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*Hebrew News*, a unique quadrilingual newspaper that appeared in the U.S (1871) in four languages: Hebrew, English, German and Yiddish.

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## WRITING "WITH 70 PENS" AND IN MANY LANGUAGES

The sociology of the Jewish press can be as exciting and enticing as its history.

Some 19 years ago, in December 1970, a centennial celebration of the Jewish press of America was held at the residence of then-President of Israel Zalman Shazar. To be more precise, it was the centennial of the Yiddish press of America, for English and German newspapers had preceded the Yiddish press there.

President Shazar delivered an enthusiastic speech, as was his way, about the role of the press in the lives of the Jewish people in their various diasporas. During the course of his remarks he outlined an original theory which deserves to be explored retroactively by contemporary researchers as to its relevance today, especially in the U.S.

His theory, briefly, was that there was a great difference between the historical role of Jewish diasporas in which there was a Jewish daily press, and those in which there was no such press. Shazar explicitly cited Germany, which had had a highly intellectual Jewish community. The German Jewish intelligentsia "wrote with 70 pens," according to his graphic oratory. They wrote poetry and prose in every genre. But they didn't have a Jewish daily press.

In the pre-Revolutionary Russian diaspora, Jews did control a Russian-language daily — *Novosti* — but it did not replace a Jewish daily paper. While there was a Hebrew daily press in Russia, including *Ha-Melitz* and *Ha-Tzfitah*, it had a limited readership. There was no Yiddish daily, and most of the Jewish population had to draw its daily information, as well as its political and ideological education, from the non-Jewish press. Ultimately, who can say how this influenced the fate of the Jews there?

How did Poland's Jewry, with its prolific Jewish press, and especially its high-level Yiddish daily press, fit into Shazar's original theory? In reviewing the record of that event, and from my own personal recollection, I find that he failed to refer to it. This is the place, then, to mention that we are paying homage to this press, and to its language — Yiddish — in a comprehensive article in this issue of *Qesher* by journalist and author Mordecai Tsanin who conveys his intimate knowledge, and that of other Holocaust survivors, about the rise and fall of the Jewish press in the largest Jewish center of pre-war Europe. Included in the Yiddish

section of the magazine are several other articles on Yiddish periodicals, especially the prestigious literary journal *Goldene Keyt*, although all this constitutes only a drop in the vast sea which will be explored in future issues.

Meanwhile, let us return to Shazar. "The Jewish instinct," he said in 1970, "was to establish a highly varied Yiddish daily press in the U.S." Today, of course, there no longer is a Jewish daily press in the U.S. — neither in Yiddish nor in the language of the land. Whether there is significance in this fact, and what that significance is, will not be considered in this introductory article. But, undoubtedly, research of the "biography" and bibliography of the Jewish press in the U.S., in all its languages, can prove a rich source for the study of American Jewish history in recent generations. This conviction is shared by Professor Moses Rischin, who has contributed an article to this issue on the most important Jewish paper in America, the *Forward*, and its brilliant editor, Abe Cahan. In an article he published in 1954 for the tercentenary of the American Jewish community, Professor Rischin defined the Jewish press as both "a highly fertile source and, paradoxically, the most neglected source of information on the Jews in the U.S." Robert Singerman, in an essay on the bibliography of the American Jewish press published in *American Jewish History*, rightly calls for the documentation and compilation of all research done on this multi-lingual press — "its collective history as well as that of each individual periodical — and the application of this research to wider historical and sociological contexts." An important contribution in this area is made by Professor Arthur A. Goren who, in this issue of *Qesher*, surveys the development of the Jewish press in the U.S. from the appearance of the first periodical, *The Jew*, in 1823, which was devoted entirely to combatting missionaries, to our time. He deals with several contemporary English-language periodicals which comprise an accurate representation of the various ideological, political and religious points of view within the American Jewish community.

Robert Singerman, in his survey, mentions only four languages — English, German, Hebrew and Yiddish — perhaps in reference to the unique quadrilingual periodical, *Hebrew News*, whose cover is reproduced on our cover. As far as I know, this multi-lingual journalistic feat has never

been paralleled, either within or outside the Jewish press. Its co-founder and co-editor, Zvi Hirsch Bernstein, who together with Kasriel Sarasohn (the subject of another article in this issue), is considered a pioneer of the Hebrew and Yiddish press in the U.S., provided background on the *Hebrew News* in an article published in the annual review *Yalkut Ma'aravi* (New York, 1904). An excerpt from this article, which is a gem in style as well as in content, is printed in the original Hebrew elsewhere in this issue.

This tri-lingual issue of *Qesher* contains only a small portion of the story of the North American Jewish press and its founders. It is unlikely that anyone knows how many papers were published since the first English-language Jewish paper appeared. Some disappeared immediately after their emergence, leaving no trace in any archive or library, while others lasted longer. Some were independent papers, others were supplements of larger papers. (During certain periods, such as political campaigns, American newspapers would publish "ethnic" supplements, including some intended for the Jewish community, in various languages.)

Included in this issue are articles on the Ladino-language American Jewish press and on the German Jewish press. We also know that at various periods Jewish newspapers were published in at least four other languages — Hungarian, Romanian, Polish and Russian.

When the well-known bibliography by Mendel Probst appeared in 1925 in *Kiryat Sefer*, the National and Hebrew University Library bibliographical quarterly, it cited no fewer than 871 Jewish periodicals in America up until 1920: 457 in English, 323 in Yiddish (including 50 dailies, most of them short-lived), 58 in Hebrew, 28 in German and a few in other languages. Hundreds of other American Jewish papers rose and fell during the ensuing 70 years.

Although most of this issue is devoted to the American Jewish press, we have also included articles and essays about Jewish newspapers and journalists in other parts of the world as well, in keeping with our editorial policy. Outstanding in this section is Nissim Kazzaz's article on the Iraqi Jewish press, which could also serve as an interesting source for research not only of the history of the Jewish press of Iraq but of the history and sociology of the whole Jewish community in one of our people's most ancient diasporas. It is

astonishing to learn how few Jewish newspapers appeared in Iraq, compared with Jewish centers in other Moslem countries. In the last issue of *Qesher*, the figure of 138 Jewish newspapers was cited for the community in Tunisia. There were dozens of Jewish papers in Egypt. While Mr. Kazzaz offers an explanation for the Iraqi phenomenon, there is much room for further research on this topic.

In a practical vein, I should like to mention Gavriel Strasman's piece on a subject which has increasingly occupied the media in the West — how to avoid, and protect against, libel suits. It is an up-to-date guide which should be found on every Israeli journalist's and editor's desk.

A few final words: The publication of this expanded special issue of *Qesher* was made possible by the generosity of a man who has given his moral and financial support to a great many institutions in Israel — Sam Rothberg. Although he resides in the West, to be exact, in Peoria, Ill., his heart is with us here. For many years now he has been involved in matters related to both the material and the spiritual aspects of Israeli life: the United Jewish Appeal, Israel Bonds, the Jewish Agency, the Hebrew University and many other projects. The fact that the subject of the Jewish press, a splendid aspect of our people's rich culture, struck a responsive chord in this public-spirited man is testimony both to Mr. Rothberg's character and to the importance of the subject.



Head of the Journalism Studies Program  
and Institute for Research of the Jewish Press

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# THE JEWISH PRESS IN THE U.S.

ARTHUR A. GOREN

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It is remarkable that in a nation where immigration has been so central to its development, the immigrant or ethnic press has received such little scholarly attention. To this day Robert E. Park's study, *The Immigrant Press and its Control*, published in 1922, remains the one comprehensive work on the subject. A sociologist, Park was interested primarily in the contemporary problem of immigrant acculturation. In the Jewish field, scholarly research is only slightly better. Mordecai Soltes's *The Yiddish Press*, which appeared in 1925, is a valuable early study of one aspect of the history of the Jewish press in America. His interest was essentially the same as Park's. In the years immediately following World War II several collections of monographs in Yiddish appeared, written mostly by Yiddish journalists and literary critics, that sketched the development of the leading Yiddish dailies. Only in the 1960s did a handful of historians of American Jewish life begin to examine the Jewish press in any depth. Since their concern was primarily the mass migration of East European Jews to America, they, too, ignored all but the Yiddish press of that period. This study is a first effort to sketch the entire history of Jewish periodicals in the United States, and it therefore must depend, to a considerable degree, upon the secondary historical literature that exists, memories and biographies, and only a sampling of the periodicals themselves.

The Jewish press in America, beginning in 1843 with the appearance of the first successful periodical, the monthly *Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, reflected the presence of both an acculturated Jewish community and a continual flow of Jewish immigration. The foreign languages in which the periodicals appeared — German, Yiddish and, to a lesser degree, Hebrew and Ladino — demonstrated the diversity of cultures Jewish immigrants brought with them in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From the 1930s to the 1980s, following the decline or demise of the older foreign-language press, new periodicals in German, and then

in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian, responded to the needs of the most recent immigrants. However, the first journals published for any length of time were English-language — Anglo-Jewish — papers which multiplied and changed as the Americanized segment of the community grew in size and complexity. Thus, from the beginning of the Jewish press, English-language periodicals nurtured an ethnic culture in English. In this respect, the Jews differed from most other ethnic groups, where the demand for information about the new country in the immigrant's native tongue and the hunger for news from the Old World provided the impetus for establishing foreign-language newspapers, and language loss coincided with the passing of the immigrant press. When language loss occurred to the Jews, most notably during the past four decades, highly acculturated second-, third- and fourth-generation Jews produced a remarkably multifaceted ethnic press in English that had a venerable tradition.

Significantly, even during the middle third of the nineteenth century, when a substantial Jewish immigration from German-speaking countries changed the complexion of American Jewry (in 1880 two-thirds of the 250,000 Jews in the United States were of German origin), Anglo-Jewish periodicals outnumbered those in German and survived longer. The first German-language periodical of any longevity, the monthly *Die Deborah*, was founded in Cincinnati in 1855 by Isaac Mayer Wise, the leading Reform rabbi of the time, as a women's supplement to his English-language *Israelite*. The following year another Reform rabbi, David Einhorn of Baltimore, began publishing *Sinai*. Twenty-five years later, in addition to *Die Deborah*, only the *Zeitgeist* ("Spirit of the Age"), published in Milwaukee, was appearing solely in German, while two Anglo-Jewish weeklies carried German-language sections. In the early 1900s, the last periodical in German ceased publication. Altogether, during the life span of the German-Jewish immigrant generation, sixteen periodicals publishing wholly or partly in German had

# Israels Herald.

7. NISSAN 5609.

New-York, 30. März 1849.

No. 1.

## Israels Herald,

redigirt und herausgegeben von

**Isidor Busch,**

erscheint jeden **Freitag** Vermittag.

Abonnement, in New-York beim Herausgeber

419 Grand Street und in der Druckerei von

J. Mählbauer 237 Division Street.

Halbjährig: Ein Dollar 50 Cents.

Vierteljährig: 75 Cents

In Vorausbezahlung an den Austräger.

Eine einzelne Nummer: 64 Cents.

er gab sie zunächst uns, und durch uns der in Betracht kommt. Aber das genügt Die-  
ganzen übrigen Menschheit. len nicht, sie sagen: „die Einen werden sich

Jedes Wort dieser Lehre ist ewige Wahr- nur den Antritt der Unarbeitsheißigkeit geben,  
heit; aber die göttliche Weisheit, die in und mit leidenschaftlichem Eifer, in kühnem  
Allem Einem Maße setzt, hat — indem Tene, der Wahrheit die Ehre zu geben ke-  
ne diese Lehre dem Menschen gab — ihm thenern, die Andern werden, nach Grunde  
denn nicht das fernere Streben nach Er- und Beweise für ihre Meinung, war Was  
kenntnis, das Versehen eines Geistes nach und Treue gegen die der Allen zu richten  
diesen höchsten Wahrheiten abzuschnitten, wissen.“

es ihm weder unmöglich noch unmöglich ge- Nun, denken werdet Ihr doch nicht leicht  
macht. Im Gegentheil hat sie gerade die 'Glauben schenken' und wir werden bald  
tes Versehen ihm als heilige Pflicht aufzer- finden, ob sie nicht bei der nächsten Rücksicht

"Israels Herald," the first German Jewish newspaper in America, 1849

appeared. In contrast, in 1855 five Anglo-Jewish weeklies or monthlies were being published. Within two years, two more appeared. Between 1880 and 1903 the number rose from seven, published in five cities, to thirty-two, published in twenty-two cities.

The reasons for the relative weakness of the German-language Jewish press require explanation when one considers the place the German language held in the life of the German Jewish immigrants. For a generation at least, German Jewish immigrants spoke German in their homes, clubs and synagogues. However, since they were part of the great migration of German-speaking immigrants, settling in neighborhoods where the Germans concentrated, and coming with a generation or more of exposure to German culture, they possessed a dual ethnic identity — German and Jewish. Many of these Jews participated in the social and cultural life of their fellow German immigrants and preferred the thriving German-language press, which included daily newspapers on a high level, to their own more circumscribed German-Jewish weeklies. Moreover, the fact that the German Jews were concentrated in mercantile endeavors and achieved a remarkable rate of upward mobility resulted in rapid Americanization.

Paradoxically, the mass emigration from Eastern Europe, which began in 1881, contributed to the growth and quality of the Anglo-Jewish press. The presence of a highly visible Yiddish-speaking population heightened the self-consciousness of the established Jews, now mostly middle-class and well integrated into American life. The flood of Eastern European Jewish immigrants presented a threat to their status.

However, a host of new problems involving the integration of new immigrants into society required public discussion and communal solutions. Both factors intensified and extended Jewish organizational life and stimulated the expansion of the Anglo-Jewish press.

During the forty years of mass migration, 2.3 million Jews from Russia, Poland, Galicia and Romania settled in the United States. The Eastern European Jews brought with them a highly developed communal tradition, a strong collective identity and a richly textured Yiddish culture. For generations, government repression from without and an exacting religious culture from within produced and then sustained the self-contained Jewish settlements of Eastern Europe. Treatment by the secular authorities as a corporate group enabled the Jews to maintain more readily a communal polity sanctioned and prescribed by their own religious law and custom. Language reinforced Jewish separatism. Hebrew, the language of prayer, was studied by all male children. It linked the generations in a lineal continuum to the people's biblical beginnings, and, laterally, as lingua franca of the Jewish diaspora, enabled distant communities possessing different vernacular languages to maintain ties. Yiddish, the spoken language of Jews who originated in German-speaking countries, moved eastward with the migration of Ashkenazi (German) Jews to Poland beginning in the fifteenth century. Derived from Middle-High German with a considerable mixture of Hebrew as well as some Polish and Russian, and written in Hebrew characters, it became the exclusive language of Eastern European Jews.

Contemporaneous with the mass exodus to America,



THE NEW YORK  
PUBLISHED  
BY  
ROBERT LLOYD PERLBERG  
1948

Published weekly  
Friday, October 20th,  
1948

"Two are better than One, and a Threefold Cord is not quickly broken."

VOL. I—No. 1. "KNOWLEDGE IS POWER." ROBERT LLOYD PERLBERG, 120 W. 42ND ST., NEW YORK.

<p><b>The Asmonean</b> HAS THE PATRONAGE AND SUPPORT OF THE MINISTERS AND PRESIDING OFFICERS OF THE FOLLOWING CON- GREGATIONS IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK:</p>	<p><b>TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS</b> It is the desire of our editors to publish the most useful and interesting material that will be of benefit to the Jewish community. We are particularly interested in the activities of a congressional group of the United States, and the general dissemination of information.</p>	<p><b>SPURDY JUSTICE.</b> The State Legislature with a host of legal employees, have been for many seasons, the fierce critics, the batter for themselves, probably employed in printing and circulating, restrictive and restrictive of...</p>
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"The Asmonean," an Anglo Jewish newspaper begun in 1849 that was the forerunner of the community newspaper

secular ideologies spawned by the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, and abetted by economic change and dislocation, shook the social, religious, cultural and communal structure of traditional society. Socialism, Zionism and assimilationism, in numerous variations, developed into well-organized movements by the beginning of the twentieth century. A secular modern Hebrew literature flowered. Jews also wrote in Polish and Russian for an acculturated Jewish public. Most dramatically, a fledgling literature in Yiddish, closely tied to efforts to radicalize the impoverished masses, matured into a modern literary medium coequal with Hebrew. The best authors of the period and its leading polemicists published in the spirited and influential Hebrew and Yiddish press which, in the repressive political conditions of the Russian Empire, occupied a crucial place in the intellectual and cultural life of the people.

The immigrants transplanted this flourishing, sometimes frenetic group life to the densely populated settlements they formed in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and other large eastern and midwestern cities. The first periodicals they began to publish, in both Hebrew and Yiddish, appeared in the 1870s. However, the most important index of the intensity and creativity of the burgeoning settlements of Yiddish-speaking immigrants was the rise of a powerful Yiddish daily press. These newspapers represented the full range of political opinion and defined and defended a variety of versions of Jewish life. In addition to the functions performed by the immigrant press in general, the Yiddish dailies published belles lettres, literary criticism and essays of broad cultural content, providing Yiddish writers, essayists

and propagandists with an influential forum. The first successful Yiddish daily, the *Yidishes Tageblatt* ("Jewish Daily News"), appeared in 1885. Significantly, it was religiously and politically conservative, an indication that the radical and secular elements among the immigrants were comparably small in number and lacked the resources or will to launch a daily. In 1916, the peak year for the Yiddish press, eleven dailies with a circulation of 650,000 were published, five of these in New York City. The majority held radical or secular views. The pacesetter among them was the socialist *Forverts* ("Forward"). An estimated 2 million people read the Yiddish daily press. Immigration restriction and the gradual passing of the immigrant generation took its toll, but the process was gradual at first. In 1940 eight dailies, of which four appeared in New York, had a circulation of 400,000. Then came a precipitous decline to three in 1960, all published in New York. The last remaining Yiddish daily, the *Forverts*, became a weekly in 1983.

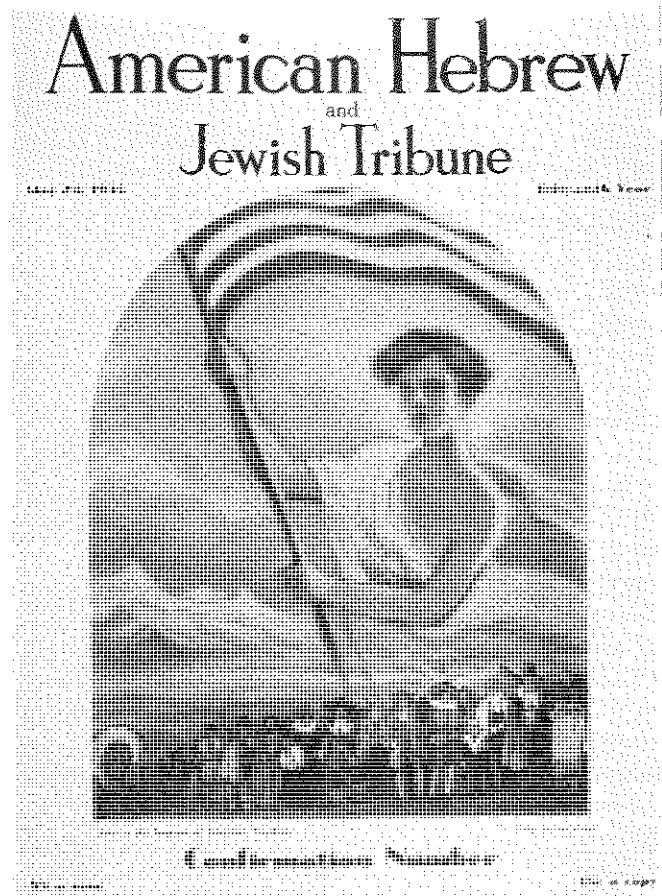
The steady rise in the numbers of refugees from Germany, Poland and other East and Central European countries beginning in the mid-1930s slowed the decline of the Yiddish daily press somewhat and led to the establishment of periodicals in other foreign languages. Between 1934 and 1941, as Hitler's anti-Jewish measures became more brutal, 150,000 Jewish émigrés reached the shores of America. Most of them were German-speaking. A presidential directive in 1945 and special legislation in 1948 and 1950 enabled 137,000 Jews who survived the Holocaust to enter the United States. Finally, under the liberal immigration policy inaugurated in the 1960s, about 400,000 Jews settled in the United States,

increasing the number and diversity of the foreign-born Jewish population. They came from Poland, Hungary, Latin America, Israel, the Soviet Union and Iran, victims of anti-Semitism, political upheaval and economic insecurity.

The journals these immigrants founded registered not only their linguistic needs but a range of group experiences and cultural backgrounds unknown to earlier waves of Jewish immigrants. To illustrate: the German-language *Aufbau* ("Reconstruction"), which began appearing as a weekly in 1938, quickly achieved a reputation for literary excellence reflecting the intellectual attainments of Germany's Jews on the eve of Hitler's rise to power; *Algemeine Journal* ("The General Journal"), a Yiddish weekly, was founded in 1972 by the Lubavitcher Hassidim, an ultra-Orthodox sect determined to shelter its followers from secular influences, including that of the existing Yiddish press; immigrants from Israel established the Hebrew-language *Yisrael Shelanu* ("Our Israel") in 1979, finding the older Hebrew-language weeklies, edited by Jews who had acquired Hebrew as a second language in the United States, of little interest. Significantly, Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union failed to publish their own periodical. But they did constitute an overwhelming percentage of the editorial staff and readers of the daily non-Jewish *Novoye Russkoye Slovo* ("The New Russian Word") and the weeklies *Novi Amerikanitz* ("New American") and *Novoya Gazetten* ("New Gazette"), an indication of the absence of a strong Soviet-Jewish collective identity. In 1984 only seventeen foreign-language periodicals appeared, the majority in Yiddish.

Anglo-Jewish weeklies and monthlies dominated the Jewish press in the post-war decades. In ways strikingly parallel to the situation at the turn of the century, a highly acculturated American Jewry expanded its communal organization to aid brethren in other parts of the world, and reinforced a sense of Jewish self-consciousness. Second- and third-generation Jews joined synagogues and Jewish civic bodies, supported Jewish social agencies and took part in Jewish educational and cultural endeavors, creating an impressive communal structure. The Anglo-Jewish press assumed a crucial role as it linked a dispersed, highly suburbanized population to the local network of Jewish associational life. It fostered, moreover, a feeling of unity and consensus notwithstanding institutional rivalries, clashing views and tensions endemic to American Judaism's denominationalism.

The Anglo-Jewish press has served these ends by simultaneously extending its scope and sharpening its focus. Community newspapers, published privately or owned or subsidized by the local federation of Jewish philanthropies,



a 1925 issue of "The American Hebrew"

provide their readers with coverage of international, national and local news of Jewish interest. These periodicals reach a majority of the Jewishly identified households in the community. On another level, national Jewish organizations have expanded their house organs to include topical and cultural material; these magazines have the largest single circulation of any category of the Anglo-Jewish press. Journals of opinion, religious or secular, have multiplied in response to the urbane tastes of an increasing number of well-educated Jews. Meanwhile, the professionalization of Jewish communal life has stimulated the growth of specialized journals. Finally dissenting voices in the community — students, women and those dissatisfied with consensus communal policy — have produced a significant number of journals. Taken together, the 195 periodicals published in 1984 — excluding annuals, directories and children's magazines — faithfully mirror the many-sidedness of American Jewish life.

