for \$45 a month!

Segal began a thorough investigation after Negro Councilman Kermit

K. Neely exposed this racist practice at a meeting of the City Council and condemned the local press for keeping quiet about this blatant exploitation of the Negro people. Segal cited names and addresses of tenants and real estate companies involved. His report is restrained and "objective" and he restricts his comments to a single neighborhood. But the local Negro weekly, *Call and Post*, is not as "objective." It points out (July 2) that the same super-exploitation of Negroes in the renting of apartments or purchase of homes prevails *throughout* Cleveland.

The housing situation of Negroes is extremely severe, since the Negro population of Cleveland has doubled in the last ten years. Thousands of new homes are being built in the suburbs but are not for Negroes.

Instead, the real estate interests confer on the Negro population the "favor" of renting the houses in former white neighborhoods for three or four times the rent charged the white tenants. The Negroes who are forced to pay these exorbitant rents are workers in steel, auto, railroad and highway construction. Their average weekly wages are \$75. Fig-

ABE STRAUSS is the Cleveland correspondent of the Morning Freiheit.

ure out for yourself what such rents leave them to live on!

Action Against Gougers

Segal mentions a number of landlords in his articles. There are a number of Jewish names among them. As a Jewish community leader, Segal rightfully tries to call the attention of Jewish opinion in the city to this unfortunate circumstance, which is damaging to the Jewish people.

A leading writer of the *Call and Post* pointed out to me that there were also a number of Negro and other non-Jewish landlords (Slavic, Irish, Italian) mixed up in this racket. The article in the *Call and Post* of July 2nd does not spare the Negro landlords. But the Negro real estate companies complain that they pay 40 per cent more than white landlords for properties.

The Jewish workers oppose anti-Negro discrimination. Although a few leading Jews promote the "hush-hush" policy, the local Jewish community has made a number of contributions toward united action with the Negro organizations against racism and discrimination through the local Jewish Community Councils. They have thus helped greatly in bringing the Jewish and Negro people closer together.

Such cooperation has been achieved in combatting the anti-Semitism which is the grim result of discriminatory dealings by some land-

lords. Jewish leaders should seriously examine the lamentable role being played by many Jewish landlords. An effort should be made to show these landlords not only the brutality of this discriminatory practice against Negro families but also that they do great damage to the entire Jewish community.

Of course, the struggle against Jimcrow housing and exorbitant rents must be conducted by the united efforts of all the democratic, anti-racist groups of the community. But the Jewish community can make a contribution by taking action in the matter of the guilty Jewish landlords.

And Jewish communal leaders in the city are beginning to take such steps. A few days after Segal's articles they conferred with landlords mentioned and talked turkey to them. As a result, two big Jewish real estate firms reduced the rents of many Negro tenants from \$190 to \$90 a month. Discussions are going on with other Jewish real estate agents.

This work of the Jewish leaders—by no means an easy job—is of great importance and is in the best interests of the Jewish people. This reporter learned that a letter sent by officers of the National Association for Advancement of Colored People expressed deep recognition of the effective cooperation of the Jewish leaders against discrimination in housing and rent-gouging.



ISRAEL

The two current box-office hits at the Tel Aviv Chamber Theater (founded 1945) are Berthold Brecht's *The Good Woman of Sechuan* and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. . . . Two Israeli poets, Abraham Shlonsky and J. Lichtenbaum, are participating in the international commemoration in Warsaw, of the hundredth anniversary of the death of the great Polish national writer, Adam Mickiewicz. Lichtenbaum, who many years ago translated into Hebrew the classic work of Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz*, has given several Yiddish public lectures in Poland on culture and literature in Israel.

In Tel Aviv, the League for Israel-Soviet Friendship recently held an exhibition of Russian and Soviet books in Hebrew translation. . . . When S. Mikunis, general secretary of the Communist Party of Israel, returned from a visit to the Soviet Union early in November, he reported having had a discussion with Jewish composers in Moscow at the Union of Soviet Composers. Among those he talked with was Alexander Krein (two of whose piano compositions were performed by Alan Booth at our memorable JEWISH LIFE concert on December 2). Mikunis heard performances of the Jewish songs of Shostakovich and of a symphony by Weinberg (son-in-law of Solomon Mikhoels). The Union gave Mikunis scores and records to take to Israel.

J. Krakovski, director of the Polish tourist agency, arrived in Tel Aviv in mid-November to arrange for a tourist exchange between the two countries. . . . *Intourist*, Soviet tourist agency, is negotiating with *Paltourist*, its opposite number in Tel Aviv, to work out the Soviet government proposal for a reciprocal exchange of tourists. . . . From July 1954 through July 1955, 29,605 immigrants settled in Israel. From North Africa came 25,474, from Asia, 2,050, from Europe, 1,163, from North and South America, 83, from South Africa, 40.

United States investments in Israel increased from \$13,000,000 in 1949 to \$63,000,000 in 1954. . . . In the first half of 1955, U.S. exports to Israel amounted to \$47,413,700, while U.S. imports from Israel were only \$8,161,500. For that one half-year Israel incurred

an unfavorable trade balance (a debt) of \$35,252,200 to U.S. businessmen alone. Such economic dependence is a continuing threat to Israel's political independence. Such dependence is increasing; while Israel exports to all countries in the first eight months of 1955 were almost static, its imports increased by 9 per cent over last year, and totalled \$280,000,000.

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Parents who want to send their children to kindergarten have to pay 15 Israel pounds per month per child (the Israel pound is worth 55½ American cents). Students in secondary schools have to pay 35 pounds a month tuition fee. Elementary education is free.

•
The Emma Lazarus Kindergarten in Tel Aviv, sponsored by the Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Women's Clubs in the United States, is one of five operated by Tarbut L'am (Culture for the People), a progressive organization that serves Jewish and Arab children alike at less than half the standard price.

•
Arab workers are eligible for membership in Israel trade unions, but are not allowed to vote in the elections of Histadruth, the Israel General Federation of Labor. . . . Arab workers are also not allowed to register for work with the Histadruth Labor Exchanges. Therefore they are not counted among the officially unemployed, and find it harder to get jobs. . . . No worker over 45 is permitted to register in the Labor Exchange, be he Jewish or Arab. Shades of Rabbi Ben Ezra, who, in Robert Browning's version, wrote: "Grow old along with me; The best is yet to be."

•
Late in November in Tel Aviv there was staged a conference of 4,000 members of the former Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Military League), once the military and terroristic arm of Menahem Beigin's Revisionist party. Both the Irgun and the Revisionists disbanded after the War of Liberation. The party was transformed into Herut (Freedom), which in the last elections emerged with the second highest number of votes. The conference, significantly, was held in the House of American Zionists. The chief slogan, inscribed on streamers behind the presidium, read: "God, you have chosen us to rule!" Beigin and other speakers called for preventive war against Egypt and for the restoration of the Biblical frontiers of Palestine, which would include Jordan and other territory. A resolution was passed to reconstitute the Irgun to "help" the Israel Army! Israeli political observers have warned that Herut is preparing for a fascist putsch to seize power and launch aggressive war.

M. U. S.

CALL FOR JEWISH CULTURAL EXCHANGE

The following appeal for cultural exchange among the Jewish communities of the world was published last fall in Folks-Shtimme, the Yiddish newspaper of Poland.—Eds.

MANY delegates at the World Youth Festival in Warsaw last summer manifested deep interest in the cultural achievements of the Jews in Poland for the past 11 years. . . . At the same time we Jewish community leaders of Poland were greatly interested in the accomplishments of the progressive Jewish forces and ordinary Jewish people in the capitalist countries. In the face of difficulties the Jewish masses are creating significant cultural values which are an effective factor in creating unity among the forces for peace and friendship of the nations of the world.

During the festival we met with delegates from Canada and Argentina, from Israel and France, from England and Uruguay. We heard encouraging reports of progressive Jewish cultural works, of books and plays, libraries and creative groups, which are being aided by the love and self-sacrifice of the Jewish masses. We had the good fortune to hear and see the wonderfully artistic chorus of the Israeli workers and the dance ensembles of the Israeli youth, which embody the creative spirit of the common man. They look hopefully toward the future and believe in the victory of the just cause of toiling mankind.

Direct contact with Jewish cultural workers of the capitalist countries emphasizes even more the necessity of establishing permanent ties with centers of progressive Jewish cultural work in all lands to strengthen the fight for peace and peoples' friendships.

