

Jewish Life

Issued Monthly by the Morning Freiheit Association

ANNIVERSARY CULTURAL SUPPLEMENT

In Two Parts

NOVEMBER 1947

Part Two

FOR THE CULTURE OF OUR PEOPLE

An Editorial

THIS month we celebrate one year of Jewish Life, an anniversary which happily coincides with the meeting of the American Jewish Cultural Conference. This has been a year of continuing tragedy and travail for the Jews—survivors of the gas chambers continued to rot in the DP camps; British imperialism tightened the screws on Palestine; anti-Semitism mounted in the United States, Britain and elsewhere; “re-nazification” of Germany threatens through the Marshall Plan. But the picture has not been dark everywhere. New light has come in the revival of Jewish communities and the check of anti-Semitism in Europe’s new democracies, especially Poland.

We have tried to reflect all these vital phases of Jewish life in our pages. No aspect of this life is alien to us. True, economic, political and social problems have immediate urgency, but it would be short-sighted not to recognize the deep-running significance of our subtle cultural problems. For all aspects of Jewish life, like that of any people, form an organic whole. Culture not only reflects the basic conditions under which a people live, but it also reacts upon those conditions by its influence on the thought and aspirations of the people. It is therefore important for Jewish Life to be deeply concerned with cultural questions. Much of our space has been given over to fiction and poetry on Jewish themes, and to discussion of a Jewish culture in America.

The character and specific qualities of any culture derive from its roots in the life of the people. Hence the problem of an American Jewish culture is difficult because its sources are complex. Not only is it rooted in the Jewish past. This past, so much of which is not alive for the second and third generations, cannot be revived in its original form, but must be remolded in terms of the American mentality. And elements of American culture itself are both necessary and legitimate sources of American Jewish culture.

There exists in America a rich Yiddish culture that is inaccessible in its fullness to many second and third generation Jews because of the language barrier. Certainly one of the problems for us today is the nurturing of an American Jewish culture in English in which elements of American life are amalgamated. This is only another way of saying that the culture of American Jews must be rooted in their everyday life, whose vehicle is English. The Cultural Conference presents an occasion for discussion of these problems.

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About Our Authors

LEO BILANDER is a young writer who is a furrier by trade, and a member of the Furrier's Joint Council of the International Fur and Leather Workers Union.

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JULIUS BUTWIN was the translator, together with his wife, Frances Butwin, of *The Old Country* by Sholom Aleichem. He died prior to the publication of that work. He had appeared in several of the "little" magazines that flourished in the thirties and early forties.

MARC CHAGALL is the internationally famous painter whose pictures hang in many museums all over the world. Jewish themes have always figured prominently in his work. The article published in this issue is a translation of a speech, delivered in Yiddish, at a banquet in his honor tendered by the Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists in New York on May 26, 1947.

HOWARD FAST is the distinguished author who has written a whole series of historical novels on America. Included are *Conceived in Liberty*, *The Unvanquished*, *The Last Frontier*, *Haym Salomon*, *Citizen Tom Paine*, *Freedom Road* and *The American*. He is also the author of *The Children*, on a modern theme, and of a book of short stories, *Patrick Henry and the Frigate's Keel*. *Publisher's Weekly* recently proclaimed him the most widely read contemporary American writer. His progressive political views and his activities in support of loyalist Spain have brought him afoul of the Congressional Committee on Un-American Activities, and he is now under sentence for contempt of Congress, awaiting appeal. The excerpt from his current novel, *Clarkton*, is here published with the permission of Duell, Sloan & Pearce.

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and *Prose*. He is the contributor of a weekly column to the *Morning Freiheit* and is a member of the Board of Directors of the School of Jewish Studies. He is a member of the editorial board of *JEWISH LIFE*.

YURI SUHL is a well-known Yiddish poet, a frequent contributor to the *Morning Freiheit* and *Yiddishe Kultur*, and the author of several volumes of Yiddish poetry, including *Yisroel Partizan* (Israel the Partisan). He is at work on a novel in English, a chapter of which was published in the August 1947 issue of *JEWISH LIFE*.

JULES ALAN WEIN is a veteran of World War II and winner of the Lola Ridge Award for poetry. His poem, *Genesis*, appeared in the Summer 1947 issue of *Mainstream*.

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The content of culture is not exhausted by its expression in the formal arts. We are aware that culture is a broader phenomenon, embracing the whole psychological and social life of the people, its customs, manners, every phase of its intellectual and emotional life. These larger, deeper aspects of the problem cry aloud for exploration and analysis — which is a long range project. But the arts are an extremely important part of any culture, and it is largely upon them that we are concentrating this first Annual Cultural Supplement.

It is our hope that the ensemble of fiction, poetry, criticism and art contained in this Supplement will stimulate both creation and serious thought on Jewish culture in America.

UNITY IS THE SOUL OF CULTURE

By Marc Chagall

I AM grateful for your friendship. I hope that this is not a banquet to honor me, but Jewish culture. For me this evening is dedicated to culture, an evening with friends to discuss cultural problems and goals. As for me, I should like to be a spoke in the cultural wheel. I should like to be in the shadow. The real reason for my speaking today is that I identify myself as one of the many sons of the Jewish people, whom ruthless enemies only recently drove into the lime ovens and the gas chambers.

We have gathered here to demonstrate that we are not all dead, that we still have the will to live and to create. We are here to confront our enemies, dead and alive, with the fact that all their methods and theories in the last analysis turn against themselves alone. Unfortunately these enemies delay the realization of a better social life and darken the ideals of artistic creation.

We serve notice on the enemy that in the name of our dead and living martyrs, we will not forget or forgive—neither in life nor in art. We are not among those who believe that that poor wretch, the enemy of mankind, should be helped and forgiven; forgiven, so to speak, in order to save European culture. If our culture is to be saved by our enemy, then it is better that such a culture should die. Sins are redeemed in the awakening of conscience, and only then, and not until then, can one talk about a relation to our culture. The doors of creation are shut against ideas of evil and slavery. I am astonished that, after our experiences in the war, we can still be imbued with a lingering war spirit. The war is not only outside us, it is still inside us and among us.

It is tragic that these feelings within us are not a portent of new creation. No! These feelings, unhappily, do not fructify our imagination, our art. They are suspended in the stratosphere, without air, without soul, like a fog over our heads.

It is strange and even terrible that all the works of the prophets, of the great ideologists and artists of mankind are, it seems, remote from the present. It is sad that today I can find so few words and sentiments which can stop the dark deluge of our days. This is especially true when from time to time I see art that throws me into confusion and gloom.

When you see this art you ask yourself: have we yet passed beyond the cycle of hate and evil which this very art, perhaps unconsciously, has bred in its time? If it is possible mechanically, cold-bloodedly, heartlessly to paint pictures that seem to say, "It's all the same"; if you fail to see emanating from these pictures simple pity, if they contain only formal relationships that are rotten with calculated, hollow cold-bloodedness, although they are sometimes

superficially beautiful; then we must ask if this same art can appreciate fully the catastrophe of millions of men condemned to crematoriums.

Art and Indifference

Many have believed, and perhaps still believe, that artists can prophetically sense the immediate and distant future and even chart new paths. But is this the art of the future, the kind it is possible to paint coldly and without feeling, with the words, "It's all the same"? If you should ask the painters of such pictures, why were only five or six million sent to the crematoriums, why not 15 million, would they also reply with the same words, "It's all the same"? The fact that we can even pose such questions, is a sign of the tragedy of our spirit, art and life.

It is good to see among the nations that have survived the most intense suffering in history, the kind of comprehension that will keep them alive, that gives substance to their humanity. Some bright signs of hope are already becoming visible.

Let not the world think that the Jewish people today are the same as those who before inhabited the ghettos. No! They are no longer the same, they will no longer live in ghettos. New young people have appeared, and with them, just as there once appeared a new art breaking with the old academicism, a new consciousness has grown. We should like to believe that through this new youth the vitality of biblical times will slowly be recaptured. Youth is aflame, and the fire of the crematoriums is baking this flame hotter and stronger, while it throws shadows into the camp of the enemy.

In this age of the obsolescence of religion, men wished, by striving for a sort of pure "technique" in art to evoke a certain "holiness" or "superrealism." To supply the void left by religion, these painters are trying to recover something like it by endowing this technical power with mystical attributes. Certainly all of us are sure that art attuned to previous centuries no longer exists. Even the key to this earlier art has been lost. Formalism in art could not revive this old spirit, could not yield human significance.

Instead, into art has come so-called technique with a great measure of automatism. But why is there this cult of technique? Rembrandt, Van Gogh, El Greco were not such technicians. Little boys ran after Cezanne, ridiculing him. Van Gogh pleaded in vain with Paul Gauguin for lasting friendship—until he cut off his ear. Rembrandt, unrecognized, "without technique," barred himself within his biblical vision. The prophets and Christ himself moved over the face of the earth without technique. Moses the

lawgiver and stammerer, lay before the walls of the holy land, unable to enter it.

Mankind has been truly touched by creators who moved its soul.

Art is not a newspaper editorial, but it has no special *mystique*, as many think. It is a plastic object. It contains as much *mystique* as a stone of the field. This similarity of art to nature surprises you. What kind of similarity is it? This kind, for example: Cezanne's content resembles the earth; Tintoretto's painting resembles dried blood; Rembrandt's material—light rays; more than anything else Vermeer's work reminds one of precious gems. And the substance of Van Gogh's painting recalls the furnishings of a poor church after flaming sermons.

The art of our time has chosen to travel a so-called "scientific" formal path. The soul was proclaimed a "literary" concept. With the result that the soul slipped out entirely, leaving behind only a pretty shell. No wonder the

masses were estranged from us painters, because spiritual contact was broken.

Nevertheless, approaching the masses with "subjects" and illustrations in art is also not correct. An artist creates art as natural as the earth, expressive as the soul, not dependent on subject. But that does not mean that the importance of subject should be minimized.

Where is art today? Are we faced with artistic retrogression?

In the place in the Bible where Bezalel is mentioned, the writer said that the artist is "a sage of the heart." Where is the art of the heart today?

The tragedy of our time is that people approach the solution of life's problems as they enter an office. But for this, as for art itself, flair is necessary. It is necessary to feel that it is not so-called religious ideology that has become obsolescent, as that we ourselves have. This will be true so long as we are not permeated with the consciousness that not a

single picture can be painted, not a single poem written without a sense of love and unity with one's own people and with humanity.

At the basis of all good revolutions is there not such an ideal harmony of love and unity? This is like a yeast that sets free, develops and expands all talents. But where do we find such talents?

In unity is our salvation. I should more readily prefer those who, perhaps, possess lesser talent, but feel this unity, to those so-called great talents who are in the opposition, who stand to one side.

In the light of history the new Jews appear more like partisans than like wanderers with sacks over their shoulders flying over the roofs of cities. On their banners, notwithstanding their military appearance, are inscribed words of love and unity. Their brothers and fathers fought in the ghettos of Warsaw and other cities. Their crucifixion in the streets of Vitebsk and other places took on the tragic appearance of the crucified Christ Himself.

For thousands of years our people wandered through the labyrinths of the world. They wandered over the earth and in their minds no God, it

WHITE CRUCIFIXION

By Marc Chagall

Courtesy of Pierre Matisse Gallery



seems, existed to hear their lamentation or to look on their pallid faces. And just as the waves fill the bowels of the sea, so was this tragic people filled with its fate, and this fate stirs them and the whole world.

But what have I said about the basic problems of our culture? Please understand that I am not dealing with details because our big problem today is one: unity, to integrate what has remained of us, physically and culturally after this world misfortune.

It is time to start anew to lay the bricks for the foundation—the foundation of art and culture, to set to work with the greatest seriousness. The programs will come in the heat of work.

It seems to me that things are a little too quiet among us. We have become silent, we hide in corners. It seems to me that I have returned to the time when I was a young boy on my dark, unlighted streets, where in the dark of the evening I bumped into people who were frightened of my shadow.

Let us light the lamps and illuminate our path. Let us begin to count and recount our assets and our property.

Let the time come quickly when we shall understand that to create it is necessary to unite with all elements, and to fight those who oppose unity. The more clearly we understand this, the clearer our art and our culture will be. The time has passed for an art with sealed doors.

At the basis of art must lie great plastic ideas. The time has come to give eminence to the bearers of true culture, of true art, to give them a special place in the conduct of life—in the life where man, it seems, has lost his humanity.

The war has disturbed not only cultural and material values, but also innermost humanism. This was the "technique" of evil and of calculated abstraction, which has caused us to get lost. But there is another craft, the creative, of love and justice, the realistic or superrealistic one. This can rescue our humanity first and help us to rebuild the destroyed cities and countries later.

But why, when I speak thus do I feel that someone is whispering in my ear, "You are a dreamer. You talk as in a dream." Then I fall at once into a world where people no longer know whether they are alive or not. I imagine how my parents and grandparents, quiet and honest, come to console me and pass me by. I see the shadow of my bird flying toward me—to ask me to stop the dream in the stream of my words.

I no longer count my years. Their dust makes my eyes a little dim. Sometimes I think that at a certain time we should put away paints and brushes and call to the heavens that swim quietly high over us.

But we can find strength only when we are all together—and only then does one wish to devote his years and art to his people.

LOOK, LONELY JEW

By Eve Merriam

Lonely Jew, look around you.

Stricken and Icarus-eyed, feather your wings,
Take flight.
Rise, power in the unbound air.
Descend, walk proud and tall.
Companions are here.
Many.

See, o see how ghetto is trumpet-blown
Like Jericho!

Gone your polar solitude.
Ice melts
In the sun of darker skin;
Negro, Indian, Arab your brother.
Subject peoples everywhere.

Across new Europe
Roads are paved;
Flares already line the way.

Into the fog
Pierces the Soviet star,
Scarlet beacon.

And hear, once lonely Jew,
Your thousand-lunared wail
Becomes a daybright chorus:
... *For we are coming,*
Union men be strong;
Side by side we travel onward,
Victory will come!

Join our marching song.
We are mighty, can be millions,
One family of the world.
House tomorrow holding
Unrestricted
Room for each.
Plough earth today,
Build brick, drive nail,
Plant flowering wall!
Work, reach together
Singing, Jew, equal, all.

MAX GOLDSTEIN—ATTORNEY-AT-LAW

An Excerpt from the Novel Clarkton

By Howard Fast

WHILE the night still lingered, Max Goldstein, who had slept but fitfully, woke up with that clear and worried finality that betokens an end to sleep, moved his enormous bulk, and tried to see the hands of his watch in the graying darkness. He had, finally, to strike a match which he shielded with a cupped palm, and he saw that the hands stood at a minute or two after six o'clock, a time that struck him as a lonely and unholy and woeful hour. In the same brief light of the match, he caught a glimpse of his wife's face, traced over with hair that was still blonde, a child's face at this moment, and her sleep was so peaceful and relaxed that he rejected immediately any thought of waking her. For that reason, he struggled with his elephantine bulk, easing it out of bed as quietly and as gently as he could, sitting for a long moment with the stomach pain that comes from late retiring and early rising, nursing it, and then climbing to his feet and shuffling into the bathroom.