## The Rise of the Community Newspaper

The brief existence of the first Jewish periodical to appear in the United States suggests the preconditions that were necessary for the establishment of a stable press. *The Jew*, published monthly in New York, lasted from March 1823 to March 1825. At the time, less than 1,000 Jews lived in the city, and 3,000 more were scattered in a half-dozen other Eastern cities and in smaller rural settlements, a number insufficient to support a periodical for long. *The Jew*, moreover, devoted itself to a single issue: combatting Christian missionary endeavors to convert Jews. The monthly disregarded events within the Jewish community, an indication not only of the publisher's singleminded purpose but of the absence of any demand for a communal news medium. Each of the urban Jewish settlements maintained a single congregation which served as the religious and social center for the small homogeneous Jewish populace. Two decades later, when *The Occident* began to appear in Philadelphia, the Jewish population had increased fifteenfold and spread to the Midwest and South. During its twenty-six years of existence, *The Occident* recorded the quadrupling of the number of Jews and the establishment of an organized Jewish life in 160 places across the continent. Congregations multiplied from 8 in 1820 to 77 in 1850 to nearly 200 in 1870. The journal also noted with alarm the fragmentation and secularization of communal life. Philanthropic institutions, benevolent societies, fraternal orders, cultural associations and social clubs proliferated in the large urban centers where most Jews settled. Cultural differences brought from Europe intensified functional segmentation and eroded a sense of community. At the same time, *The Occident* chronicled the legal, social and religious manifestations of anti-Jewish feelings and the lack of any effective response.

These developments, already in evidence in the early 1840s, moved Isaac Leeser, the German-born and -trained rabbi of Philadelphia's prestigious Mikveh Israel Congregation and the leading spokesman of traditional Judaism, to launch *The Occident*. Leeser was also encouraged by the rise of Jewish periodicals in Germany, England and France, and the role they played as spokesmen, advocates, educators and promoters of Jewish group life. Where geography separated American Jews and organizational allegiances divided them, *The Occident* intended to reach Jews everywhere and foster Jewish solidarity. During its first eighteen years of existence, *The Occident* listed subscribers in thirty-three states and territories. It disseminated information on Jewish affairs, served as a forum for the exchange of ideas and energetically defended Jewish interests. Accounts of synagogue life, Jewish

schools and philanthropic institutions appeared regularly. *The Occident* diligently monitored the general American and religious press on issues affecting American Jewry, especially Sunday laws, the vestiges of political restrictions, religion in the public schools, public expression of anti-Jewish sentiments and missionary activities. It gave close coverage to such sensitive issues as the 1850 United States treaty with Switzerland, which discriminated against American Jews. The monthly also kept its readers well informed of Jewish events abroad. In 1859, when a Jewish child in Bologna, Italy, was secretly baptized and then forcibly abducted by the Catholic Church, *The Occident* supplied its readers with long accounts of the protest actions of English and French Jewry, answered the defenders of the Church and approved the public meetings which called on the President to intercede. Leeser was elected a member of the delegation that met with President James Buchanan. However, Leeser's view of American Jewry as a religious community made "the diffusion of knowledge of Jewish literature and religion" the central purpose of his journal. Sermons, didactic articles often translated from European periodicals and polemical editorials attacking the rising movement of Reform Judaism gave *The Occident* the tone of an American religious monthly. Leeser's principal communal goal was the establishment of a national union of Jewish congregations with the authority and means to improve the quality of Jewish religious life. In this respect, *The Occident* echoed the calls for unity which so preoccupied the Protestant religious press.

Although the secular and nonsectarian dimensions of Jewish life received greater weight in the periodicals that began to appear in the 1850s and later (see below), Leeser's pioneering journal proved to be a prototype in important ways. Other rabbis followed him in establishing periodicals which served as extensions of their pulpits and vehicles for winning a national following. Their rabbinical calling to uphold and defend Judaism, the educational attainments and literary skills required of their office and their station as communal leaders predisposed them to publishing. Isaac Mayer Wise is the outstanding example of the preacher-publisher. Wise founded the weekly *Israelite* (later *The American Israelite*) in 1854, only months after accepting the pulpit of Cincinnati's B'nai Jeshurun synagogue. Vigorously advocating the cause of Reform Judaism, Wise stressed Reform's compatibility with the American democratic ethos, its belief in human progress and its rejection of "antiquated" and "fanatic" Orthodoxy. Eager to win readers, *The Israelite* struck a more popular stance than *The Occident*. Wise balanced didactic and polemical articles with stories and serialized novels. The weekly appearance of *The Israelite* gave





Wise's lively coverage of political affairs a timeliness which was especially welcome. More than any other Anglo-Jewish weekly during the nineteenth century, *The Israelite* achieved a national circulation. Wise's journalistic skill and his position as the dominant figure in the expanding Reform movement with which his weekly was so intimately identified explains much of the success of *The Israelite*. Wise edited the paper for nearly half a century, until his death in 1900. Still published, *The American Israelite* is the nation's oldest Jewish journal.

Among Wise's rabbi-editor colleagues were Samuel Myer Isaacs, who founded the conservative *Jewish Messenger* in New York in 1857; Julius Eckman, whose *The Weekly Gleaner* began appearing in San Francisco in 1858; Moritz Spitz, who began publishing the *Jewish Voice* in St. Louis in 1884; and Chicago's Emil Hirsch, who founded *The Reform Advocate* in 1891. Influential rabbis, they never achieved the national prominence of Wise, nor did their journals compete successfully with *The Israelite*. Like *The Israelite*, their periodicals combined a personal, partisan journalism when dealing with religious questions, along with political analysis, literary and historical essays — often translations of the work of outstanding European scholars and publicists — and brief reports of American and European Jewish life.

Beginning in the 1870s and gaining momentum in the 1880s, community-conscious laymen in the major Jewish population centers entered the field of Jewish journalism. Some of the community papers were owned by single proprietors who had gained journalistic experience before immigrating to the United States; others were businessmen who saw the commercial possibilities in a Jewish newspaper. In this category were Robert Lyon's *Asmonean*, which appeared weekly in New York from 1849 to 1859 and was the forerunner of the community newspaper; New York's *Jewish Times*, published by Moritz Ellinger from 1869 to 1879; Rochester's *Jewish Tidings*, founded by Samuel Brickner and Louis Wiley in 1887; and the *Hebrew Observer*, established in Cleveland in 1889 by Hiram Strauss and Samuel Oppenheimer. In other cases, the newspapers were founded as stock companies attracting investors from among communal leaders and young professionals. New York's *American Hebrew*, which began appearing in 1879, and Philadelphia's *Jewish Exponent*, established in 1887, are notable examples.

Seeking a broad, local following, the community weeklies reported the full range of Jewish opinion with commendable fairness. They adopted moderate positions on social, political and religious issues, and supported noncontroversial, ameliorative measures for improving the quality of Jewish

communal life. In a statement which well expressed the consensual thrust of the local papers, Baltimore's *Jewish Comment* announced in its first issue that it "is to stand for this community" and for "the Jew and Judaism in their truest and broadest sense — without any modifying adjectives." The paper would try, furthermore, "to interest all sections and classes of the Jewish community."

In practice, the Anglo-Jewish press of the time served only one section and class — the established, Americanized stratum of the Jewish population. To succeed commercially, the community weeklies recognized that their readers, as the *Jewish Comment* remarked, "most want to know what their neighbors are doing." (The Baltimore paper also announced that it would "furnish this community with both what it wants and what it needs.") Thus, in addition to the standard fare of national and foreign news, fiction and articles on Jewish history and religion, the papers devoted much space to the affairs of the established synagogues, philanthropies and clubs, and to the betrothals, marriages, deaths and gossip of the social elite. Theater news, fashions, stock quotations and sports were regular features. Women's interests received considerable coverage, proof that middle-class women were avid readers with special concerns. Columns were devoted to "the new woman," "raising children" and "household hints." The advertisements reflected the affluent, middle-class consumer society that the papers appealed to (household furnishings, piano lessons, medicines and beauty salons) and the commercial occupations of its wage-earners (banks, law offices, insurance companies, shipping agents and hotels).

Increasingly, the situation of Eastern European Jewry occupied the attention of American Jews. The Anglo-Jewish press responded by broadening its news coverage of conditions and events in Eastern Europe and by detailed reports of Western Jewry's efforts to cope with the increasing flow of emigration. Understandably, the arrival of large numbers of immigrants to a community received close attention, and their integration became a subject of discussion in the local paper. Occasionally, expressions of antipathy and fear of the immigrant Jews appeared in the Jewish press. Such articles focused on the immigrants' Orthodoxy or radicalism, or on compact settlements, which were seen as obstacles in the way of Americanization. More often, the established community's paper glossed over the gulf that separated the two groups and emphasized communal responsibility for the immigrants' uplift. On a national level, the problems of integration, immigration restriction and social dislocation agitated Jewish public opinion. The Anglo-Jewish press served as the sounding board for the rising demand for better

organized, centralized endeavors. In the early 1900s, when the established community mobilized its resources in a concerted effort to integrate the Eastern European immigrants, the community newspapers reached the crest of their influence. The Anglo-Jewish press now described the political, social and cultural interests of a heterogeneous ethnic group in contrast to three decades earlier, when it had perceived American Jewry as a unified religious community well rooted in America.

### The Era of the Yiddish Press

The flowering of the Yiddish press, which began about 1905 and lasted for nearly half a century, was preceded by a long period of gestation. In 1870 the first Yiddish periodical to appear in the United States, the *Yiddishe Tsaytung* ("The Jewish Journal"), began an irregular existence with long interruptions until its demise in 1877. (The *Tsaytung's* subtitle is noteworthy: "A Weekly Paper of Politics, Religion, History, Science and Art." This all-encompassing educational purpose, typical of the Haskalah approach, became a hallmark of Yiddish journalism in America.) Of the nine Yiddish journals launched during the 1870s, only one, the *Yiddishe Gazeten* ("Jewish Gazette"), founded by Kasriel Zvi Sarasohn in 1874, survived. In 1885, when Sarasohn established his daily, the *Yiddishes Tageblat*, the *Gazeten* became the *Tageblat's* weekly magazine.

A number of reasons account for the early failure of the Yiddish press. The Yiddish-speaking population was relatively small. In New York, it rose from about 15,000 in 1870 to about 35,000 ten years later. (This approximation is based on an estimated 40,000 Eastern European Jews migrating to the United States during the 1870s, half of whom settled outside of New York). A considerable portion of the newcomers, furthermore, were unaccustomed to newspapers. They came from small towns, were Orthodox in religious outlook and until their migration were insulated from the secular influences which went into the making of the press. In fact, the first Jewish journal of any longevity appeared in Eastern Europe only in 1857. Its language was Hebrew, and it was edited by Haskalah writers who addressed the educated elite. Five years later a Yiddish periodical appeared as a supplement to a new Hebrew-language journal. Although the 1860s and 1870s witnessed a significant growth in the Eastern European Jewish press, which now included Russian-language periodicals, it made little impression on the social types who composed the early wave of immigrants. Yeheskiel Sarasohn, son and partner of the publisher of the *Gazeten* and *Tageblat*, described the attitude toward the existing

Yiddish press of the small-town Polish and Lithuanian Jewish immigrants who settled in New York in the 1880s:

The older ones among them did not have the slightest need for a newspaper and its functions. They loved to hear the news, that is, from one who read aloud. To read for themselves, and every day at that, did not even enter their imagination. How can a Jew sit down to read a newspaper on an ordinary workday? The younger ones, those that had some education, read German newspapers. The *Maskilim* [devotees of the Hebrew Enlightenment movement] were satisfied with *Ha'maggid* [the leading Hebrew journal in Eastern Europe]. The very young were ashamed of a newspaper with Hebrew characters.

But the early publishers and editors were themselves *maskilim*, and their cultural biases also impeded the growth of the Yiddish press. Zvi Hirsch Bernstein, who began publishing the short-lived *Post* in 1871, founded soon after *Ha-Tzofe Be-Erets Ha-Hadasha* ("The Observer in the New Land"), the first Hebrew-language periodical on American soil. *Ha-Tzofe* appeared intermittently for five years. Kasriel Sarasohn, the first successful Yiddish publisher, also tried his hand editing a Hebrew journal, and several of the Yiddish periodicals of the 1870s carried columns in Hebrew. Clearly, these pioneer publishers and the small coterie of writers who gathered about them brought to the United States an ideological and sentimental commitment to Hebrew. They belonged to the mid-nineteenth-century generation which saw Hebrew as the medium for modernizing East European Jewry and as the language of national revival. In America they found few followers and discovered a completely different reality from Europe. Yiddish became a compromise. They turned to it as the one means of reaching the common people who required guidance in adjusting to the New World and, no less important, cultural nourishment to maintain their Jewishness.

However, Yiddish, as a language, presented problems for these early journalist-intellectuals. A strong element of condescension marked their attitude toward it. They considered it the jargon of the uneducated masses and deprecated it as inadequate for literary expression. Consequently, publishers, editors and contributors endeavored to raise the standards of the common person's language, which they reluctantly used, by employing a heavily Germanized Yiddish style and vocabulary. Samuel Niger, the noted critic of Yiddish literature, summarized the result: "Unaccustomed to reading even their mother tongue, they [the immigrants] could hardly be expected to read a heavy Germanized language." Neither a sizeable populace nor a popular journalistic idiom existed as yet. In the twenty years

between 1885 and 1905 both deficiencies were remedied, transforming the immigrant community and its press.

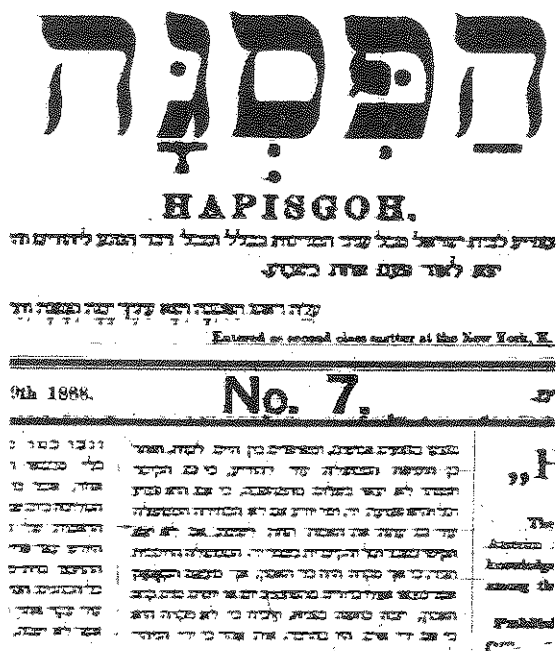
The pogroms of 1881 and 1882 that engulfed over 200 Jewish communities in Tsarist Russia, followed by a draconian policy of economic pauperization, expulsions and administrative oppression, jarred the limits of Jewish sufferance. Flight was one response, and 200,000 Jews immigrated to the United States in the 1880s, 500,000 in the 1890s and another 1.5 million from 1900 to 1914. An ideological realignment among Jewish intellectuals was another response. Reformists and revolutionaries, disillusioned by the passivity of Russia's liberals and socialists to Jewish persecution, now channeled their energies into Jewish affairs. At the same time, the literary intelligentsia, through the medium of the Hebrew- and the Russian-language Jewish press, became more assertive in supporting and influencing the array of Jewish socialist and nationalist parties which began to emerge during these years. By the mid-1880s the initial effects of these developments in Russia were visible in Jewish immigrant quarters, especially on New York's Lower East Side.

Abraham Cahan, the future editor of the *Forverts*, is a telling illustration of this process. Born into a pious family but exposed in his youth to Russifying influences and Western culture, Cahan joined an underground socialist-revolutionary cell in Vilna. In 1882, after eluding the Russian police, he arrived in New York, where he quickly assumed a dominant place in Jewish radical circles. Cahan soon realized that as a socialist preacher his natural constituency was Yiddish-speaking workingmen. In addressing his audiences, he adopted a homely, idiomatic Yiddish rather than the Russian of the Jewish radical elite or the Germanized Yiddish or Hebrew of the *maskilim*. In the mid-1880s and early 1890s, when Cahan collaborated in launching the first radical journals in Yiddish, he adapted the popular idiom of the lecture platform to the printed page. "We used the simplest Yiddish imaginable," Cahan recalled years later when he described the *Neie Zeit* ("New Era"), the pioneer radical periodical, which he founded in 1886. Another innovation, which Cahan and his emulators would use very effectively in the *Forverts*, was the artlessness with which a complex subject like socialism was presented. When the first issue of *Neie Zeit* appeared on Shevuot, the holiday celebrating the giving of the Torah to Moses, Cahan, the secularist, linked the two events metaphorically, tapping the religious sentiments of many of his readers. "I told the Jewish workers," he wrote in his memoirs, "that the socialist thought which we will expound must become their Torah."

A number of Russian-speaking stalwarts among the Jewish intelligentsia attempted, in fact, to establish a Russian-

language socialist press. In 1889 Louis Miller, who fled Russia because of his revolutionary activities, founded *Znamya* ("The Banner"), the first such weekly. Miller soon turned to Yiddish journalism. He participated with Cahan and Morris Hillquit (see below) in launching the weekly *Arbeiter Zeitung* ("Workers' News") in 1890, collaborated with Cahan in the founding of the *Forverts* in 1897 and eight years later published his own daily, *Warheit* ("Truth"). Others among the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia, like Jacob Gordin, Isaac Hourwich and George M. Price, tried their hand at publishing Russian-language journals during the 1890s before becoming writers for the Yiddish press. Altogether, six such journals appeared fitfully during the decade.

At the other end of the Jewish immigrants' language spectrum, Hebrew continued to engage the interest of a devoted group of *maskilim* who struggled to maintain a Hebrew press. Between 1882 and 1914, twenty-three Hebrew-language periodicals appeared; the great majority existed for less than a year. *Ha-Ivri* ("The Hebrew"), founded in 1892, maintained itself, with interruptions, until 1898 under the editorship of Gerson Rosenzweig and with the financial support of Kasriel Sarasohn. Zev Wolf Schur, a writer of some distinction, published *Ha-Pisgah* ("The Summit") intermittently from 1888 to 1899, moving from



"Ha-Pisgah," a Hebrew newspaper that appeared in the U.S. during the last decade of the 19th century

city to city in pursuit of a livelihood and support for his journal. In 1909 a Hebrew daily, *Ha-Yom* ("The Day"), appeared briefly. Further attempts were made during the following decade. Only two journals survived for any length of time, *Ha-Toren* ("The Mast"), 1913-25 (with interruptions), and *Ha-Ivri*, 1916 to 1926. Feeble as the Hebrew press was, it provided an outlet for Hebrew authors in America and published some of the important European writers. Zionist and sympathetic to traditional Judaism, the Hebrew press remained the province of a small group of dedicated Hebraists. *Ha-Doar* ("The Post"), founded in 1921 as a daily but reorganized nine months later as a weekly, continues to appear to this day.

Clearly, language was laden with political meaning. In Eastern Europe, the rise of Zionism inspired a new growth in the Hebrew-language press, which in turn became the vehicle for an outpouring of literary and publicistic writing. An opposing ideology crystallized in the 1890s and early 1900s. The newly founded Bund, the General Jewish Workers' Union, in its dispute with Russian socialists over the right to function as an autonomous Jewish socialist party, defended the legitimacy of its Jewish national and cultural program. Yiddish, the Bundists asserted, represented the folk genius of the ascendant Jewish proletariat and the authentic expression of its nationality. Jewish socialists and Zionists engaged in a language war which resonated in the Yiddish press in the United States. The Yiddishists rejected the notion of a rejuvenated Hebrew culture as elitist, reactionary and utopian. For the Zionists, Yiddish was a passing phenomenon, the product of a particular time and place in the history of the Exile. National redemption — the return to Zion — was linked to the renaissance of Hebrew culture.

The main debate in the United States, however, revolved around the status of the Yiddish language itself and was conducted almost exclusively within radical circles. Was Yiddish a transitory phenomenon, as the cosmopolitan Jewish intelligentsia claimed, a convenient means of communicating with Jewish workers until their Americanization and, it was hoped, their conversion to socialism? Hillquit exemplified this older cosmopolitan view. Arriving in New York in 1886 from Riga, Latvia, where German was his native tongue, he learned Yiddish in order to organize the Jewish immigrants in the garment industry. He played key roles in forming the United Hebrew Trades in 1888 and in placing the Yiddish radical press on a more stable basis. Hillquit soon entered American socialist politics. He was one of the founders of the Socialist Party in 1901, ran for political office on the Socialist ticket and rose to national leadership. The most influential ideologue of Yiddishism, Chaim Zhitlowsky, settled in New

York in 1908, although his writings appeared in Yiddish periodicals in the United States well before then. On his arrival, he began publishing the monthly *Dos Naye Lebn* ("The New Life"), which appeared until 1914. He defined Yiddish culture as socialist and Jewish, and its literature as one that was bound up with the struggle of an oppressed people. Surveying Jewish immigrant life at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Zhitlowsky was convinced that nowhere else were Jews building a Yiddish cultural nationality with such success and permanence.

And indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, one could speak of a Yiddish national literature. In the novels and stories of Mendele Mocher Sforim, I. L. Peretz and Sholom Aleichem, the folk-life of East European Jews acquired a dignity, authenticity and moral passion which reflected the reality of a culturally creative people. The Yiddish press in the United States brought this literature, together with the growing literature of immigrant writers in America, to masses of Yiddish readers. Thus, literature assumed an important place in the Yiddish press, filling the multiple roles of social commentary, literary art and Yiddishist, cultural self-consciousness.

For the Yiddish press, the 1890s proved to be a transition period. The *Tageblatt's* hegemony as sole Yiddish daily was broken in 1894 when the socialist *Abendblatt* ("Evening Paper") and the *Teglicher Herald* ("Daily Herald") were founded. The first Yiddish daily outside of New York, the *Chicago Yiddisher Kurier* ("Jewish Courier"), made its appearance. Toward the end of the decade, socialist factionalism and differences over journalistic policy led to a split in the *Abendblatt* and the founding of the *Forverts*. The Yiddish dailies also assumed some of the features of the American popular press — sensationalism, partisan news reporting and highlighting of crime and vice. Alongside the best in Yiddish fiction and poetry, the Yiddish dailies serialized titillating romantic novels. Among the journals founded during the 1890s, two are especially worthy of note: the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* ("Free Voice of the Workingman"), an anarchist weekly, and *Die Zukunft* ("The Future"), a social-democratic monthly. During the following decade both journals achieved stability and won reputations for literary excellence and breadth of interests.