Broad and regular cultural contacts present us with the possibilities of keeping other Jewish groups systematically informed about the cultural work of our country, of sharing literary, scientific and musical works. Thus we will combat the campaign of slander which Jewish reactionaries continually carry on to disparage and deny the achievements of the Jewish people of Poland. Close cultural contact will effectively help progressive Jewish cultural workers in all lands to oppose the decadent, despairing, helpless moods which the sanctimonious writers of Jewish reaction constantly try to spread among the Jewish masses.

Strengthening and broadening of cultural contacts among Jews imbued with the universal ideal of peace and friendship are urgent needs at this time of intensified struggle for relaxation of tensions, for friendly, mutual creative ties among all the peoples of the world.

The Revolution in the Little Synagogue

A Short Story

By ABRAHAM REISIN

DESPITE the fact that it had no rabbi to lead the prayers and no cantor to sing the chants, the congregation of the Little Synagogue regularly finished its Sabbath services later than the other synagogues of the town. Not that the Jews in the Little Synagogue were a whit more pious than the Jews in the other synagogues. On the contrary, it was precisely in this synagogue that you could find the town's few Maskilim [scholars of the "Enlightenment"] who were suspected of being somewhat impious and of whom it was said that in their youth they were quite far from "Yiddishkeit." The rest of the congregation were ordinary Jews; true, they were not workingmen—no workingmen belonged to the Little Synagogue—but storekeepers and wheat-traders and several teachers of the modern type (they taught grammar, and one of them even had "desks" in his *heder*). And yet, it was this synagogue that finished its services, every Sabbath, one and a half hours later than everybody else. . . .

ABRAHAM REISIN is a continuator of the classical Yiddish writers. He died in New York in 1953. The above story was translated from the Yiddish by Max Rosenfeld.

The reason was quite simple: The Rich Man of the town prayed in the Little Synagogue. There were differences of opinion about Hayim Maier's wealth; some maintained that he was worth 200,000 rubles, some said only 100,000. The Maskilim, who tended to be heretical, lopped off most of his fortune and credited him with only 50,000. Naturally, such an injustice was not allowed to pass unchallenged, and eventually the Maskilim compromised and gave him back another 25,000—and everybody was happy.

BUT THERE WAS NO DIFFERENCE OF opinion about waiting for the Rich Man before beginning the prayers. This was taken for granted. Even assuming the claim of the Maskilim to be correct, that Hayim Maier had only 50,000 rubles, well, you don't find 50,000 lying around in the street! So they had to wait for him—whether he had 50,000 or 100,000. It would not have occurred to anyone, even in jest, to say: "Let's start without him!" On this point the entire congregation was united.

On one occasion it did happen that Yoneh the Wheat Trader, who had a reputation as a smart-aleck, suggested that they could get along without the Rich Man at least until

Boruch She'Omar [opening words of a prayer], but the congregation assumed he was joking and no one thought it necessary even to argue with him. It was obviously unthinkable. Could they let the Rich Man pray alone even up to *Boruch She'Omar*? Could they force him to rush through his prayers until he caught up with the Reader? How could they? It was bad enough that once, when they had waited in vain for the Rich Man until ten o'clock, they had sent the *Shammos* [synagogue caretaker] to find out what was the matter. After all, he was only human; a Rich Man too can get sick, especially since he did have an ailment known as hardening of the arteries—that is, he was too fat. The Rich Man, however, became very angry and said that it wasn't necessary to wait for him, he could do without that honor. . . .

The *Shammos*, on that occasion, was roundly castigated by the leading members of the congregation. "It was not proper to go and rush him; that is no way to act with a Rich Man!" And when Reb Hayim Maier finally arrived a half hour later, it was Yoneh the Wheat Trader, the smart-aleck, who approached him, and with a sweet smile spilling over his beard, stammered: "As far as we are concerned, Reb Hayim, we would have waited—what's the difference!"

And Reb Hayim, petulant though pleased, replied: "You don't have to come and fetch me! If it's too much

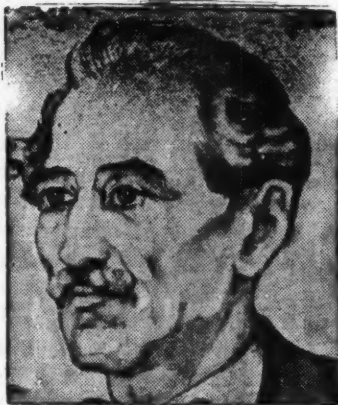
trouble for you to wait, then go ahead without me—you have my permission!"

The congregation was quite upset by this incident. The Rich Man was angry! Everyone apologized, the elders, the Maskilim, the modern teacher with the desk, all volunteered the opinion that they would have waited and waited—it was all the fault of the *Shammos*. . . . And the poor *Shammos* stood huddled against the pulpit, looking more like a corpse than a *Shammos*. This was no trivial matter, offending the Rich Man!

ONE DAY THE NEWS BURST SUDDENLY into the town that someone had thrown a bomb at Von Plehve, Russian Minister of the Interior. This was on a weekday, when the men were busy chasing after a living, and they left the news to be digested by the women and boys, who had plenty of time. But on the following Sabbath the Little Synagogue rocked with discussion. The Maskilim were more excited than anyone else. "Now we will be free!" they proclaimed:

When he heard the word "free," the *Shammos* asked: "What does freedom mean? Will they allow Jews to keep taverns or live in the villages?" The Maskilim laughed: "Freedom means—there won't be a tsar!"

And Yoneh the Wheat Trader interpreted the meaning of freedom in his usual smart-alecky fashion: "Freedom means—we will stop waiting for the Rich Man!" He said this,



Abraham Reisin

of course, in jest, but this time his joke found a quick echo and the *Shammos* seconded the idea. "I tell you, brothers, that would be a real salvation!" And although this was the first time the *Shammos* had ever expressed an opinion against the Rich Man, he was not frightened, but took a determined whiff of snuff and continued: "He can sit back there, for all I care!"

By the next Sabbath they were already talking about the great demonstration that had taken place in their own state. "They say that even the army is restless," said one of the Maskilim.

At this moment the Rich Man came into the synagogue.

"Why so early today, Reb Hayim?" Yoneh the smart-aleck asked him. "It's only nine o'clock. . . ."

"I couldn't seem to sleep this morning," the Rich Man answered politely. "I woke up early."

"And what do you think of the things that are happening in our Russia? The world's turning upside down!" Yoneh waited to hear the Rich Man's opinion.

"What I think? Loafers! Trouble makers! They think they can make the world over!"

Here the *Shammos* intervened, and although his heart was pounding, he said quite clearly, "They say that we will be free. . . ."

The Rich Man looked at him sideways, but didn't say a word.

Even greater excitement was caused in the Little Synagogue by the mutiny on the [battleship] *Potemkin*.

"They say that they will give us a Constitution."

"What do you mean 'give us,'" said the teacher with the desks. "We'll take it ourselves!"

"It's already a quarter to nine!" Yoneh the Wheat Trader announced suddenly. "Let's start the services without him—how long are we going to keep up this waiting!"

"He's right! He's right!"

"Constitution is Constitution!" proclaimed one of the Maskilim.

"Freedom is freedom!" said another.

And Yoneh the Wheat Trader took his place at the pulpit and sang out each blessing, right from the beginning of the service, and the congregation, with barely concealed feelings of joy and revenge, answered loudly after each blessing—Amen!

MUSIC IN ISRAEL TODAY

An interview about the musical scene with
Paul Ben Haim, noted Israeli composer

By URSULA WASSERMANN

PAUL Ben Haim, Israel's leading composer and much sought-after teacher, received me recently early one morning in his midtown flat. Like most busy people, Ben Haim is an early riser, a habit which in a hot climate becomes almost a necessity where the sluggish mid-day hours slow down mental and physical activity. Almost immediately, we plunged into a discussion of Israel's musical level which, according to the composer, is in general very high and quite extraordinary.

"It is true," he told me, "that we have only one great symphonic orchestra in this country—and in my view, there would be room for a second and even a third to satisfy the population of over one and a half million. But the Israel Philharmonic, founded by Bronislaw Huberman al-

most 20 years ago, has attained a level which gives it genuine international standing, as its successes during its American and recent European tours have amply shown. In addition, we can be proud of our many chamber music ensembles, among them the Israel String Quartet, which has yet to make its debut abroad; of conductors such as George Singer, who appeared in Prague not long ago and is at present a guest conductor in Bucharest; and of a number of fine soloists, many of whom have enjoyed a cordial welcome abroad, especially pianists like Frank Pelleg, Frederic Portnoy and Pnina Salzman.