He faced himself in the mirror with the same, rather mawkish curiosity that had been a part of pre-shaving for as long as he could remember, indulging that brief moment of contemplation where a man sees himself from without. The big, fleshy, rather gross, beard-shadowed face broke into a smile, partly cynical, partly forlorn, and then lather washed it into the shape of a clown, the bulbous nose prodding from the little mountains of soap, bits of which were caught on the shaggy eyebrows, and the pale-blue eyes wrinkling in wordless interrogation. As he began to shave, it occurred to Max Goldstein that many of the world's evils were not so much a result of a lack of perspective as a lack of humor, and he wondered whether even that somber man, Elliott Abbott, would not see the ridiculous side to such a situation as this, the portly and archaic barrister Goldstein rising before the dawn to march up Concord Way to the plant with a crowd of pickets. In the seven years since he had joined the Communist Party, this was actually the first step of physical militance in which he had indulged, nor was he too certain now as to precisely why he had come to this decision. During his slow toilet, he ruminated on why a man does the things he does, whether they be large or small; and he turned over in his mind his own relationship to an organization that had earned for itself more abuse than any other since man's beginning—except possibly Christianity itself.

Heroism was in the long past. Twenty-eight years ago, he had been a great war hero; he hardly remembered anything except the band which met him at the station when he came home, and the hard, youthful core had long since

disappeared into a hundred pounds of fat. Reason persisted; in those old, old days, he had learned under a group of men who were essentially reasonable, ancients even then, who had come out of the tough fiber of the Republic. The principle that *Ye shall know the right and do it, and render justice unto all*, was something he clung to as a child clings to his mother, and it had led him step by step to a group of people of whom he was sometimes highly critical, sometimes indulgent, and sometimes bitterly admiring. In himself, he recognized none of the stuff of which martyrs are made, and he hated violence with a deep, philosophical, and ancient hatred. But equally, he despised the never-ending headlines which informed him that he was a Russian agent, a subversive element, a bearded rat, and a malignant cancer in the society that had given him sustenance. He knew what he was; he was a fat lawyer, on toward the end of his middle age, a lazy man who collected from too few of his clients, an omnivorous reader of Spinoza, Voltaire, and A. Conan Doyle, the son of an immigrant Jew who had become more Yankee than most products of ten New England generations, a gossip, a small-town, rather rusty sage, and a psychopathic checker player. Those things he was, and they were none of them, as he realized, things to call for unprejudiced admiration.

AS HE CLOSED THE FRONT DOOR OF HIS HOUSE BEHIND HIM, Max Goldstein realized how long it was since he had left home at this hour, the more so in the sunless and biting cold of a December morning, a small departure from the normal course of things, but for him almost an adventure in itself. In the empty and lonely Sunday streets, there was only the cart of the milkman coming back from his deliveries, and the only sound was the click-clock of the horse's hoofs. There is no wind at such a moment, when the night is finished and the day not yet begun—or so the legend goes—and the air is cold and heavy and tired from cold darkness.

Goldstein had wrapped himself in a long, alpaca-lined coat; he had a scarf around his neck, and a hunting cap pulled tight down, and if anyone had seen him, they would have thought of an intelligent, well-trained bear, and like a bear he ambled slowly to the corner and then down the three blocks to Elliott Abbott's home. Lights were on in the old frame house. . . . Abbott grinned when he saw Goldstein, and said, "Good morning, Max," and Goldstein smiled back foolishly. The others said good morning, and Ruth got up and set a place for Goldstein, while Frances Colby poured batter onto the griddle.

"You want orange juice?" Ruth said to him.

"Just coffee. I find I don't have any appetite in the morning. I suppose I could eat a hotcake or two. It's good to have something on your stomach, isn't it, Doc?"

"Some say so," Abbott smiled. "With you I think it's just academic. Have you turned your back on legality?"

"I couldn't sleep," Goldstein answered uncomfortably.

"I don't wonder. You probably had gas pains."

"No—I just got to thinking. I got to thinking that one thing I'll never get over is a hankering for the bench. Even something like chief magistrate. I used to be a good lawyer once."

"You going with us, Max?"

"I guess so," Goldstein nodded mournfully, carefully layering the hotcakes. Frances put in front of him with a great helping of syrup. "You know, heroes are made, not born. It's maybe five years since I got up at this hour of the morning; with me, it's an undertaking of some proportions, and at this moment I feel foolish. I don't think there's much sense to this. But Elliott never forgives someone who doesn't do what Elliott considers the honorable

thing to do. These are very good hotcakes," he said to Frances Colby. "Elliott has cold and ancient Puritan blood. He is also an ascetic, which does—."

"You talk more damn nonsense," Ruth interrupted. "Max, Elliott wasn't angry at you."

"I'm angry with myself," Goldstein muttered through a mouthful of pancake. "I'm too old and too fat for wars, marches, and counter-marches. It was my own revered ancestor, Bar Kochba, who said, Gather around me the young men, those of bold mien and brave countenance, and I will forge them into a mighty sword for freedom. Jew or no Jew, I could have had old Lowell's business these past fifteen years, and ten years ago it wouldn't have been as fantastic as now to consider a Jewish governor for Massachusetts. I'm not complaining. I'm merely speculating. For young Sawyer here to amble up Concord Way is an ordinary thing; for me, it's an adventure fit for Cervantes."

"Why don't you stop talking so much and finish your breakfast?" Ruth said. . . .

THE JEWISH ARTIST IN SEARCH OF A SUBJECT

By Michael Gold

JACOB EPSTEIN, now the great British sculptor, was originally an East Sider. He began his career on Hester Street, only a few blocks from where I was born. I was pleased to discover this fact in a rare and interesting book that Epstein himself illustrated, *Spirit of the Ghetto* by Hutchins Hapgood, published in 1902. Hapgood tells us that Epstein was a conscious patriot of the East Side, a young Jewish artist who loved and admired his people intensely, and that he felt himself dedicated to the mission of expressing in graphic art the soul, the sorrows and joys, the daily life of his tenement folk. Hapgood paints a romantic portrait of this dark, youthful artist. He lived in two small rooms in the old Hester Street tenement, and paid \$4 a month rent. His other living expenses came to about \$12. He was living on less than \$4 a week, therefore, a heroic feat even in those lean, immigrant days of the bread and herring diet.

Yet how happy was the hungry young idealist! All day he sat by the open window of his "studio" and sketched the mighty river of humanity rushing below him in the street—the Jewish men and women, buying and selling, arguing, wailing, laughing, in the Hester Street pushcart fair, then the East Side's busiest market. Some of those sketches can be found in Hapgood's book. They are really fine, with much sensitivity and expression. They have captured some of the tragic humanity of that time. Nobody has done any better East Side sketches.

Why did Epstein abandon his mission? Why did he give

up sketching, painting, sculpting the East Side? If one could trace the psychological twists and turns, the economic necessities, or perhaps the growth or decline of love for people in Epstein, might one not have a perfect example of one of the great problems in Jewish culture and history?

Jewish-born artists, writers, musicians in America have given too little of their talent to their own people. But I believe that in our horrible time of fascism, with the end not yet plain in America, every Jew owes such a debt to himself, to his own honor, his own future. Jewish cultural morale is today as necessary as bread to the Jewish people. Without such strength they aren't prepared for the troubles that lie ahead.

The Jew is not a limited subject. I don't believe in a parochial or chauvinistic art of the Jews. Yet a Jewish artist dedicating himself to his own people's life can enclose all humanity.

Mutilation of Ben Hecht

If one looks upon Jewish life with a mean, frightened or apologetic spirit, one will not produce anything but a narrow and parochial art. But with the eyes of all humanity, with the vision of a Tolstoy, a Romain Rolland, a Walt Whitman, the art becomes all embracing. The narrowness and inadequacy lies not in the materials of Jewish-American life, but in the Jewish-American authors.

It has been a loss to American literature that so many fine Jewish artists have not developed themselves to the

fullest because of the apologetics, shame and self-distrust of the persecuted that afflicts them.

A Ben Hecht is an example of the mutilation I mean. He was always a master of the wild and whirling word; he has contributed a few colorful, if shallow, books to the treasury of American literature. Yet underneath the glittering paradoxes, the dazzling epithets, the shower of rhinestones that is his prose, the machine-gun rattle of his plots, does one not hear the hopeless whimper of the lost dog of history? He is always trying to get away from something, to shout and brazen it out, to fill up a vacuum with words, words, words.

Latterly, Ben has gone Jewish in a big way. He seems unable to think soundly about the new (to him) problem. He is close to the Jewish near-fascist elements like the Ziffs, reflects their phony militancy and morbid chauvinism, their failure to understand that the Jew can survive only in a world that is democratic and free, and therefore must march in the ranks of all progressive humanity.

In his former state of rootlessness Ben Hecht wrote a flashy book, *A Jew in Love*, said to be a fictional portrait of that flashy, inspired and paradoxical publisher, Horace Liveright. This novel is an anti-Semitic slander that might have been written by Goebbels. It displays a foul, sensual Jew such as Streicher loved to gloat over in every issue of his paper. It is as false as those caricatures. Horace Liveright was not like that.

The School of Self-Contempt

Jerome Weidman, author of *I Can Get It for You Wholesale, I'll Never Go There Anymore*, etc., is a slick, sophisticated young American who still is writing this sort of libel against the Jews. I imagine he must justify his novels to himself by saying that they are "realistic" and "true" and that if anything is hurt by truth, let it crack, it's rotten anyway!

Such realism is only a half-truth, however. Nobody asks a Jewish author to paint a propagandist picture of a Jew who is always a saintly biblical figure, never of the earth, with all its crimes and compromises. No, we want Jews as they are, simple, earthy, bewildered, and even criminal. But give us the whole picture. Give us the shadows, but also give us the heroism, self-sacrifice, and the idealism displayed by Jews in every land. Their historic love of justice, the Jewish tradition of intellect, their immemorial social feeling—these also are part of the portrait.

The Jewish writer who leaves out such positive elements and presents only a sordid, negative Jew, is confessing to an old thing—a terrible mental disease, centuries old, the famous self-hatred and self-contempt of Jews who have been infected by the anti-Semitism of their enemies, who cringe before the enemy, who blame the victim for the sins of the criminals who oppress them.

"Jewishness is not a handicap to be overcome, but a peculiar treasure whose riches serve not only as goads to high endeavor, but also as a reservoir of spiritual sustenance." This quotation from Ahad Ha'am, one of the

pioneers of Zionism, is too rarified in feeling for me, yet fundamentally true. I would not need such lofty confirmation of the truth about the Jews. I would prove the truth by taking a young Weidman by the hand and leading him among the Jewish people he has never met—the young men who fought in Spain, the trade union fighters, the youth that builds collective farms in Russia, the good fathers so rich in humanity, the good mothers whose hearts are big as the world.

Jerome Weidman and Budd Schulberg, author of *What Makes Sammy Run*, and others of the slick, smart school of Jewish self-contempt developed during the boom period of American capitalism. They are only the latest expression of the drift to a vulgar assimilation that has always been witnessed whenever temporary security developed a group of newly-rich Jewish *allrightniks*, people without roots, or culture, or self-respect, or human dignity. Would a Budd Schulberg, a Jerome Weidman, or a Ben Hecht have written such books as theirs in a Hitler concentration camp? Would they not rather have searched Jewish history and explored the Jewish soul for the materials of pride and love for one's own tortured and magnificent folk?

Rich East Side Culture

When I was a boy on the East Side the Russian-Yiddish-American culture, which Hutchins Hapgood describes so well in his book, was in full bloom. My father, humblest, poorest of workers, was a lover of the stage, and took me to see all his great heroes perform. How serious, how majestic, they seemed as they trod the boards and declaimed the great stage plays of Shakespeare, Gorky, Tolstoy, Ibsen. Before I was twelve, I had seen Jacob Adler and Mogeleescu and other great figures act on the Yiddish stage *King Lear* and *Othello*, also Gorky's *Night Lodging*, *Resurrection* by Tolstoy, *The Robbers* by Schiller, plays by Chekhov and Hauptmann, the grand, stirring dramas of the East Side's own Shakespeare, the remarkable Jacob Gordin, as well as those beautiful folk-operettas by the Jewish writer and musician I think I always loved best, Abraham Goldfaden.

Was this a parochial diet? Was this Yiddish world of culture not more universal than the cheap imitations of Broadway musical comedy one finds now on Second Avenue, this dreary Americanization that has taken everything and left nothing in payment? Was American civilization made richer or poorer when Jewish culture had its finest hour?

Along Second Avenue and East Broadway, as Hapgood describes them, the smoke-blue cafes of the immigrant intellectuals rang with endless debate among Zionists, socialists and American *allrightniks*, between the mystics and atheists, workers and bosses, writers of every persuasion and style, painters, beggars, musicians, journalists and doctors. It was in Yiddish, and a rich and varied culture, broad as all humanity, with its eyes turned outward as well as inward. It had been imported, of course, bodily along with the migration of a whole people that came in

the wake of the Russian pogroms in 1881. Now it has passed into the silences of the past, along with the six million Jews who perished in Europe in the Hitler terror.

The American Jew, most especially the writer, is faced with a new, a more dangerous situation than the immigrant of 1881 found in the sweatshops and slums.

One does not impose themes upon a writer, or make this or that political demand, however important. Writings must come from one's deepest sources; the whole man must assent to the theme, before it gets written.

A Jewish-American literature that will help explain the Jews to themselves and to America can never get written by writers who live only in Hollywood or Park Avenue, or the fashionable suburbs. They will have first to get out among working Jewish humanity, learn to know and admire the Jewish people of our time. They will have to study their own tradition in the biblical, medieval and American past. They will have to stop hiding, apologizing, mourning for their Jewishness. They will have to become as universal and wise in English as Sholom Aleichem was in Yiddish.



IN THESE CAFES THEY MEET AFTER THE THEATRE OR AN EVENING LECTURE



EAST SIDE SKETCHES

Drawings by Jacob Epstein

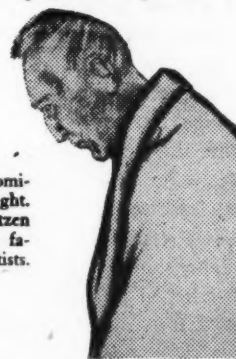


MADAM LIPTZEN



JACOB GORDIN

Jacob Gordin was a prominent Yiddish playwright. Jacob Adler, Madam Liptzen and David Kessler were famous Yiddish stage artists.



JACOB ADLER



DAVID KESSLER

Reproduced from Hutchins Hapgood's *Spirit of the Ghetto*, first published in 1902, with permission of Mrs. Hutchins Hapgood.



YIDDISH PLAYWRIGHTS DISCUSSING THE DRAMA

A PAIR OF OVERALLS

A Short Story

By Julius Butwin

WHEN I was eleven years old, my father came home from the factory one evening with a package under his arm.