The remarkable growth of the Yiddish press took place during the ten years prior to the outbreak of World War I. The new wave of immigrants that came in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom of 1903 and the collapse of the 1905 revolution brought large numbers of Jews who had been exposed to a quarter of a century of social and cultural change and political agitation. Among the immigrants were scores of

דער מארגען זשורנאל

יום ראשון 11טן סיון תש"ב

4 JEWISH JOURNAL AND DAILY NEWS

דער מארגען זשורנאל

ווארשע, שטענענאמאן פארטיס  
צום דריטן טאג אין פאניק

JEWISH JOURNAL AND DAILY NEWS

דער מארגען זשורנאל

פארזאמלונג פארמאגט פארגרייבן  
היינטיגע זאך איז ארויס  
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6 JEWISH JOURNAL AND DAILY NEWS

דער מארגען זשורנאל

רוסען 165 טייל פון בערלין

4000 זאך טאגן אין פאניק

JEWISH JOURNAL AND DAILY NEWS

דער מארגען זשורנאל

ווארשע ווען ערעווערט  
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JEWISH JOURNAL AND DAILY NEWS

דער מארגען זשורנאל

פארזאמלונג פארמאגט פארגרייבן  
היינטיגע זאך איז ארויס  
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"Morgen Journal" — one of the largest Yiddish newspapers

writers, journalists and publicists. Nachman Syrkin, the leading theorist of Socialist-Zionism, settled in New York in 1907. Baruch Chatney Vladeck, who had been imprisoned for propagandizing for the Bund, immigrated in 1908, the year Zhitlowsky arrived. By 1914 such leading literary figures as Abraham Reissen, Sholom Asch, Peretz Hirschbein and Sholom Aleichem were residing in New York. Together with the earlier arrivals — editors Cahan, Miller and Peter Wiernik, poets like Morris Winchevsky, Morris Rosenfeld and Yehoash (Solomon Bloomgarten), and dramatists Jacob Gordin and David Piuski — they formed an illustrious Yiddish literati. They staffed the daily newspapers and founded and edited an array of literary and political journals. Among the latter were the *Yiddisher Kemfer* ("The Jewish Fighter"), a Socialist-Zionist weekly, still published; the *Yiddishes Folk* ("The Jewish People"), founded in 1909 by the Federation of American Zionists; and the *Groyser Kundes* ("Big Stick"), a satirical weekly.

A ready public, undergoing the throes of social and economic adjustment, provided ardent readers for the mass-circulation dailies that came of age during this period. Circulation rose from 66,000 in 1900, to 120,000 in 1904, to 500,000 in 1914. For the immigrants, the paper of their persuasion was the most accessible and authoritative source of information, guidance and news. It introduced its readers to American history, civics, manners and customs. Instruction took such forms as serialized histories of the American people, exposés of corrupt government, paens to the value of public school education, and analyses of the causes of Jewish criminality. The *Morgen Journal* ("Morning Journal"), an Orthodox paper founded in 1901, published, for example, articles on the constitutional issue of separation of church and state to support its call for boycotting Christmas ceremonies in the New York public schools. A *Warheit* editorial appealed to parents to enroll their children in the Boy Scouts. (The editorial began with the injunction: "Our Jewish sages declared that every father ought to teach his son three things — horseback riding, swimming and shooting.") Irving Howe, in his discussion of the Yiddish press, succinctly describes the "sociological imagination" which informed the *Forverts* accounts of immigrant life: "Were Jewish children starting to take piano lessons? Were East Siders finding new occupations ranging from real estate to gangsterdom? Were lonely immigrant girls succumbing to the lure of suicide? Were *yentes* (busybodies) moving to West End Avenue and becoming 'fancy ladies'? The *Forward* bustled to look into all these matters." Interpreting America to the immigrants and reporting their responses formed the substance of the Americanization role of the Yiddish press. No less important

in the Americanization process was the zeal the papers displayed in dealing with American politics. Their political ardor and partisanship called out for commitment and engagement.

The Yiddish-reading public allied itself with one or another of the Yiddish dailies. One can, in fact, speak of "communities of readers." Each paper appealed to a different constituency marked off by political tendency, Jewish outlook, social class and institutional ties. Orthodox Jews (in practice or in sentiment), usually lower middle class, would normally read the *Morgen Journal* or the *Tageblatt*. (The *Tageblatt* began to decline with the appearance of the *Morgen Journal* and merged with it in 1928.) Standing for "Orthodox Judaism and patriotic Americanism," the *Morgen Journal* denounced its rivals for not devoting enough attention to American institutions. The paper was aggressively Republican, conservative on social issues and provided extensive coverage of religious affairs. It rallied support for Orthodox philanthropic institutions and denounced both Reform Judaism and socialism as blasphemous. In decrying the decline in religious observance, the desecration of the Sabbath and the poor state of Jewish education, the paper also placed the blame on "materialistic America" and misguided Americanization. At the other end of the spectrum, the *Forverts*, which during the peak year of 1916 had 37 percent of the Yiddish newspaper circulation while the *Morgen Journal* accounted for 20 per cent, was the paper of the Jewish labor movement, giving it coherence and a sense of direction. Leaders of the Jewish trade unions, the Socialist Party and the Workmen's Circle Order were key figures in the Forward Association, which controlled the paper. The *Forverts* carried notices of union meetings, reported extensively on industrial disputes and at strike time published appeals for contributions to the strike funds. Under Cahan's direction, the paper also established a rapport with its readers which other papers sought to emulate with mixed success. Through the "Bintel Brief" ("Bundle of Letters") column, in which readers turned to the editor for advice, through contests which the paper ran and by eliminating much of the socialist disputatiousness and the antireligious rhetoric of his predecessors, Cahan broadened the appeal of the paper. The *Warheit*, founded by Louis Miller as a socialist competitor of the *Forverts*, gave more attention to Jewish issues than its opponent. It opened its columns to Socialist-Zionists and Yiddishist nationalists. Politically, the paper moved toward the Democratic Party and supported Tammany Hall candidates. When the *Tog* ("The Day") appeared in 1914 as a liberal, pro-Zionist paper, restrained in tone and addressing a better-educated public, the *Warheit's* circulation fell until it was taken over by the *Tog* in

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# CHICAGO AMERICAN

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WEDNESDAY

WEDNESDAY

CHICAGO, OCTOBER 25, 1939

MONDAY

PRICE ONE CENT

## קאנאם פראטעסט געווען צו

### Hubby Takes All the Quiffs on Cold Nights, So Wife Asks Door

Hubbys take all the quiffs on cold nights, so wife asks door. The article discusses the challenges of winter weather and the role of the husband in providing warmth and protection for his family.

### MILITANT SAYS U. S. SLAPPED ENGLAND

The article reports on a militant's perspective regarding the relationship between the United States and England, suggesting a sense of being 'slapped' or mistreated.

### WOMEN RIOT AT RITUAL TRIAL IN KIEV

Former Senator: He Comes to Aid of Defense. The article describes a riot by women at a ritual trial in Kiev, with a former senator mentioned as coming to the aid of the defense.



### Point Prayer of Women Locked in Cellar, Sees Her

The article details the plight of women locked in a cellar, mentioning a point prayer and a woman who sees her. It highlights the harsh conditions and the emotional toll of the situation.

an Anglo-Yiddish paper in Chicago

1918. In 1922 Jewish left-wing socialists and communists established the *Freiheit* ("Freedom"). For a time, in addition to a hard core of Yiddish-speaking communists, it attracted some of the younger left-wing intellectuals, but the paper's complete subservience to Communist Party positions alienated all but the most zealous believers. Outside of New York, Yiddish dailies existed for extended periods of time in Cleveland and Philadelphia, with two appearing in Chicago. The social and economic integration of the immigrant generation, well advanced by 1930, found expression in the Yiddish press in the trend toward a more consensual position than had been the case during the prior period. Beginning in the mid-1920s, but especially following the 1929 riots in Palestine, the previously anti-Zionist *Forverts* showed increasing sympathy for Zionist settlement in Palestine. In 1936 it endorsed Franklin D. Roosevelt for president,

breaking its historic support of the Socialist Party. The *Morgen Journal* abandoned its anti-Zionist stand earlier than the *Forverts* and tempered its political and religious conservatism. The *Tog* maintained its centrist position but adopted some of the more popular journalistic features of its competitors. The 1930s and 1940s were also years when important new novelists, essayists and poets began appearing in the Yiddish dailies. Among them were Jacob Glatstein, Shmuel Niger, Isaac Bashevis Singer (a Nobel Prize Laureate) and Aaron Zeitlin. Jewish issues now preoccupied the Yiddish dailies. The fate of European Jewry following the rise of Hitler, the rescue efforts and the Holocaust of World War II, the struggle to establish a Jewish state during the immediate postwar years and the concern for the new state's security removed all vestiges of ideological differences. The dwindling number of readers — often bilingual — read the Yiddish



press for the maximum coverage it gave to Jewish matters. Americanizer, window to the outside world and interpreter of Jewish immigrant life from its beginnings into the 1920s, the Yiddish daily press became increasingly the ethnic press of the older generation. Nevertheless, it retained its place as forum and focus of Jewish cultural creativity. With the decline and eventual death of the Yiddish dailies in the years 1953 to 1983, the task of filling these functions fell upon the Anglo-Jewish periodicals.

### The Anglo-Jewish Press, 1900-1985

During the half century that Yiddish journalism guided and spoke for the immigrant generation, the Anglo-Jewish press lost its position as the collective voice of the Americanized community. Two reasons stand out. First, the weeklies, the largest component of the Anglo-Jewish press, failed to keep pace with the expanding Jewish population. While the number of weeklies rose from seventeen in 1900 to forty-four in 1950, the Jewish population increased from one million to over five million; English became the preferred, or the only language, read by four out of every five Jews. The total circulation of the weeklies lagged far behind the growth of the English-speaking Jewish public as well. Second, the papers changed little during the intervening years and continued to address the older, settled community. In representative papers like the *American Hebrew*, the *American Israelite* and the *Jewish Exponent*, departments such as "Milestones: Events Along Life's Highway," or "Social and Personal" received more space than political affairs or cultural matters. Edited in most instances by a single individual with little or no staff, the papers counted on sermons, reports from organizations and information supplied by the established synagogues, philanthropies and clubs for their copy. For national and international news of Jewish interest, the papers increasingly depended upon the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, a news service established in 1917. The reporting was dull and shallow. For many, particularly among second-generation Jews — the offspring of the East European immigrants — the Jewish weekly press appeared staid, distant and intellectually vacuous. Stephen S. Wise, the prominent rabbi, Zionist and communal leader, summed up this view by referring to the Jewish weeklies as "Weaklies," alluding, as well, to their policy of avoiding controversy.

The emergence of national magazines, usually monthlies, hardly filled the cultural void. Sponsored by national organizations, they combined the functions of house organs and journals of Jewish affairs. As early as 1886, B'nai B'rith, the first nationwide Jewish secular organization, began publishing *Menorah*, which changed its name to the *B'nai*

*B'rith News*, then to the *National Jewish Monthly* and, currently, to the *International Jewish Monthly*. The parent journal was described in an 1893 survey of the Jewish press as containing, besides "official matter and what appertains to subordinate lodges, editorials and contributions of a literary and scientific character on Jewish affairs and subjects which are readable and instructive." In 1901 the newly founded Federation of American Zionists launched the *Maccabean*. Broad in scope in its early years, it nevertheless fell short of its goal of reaching a general readership. The Intercollegiate Menorah Association, a Jewish campus organization, began publishing the *Menorah Journal* (discussed below) in 1915. Appearing as a quarterly and then as a monthly until 1930, it was published irregularly thereafter, closing down in 1961. During the interwar years, the number of new journals increased. Among those of some moment were the weekly *New Palestine*, which replaced the *Maccabean* in 1921 and is currently published as a quarterly under the name *American Zionist*; *Liberal Judaism*, first published in 1935 by the Reform movement and now appearing as *American Judaism*; the *Jewish Frontier*, founded by the Labor Zionists in 1934 and still published; and the *Reconstructionist*, begun as a bimonthly in 1935 by the Reconstructionist Foundation (a Jewish religious movement) and now published monthly. Both the *Jewish Frontier* and the *Reconstructionist* are highly respected journals of opinion.

Of the attempts to establish journals of intellectual stature, the *Menorah Journal* warrants attention on two counts. At its peak, during the 1920s, the journal was considered one of the better literary quarterlies in the country. However, literary excellence was also linked to "advancing Jewish culture and ideals." The purpose of the *Menorah Journal* was to demonstrate to those who were ambivalent about their Jewishness that "fostering the Jewish 'humanities' was a spur to human service." For the founders and supporters of the journal, the estrangement of college-educated Jewish men and women from their Jewish past loomed as a major threat to group survival. The convergence of the intellectual challenge, the community's endorsement, the exclusion of Jews from some fields of university teaching and skillful editing enabled the journal to tap a rich array of talent. It attracted a group of eminent Jewish writers, thinkers and public figures that included Louis D. Brandeis, Ludwig Lewisohn and Mordecai M. Kaplan. Among its non-Jewish contributors were John Dewey, Lewis Mumford and Mark Van Doren. A number of young writers and poets — including Babbette Deutsch, Lionel Trilling, Clifton Fadiman and Herbert Solow — were drawn to the journal by its young editor from 1925 to 1930, Elliot Cohen. In the course of time, some of the younger

writers lost all ties with Jewish life and moved to the radical left or assimilated into the academic and literary world. Others continued to affirm the centrality of their Jewishness, writing for or editing Jewish periodicals. And there were those who moved easily between the two worlds. The tensions were similar to those the Yiddish-speaking intellectuals had experienced — of identifying with universal humanistic values or believing that Jewish culture and ideals furthered those values. For the American-born, however, language gave them the choice their forebears hardly had.

Before considering the recent history of the Anglo-Jewish press, note should be taken of the Judeo-Spanish (Ladino)-language newspapers which served the Sephardic Jews (or Sephardim). These Jews, whose ancestors were expelled from Spain in the fifteenth century, immigrated to the United States from Turkey and the Balkan states. Speaking and reading a medieval form of Spanish mixed with some Hebrew

and written in Hebrew script, the Sephardic immigrants settled mainly in New York. Language, custom and certain religious rites divided them from the Yiddish-speaking immigrants. The Sephardim established their own network of communal institutions, and in 1910 Moshe Gadol, a public-spirited immigrant from Bulgaria, began publishing a weekly, *La America*. The paper offered advice, exhorted its readers to create a united Sephardic community and published accounts of ontying Sephardic settlements in the South and Far West. In 1925, *La America* succumbed to the rival *La Vara* ("The Baton"), a more popularly written paper, which published until 1948. An influx of Sephardic Jews in the post-World War II era prompted efforts to foster Sephardic culture, but the community was too diverse and the second and third generations too acculturated to support either a Ladino or English periodical.

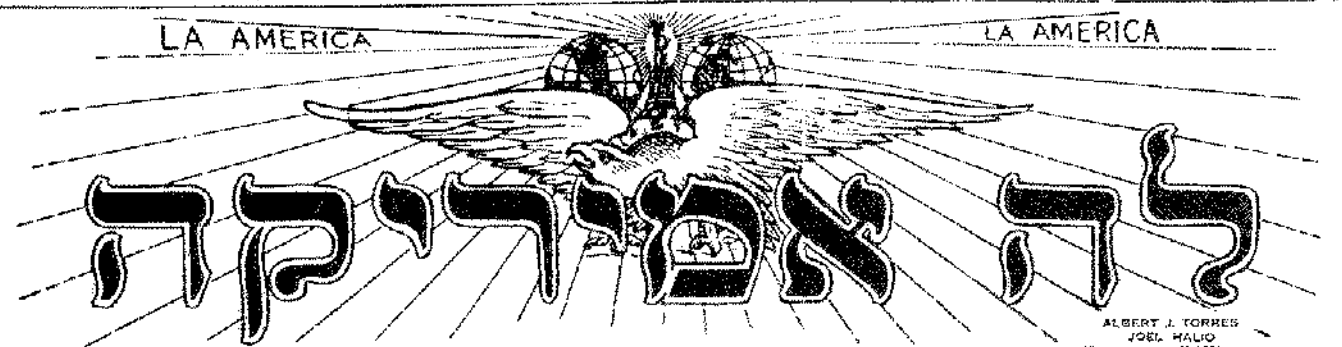
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פרייטיק 6 סעפטעמבער

Friday, January 2, 1925

ה'תרפ"ה

Vol. XV No. 680



פריידיקו סעפטעמבער, פרייטיקו אי קווערטליא

# לה סימאס'יין אין לוס באדקאניס

<p>דוקטור מ. אטאנס 86 גראיסט 119 סטריט פילאזאפ'י יוניווערסיטי 166/170 אדאס די אויף די לאס 8 פון לאס 30 די לע סטריט</p>	<p>אביעוואס ספררי 1016 קאמארס 3078 טיילונגס סטריט 6312 סייקסטיז JOHN HEZKIAH LEVY 102 WEST 42ND STREET Room 1013</p>	<p>ניין די גרוס אי אל סקוטו דיל שער הערן, זעסאס אל אינסטיטוציע די לע אויבס אל סטריט 222, קופ פרייט אדער אין אדער פאר די זענען די סטריטס סוף לע אדער כל דק פרייטס אפאריעס, אדער אדער סטריט סוף פאלאנאס. זענען די סטריט, אדער אין לע זענען סטריט</p>	<p>קעטאנאריען די סוף לאס געזען אם סטריטס, זענען סוף די אם אדער סוף סוף אפאריעס אי סוף פארזענליכע סוף סוף זענען אדער אדער אדער אדער אדער אדער אדער זענען אדער אדער אדער אדער זענען אדער אדער אדער אדער זענען אדער אדער אדער אדער</p>	<p>אם זענען זענען אדער אדער קעטאנאריען די סוף לאס געזען אם סטריטס, זענען סוף די אם אדער סוף סוף אפאריעס אי סוף פארזענליכע סוף סוף זענען אדער אדער אדער אדער אדער אדער אדער אדער זענען אדער אדער אדער אדער זענען אדער אדער אדער אדער</p>
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"La America," the first Ladino newspaper in the U.S.

During the years following the end of World War II, the Anglo-Jewish press mirrored the heightened self-awareness of a Jewish public composed in the main of second- and third-generation Jews. National service organizations like B'nai B'rith and Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization, expanded the range of their interests, grew in membership and came to view educational and cultural programs both as important in themselves and as a means of motivating members to fulfill their philanthropic and public service responsibilities. To achieve these ends, B'nai B'rith and Hadassah transformed their newsletters and house organs into mass-circulation, family-type magazines. Professional journalists produced popularly written, attractively laid out journals whose contents ranged widely and briefly over political and cultural topics of Jewish interest and institutional matters of importance to the organization. A member's dues included a subscription to the organization's journal, giving the *Hadassah Magazine* an impressive circulation of nearly 400,000, and B'nai B'rith's *Jewish Monthly* close to 200,000. The circulation figures attracted advertisers and helped to underwrite production costs.

Although the mass-circulation journals sponsored by the national organizations varied, an issue of the *Hadassah Magazine*, by way of example, suggests their character. The August-September 1983 issue featured a symposium on the effect of assimilation on American Jews, a biographical essay on David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, and a short story. Columnists posted in Jerusalem and Washington reported on Middle East developments. A freelance writer offered a human-interest story about life in Israel, and a travelogue described historic sites of interest to Jewish tourists visiting Prague. Departments included the president's column, which dealt with the organization; a Hebrew column; a book review section; an art column; and a summary of the month's important events. Except for the president's column, all of the articles were authored by established writers, journalists and scholars. Nevertheless, the facile style and the brevity of the articles hardly allowed for reflective thought or in-depth analysis.

The Jewish religious press, perhaps the least developed of all areas of Jewish journalism, underwent a similar transformation. The establishment of new synagogues and the expansion of synagogue membership that accompanied the suburbanization of American Jewry invigorated the central directing bodies of the religious wings of Judaism. They were called upon to train and supply rabbinical leadership for the expanding movements, to advise on Jewish education and youth activities and to raise funds to support the movement's theological seminaries and national

institutions. Once again mass circulation magazines became indispensable, providing a sense of denominational identity and loyalty and informing lay members about current religious issues. *Reform Judaism*, the Conservative movement's *United Synagogue Review* and its *Women's League Outlook*, and the *Orthodox Jewish Life*, representing American Judaism's three denominational movements, together reach about 800,000 homes. Yet despite their utility, their content has been criticized for not matching their technical and journalistic standards. Writing in 1963, David Silverman, a Conservative rabbi and educator, depicted the mass-circulation Jewish religious press in these terms:

Editorial focus is so wide as to be meaningless. Many of the articles are of the "how to" variety — how to run a synagogue membership campaign, how to increase attendance at worship services or how to listen to the rabbi's sermon. There is also the constant note of group self-congratulation... There is no extended treatment or critical analysis of how Judaism can and should affect civil society.

The number of local weeklies has hardly increased since 1950, but they have grown in size, news coverage and circulation. As the social and cultural barriers dissolved between the older stratum of the community and the much larger element of Americanized and native-born children of the East European migration, the Anglo-Jewish weeklies adapted themselves to a highly organized community committed to group survival at home and financial and political aid for Israel and for Jewish communities under stress abroad. These developments have gone hand in hand with the growth of local federations of Jewish philanthropies. Public relations experts and press officers funnel news releases and other information about the agencies they represent to the community papers. Syndicated columnists and Jewish press associations supply news, commentary and political analysis. At the same time, traditional features of the community newspapers of the past — announcements of the rites of passage, calendars of community events and honors — still bulk large in the allocation of space. Background stories on religious holidays, a commentary by a rabbi on the biblical portion of the week, reviews of Jewish books and departments discussing Jewish art, music, sports and travel appear with some regularity in most papers.

One consequence of these trends has been a uniformity of tone and an avoidance of controversy. With small, if any, reportorial staffs, the weeklies have been completely dependent on the stock press releases and publicity handouts provided by the major Jewish institutions. National and international affairs tend to be covered in a prosaic fashion

since the Jewish news services, mainly the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, are in part financed by the central communal funds. Finally, critics point to the trend toward community ownership of the weeklies. Of the forty-eight weeklies published in 1985, eight are owned outright by the local federation of philanthropies and others receive financial aid in one form or another from the federation. Community support mitigates against disinterested criticism, some claim: papers tend to be mouthpieces of the establishment.

Despite these constraints, talented and forceful editors have succeeded in improving the quality of their papers. Those in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Detroit and Boston are such instances. The Baltimore *Jewish Times*, which claims to be the largest Jewish weekly publication in the nation, for example, is privately owned. Its weekly issues average 175 pages, much of which is advertising. In addition to carrying syndicated columnists, its editors undertake investigatory reporting on local issues. Moreover, the weeklies reach a majority of the Jewish homes in all but the very largest communities. In New York City, a recent sample of the Jewish population indicated that three households in ten received at least one Anglo-Jewish paper. With all their flaws, the weeklies bring their readers news of the Jewish world unavailable elsewhere, and a record of local institutional and social life which fosters communal sensibilities.

However, the mass-circulation press has failed to satisfy the growing segment of the Jewish populace that is college educated, informed on Jewish matters or eager to be and influential in the community. Nor can the popular Jewish press meet the needs of religious professionals — rabbis, educators and scholars. To fill this void, a number of serious journals of Jewish thought and letters were established in the postwar years and particularly between 1945 and 1960. Each denominational association of rabbis launched its own quarterly: *Conservative Judaism* in 1945, the *Journal of Reform Judaism* in 1953 (known as the *Journal of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* prior to 1978), and the *Orthodox Tradition* in 1958. The American Jewish Congress, a civic defense agency concerned with protecting Jewish and human rights, began publishing a quarterly, *Judaism*, in 1952, dealing with Jewish religion, philosophy and ethics. (The organization's more conventional and popular magazine, *Congress Monthly*, was established in 1933.) What is surely the most influential of the intellectual journals, *Commentary*, began appearing monthly in 1945.

Subsidized by the American Jewish Committee but retaining editorial independence, *Commentary* had as its announced aim to be "a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues." Its first

editor, Elliot Cohen, brought much of the intellectual zest and originality that marked his years as editor of the *Menorah Journal* in the 1920s to the new magazine. He and his successor, Norman Podhoretz, have kept *Commentary* close to the center of the American intellectual scene, while at the same time addressing Jewish issues of intellectual moment and Jewish communal problems.