Choir singing, too, is a much developed musical activity here and almost every kibbutz (communal settlement) has its own choir—the larger ones, choirs of real quality. Besides, the Tel Aviv choir, under the direction of E. Lustig, which boasts of 160 members, constitutes an excellent vocal ensemble, capable of great choral performances.

Was opera similarly well developed, I wondered?

URSULA WASSERMANN is Israeli correspondent for a number of papers in Europe and Asia and of the National Guardian here. Her book, *I Was an American*, was published in England in 1955.

"No, unfortunately not." The composer shook his head. "As a matter of fact, the Hebrew National Opera, which did exist for a while, met an untimely death, owing largely to unfavorable economic conditions and the lack of a substantial government subsidy without which no opera can hope to survive. Not having an opera here constitutes a grave lack, for the public is starved for opera. The proof can be seen in the unusually heavy attendance at operas—such as *Don Giovanni*—performed, in concert form, by the Philharmonic Orchestra, with only the solo parts sung by artists from abroad."

A Musically Gifted Youth

With the public so music-hungry, I asked Mr. Ben Haim, the demand for musicians must be great?

He agreed. "Our youth is musically highly gifted," he said, "and the percentage of young people studying music seriously is very high in comparison with many other countries. The most popular instrument is the piano, which 85-90 per cent of the girl students choose. Violin and cello follow at a considerable distance and are chosen almost 100 per cent by boys. With regard to all three instruments, we find much real talent. Wind and brass instruments follow far behind as does vocal training. We have some vocally gifted young people but by no means in the same measure as might be hoped for or expected from so

southern a country as ours. Great voices and the sunny south seem to go together. But we have produced no great solo singers as Italy has done."

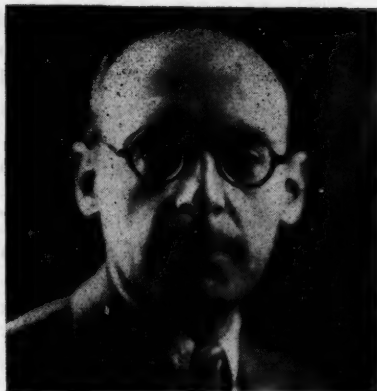
Was music taught generally in schools, I asked.

"Most schools have their choir," the composer replied. "Some high schools have their own school orchestra. But most music teaching is done privately and at a number of conservatories. Moreover, two music academies exist, one in Jerusalem and the other in Tel Aviv, as well as a seminary for music teachers. These institutions for advanced study are very good," he added, "as they ought to be, in view of the fact that, thanks to Hitler, music teachers came here en masse from Europe."

Influence of the Orient

In view of the large, recent immigration of Jews from Oriental countries, I wondered what musical talents Oriental youth had shown.

"So far," Ben Haim told me, "far too few among them have an opportunity of obtaining any musical training. Most of them are much too poor to be able to study. However, at the Teachers' Seminary, where I myself teach, I have come to know some young Yemenites who show the most astonishing talent, not only the 'natural' musical gift so often associated with the term 'Oriental' in the musical sense. I feel certain," he added, "that, given the opportunity



Paul Ben Haim

to develop, much new talent will be discovered among our Oriental youth."

"Music here," I remarked, "must be subject to many different influences of East and West."

"The performer," Ben Haim suggested, "whatever his instrument, is subject to Occidental influence, of course. The student must naturally be familiar with the standard works. The same applies to teaching, as far as musical theory is concerned. However, in our teaching here we place great emphasis on Oriental music as well with which the student must become acquainted. Oriental music, as a matter of fact, is taught separately here and there are special examinations in this field. This is especially important for future composers who must be well versed in the knowledge of Oriental music—both Jewish and Arab, both of which

are, of course, intimately connected.

"Composers here, both of the older and the younger generation, are largely influenced by Oriental folklore. But there still exists a group of older composers who have withstood this environmental influence and who continue to work as 'Europeans.' However, there exists a special group, to which I believe I belong, which has set itself the task of studying Oriental folklore and of preserving the rich treasure of its melodies.

"This group has for its aim the achievement of a combination of Occidental technique and Oriental content. In this context, the name of the Yemenite singer, Bracha Zefirah, must be most gratefully mentioned. This singer, an artist in the field of Oriental musical folklore, deeply influenced a group of Israeli composers from whom she commissioned, 15 years ago, arrangements of traditional folk songs or compositions of art songs in a definitely Oriental style."

"Am I right in assuming that your own music was deeply influenced in this sense?" I asked.

Use of Folklore

He nodded agreement. "In the course of many years," he said, "I myself, in cooperation with Bracha Zefirah, have collected many dozens of traditional Oriental melodies—of Yemenite, Sephardic, Bukharian and Arabic origin. We arranged them for

different instruments and vocal combinations.

"Other composers who have done similar work are Oedoen Partos, Marc Lavry, M. Avidom and A. U. Boskovitch. This group, in my own view, helped to create, both here and abroad, a certain feeling for a new 'Israel' style in the musical composition of our epoch. We must hope that the younger generation will continue the work begun by their older colleagues. However, there is reason for hope and factors which point in their favor. A few young and very gifted composers today hold definite promise for the future."

"In other words," I asked, "what you hope to achieve is a kind of synthesis of Orient and Occident?"

"That is correct," he agreed, "a synthesis, as I said before, between Occidental technique and Oriental folklore. I am firmly convinced that as a fertilizing force folklore constitutes an eternal principle in the history of music. Its influence grows sharply at a time when a stylistic epoch is nearing its end. Then it frequently happens that idioms of folk melodies penetrate the exhausted melos [type of melody] of a crumbling style and thus become the symbol of a new and rejuvenating force.

"And so it is today," he smiled. "We have, on the one hand, the futile experiments of the Dodecaphonists¹ and others, and on the other hand,

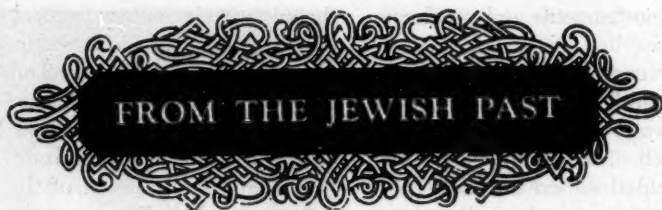
the mighty, elementary musical force—based on folklore in a wider sense—of a Shostakovich, a Prokofiev, a Khatchaturian, a Villa-Lobos and many others the world over. I have no doubt as to whom the future belongs—and the reaction of the music-loving public all over the world shows that it has no doubt either."

International Musical Exchange

"I believe," I told Mr. Ben Haim, "that it is just as the outstanding exponent of this new synthesis that your music is so widely enjoyed both here and abroad, and has found favor with such great interpreters of fine music as the late Sergei Koussevitzky and Yehudi Menuhin."

Mr. Ben Haim then told me of his recent visit to Prague, where he met Czech musicians. "My visit to the Prague Festival has only strengthened my desire for an ever increasing exchange of cultural experience. This exchange must be furthered and widened. I regard the current beginnings of a cultural exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union as an undisguised blessing. I can only hope that other—and smaller—countries, like our own, will also benefit from this type of new international relations which, in my opinion, will do far more toward ending the cold war than any number of political conferences, and which offer the surest and most hopeful basis for peace and understanding among the nations."

¹ The 12-tone technique as first introduced by Arnold Schoenberg.



Excommunication of Hassidism

By KALMAN MARMOR

PIOUS and powerful Christians burned their heretics at the stake. But pious Jews in "exile" [from Palestine] have had to be satisfied with burning only the heretic's books. The Christians could place their dissenters behind prison walls. Jews could only place theirs under the ban—excommunicate them—"arainlegen in herem."

So we find in the course of Jewish history that among those excommunicated were such esteemed Jews as the Tannai Rabbi Eliezar Ben Hyrcanus, the Gaon Rabbi Saadia, the Rambam (Moses Maimonides), the Cabbalist and moralist Moses Hayim Luzzatto, the free-thinker Uriel

Acosta and the philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Not only were Jewish individuals, declared anathema, but also whole sects of Jews, such as the Hassidim and their Zaddikim, who have been—and still remain—under the ban since 1772. The Hassidim were excommunicated by public pronouncements in the synagogues and the Houses of Study, in the streets and in the market-places, to the accompaniment of shofar blasts and the gloomy shimmering of black candles.