Bessie and I ran to tear it away from him. He shook away from Bessie. "No, no it's not for you," he said. Me he only slapped across the fingers, sharply but not enough to hurt.

It wasn't a large package. It couldn't be a toolbox, not even a small one. It wasn't a box at all. It was just something soft wrapped in green paper.

We yelled, "What's in the package?" And my mother, coming out on the porch, said, "Look at them—three little children."

My father made a face. "Does every neighbor have to know what I bring home?" he said. "Come inside."

He wouldn't open the package and he wouldn't tell us what was in it. He put it on the diningroom table and said it would stay there till we were through eating. I thought I caught his eye, but I wasn't sure. We followed him into the kitchen.

"Is it for Ma?" I asked.

"No, it's not for Ma and it's not for me."

And it wasn't for Bessie either. My spoon shook so that all the barley soup poured out. My father looked amused.

"Ah, Morris, Morris," he said, "if your grandfather could only see what is in that package. . . ."

My mother's face grew pink the way it always did when Pa started talking about her father. "Don't listen to him, children," she said, "Go, eat your supper."

Bessie guessed it was a cowboy uniform, but I knew it wasn't. And it wasn't a catcher's mitt. I splashed around in my plate until my mother began to clear the table and my father got up. I followed him into the dining room where he slowly undid the package.

It was a pair of overalls.

I held it up and waved it in my mother's face. A pair of overalls, my first pair. I let out a yell. But she didn't get as excited as I did.

"Your grandfather," she started to say, and nodded her head.

"What's the matter, Leah," my father said.

"You know you just went back to work. There are more important things. . . ."

"Overalls are cheap. Cheaper than anything."

"My Morris doesn't need overalls."

There was no use standing there. I ran into the bathroom with them. I couldn't understand what the argument was about. Overalls weren't an Indian suit or a baseball outfit, but I always wanted some. And every time I mentioned it,

every June when school was out and Harvey and Pat wore nothing else, my mother said, "You don't need overalls. Let *them* wear overalls." Them. That was what I could never understand. I pulled the overalls right over my pants and tightened the buckles over my shoulders. There was a small mirror in the bathroom but it was too dark to see and I didn't dare get a match just to light the gas for it.

WHEN I CAME OUT, MY MOTHER LOOKED UP FROM THE DISHES and shuddered.

"What's the matter, Ma?" I asked. "Look, it fits me perfect."

"I don't want to see them."

"But, Ma. . . ."

She didn't look at me. She didn't even say, "Wear them well." I dug my hands into the deep pockets. They felt strong and rough and I felt strong myself, ready to do something. What was the matter with the overalls? They were as good as Harvey's. The pockets had copper tacks in the corners, and there were stitched spaces across the chest for pencils, rulers, things like that.

"Look, Ma, I'll be able to do things around the house, and I can play ball in them."

She was rubbing the soup pot. "A little janitor," she said. "A little teamster."

The way she said it I couldn't wear them. I took them off and threw them on a chair and went out and sat down on the top step of the porch. Sam came over and wanted to play knife, but I said I couldn't. Mr. Hornstein came downstairs and he and my father talked about the war. Bessie finished helping with the dishes and ran by on her way to the girls. "Smarty," she shot out as she passed me. And then my mother came out too and Mrs. Hornstein came down, but nobody talked about overalls.

It was worse than not having any. "Look, Ma," I called out. "I'll go downtown tomorrow and start selling papers. I'll pay for them myself."

"You don't have to sell papers."

"Then what is it?"

"Don't bother me, Morris. I'm talking."

It wasn't the money. I knew all the time it wasn't the money. If we had a million dollars she wouldn't want me to wear overalls. She just didn't want me to wear them. It was something about overalls, something that said Pat could wear them and I couldn't. Pat could eat pork but I couldn't. I knew that. I understood that. But overalls. . . .

"Are they *treif*, Ma?"

"Ask your father. He's the rabbi around here."

"No," said my father. "I'm not a rabbi. I'm only a cap-maker. I'm only a working man."

"I didn't marry a working man," my mother said.

"So I'm improving, Leah. A lot of things I didn't know in the Old Country."

"You make a joke out of it."

I got up and ran into the house. "I'm going to sleep," I yelled to let them know I was mad.

BUT I COULDN'T SLEEP. ONE MINUTE I SAW MYSELF IN OVERALLS, big and strong. I could swing my bat harder, throw farther, slide with a faster hook into second base than ever before. I helped with the storm windows, I painted the house, standing high up on the ladder while my mother stood below me begging me to be careful.

And the next minute I didn't know what to think. What did my dead grandfather have to do with overalls? My pious grandfather about whom I had heard so many stories? And before I fell asleep it was all mixed up in my mind—my grandfather and the synagogue he always sat in, in the long shining coat he wore in all the pictures I saw—my grandfather and my mother, something between her and my father, something I couldn't figure out, but her voice was in it and his too, the way she talked about his working in the shop, and the way he did, the way she talked about Europe, the way she talked about what my father had been like before he came here—and now my overalls were all mixed up with these things, and I tossed and turned on my cot in the dining room, and couldn't sleep.

The next morning I was in my overalls before I remembered what had happened the night before. My father was gone already, and my mother was in the back yard digging among the radishes. She looked up when I stood in the doorway and came toward the house. "My little janitor," she said, but didn't look angry. "You talked in your sleep last night."

"What did I say?"

"I want them. I want them.' You said it over and over, as if someone was taking your parents away."

"Look, Ma, let me wear them a few days, and then if something happens. . . ."

"Little fool, what should happen? Nothing will happen. Nothing will happen."

She made me think of the way she talked before Aunt Sarah went to New York, only she wasn't crying the way she did then. But I wasn't going anywhere, only to Hebrew school.

"Look, Ma, they're swell overalls. Better than Pat's."

"I didn't say anything, Morris. Go wear them, wear them."

She sounded more and more as if I was going somewhere.

Before I was through with breakfast Sam was yelling for me, and I ran out. He was tossing his jackknife in the air, but when he saw me his mouth opened. He wanted to try them on right there, but I told him he'd have to wait, I didn't have anything else on.

WHEN WE CAME TO ARENSONS, SOME OF THE OTHER BOYS OF the class were there and they crowded around, grabbing me from all sides, feeling buttons, pockets, clasps. They almost tore the overalls off my back before the older boys came out at ten and we were ready to go in.

Harry Marks caught me by the arm. "Look who's got overalls!" he yelled. "What shall we do with him?"

I tore away and ran up the steps. "What's the matter—afraid?" someone yelled, but I was inside. The boys all crowded around me again. Arenson always had his breakfast between the two classes. Sometimes we saw him eating when we crowded into the kitchen for a drink of water. He sat at the edge of the chair, a biscuit in one hand, his glass of hot tea in the other, blowing at the tea, chewing his roll, and at the same time telling us not to make so much noise.

But today nobody went for water, no one went to the bathroom. They stood around me, punched me, laughed, hooted, until Arenson came into the room, and even then they didn't stop. "Quiet, Indians!" he cried. "Quiet, animals!"

His face was red. "Who started this noise?" he demanded. No one answered. "I am asking you quietly."

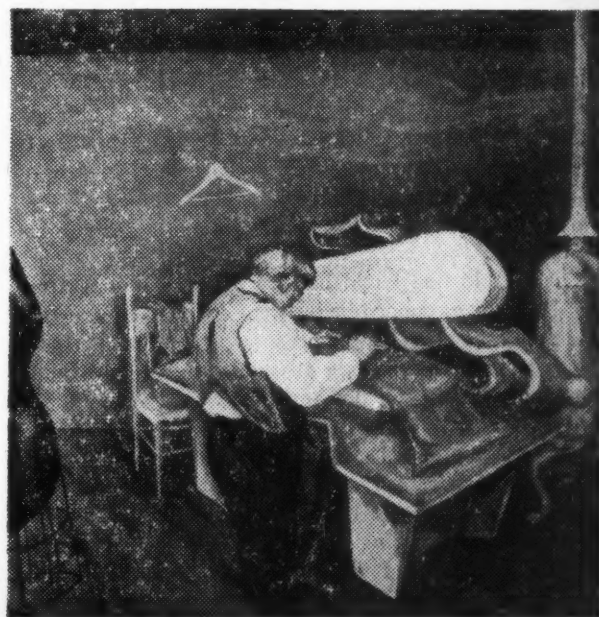
Still no one answered, but a few of the boys snickered, and out of the corners of my eyes I could see them looking at me.

"Morris, stand up. . . . Ah-ha, now I see. You come here like a stableboy and you think you're in a barn. You come to my house like this."

He wasn't talking about the noise now. He came toward me, nodding. "Look at him. He comes to learn the holy

THE LITTLE TAYLOR

By Mervin Jules



language like a streetcleaner." I couldn't swallow my tea. It's a storm, I thought, an explosion, a war. Murderers are in the front room. . . .

"Your parents are doing me a favor, sending you here like someone from a reform school to tear down my house. They are giving me two dollars a month for charity. For thirty years almost I have been teaching Jewish boys here and in the Old Country . . . good boys, wild boys, but not in thirty years. . . . You haven't any pants at home? Come to me and I'll buy you some!"

He caught me by the ears and pulled my face up. "You are brought up like this. You'll grow up like this." He let go my ears. "I won't yell at you. I won't touch you. I don't want you in my class. Go."

Without looking up I walked out. I didn't lift my head all the way home.

FIRST I THOUGHT I WOULDN'T GO HOME AT ALL. THIS WAS THE first time I had been sent away from school. I must have done something but I didn't know what and I didn't know what to say when I got home. I was all mixed up. I didn't feel as if I had done anything, but I must have.

I didn't know if a fellow got whipped for being sent home. My mother never whipped me, but if she looked as if she wanted to, it would be enough. That happened sometimes. She could go right past you with that queer look without seeing you that made you wish she'd grabbed something and let you have it. Sometimes a fellow wants to get licked. . . .

I wasn't thinking about my father. He wouldn't know about it till he came home from the factory, and besides, if it was my fault it was his too, in a way. But being home all day with my mother and knowing something was wrong. . . .

I didn't look where I was going, I didn't look where I was, but I got home without looking, and I went up the steps without looking.

My mother was going over the rug with the carpet sweeper. She jumped when I came in. "What's the matter, Morris, aren't you feeling well?"

She looked at me. "You're so pale. What's the matter?" "Nothing."

"You're not feeling well."

"I'm all right."

"Then. . . ."

Then I told her. I told her everything. I didn't care if she shook me or slapped me or went after me with a strap. I had to get it out and I did get it out. I was almost crying, I was so nervous, knowing all the time that I had done something wrong, and not knowing what or how or just when it was.

My mother moved back a chair and sat down. I looked at her, the first time I really looked at her since I came home and I knew that I wasn't going to get whipped or scolded. She sat playing with her hands and looking far away. "It's not your fault, Morris," she said. And a little later she said, "It's your father's fault. He shouldn't have

brought the overalls. They're not for people like us."

I sat down on a chair near the window and looked out. We were both sitting there, looking different directions and not saying anything. It wasn't what I had expected. It didn't hurt the way I thought it would. I glanced up. My mother wasn't even looking at me. She wasn't even thinking of me.

At last I said, "Ma, will I have to take off the overalls?"

She looked down at her hands. "What good will that do? You'll take them off today, you'll put them on tomorrow. Maybe Pa knew. . . ."

A little later she said, "Your grandfather wore black trousers and a long black silk coat. He spent most of his life studying in the synagogue. Your father wore black trousers and a black satin coat too when I married him. He had never done a day's work in his life. He was young and good looking and his hands were soft and clean."

I started to laugh and then I knew it was the wrong thing but I couldn't help it. My father in a long satin coat, with a skullcap too, like my grandfather wore in his pictures.

"You're laughing, Morris. . . . To you it's funny. Your father would laugh too. Maybe he knows. He was the one who wanted to come here. He was the one who wanted to work. Maybe he knows."

She stood up and started to walk out to the kitchen. "Maybe we're living in another world now, Morris. Maybe overalls are all right. Maybe overalls will be as good as a black satin coat some day. Maybe you'll always wear overalls."

She was in the other room and I couldn't see her. I thought she was crying, but it wasn't because Arenson had sent me home. It wasn't about that and it wasn't about overalls.

I just sat looking outside.

EPITAPH WITH STAR OF DAVID

By A. M. Krich

I am this man.
This man was all I am.
He was many. I am one.
My shadow was his sun.
My flower was his frost.
I find what he has lost.
His hammer was my nail.
My palace was his jail.
His ashes were my fire.
My footsteps his desire.
Now his eternity is my day.
His voice in what I try to say.
My secret now he cannot hide.
My tombstone where he died.

THEMES FOR THE PEOPLE'S ARTIST

By Morris U. Schappes

PROGRESSIVE American Jewish writers are beginning more and more to hunt for appropriate subject matter in the realm of Jewish life. They feel an impulse to express their deepening awareness of the need to take part in Jewish affairs by writing about the life, the problems, the dreams and hopes of the Jewish people. These writers want to make the stage and air-waves and the printed page quiver both with the anguish of much of Jewish life as well as with the sense of its indestructible vitality.

They turn first of course to the most immediate themes: the heaven-taunting treatment of the 4,500 Jews of the "Exodus 1947" by the callous British labor government; the taste of anti-Semitism in the mouth of the youngster that encounters it roughly in the street; the studied retreat, with the smile fixed, of the cautious couple faced by the ban of the restrictive covenant; the complexities of family relationships in which children and the grandchildren of immigrants have to make their adjustment not only to each other but to new environments and strange but enticing mores. These and similar themes are far from exhausted and need doing and re-doing by imaginative American Jewish writers whose outlook is progressive and who understand the forward motion of the deep processes of social change.

But I would also commend to these writers the almost untapped field of American Jewish history as a source of thematic material for their art. The field is not easy, but it is highly rewarding. The progressive historian has not yet properly plowed and prepared the field so that the writer of fiction, drama, and lyric can walk in and reap the ripened grain. Fresh research is still a great necessity. Much that has been published needs to be re-examined, checked, re-evaluated. Uncultivated though the field is, however, writers who merely take a long look at it will find themselves inspired to pitch in and work in it. For they have learned from the fields of American history in general and of American labor history how great a contribution historical fiction is to contemporary progressive life and action.

A usable past is a necessity for the development of progressive American Jewish life and culture today. While the historian and the archivist continue their researches into the still insufficiently explored realms of American Jewish history, the writers of historical fiction in the form of novels, short stories, plays and poems already have at hand a body of materials the richness of which will surprise them when they turn to it. There is a great progressive tradition in American Jewish history which can become as a banner moving us forward in contemporary struggles. Merely by way of example and illustration, I shall sketch

three characteristic incidents from widely separated periods of American Jewish life.