In the sense that its editors addressed the American Jewish intellectual more American than Jewish in his knowledge — who was to be shown the intellectual richness of Jewish cultural life — *Commentary* continued the direction of the *Menorah Journal*.

The magazine has discussed the central issues of American society and has contributed to clarifying the Jewish position in provocative essays. By publishing the fiction of Saul Bellow, Elie Wiesel and Bernard Malamud, the literary criticism of Lionel Trilling and Alfred Kazin, and the writings of scholars like Gershom Scholem and Jacob Katz, it has established itself as a notable journal of letters and opinion.

*Commentary* has also been the object of harsh criticism from its beginning. Among other charges hurled at it, it has been said that it has not treated American Jewish life with sympathetic understanding, that it has overlooked writers identified with Jewish institutional life and that it increasingly has drawn back from coverage of topics of Jewish interest. Most recently, it has been faulted for its neoconservatism.

One of its most important contributions has been the role it has played as gadfly and stimulant. Other journals of Jewish thought have been founded in part to challenge *Commentary's* intellectual preeminence among Jewish journals. *Midstream*, established in 1954 under the auspices of the American Zionist movement, focused on Jewish issues, Zionism, diaspora-Israel relations and contemporary Israeli society. It played an important role in bringing notable Israeli writers to the attention of the English-reading public. *Moment*, an independent monthly, began appearing in 1975 and clearly sought to balance *Commentary's* detached criticism of Jewish life and its increasingly conservative stance.

During the late 1960s a plethora of "little magazines" appeared, constituting what is known as the Jewish Student Press movement. Influenced by the protest movements of the 1960s and the radical student press, these Jewish student papers carried criticism of the hierarchical, philanthropic character of the Jewish community, the "ossification" of establishment thinking and the poverty of Jewish spiritual life. Surely the longevity of the editors at the helm of the major journals of Jewish opinion also induced young intellectuals to strike out on their own. A number of periodicals survived the peak of the outburst of protest and

# Commentary

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dissatisfaction. *Response*, established in 1967, is one such journal. Its issues on the Jewish woman, the *Havura* movement calling for changes in the organization of Jewish synagogue life, and the Yom Kippur War are instances of this genre of magazine at its best.

The most recent instance of the founding of a magazine by a circle of young radical intellectuals opposed to the political conservatism of *Commentry* and the uncritical support of Israeli government policy is *Tikkun*. Since its first appearance in 1986, *Tikkun* has achieved a considerable reputation for its literary and political excellence.

Taken as a whole, the Anglo-Jewish press of the last four

decades reflects the broad social and cultural consensus of an affluent, well-educated, middle-class community both integrated into American life and committed to Jewish group survival. This affluence and intellectual sophistication leads, from time to time, to self-examination, soul-searching and, for some, disenchantment with the style and content of Jewish life in America. Thus, alongside the mainline press — the weeklies and organizational monthlies that reinforce the sense of community — there exist the journals of opinion, the scholarly periodicals and the "little magazines" which demonstrate the vitality of Jewish religious and secular life.



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# ABRAHAM CAHAN AND THE "FORWARD"

MOSES RISCHIN

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Abe Cahan



The single most influential personality in the cultural life of some two million Jewish immigrants to America and their descendants, Abraham Cahan (1860-1951), was inseparably linked with the *Forward*. It is indeed impossible to imagine the American Jewish experience in the first half of the 20th century without Cahan and the *Forward*.

Among the first of the idealistic Russian pioneers to reach America, Cahan arrived in New York in 1882 at the age of 21, eager for freedom and vaguely determined to speak for, write about, lead and shape the new immigrant Jewish America. In the ensuing two decades, this Russian intellectual's apprenticeship in American living was to prepare him for his role as editor of the world's greatest Yiddish, and America's most widely read socialist and foreign-language, daily newspaper. With an incomparable knowledge of the language of the people, Cahan not only spoke Yiddish fluently, lovingly and artistically, and was a master of Russian as were few other immigrants, but he was to become the first fully realized American as well, frenziedly crafting himself into a multi-cultural new man.

Factory hand, lecturer, English teacher, labor organizer, law student and socialist preacher, Cahan fully shared in all the experiences of his fellow immigrants. But from the outset, the American correspondent for *Russki Evrei*, for which he had written in Russia, cultivated literary ambitions. Before the end of his first year in America, he sent in an article denouncing the Tsarist autocracy to Pulitzer's new *New York World*. Titled "The Crowned Criminals," it was promptly printed on the *World's* front page. Within a few years, he would be contributing to the socialist *Workmen's Advocate*, the *Sun*, the *Press* and the *Star*, and would successively edit the *Naye Tsayt*, the *Arbeiter Zeitung* and the *Zukunft* — the earliest labor, socialist, popularly written periodicals to appear in Yiddish in America. Using the pen names "Socius," "David Bernstein" and most famously "Der Proletarishker Magid," Cahan wrote the *Arbeiter Zeitung's* most popular feature, the

"Sidra," as well as countless columns under his own name, gaining a reputation as the most spirited, earthy and authentic pioneer of the new Yiddish journalism.

Cahan also aspired to become a genuinely American writer, and that was possible only in English. In 1895 he published his first two short stories, "A Providential Match" and "A Sweatshop Romance," and in 1896 *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, the first authentic American immigrant novel. Cahan was hailed in a sensational front-page review in the literary section of the Sunday *New York World* by William Dean Howells, the nation's first man of letters, as the harbinger of a new American literature and "a New Star of Realism," and was launched upon a career as the first important American Jewish writer. In the next few years, which also included an eight-month stint as editor of the newly founded, strife-torn *Forward*, Cahan achieved wide renown as a short-story writer in American magazines, and as an authority on Russian literature and politics and on Jewish life. His *The Imported Bridegroom* appeared in 1898, *The White Terror and the Red* in 1905 and his masterpiece, *The Rise of David Levinsky*, in 1917.

But for nearly five years, from 1897 to 1902, Cahan was also building a reputation as an original American journalist, at first with human interest stories, feature articles and character sketches for three of New York's most distinguished newspapers, the *Sun*, the *Evening Post* and Lincoln Steffens' *Commercial Advertiser*. As a full staff member of the *Advertiser*, Cahan was given a free hand to explore and write about multi-ethnic New York with "fresh eyes," and was inducted into a new role as police reporter by the renowned Jacob Riis, author of *How the Other Half Lives*. Cahan wrote hundreds of columns, from reports of murder trials and fires, to interviews of Boss Croker, Buffalo Bill and President McKinley, to authentic evocations of immigrant and Jewish life. In no other newspaper in the English-speaking world did Jewish feasts and fasts alike leap from the printed page in the lyrical and authoritative prose that, thanks to Cahan, graced the columns of the avant-garde *Advertiser*.

By 1902, when Cahan was again invited to serve as editor of the *Forward*, he was the most accomplished American journalist and writer to emerge from the immigrant Jewish community, its most widely recognized man of letters and clearly someone to be reckoned with. Brought in to extricate the foundering socialist Yiddish daily from its sectarianism, polemics, obscurantism and sclerotic Yiddish, he transformed it in a few years into the pacemaker of Yiddish journalism. By 1907, its circulation had zoomed from 6,500 to 80,000, rising to over 200,000 during World War I and through the 1920s to become one of the world's great dailies.

From the first, Cahan made it clear in an editorial that the new *Forward* was to be not "merely an organ of socialism" but "a socialist paper for the whole Yiddish-speaking people," wives as well as husbands, the young and the old, the green and the gray, bearded believers no less than clean-shaven atheists. Between 1902 and 1906, beginning with the feature "True Happenings," *Forward* readers were invited to become active participants in the two dozen reader departments with Cahan successively experimented. Debates on the virtues of Europe and America, the Sabbath question, the respective merits of men and women — "How Does a Workingwoman Keep Her Charm?" "Are Men or Women More Honest?" and "Is Morality Stricter With Men Than With Women?" — and many other topics reflected the editor's unceasing efforts to bring readers into the newspaper as intimate collaborators. When, in 1905, the *Forward* invited readers to submit titles for a new quality Yiddish weekly, over 2,000 suggestions poured in, including such unlikely winners as "The Tree of Knowledge," "The Red Sea" and "Pillar of Fire," reflecting the widespread receptiveness to the *Forward's* new methods.

### "His Binteldige Majesty"

The following year, Cahan initiated a column that became the most popular ever to appear in the Yiddish press and a byword in the history of American journalism. "The book of life," explained Cahan to his readers, "is the only book. We writers cannot open it for you; you must do that for yourselves. Give us your innermost secrets — both those that make you laugh and those that make you cry. Do not be afraid. If you so request, we will keep back your names. But help us to pry the book wide open, that we may read it all together." "*Bintel Brief*" ("Packet of Letters") was a response to the confusion that pervaded the minds and lives of a people who were being torn away from their traditional moorings and who were not quite aware of what was happening to them. What was happening was that grave personal problems were being generated in an unfamiliar modern world which they did not know how to deal with, problems they had never encountered or even thought about before. The "*Bintel Brief*" helped them to open windows upon their souls, one might say, and to breathe more freely. It aided them in gaining insight into their own humanity in religio-secular terms, as did no other single column in the newspaper world.

No popular column or feature in all of American newspaper history was so faithfully read — and so continuously denounced — as was the "*Bintel Brief*" — and its editor. Week in, week out, for two decades, the Yiddish





comic weekly *Der Groiser Kundes* flayed "His *Binteldige* Majesty," the *Forward* editor, while the unconverted, whether the traditionally Orthodox or the radicals, vociferously condemned the column as unfit for a Jewish newspaper.

If the *Forward* bristled with sensational Hearst-like headlines, trumpeting stories of crime, violence and mayhem on the front pages, coupled with Marxist exegesis and popular romances on the inside pages, early on, Cahan was determined to imbue his people's newspaper with high literary élan. He published the stories of Zalman Libin, Sholom Asch and Abraham Reissen, telling of people like the *Forward's* readers, groping their way into the modern world. Such authors were at first more honored than read, for like most untutored readers, the immigrants were not sophisticated enough to quite see themselves through the unblinkered lenses of the disciples of I. L. Peretz. But Cahan was resolved that they do so. More than any other newspaper editor in the modern world, he touted great writing, from Tolstoy and Chekhov to Israel Joshua and Isaac Bashevis Singer, for he viewed literature as the prism for understanding life.

During its first 20 years, the *Forward* functioned essentially out of New York and Philadelphia. Immediately after World War I, however, it developed into a truly national newspaper, with scores of employees and staff, and local editions in every major Jewish population center in the country from Boston to Los Angeles. By then, the *Forward* was devoting 40 percent of its income to supporting a whole array of labor, civic and cultural institutions and causes. In the prosperous '20s, when the paper reached full maturity and international renown, it adopted some of the Sunday features of *The New York Times* and the *New York World*, such as a stunning rotogravure section, a rich supplement and, for a time, a four-page English section. It also printed reports from correspondents throughout the Yiddish-speaking world, including Palestine, that were second to none.

### From Foe to Friend

The *Forward*, in its earliest years, was avowedly anti-Zionist, although Cahan himself frequently voiced his personal sympathy for the Zionist cause. In the early '20s, however, a change began to take place. After Cahan visited Eretz Israel in 1925, upon Weizmann's invitation, the *Forward* called for support for the Jewish revival, for David Ben-Gurion, the Histadrut and the Jewish labor movement. Cahan's articles from Eretz Israel, which were translated into English for the *Forward* as well as for the general press, created a sensation. No series of articles in the history of Yiddish journalism had ever been so widely publicized, so dazzlingly illustrated and so prominently featured. For ten successive weeks the story of

Eretz Israel was proclaimed with banner eight-column headlines, and at their close the *Forward* ran a special issue of 220,000 copies as Cahan announced to an overflow crowd that "Zionism is a Jewish question, while Socialism is a world question, and there is no conflict between the two." Confessed Cahan: "Palestine is part of my heart," and ever after the *Forward* supported the Zionist undertaking in Eretz Israel and later the State of Israel.

Like a great number of Jews, Cahan welcomed the Russian Revolution and the Bolsheviks as the saviors of their people in a Russia polarized by bloody civil war between Left and Right, with no quarter given to Jews by the anti-Semitic Right. By 1922, however, it had become apparent that the susceptibility of Russian immigrants to the dream of a Soviet utopia in an increasingly xenophobic and anti-Semitic world was not only delusive but destructive to the Jewish labor movement in America. By then, Leninism was no longer a provisional survivalist expedient needed to deal with the exigencies of anarchy, civil war and pogroms. It had become a ruthless, entrenched dictatorship which Cahan could no longer abide. From then on, the *Forward* led the opposition to the Russian Communist autocracy. The suppression in the Soviet Union of civil rights and of all dissidents, the famines, forced migrations, massacres and executions were monitored and speedily reported by the *Forward*.

Cahan exerted a tremendous influence on the Jewish immigrant generation, for whom he was to become virtually a folk hero. Even their children, who largely shunned the *Forward* and barely read Yiddish, if at all, took great pride in Cahan as a bulwark of integrity and an overriding moral and political presence bridging the generations.

A man of great nervous energy, depth of feeling and intellectual perception, Cahan sensed better than any of his contemporaries the large and small dilemmas that troubled his readers and all of society. He had commitment, virtuosity and passion. He felt with his head and thought with his heart, and thus embodied the unique kind of leader that the immigrant Jewish community needed. This above all accounts for his singular place in American and Jewish history.

### Cahan and Jewish Tradition

As a young revolutionist in Russia, Cahan discarded virtually everything associated with the traditional Jewish world from which he and his fellow immigrants emerged. He was one with them in religious background and sensibilities, but unlike them he was profoundly shaped by the modern world. It was the acute tension between old world and new in Cahan's own life that equipped him to play so extraordinary a role in the life of the immigrant Jewish community. There were others

who were gifted in special ways, but only he embraced the deeper values of the older Jewish culture, if not its lifestyle, while leading his readers into the modern world.

Cahan was the only newspaper editor in the Yiddish-speaking world, and, as a matter of fact, in all of immigrant America, who was nationally known. There was no dearth of genuinely talented journalists, of course, but they simply did not have Cahan's authority, reputation and access to the larger American word. Today it might be hard to believe how easy it was for Americans in a fragmented, pre-mass media world to ignore an editor of a foreign-language newspaper writing for people isolated from the English-speaking mainstream. Today, any representative of an ethnic community who wants to address a larger public has no trouble doing so. In the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, this was not the case.

Finally, Cahan's *Forward* was not out to make money, as were most Yiddish newspapers run by entrepreneurs who, after working to raise circulation and advertising income, attempted to sell at a profit, as they would a business property. Such newspapers didn't elicit the reader loyalty that the *Forward* did. Published by the Forward Association, it represented the whole Jewish labor movement and its family of social, cultural and fraternal organizations. Indeed, there has been nothing remotely like the *Forward* in the annals of American and Jewish journalism.

### Cahan's Last Year

Abe Cahan edited the *Forward* during the entire first half of the 20th century until a few years before his death at age 91 in 1951. On his 90th birthday, 1,500 of his admirers from all walks of life feted him in New York for the last time. At his funeral exactly a year later, the United States government was represented, appropriately, by Secretary of Labor Maurice



a New York newsboy, illustration by Jacob Epstein

Tobin, and the new State of Israel by its ambassador to the U. S. Abba Eban.

Founded shortly before the first Zionist congress at Basel and the establishment of the Bund in Vilna, Abraham Cahan's *Forward* is irrevocably identified with an era that saw the transfiguration of Jewish life: the Holocaust, the founding of the State of Israel and the emergence of the United States as the largest Jewish center in all of Jewish history. From beginning to end, Cahan and the *Forward* mirrored and interpreted that awesome era.

# THE JEWISH PRESS MAGNATE FROM EAST BROADWAY

## SHALOM ROSENFELD

When a friend from childhood brought me a copy of *Sefer Kehillat Suwalk U-Venoteha* ("The Jewish Community Book of Suwalki") which came out in Tel Aviv recently — a handsome, thick, well-edited volume<sup>1</sup> — I naturally leafed through it in search of the names of old acquaintances. Suwalki, on the border of Poland, Lithuania and Prussia, produced many accomplished individuals who were to make major contributions both in the State of Israel and in the Jewish community of the United States. Two Suwalkis whose lives intersected, unfortunately, in a notorious literary scandal, are mentioned in the book: Morris Rosenfeld, the poet of the American Jewish proletariat and composer of elegaic poems of Zion, and Kasriel Hirsch Sarasohn, the enterprising publisher.

Sarasohn is considered the first Jewish press magnate — or perhaps, more accurately, the first magnate of the Jewish press — in America. He played a decisive role in the development of the Jewish press both in Yiddish and in Hebrew. Several other Suwalkis were also involved in this area: Nahman Dov Ettelsohn,<sup>2</sup> who founded the first Yiddish paper in Chicago, and Zvi Hirsch Bernstein,<sup>3</sup> who published *Di Post* in New York in 1870.

Kasriel Sarasohn, born in 1835, was the son of Rabbi Eliyahu Sarasohn, a highly popular preacher in the Suwalk region. The rabbi taught his son Torah and prepared him for the rabbinate, but events were to develop otherwise. Kasriel married Batya, daughter of David Yehalmstein, and instead of completing his advanced Torah studies, he turned to commerce, opening a paper-products store. Several years later he emigrated to the U.S. where he embarked upon a publishing career in which his fortunes were to rise and fall

many times. The names of other emigrants from Suwalk are interwoven in Sarasohn's history both as competitors and partners, including his brother-in-law Mordecai Yehalmstein, an enlightened Jew who frequently contributed articles to *Ha-Magid* and *Ha-Melitz* under the pen-name "Ish Yemini," his son-in-law Yehuda Leib (Leon) Kamaiky, and above all his son Yehezkiel. Yehezkiel played an active role in maintaining his father's newspapers while the senior Sarasohn was alive, and upon his death in 1905 managed the business with alacrity. Eventually, though, his interest in it waned, leading to the failure of the jewel in the crown of the Sarasohn publishing empire — the daily *Yiddishes Tageblatt* ("The Jewish Daily News") — in 1928.

The Jewish community book of Suwalki gives these biographical details about the Sarasohns:

Kasriel Hirsch Sarasohn and Mordecai Yehalmstein were pioneers of Yiddish publishing in America. They both arrived in New York in 1866, whereupon Yehalmstein began publishing *Die Yiddische Presse*, which was short-lived. Later, Sarasohn brought out *New-Yorker Yiddische Zeitung*, also short-lived. [According to J. Chaiken in his book about the Jewish press in America, Sarasohn invested the last \$1,000 of his dowry in the paper, but it survived only five months, despite the fact that it was "written in good German, and most of the subscribers, Polish-German Jews, read it gladly."<sup>4</sup>]

Yehalmstein, having since returned to Europe and come back to America, co-founded the weekly *Yiddische Gazetten* with Sarasohn in 1874, which again met with only minimal success. Undaunted, Sarasohn launched a daily, *Tegliche Gazetten* ("Daily Papers"), in 1881 — the first Yiddish daily in America and in the world. Early issues featured reports by the "Alliance" on conditions in Russian cities and towns that had suffered a wave of pogroms. Emigrants from those regions devoured the news, but the paper failed shortly thereafter. [According to one source it lasted two weeks; according to Chaiken, two months.] Sarasohn's efforts to revive it in 1883 also ended in failure.

But in 1885 he launched the successful New York daily *Yiddishes Tageblatt*, which was later to merge with the *Yudische Gazetten*. Sarasohn's son Yehezkiel and future son-in-law Yehuda Leib Kamaiky were also involved in the paper.

The author of this biographical information also adds: "As a newspaper publisher, K. Sarasohn made some major errors in judgment. One example was his relationship with the well-known Jewish folk poet Morris Rosenfeld, who was also a fellow Suwalki. Rosenfeld contributed poems to Sarasohn's *Yiddishes Tageblatt*, until one day Sarasohn and his son decided to fire him." There is a serious case of mistaken identity here, as shall be shown later — a clear example of

the fathers paying for the sins of the sons. The editors of the Jewish community book of Suwalki (Tel Aviv) copied the information from an article by Berl Cohen which had appeared in a commemorative book about the town published 28 years previously in New York.

### John Paley, editor

The world's first Yiddish daily reached a circulation of 70,000 copies at its peak — an enormous figure in those days. It was, in fact, the most widespread Yiddish daily in the world. Its success was attributable primarily to the vision, sharp commercial sense and tenacity of the Sarasohns. But a good measure of the success was also due to the paper's dynamic editor-in-chief, John Paley.<sup>5</sup> Even Paley's most severe critics

described him as a brilliant journalist, part showman, part virtuoso, who knew his readership intimately: the new East European immigrants who knew no English, missed their native land and were starving for news of it. Most of them had little general education. They kept the old traditions. They craved folk tales. He supplied them with a mix of shmaltz, sensationalism, crime, nostalgia for the old country, miracles from the Holy Land, entertainment and love stories, all in the style of the Hearst newspapers prevalent then.

Since there was no departmentalization or specialization in those days, the phenomenally prolific Paley would compose the news items (some purely imaginary), write the lead articles and the political editorials, make up the headlines, conduct real and imaginary interviews and stage all sorts of

newly arrived Jewish exiles from Russia



escapades which he would then report. For example, once, on Hanukah, he offered a poor peddler some oysters to eat, having convinced him that they were American-style pancakes. The peddler vomited it all up, and Paley turned the episode into a heartbreaking front-page story about a gang of anti-Semites attacking a Jewish peddler and choking him to death.<sup>6</sup> Another time, arriving at the editorial offices after a night on the town and unable to write anything, he copied a lead article from the despised rival *Forward* which attacked the Orthodox community, and then added: Now you see what those scoundrels are capable of writing.

Paley was the life of the *Tageblatt* and its undisputed editorial boss. While all of Sarasohn's editors were respected and accomplished, Paley was in a class of his own. He had been preceded by the versatile Professor Getzel Zelikowitch,<sup>7</sup> a noted scholar, widely traveled, who is thought to be the first Jewish military correspondent in the world, and who also wrote popular serialized novels. Following Paley's death, the author Tashrak<sup>8</sup> served as editor, to be followed by the religious Zionist publicist Gedaliah Publik.

### The Controversial Sarasohn Empire

But ultimately it was the Sarasohns' role which determined the success of their empire. Father and son repeatedly succeeded in taking over their competitors, whether in New York or in other cities throughout the U.S. Historians and lexicographers of the American Jewish community have derived a great deal of material from two commemorative issues of Sarasohn newspapers: a 20th anniversary commemoration of the *Yudishe Gazetten* that appeared in 1894, and a 25th anniversary commemoration of the *Yiddishes Tageblatt* in 1910. The latter was especially important because it included pieces by the leading Jewish American and European journalists and authors of the period, from Mendele Mokher Sforim [see his contribution, reprinted in Hebrew translation, in *Qesher* no. 2, November 1987] to the Zionist publicist Moshe Kleinman. In the issue's editorial, Yehezkiel Sarasohn stressed that many who had maligned the newspaper now came to praise it, reflecting the change of opinion about the paper.

There was, indeed, a great deal of criticism of Sarasohn's papers. Some saw the *Gazetten* as a blend of "the skullcap and the crucifix," a reflection of current rumors that Paley had converted in his youth. Jacob Milch, the writer, said that the *Yudishe Gazetten* was a combination of "rabbinitics, frivolity and American business greed." I. D. Berkowitch, in his book *Ha-Rishonim Ke-Vnai Adam* ("The Founders as People"), described it as a "repulsive monster." The



Kasriel Sarasohn, publisher



John Paley, editor

*Tageblatt*, as other popular newspapers, promoted pulp literature and "housemaids' novels."