The Hassidim and their rabbis were completely "cut off from Israel." Their food was declared *treif* (unclean). A pious Jew was forbidden to "fraternize" with them or marry into their families. The Hassid's children were regarded as non-Jews. The ban extended even to their dead, who were regarded as "carcasses" and denied burial in Jewish cemeteries. This "Great Excommunication" on the Hassidim was renewed several times and has never

KALMAN MARMOR is an outstanding scholar, writer and critic who has played a prominent part in the Jewish labor movement in this country for many years. He now lives in California. This article was translated from the Yiddish by Max Rosenfeld.

up to now been officially rescinded.

Among those who signed the first, second and third excommunications against the Hassidim in 1772, 1781 and 1796, we find the name of the Gaon of Vilna, the greatest scholar of his time whose piety and essential honesty were recognized by everyone. The Gaon, who naively believed everything that the anti-Hassidim invented, considered it his sacred duty to attack the Hassidim and their movement.

The first ban on the Hassidim was announced in the summer of 1772 in Lithuania and Galicia. Nine years later it was renewed at the Great Fair of Zelve (Grodno, Poland) in August-September 1781. The excommunication at Zelve, as described in the official pronouncement, was read publicly at a mass assembly and in the presence of the "Elders and Patriarchs." It was signed by the "Eminent and Rich Citizens, the Leaders and Elders" of the Jewish communities, and of course, by the rabbis. The pronouncement of 1781 reads as follows:

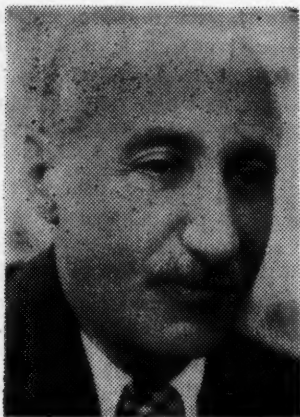
"May the terrible Excommunication of Joshua Ben Nun, and the Excommunication which is described in the Book of *Kol Bo*, and all the excommunications, damnations and bans, and all the curses of the Holy Torah, fall upon their heads [the Hassidim] and upon any one who disobeys the following decree: No one shall befriend them or assist

them or stand within four cubits of them; most important, no one shall even look at the Wicked One, the High Priest of their Sect [meaning the Hassidic Rebbe], who serves a false god. . . .

"Let our provinces, near and far, observe this pronouncement, which has been proclaimed in the presence of the entire community and its holy and prominent personages. The chief rabbi, who rules over all the Jewish towns, has ordered the sounding of the shofar, to make known far and wide the severity of his pronouncement, and it shall be observed in all the Jewish towns under his authority, and let no one go from our community to the place of the Sect of the Hassidim, the ignorant and the damned, to join their uncleanness.

"And whosoever shall not obey this decree, may he be cursed and damned and expelled and excommunicated and ostracized from the community and from this world and the next; and may there not remain even a name or any trace of them in the sacred community of Israel."

The "leading citizens" and the rabbis who had not signed the original ban, did so several days later. The Fair was of long duration and almost every day there were new pronouncements against the Hassidim. Thus the Rabbi of Brisk, on the 20th day of Elul, 1781, promulgated a ban which was even more severe



Kalman Marmor

than the previous ones.

In his lengthy pronouncement we find, among other things: "Was there ever such a misfortune as that which has come to us at the hands of those unworthy and irresponsible ones, the Sect of Hassidim, may their name be extirpated from the earth. The betrayer betrays, the thief steals and the greater the destruction a man inflicts on the structure of religion, the more he is praised. A plague, an eruption of sores, has spread through the walls of Israel. A band of evil, sinful people has arisen who falsify God and his Torah—a mob, a Sect of Hassidim; may their souls and spirits be afflicted, for that they have separated themselves from all the Tribes of Israel and entered into heresy.

"Excommunicated and ostracized and devastated are all those who eat

at the table, who use the unclean utensils—whether of clay or wood or stone—of these sinful souls. Let everyone who has the fear of God in his heart gird his loins like a warrior and go forth in battle with all manner of weapons . . . and curse them with fit curses, until God's hand comes to our aid. . . . We give to the leaders of the sacred communities the right to assemble and attack, to confuse and exterminate, to destroy and root out the spirit and the possessions [of the Hassidim]. . . ."

Why did the Jewish "Leading Citizens, Eminent and Rich Men, Elders and Teachers" and their rabbis, place the Hassidim under the ban? Certainly not because they prayed according to a different ritual, or for other reasons of that kind. The sin of Hassidim at that time consisted in this: the masses of Hassidim, by their denial of the accepted, prescribed ritual and customs, expressed their protest against the social crimes of the community leaders—the elders, teachers, leading citizens, rich men, rabbis, etc.

The Hassidism of the earlier period was supported chiefly by the Jewish innkeepers and tavern-keepers in the villages. These villagers were rebelling against the rule of the city "princes" and their rabbis, against "The prominent people, and their ruler, the rabbi of the *gubernia* [province], who reigned over all the Jewish towns."

The simple farmers, tavern-keepers and innkeepers concerned themselves little with the Cabbalistic dissertations of the Hassidic theoreticians. The masses of Hassidim were drawn by the protest against their arrogant exploiters in the big cities and against those religious leaders who supported the rule of the rich in the name of the Holy Torah.

But Hassidism offered no positive social idea. It did not propose even a minimum program to lighten the heavy burden of the impoverished Jewish masses. It built its whole foundation on belief in the Zaddik, who was believed to have the power to reverse even that which was divinely ordained, if he was given the required sum of "*pidian*" [literally ransom money]. As a result, Hassidism fought with the same weapons as the official rabbinate—physical violence, setting fire to "enemy" property, informing to the tsarist authorities, etc. Both sides turned for help to the tsar's officials—who of course intervened to the advantage of the tsar's interests.

The ban on the Hassidim was never officially lifted. The Hassidim, for their part, never recanted their "denials" of the rabbinic laws and customs. Nevertheless, today they are "bosom colleagues" of the most anti-Hassidic zealots. Why? Because the original excommunications were aimed primarily at those who opposed the Jewish ruling class. But as soon as Hassidism gave itself to the

service of that class, it became "*kosher*." As soon as it began to help the Jewish "leaders" keep the Jewish masses ignorant and backward, it ceased to be "*treif*."

The Baal Shem Tov [18th century "Messiah"] and the first Hassidic rabbis were "scoundrels" and "misleaders of Israel" only 'so long as they were the friends of the poor. The later Hassidic rabbis, who themselves became rich and powerful, were raised to "eminent, respectable" Zaddikim. Today many Hassidic leaders live in luxurious mansions. Their wives and children are clothed in silks and satin. The Hassidic Zaddikim, like other rich and pious Jews, are united in their opposition to every freedom-movement of the progressive Jewish masses.

When the Jewish bourgeoisie was still a radical class, its ideologists sharply attacked the strongholds of Hassidim. Today, however, when the bourgeoisie, Jewish as well as non-Jewish, has become reactionary, its theoreticians defend religion in general and Hassidism in particular.

Generally speaking however, the difference between the Jewish "excommunicators" of yesterday and those of today consists in this: the former emerged from conflict and class struggle between Jews and Jews; today's excommunicators are insignificant cogs in the machinery with which the wielders of power of our country, seeking to save their dynasty of dollars, try to turn back the wheel of history.

INSIDE

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

B'nai B'rith

A resounding cheer for the Brighton, N. Y., Chapter 646 of B'nai B'rith which upheld the honor of its organization when it unanimously passed a resolution expressing "shock and shame" at the dismissal of a number of Dalton, Georgia, textile workers because they are members of the Church of God of the Union Assembly. Many of the plants are owned or managed by members of the Dalton lodge of B'nai B'rith. The Church of God of the Union Assembly is a strong supporter of the present organizing drive of the Textile Workers Union (AFL-CIO) in the chenille rug and bedspread industry in Dalton.

The Brighton chapter said that the Dalton members of the order were arousing "widespread resentment" resulting in "optspoken anti-Semitism" and that "it is one of our organization's basic beliefs that Jews cannot feel secure in their employment of religious freedom and social security unless these fundamental rights are made fully available to Americans of every type, description and background." The national officers of B'nai B'rith were urged "to criticize the Dalton members in question" for their action.

L. A. Community Council

The state of civil liberties received a thorough airing at a round table conducted at the annual meeting of the

Los Angeles Jewish Community Council on November 6. The panelists under the chairmanship of Martin Gang of the Community Council were Judge Stanley Mosk, Dr. Finn of UCLA, Bill Stout of CBS, and Paul Jacobs, Consultant of Fund for the Republic. In their presentation the panelists indicated the blows received by our civil liberties in the areas of freedom of speech, security programs, academic freedom, rights of association and legislative investigation abuses.