Crisis in 1776

What shall the Congregation Shearith Israel do? It is the year 1776. The war against England has begun and has deepened into a Revolution for Independence. The British have besieged New York City and are about to conquer it. The city is a stronghold of British loyalism. The Anglican clergy particularly have been opposing the Revolution, preaching moderation, submission, obedience, loyalty to England. For years the debate had gone on, but now the issue was to be decided by force of arms. In the Jewish community in New York there had also been division. There had been those who had signed non-importation agreements as a means of resisting British economic oppression. There had been Jews who had fought against these boycotts of British goods.

Now the British troops are about to occupy New York. Independence had been declared in Philadelphia, but British arms are conquering New York. What shall the Congregation do? The Jews gather in the little synagogue in Mill Street to decide: shall we go into voluntary exile from our homes in New York, or shall we stay and collaborate with the British forces of occupation? Shall these Jews, whose exile has always been involuntary, decide now, for themselves, to pack up and leave, abandoning homes, businesses, and the Synagogue itself, as part of the national fight for freedom and independence? Shall they not stay home, protest their loyalty, obey the ancient Hebrew rule that the law of the land is the first law of the Jew?

The majority decided to go, to resist the British and not to yield. On August 22, 1776, the Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas removed the Holy Scrolls and the "portable valuables" from the Synagogue and the fighting exodus, the strategic retreat began. When these Jews returned late in 1783, it was only after the British had been defeated.

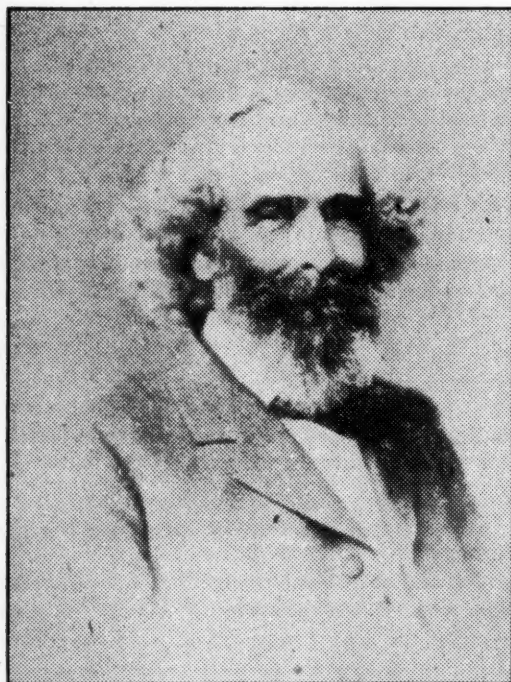
Controversy Need to Be Written

What was said in that historic meeting of the Congregation is not recorded, but the writer of fiction, if he studies the history of the Jews involved, will have no difficulty reconstructing the scene, the characters, the arguments, the great drama. The president (*Parnas*) of the Congregation was Solomon Simpson, then thirty-six years old, a merchant, a patriot. When he left New York for Norwalk, Connecticut, he was active in the resistance, and did not return to New York until 1786. He was a speaker too.

Later he was to become an organizer of the Jeffersonian Democratic Club in New York, and its president. What did *he* say in that congregational debate that persuaded the majority to resist? That speech needs to be written.

What did Gershom Mendes Seixas say, this minister (*hazzan* or reader was his official title according to the Spanish-Portuguese Jewish ritual) of thirty years of age, who had already held his honored post for eight years, and been married less than a year. The Christian clergy was all for staying and collaborating with the British. But not Gershom Seixas. Did his brother Benjamin Seixas, who was an officer in the New York militia, take part in the debate, or was he away fighting the British with guns? Did Gershom Seixas point to the chapter in the Book of Samuel in which the Jews are warned against wanting to have a king rule them? Tom Paine had used that argument, and so had many a Revolutionary Christian clergyman.

It is reported that forty-year old, German-born Jonas Phillips spoke up well. When someone argued that this exile might mean the end of the Congregation, Phillips retorted that it was better that the Congregation dissolve in the cause of liberty than live to submit to British tyranny. As a historian I should say that the documentary sources of that rejoinder have been inadequately verified, but I commend it to the writer of historical fiction as quite adequate for his purpose.



Isidor Bush

What of the minority of "loyalists," who were they? We know some of the names of those who stayed in New York and on October 16, 1777 signed, together with some 900 non-Jewish citizens, a humiliating declaration of dependence upon the British conquerors. There were the wealthy Gomezes and the Hendrickses and the Hayses. There was the *shamash* (sexton) of the Congregation. There were the elders and past presidents, Samuel Myers and David Hays, aged, tired, and "loyal." Their speeches, thinking, and arguments need to be written too, so that we may better be equipped to reject the seeming-reasonableness of those reactionaries who counsel ease and sloth and security in their fight against progress. For history has decided that it was the majority that fought Britain that was most loyal to democracy, to progress, and therefore to the American Jewish community and to the Jews in Europe, whose partial emancipation was thus hastened.

Isidor Bush, Bourgeois-Democrat

Missouri was a border state in the Civil War, and the winning of the border states for the cause of the Union was one of the great strategic requirements of victory. Yet not only was Missouri won for the Union; this "border state" became a stronghold of abolitionist sentiment, and was the first state to abolish slavery. On January 11, 1865 the Missouri State Convention officially proclaimed that "hereafter, in this State, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except in punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted; and all persons held to service or labor as slaves are hereby declared free." Among the sixty names signed to this document is that of Isidor Bush, who is the most consistent bourgeois-democrat I have yet encountered in the annals of American Jewish history up to that time.

Bush's speeches will not have to be written for him by writers of fiction. His incisive, bold, and often flaming words are fortunately extant in the proceedings of all the Missouri State Conventions from 1861 to 1865. It is the drama that has to be written around the splendid public career of Isidor Bush. This exile from Austrian absolutism spread ideals of democratic equality in his new American home. By 1865 he was a man of wide experiences.

Born in Prague in 1822, he had become an editor of German-Jewish periodicals from 1842 to 1848. His father, Jacob Bush, was part owner of the largest Hebrew publishing house in the world when the March 1848 revolution broke out in Vienna. Revolutionary proclamations were printed on his father's presses. The success of the counter-revolution caused Isidor Bush to flee with his wife to the United States, which he reached in January 1849. After a three-months' attempt to publish the first Jewish weekly in this country, *Israel's Herald*, Bush went west, took root in St. Louis as a grocer, small banker, active worker in the B'nai B'rith, and a leader of the German-American community in St. Louis. A militant abolitionist, he became a Republican. With the slave-owners not only

in the South but in Missouri itself on the offensive, Bush was one of those that fought for the Union cause. When the State Administration seceded, the people of Missouri, led by men like Bush, set up their own people's Union power, administered largely by the State Constitutional Conventions from 1861 to 1865.

From September 16 to November 12, 1861, Isidor Bush served as a captain on the staff of Major-General John C. Fremont, commander of the Western Department of the Union armies. Fremont had surrounded himself with democratic fighters and abolitionists of many nationalities, Hungarian, Italian, and German. On August 30, 1861, Fremont had issued his famous proclamation of martial law against the slave-owners and of emancipation of the slaves. For that he was relieved of his command by McClellan, and all Fremont's appointees who had not yet received Presidential commissions, including Bush, were discharged.

Fighter for Emancipation

During the next two years (1862-1864), with time out of course for work in the Missouri Constitutional Conventions each year, Bush served as Clerk in the Office of the Second Comptroller of the Treasury. But it is his convention activity that is of special interest. In his maiden speech on March 20, 1861, before the war began, he pledged the support of his German constituency to peace and Union, with Union primary. In the 1862 Convention he worked on the Committee of Finance, and opposed the advocates of "gradual emancipation" that dominated the convention. Elected in June 1863 one of nine members of the Committee on Emancipation, he presented a minority report of one and a substitute resolution favoring immediate emancipation to go into effect at the end of that year.

Bush reached his heights as a leading and articulate democrat at the 1865 Convention, which finally decided on immediate emancipation. He was chairman of the Committee on Banks. He served on a Committee of Five to discuss peace terms with the South *after victory*. He was on the Committee on Apportionment, and on a special Committee on Loyalty to hear charges against members accused of collaboration with the South. But he was particularly distinguished in discussion of the proposed Bill of Rights in the State Constitution. His amendment on religious liberty and the complete separation of church and state was defeated. An amendment to abolish capital punishment was defeated. A complete substitute Declaration of Rights was defeated. But Bush fought on. When it was proposed that Missouri schools segregate Negro from white, he voted against the motion, in vain. He advocated State aid to education, unsuccessfully. He did succeed in securing the right of suffrage to all male immigrants who declared their intention of becoming citizens within a specified time before an election. When the discussion of the Constitution was interrupted by the

news, on April 6, 1865, of the fall of Richmond, a resolution was introduced hoping for the restoration of peace. Bush had that amended to read "peace and *freedom*." With freedom always on his mind, when the entire Constitution, with all its weaknesses and compromises, was finally before the convention, on April 8th, Bush voted against it as a whole. There was not enough freedom, not enough equality, in it.

Could you not sing about Isidor Bush, if someone wrote a song?

Clara Lemlich, Socialist

She was not yet twenty when she uttered the words that set this revolution going. Maybe "revolution" is an excessive word, but it was what Samuel Gompers, the conservative labor leader, called the great New York general strike of women shirt-waist makers that lasted from November 22, 1909 to February 15, 1910. And Gompers was there when the revolution began, and heard her say the words that became the spark.

I look at a photograph of her taken at the time. A strong, round face, dark hair, a lot of it, parted on the right, a high starched collar that thrust her head up, a long, thin necktie down the front of a pleated, full-sleeved shirt-waist—that was Clara Lemlich in the winter of 1909-1910. The many thousands of women workers who overflowed Cooper Union had already heard many speeches. There had been Samuel Gompers, Meyer London, Jacob Panken, Max Pine, Bernard Weinstein and others, all talking about a strike. *Now*, the workers thought, when? And there was Clara clambering up to the platform, and saying: "I have listened to all the speakers and I have no patience for talk. I am one who feels and suffers the things pictured. I move that we go on a general strike." The audience went wild, the meeting ended and the strike began, with some twenty to twenty-five thousand women and girls rousing the nation.

Clara Lemlich had been brought here by her parents from Russia just a few years before. She had been going to high school when the family migrated. But she began a new type of schooling when, at sixteen, she went to work in a New York sweat-shop. She was a good worker, intelligent, somehow got into one of the better-paid crafts and was earning \$15 a week when she called for strike. But she knew others, many of them, who earned only three dollars a week. She wanted to study medicine all the time; poverty interfered, not only her own but that which she saw all about her. When she talked, people called her a "socialist." She studied what that meant, and became a socialist. Joining the International Union of Shirt-waist Makers, she started working in small shops to help organize them. In 1907 she had already been jailed for distributing union leaflets.

In 1909 she was working at Leiserson's, one of the big places, whose owner had made \$100,000 profit out of the exploitation of his workers. In September there was a

strike at Leiserson's (one of the preliminary bouts that led to the general strike in November). Clara was of course active. She could stand just so much talk and hesitation, therefore, at that Cooper Union meeting. So she spoke up, and from having been for years a heroic rank-and-filer she suddenly became a public heroine, "the soul of this young women's revolution."

The following day she ended her address at the Central Federated Union with the fervid words: "I seem to see the realization of the words of Karl Marx: 'Workers of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have the world to gain.'" There was applause.

A few days later, she told the sleek women of the Colony Club what workers' life was like, and pin-money was contributed to the strike fund. On the picket-line, one day, Clara was beaten up so badly that she was bed-ridden for several days; but she returned to picket duty, to raising funds for the hungry workers, to making history.

She and the twenty thousand made the history. Let us write it. Let us write it soberly, factually and with foot-notes for the scholar, and truthfully but brightly for the general reader. Our generation of American Jews needs inspiration and courage to go ever forward. There is inspiration in such a past.

TWO POEMS

THE RETURN OF THE PRISONERS

By Jules Alan Wein

(For Minna Levenson, whose husband did not come home)

Paris, 1945

I

He was not on the train
At the Eastern station.
He was not on the train
From the north.
He was nowhere among the faces,
Among the timid fingers
Waving, waving.
He has not come home.

He was not of the groups
In the twilight stations,
In the fumbling burdens,
In the thin uncertain files.
I have looked and I have looked
And he is nowhere.
Nowhere in the hungry eyes.

He was not of the rejoicing,
Of the holding, of the pressing,
He was nowhere in the pity,
In the speechless word,
The vast embrace.

I had not thought, tonight,
I had not dared to think
To be alone again.
I had not thought
To crouch between the walls.
Out of all the increment of longing,
Out of all the nights and nights and nights
And calling in the stillness,
All the secret whimpering,

The private death relived and died
And lived again,
I dared to hope. . . .

But he has not come home.

I shall eat dark bread by gaslight,
I shall crouch between the walls
With empty limbs,
And struggle to be deaf,
To be blind,
To be mute,
To be stolid.
I shall not give over.

I shall go again tomorrow
To the Eastern station,
To the station of the north.
I shall comb my hair in the old way.
I shall wear a new ribbon.
I shall go and stand with folded hands,
And my eyes will be young with waiting.

II

I watch them come,
The quiet men, the striped men,
Watch them come,
The stumbling and the shy,
I cannot cheer
The quiet men, the striped men;
Cannot hail the lorries going by.

It seems too much
 To lift an arm in greeting;
 Effort almost more than I can bear.
 Too much to summon
 Brittle arms responsive
 In a fisted forest
 Weeping on the air.

I shall not speak
 Or stir upon their passage;
 Shall not call
 The echo up in vain;

Dare not sound
 With blind and fumbling finger
 This, the lost chord of a nation's pain.

Yet we are one,
 All quiet men and striped men,
 By some unknown genuflection
 Secret in our silent cries;
 And speak the brotherhood of sorrow
 In the triumph
 Of our bleeding eyes.

TWO CEMETERIES

I

Green the cemetery on the hill.
 A silent sisterhood of sorrow
 Strays the crisp stone flagging,
 Kneels beside each solitary grave
 And lays a wreath for hero dead.

Between,
 The lawns,
 Meticulously tended,
 Taut and tailored
 Overlay their sleep.
 The headstones neat,
 The legend and the loss
 Declaimed in sculptured symmetry:

*"Kette, Heinrich
 Unteroffizier
 SS Panzerdivision Goering
 Für Führer, Volk und Vaterland
 In Russland gefallen
 August 1942"*

*"Gruenwald, Marthe
 Im Terrorangriff
 Juli 1943"*

The sun is kind.
 The bumbling summer insects
 Weave their flowered tapestry
 For these who fell for Germany
 To battle and to bomb.

II

(Bad Vilbel, Germany, July, 1944)

Below, in the ravine,
 The dead beyond the pale,
 Dishonored
 But not quite forgotten.
 Here, long since,
 With spade and spleen
 The Heinrichs and the Marthes came.

This sun is warped
 And breeds up stinging things.
 Nor women walk with offering
 Amid the offal and the shard,
 The lawns disrupt,
 The headstones cast awry
 And churned in tillage
 To deny the place,
 The person and the memory.