But along with its vulgarity and self-righteousness, the *Tageblatt* provided its readers with entertainment and pleasure, relieved their yearnings for the old country and, indirectly, even brought them closer to English through its use of English expressions mixed into the German Yiddish. There were also occasional English supplements for young readers. It didn't try to convey a message or to educate, but its readers liked it.

Two important essays, by Sarasohn Sr. and Jr., are included in Moshe Starkman's *Geklibene Shriften* ("Selected Writings"), published in Tel Aviv in 1979 (edited by Mordecai Halamish and Yitzhak Yanasovitz) and provide valuable biographical material. The essay by the senior Sarasohn, Kasriel, reveals his talent for writing, his erudition and most of all his sensitivity. The son's essay is drier and more factual, but it paints a living picture of the family's struggle for survival against the many competitors who would go to any length — including personal slander — in the world of press battles.

In describing the history of the *Yudishe Gazetten*, Kasriel Sarasohn quotes Genesis 32:11 and continues in a poetic vein:

"I am not worthy of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast done with thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two camps."

These holy words are familiar to everyone. They were spoken by Jacob, our father, to God, after having worked for Laban for 20 years and achieved prosperity. I too, dear readers, was forced to struggle with many Labans who wanted to cause me evil in

return for my good services to them, but after 20 years of suffering I became two powerful camps: In New York, the *Gazetten*, the *Tageblatt* and *Ha-Ivri*, and in Chicago, the *Yiddische Courier* — dailies and weeklies.

Publishing a newspaper can be likened to a ship's voyage. When leaving the harbor every skipper hopes for good weather and a short voyage to the next port. But not all ships are lucky: some are destined to battle storms and high seas, some sink and only some reach port safely. Editors too have high hopes when their first issues are published, but many sink to the depths, many must struggle against storms and their lives are very difficult. Only a few are destined to have their dreams realized.

Kasriel mentions that nearly 40 Yiddish newspapers failed, most of them established for the sole purpose of putting the *Gazetten* out of business. He portrays three types of enemies: the "*Fanatismus*" — the religious fanatics who forbade reading his paper on the Sabbath, the "*Maskilismus*" — the Enlightened, who were embarrassed by the "jargon newspaper," and "*Capitalismus*" — lack of financing. Actually, it wasn't only the Enlightened who were embarrassed by the "jargon newspaper": the Sarasohns couldn't get Jewish newsboys to deliver their papers in the streets, and Yehezkiel had to recruit non-Jewish boys for this purpose. Mostly, the *Gazetten* had been sold in grocery stores, where housewives would pick up a copy with the bread, milk and oil. But Yehezkiel wanted to move on to more modern distribution methods, in the street.

The senior Sarasohn fondly describes the staff's devotion and hard work, especially that of his eldest son, Yehezkiel, who was manager and treasurer, his 13-year-old daughter and his youngest son, age 10, both of whom worked as typesetters. Years later, the youngest son, Avraham Hayim, who became a lawyer, was to be part of the legal team that represented his father in a slander case initiated by Sarasohn against the editors of the *Abendblatt* in 1897. The editors, Benjamin Feigenbaum and Philip Krantz, accused Sarasohn of embezzling public funds from charity collections for Eretz Israel and for Dreyfus. This case, which resulted in the closure of the rival *Abendblatt*, was just one episode in an unending stream of defamatory accusations directed at the Sarasohns, including a similar charge by the *Forward* regarding embezzling charity funds.

Yehezkiel, the son, describes the rise and fall of the firm's daily, *Tegliche Gazetten*, which was forced into a weekly format after several months. According to Yehezkiel, it was he who saved the *Gazetten* by disregarding his father's advice. In collusion with his mother, Yehezkiel foiled his father's intention to sell out to a rival publisher, Moses Topolowsky

of the *Yudische Volkszeitung*, by withholding the list of *Gazetten* subscribers. After an unrestrained battle, it was Topolowsky who broke, and the Sarasohns acquired his paper and his press for a pittance.

Yehezkiel also describes the news-gathering system devised by his father and himself. They would import the newspaper *Haisraeli*, published by Yehiel Brill in Mainz, Germany — a German Jewish weekly printed in Hebrew letters — with its front page left empty. Then, utilizing the limited supply of lead letters in their possession, they would fill the front page with local items and fresher world news, generally copied from the German and English press in New York.

In addition to descriptions of Sarasohn's papers, the commemorative issue of the *Yudische Gazetten* in 1894 contains a great deal of background material on the beginning of the Jewish press in America. Under the headline "One Against Eighteen," an account is given of the *Gazetten*'s takeover of each of 18 rival papers, listed alphabetically, with a verse from Ecclesiastes — "All the rivers flow to the sea" — serving as the motto. Particular mention is made of those owners or contributors who maligned the Sarasohns. The list of 18 newspapers is essentially the first organized bibliography of a portion of the Jewish press that appeared, and vanished, during that period.

If in 1894 Sarasohn spoke in terms of "one against eighteen," during the following years his empire expanded until the family bought or controlled some 40 papers in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and elsewhere in the U.S., some of which were eliminated by mergers. During a period of 25 years, Kasriel Sarasohn, "the grand old man of East Broadway" according to Professor Getzel Zelikowitch,<sup>9</sup> managed, through his own efforts entirely, to attain the status of a press magnate — a kind of Jewish Hearst.

### Sarasohn the Man

In addition to his publishing ventures, Kasriel Sarasohn established a number of Talmud Torah schools and charitable institutions. He was president of the synagogue founded by fellow immigrants from Suwalk. He published the first ever Yiddish textbook for learning English. He was a delegate to Zionist congresses in Basel and London. He visited Eretz Israel on an arbitration mission to end dissension between the rival Sephardi and Ashkenazi hospitals in Jerusalem (he didn't succeed).

By the end of his life, Sarasohn had amassed a large fortune in America, as shown by his will, in which he bequeathed \$600,000 (\$60,000?)<sup>10</sup> to Jewish institutions, with 2/3 of the sum earmarked for New York institutions and 1/3 for Eretz

Israel. His funeral in 1905 was attended by some 50,000 mourners.

The available evidence about Sarasohn's character is conflicting, ranging from descriptions of him as tough, unsentimental in personal relations and insensitive to the status of writers and employees, to gracious, warm, devoted to public causes and reverential toward Talmud scholars.

The London *Zukunft* ("Future"), in issue no. 35, 1895, accused him of plagiarism. The editor and publisher of *Ha-Pisgah* ("The Summit") in Chicago, Wolf Schorr, a noted Hebrew publicist, described him as "a base person" and "a malignant leper," although Schorr wasn't entirely objective as he had been in a partnership with Sarasohn which ended badly. Competing newspapers attacked him for accepting "subsidies" (or gratuities) from political quarters, which could explain why only a few days before the 1900 presidential election the Sarasohn papers suddenly shifted their traditional Republican loyalties (for William McKinley) to the Democratic candidate. A similar shift was made again in 1903, and when it was exposed by the *Forward*, Sarasohn admitted that he did it to guarantee "a jobele" for his brother. The Sarasohn in question here must have been the son, Yehezkiel, who was probably advancing his lawyer brother

Avraham Hayim's career in the best Tammany Hall tradition.<sup>12</sup>

Kasriel was the founder of *Ha-Ivri* ("The Hebrew") in 1892, edited by the former Suwalk teacher Gershon Rosenzweig.<sup>13</sup> The paper elicited an unfavorable reaction from the author Yehuda Leib Gordon, who wrote in a letter: "The publishers of *Ha-Ivri*, Sarasohn Sr. and Jr., are asking for my help, but I have turned them down because, judging from the sample pages they have sent me, I can see that their linguistic level is poor and will never amount to anything."<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Moshe Kleinman, the Zionist writer who was later to write an obituary for Sarasohn, praised him intensely, especially for his journalistic qualities, rating him nearly as high as Nahum Sokolow.<sup>15</sup>

Yet another opinion on Sarasohn and his papers, I. D. Berkowitch's, was also negative.<sup>16</sup> Berkowitch was Sholom Aleichem's father-in-law. Sarasohn's papers frequently reprinted Sholom Aleichem's sketches and stories from the Jewish press in Russia, without paying copyright fees — a widespread practice in the American Jewish press. Eventually, when forced to pay, Sarasohn behaved dishonorably both to Sholom Aleichem and to Berkowitch.

"The Hebrew," one of the newspapers in Sarasohn's empire

# THE HEBREW

## העברי

תחת ידי המהפכה ועל שפתה תבוא

תחת ידי המהפכה ועל שפתה תבוא

(מספרים)

מחיר... 2.00

במחיר... 10

במחיר... 14

במחיר... 18

המחיר... 2.00

The Hebrew,

110 HENRY ST. NEW YORK

Vol. VI. No. 3

New York & Philadelphia, Nov. 15, 1892. — מחיר השנה \$2.00

Price \$2.00 a Year.

המחיר... 2.00

במחיר... 10

במחיר... 14

במחיר... 18

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## The Sholom Aleichem Affair

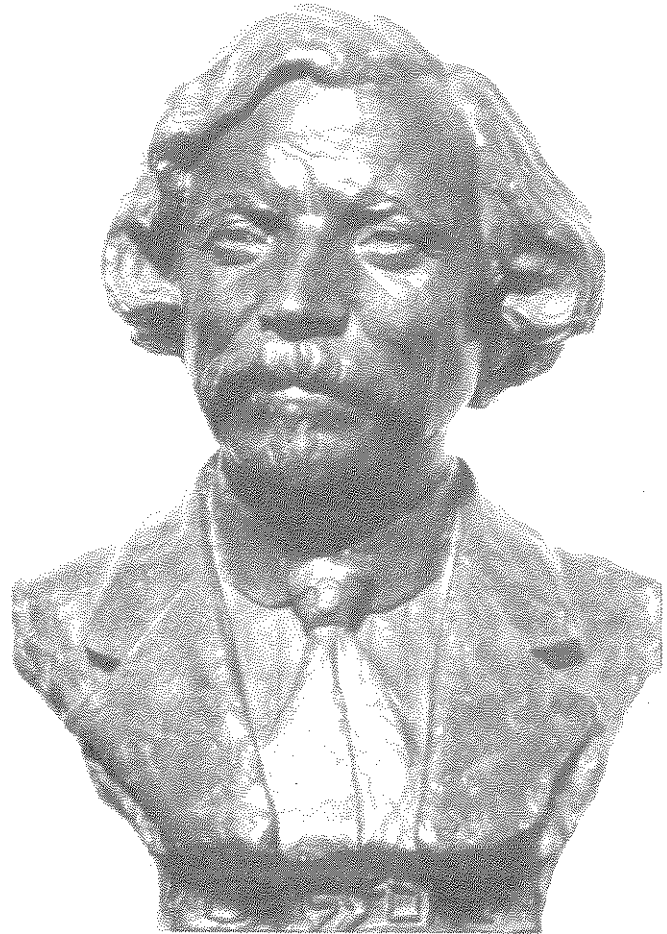
1905 was a watershed year in Russian history. The revolutionary movements made their first attempt to throw off the despotic Tsarist yolk, and the threatened regime responded by intensified repression. Rivers of blood flowed through the major cities, and the Jews inevitably were the first to pay a heavy price, suffering massacres at the hands of crazed masses.

One of the locations of the pogroms was Kiev, Sholom Aleichem's home, although he and his family were lucky in finding refuge in the Hotel Imperial. It took him a long time to be able to record his impressions of the horror. Meanwhile, his financial situation was desperate and he implored a friend in America, Dr. Morris Fishberg, to secure publication of material he would prepare for the Jewish theater and press in America in order to finance his and his family's escape to America. Fishberg conveyed Sholom Aleichem's plea to two Jewish papers in New York — Sarasohn's *Tageblatt* and Jacob Saphirstein's *Morgen Journal*, both of which responded enthusiastically. The *Morgen Journal* even urged the public to establish a special fund to bring over Sholom Aleichem and his family. The *Tageblatt* promptly countered by discounting the idea of a fund because, in an article titled "We Are Bringing Him to America," the readers were informed that the great *literat* was being invited to describe the Kiev pogrom and the other pogroms exclusively for the *Tageblatt*. The paper went on to say that at that very moment, the sum of \$600 was being cabled by the paper to Sholom Aleichem and his family in Kiev (I. D. Berkowitch, p. 219).

Sarasohn's business sense, and especially Paley's journalistic savvy, focused on the combination of "pogroms" and "Sholom Aleichem" as a veritable gold mine.

According to Berkowitch, Sholom Aleichem was greatly encouraged by the response from America and, working day and night, he soon sent 42 letters — "Pictures of the Pogrom" — to the *Tageblatt*. Not having seen the complete item in the paper, Sholom Aleichem didn't know that Sarasohn had presumably cabled him \$600. He had actually received a total of 300 rubles, or 1/4 of the promised sum. A long battle was to ensue over the question of the unpaid remainder, described by Berkowitch in a chapter entitled "Winter 1908" (p. 510):

After battling to extract Sholom Aleichem's royalties from the owners of the *Tageblatt*, I have a dim view of the paper's status. One of the two owners, Sarasohn [the reference is to the junior Sarasohn, as the father had died by then], a stubborn, crazed man who has a fit when angered, announced that henceforth he will forbid his editor to print anything by Sholom Aleichem.



Sholom Aleichem (1912), a bust by Numa Patlazhan

Why? He gives many reasons. First, he isn't obliged to support outside humorists — he has plenty of humorists on his staff. Second, Sholom Aleichem can go back to the Russian newspapers, and he shouldn't be so greedy as to seek double royalties, both here and there. And third, the decision to print Sholom Aleichem's material was made without Sarasohn's knowledge, and since it is he who controls the finances, he has decided not to pay another penny.

Protests by Berkowitch, Sholom Aleichem and various would-be arbitrators were to no avail. Paley too, aware of reader surveys showing Sholom Aleichem's wide popularity, failed to change Sarasohn's mind. Berkowitch, describing Paley's friendliness and his somewhat cynical confidentiality, quoted Paley as saying that the owners don't spend money on fine literature. "In America we spend money only on low

literature," he said (p. 481). Apparently, Sarasohn's hatred for Sholom Aleichem was so deep that once he even stole a collection of the writer's stories — "My Vacation" — from Paley's drawer. Unfortunately, the writer had no copy of the manuscript. An attempt was made by Tashrak, the writer and humorist who was a senior staff member of the newspaper, to calm Berkowitch, and through him Sholom Aleichem (p. 512): "The owner [Sarasohn] is a capricious man, given to madneses. When this passes, he'll release the 'Vacation' from its prison and print it in his paper for the benefit of the readership."

In fact, the boss's "madness" was prolonged and Sholom Aleichem's "Vacation" remained in its "prison" a long while. It was only after Paley's death in 1907 that the manuscript was revived. Paley had taken his own life, an act which tarnished the paper's image in the minds of its Orthodox readership and greatly displeased the owners — so much so that they forbade public mention of his position as editor of the paper. The paper was in need of refurbishing, and one of the first steps taken by Yehezkiel Sarasohn and his partners was the "release" of Sholom Aleichem's "Vacation." At the insistence of the owner, and with the consent of Sholom Aleichem, the piece was divided into short stories, for, according to Tashrak, the paper's literary editor, "the owner doesn't like long *megillot*" (Berkowitch). I urge Sholom Aleichem devotees to read his wonderful letter to Tashrak, advising him how to "baste" and "sew" the stories, for "we tailors know each other by our stitches."

The *Tageblatt* owners never forgave "the Jewish Mark Twain," as they themselves, along with other admirers, labeled him. The question of the \$600 payment had been widely publicized and had harmed the Sarasohn image. The Sarasohns were also rankled by the fact that Sholom Aleichem wrote for competing papers.

At the height of World War I, Sholom Aleichem escaped via Copenhagen to New York, where he was accorded many public receptions. At one such event on the East Side, the main speaker was the millionaire philanthropist Jacob Schiff, who praised the guest profusely. Unable to disregard the event, the *Tageblatt* reported that Schiff had preached peace and unity within the Jewish community, and that afterward "the guest read from his works," without identifying the guest (Berkowitch, p. 1180). Previously, the paper had played another trick — or perhaps revealed its ignorance. In reporting the arrival of "the greatest Jewish humorist" in New York's harbor, the name given for the honored visitor was "Mr. Sholom Jacob Abramowitch" — Mendele Mokher Sforim's name. (Sholom Aleichem's name was Sholom Rabinowitz.) Not coincidentally, Mendele had once warned

Berkowitch: Better support yourself as a carcass-stripper in the marketplace than a writer in Jewish America.

### The Morris Rosenfeld Affair

If Sholom Aleichem spoke of the tailor's kingdom as a literary metaphor, his colleague in the literary kingdom and in this particular New York newspaper, Morris Rosenfeld, could have truly listed "tailor" as his profession in his biography. Like Itzik Manger, who also composed his first poems to the accompaniment of the rhythms of the sewing machines, Rosenfeld, a tailor in Suwalki and in Warsaw, put his vocation to use when he immigrated to America in the 1880s. He began working in one of those notorious sweatshops where Jewish men and women toiled from sunup to sundown, sometimes in slave-like situations. In one of his poems Rosenfeld appropriately called himself "a teardrop millionaire," for many tears were mixed into the rivers of sweat in those shops.<sup>17</sup>

Rosenfeld's poetry was widely read, translated first into English and later into German, French, Russian, Polish, Czech and Hungarian.<sup>18</sup> He also excelled in satiric verse, and, together with the poet A. M. Sharansky, he published and edited a satiric journal, *Ashmedai*, which lasted for nine issues. He sold his poems to Jewish newspapers to supplement his salary, and after ten years in the sweatshops he became a full-time writer. He came into contact with the two New York Yiddish papers published by his fellow Suwalkis, Kasriel and Yehezkiel Sarasohn, but, according to

Morris Rosenfeld, the poet, and a sewing-machine operator



Yehezkiel Lipshitz, editor of Rosenfeld's letters, "to work for Sarasohn's *Gazetten* or *Tageblatt* wasn't much better than working in a sweatshop."<sup>19</sup>

The contemptuous treatment accorded Rosenfeld by both papers even exceeded that directed at Sholom Aleichem. Eventually, his troubled relationship with the *Gazetten* and the *Tageblatt* reached a climax with his dismissal from the paper. The dismissal notice became a kind of classic in the annals of the Jewish press, mentioned in almost every biography of Rosenfeld. Kalman Marmor, a Yiddish literary researcher who promoted Rosenfeld's work, as well as a founder of Po'alei Zion and editor of its organ *Der Kempfer* ("The Warrior"), wrote:<sup>20</sup>

In his advanced years Morris Rosenfeld was obliged to work in the *Yiddishes Tageblatt*. The poet, age 59, was ill, physically and emotionally broken.

Moreover, journalism was alien to him, especially at the *Tageblatt* where he had to adapt himself to a Conservative-Orthodox public and to glorify a type of Judaism that he had previously mocked. Amongst his writings is a series of poems expressing grief and pain about his journalistic involvement, during which time he became "simple and meager, a dry scribe, a weekly sermonizer working only for the salary."

One day he was sent this slip of paper:

New York, March 4, 1921

To Mr. M. Rosenfeld

Dear Sir,

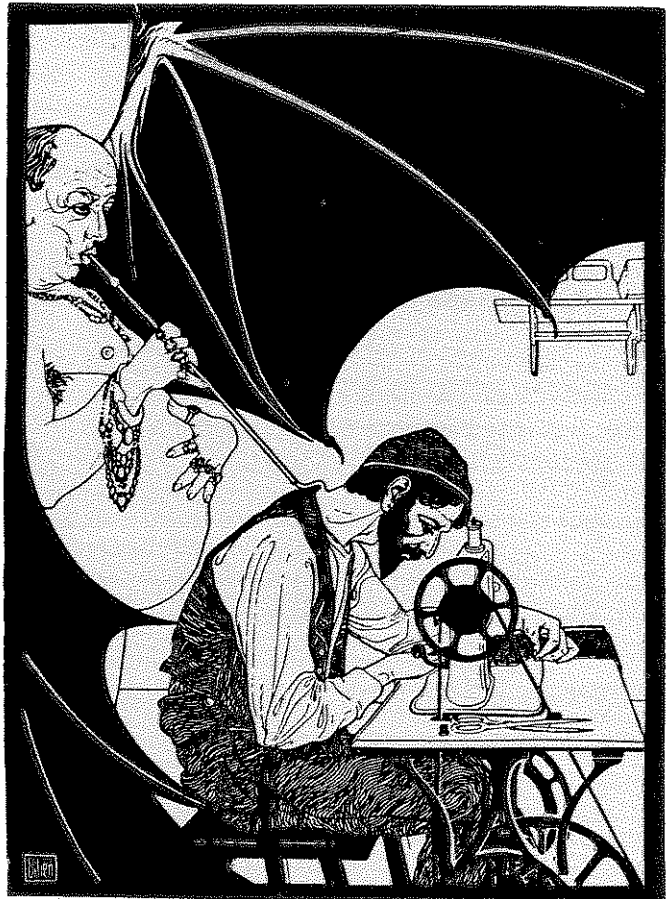
We find it necessary to inform you that as of today you need no longer write for us. The reason for this is that your writing is unsatisfactory in quality and quantity.

Best wishes,  
Sarasohn and Son

They wrote to him in dry office style on stationery used for billing subscribers and advertisers. They wrote to him as if he were someone off the street, some "Mr. M. Rosenfeld," signed by the firm — cold and alienating — "Sarasohn and Son."

In his article Marmor refers to the signature "Sarasohn and Son." This was the formal name of the firm. Clearly, Kasriel could not have been involved in this base act, as he had long since died. It is similarly puzzling that the author of Sarasohn's biography, Berl Cohen, also attributes the dismissal in 1921 to Kasriel Sarasohn (in *Yizkor Buch Suwalk, New York*).

It was the son Yehezkiel, as well as Leon Kamaiky, who were obviously involved. This same Kamaiky (as described by



"The Vampire of the Sweatshop," Lilién drawing for Morris Rosenfeld's book "Songs of Labor."

Starkman in *Geklibene Shriften*) was known to have treated workers shamefully. Once, when the novelist Moshe Seifert complained about the unliveable wage he was earning, Kamaiky retorted: "And who asks you to live?"

### The End of the "Tageblatt"

In describing Rosenfeld's dismissal, Marmor refers to the sad end of the paper — in 1928 — as well. "The proud oak," as Rosenfeld had termed the paper in a commemorative poem, which could "buy out anyone," had itself been sold. And in the end, no one had a good word for it, the inevitable result of Sarasohn's lack of ethics and tact.

The *Yiddishes Tageblatt* had ignored both its writers and its typesetters. Characteristically, on the day it closed, April 20, 1928, the workers and reporters arrived as usual, only to find the doors locked. They were to learn about its closure along with the public at large, when the buyer, the *Morgen Journal*, publicly announced its acquisition.<sup>21</sup>

ידי שיע שבתאי לאה

PRICE, EXCHANGE BUILDING, 1743 PLEASANT AVENUE, BROOKLYN, N. Y. TWO CENTS. Brooklyn, Wednesday, November 3, 1914. VOL. 1, NO. 111.