The general theme which emerged from the discussion that deprivation of the rights of minorities or dissenters menaces the rights of all. The round table reflected a growing demand for more courage and consistency in the defense of civil liberties.

The results of the round table discussion were published in an *Information Handbook on Civil Liberties*. The round table called for similar gatherings in all communities and organizations as a means of developing a grassroots movement against McCarthyism which still pervades American life all too powerfully, although some gains have been made for civil liberties in the past period.

Stephen Wise Award

The American Jewish Congress on Dec. 4 presented the Stephen Wise Award to commentator Elmer Davis for "the courage, consistency and clarity with which he has defended our

traditional liberties at a time when they have been seriously challenged and frequently violated."

Davis recently enhanced his defense of civil liberties when he said after reading the John Wexley book on the Rosenberg-Sobell case that, "Assuming that the record here is correctly cited (and I have no reason to suppose that it is not), I cannot believe the testimony of Elitcher and the Green-glases or much of that of Harry Gold."

Civil Rights Rally

A significant city-wide rally sponsored by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, whose national committee is composed of many trade unions, Negro, Jewish, church, professional and community organizations, was held in New York City on December 15. Jewish organizations among the sponsors are: American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans, National Community Relations Advisory Council, National Council of Jewish Women, Workmen's Circle and United Hebrew Trades. The object of the meeting was to call for congressional action in defense of civil rights.

McCarran-Walter Act

The Senate Judiciary Sub-Committee on Immigration and Naturalization heard a call for a basic revision of the McCarran-Walter Act by leading American Jewish religious, communal relations and philanthropic agencies at its November hearings. The statement in behalf of the Jewish organizations and agencies was made by Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman of Hartford, Conn., president of the Synagogue Council of America. It called for the

abolition of the "National Origins Quota System," revision of the "national security" features of our immigration laws, basic revision of present deportation laws, assuring naturalized citizens the same status as native-born citizens and establishment by legislation of a Visa Review Board to review decisions of immigration or consular officials who now have an absolute right to refuse to issue a visa. (Chicago *Sentinel*, November 24).

Speaking before 450 guests of 23 Brooklyn B'nai B'rith lodges, New York's Attorney General Jacob K. Javits declared that 1956 "is an ideal test year for rewriting of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act and the Refugee Relief Act and modernizing the immigration policy of the U.S."

The Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Women's Clubs in a statement to Senator H. M. Kilgore, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Sub-Committee, called for repeal of the McCarran-Walter law and denounced especially the "built-in racism of the act." The statement called for new "legislation upon the sound basis of the Immigration and Naturalization Bill S1206, introduced by Senator Lehman and twelve other members of the Senate."

United Synagogue of America

The biennial convention of the United Synagogue of America (Conservative) at Kiamasha Lake, N. Y., speaking to its one million members, warned that threats to civil liberties continue. The more than 700 delegates warned against "panicky excesses in the name of security, to intolerant demands for conformity." Opposition was expressed to censorship, loyalty oaths and other breaches of freedom.

"Women Against Slavery"

A book that introduces the general reader to the
inspired heroism of women Abolitionists

By ALICE CITRON

WHEN history's veils are lifted, wonderful people beckon to us to tell us about their times. Samuel Sillen in *Women Against Slavery* pushes aside the draperies of obscurity to present sketches of 16 women.¹ One hundred years ago, these women, Negro and white, engaged in a battle to end chattel slavery. Their talents varied but all had in common the highest courage.

There was another cord that bound them. They had to plough through centuries of prejudice against women as the inferior sex. These are not the women of brocades, satins, perfumes and jewels who "made history in boudoirs." These abolitionists in "petticoats" stormed the public arena to duel for a double emancipation—their own and their Negro brothers and sisters. It is a fairly common concept in embattled times that things were easier in the long ago. But liberty's battlers never had a gay time of it, Samuel Sillen graphically relates. Each day has its epithets for those who would advance society. Susan Anthony, who was reviled by the legal concept that women were never mature, was called a "hyena in a petticoat."

But not only words were hurled.

¹ *Women Against Slavery*, by Samuel Sillen. Masses & Mainstream, 832 Broadway, New York City. 102 pages. Cloth, \$1.50; paper, \$.75.

Every threat and form of persecution was used by the bigots of the day to cripple the anti-slavery fight. Prudence Crandall,² who had admitted a Negro student to her boarding school in Canterbury, Conn., ran the full gamut of local hostility. Among the ugly things that have to be recorded was the withdrawal by the white parents of their daughters. When she converted the school into an all-Negro school with the help of Negro abolitionists, the hue and cry was like a McCarthy rampage.

Nor did Harriet Tubman³ have an easy time. This amazing Negro woman had a price of \$40,000 on her head. But she insisted, "There are two things I've got a right to and these are death or liberty. One or the other I mean to have." It was not only for her own liberty that she fought. She brought hundreds of her people out of bondage. And "Moses" was the name she was given by the delivered ones.

Guns and the baying of dogs did not deter her. The constant search for her by the slaveholders brought more heroic exploits planned with the genius of a military leader. John Brown

² A teen-age biography of this abolitionist has just been published: *Prudence Crandall, Woman of Courage*, by Elizabeth Yates. Aladdin Books, New York. \$3.00.

³ This season has also seen publication for teenagers of *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*, by Ann Petry. Crowell, New York. \$2.75.

called her "General Tubman" and, as Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote: "Only sickness brought on by her toil and exposure, prevented Harriet from being present at Harper's Ferry." It seems incredible that in her old age Harriet Tubman had to utter these poignant words: "You wouldn't think that after I served the flag so faithfully I should come to want in its folds." For, in the last years of her life, Harriet Tubman lived in aching poverty.

What a valiant band! Lucretia Mott, mother of six children and a Quaker, was called a "modern Borgia" by those who crashed windows and stoned the meetings of the Anti-Slavery So-

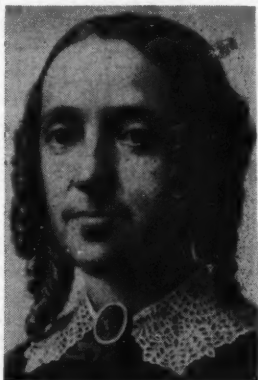
cies of the day. Yet she spoke on platform after platform.

Queens of the platform

It was natural that such advanced and determined harbingers of progress should know each other. Among the 16 that Sillen presents, the trio, Susan Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Ernestine Rose worked together for many years. Ernestine Rose, the great Jewish woman who came here from Poland in 1836, popularly known as "Queen of the Platform," was a splendid addition to the two well known organizers.

Another "Queen of the Platform" who toured with the abolitionists was Sarah Redmond, a Negro sister of Charles Redmond, co-worker of Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison. Her striking presence before an audience was so effective that she was sent to Europe as a lecturer by the abolitionists. In London, she soon found out that colored people weren't considered citizens of the United States. For the embassy of the country in which she was born refused to give her a visa to France. During the Civil War her eloquence was a potent force, once more in England, to prevent the Tories from giving help to the Confederacy.

These glimpses into *Women Against Slavery* are but a skeletal and necessarily meager presentation of an exciting array of remarkable women who took part in crusades for human emancipation. It is rare that fighters for liberty, male or female, are given the stature and interpretation they merit. *Women Against Slavery* is a splendid addition to the arsenal of books that battle for the best and truest in our national heritage.



Ernestine Rose

ciety. Poet Whittier, however, described her as "singularly beautiful in feature and expression." Lucretia Mott of passionate conviction early learned the interlocking nature of the anti-slavery movement and the women's rights' struggle. There was a taboo in the 1840's against women speaking to groups of both sexes. Male abolitionists weren't free from the common idio-

An Important new musical work

By HENRY BERG

JEWISH LIFE is to be congratulated on its project of a "Festival of Music on Jewish Themes," presented at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on December 2, 1955. The concert attracted a full house. The program included vocal and instrumental music from the United States, the Soviet Union and Israel, including the premiere of "A Ballad of August Bondi," with music by Serge Hovey and text by Aaron Kramer.

In this concert the diversity of styles and content is testimony to the diffusion and variety of Jewish groupings over the world.

The program opened with a group of Israel songs arranged by Bob De Cormier for vocal duets, which were performed by Martha Schlamme and Nadyne Brewer. They were beautifully sung and the arrangements were tailor-made for the singers and in keeping with the unique folk style developing in Israel. "Aley Givah" by the Israeli composer Nahum Nardi is a lyrical shepherd song haunting in its simplicity. "Sovevani" was a vigorous hora, infectious in its lively spirit.