Who lies here?
 Who?
 Who lies with none to mourn,
 The mourners and the mourned
 Now mourned alike?
 Who sleeps?
 Whose monument of dung and brier
 Sours from the ravine
 And bursts the bosom of the hilltop?

We who brought the heroes to their knees
 Remember.
 We have marked the place.
 We call thee Israel.
 Sleep well.

HAS THE YIDDISH THEATER A FUTURE?

By Nathaniel Buchwald
Translation from Yiddish
By Joseph King

THE main product of the commercial Yiddish theater in America was and has remained the so-called *shund*—a type of cheap hokum to suit an indiscriminate taste. Some think that the *shund* theater, like the Yiddish stage in general, is in much worse condition than ever before. But as far back as April 7, 1922, Moshe Lieb Halpern wrote in the *Morning Freiheit* on "Our Theater—Woe to Us!":

"There was once a vulgarian who went to the synagogue on one corner of the street when he wanted to weep, and to a bawdy house on the other corner of the street when he wanted to be gay.

"But once when he wanted to weep and be gay at the same time, he put up a theater in the middle of the street between the synagogue and the bawdy house, and, alas, combined both institutions into one. . . .

"Does the public attend? Yes. But does it want that kind of entertainment? The big vulgarian on East Broadway (i.e., the Jewish daily *Forward*—Eds.), a cousin of the one on Second Avenue, says yes. . . . But we . . . also know that people who still are in the habit of taking their own wives to the theater do not want gaiety of a bawdy house, even if it is primed up in holy raiment."

Thus in his own inimitable way Halpern records the contradiction between the decency of the Jewish masses and the "gaiety of the bawdy house" which they find in the theater.

With regard to quality and decency there is perhaps little to choose between the *shund* theater of the past and present. And yet important changes took place on the Yiddish stage. The greenhorn is no longer the standard theme. In the past, this was the main theme of the Yiddish operetta. The more assimilated immigrant got a nostalgic thrill out of the theatrical presentations of the old country, of the familiar surroundings, customs, manners and songs. On the other hand, he was himself flattered and amused when he saw on the stage the newly arrived greenhorn in all his comical awkwardness.

This theme is passé now, but it died slowly. Long after immigration had halted, even after the spectator had already been long Americanized, the Yiddish stage continued to orient itself on greenhorn humor and outlook. This created a contradiction between the theater and the audience. Nor did the so-called serious theater keep pace with the times and with its audiences. Morris Schwartz founded his Art Theater in 1918, when a broad Jewish labor movement had already developed, when World War I had already wrought profound changes in the life in the old

country and a new epoch had emerged with the October revolution in Russia. All this had deeply affected the life, outlook, strivings and cultural needs of the Jewish masses in America. But the Yiddish stage, even the more serious, did not reflect these changes.

Progressive Yiddish Theater

In time the more sensitive elements among the labor and progressive intellectuals began to realize that the theater was letting its audience down. In 1923, the Yiddish Art Theater passed through its first crisis. In his own way Morris Schwartz realized that this was in essence a crisis of the contradiction between his theater and his audience. With the formation of a People's Association for the Art Theater it was thought that at last the theater would come into harmony with the audience, and keep abreast of the times. The results, however, were different. Schwartz wanted a public subsidy for his theater, with no public share in directing its policy. The breach between the theater and the public remained.

This dissatisfaction with the Art Theater, which was out of step with the historical period, modern dramatic art, and the best elements of its audience, ultimately found expression in the founding of the Yiddish Labor Theater (*Artef*) in 1928. But before *Artef* was organized, other serious attempts were made to establish a modern, progressive theater in contrast to Schwartz's Art Theater, where stagnation and rigidity set in with regard to subject matter, stage-style and the all-consuming system of "starism."

In 1923 Our Theater was organized with the participation of such prominent dramatists as Peretz Hirshbein and H. Levick, and students of the theater like Mendel Elkin. In 1925 Our Theater presented its first production, S. Ansky's *Day and Night*. Boris Aronson's modernistic settings and the new style of the staging brought a fresh current into the theater world. The Jewish intellectuals welcomed it with enthusiasm. A year later, Morris Schwartz presented his memorable spectacle based on Goldfaden's *The Tenth Commandment*, with Boris Aronson's constructivist settings which captured the public with their daring and freshness. The "big vulgarian on East Broadway" was not pleased with this spectacle, but the intellectuals and the more discriminating audience, appreciating something new, greeted it with deserved enthusiasm.

Jacob Ben Ami, who about the same time as Schwartz

had made an attempt to establish an art theater, also went in search of something new. In 1927 he opened the New Yiddish Art Theater with N. Yevreinov's *The Ship of Saints*. In form and in the novelty of its stage conceptions, this spectacle made a deep impression.

On the lighter side, Molly Picon shone like a bright star in the operetta firmament. With her unique and popular Piconic quality and with the good taste which her husband and director, Jacob Kalish, displayed in the stagings and settings, the Picon Theater shamed and overwhelmed the traditional and vulgar operetta. One would have thought that after Molly Picon the operetta would not return to its "classic" style of hokum and that a new epoch had opened up for the lighter theater. These hopes were not fulfilled. But as long as the Picon Theater continued, it was a bright spot in the theater world.

The brief efforts of Our Theater and of Ben Ami's New Yiddish Art Theater did not, however, solve the contradiction between the "better" theater and the progressive part of the audience. Particularly dissatisfied were the left-wing workers and the progressive elements among intellectuals. The modernistic presentations were interesting and fresh in form, but not in content. There was still a distinct contradiction between the strain and stress of the Jewish labor movement and the themes of the Yiddish Theater. There was no connection between them. Social drama was missing, the kind that would mirror the spirit of the progressive and organizationally active worker. In this atmosphere *Artef* was born.

In the twelve years of its existence, *Artef* presented a number of productions which placed this unique theater in the front rank of modern theater producers. Few pro-

ductions in the history of the Yiddish theater in America can compare with *Artef's Recruits* or *Two Hundred Thousand*. In addition, *Artef* developed a number of well-trained and talented actors, who are to this day working either as professionals or on the non-commercial stage (such as the Yiddish Theater Ensemble of the Jewish People's Fraternal Order). *Artef* developed one of the most interesting of all Jewish directors, Benno Schneider. It reared a second brilliant director in the person of Jules Dassin, who is doing good work in Hollywood. Thanks to *Artef*, Chaver Paver emerged as a talented and promising dramatist.

But *Artef* achieved more than this. For the first time in the history of the Yiddish theater in America, a living bond, a creative union was established between theater and audience. The audience was a limited one—and the reactionary circles in Jewish life saw to it that the way to *Artef* was fenced in with all sorts of incitations and red-scares. *Artef* itself limited its audience by "highbrow art" on the one hand, and thematic sectarianism on the other. This finally led to its dissolution in 1940.

But *Artef* remained, even after its dissolution, as an effective cultural force. It kept alive the idea of a union of theater and audience. The love of progressive Jewish workers and intellectuals for *Artef* fed the desire for the establishment of a new *Artef* type of theater, though on a broader organizational base, that would offset even to a small degree the cultural impoverishment and stagnation of the Yiddish theater in America.

Artef proved that the "impossible" was possible and necessary; that a creative theater of high quality can manage very well without a "star" and that ensemble theater

Scene from
Artef's
production of
Sholom
Aleichem's
"200,000"



can become a reality. Even more, *Artef* proved that there is such a thing as a collectively evolved theater ensemble not only in the sense of a smooth playing troupe, but primarily in the sense of collective responsibility for the content and quality of the play. This was *Artef* and this will endure.

Theater as Private Industry

With the exception of two non-professional groups in New York, the *Volksbühne* (People's Stage) and the Yiddish Theater Ensemble, and a number of similar groups in other parts of the country, the Yiddish theater remains in the hands of private promoters. But as a private "industry," the Yiddish theater is now a shadow of its former self. The two large theaters on Second Avenue—Schwartz's and Skulnick's—are really all that New York possesses. We have a third theater in Brooklyn. Two additional theaters play vaudeville only on weekends. But even a comparison with the ten or twelve "legitimate" theaters in New York alone (besides the dozen theaters in the "provinces") some 20 years ago does not tell the full story of the decline of the theater. Because together with the reduction in the number of Yiddish playhouses, the playing season is now half of what it used to be.

This situation is not altogether the result of the "natural" drop in the number of Jewish theatergoers. It is true that the number of theater-minded Jewish people has fallen. It is also true that the current Yiddish stage is not fed anymore by the ever-fresh streams of theater-loving immigrants. And the competition of film and radio must also be taken into consideration. But there has been added a new type of audience—the sons and daughters of the previous theatergoer.

In a polemic with writers who sharply criticized his type of theater and the "fifty-fifty" jargon (half English, half Yiddish) current in it, Menashe Skulnik justified the gradual transition from Yiddish to English on the ground that 90 per cent of his audience consisted of English-speaking young people. This is, of course, a gross exaggeration. The majority of the audience in the Yiddish theater is still of the immigrant generation. But Jews of the new generation go to the Yiddish theater either with their "old folks" or with members of the organization which "booked a benefit." With proper attention to the tastes, the viewpoint and needs of this new type of audience, the Yiddish stage could balance its loss of attendance through winning of fresh audiences.

The Yiddish theater suffers from the absence of a serious approach on the part of the theater professionals to this problem. Skulnik's method of adjustment through increasing use of English in his plays—let alone the cheap type of hokum that is presented in the "fifty-fifty" language—is suicidal. The more English is stuck into the play in proportion to Yiddish, the more it undermines the very foundations of the Yiddish theater. It is true that English is the language of the American-born Jews, but they also

understand Yiddish and get a special thrill out of a Yiddish song, a Yiddish saying and of traditional Jewish customs. By vulgarizing the Yiddish language and by presenting grotesque characters in the style of the Jew-comedians (as is done in the Skulnik type of theater) the Jewish youth will neither be attracted nor attached to the Yiddish stage.

The curtailed seasons, which in themselves encourage reduced attendance, have already evolved into a system. This may sound strange, but it is a fact that the remaining big producers in the Yiddish theater seek to curtail the season even further. This stems from the queer economics of the Yiddish theater which has raised a frankenstein in the form of the so-called "benefit system."

"Benefit System" Speeds Decline

The system began to develop in the twenties. The producers planned on filling the almost empty theaters on mid-week evenings through this system. As Jewish communities developed increasingly in the suburbs of New York, theater-going became a greater effort which the tired worker left for the weekend. In time the Yiddish theaters became more and more empty during the week. Producers therefore thought up the idea of selling tickets for mid-week performances at less than half-price. Jewish organizations grabbed up the plan. Tickets which they got for as little as 15 per cent of the list value, they resold to their members and friends at full box-office price, and the "profits" went for the organization's activities.

At the beginning the "benefit" system did not work badly. "Benefits" were sold only for mid-week performances and only for repertory plays. The new plays were held for the week-end, when the audience bought tickets at box-office prices. But gradually competition forced the producers to begin selling benefits for new plays for mid-week performances. Later the benefits began to swallow up week-end performances as well until a situation was created in which the benefit became the main financial prop for a production. But the indiscriminate sale of benefits killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. When tens of thousands of Jews buy benefit tickets for a certain production, there are few theatergoers left to buy tickets at full price at the box office during the week-end.

The "practical" producers, however, came to the "practical" conclusion that the cure for the benefit plague was—more benefits. High pressure salesmanship methods were developed to sell benefits. And since the box-office sale began to play an increasingly minor role, there was no longer any sense in having performances without benefits. A system of telescoping as many benefits as possible into a minimum number of weeks therefore developed. When the benefits ran out, the theater closed.

This crazy system finally pushed the repertory play out of the theater. Benefits are sold for the "season play," and it does not pay to produce more than one play a season. When you have to deal with a "benefit" audience, made up of all strata, with all kinds of tastes, it is no longer

possible to suit the play to a specific audience. The approach has become to make a theater production "all things to all men," with concentration on the super-colossal "production," the sensation to stun and astound the chance audience.

Evils of "Starism"

Morris Schwartz and the Yiddish Art Theater paid dearly for this system. In recent years, spectacles based on dramatizations of novels have become, the primary stock in trade of Schwartz, and the field of original drama, without the scenic tumult of a "production," has been almost entirely neglected. Instead of playing for a culturally sensitive audience, the Art Theater now plays for the "benefit trade"; instead of maintaining a mutually beneficial connection with the Yiddish dramatists as in the past, the Art Theater relies mainly on the serialized newspaper novel.

The benefit system has also aggravated the chronic ailment of the Yiddish theater—"starism." Certainly, the star system is not of recent origin in the Yiddish theater. But never was it as detrimental as now in relation to the rest of the performers, to the play and the audience. Under the system of blind advance booking, of "benefits," when the buyer does not know what he is buying, there is no use trying to sell a play. It is necessary to sell a well-advertised commodity—the star. So Morris Schwartz is sold, and Skulnik is sold. When it comes to the finished production, the audience gets exactly what it bought: a play that is all Skulnik or all Schwartz. In such a situation the star can get along without dramatist or drama. He does not need a play, he needs an excuse to hog the spotlight for the whole evening. And his role, like his entire "production," has to be all things to all men. To all men—except the cultured spectator who feels disappointed, chagrined and imposed upon.

The two non-professional groups in New York, the *Volksbuehne* and the Yiddish Theater Ensemble, have done splendid work. The Ensemble's *The Downfall of Haman* (Benjamin Zemach's direction) and *Chained in the Vestry* (direction David Licht) at the *Volksbuehne* are by all standards the most important productions on the Jewish stage in recent years. But these groups are not professional, cannot play more than a couple of performances a week, have no apparatus and no desire to push benefit sales and are, of course, limited to a very small audience.

Certainly these two fine groups are no solution to the difficult and chronic crisis of the commercial theater with its suicidal systems of starism, benefits and curtailed playing seasons. More than ever we need today a professional and organized theater that would return to the Yiddish stage its prestige, its worth and its cultural mission. More than ever before we have today the essential elements for such a theater. The professional performers are thoroughly disappointed with the commercial theater. It does not guarantee them a livelihood, nor afford them an outlet for

creative self-expression. The Hebrew Actors Union, with its incompetent leadership, for the last twenty-five years tailed after the commercial producers, helped develop the worst aspects of commercial production and sacrificed both the material and artistic interests of the performers on the altar of trash and vulgar starism. The Actors Union which all these years stood in the way of a progressive development of the Yiddish theater, need no longer be feared as a hindrance to an organized people's theater because it can no longer provide employment and a livelihood for its members.

The Yiddish theater has seriously declined in the last quarter of a century. But there is no basis for the opinion that the Yiddish theater is doomed. The truth of the matter is that it is being destroyed by the misdeeds of its own producers and stars. But it is not too late to save it and put new life into it. There is both a need to rehabilitate the Yiddish stage and a growing desire on the part of progressive, cultural-minded Jewish people to help in this work.