האילצו נעווננט מיט ריעזיגע מאיאדיטעט ארץ ישראל פאר אידען, זאגט ענגלאנד אפיציעל

יינגלעך גיטען קומט הודו דעם פירער פון ענגלישע ציוניסטען

ענגלאנד א רעפובליק

כאטאן נעמט גרעסער נא אהן זיין שטימ, זען אן אלע באדימט

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כאטאן נעמט גרעסער נא אהן זיין שטימ

Was the paper's demise natural or was it suicide? In his book about the Jewish press in America, J. Chaiken gives three main reasons for the paper's collapse. Co-owner Yehezkiel Sarasohn had gotten entangled in financial speculation, while Leon Kamaiky devoted most of his time to his other business interests, especially his investments in sugar plantations. There was no love lost between the brothers-in-law/partners, and, fed up, Kamaiky finally sold his share to Sarasohn. The family falling-out resulted in chaos among the management and staff as well. Various Orthodox parties offered to buy the paper from Sarasohn. Unfortunately, during that period his son married a Christian girl, and he was threatened with blackmail to avoid publicizing the marriage among his largely Orthodox reading public. The quarrels, chaos and threats had their effect on all aspects of the paper's functioning. Losses were registered for the first time, reaching \$30,000 in 1927. It was not a large sum for such a well-established publishing concern, but Yehezkiel Sarasohn now lacked the will and determination to fight for the paper's existence, and in the end he sold it hastily and conspiratorially to Israel Friedkin, publisher of the *Morgen Journal* and the *Amerikaner*.

Chaiken's conclusion is that the paper ended not for lack of readership, but as "unjustifiable suicide."<sup>22</sup> All that remained of the empire built by the "grand old man" from East Broadway, Kasriel Hirsch Sarasohn, was the building and the press, which were retained by Yehezkiel.

Today, when Murdochs, Maxwells and Blakes deal in transactions worth billions, buying and selling whole media networks, and when giant conglomerates merge with or take over each other, Sarasohn's business dealings and his achievements appear diminutive. But they must be viewed in the context of the late 19th century, when the Jewish population in the U.S. was slightly over a million. Kasriel Sarasohn, in his economic, social and technological time frame, can truly be called a press lord, and shall have, in

addition, an abiding claim to fame as the publisher of the first Yiddish daily ever.

His record is not unblemished. Yet the two unfortunate, and at the time sensational, affairs described above — the paper's shabby treatment of Sholom Aleichem and Morris Rosenfeld — were not ascribable to Kasriel Hirsch personally. With his shortcomings, the man fully merited his friend Getzel Zelikowitch's memorial article which appeared in the *Tog* in 1924. Zelikowitch opened the article by describing his last conversation with Kasriel Sarasohn in 1905, which reveals something about the latter's values:

"Did the Japanese capture Port Arthur yet?"

"Yes, Mr. Sarasohn," I answered the dying man. "Port Arthur fell together with General Stoessel, his army, his artillery, his ships and all."

The "grand old man" of East Broadway smiled and murmured: "This is God's pogrom against the Tsar in revenge for his pogroms against the Jews. Compose a poem about it for the paper. A Yiddish poem for the front page."

Zelikowitch thought that these were, in fact, the last words spoken by the architect of the Yiddish daily press, who was 70 when he died. In contrast to the critics, Zelikowitch describes him as a man who "honored Torah scholars and men of learning at every opportunity. He was 'all heart,' as Jacob Schiff said in his eulogy of Sarasohn. If the business had been entirely under his control, he would never have allowed the controversy with Jewish writers and thinkers to have developed."

Could the thousands of mourners who attended Sarasohn's funeral in 1905 have imagined, in an America where there were dozens of Yiddish dailies and weeklies, that toward the end of the century, when America's Jewish population was some six million, there wouldn't be even one daily paper in this language?

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1. Jehuda Alroi and Joseph Chrust, eds., *Sefer Kehillat Suwalk U-Veoteha* ("The Jewish Community Book of Suwalk"), Tel Aviv (1989).

2. Nahman Dov (Ber) Ertelsohn, son of a noted teacher, Rabbi Baruch Ertelsohn. He published a Yiddish weekly, *Israelitische Presse*, in Chicago, where there was a large group of immigrants from Suwalk. The eight-page newspaper, which had a Hebrew supplement — "*Hechal Ha-Ivriyah*" — existed from 1877 to 1880. (From Kalman Marmor in *Pinkas*, the Yiddish Scientific Institute — American Branch, New York, July-December 1927, p. 49).

3. Zvi Hirsch Bernstein, son-in-law of the Kalvarija Rabbi. He published *Di Post* in New York in August 1870. He also founded the Hebrew journal *Ha-Zofeh Da-Eretz Ha-Hadasha* (1871). When the *Post* closed, Bernstein embarked on a unique venture with one, Ya'akov Cohen (Cahen) apparently a Suwalki — the publication of a quadrilingual newspaper, *Hebrew News*, whose 32 pages contained English, Hebrew, German and Yiddish, the last actually German printed in Hebrew letters. It began in 1871 and ran for 12 issues at irregular intervals. See Joseph Chaiken, *Yiddische Bletter in Amerika* ("Yiddish Leaves in America"), pp. 52-53; and the 75th anniversary

- commemorative volume of the Jewish press in America. The latter cites *Die Yiddische Zeitung*, ed. by Y.K. Buchner, which began in March 1870, as the first Yiddish periodical, and not the *Post*.
4. Chaiken, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
  5. Biographical details about John (or Johann) Paley are shrouded in mystery. According to one source, he studied at yeshivas in Volozin and Kovno but became an agnostic at a young age. A persistent rumor during his lifetime had it that he had attended a priest's course in Russia and had converted.
  6. Chaiken, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
  7. Professor Getzel Zelikowitch (George Selikowitch) began his career as a Semitics scholar and Egyptologist. Like many authors of his time, he was swept up by the fashion of serialized novels and began writing "folk" stories under various pen-names, with sensational titles such as "The Embittered Female," "The Profaned Grave" and "The Revenge of a Corpse." See Sol Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish Literature*, New York (1972), p. 157. Also, see Moshe Dor, "The First Jewish Military Correspondent," in *Qesher* no. 3, May 1988, pp. 122-125 (English abstract pp. 131-132).
  8. Tashrak, an acronym, is the pseudonym for Israel Joseph Zevin, one of the mainstays of the Yiddish and Hebrew press in America at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.
  9. G. Zelikowitch, "'The Grand Old Man' of East Broadway," in *Tog* commemorative issue, Nov. 23, 1924.
  10. The sum might be \$60,000. A question about this appears in the source, *Sefer Kehillat Suwalk U-Venoteha*, and in *Yizkor Buch* (New York).
  11. Eliezer Raphael Malakhi, *Igrot Sofrim*, New York (1932), pp. 113-118.
  12. Chaiken, *op. cit.*, p. 130, and Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, New York (1976), p. 527.
  13. The erudite Gershon Rosenzweig also worked on the *Tageblatt*, where he wrote a daily aphorism column. A volume of his collected aphorisms, *Hamisha Ve-Eleph*, was dedicated to Kasriel Sarasohn. Rosenzweig also wrote *Masechet Amerika*, a sharp satire on the American "allrightnik" and on Jewish functionaries, some of whom were ignoramuses whose only power was their purse. He published and edited several Hebrew periodicals in addition to *Ha-Ivri*, and wrote several volumes of Hebrew verse.
  14. Y. Y. Weisberg, *Igrot Yalag*, Warsaw, (1895), II/D, p. 398.
  15. Eliezer Raphael Malakhi, "Der Baginen fun der Yiddisher Presse in Amerika," in *Pinkos*, p. 225. While quoting Kleinman's opinion, the researcher/author adds that "Kleinman exaggerated quite a bit."
  16. I. D. Berkowitch, *Ha-Rishonim Ke-Vnai Adam: Sipurei Zichronot al Shalom Aleichem U-Vnai Doro*, Tel Aviv (1976).
  17. Professor Leo Wiener, who taught Slavic languages at Harvard and was a friend of the poet, translated Rosenfeld's earliest poems into English in an anthology titled *Songs From the Ghetto*, New York (1898). Among the many Diaspora and Israeli poets who translated Rosenfeld into Hebrew are Shimshon Meltzer, Moshe Bassok and Dr. Uriel Ofek.
  18. Another facet of Rosenfeld's creativity is recalled by Genya Manger, the poet's widow. She had worked in the sweatshops for many years and remembers the workers singing the tunes that Rosenfeld composed for several of his poems.
  19. Yehezkiel Lipshitz, *Morris Rosenfeld's Letters* (Yiddish), YIVO, Buenos Aires (1955), p. 16.
  20. Kalman Marmor, "Morris Rosenfeld's Literary Legacy" (Yiddish) in *Pinkos*, *op. cit.*, 1928, p. 209.
  21. *Ibid.*
  22. Chaiken, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-301.

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# MEYER WEISGAL, EDITOR: THE AMERICANIZATION OF THE ZIONIST PRESS

CHAYA WEISGAL-AMIR

When I was fourteen years old my father, Meyer Weisgal, inducted me into the mysteries of proofreading. He was editing a *festschrift* for Chaim Weizmann's seventieth birthday and the galleys were in the house. He was professional and forbearing in his instruction (i.e., totally out of character as far as I was concerned). I remember feeling flattered and elated — as if I had been given a precious gift. In retrospect, I believe it was just that: since girls were not bat-mitzvahed in New York in those days, this was apparently my coming-of-age ceremony, a time for passing down some family treasure to the next generation.

True, my father will most likely be remembered in Israel as the founding father and patron saint of the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot; or as the man who turned Zionist fundraising into an art. He will be remembered in the annals of the New York theater world as the man who brought Max Reinhardt, Kurt Weill and Franz Werfel to America in the thirties and produced their theatrically exhilarating and financially disastrous musical drama, "The Eternal Road." In Zionist history, he will be remembered as Weizmann's most trusted lieutenant.

Yet, whenever asked to state his profession, he invariably answered — editor. I think his answer sprang from a deep-seated pride in the fact that he, a Yiddish-speaking immigrant boy from the *shtetl*, had succeeded in mastering the English language. "Journalist" or "editor" appeared in the relevant slots in his American passport and Israeli I.D. Furthermore, it was almost always — if not exclusively — true.<sup>1</sup> But more to



Meyer Weisgal, editor, in the 1920s

the point, during the period from 1916 to 1932, when he was primarily — though not quite exclusively — a working journalist and editor, he was instrumental in Americanizing the Zionist press.

I once described my father as the Cecil B. De Mille of American Zionism in that he always thought in terms of the dramatic and the spectacular.<sup>2</sup> De Mille's productions, however dramatic and spectacular, were, nonetheless, tawdry and oversimplified. Although my father was not what one would call "highbrow," he did have a discriminating style. He had an eye for aesthetic design, an ear for music, and a wild imagination which his sharp intellect was able to harness effectively. He also had a precious antidote to his outrageous ego — a keen and often self-effacing sense of humor. In short, he had all the makings of a first-class impresario, and at the age of nineteen he began testing these natural talents in journalism, and not without success. But it is extremely important to emphasize that he was not primarily a journalist in search of a job: he was, rather, an American immigrant, fueled by the Zionist idea and, equally, by an immigrant boy's ambition to make his mark. Journalism was his first and most decisive proving ground.

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It is not my intention in this article to expatiate on the political or ideological roots or the history and controversies of Zionism in America seventy-five years ago, as reflected in the pages of the Zionist press, except in passing. I intend, rather, to examine the *New Palestine*, the official journal of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), during the nine-year period of my father's editorship, from 1921 to 1930, in the light of the hypothesis suggested by the title of this piece.

It is my central assumption (and not only mine) that the idea (if not the practice) of Zionism replaced religion and socialism as the most tenable ideology for the upwardly mobile Jewish immigrant community of the United States (and Western Jewry in general) in its desire to maintain a national identity while, in fact, assimilating. After all, American Italians loved Italy and American Irishmen loved Ireland. Why shouldn't American Jews love Palestine? American Zionists were never asked for more than financial contributions and political support for the Zionist idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.<sup>3</sup> They didn't even have to be card-carrying members. As a matter of fact, with the exception of two short periods — immediately following the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and right before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, membership in the ZOA never really amounted to more than a hill of beans.<sup>4</sup> (Hadassah was always more successful, and for different reasons.)

The period between 1921 and 1930, the heyday of the *New*

*Palestine*, was the period in which a large part of the American Jewish community began to "make it," gaining an intellectual, or educational, or professional, or financial foothold in society. Meyer W. Weisgal (hereafter MWW), an archetypical American Zionist, took it upon himself to turn the stodgy house organ of the ZOA into a journal which any aspiring and self-respecting American Jew — if he could read English! — would be proud to be seen reading. To achieve this, it would have to be intellectually and graphically attractive, readable (upwardly mobile Americans didn't have the time for copious treatises on any subject), and non-threatening (not too much religion, less socialism, and certainly no demands for relinquishing active participation in the American dream).

MWW (the middle "W" is pure invention: it appealed to his aesthetic and Americanizing instincts) passed his apprenticeship, first, as errand boy for *The Macabbaean*, and then, after only two years, in 1916 at the age of twenty-two, as acting editor under Louis Lipsky. According to Lipsky, "he did not like the way [the paper] looked. He hated its monotonous appearance. He altered its format; he gave it an illustrated cover and better paper."<sup>5</sup> He got interesting people to write and a well-known cartoonist to satirize.<sup>6</sup> His model — I can only guess: perhaps he wanted the dignity and intelligence of the *New York Times* tempered by a pailful of Hearstian splash.

*The Macabbaean* was the first casualty of the hostilities which broke out in 1921 between the "American" and "European" factions in the ZOA. The former, led by Justice of the Supreme Court Louis D. Brandeis, and Judges Felix Frankfurter and Julian Mack, the "established" leadership of the movement, was challenged by the pro-Weizmann Lipskyites, representing the East European, Yiddish-speaking rank-and-file. The Lipskyites resigned, left the ZOA offices, set up house in an office on Union Square and decided to publish a new paper in order to gain support for the upcoming Cleveland Convention. Weizmann arrived in America during that period and, according to one historian of American Zionism, "Weizmann, in turn, barnstormed the country, shouting, 'there is no bridge between Pinsk and Washington,' while Meyer Weisgal edited the *New Macabbaean*, devoted to the support of Weizmann and his policies."<sup>7</sup>

In the few months of its appearance, the *New Macabbaean* achieved a circulation of 30,000 and was, according to Lipsky, responsible "to a large extent" for the victory at Cleveland which fell to the pro-Weizmann faction by an overwhelming majority.<sup>8</sup> In retrospect, it is clear that the Lipsky-Brandeis "controversy" reflected more a shifting balance of power



# THE NEW PALESTINE

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## Editorial Comment

### *A Searching of Hearts on the Eve of the Days of Awe*

IT would have served no useful purpose to address ourselves to the Zionists of the country immediately after the Pittsburgh Convention. That was not a Convention of peace and reconciliation, but a battleground. A rancorous minority stormed the administra-

fight was all about.) There were no principles thrown into the controversy. Matters personal, raged and foamed and emitted angry words. The Convention, however, has settled these matters for the period of a year. The Zionist movement is entitled to a respite.

"The New Palestine," cover

rather than any deeply different Zionist program for American Jewry. The leadership moved from Jews with Central European roots to those with East European roots who, although on their way up in society, were still linked with the immigrant masses. They were, in fact, the perfect bridge between "Pinsk and Washington," although perhaps not precisely in the way that Weizmann meant. In all events, the winners returned to the old offices and MWW began to produce the *New Palestine*.

The first few issues of the new *New Palestine* (the original had been an administrative house organ) announce that a subscription to the weekly costs \$2.00 (10 cents an issue) but comes free to those who pay their yearly membership dues of \$6.00; members are offered the choice of receiving either the *New Palestine* or *Dos Yiddische Folk*. Most of the material is unsigned. Not even the names of the editor and editorial board appear. But there are editorials, polemics, news items about the ZOA, Hadassah and the World Zionist Organization, and lots of interesting tidbits about Palestine. In Palestine, we are told, Charlie Chaplin is a great favorite "of the cinematographs (which Americans undignifiedly refer to as 'movies')"; and Henrietta Szold advises readers "What to Wear in Palestine":

A fur coat is a comfortable addition to one's lounging wardrobe, the only article of boudoir wear that permits cosy enjoyment of a winter evening in a Jerusalem house. For, the little petroleum stoves one carries from room to room are as effective as a glittering diamond would be.<sup>10</sup>

There are lists of contributions and contributors of \$25 and more, full-page appeals for membership and/or money, and announcements of forthcoming rallies.

Towards the end of 1921, subtle changes begin to appear,

such as eye-opening headlines over the masthead and — yes — small commercial advertisements. Previously there were ZOA ads for books or congress reports to break the monotony of the twelve pages of double-columned 10- or 8-point print. And in the middle of October it is duly noted, in tiny print and as required by law, that Meyer W. Weisgal is the managing editor.

In the November 18 issue, a photograph makes its debut, taking up one-third of a page and showing, *inter alia*, Jabotinsky, Sokolov and Warburg aboard ship, having arrived in America. Half of the final page of this issue is devoted to self-promotion for the next order: 25 copies for \$2.00, 100 for \$7.00.

The next issue was indeed a landmark.<sup>11</sup> First of all it was 20 pages. It contained half-column drawings of the visages of the visiting Zionists by "the noted Jewish artist" Michael Loeb, alongside their statements. There is a tribute to Sokolov by Reuben Brainin, and one to Jabotinsky by Abraham Goldberg, a piece called "Jabotinsky, the Fighter" by a former legionnaire, the print set around a romantic photo of Jabotinsky in prison at "Fort Akka," and a sketch by Sokolov, "The New Jew," about a skeptical Diaspora Jew who becomes a farmer in Petah Tikva. An unusual — coincidental? — news item follows the sketch: a full half-column is devoted to the story of an ex-barber from the Bronx, Abraham Krotoshinsky, who is on his way to Palestine to become a farmer. An American Jew going to Palestine — that was really news!

In the last issue of 1921 there is another editorial innovation: 6-point italicized introductory paragraphs summing up the contents of the articles that follow — for those who didn't have the time or patience to read everything.

In 1922 there are more photos and sketches and a good

deal more paid advertising, sometimes two complete pages. Stamp-size photos of local Zionist leaders accompany the news of their fundraising successes. While the paper has slumped back into a humdrum format, the nature of its contents has improved. It is now sixteen pages and carries literary fragments from the pen of the up-and-coming American Jewish novelist and writer Maurice Samuel, as well as articles by Jabotinsky, Pinhas Rutenberg and well-known non-Jews like J. Ramsey MacDonald, leader of the British Labor Party, surely a feather in the editor's cap.

On May 19 that year an editorial, easily recognizable as coming from the pen of MWW although unsigned, indicates that our 28-year-old Zionist enthusiast is less than enthusiastic about the way Zionist meetings are run. There is too much talk, too many speakers; audiences are talked to death and held captive by the promise of the brilliant guest orator... at the end. "Until you have been hammered and appealed to and cajoled and urged to contribute, you will not be given that which you have come to get." (Many years later, he set his own standards for Zionist events when he had the power to orchestrate them: Weizmann dinners or memorials included music and one speaker, and never lasted more than one hour.)

On June 23, the *New Palestine* appeared in a special enlarged format of eighty pages, marking twenty-five years since the founding of the ZOA and the First Zionist Congress in Basel. The front cover is a graphically designed tribute "to the men and women thru whose devotion and self-sacrifice the Zionist Organization of America was established," and is printed on oaktag. Noted Zionist and Palestinian thinkers, writers and leaders, among them Leonard Stein, Ittamar Ben Avi, Weizmann and Ussishkin, and including three women, as well as a number of well-known non-Jews, are represented. There are translated excerpts from Herzl's speeches, a critical article on the poetry of Bialik, a philosophical discussion of the biblical Samuel as the founder of the Jewish State, an article on Arab-Jewish concord, a personal literary memoir of the first Congress. In short, it is an issue conceived and executed with imagination and good taste, and makes fascinating reading — even today.

And where did the hard-pressed ZOA get the money for it? Thirty of the eighty pages are advertisements, paid tributes to the ZOA on its anniversary from the membership, greetings from sister-organizations, vested commercial interests (e.g., matzoh companies, Palestine travel bureaus, lots of Jewish summer resorts inviting "their Zionist friends to join them for the summer," etc.) and ordinary commercial enterprises. Two of the ads caught my attention. One was the "Herzl Knife" (85 cents), a boy-scout knife imprinted with Herzl's

face, his name in Hebrew letters and a Jewish star; the other, a small greeting from "Weisgal Bros., 116th Street and Broadway." My Uncle Josh ran a newsstand there, across from Columbia University, and while Josh was in the army my father helped keep it going. This would account for the "Bros." But Josh also operated out of there as a bookie, and he must have made a killing at the racetrack that weekend to account for the ad. Still, the most impressive ad is the one which closes the celebratory issue, on the back page. It is a full-page ad for Topkis Athletic Underwear and features a handsome man seated, crosslegged, in a one-piece, button-down, sleeveless combination, assuring readers of "Comfort and Long Wear."

The March 9, 1923, issue is dedicated to the visit of Dr. Weizmann to New York and is remarkable for a number of things. The cover features a large sketch of Weizmann, that is, it's a cover and not a page of printed text. Weizmann's message is, to paraphrase, we have the men, the methods and the opportunity; American Zionists must give us "a more concrete expression of the national will." Inside there is a 16-page pictorial supplement on glossy (or at least glossier) paper, illustrating the work of the Keren Hayesod in Palestine. The first page depicts "Israel's flight across the Ages" in photographs and paintings of wretched refugees carrying Tora scrolls and fleeing (Tzarist?) villages. On that page the question is asked of the Jews of America: "Will you enable the Keren Hayesod, the Builder of Palestine, to bring them home?... Your contribution... helps to bring these Jews to Palestine." The rest of the supplement consists of photos of *halutzim*, tractors, tents, the new generation, agricultural training, health services and educational institutions in Palestine, ending with two pages of well-known Jews and non-Jews (Einstein, Balfour, President Harding and a few congressmen) endorsing the idea of the national home.

This issue is quintessential American Zionism: the message is absolutely clear and the presentation is sophisticated, technically up-to-date and probably costly. The UJA campaigns after the Second World War no doubt surpassed the *New Palestine's* in effectiveness: The plight of European Jewry after the Holocaust was unprecedented and the possibility of a Jewish state more palpable. There was also a good deal more money available and a much more highly developed technology to employ. But even so, there was no change in approach. Perhaps it should be added here that Henry Montor, the man behind the UJA's post-war campaigns and its famous slogan, "The Greatest Homecoming in History," had already been drawn into MWW's inner circle at the ZOA.

From then on, the *New Palestine* had a cover — either a sketch, photo, message from a Zionist leader or a non-Jewish

Weisgal attracted many talented individuals to his paper. He requested Reuven Rubin, the Eretz Israel artist, who arrived in the U.S. in 1928, to sketch the participants in a ZOA convention, including Dr. Chaim Weizmann and Louis Lipsky



figure in large bold type, or, most frequently, banner headlines of the most important articles inside. It argued issues which are still a bone of contention in Zionist Jewish circles, such as to what extent do the people who contribute money in America have the right to influence developments in Palestine.<sup>12</sup> It continued to publish oversized special issues every so often. Two are worthy of mention.

The first, the 1925 Hebrew University edition in which, for the first time, my father's name appears as editor (the slug was prepared by Louis Lipsky and inserted at the last minute as a surprise), carried over 100 pages of articles (and advertisements) and salutations by everybody who was anybody anywhere, among them such unlikelies as Rabindranath Tagore, Charles W. Eliot, Millicent Fawcett and Edouard Herriot. To make sure that readers knew exactly how broad and representative the pantheon was, the editor included a page and a half of "Who's Who in this Issue."