Then followed a group of piano solos performed by Alan Booth, whose artistry brought out the distinctive qualities of each work. He began with Gershwin's "Prelude No. 1 in B flat," a work of the famous Jewish American composer who fused his talent with jazz, one of the great products of the American Negro.

Two short works, "Petites Poèmes"

and "Folk Song," of Alexander Krein, a leading Soviet authority and collector of Jewish folk songs, were played. "Bitter Herbs" by Norman Cazden, young Jewish American composer and accomplished music scholar, was originally written for the modern dance. It used advanced harmonic and rhythmic style and had surprise and interest. The Hora by Marc Lavry, well known Israeli composer, was a virtuoso piece which adorned an exciting folk-dance theme and Mr. Booth carried it on with ease, yet with vigor.

The group of Yiddish songs performed by Martha Schlamme was rendered with informal and informative comments and with a superb singing delivery.

For this reviewer the high point of this portion of the program came with the "Three Jewish Workers' Songs" by L. Shtreikher, a Soviet composer. The songs expressed the pride of the Soviet Jew in his toil at the factory and his sense of unity with workers everywhere in the world.

Miss Schlamme was skillfully supported by accompanist Tanya Gould in the well conceived piano settings.

Outstanding on the program was the premiere performance of "A Ballad of August Bondi."

The work deals with the participation of Bondi in the early struggles against slavery in Kansas. [Part of the text of the ballad was published in JEWISH LIFE, May 1955.] This fine theme offers great opportunities and

the composer, Serge Hovey, who is widely known as the composer of the music for *The World of Sholem Aleichem*, captured the spirit and embodied it in lyrical folk ballad and dramatic choral chant.

The work contains rich melodies and set pieces: the song of the bal-ladeer, the quartet of the sons of John Brown, the Kansas song and Martha Bondi's song. The audience responded to the performance with an awareness of being present at the first performance of an important work and gave a long, unstinted ovation to the composer and poet who had created it.

Despite its obviously impressive qualities, the work can be more completely realized. The positive effect of the whole was somewhat hampered by excessive dialogue that did not allow full reign to the development of the music. Even greater impact could be achieved by choral expansion and greater use of the resources of the orchestra. Nevertheless Serge Hovey has demonstrated again, as in his "Sholem Aleichem Suite," his considerable talent and he has once more written a work of beauty and substance. Aaron Kramer's words formed an excellent base for the music.

That fine choral group, the Jewish Young Folksingers, performed with their enthusiasm well modulated under the conducting of Bob De Cormier. The orchestra played with fine musicianship. Peter Seeger as the bal-ladeer was the finest choice for the role. Other soloists, drawn from the chorus, and the chorus itself showed the need for greater security in execution and projection of the piece.

With some tightening in the writing and more assurance in future performance this fine work will evolve into a great contribution to American music.

"BALLAD OF ASSER LEVY"

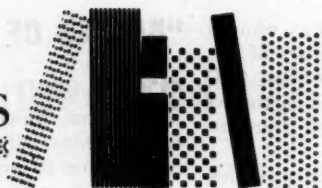
THE Jewish People's Philharmonic Chorus, which represents a tradition of over 30 years of unbroken contribution to progressive New York musical life, gave its annual Hanukah and Schaefer concert at Town Hall on December 10th. The chorus did honor to its founder, Jacob Schaefer, in two ways. First, it opened the program with six of his short choral works, which are still as fresh as when he wrote them. Second, it carried on the creative tradition which he inaugurated with his own splendid large-scale choral compositions, by sponsoring and performing a new large choral work, "The Ballad of Asser Levy," with text by Yuri Suhl and music by Paul Held.

The new composition had been given a preview last Spring, when it was not altogether completed. Now it is both amplified and tightened.

Words and music made a powerful impression on the audience. Paul Held's musical writing fits the text like a glove, is eminently singable, and makes rich use of the varied tone colors of the chorus and solo voice. Both the chorus singers and the fine baritone, Edgar Mills, met the challenge of the difficult music, sounding strong and youthful, under the dynamic conducting of Eugene Malek. My one reservation about the composition is that the melodic invention does not match, in distinction, the fine harmonic sensitivity and polyphonic working out of the music. Yet it has great merit, with many striking and beautiful moments that the listener carries away, and it deserves to be heard long after the Tercentenary celebrations are over.

SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

Book REVIEWS



America in the Yiddish Mirror

By **BER GREEN**

America in Yiddishn Vort (America in Yiddish Literature), an anthology (in Yiddish) selected and edited by Nachman Meisel. Yiddisher Kultur Farband (Ykuf), 189 Second Avenue, New York 3, N. Y. 896 pages. \$10.00.

THIS anthology is a treasure-house of Yiddish poetry and prose created in our country. This monumental achievement is an invaluable contribution to the Jewish history of the United States. The book can have a constructive influence on the development of Yiddish literature and will help the reader toward a deeper grasp of the life of Jewish workers as well as of the growth and development of Yiddish literature in our country.

The compiler and editor of the anthology, Nachman Meisel, was well equipped for this gigantic task. For he is editor of the literary monthly, *Yiddishe Kultur* and is a critic in his own right. The work was planned and executed as a contribution by Ykuf

to the Tercentenary celebration of Jewish life in the United States. The works include the writings of Yiddish poets and prose writers on the varied aspects of the 300-year-old Jewish community in this country. The book contains about 1,000 poems, short stories, excerpts or chapters from novels by 210 writers and were mainly produced here during the past 80 years.

The editor opens the anthology with a lucid essay in which he introduces the reader to the aims of the work and to the problems of Yiddish literature in this country. The work is intended, he says, "to show through the various works of Yiddish poets and novelists . . . how the great America, America in general and Jewish life in America—how America with its lights and shadows, its political events and social struggles, its rich and colorful character, its regions and cities, rivers and bridges, narrow streets and vast stretches of land—how all this was depicted and sung in Yiddish literature."

The anthology is a poetic record and literary mirror of America and of its Jewish life. It gives deep insight into that life for the past century. Through poetry and prose it conveys the moods and struggles, joys and sor-

BER GREEN is a well known Yiddish poet and president of the Jewish Writers Club. He is a staff member of the Morning Freiheit.

rows, strivings and yearnings, tears and laughter of the Jewish workers. The selections show the great democratic traditions of our country, the struggles to preserve and extend them and reactionary attempts to smother the spirit of freedom during the past few generations of Jewish immigrant life. The work depicts how the "greenhorns" underwent the process of becoming, despite restrictions, part and parcel of the country.

Included also are works which show the immigrants in their home-country preparing to come to America, their leave-takings and also their nostalgia for their old homes and the folks they left behind. We see the "greenhorns" becoming acquainted with the new land, their hardships and disappointments and tribulations in adapting themselves to the new environment, of acquiring citizenship, of gradually feeling at home here. We see them striking their roots in American soil and becoming a part of the struggling masses who were enriching America with their sweat and blood. Some of these themes appear in the works of the older generation of Yiddish writers such as Elyakum Zunser, M. Varshavsky, Shomer, M. Zeifert, Jacob Gordin, N. H. Imber, M. Winchevsky, Y. Kopelov, Y. A. Katzovitch, Sholem Aleichem, Morris Rosenfeld, S. Ansky, Alexander Harkavy, Getzl Zelikovitch, Oizer Smolenskin and others.

Many selections portray the deep suffering of the Jewish immigrant proletarians in the "sweatshops." A number of these works are stirring depictions of exploitation, insult, mistreatment, speedup, poverty, accumulated emotions of embittered protest and anger. Then there are songs of liberty and struggle against starvation and ex-

ploitation in the moving works of the pioneering Jewish labor poets, Morris Winchevsky, Morris Rosenfeld, David Edelshtat, Joseph Bovshover, as well as many less known poets with deep sympathy for the exploited workers.

The writers differ in caliber and degrees of importance, the remembered and near-forgotten who exerted various degrees of influence upon Yiddish literature in America.

Not only the people but the geography and flora and fauna of America are in this book. The metropolis of New York, its avenues and streets with their characteristic faces, sounds and odors, are reflected in this work. Other parts of the country, industrial centers and rural areas and villages—these, too are sung here.

The rich variety of themes includes courage and suffering in common struggle for better living conditions, admiration for the brains and hands that built our skyscrapers, Jewish farmers, the living conditions of other groups that form part of the great American family, the Negroes, Italians, Chinese and others. The work cries out against anti-Semitism, racist discrimination. Jimcrow, Scottsboro, lynching, persecution of foreign born, poverty; it depicts strikes, picket lines, scabs and their victims.