EDITORS' NOTE: Since this article was written, a movement has got under way to help the Yiddish Art Theater regain its former leading position and to renew its repertory system based on the best works of the Yiddish drama. Along with other progressive circles, the Jewish People's Fraternal Order, the Ykuf and other organizations, as well as individuals including Nathaniel Buchwald, expressed their readiness to participate in this movement with the ultimate aim of establishing a non-commercial people's theater.



Two characters from
Artef's production of
"Haunch, Paunch and Jowl,"
drawn by
Florence Schachnov.



RACHEL

Excerpt from an Unpublished Novel

By Saul Levitt

WHENEVER Harry went to see Rachel, his mother, he was confronted by her life, not the moment of it but the challenge of the whole of it all at once. For he couldn't see her without being assailed by a tantalizing, elusive, remindful fragrance. He was an explorer, challenged not by a West but by an East, by a life coming out of that East to this West. In her fifties Rachel Miller was lyrical, spinning with whatever emotional wind blew, and making all kinds of luminous music, sad, happy, tragic, boisterous. Behind this music her son discerned dimly the shattered life. And he was an occasional futile explorer in the ruins of her life, trying to put together extremely elusive fragmentary pieces of evidence, hours, places, conversations, trying to fashion the biography. The Marsalkowska and the Platz Teatralny in Warsaw were her streets and he had heard them mentioned in his childhood conceiving them strongly then as dim gaslighted streets on that far-off flickering stage set of his mother's life. Koenig Lear was the name of a play, Shakespeare against those Warsaw gaslights as she had heard him. And the Soski Ogród was a park, a distant park, a remote green place flowering in her girlhood where a band played Schubert on Saturday afternoons. The *cukiernia*, the pastry shop where she worked, a tea room on that gaslit stage and there sat the bearded beau brummels of the Polish capital clinking tea in glasses, with Rachel, the apprenticed Rachel, 15, small, lively and hopeful behind the cashbox.

In a photograph taken early ("when, it's not your business") she appeared with big dark eyes and a high dark crown of hair, in one of those ideal poses, in the wishful human effort to appear as you would like to be. And from this picture she would wish to appear to be a quiet, hopeful graceful lady. Undoubtedly, in that shirtwaist and with those earrings and the brooch at the throat conforming to a pattern in her time. . . . Probably the pattern of the advanced woman *circa* 1905, Warsaw style ("they call Warsaw the Vienna of the North"). There was also a naive, innocent touch of arrogance in the picture, as if she has the right to be accepted as she thinks she is. . . . "Here I am," says the face in the picture, "and you must honor this photograph and the signature of expression like a certified check." But her eyes, full of melancholy and of an intimation of tragedy, themselves betrayed the certified check. They said that here was a girl in her teens, anonymous in her own eyes, not knowing the forms of life, knowing only that you must fight to live, and it was so fearfully hard to live. . . .

WHAT WAS THE MORNING OF HER LIFE? WHAT WERE SIGNPOSTS, the road to now that you could follow? Goats roamed

it, goats led into Lublin by farmers and little girls with Polish pennies and tin cups for goat's milk around a farmer in the summers of another time. A grandmother shows wrinkled, hiding an egg under a dress in a drawer, dying soon after to a long low lament in that other tongue. A father flickers briefly in this screen, supposedly kind, but ailing, dead of tuberculosis in her ninth year. And her mother is more remote, a dream within a dream, dead in her sixth year ("like in a dream I see her, they lead me into the room. . . . It seems to me like a dream"). A train chugged from Lublin to Warsaw in her eleventh year (these journeys, purposes, necessities). And was it a wood-burning train, a slow train, was it a summer day for example? Apprenticed to the *cukiernia* for seven years, this ancient servitude, this living upstairs in the attic, always this incandescent hopefulness of her undoubtedly dreaming at night (and how did they dream then, in that language dreaming, the teenage dreaming saying *liebe* for love?).

The stream of what is called history dispersed her kind. Hungers, fears, hope, the inevitability that sparks when the humanness strikes the anvil of a force, scattered them across Europe, and out of that stream he was always jealously plucking one life, one thread of the carpet, seeking to take it out of anonymity and himself with it—Warsaw, next stop. . . . The remote, the impersonal term—history—held for a moment at the turn of the century, held her in a cold grip and let her live. For the *cukiernia* had sent her out to collect a bill in a time when assassinations of Russian Grand Dukes was fashionable. A Grand Duke was coming to Warsaw and she was sent to collect a bill when the streets were cleared. If they did not kill her in the ferocity of that hour, how did it happen? Coming around the corner smack into the arms of the patrols, the giant men over her fifteen-year-old life, that tossed chip-on-the-ocean orphan life looking up innocently out of gray eyes, squirming on the thin child legs where the trigger fingers tighten, tighten (a trigger finger lightning in judgment)—and releasing. Alive. Go home, said the hard soldier voices.

Saved. For what? Saved for the fatal accident, this was the thing. To meet *him*, that man. The man walking into her life with the enigmatic smile (for he must have had it then, too, seeing that he showed it so persistently later), the hiding, the detached, the knowing smile—knowing what? A traveller then as later, him with that penchant for movement, pawning his father's fur coat for the money to go to England. His people even more remote than hers, no pictures, no talk ("beautiful sister he had," said Rachel, "such a beautiful girl to go to a crazy house, nobody knows why"). He came to Warsaw, this stocky

man with the features firm and full on his face, the nose, mouth, chin all even and strong and the eyes a light, mocking shade of blue. (Strong, weak, what do we mean by strong?) The fatal accident was in the making, it was surely in the making for these two, this traveller and this girl out of her apprenticeship, the orphan stubbornly wanting him against advice, warning. This wild goose of a man always ready to take off for some place.

See how he came back to Warsaw with nothing in his pockets and three words of English for his capital. He wooed her under those gaslights. They walked the Marsalkowska, they drank tea in glasses, they sat in the Soski Ogrod listening to the band. He always liked music and he could sing too; a deep round bass came out of his square chest. But out of the deeper treasure chest of this young traveller came a fairy tale voice that clung to the orphan listener, enveloping her in silk. Enwrapped in those silken tales for her wedding gowns she married the man.

And westward ho they go to live unhappily ever after. . . . Against Rachel's passionate hatred of the man Harry could invent little. What he remembered of Julius came from before his twelfth year, and his remembering was fixed in certain shining things, in the *Firefly* sled brought home one winter night, in the pair of skates and in those walks by the side of this enigmatically smiling man. He had come and gone and when he was gone there was the huge emptiness in the house and the letters from Seattle, Chicago, Houston. When he was small, he was put into motion by the father's motion, flying with him on the *Firefly* down the hills of St. Mary's Park and on the skates down Union Avenue on sharp autumn nights, and these were the things made by the man. The motion, the space, the color, these were the man's bequeathal before he disappeared, leaving Harry in the midst of boys with durable fathers. . . .

SOMETIMES ON SUMMER SUNDAYS IN TEENS, COMING HOME from a day's swimming, he found them there. There was Uncle Itzik, that man who had married his aunt Mollie, and the aunt and Rachel and he and Sam, his brother. Itzik always sat on the hardest chair in the house (if you put him in a soft chair he apologized and found a hard chair), and explaining about the forge. This Itzik had been a blacksmith in Russia and here he worked at a forge making medical instruments. Dark as an Arab, this Itzik. Harry would lean on the back of Itzik's hard chair listening to him explain how the medical instruments were made, listening behind those strong shoulders.

"But if he gets sick himself," interrupted his aunt Mollie wrathfully, "what instruments—shminstruments they give him? A poor man is cursed."

"Harry—Sam," said Rachel. "You have a good time, you not drowned?"

She looked at him anxiously, and the anxiety was habitual, it didn't refer to anything specific, it referred to his whole life, to his inexplicable American life—

"Yes," he said, "I was drowned but they pulled me out dead—"

"Never mind, watch out, watch yourself," she said knowingly, in the habitual fear, in a plaintive singing.

"I will."

"You want something to eat, you must be starved." She scanned his face looking for scars, wounds, intangible damage. She had learned and she was still learning an English of her own, a lyrical language of her own—

"I make a cabbage soup, Harry, it's out of this world," she said impressively. "With potatoes, with *gedempteh fleish* . . . Har-Sam (she always got their names twisted), you too?"

Younger, darker, slimmer than Harry, quieter too, he said "yes." And they ate listening to Aunt Mollie mutter angrily and defiantly and vaguely about the poor and to Rachel's voice singing low, singing high . . . "prices these days is *high sky*, a dollar flies away like a feather."

"You heard about Becky's daughter, the one with the *fa'crimptah nunnah*?"

"Oh, a nose she got," cried Rachel, "but an apartment near the Concourse . . . so neat, so beautiful, two and a half rooms, a dinette! Beautiful, *grosshartig*. The husband, a cutter, he makes a good dollar, a lucky girl. But such a *nunnah*."

Aunt Mollie, glancing at her Itzik, announced in dismay—"he's sleeping. My Itzik sleeps. The poor man works like a slave. He goes out on a Sunday in two minutes he sleeps."

The sisters were shouting their pity around the ex-blacksmith who slept his just sleep with a terrible weariness in his face.

"Like a dead man," sang Rachel.

All this woke Itzik finally, and sleepily he rose and sleepily stood at the door rubbing his eyes and the sister Mollie from the precincts of Brownsville shouted to sister Rachel, "don't be a stranger, come out on a Sunday. . . . You too, Har—Sam!"

Late at night, very late, a rising tide in her blood meant a pot of coffee and talk. Small, round shouldered, and with the petite quality to her, his mother Rachel, always seeming young, younger than he. He stared at her as she made the coffee.

She said, "Harry, you look at me so strange."

He said, "who are you? Tell me *that*."

"Me? I'm a plain person," she said in a small vanity, "a plain simple person. Who should I be?"

"Solomon's third wife."

"What? You making fun with me again . . . Harry, explain to me something, not a joke. Abraham Lincoln from the pictures, he got a face just like my father. . . . Such a considerate person looks like the expression. . . . It could be may be that he's Jewish?"

He shook his head but he did not laugh. Yet he was at times a little priggish, a little condescending to this woman. She had been working in a laundry and she had worked alongside Italian, Irish and Negro girls. She used to fry flounder sometimes in the early morning for her lunch,

wrapping it in brown paper and taking it off to work. Because the Negro girls at the mangle liked the fried fish, she offered them some. Then, to be more sociable, she brought one of the girls home at noon with her, to the street where they had lived for years and he, with this terrible sensitivity of his childhood, with the sense of many disapproving eyes in the windows, pointing out his mother, hearing the rustle of a hundred tongues—

"Do you have to bring her here?"

The moment he said this he regretted it. If Rachel was timid, it had nothing to do with her democracy which was powerful in its artlessness. She misunderstood him completely.

"She likes my fried fish, butterfish, flounder, it's very good fresh with a piece of lemon, so I bring her here, it's more comfortable."

She looked at him inquiringly, and the shame that came over him at this, at the power of her feeling, the shame at a hypersensitivity that had made him at this moment a coward, drove him into the next room, away from the gray eyes behind the glasses.

ADORATION OF THE MOON

By Max Weber



HE HAD TAKEN HER OUT OF THE LAUNDRY BY GOING TO WORK at those jobs downtown, any job it didn't matter, wanting to break once and for all the clamorous anxiety of his childhood, and this sense of a dismaying tipping world. When he was very young he had seen her working over bills late at night. He would lie awake at night listening to the fierce, suppressed crying, knowing that she sat alone in the kitchen with the bills in front of her. She used a pencil that always needed to be sharpened. Her ledger was a grocery bag. He could see the light shining in half the night, and he knew that she was adding in big childish figures because her eyes were so poor. That she, who was so timid, so frightened and fluttering about the world she lived in, nevertheless had attacked and defeated the mathematics on those grocery bags—dragging him and his brother into their teen years—this was part of the solidarity between him and Rachel. At last he had been able to take her out of the laundry.

Nevertheless he felt scarred. . . .

He went to see Rachel that winter. Whenever he went to see her there was this challenge of her life upon him, to give a name to it. And because he had found no name for it he had to nerve himself for it, a feat like diving into cold water. He came up by that perpetual Bronx Express shining its red and green eyes down the tunnel. The train ride through Manhattan set up the rhythm of remembering. As the train broke into the open out of Manhattan, as it made that turn through the iron-scarred cut into the East Bronx, the tenements rose up swollen and sullen gray and winking their dull yellow lights. He walked stiffly and defensively through these streets as through an enemy terrain. For these alleys had been his playground. And he had grown up among men sitting at curbs in the hot wet sunlight of the New York summer staring into emptiness and he had felt the miserable spinning out of the years, the adult world going down the rope ladder of their lives pulled by the one way pull of time—remorseless gravity of time pulling them down. . . .

Usually she was waiting for Sam to come home, in the universal manner of all mothers of hardworking sons, a waiting by windows as for returning soldiers. He thought if it was for a soldier, it would be like this, the waiting for the first sight of him over the hill coming homeward. . . .

And when Sam came in, there was the grayness in his face, the grayness of the long hard day in which the man is fatally behind the pace of the machine. He wore the friction mark in his face, the infallible mark of the personality demurring, braked against the pace of the mechanical thing, and the locked body dragged through the performance. . . .

And out of his day's work his brother fell asleep on the couch, with the lighted cigarette beginning to slide out of his fingers. And the mother of the hard soldier came into the parlor and took the burning cigarette out of his hand just in time. Rachel looked down on him, on the good eye and the weak injured eye both closed in the evening nap.

"The eye. . . ." Her voice troubled, self-accusing.

"What could you do?"

"A good doctor maybe he have two good eyes in his head today?"

"But you couldn't afford a good doctor."

The self-accusing was strong and he could not erase it. The stone alleys below these windows . . . Rachel Miller put on her reading glasses, and with this act, like an act of magic she entered her new domain, she shut her personal daily world out and entered this other one that she had discovered in her middle years, the world of events. Bent over the newspaper, over the book, she had shed her day. . . .

The woman over the book trying to make for herself a map of the world, the man on the couch with his good eye and his bad eye shut, and the stone valley. . . .

"OK, darling, I keep my fingers crossed for you," she said, lifting her head, then plunging back into the precious printed page. . . .

Rachel was going to school now and they talked in that odd parity which had grown between them.

"Harry," she said, distressed on one of his visits, "everything is good but the fractions."

"The fractions?"

"Numerators with denominators, it's killing me."

He helped her by cutting up oranges, apples and tearing off sheets of paper making the kitchen into a frenzied laboratory. But the *numerator* and *denominator* of it still eluded her. Distress showed in her face.

"With English I'm good," she said proudly, "forget the fractions. Dreiser a wonderful man, I been reading Sister Carrie."

"You like him?" He sat in the warm kitchen and she had made the late pot of coffee. "Why?"

She thought about this for a moment. "He writes a life story," she said gravely.

He knew what she meant. She meant the totality of life that was encompassed. She had found the American writer

when she was full-grown, and if words escaped her the cumulative impact, the intent of the man did not.

He said, "I've met a girl, a nice girl."

"Intelligent?"

He knew she did not mean quite that, rather someone quick and sparkling, not dull, and he said, "yes."