The second, the 1929 Theodor Herzl Memorial issue, was even more ambitious. It had over 300 pages and in addition to

all the notable Zionist and Jewish contributors — among them, Martin Buber, Stefan Zweig, Edmund Fleg and Simon Dubnow — there was "A Royal Tribute" by Ferdinand I, King of Bulgaria, a piece by the great-great-grandson of Schiller and an interview with Georges Clemenceau. There is also an absolute gem by a train conductor, Heinrich Husserl, who worked the Wagons-Lits and attended Herzl, as well as all of European royalty, on his travels. He reports a conversation with the Grand Duke Sergius of Russia in 1904 about Herzl:

"In Russia we call him the Jewish King. He is the Moses of today," the Grand Duke continued, smiling, "and he, too, should lead his people through the sea." Then His Highness suggested that would give Dr. Herzl an excellent opportunity to drown all the Jews; this, he said, would solve the Jewish question once and for all.

I was not at all sorry when, a few years later, this kind-hearted Grand Duke was killed by a bomb.

But the Herzl Memorial has more than public relations or anecdotal significance. It is, as well, a scholarly offering, with a large selection of contemporary critiques of Herzl, the first (condensed and annotated) English translation of Herzl's diaries (by Maurice Samuel) and an evaluation of twenty-five years of Zionist achievement in Palestine. One notes in issues preceding and following the Herzl Memorial colored illustrated covers, the introduction of book reviews, a wealth and variety of photographs. Advertising has also been upgraded. No longer only matzoh, Herzl knives and summer resorts in the Catskills, but first-class (kosher) luxury tours to Palestine, furs and — automobiles. The year 1929 was the climax, both for the *New Palestine* and for its editor.

His last great production was an article by Winston

Churchill in support of Zionism, written at MWW's invitation exclusively for the *New Palestine* at \$1.00 a word, a thousand in all.<sup>13</sup> But the ZOA, even before the Depression, was in serious decline. Deficits abounded, membership was down, the Brandeis faction was back in the saddle. The Churchill article was the straw that broke the camel's back. MWW was upbraided for wasting money and rumors were rife that he was leaving. He decided that it really was time to go.

He spent another two years as editor, this time of the *Jewish Standard* in Toronto, an epilogue and a dignified end to a notable journalistic career. He was not yet even forty and so his life had yet to begin.



1. Among the books he edited at various times were: *Chaim Weizmann, Statesman and Scientist* (1944), Dial Press, New York; and with Joel Carmichael, *Chaim Weizmann, A Biography by Several Hands* (1963), Atheneum, New York. He was the editor-in-chief of the first eleven volumes (1968-1977) of the twenty-three-volume series *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Oxford University Press and Israel Universities Press. In 1960 he founded and kept a loving eye on *Rehovoth*, the popular English-language magazine of the Weizmann Institute of Science.
2. Chaya Amir, "Meyer Weisgal: Saw Life as a Drama" (Hebrew), *Monitin*, 1982.
3. This was true from the very beginning. See, e.g., Naomi W. Cohen, "The Macabbaean's Message: A Study in American Zionism until World War I," *Jewish Social Studies*, 18, July 1956. She writes: "Early American Zionists were asked for no more than financial contributions and loyalty to a political ideal" (p. 177), and, further, "American Zionism neglected to provide positive leadership for the educational and cultural needs of American Jewry; and it did not motivate American participation in the actual building of Palestine" (p. 178). See also Yonathan Shapiro, *Leadership of the American Zionist Organization, 1897-1930* (1971), University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Chicago, London: "The American version of Zionism served the function of providing an ideology of survival for the Jewish community of the United States" (p. 5).
4. See, e.g., Samuel Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism* (1961), Wayne State University Press, Detroit.
5. Louis Lipsky, "Through the Eyes of a Mentor," in Edward Victor, ed., *Meyer Weisgal at Seventy, An Anthology* (1966), Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, p. 55.
6. *Ibid.* The reference is to Boardman Robinson of *The New York Morning Telegraph* and later *The New York Herald Tribune*.
7. Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (1975), Anchor Press, Doubleday, New York, p. 290.
8. See note 5 above. The Lipskyites received more than two-thirds of the votes of the delegates on all the crucial issues.
9. *New Palestine*, Sept. 23, 1921. Available at the Weizmann Archives, Rehovoth, or the library of Jewish and Zionist History, Carter Bldg., Tel Aviv University.
10. *Ibid.*, Aug. 5, 1921.
11. *Ibid.*, Nov. 25, 1921.
12. *Ibid.*, Nov. 14, 1924. Maurice Samuel argues: the Jews in the Diaspora must build Palestine, but Palestine must be free from the stigmata of the Diaspora. We are the builders, yet the building must not reflect our tainted personalities. Emanuel Neumann rejoins with: Palestine requires not only our money but our intensive personal participation in every way, and, at this early stage, our guidance and solicitude as well.
13. *New Palestine*, Sept. 20, 1929.

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# NEW YORK'S TWO YIDDISH DAILIES: "THE DAY MORGEN JOURNAL" AND "FORWARD" — A 1966 STUDY

IDO JOSEPH DISSENTSHIK

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This article is based on a Master's degree paper prepared by the author in 1966 when he was a student at Columbia University's School of Journalism. The work was guided by Professor Fred T. C. Yu, a post-World War II immigrant from China who was drawn to the subject of the Yiddish journalistic heritage as an example of the immigrant experience in America. Professor Yu's

interest complemented the author's — a native Israeli's conflicting reactions to the Yiddish diaspora.

At the time the study was conducted, the two newspapers under discussion were functioning dailies. An update appears at the end of the article.

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## Introduction

The history of the Yiddish newspapers in New York — particularly that of the dailies — is the story of an institution that managed to accomplish everything it set out to do except devise a formula for its own survival.

It was instrumental in Americanizing Jewish immigrants who arrived between 1880 and 1930. It taught the immigrants how to remain Jewish in America. And it taught them how to do it without the Yiddish language itself, thus defeating itself by its own success.

The Yiddish press helped build Jewish pride, long suppressed in the "old countries" of Eastern Europe. It was a forum for Jewish novelists, poets, social thinkers and politicians. It cultivated Jewish nationalism and generated support for the creation of a Jewish state in Israel. It helped shape the so-called liberal attitudes and outlook of the American Jewish community. It advocated Medicare long before the word existed.

The Yiddish press served as a major source of information to Jews on a wide spectrum of matters — including where and how to learn English and thereby forget Yiddish.

This press is a meticulous record of Jewish history during the past 90 years, and constitutes a more complete account of Jewish life in America than any other source.

## Beginnings

The first Yiddish paper in the U.S. appeared in New York in 1872. A weekly, *Die Jüdische Post* ("The Jewish Post") lasted only a short time, as the great influx of Jews from Eastern Europe had not yet begun. These immigrants were to become, and indeed still are, the major force behind the creation and maintenance of the Yiddish press in the U.S.

Some two dozen Yiddish weeklies and dailies were founded between the 1880's and the 1920's, reflecting a lively range of ideological and political viewpoints, mostly leftist. The Russian Jewish immigrants were strong supporters of socialism, and this was reflected in the editorial positions of their newspapers.

One of those papers, *Forward*, still exists today. It is one of the two remaining Yiddish dailies in New York — and, for that matter, in the U.S. Begun in 1897, *Forward* became the most widely read and most prosperous foreign-language newspaper in the country, with a record daily circulation of almost 200,000 in the early 1920's. For many years its editor was Abraham Cahan, one of the most influential and colorful of American Jewish leaders.

Responding to the need for a less political morning paper which could supply the Jewish immigrant with information on employment and current affairs, Jacob Saphirstein began

the *Jewish Morgen Journal* in 1901, and it was an immediate success. The *Morgen Journal* regarded itself as the spokesman of the Orthodox masses in the city.

In 1914, the daily *Der Tog* ("The Day") appeared, founded by Herman Bernstein. A nationalist Zionist newspaper, it was soon quite successful. Eventually, *Der Tog* and *Jewish Morgen Journal* merged for financial reasons, and became *The Day Morgen Journal* (D.M.J.), the other Yiddish daily still extant.

### The Yiddish Press at its Zenith

In 1918, Dr. Samuel Margoshes, now a columnist for *D.M.J.*, described the Yiddish press in *The Jewish Communal Register of New York City 1917-1918* thus:

The Yiddish press in New York City differs in many essentials from the other divisions of the Jewish press. First, it has the peculiar distinction of having practically created its own reading public. Very few of the people who are now the readers of the Yiddish press in New York City had ever read any journals on the other side of the Atlantic... The Yiddish papers taught the East European Jew in America to read newspapers by coming out every day for his own special benefit... The Yiddish newspaper, therefore, is their (the readers') only education and their chief educative influence. Here may be found the origin of the make-up of the Yiddish paper, which is radically different from that of the English newspaper. While the English newspaper is primarily organized for the conveying of news, the Yiddish paper must also be a literary journal, printing short stories, novels, articles on popular science, theology and politics.

It explains also the marvelous influence of the Yiddish press. No other press in the world exercises such a monopoly on the mind content of its readers. While, for instance, it is possible for a political candidate in New York City to get elected in the face of strong opposition of almost the entire English press, the election of any candidate on the East Side is impossible unless the Yiddish press favors him.

As to the power of reach of the Yiddish press, the circulation statistics [for 1917] tell a very interesting story. These figures were:

<i>The Forward</i> .....	148,560
* <i>The Morgen Journal</i> .....	87,522
<i>The Day</i> .....	65,369
* <i>Yiddische Tageblatt</i> .....	55,000
<i>The Wahrheit</i> .....	50,241

\* The two papers merged in 1928.

The figures are more meaningful seen in the perspective of the following table:

	1917	1966
Circulation of Yiddish dailies	406,492	110,000
Jews in the U.S.	3.01 million	5.6 million

In his article Dr. Margoshes explained that three out of every four papers were sold in New York, that on average a person bought two papers and that each paper was read by three people. Thus he arrived at the figure of more than 457,000 readers a day in New York in 1917. He concluded that New York Jews spent an annual sum of over two million dollars on the purchase of newspapers. He went on to say:

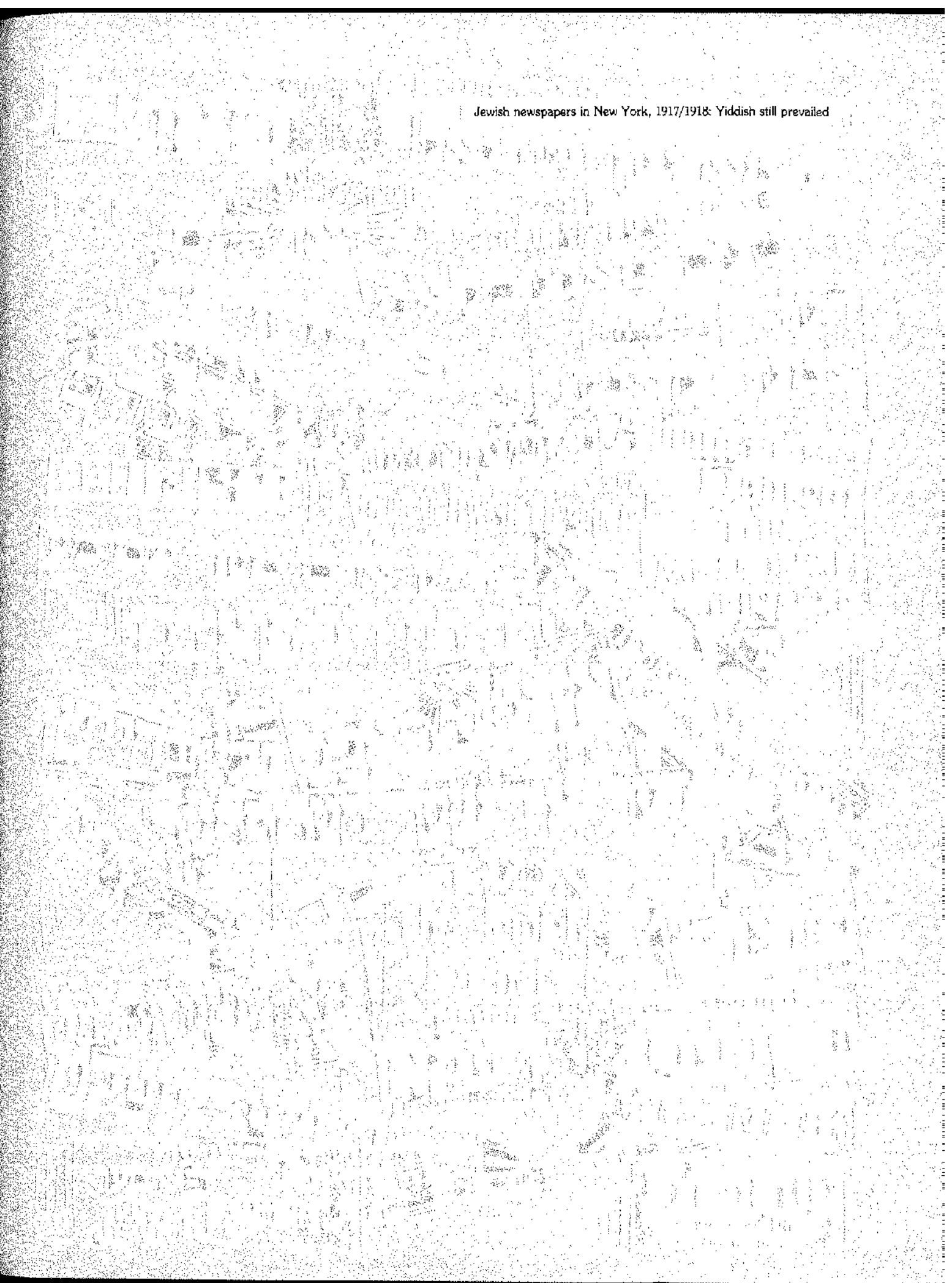
As an instrument for the Americanization of the masses of Jewish immigrants settled on the East Side, the Yiddish press has been invaluable. Assuming at the very beginning an American character, the Yiddish press has instilled in its multitude of readers the spirit of American life, making possible the intelligent citizenship and loyal American sentiment found on the East Side. The great usefulness of the Yiddish press is demonstrated also in the conscientious vigilance over the welfare of the community and its fostering and encouraging of Jewish institutions which carry on the charitable and educational work of the Jewish community. In addition, the Yiddish press, by serving for so many years as a common channel for information and education of the large and heterogeneous Jewish masses of New York City, created that indispensable modicum of communal appreciation without which no communal activity would be possible.

Dr. Margoshes also had some criticism of the Yiddish press:

This exercise of power is not unattended by abuses. But the latter are almost unavoidable when power is wielded as omnipotently as it is in the Yiddish press. The Yiddish press has not always been able to successfully resist the temptation to allure its readers with the cheap stories of "sex" interest, and its attitude towards Jewish institutions and movements as well as prominent personalities has not always been noble and righteous. Very often the editorial staffs of the Yiddish papers were not animated with that spirit of responsibility which should be theirs.

Dr. Margoshes expressed hope that the Yiddish press would "catch the spirit by which the Jewish community of New York is organizing itself into a firmer and more Jewish life." However, his hope was frustrated, for since the 1920's, deaths, mergers and shrinking circulation have been some of the obvious characteristics of the daily Yiddish press in New York City.

For many years the Yiddish press served as an information



bureau, as translator and as instructor for the immigrant in an unknown and often hostile environment. It told him where he could find a job, where he could study English and how to fill out official documents. Even in 1966, during an interview with David Meckler, one of *D.M.J.*'s editors, a phone call came through from someone asking the meaning of the word *gatkes* (long winter underwear). The inquirer was a merchant who did not understand what his customer wanted to buy.

Inevitably, as the immigrants became more integrated into American society, the circulation of the dailies declined.

### Current Ownership of the Yiddish Press

While *D.M.J.* is privately owned and operated, *Forward*, faithful to its founders' socialistic attitudes, is owned and operated by a cooperative. Called Forward Association, the cooperative has 125 members who vote on major editorial and administrative decisions, such as the endorsement of a candidate in New York mayoralty races, or the appointment of a managing editor.

The different ownership patterns of the two papers reflect the difference in their outlook. While *D.M.J.* is a commercial enterprise motivated by profits, *Forward* sees its most important function as serving its readers and fulfilling a communal mission.

### Editorial Departments

*D.M.J.* has a staff of 150, of whom 32 are editorial workers. There are also part-time employees and stringers. It has full-time foreign correspondents in Israel and London, in addition to part-time staff and stringers in Israel, Montreal, Mexico City and Detroit. It has contracts with 10 different unions.

*Forward* employs about 200 workers and has similar union obligations. It too has 32 full-time, and several part-time, editorial employees, with foreign correspondents in Israel, London and Paris. It also has stringers in Buenos Aires, Melbourne, Johannesburg and occasionally in Santiago, Mexico City and Stockholm. U.S. stringers and correspondents are located in Detroit, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles and Pittsburgh.

The major source of editorial material for both papers is the writers and commentators, who also handle editing, make-up and translation, primarily from English. Both papers also use the United Press International and the Jewish Telegraphic Agency wire services. They also rely heavily on translation from the city's English press.

### Special Projects

*D.M.J.* engages in sales of records and books as a service to readers who live outside New York and are unable to buy

these products cheaply. Until a few years ago, *Forward* ran a Western edition which was printed in Chicago. However, the operation became totally unprofitable and the paper shut down its Chicago plant. As a result, Midwestern readers receive their papers a day late, and those in the Far West two days late. *Forward* also has a radio station — WEVD. The letters EVD stand for Eugene Victor Debs, the American socialist leader who obtained over a million votes in the 1916 presidential election. WEVD broadcasts in Yiddish part of the time, renting out its facilities for broadcasts in Italian and Spanish as well. The revenue from the station helps underwrite the newspaper's losses.

### Attempts to Attract New Readers

Both papers attempted to gain more readers by publishing English sections, but without much success. The idea was eventually dropped.

*D.M.J.* tried to take advantage of a 1958 newspaper strike in the city and increase its circulation by attempting to keep readers it had gained when the English newspapers were shut down. During this period it announced a forthcoming serialization of an unpublished novel by Shalom Aleichem. One commentator wrote during the strike:

The Yiddish newspapers were easily available during the strike. It therefore came to pass... that Jews became aware of the fact that they can still read Yiddish. One poor man... noticed me buying the Yiddish papers and instinctively reached out for a Yiddish paper too. Then he grew ashamed: What is the connection between him and a Yiddish paper? He never reads anything but the English press.

"What do you care? Try it," I said. "The Yiddish paper won't burn you."

The man took the paper. The next day I bumped into him again and he said:

"Just think, I was sure I couldn't read a word of Yiddish. As it turned out, I still read very well." Twenty years had passed, he said, since he had read a Yiddish paper, and now he has rediscovered it...

For years, *Forward* had a regular English page every Sunday, but when the English supplement was suspended in 1951, there was no noticeable reduction in circulation. *Forward's* directors concluded that English was not what readers needed or missed.

### The Contents of the Yiddish Press

As in any other press, the contents of the Yiddish press reflect the interests of its readers. The average age of these readers is 50-60. Most are Zionists with strong sentiment and support for the State of Israel. The "old country" for most of



them is Eastern Europe. Many are lower middle class, having started out in America as garment industry workers with strong socialist convictions. They had been part of the movement which resulted in the establishment of labor unions in New York. A significant minority of the readers are religious Jews. The few young readers are nearly all devout Jews.

Arthur Jacobs, publisher of *D.M.J.*, regards his paper as "a trade journal for Judaism" which reports "Jewish affairs in depth." This statement seems a good description of the contents of the Yiddish press. Major topics covered by the Yiddish press include:

1. Jewish news throughout the world.
  - a) The Jewish community in the U.S. is covered especially closely. Conventions, meetings and resolutions of Jewish organizations from Boston to Washington, DC, statements by Jewish leaders, fund-raising campaigns, inter-religious dialogues and even dinners are reported in detail. Jewish events that take place in communities farther away are also covered, though not as extensively. Interestingly, there is more coverage of the Orthodox and Conservative currents in Judaism than of the Reform faction, which is seen as less concerned with in-depth Judaism. Because its assimilatory tendencies are greater, hardly any of its followers know Yiddish.
  - b) The State of Israel receives wide and detailed coverage.
  - c) The Yiddish press is anxious to cover the Jewish community in the Soviet Union — the second largest in the world after the U.S. — and manages to overcome the difficulties involved by utilizing non-Jewish sources. The Yiddish press in New York spearheads the struggle to help Soviet Jewry improve its religious and cultural status.
  - d) Canada, Argentina and Mexico — three other major centers of Jewish life — are also covered, Canada most extensively.

The Jewish angle in a story determines its importance. For instance, an auto accident in which a Jew was injured would often appear on the front page. If no Jew were involved, the story wouldn't be reported at all.

2. General news from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The Yiddish press does not have its own reporters in this part of the world, but utilizes the wire services and the English-language press. Despite its devotion to socialism, the Yiddish press has little sympathy for the Soviet Bloc.
3. Middle East news. Israel's geographic location makes the Middle East a major area of readers' interest. Conflicts between and within Arab countries are reported in detail. The Yiddish press in New York, as the Hebrew press of

Israel, focuses on the negative aspects of developments in the Arab world. Reforms, advances and development in those countries are seldom reported. By the same token, events in Africa are covered to a greater extent than might be expected because of Israeli interests there.

4. American non-Jewish news. The Yiddish press reports major events in the U.S. and, generally, any news in the country that would be reported in any foreign-language daily. New York State and City news is also covered, though less thoroughly than in the English-language press.
5. World news. The Yiddish press reports the main international events through the wire services.
6. Social Security, Medicare and health news. Since a large proportion of its readers are senior citizens, the Yiddish press employs several experts on a full-time basis who write answers to readers' questions on these subjects.
7. The serialized novel. The practice of serializing novels began early in the history of the Yiddish press, in the realization that this was the only vehicle for publishing the work of creative Yiddish writers. The Yiddish press considered it its duty to help these writers. Serialized novels became a regular feature, and although the quality of the published material has declined, the readers continue to want to read novels.
8. Labor news. Both newspapers devote a full page daily to labor news. The deep involvement of the writers and the readers in labor's efforts to organize, combined with old socialist convictions, make labor a major field of interest for the Yiddish press.

Today, the Yiddish daily is a specialized newspaper, in fact half newspaper and half magazine. Only 25 per cent of its space is devoted to news. The rest is filled by features, columns, analysis, comment and opinion. The Yiddish dailies provide readers with information they cannot find in the English-language press, while also reporting major national and international news.

### The Editorial Stand of the Yiddish Press and its Influence

In an article entitled "Yiddish in America" in the *International Journal of American Linguistics*, Joshua A. Fishman, a Yeshiva University lecturer, evaluated the editorial stand of the Yiddish press thus:

Unlike the Yiddish secular schools, the Yiddish press — particularly the dailies — has largely been neither secular nor Yiddishist. The daily press addressed itself to the masses of Jewish immigrants and not only to the intellectuals and sophisticates for whom "national" secularism and Yiddishism

were recognizable ideologies.

We can find support for various causes from socialism and communism to religiosity and even anti-clericalism.

*Forward* was at times anti-clericalist, anti-Zionist and socialist. Today it is New-Dealish, pro-Zionist and almost traditionalist in its outlook. The *D.M.J.* is closer to Orthodox Jewry, always Zionist-nationalist.