Each of the 210 writers represented in this volume interprets life in his or her own way. The opportunity is therefore offered to study, analyze and compare these varied works and approaches. The presence of differing "schools" of writing offers stimulation to thought about American Yiddish literature. The bridges between past and present generations become apparent. Thus we can here see the affinity between the classic Yiddish la-

bor poets (Winchevsky, Rosenfeld, Edelshtat and Bovshover) and the vital present-day progressive Yiddish poets, A. Kurtz, Z. Weinper, L. Miller, B. Green, Y. Suhl, D. Teitelbaum, S. Shtern, A. Safran, S. Budin, I. Ronch, D. Seltzer, E. Katz, S. Barkan, N. D.

Korman, C. Schwartz, Youdica, S. Fellyellin and others.

The book is richly illustrated by the works of many gifted painters and sculptors. This harvest of Yiddish literature can enrich our life and our future.

Dr. Joshua Bloch on the Anthology

The distinguished Jewish scholar, Dr. Joshua Bloch, sent the following letter dated September 19, 1955, to Nachman Meisel concerning the anthology of Yiddish literature about America reviewed above. The letter is in part here translated by Max Rosenfeld from the Yiddish as it appeared in Yiddishe Kultur for October 1955:

DEAR friend Nachman Meisel:

Your splendid anthology, *America in Yiddishn Vort*, was a monumental undertaking and you carried it through in a highly successful manner, despite all the obstacles which arose while you were collecting and compiling the material on which the work is built.

I am very grateful for your superb accomplishment and I am thankful to those who helped you in various ways in this undertaking.

With extremely limited forces you succeeded almost single-handedly in creating the only "monument" of the celebration of the Tercentenary of Jewish Settlement in America. Out of all the ballyhoo and tremendous financial campaigns by the so-called self-appointed committees which ran this celebration, nothing was left for the coming generations. Only your anthology, *America in Yiddishn Vort*, will be a proud testament to show the Jewish masses that at least a part of their contribution to American Jewish cultural life cannot be shunted aside, cannot be denied or ignored, as was done by the so-called "official" Tercentenary Committee. The leaders of that committee made promises, collected money—yes, tremendous sums of money—and left nothing to show for it. They forgot the promises, squandered the money and deceived the broad masses of the Jewish people. . . .

Your anthology is the beautiful monument which will keep the Tercentenary in our memories. All sections of the American Jewish people owe you a debt of gratitude. With your anthology you have shown that American Yiddish poetry is truly American in spirit and content, and expresses the feelings and relationships of Jews of all classes to the experiences and problems which affected their lives in our country.

Your anthology is a rich collection of poetic "documents" in the history of the life-struggles which the great East European immigrant masses—and their children—went through in America. . . .

RELIGION

(Continued from page 5)

to recognize the dangers in this program and are almost unanimously up in arms against it on a national scale. Not only the New York Board of Rabbis and the American Jewish Congress, but also the American Jewish Committee and virtually every other Jewish organization in New York City are vigorously opposing introduction of religion in the schools. Opposition has also been put up by the two trade union organizations of teachers, Teachers Union (Ind.) and Teachers Guild (AFL), as well as the United Parents Association, the organization of parents in the city. The Protestant Council, representing 31 denominations, is still studying the matter, and is scheduled to act on it January 20, 1955. In the past, they have generally opposed the introduction of religion. A leading Protestant churchman, Dr. Lee Belford, chairman of the Dept. of Religious Education of New York University, has assailed the *Guide*. (*N. Y. Post*, Dec. 8, 1955) The Roman Catholic Diocese of New York has given its complete support to the program.

Aside from the Constitutional issues involved, what are the very serious dangers inherent in any program to bring religion into the schools?

For one thing, as the New York Board of Rabbis pointed out in its

analysis, dated November 10, 1955, the program assumes that moral and spiritual values cannot be taught without a religious sanction. By definition it virtually negates the right to religious dissent and ignores the rights and sensibilities of those children who are not religious.

Further, Philip Jacobson of the American Jewish Committee warned the National Council of Social Studies at their national convention on November 26, 1955, of another serious danger: "The only way school boards can make certain all teachers qualify for the delicate task of providing even so-called non-sectarian religious instruction is to impose some form of religious test." (*N. Y. Times*, Nov. 27, 1955)

Critics of the program point out that the *Guide* can only result in a meaningless, watered-down "public school religion," on the one hand, or in a sectarian indoctrination on the other, and that it will expose children to religious doctrines inconsistent with those taught them by their parents and spiritual advisers. It will create divisiveness among teachers and pupils, and open the floodgates to sectarian pressure.

It is clear that all those who wish not only to defend our public school system but also to keep the example of this breach of church and state from being extended to other aspects of our country's life must help to keep religion out of the public schools.

letters



FROM READERS

CONTROVERSY ABOUT A SHORT STORY

Editors, JEWISH LIFE:

I've always read the informative, excellently edited *JEWISH LIFE* with relish. The new format, both as regards style and size, in my opinion, should help considerably in broadening the readership.

I thoroughly enjoyed the November issue with but one exception. Louis Lerman's short story left a bad taste. Though the issues delineated in his story are very much with us, they are secondary and insignificant compared with the burning, major ones of today.

Secondly, the concluding paragraph left things very much up in the air. The father is dismayed and shocked at his brother's action in pulling out on strike the workers in his shop. Such realistic dismay *could* easily find a responsive chord in the hearts of quite a few readers. Subjective emotionalism often supplants objective, scientific attitudes; and while it certainly could not have been Lerman's intention to do so, the way is opened for even well-intentioned people to identify themselves sympathetically with the plight of the so-petty-bourgeois father instead of with the courageous, rational activities of the brother.

Let's have more of Sholem Aleichem and Peretz and the other great classicists.

Please accept my congratulations on the new format. I hope you will double your circulation—in the next few months.

New York City

ALBERT PRAGO

Reply from Louis Lerman

Editors, JEWISH LIFE:

I cannot, of course, argue with Mr. Prago because he did not like my story ["Good Boss," in Nov., 1955 issue]. I can be easily persuaded that "Good Boss" is not a masterpiece. It is a slight story, dealing, perhaps inadequately, with a problem not unfamiliar in Jewish American life. But I find the letter disturbing because it represents an attitude toward fiction which is immature and self-destructive, which would reduce the attempt to represent real people in real situations to a leaflet formula and shouted slogan. People, and therefore characters in stories, are complex animals who refuse to let themselves be explained by a simple formula. They are moved by a variety of conflicting thoughts, attitudes and emotions. What we call conflict in literature and living in general is not alone the struggle a person has with forces outside himself but also the struggle he has with himself. The story writer's job is to show this

struggle as honestly and as skillfully as he can and the story reader's job is to understand that characters and social movements represented in a story are at least as complex as those in real life. A demand that the writer preach a sermon so obvious that no unwary reader will "identify himself sympathetically" with any but the good hero is to reduce literature to the same vulgarity that obtains in the slick magazines and the TV soap operas. The moral is different—that's all.

New York City

LOUIS LERMAN

The Editors invite further discussion on Mr. Lerman's short story.

Yiddish and Hebrew

Editors, JEWISH LIFE:

In the article, "Why Progressive Jewish Schools?" in your October 1955 issue, Yiddish is upheld as the keystone of progressive Jewish education. Hebrew is barely touched upon, feared as some sort of "taboo" in the lexicon of progressive Jews. The Ladino of the Sephardic Jew is disregarded completely. (May I state that I have learned a true love for the Yiddish language.)

The past 15 years have made a great difference in Jewish history and the Jewish psyche. If we do not grasp this difference, our links to the Jewish people will become tenuous and the "progressive" portion of the Jewish people will be isolated in a small sectarian maze.

The destruction of 6,000,000 Jews with the rise of fascism destroyed with it the largest base of the Yiddish language. Hebrew has been transformed from "*Loshen Kodesh*" (the Holy language) with the birth of the State of Israel to a language belonging not only to the ritualistic aspects of Jew-

ish life but to the masses as well. It belongs specifically to the masses of Israel—including Jew, Arab, Anglo-Saxon-Jew, Moslem and Christian—Mapai, Mapam, Communist, etc. In turn this has had a salutary effect in developing a sense of pride and dignity in large masses of Jews living in lands other than Israel and has made them seek some identity with these historic changes.

The progressive schools, not wishing to be opportunistic, closed their eyes to this change and thus in sectarian fashion denied this link to the Jewish masses. They do not see that today Hebrew is being taught in universities to non-Jews and not only to Biblical scholars but to secular scholars as well;

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that it is also a language of diplomatic exchange, the living language of a people.