"Jewish? I'm a tolerant person, Harry, but it makes out for better when two people are the same kind of people. . . . You agree with me or not?"

"Yes, I agree with you."

His voice was so dry she looked at him carefully to see if he was laughing at her. To make sure he understood her, she said emphatically, "I am a very modern person, but it's only better that way."

She looked at him for a long moment hoping he would tell her more about this woman he was seeing, but he said nothing more about it. As she thought of him with a woman, she thought of another man with a woman, who was herself. The stone of her marriage moved in its socket, hurting. The man buying her a gift once, a bribe, taking her life with his tongue and his gifts. The stone groaned in its socket, making the sharp pain. She felt her blood pressure rise (it had been bothering her lately), and a headache suddenly throbbed in her temples.

"Another cup of coffee, Harry?"

"Alright."

They drank the coffee not speaking now. And though he said nothing, still she managed to convey something to him. She felt he could be badly hurt and she spoke in a vast indirection saying, "be strong, be strong."

Be strong. . . . Strong? Strong for what, that was what he wanted to know.

She put her hand on his shoulder and it was hard and unyielding under her hand as it sometimes had been when he was young. He would complicate life for himself, he would complicate it in his own way, stubbornly and willfully. She felt cold with the thought.

"A cup of coffee," said Rachel brightly, "with the dripolator I make it, it comes out very good."

THE MAKING OF AMERICAN JEWISH CONCERT MUSIC

By S. Finkelstein

MUSIC has been loved by the Jewish people from time immemorial, and the music of the Jews has made an invaluable contribution to the world musical heritage. The Gregorian chant, for instance, which formed the basis of a great mass of the magnificent choral music of medieval and Renaissance times, was in important respects a development out of Hebrew ritual music. And Jewish folk music has had a fruitful influence on the growth of European folk song, which in turn formed the idiomatic basis of a great mass of European composition.

However, while the composition of music, in the modern individualistic sense, began some six centuries ago, musical composition by Jews began little more than a century ago. As in other realms of art, Jewish composition was belated because of the restricted life of the ghetto. When the Jewish people were emancipated at the end of the eighteenth century, as one result of the bourgeois democratic revolution, Jewish artists in all the arts began also to emerge from the ghetto and take their place in the stream of western culture. Almost immediately Jewish

composers came to the fore. But the tendency was for these composers to turn their backs completely on the Jewish tradition. The two outstanding Jewish composers of the nineteenth century, Felix Mendelssohn and Jacob Meyerbeer, adopted completely the idioms and practices they found in the cultural life they entered. There is not a hint of what may be called a national or Jewish quality in their work.

Even after the emancipation, the Jewish people was by no means freed from prejudice and discrimination. Yet each opening of the door, however slight, has resulted in a brilliant flowering of creative activity. Typical is the musical culture of Germany and Austria before these countries became nazi hell-holes. Two of their foremost composers were Jews, Gustave Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg. Jewish performers played a major part in musical interpretation, and Jewish scholars in musical theory and criticism. Conductors such as Bruno Walter and Leo Blech, pianists such as Artur Schnabel and Rudolf Serkin, became educative and enlightening forces in the musical life of the country.

Participation in American Music

The picture is similar in our own country, where the Jewish contribution is so great that it is hard to conceive of American musical life without it. Jewish activity is found in every sphere of musical life. The roster of Jewish composers includes—to mention a few—such names as Aaron Copland, William Schumann, Frederick Jacoby, Marc Blitzstein, Sam Morgenstern, Elie Siegmeister, Arthur Cohn, Lazare Saminsky, Leonard Bernstein, David Diamond, Alex North, Herbert Haufrecht, Norman Cazden, Henry Brant, as well as the Swiss-born Ernest Bloch, who has been connected with American musical life for thirty years. Jews are prominent as concert performers, and make up a great percentage of concert audiences. Jews such as George Gershwin, Jerome Kern and Irving Berlin have provided some of the best-loved popular songs of the American people for the past two generations. In fact, the contribution of the Jewish people to American popular music is second only to that of the Negro people. In addition, there has been a specifically Jewish musical life. It includes Jewish singing societies and music written for them by men such as Jacob Schaeffer and Jacob Weinberg, Jewish musical comedy, musical performances in YMHA's and the Educational Alliance of New York, the efforts of some reformed temples to build up a body of composed music for Jewish ritual.

Without minimizing the importance of the latter music, it is safe to say that the greatest part of musical activity by Jews in America has been away from the specifically Jewish. Generally, the Jewish composer does not regard himself as a writer of Jewish music, and this attitude reflects that of the Jewish performers and music audiences. It is to hear the heritage of music from Bach to Shostakovich that Jewish audiences flock to Carnegie Hall and the

Lewisohn Stadium, and it is upon their performance of music from Bach to Shostakovich that the great majority of Jewish pianists, violinists and conductors pride themselves.

Similarly, although Copland has written a work on Jewish melodies, the great body of his composition is intended as a contribution to what might be called the international stream of musical culture. The same is true of Schumann, and of a host of the younger composers. We frequently have a curious anomaly such as took place last season in New York when a Jewish pianist, Leo Smits, and a Jewish conductor, Leonard Bernstein, performed a work by a Jewish composer, Copland's *Jazz Concerto*, to an audience predominantly Jewish. Yet the character of the event was as if everybody concerned had checked their national origins in the lobby.

Assimilation or Integration

One can have several possible responses to the above situation. One attitude toward it is to say that it is a kind of cultural assimilationism, which must be denounced as opposed to the progress of a Jewish national life and Jewish culture. Another is to say that music is an international and universal language. Still another asserts that, even if national manifestations are possible to other people, they are not possible to the Jewish people in America. Others—myself among them—would say that the "assimilationism" in this situation is not really assimilationism but is a necessary and progressive stage in the creation of a living Jewish cultural life; that it is only an intermediate stage; that Jewish artists and audiences must begin to consider new steps that must be taken to meet the needs both of the Jewish people in America and of American culture as a whole.

Assimilationism must be dismissed as hostile to needs of the American Jewish people. Assimilationism is a form of American nationalism. Neither does the contrary viewpoint, Jewish nationalism in art, have validity. It would cut off Jewish artists and audiences from the great achievements of modern culture. It would restrict the Jewish musician to idioms and ideas that are insufficiently meaningful to him. It would limit Jewish culture to forms that would be almost predominantly folkish or archaic.

The belief that a national music is not possible for the Jewish people is widely found among Jewish artists, audiences and intellectuals. Germany and Austria are probably the lands in which there was the greatest flowering of musical production by Jewish artists in creative channels completely divorced from Jewish national consciousness. German Jews have prided themselves on being above political and national considerations.

Mendelssohn revived the almost forgotten Lutheran music of Johann Sebastian Bach, and himself wrote a Lutheran work, the *Reformation Symphony*, which turned out, incidentally, to be one of his least inspired creations. His own music was a combination of Beethoven's classic

designs with the kind of romantic color and German national melody that had been developed by Weber. Mahler conceived his symphonies as a synthesis of Austrian musical culture and philosophical thought, seen in the twilight glow of Vienna before the First World War. Schoenberg was the greatest follower of the Wagnerian aesthetic, and his musical system is the foremost expression in our own times of German idealist culture in its last stage of individualistic flight from society. German Jews have been among the greatest performers of the music of the outspoken anti-Semite, Wagner. Bruno Walter, driven into exile by the nazis, gave glowing performances of the music of Richard Strauss while Strauss was helping organize German musical life for Hitler.

I do not point such facts out to arouse any disrespect for these men, so outstanding in their achievements. The question, however, is whether the cultural creation of these Jewish figures was limited by the view of life and society implicit in the paths they chose. Certainly Mendelssohn, the darling of upper class German and English society, a society bristling with anti-Semitism, must have felt many pin-pricks. Does the weakness of his music reflect a divided personality, reflect the fact that one part of his mind and heart must have been kept secret? It is ironical that Mahler and Schoenberg should not only have been enthusiastic Germans, but culturally more German than the Germans. No composers have been more whole-souled in their deification of music than these two, more completely divorced from any opportunism or showmanship. But the very purity of their music, placed in a tradition that was itself decadent, led to a kind of masterly expression of decadence, to a type of art which announced that a pessimistic isolation from the masses was the only attitude fit for a twentieth century cultured human being.

Schoenberg is too great a musical mind to be disposed of in a few generalizations. His music is moving and beautiful, his musical system has opened up new approaches to the art that have been taken up by composers the world over. But it is plain, I think, that both his aesthetic and its musical results represent only one, narrow aspect of the contemporary artistic consciousness; that it leaves unexplored too many realms of human emotion, too many possibilities of healthy contact between the artist and his people, to stand as a model for the Jewish composer to follow.

It was necessary for the Jewish people, once the ghetto restrictions were broken, to embrace with enthusiasm the entire world of culture from which they had been so rigidly out off; to rediscover, welcome and carry further the riches of human perception, the vast growth in knowledge of man and the world, the developed tools of expression, that had been brought to flower by European civilization. It is understandable that some should give this culture the almost religious devotion that I have described in talking of German musicians.

But the very internationalism, the search for universal artistic experiences free from political conflicts and social

divisions that characterized the thought of many Jewish artists, inevitably led to an exaltation of the past over the present. This European culture, was itself changing, itself torn by conflict. The conflict at the heart of European culture was between an art that would increasingly reflect the flight of the individual from the horrors of bourgeois society in its decadence, and an art that would serve the needs of the masses struggling for democracy and national freedom. The Jewish artist had a place in this conflict, a place that inevitably meant a search for the possibilities of recreating an art which would be Jewish and yet not retrogressive; one that would include all the tools, methods and achievements of the world artistic heritage.

It is in America that we can see most clearly, I think, the transitional character of the "assimilation" phase of music by Jewish composers. Aaron Copland was a leader

THE VIOLIN PLAYER

By Ben Shahn

Downtown Gallery. Photo by courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art.



among those composers who brought to America the exciting musical explorations and discoveries of Paris in the '20s. This was a most useful and necessary step in the development of American music, giving American composers an education in the materials of music, a perspective from which they could understand better the strengths and weaknesses of the nineteenth century romantic tradition, a stimulus to further exploration of new musical forms and idioms. Copland's first mature musical works such as the piano variations and the piano concerto, influenced by Stravinsky and tending towards abstraction, are landmarks of American music.

The transitional character of this aesthetic can be seen, however, in the barren production of those who remained confined to its limitations. William Schumann, for example, writes with the utmost mastery of the musical forms he handles, but regards them simply as arbitrary forms and not as living means of conveying ideas. His abstraction no longer has the excitement, the feeling of exploring new paths and discovering new principles, that characterized Copland's work. This tendency is carried further by the younger composer, David Diamond, who seems to be destroying his very real musical talent by trying to limit it to the mere manipulation of formal musical materials.

Once the lessons of Paris were absorbed, new paths had to be broken, and the next stage was the development of a recognizably American music; one that would use all the developed traditions and tools of modern music along with the folk and popular heritage of American music and themes taken from American life. In this stage also, Jewish composers played a prominent role. Elie Siegmeister helped popularize American folk song, both in recitals of his ballad singers and in compositions such as his *Ozark Set* and *Piano Sonata*. Marc Blitzstein, in his *The Cradle Will Rock*, *No For An Answer* and *Airborne Symphony*, used an idiom with a rich popular content, and themes describing contemporary struggles of the American people, in forms distinguished by their audience effectiveness. Other composers such as Haufrecht helped develop an American form, idiom and communication of ideas in their music.

But this phase also, the search for an American heritage and an American idiom of a homogeneous nature, must be considered as valuable but transitional. American culture was a creation of all the national groups that helped build the country. Now that composers, in the main, have discovered that there is such a thing as an American idiom, the next step is to discover its great variety, its multitude of different components, and its multitude of different possibilities for use and growth. In such a step the attempt of American Jewish composers to develop an American Jewish music can only be an asset to the proper development of American music as a whole.

A number of such works have already been written, such as Haufrecht's *A Call to Vilna* and Morgenstern's *Warsaw Ghetto*. And in respect to the development of a

Jewish musical idiom that will be neither narrow nor archaic, and will be fit for the expression of contemporary psychology, human images and emotional problems, the works of Ernest Bloch merit far more detailed study than they have been given.

It is Bloch's achievement to have written music that combines a Jewish idiom, a Jewish emotional experience, with the broad and epic structures of western culture and the freshness of modern harmony and counterpoint. It would be wrong to say that Bloch's particular emotional experiences are the kind that all Jewish composers must or can feel. I myself find in them the emotional expression of a Jew who feels that his position today is almost wholly tragic, and that the glories of the Jewish people lie in the past. There is in them a pervading tone of lamentation, so that even in the more vigorous sections there is more bitterness than joy. But within these bounds, there is the richest kind of musical texture, subtlety and imagination. There has been a lamentable failure on the part of American Jewish audiences to prize Bloch's work, and to demand more performances of it. Similarly there has been a failure on the part of American Jewish composers to study Bloch sufficiently and extract the lessons that can be found in his work.

Varied Sources for a Jewish Music

If the problems of the American Jewish composer are correctly seen, there need be no feeling of narrowness or artificial restriction about the formation of a program for an American Jewish music. Such a music may use old ritual chants, Jewish folk themes, American folklore, jazz, material from the mainstream of American and European music, for all of these materials are part of the psychology of the American Jewish people. Its idioms and forms can be enriched as its content deepens of a portrayal of the human character, problems and struggles of the American Jewish people. Such a music need not be closed off from the progress of American music as a whole, but will rather be a living part of such a musical culture, profiting from the lessons, experiments and achievements of other composers, and the cultural expression of other national groups in America.

One can go further and say that the struggle for such a music is inextricably bound up with the struggle for an all-over healthy American musical culture. It is an old story that the life of the serious American composer is that of a martyr to art. The work of the greatest American composer, Charles Ives, is still largely unheard and unknown, and the amount of money he has made from a lifetime of musical writing would not support a man today for six months. Other composers have been more fortunate in winning attention, but not one can devote his time exclusively to the writing of music.

Performances of major works are too few to enable audiences to become familiar with them, and even these are won through wire-pulling, degrading subservience to would-be philanthropists, membership in cliques. The

forms in which the American composer works, tend of necessity to be small in scope, the emotions private, the style precious. The centralization of American musical performance, and its control by the great monopolies which combine concert management, radio, phonograph recording, cinema and the musical stage, hamper still further the free development of a vigorous and broad American musical culture. This monopolization has intensified the Anglo-Saxon cultural snobbery and academism which militates against the cultural development of the many localities and national groups of the country. The Negro people, with their rich poetic and musical potentialities, have suffered even more than the Jewish from the denial of opportunities to work out a cultural life of their own on the highest levels of technique and form.