The religious schools, which have always used this language (Hebrew) for ritualistic purposes, are now sought out by many progressives as a source of identity. Today these schools teach conversational Hebrew as well. The Workmen's Circle schools have found this link and also teach Hebrew, together with Yiddish. Yiddish is suffering from the "law of diminishing returns."

Yiddish and Hebrew are the symbols which link most of us to our history, and Hebrew is today beginning to take precedence for the largest number of American Jewish youth. To these Yiddish has become as "strange" as Hebrew, but Hebrew has achieved a greater status as the language of a nation rising in the State of Israel. There is a struggle not only between direct and easily understood content (progressive content in the English language), but also secondary means of communication, which are often stronger emotionally, form and rituals which bind people in communion, even when they cannot understand each others' language.

Midwest Region

NAME WITHHELD

The Editors invite further comment on this subject.

More approval of new format

Editors, JEWISH LIFE:

About the new format of JEWISH LIFE, we like it very much. It is easier to tote around and show people this magazine. We do pass it around and know that a number of people are now subscribers.

Vancouver, B. C.

S. K.

Release for Jacob Mindel

Editors, JEWISH LIFE:

I wish to thank you and your readers for your support of my effort to win parole for my husband, Jacob Mindel.

As you know, my husband, a Marxist scholar, 74 years of age and ill with progressive heart disease and chronic stomach ailments, is today in prison serving a two year sentence under the Smith act.

I had hoped that when my husband became eligible for parole on September 2, 1955, having served one-third of his sentence, he would be freed. But neither age nor illness moved the Parole Board.

There has been no case in which prisoners convicted under the Smith act have been granted parole. I am sure that the American people do not agree that there should be discrimination in the matter of parole against those convicted for their ideas, especially in the case of a man of 74, in such ill health as my husband.

The denial of release faces my husband with the prospect of dying in prison for his ideas. Such cruel and unusual punishment for a man's ideas is forbidden by the Constitution. My constant care in the peace of home can help my husband to live.

I appeal to your readers to write to President Eisenhower, the White House, Washington, D. C., urging him, in the spirit of the holiday season, to restore life-giving freedom to my husband.

I would greatly appreciate receiving a copy of any letter sent by your readers to the President.

REBECCA (MRS. JACOB) MINDEL

2854 Bronx Park East,
N. Y. 67, N. Y.

Observation post

By SAM PEVZNER

The Bugle Calls: To all JEWISH LIFE readers and their families—*A Happy New Year!* May you and your magazine contribute mightily to the growth of the spirit of Geneva, for in that lies our hope for the greatest boon of all—for 1956—peace on earth.

With the new year can't you hear the bugle calling? It is the call to action to the 1956 fund campaign for JEWISH LIFE. Begins January 1st and ends April 1st. To work, all committees, organizations and individual readers. The goal is \$15,000. Set up your own goals, organize your campaign, draw up your list of contributors. Only a successful campaign can keep J. L. rolling.

Prevue Dope: The April issue of J. L. will be a special Passover-Warsaw Ghetto number. An occasion for greetings from every reader, friend and organization. Organizations will receive credit for money raised for greetings toward their quotas in the fund campaign. Also: how about getting regular sustainers from among your friends. Start with yourself. A sustainer pledges to send in a regular amount monthly, from one buck up. Sustainers too will be credited to the campaign.

Deliver orchids please: The Festival of Music on Jewish Themes on December 2 was a great success. Full house. Commendations to the cultural and women's clubs in Brooklyn especially. They did a great job selling

tickets. JEWISH LIFE much encouraged by the splendid response. Will plan more ground-breaking cultural events in the near future. Anne Friedlander, new manager of J. L., also asked this column to extend thanks to all in audience who responded so liberally to the collection.

Clarification Train: Many readers and organization leaders have come to the office to say a good word on the job J.L. is doing in clarifying the issues around the Israel-Arab crisis. The special brochure reprinting the December article, "Israel-Arab Crisis! The Way Out," has already been distributed to the tune of 60,000. Many brochures are being mailed to selected lists of community leaders. Have you done your little job of clarification on this vital issue? Send for brochures now: 1-24 costs 3c each, 25-99, 2c each; 100 and up—2c each plus postage.

Home Run: Happy to announce a victory for a free press turned in by JEWISH LIFE. Last summer J.L. protested to the Post Office Department upon its confiscation of *Bleter far Geshichte* (Pages from History), scholarly journal published by the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland. [See Aug. 1955 issue.] Well, we received the *Bleter* (January-June 1955) in November. Glad we could do a little something to promote the freedom of information.



AT HOME *The Virginia* legislature on Dec. 3

Hearings were held before the Senate immigration subcommittee in November on the racist McCarran-Walter law. In his testimony Senator Herbert H. Lehman said that the law "represents a pyramid of unfounded fears—fear of foreigners, fear of criminals, fear of Communists and anarchists and fear even of naturalized American citizens." He called upon Congress to "erase the shame" of the law.

Officials of Imperial County, Cal., on Dec. 3 signed a legal stipulation agreeing to remove subtle forms of segregation of Negro and Mexican American children in the elementary public schools of El Centro, Cal. By devices such as arbitrary zoning laws Negro and Mexican American children had been channelled into Jimcrow schools. The four-year campaign that ended with this victory was sparked by the NAACP and the Alianza Hispano Americana, a Southwestern Mexican American fraternal organization. Other organizations, including the American Jewish Committee, participated in the drive.

completed action on amending the State Constitution to permit public funds to be used for education of children in private schools in order to evade the Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation. South Carolina and Georgia have already amended their constitutions similarly.

A Negro seamstress who refused to take a Jimcrow seat on a bus in Montgomery, Ala., and was fined \$10 for it, has set off a successful boycott of city busses by Negroes. The bus manager said that from 85-90 per cent of the city's Negroes, who form 46 per cent of the population, have shared in the boycott.

Sterling Trahan, a white man, was convicted by an all-white jury on Nov. 22 of attempted rape of a Negro woman in Crowley, La. This is reported to be the first conviction of its kind in Louisiana.

The National Association of Ice Cream Manufacturers in November cancelled their Spring board meeting at the Camel Back Inn in Phoenix, Ariz., because of the hotel's anti-Jewish discriminatory policy.

Only a few executive board members are Jewish. . . . The Vermont Federation of Labor at its 51st annual convention in October unanimously passed a resolution calling for boycott of all public restaurants, inns, lodging houses, hotels and motels practising racial and religious discrimination.

ABROAD

Sultan Ben Youssef called into consultation two Jewish leaders, Jacques Duhan, secretary general of the Board of Moroccan Jewish Deputies, and Meyer Toledano, secretary of the Moroccan Committee of the World Jewish Congress, in connection with the formation of a new government. The Sultan personally guaranteed full citizenship for Jews and protection of their persons and property.

The Poujade anti-tax movement in France is said to have an anti-Semitic character. At a meeting in Paris addressed by Mendes-France in mid-November, a Poujade leader supported by 200 hooligans took over the platform and delivered an anti-Semitic tirade.

Polish Jewish leaders have appealed to Polish Jews abroad to return home as part of the general campaign recently launched by the Polish government to urge Poles abroad to return with guarantees of no reprisals. . . . A. Krakowski, an official of the Polish tourist organization, visited Israel in November to arrange for

an exchange of tourists between Poland and Israel.

News about Soviet Jews. . . . Leading Soviet Jewish Colonel-General Yakov Grigoryevich Kreiser, who is famous for his exploits in the anti-fascist war, was awarded the Order of Lenin on Dec. 3 by a special decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on his 50th birthday in recognition "of his services to the Red Army." . . . A children's story, *The Blue Grove*, by the Soviet Jewish writer, Rachel Baumwohl, was published in Moscow last Fall. . . . Ramana Markovich, a leading member of the orchestra of the Soviet Moiseyev Dance Company that played in London in November and has several other Jewish members, was interviewed in Yiddish by a London *Jewish Chronicle* reporter (Nov. 11). "When I asked Mr. Markovich," wrote the interviewer, "whether as a Jew he felt happy in the Soviet Union, he replied that of course he did and that the question did not even arise, because no Jewish problem whatsoever existed in Russia. Regarding the company he said that the only thing that mattered was the talent of the artist and nothing else." **Neo-nazism** in West Germany. . . . An organization of victims of nazism in November protested a meeting of former German tank troops at which nazi and anti-Semitic songs were sung and anti-Semitic slogans shouted, including, "Hang the Jews."

L. H.

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