The struggle for American music is a struggle to restore a living bond between the American composer and American audiences. Thus, if Jewish audiences were to seek a music addressed directly and specifically to them,

not only in specifically Jewish institutions but on radio and in concert hall, and American Jewish composers were to think in terms of addressing directly such an audience, the results would be a boon to American musical progress as a whole. And the audience must do its part as well as the composer. Theoreticians and critics sometimes forget that before demands can be made of the artist, he must be given the opportunity to live and work as an artist, to develop his tools, experiment and work out his ideas for a receptive audience, and not the least important, make enough out of his work to feed himself and his family. There can be an American Jewish music, but it must be worked out as part of the growing consciousness of the Jewish people of themselves as a national group with their own cultural needs. And it will be worked out as both Jewish artists and the Jewish people as a whole see that this struggle for an American Jewish culture is a vital sector of the struggle for an American democratic life and culture.

THE WORLD IS WITH MAN

By Yuri Suhl

Translation from Yiddish

By Yuri Suhl and Eve Merriam

On the endless echoing shelves of Time
Stand row upon row of books—
Generation, century, epoch
Not written with pen-and-ink,
Not bound in cloth and leather
But in minutes, hours, days, weeks, years.

I reach for Volume One and gaze with awe,
I need not even blow upon it.
For Time does not gather dust upon itself—
Clear and transparent as a window, freshly washed,
The story of Life looks back at me:
As mother with child,
So the world is with man.

And through the centuries they march together:
Mother and earth, World and man.
But if a mother writhes in pain as she springs forth her
newborn,
Who can measure the agony of the world
With each faltering step it takes toward man?

I turn the pages of the oldest volume
And I gape.
I, the gentlest child of all creation
Swing from branch to branch,
Crawl on all fours—an ape.

I leaf another volume—
What a marvelous tale!

Now I am Neanderthal dwelling in the caves;
And now a shepherd—
A hunter—
Nomad;
And now a Jew,
Wanderer in exile.

Now Moses leads me through the burning desert,
And now Torquemada leads me to the stake.

One extends a cup of water across the thirsty sand,
Another sets me fleeing like a leper from his land.
One cries: *Jude Gott verdamt!*
Another spits with scorn: *Zhid parchate!*
And everywhere I am the Jew,
Oppressed and bent, outcast, despised;
When freed, freedom never whole,
Until Lenin takes me like a father by the hand
And returns to me the dignity of my people's past,
He gives me back my pride,
And says: Jew, there shall be light in your eyes!

And Stalin speaks a single word
That through the ages will resound.
He says to me: you are a Man,
Worthiest of all capital.

Now Time is writing the twentieth century
With bloodstained pain and hope.
Wonder must come to pass:
The world with new man, with new world.

GREETINGS FROM THE TSAR

A Short Story

By Leo Bilander

POP took off his glasses and wiped them with the corner of the white tablecloth. We were sitting in the small but comfortable kitchen made cozier by the glow of the Friday night candle-light. The boyish gleam in Pop's eyes told us he was about to launch into an anecdote or a folk-tale. There was never an occasion that failed to bring to his mind an appropriate story. Various heroes peopled his imaginative canvass. There was the hungry gypsy who cooked a horse-shoe in the kitchen of a hostile peasant woman and obtained a wholesome soup; the village carrier nursing a hopeless passion for the Rabbi's young and comely wife; and there was the poor shoemaker who became rich overnight by learning a coveted secret. Pop was a superb story-teller. In his voice they laughed and cried, danced and sang.

"I'll never forget the day I received my greetings from the Tsar," he began, shifting himself in his chair crammed between the cereal closet and the table. "It was a sunny spring day and I remember getting up a little earlier than usual to take a walk to the woods before breakfast. When I came back my father told me the news.

"The sun disappeared, the day turned into night, the spring into winter.

"Whoever thought . . . ! We all knew it would come as inevitably as night follows day, but, somehow, we would never think of it. Why think of unpleasant things to come? There was enough grief at hand. You may wonder, Julie, why your father-in-law dreaded going into the Tsarist army. You may also wonder why a successful draft-dodger in those days was greeted with envy and not contempt. You always talk about things changing. I suppose this is one of them.

"The Tsarist army wasn't exactly a democratic army, very few armies are, I guess, but that army was dreaded particularly by the poor Jews who lived in small villages. And small wonder it was. Often tales of horror and tears circulated whenever people gathered, even at weddings. And things were told, as to make one's hair stand up on end: the torturing, the whippings, the lashes of the Cossack's knout! And the pogroms? That was the gratitude the Jew received for serving the Tsar!

"The rich Jews were in a position to bribe the army officials. I don't have to tell about the corruption in that Army. But what about the Jews who had no resources but their own two hands?

"THAT NIGHT I WENT TO BED, MY HEART HEAVY AND DARK. I tossed and tossed but could not fall asleep. My skin crackling under an imaginary whip. A huge bearded Cossack was standing over me. In my ears rang the foul words:

You accursed Jew-boy! I waved my fists as though to ward off the blows that never came. I jumped out of bed, my shirt drenched with sweat. I trembled. Suddenly I noticed a light in the kitchen. I tip-toed to the door and heard my parents talk in low voices:

"Sarah," my father was saying, 'something must be done.'

"I know, Abraham," my mother replied, 'What can we do? What can any poor Jew do when the mighty Tsar makes up his mind?'

"Tsar or no Tsar," growled my father, 'Sam won't go into this accursed army! I'll kill him with my own hands first.' His stony voice made me shudder. I stood there embracing the door like a child that just begins to walk.

"For the love of God, Abraham," I heard my mother shriek. She soon began to sob. I wanted to run to her and bury my head in her lap but the fear of my father held me back.

"What are you crying for?" said my father in a repressed voice, 'Will your tears help? Then why waste them?'

"Silence fell and all I heard was the nervous pacing of my father's boots that made the floor creak in spots.

"Maybe I should go to Rebe Schmiel," timidly offered my mother, 'He's a smart man, he always thinks of something. Remember Eli's son who got caught crossing the border?'

"Why shouldn't I remember? Didn't I help raise the money?" He paused for a moment and then cried out: 'Of course, why didn't I think of that before? We'll take him to the Rykowski Mills!'

"Rykowski Mills?" echoed my mother, horrified. 'You don't mean . . . !'

"Yes, that's what I mean. Why not? Sam'll have a few fingers cut off. Nobody'll need know. It's not the first time somebody lost a hand there.'

"I recoiled with horror. I put my hands to my face to feel if my fingers were still there. I won't let them, something shouted inside of me. Never! Not my fingers! I was born with them and I will die with them!

"Do you know what you're saying?" my mother gasped. 'Have you no fear of God?'

"Yes but there is no other way," my father said.

"That's my only son!" cried my mother, 'I didn't bring him up to be a cripple!'

"Would you rather have him dead?" asked my father. His voice grew softer as he said, 'Nothing terrible'll happen to him. We'll be very careful. Just press his hand against the stone. It'll take only a few seconds. So he'll lose a few fingers. Didn't Reb Moishe get married and have a fine family? And yet he has only one hand.'

"I know," said my mother.

"So you see," my father continued more hopefully, "I'm sure God'll forgive us this act. Imagine how grieved He would be knowing a Jew served in an army that oppressed His people."

"If you say so, Abraham. God help our Sam!"

"He will," I heard by father say, "He will. He always does."

"Whether God would help me or not, I had my own opinion on the matter. My fingers were to be cut off and nobody else's. I never heard of God restoring fingers to anybody who had lost them and there was no reason to believe I was going to be an exception. But what could I

"When are you going to tell Sam?" my mother suddenly asked.

"Better you tell him. After all, a mother—"

"Yes, it's always the mother," she sighed.

"I didn't hear the sentence finished. I flung the door open and dashed through the kitchen into the yard. It was dark and chilly outside. I had forgotten I was in my nightshirt. I remember stumbling and bruising my knees. But I got up and kept on running. I heard shouts and screams but they only made me run faster. I reached the field where the grass grew tall and threw myself upon the ground. I whimpered like a lashed dog. I cursed my father, my mother, the Tsar, God and even the stars that shone in the sky that night. I wanted to throw myself into the pond but I thought of my mother and how the news would break her heart. I don't remember how long I lay in the field that night. The chill drove me back home."

Pop paused to wipe his glasses again.

"THE FOLLOWING MORNING," HE RESUMED, "WE LEARNED that I was not only one to submit to an accident. My cousin Berek who was my *cheder* classmate had, too, received greetings from the Tsar. Berek was shy, serious and a bookworm. His father, a bookbinder, prided himself in his son's learning and decided Berek was to become a rabbi. But Berek played the violin and loved music. He laughed each time his father would mention a rabbinical career. Playing music was more fun than quoting Holy Scriptures, he told me once. Some day he would go to St. Petersburg to study music. Of course, his father wouldn't know about it. He'd just go away and write him a letter. I told him he was a fool and threatened to tell my uncle about it. Of course, I never did. I just envied him being able to go to a fabulous city and play for the rich people I always heard about but never saw.

"I don't know if Berek ever thought the Tsar might interfere with his plans. Berek was a weak boy and the way he looked, pale, thin, one might have thought he had

IN MY VILLAGE

By Yosel Cutler



consumption. You can imagine my surprise when I heard that Berek was to meet us at the Rykowski Mills! I didn't believe it. What about his violin and St. Petersburg? I rushed to see Berek. His haggard face told me it was true. He refused to talk to me and I left my uncle's house feeling miserable. I had forgotten what was in store for *me*, I could only think of my cousin Berek, the gifted darling of the village.

"That day our village was in the state of excitement. Rumors were going around that Berek wanted to kill himself and that he was being guarded every minute of the day. Some thought my uncle was a beast for wanting to destroy a gift that, surely, came from God. Some women shook their heads and said that if Berek's mother had lived she would have protected her son. The water-carrier who hated my uncle for some reason or other, even went on to say that my uncle was happy to have his son's fingers cut off so Berek wouldn't be able to play the fiddle any longer and there would be nothing else left but to study the Holy Scriptures. I vaguely realized that nothing was said about my father. My fingers, I suppose, did not matter. Only Berek's did.

"But what about Berek? Had he nothing to say about himself. Did he agree to what his father commanded him to do? I knew he loved his father but so did he love his fiddle.

"THAT EVENING MY UNCLE CAME TO OUR HOUSE TO TALK TO my father. It was decided that Berek and I, together with our parents, were to meet at the Rykowski Mills close to midnight. There was no risk being caught by an unwelcome intruder for the Mills were located outside of the village and seldom did a soul venture there at that hour.

"I could not eat my supper that night, though my mother prepared the food she knew I liked most. It seemed to me the time was standing still. I hoped and prayed and kept my tears back. My mother kissed me and begged her 'sun-

shine' and 'pearl' and 'sweetest boy' not to be afraid. My father was silent, and avoided looking at my mother. She followed us outside and sat down upon the bench. I knew she would still be there when we came back. But *how* would I come back?

"Just as we passed the last house on the outskirts of the village, two shadows detached themselves from a hut and joined us. Neither side greeted the other. Not a word was said. We moved along like spirits listening to our own footsteps. There was nothing to say."

"I managed to leave my father's side and walk alongside of Berek. He seemed to be hardly breathing. I tugged at his sleeve. Around us were open fields and to the left began the woods. The moon was dim and protective. It was not too late. One could make a dash for it and be gone. To St. Petersburg! Anywhere!

"I whispered softly. But Berek pretended he did not hear me. Perhaps he didn't at that. He was quiet and from the way he walked I guessed there was nothing anybody could have done with him. If he had but breathed a word I wouldn't have hesitated!

"But Berek would steal a glance at his father, then stare at the dirt road ahead of us and move soundlessly along.

"I heard the gushing of the mill-stream and I knew we had reached our destination. Berek and his father detached themselves from us and were lost in the dark. It was only then that I learned he was to be 'first.' My father scanned the fields around us but there was nothing to be seen.

"SUDDENLY I HEARD A SCREAM. COULD I EVER TELL YOU HOW it sounded? If I could I wouldn't be telling this story, maybe I'd write it down myself. Berek screamed. I guess each scream we heard had something more horrible than the other. Berek's scream had pain and terror and a thousand other things I could never explain.

"My father and I stood rooted to the spot.

"'Abraham!' came a panicky voice, 'Come here, quick! Berek fainted.'"

"My father rushed forward, leaving me alone.

"It was then that I made up my mind. I started running in the direction where the woods lay. My feet ripped the grassy knots and easily cleared the bushes and tree-stumps. I felt as though carried by wind. I don't know how long I ran. I reached the woods and hid in a thick bush. I felt dizzy and nauseous. My temples were about to burst. I was going to run further away but I couldn't get up. I heard someone trudge through the field. It was my father. He was calling me but I didn't answer.

"'Sammy, where are you, Sammy? Your father orders you to come back! Do you hear me?' I knew by the sound of his voice how angry he was. But I didn't care. All I could hear was Berek's scream.

"'I'm doing it for your own good, my Sammy,' he coaxed in a softer tone, 'Don't you understand? Berek's all right. He was a little shocked, that's all. They came off very easy.'"

"He waited for me to speak but I kept my silence.

"'If you don't want to—well, that's up to you. Come out. We'll go home.'"

"He sounded suddenly tired and depressed. I hesitated. Maybe he was using guile. I didn't know whether to trust him or not.

"'I promise to take you straight home,' he began again. 'Believe me, I will. My mother should rest in peace that I won't touch your hand.'"

"His voice broke off. I got off the ground and went out to meet him.

"He embraced me silently.

"'How's Berek?' I asked.

"'They're half way home by now,' he said, turning away from me.

"My mother was sitting outside waiting for us. She ran towards me and grasped my hands. When he saw they were unharmed she covered them with kisses. Inside the kitchen my father was cutting a loaf of bread. I reached for the salt and gave it to him. He did not lift his head.

"'Thank you, Abraham,' my mother said quietly. 'I knew you wouldn't do it.'"

"My father looked at me but said nothing.

"We were both thinking of Berek.

"THE FOLLOWING MORNING MY MOTHER WOKE EARLY, TIED a bundle of food and announced she was taking a trip. My father expressed no surprise. He seemed as if he didn't care.

"Three days later my mother came back, her eyes like pools of light.

"'You're going to America, Sammy boy,' she said, kissing me, 'I got the money for your ticket. You'll be leaving in a few days.'"

"I did leave several days later. But before I left I attended my cousin Berek's funeral. He died of gangrene not long after the 'accident.'"

Pop finished the story. He took a tea-spoon and toyed with it absently.

"When you went to the army, Julie, I said to myself: Sam, if you were only his age!"

"Imagine your father-in-law in the army," laughed Mom. "I can't get him to drive a nail into the wall. I'm not saying he could, mind you."

"You may laugh as much as you want to," said Pop, looking at her reproachfully. "Once I'd get a gun into my hand I'd know how to shoot it. My hand would be steady, I'd be young quick enough. All I'd have to do is think of those nazi beasts that gassed and burned my brother and his wife and his children."

He threw the spoon into his cup and splashed the tea over the table. We looked at him, surprised at his sudden demonstration of fury. Mom got a dry rag and began to wipe the table.

"Yes, Sam," Mom said, looking at him, "I suppose you'd make a fine soldier, after all."