A senior editor of *Forward*, Simon Weber, agreed in essence with Dr. Fishman's evaluation. He added that the election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt changed his paper's view of socialism. Since then, *Forward* has almost always endorsed Democratic candidates, while before 1932 it gave unlimited support to the Socialist Party candidates.

In the 1930's, workers throughout America, and particularly in New York, started to organize trade unions. *Forward* saw itself as a major influence in this development. The newspaper felt that the American political and social systems were changing in a positive way, manifested both in the establishment of the trade unions and in the adoption of Social Security legislation.

At about the same time, Hitler rose to power in Germany and Europe's Jews were put in jeopardy. *Forward* concluded that the solution to the problems of the Jews was the creation of a Jewish state, rather than the establishment of socialism throughout the world.

Many people thought — and still do — that *Forward* was at one time the official organ of the semi-revolutionary Bund Party.\* Simon Weber agreed that such contentions were widespread, but maintained that they were false. While there was a "warm spot for Bundists" until the 1930's, he said, Party leaders in Eastern Europe actually condemned *Forward* frequently as a traitor to the cause.

Another development in the early 1930's — the anti-Semitic purges in the Soviet Union — added to the political and social changes in the U.S., and the rise of fascism in Europe, to produce a massive change in *Forward's* editorial stand.

Today, *Forward* still advocates social change in the United States; it vigorously supports domestic welfare legislation; it is strongly Zionist; and it is neutral on Jewish religious matters, although it does advocate strict separation between church and state.

In the past, differences between *Forward* and *D.M.J.* revolved around the issues of nationalism, socialism and

religion. Now, the only difference is in the emphasis on religion, with *D.M.J.* taking an active interest in religious aspects of Jewish life in America.

When *Der Tog* and *Jewish Morgen Journal* existed separately, *Der Tog* was Zionist-nationalist and *Morgen Journal* reflected the religious groups in Judaism. Both editorial viewpoints were preserved with the merger. Writers with ideologies ranging from moderate left to moderate right have worked for *D.M.J.* The paper generally supports Democratic candidates.

When taking an editorial stand, both *Forward* and *D.M.J.* — especially the latter — are guided by one question: Is it good or bad for the Jews? Editors of both newspapers complained that they were not entirely free to criticize Jewish affairs and leaders, especially in matters pertaining to Israel. David Meckler, editorials writer for *D.M.J.*, said: "In our readers' opinion, Israel is faultless."

Simon Weber of *Forward* said: "There is hardly any criticism of Israel. When we do it, American Jewish leaders say the criticism hurts the cause. They tell us we hamper fund-raising campaigns. It is a great disservice to the reader and to the State of Israel that we don't criticize Israel when it is necessary."

In a book entitled *Yiddish Press as an Americanizing Agency* (1924), Dr. Mordecai Soltes, educator and writer, asserted that in the late teens and early 1920's the Yiddish press had a tremendous influence on its readership, with 56 to 77 per cent of the readers forming their opinions on the basis of the editorials. Of course, at that time newspapers were the only medium of mass communication.

Today, it is more difficult to assess the influence of the Yiddish press, especially the influence of its editorials. It is safe to assume, however, that its influence has diminished considerably since Dr. Soltes' days. Where he found that only 36 per cent of the editorials, during the period of his research, were devoted to Jewish matters, and that 64 per cent dealt with issues which were of concern to the readers as Americans, today, editorial comment in the Yiddish press focuses on matters that are of concern to the readers as Jews.

### The Yiddish Press Views its Role and Influence

Although the editors of both newspapers claim that readers of a Yiddish daily do not need a non-Yiddish paper, they recognize the fact that almost all of their readers do read an English-language newspaper.

"Our most valuable readers," said David Meckler of *D.M.J.*, "are rabbis of all currents in Judaism, who use the information they find in the Yiddish press as a basis for many of their sermons." Thus, Mr. Meckler concluded, the Yiddish

\* The Bund Party was a radical Jewish socialist party in Russia, with a strong following in other parts of Eastern Europe, especially Poland. It was most active around the turn of the century, but was banned and dissolved by the Russian Bolsheviks when they gained control of the Soviet Union.

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# קולטור

ווידעווער-די שטע קולטור  
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Jewish newspapers in America during the 1950s:  
English had largely replaced Yiddish

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press reaches more readers than circulation figures suggest.

Simon Weber of *Forward* also maintained that the Yiddish press, despite its diminishing influence, still has a unique role for American Jews. While the Jewish community in New York has publications in German, Russian, Polish and Hebtew, only the Yiddish publications, particularly the dailies, constitute a Jewish mass communications medium. This is the only forum where all Jewish problems are dealt with thoroughly and in depth. Mr. Weber believed that until a Jewish daily in English assumes the duties of the Yiddish press, operating on a similar, or hopefully, a larger scale, and serving the same purposes, the Yiddish press still has an important task to perform.

He too disputed the idea that circulation figures reflect the real influence of the Yiddish press. In addition to rabbis, the readership includes secular community leaders who, said Mr. Weber, represent the true influence of the Yiddish press. "We influence their decisions, which affect the causes of the entire Jewish community in the city, if not in the country." Most Jewish organizations, including the national ones, maintain their headquarters in New York City.

Both editors firmly believed that no one could champion Jewish causes in New York better than the Yiddish press. Mr. Meckler believed the Yiddish press was still a mobilizing force among Jews. He said it would be impossible to have 45,000 people attend fund-raising rallies for Israel at Madison Square Garden without the publicity and editorial support of the Yiddish press. The same was true, he said, of mass activities on behalf of Soviet Jewry. He admitted, however, that these were small events compared with others the Yiddish press had initiated and organized in the past. One such march was organized after World War I when British Foreign Minister Lord Balfour promised to help make Palestine a Jewish home.

## A Gloomy Outlook for the Future

Dr. Soltes wrote, in 1924:

Although the Jewish immigrants support their press more generously and for longer periods than do the non-Jewish immigrants, the present tendencies, if maintained, point to the gradual decline of the Yiddish press in this country.

Obviously, this prediction is even truer today. Very few young people understand Yiddish, and fewer can read or write it. This is true of almost every Jewish community in the world that originated in Eastern Europe, including the U.S., the Soviet Union, Israel, Canada, Mexico and England. The only exception might be Argentina, where a large part of the Eastern European Jewish community is relatively new, having arrived during World War II.

In all these communities, the language of the host nation takes precedence, because Jews have a new self-confidence as compared to their ghettoized forebears in previous periods. Most of them want to, and believe they can, remain Jewish wherever they are.

The Yiddish editors and journalists will not openly admit that their press is dying out. One said: "It will outlive me, it will outlive the youngest member of the *Forward* staff." Another said: "For forty years there has been talk of calamity in the Yiddish press, but we are still publishing."

But the decline of the Yiddish dailies in New York was described by one *Forward* writer in a cynical and probably truthful way when he said: "The Yiddish press loses a reader every time it gets a death announcement, and there are quite a few of those."



Over 20 years have passed since the above study was prepared. Those years were not kind to the American Yiddish press, for one by one the Yiddish papers closed, including *D.M.J.*, with *Forward* surviving as a weekly. Clearly, the golden era of the Yiddish press is over.

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# THE LADINO PRESS IN THE UNITED STATES

GAD NAHSHON

The Judaeo-Spanish Ladino-speaking community developed in the U.S. during 1899-1924 as a result of the political upheavals in the Ottoman Empire in that period, particularly in Turkey and the Balkans. Statistics from HIAS' Oriental Department show that some 20,000 Sephardi Jews immigrated to the U.S. during this period from Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Syria and Palestine — all told, some 10 per cent of the total Jewish population living in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire then. About 90 per cent of these immigrants — all of them poor — settled in New York, alongside the Yiddish-speaking Jewish community, on the Jewish Lower East Side and in Harlem. The rest spread out throughout the U.S., reaching as far as Seattle, Washington. Thus, a new ethnic sub-group was formed, labeled the oriental Sephardim, or "The Turkinos," by the majority Ashkenazi group who differentiated them from the original Sephardim and their descendants who had been living in the U.S. since the 17th century and who had laid the foundation for the American Jewish community.

The difficulties in integration endured by the new Sephardim were twofold: acculturation into the Yiddishist Jewish community, which was unwelcoming toward the strange newcomers, and acculturation into the larger English-speaking American culture. In December 1910 the new weekly *La America*, the pioneer of the American Ladino press, reported: "Many of our Turkinos related, with tears in their eyes, that the Ashkenazi Jews don't view them as Jews."

The Sephardi immigrants developed their own "welfare state," organizing the Federation of Oriental Jews in America (1912) and other associations. Still, they couldn't avoid work in the infamous sweatshops of New York. The community's poverty indirectly prevented the creation of a financial and commercial base for the Ladino press. The minimal funding available caused endless mutual quarrels, tensions and defamation amongst the Ladino newspapers,

and the reverberations of these Sephardi Jewish wars even reached the courts.

The weekly *La America*, for example, eulogized the daily *La Agyula* ("The Eagle"), which had ceased publication in April 1912, thus: "The Jewish Sephardi *La Agyula* has passed away; let its soul languish in hell." Similarly, a 1922 court battle between the two largest Sephardi papers — *La America* and *La Vara* ("The Staff") — shocked the small Sephardi community.

The Sephardi Jews were split into dozens of organizations based on cities of origin and social needs. These were characterized by extreme mutual hostility, unparalleled in the American Jewish community. The Ladino press devoted itself to eliminating this divisiveness and to unifying the Sephardim into a cohesive communal body. In this respect it was a fighting press, tying its fate to the Sephardi wars. But ultimately, its call for unity was futile.

## An Ethnic Press

The American Ladino press began in the early 20th century as a continuation of the press in the immigrants' countries of origin. This was especially true of the Salonica community, for many of the founders, publishers, editors and journalists of the American Ladino press had been born, or worked in the field, in that city. The Ladino press in America carried on the traditions of the old country, such as the humorous and satiric press, while incorporating new influences such as Zionism and Socialism. The father of the Judaeo-Spanish press in the U.S. was Moshe Gadol (1874-1941), born in Bulgaria and not Salonica — a fact which worked against him in the Sephardi power struggle in New York.

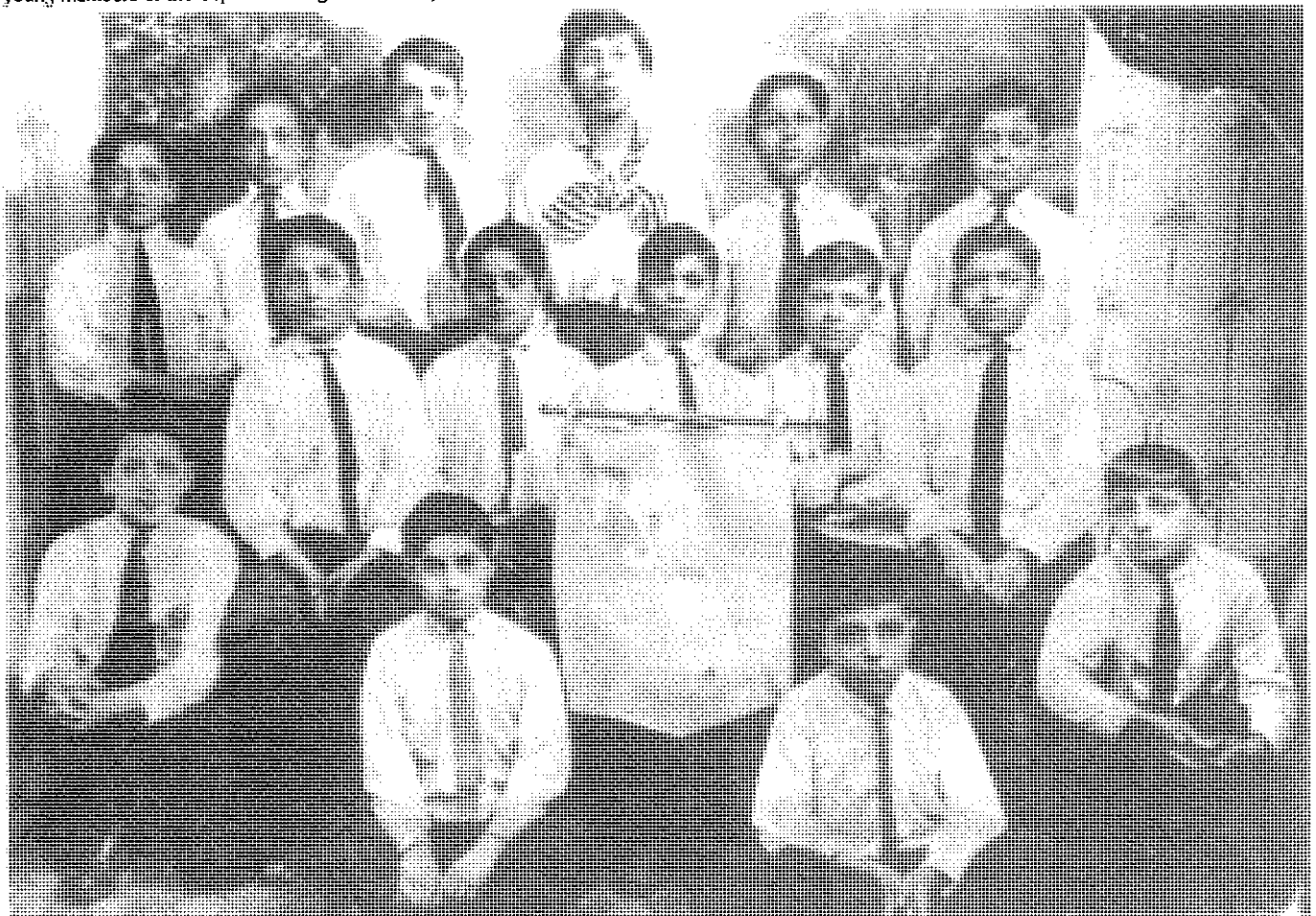
The story of the Ladino press in the U.S. began in November 1910 with the appearance of the weekly *La America* edited by Gadol. It ended in February 1948 with the closing of the weekly *La Vara*, edited and published then by



Albert Torres, publisher of "La Vara"  
young members of the Sephardic Progressive Club, 1915



Moshe Gadol, editor of "La America"



Albert Torres (1892-1970), who had been born in Salonica. While trying to increase the number of "oriental" readers, the Ladino press also ran columns and translations in Yiddish and in English in order to draw Ashkenazi readers as well.

Sephardi publications in English began appearing from about 1930 onward, especially organizational and movement organs such as *The Sephardi Bulletin* and *Maccabi*. Their emergence signified the disappearance of the Ladino press, with the condensed *La Vara* surviving as a kind of historic monument in the American landscape.

The Ladino press was a quintessential ethnic press. In most cases it was a one-man operation — the editor's. In addition, it filled an important role in its readers' process of Americanization. It had to protect the Sephardi immigrants' status, and it fought hard to combat the negative "Turkinos" image that was projected in the Yiddish press. It also struggled to create Sephardi self-awareness based on upholding the old traditions. It was a proud press, calling on Sephardi Jews to behave in a way that would impress American Jewry with their worthiness as the descendants of Abarbanel, Maimonides and Spinoza. It can be viewed as laying the foundation for a Sephardi renaissance which flourished until 1930, and which re-emerged during the 1970s in the form of Sephardi studies at Yeshiva University, the "Sephardi House" in Congregation Shearith Yisrael in New York and the founding of central Sephardi organizations.

Most of the Sephardi papers were small — between four and ten pages. They contended with serious financial problems and had limited circulations. There was little help from the Sephardi organizations; in many ways they were a stepchild of the community. These circumstances might explain the absence of references to them in research works and the many misconceptions regarding them, as, for example, in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. In short, their story is virgin academic territory awaiting attention. The one exception to this oblivion is the research done by Marc Angel, noted scholar and rabbi, on Moshe Gadol.

### The Weekly "La America" (1910-25)

Moshe Gadol, considered the father of the Judaeo-Spanish press in America, was justifiably described by Angel as "the most outstanding voice in the Sephardi immigration." Born in Bulgaria, Gadol arrived in America by chance. He soon decided to publish a Ladino weekly, founding The Oriental Publishing Co. with his entire savings — \$800. *La America* appeared on November 11, 1910, and lasted until July 3, 1925. It focused on Gadol's personal vision: the establishment

of a central organization that would embrace all the Sephardim in the U.S. This dream, which was not realized in his lifetime, caused him great despair and entangled him in unending quarrels with Sephardi public figures. Essentially, he was an idealist and an honest man, though a bad businessman. He fought for the rights of the Sephardi immigrants, for flexible immigration laws, for an improved standard of living — and mainly for Sephardi pride. He struggled for years to achieve a positive image for the "new" Sephardim, and for their integration with the old-time Sephardim who were ensconced in the Shearith Yisrael congregation. *La America* became a warm home for Sephardi immigrants. Gadol expended a great deal of energy and money in his wars with the petty Sephardi public figures and with the publications which threatened his monopoly in the field. His commitment to his paper was total. He fought *La Agyula*, his friend Alfred Mizrahi's daily, in 1912, and later became enmeshed in a vicious war with the weekly *La Vara*.

### "La Vara" (1922-48)

The weekly *La Vara* first appeared in September 1922, published by a firm called Sephardis Press owned by Morris Gratten, Sam Golden and the well-known Salonica-born journalist Moise Suillam. As other journalists of his time, Suillam had been educated in an Alliance school. He had edited humorous papers in Salonica, including the famous *La Kirbatsh* ("The Whip"), and after immigrating to the U.S. he joined *La America* in 1913. He moved over to *La Vara* in 1922, which earned him the label "traitor" by Moshe Gadol. Albert Torres, the well-known publisher and editor, also joined Sephardis Press. Salonica-born Albert Levi was the first editor of *La Vara*, which began as a humorous weekly, becoming a Jewish and international news magazine in 1929.

Its goal from the start was to expose hypocrisy, and unlike Gadol, its editors opened the paper to a variety of opinions. But like *La America* it too fought for the unification of the Sephardi community within one central organization.

Later, Moise Suillam edited the paper, followed in 1945 by Albert Torres, who brought in his grandson Joel Hulio. Torres was the key publishing figure in the American Ladino press. An activist in Sephardi communal life, he established the first Democratic Sephardi Club in 1936, and helped publish various socialist periodicals.

In 1922 Moshe Gadol initiated a no-holds-barred campaign against *La Vara* which eventually resulted in the closure of his *La America*. Gadol branded the *La Vara* staff a collection of traitors and scoundrels, and they, in turn, mounted a counter-attack. The Sephardi community witnessed an ugly





# EL LUZERO

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VOL. I No. 3  
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Editors: ALBERT LEVY & MOISE SOULAM  
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אידוטורים: אלברט לוי אי מואי סילאם  
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דוקטור קלוניד

"The Sephardi Light," a literary magazine published in 1926-27

### The Socialist and Zionist Press

A free-thinking weekly, *El Emigrante*, was published by the Salonican socialist Albert Kuvo in February 1917 in New York, but lasted only until August of that year. Kuvo, as his socialist colleagues, was unable to maintain a socialist periodical because of insufficient interest by the Sephardi public.

However, the non-ideological Sephardi humorous and satiric papers in the U.S. fared no better. *La Vara* had begun as a humorous publication and changed direction after about seven years. On April 6, 1917, Albert Levi started a satiric weekly, *El Kirbatsh Americano* ("The American Whip"), but the potential audience wasn't interested and the paper ceased publication after seven months.

While the Zionist idea found expression in the Ladino press, it was particularly pronounced in the English-language Sephardi press which replaced the Ladino papers. Moshe Gadol was a Zionist who wanted to establish a Jewish Zionist state under Turkish protection. Other Sephardi personalities in America preached the Zionist idea as well.

*La Renaissance*, a monthly organ of the Maccabi Association (later a bi-monthly), first appeared on March 4, 1917, edited by Simon Nissim and Robert Perasko. It ran

intermittently until 1922. Years later, in 1937, these two editors launched the English-language *The Sephardi Bulletin*, also representing Maccabi and advancing Zionism and Jewish nationalism. Published intermittently until 1939, it reflected the Americanization of the first-generation Ladino immigrants.

Loyalty to the Ladino language disappeared during the 1930s as the oriental immigrant community became increasingly submerged in the American melting pot. In the 1960s, however, "Ladino Jewry" turned into an academic field of study, with research activity leading to the appearance of two English-language periodicals — *The American Sephardi*, in December 1966, and the *Sephardi Scholar*, in 1967, the latter initiated by Dr. Solomon Gaon with the assistance of the American Company for Sephardi Studies. This academic research was followed by a back-to-roots movement among Sephardis in the U.S. during the 1970s. The Sephardi Federation, an umbrella organization for all Sephardi groups in North America, was established in 1973.

Moshe Gadol's dream, expressed in all the American Ladino papers, was thus realized: the unification of the Sephardim into one camp.

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# THE GERMAN JEWISH PRESS IN THE UNITED STATES

GAD NAHSHON

The foundation for the German-language Jewish press in the U.S. was laid in 1849 by Isidor Bush, a Prague-born journalist and liberal whose newspaper, the *Israel Herold*, created a double historical precedent: it was the first Jewish weekly in the New World, and it was the first German publication there as well. Another landmark in the history of the German Jewish press was the appearance in 1855 of the German-language supplement *Die Deborah* of the Anglo-Jewish weekly *The Israelite*, later *The American Israelite*, which was edited by the father of the American Reform movement, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise.

The next major development took place only in December 1934 — the founding of the German Jewish weekly *Aufbau* ("Reconstruction"), still alive and well in New York today, which is one of its distinctions.

## Two Strata

The German Jewish press had several distinct characteristics:

1. It was an ethnic minority press. During the second half of the 19th century it spoke for a majority of the Jews in the U.S., inasmuch as Jews from Germany comprised the vast majority of the total Jewish population then — approximately 250,000 at its zenith. This figure then diminished both as a result of purposeful assimilation and the massive Jewish immigration from East Europe. The original immigrants from Germany derived from two sources: those who arrived during 1830-48, and those who arrived during 1848-81. Many became itinerant peddlers in the American hinterland and established communities

in the Midwest and Far West in cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati and San Francisco. They constituted the audience for a growing press in a large number of states, paralleling a similar growth in the general German press, which also sought the German Jewish audience. The second wave of immigration included an educated elite whose most outstanding members were Reform rabbis.

2. Germany's Reform movement, its liberal goals and the enthusiastic espousal of enlightened Judaica studies were transferred across the Atlantic, spreading throughout the U.S. The journalists of the German Jewish press had been educated on these principles and espoused progress, religious freedom and democracy.
3. There was a strong commitment to the preservation of the German language and culture. The Jewish press encouraged German cultural development and the establishment of German clubs, theater and schools. Moreover, it fought for the purity of German and against the "jargon" press — the Yiddish press, which was developing parallel to its German counterpart. The "Yahudim," as the German Reform Jews were labeled, did all they could to distance themselves from the Yiddishist community, looking down on the East European Jews and the Jews of Spanish-Portuguese origin alike. They feared a "Yiddishist" identity, especially in view of the fact that the Jews in Russia, fearing censorship, had termed Yiddish — "German."
4. A total of 18 German-language periodicals were published in the U.S. Some were small supplements of English-language papers, and nine were bilingual (German-English) papers. In fact, nearly all the German periodicals included English materials. In the final analysis, the German-language press, as other ethnic presses, was a tool for Americanization.

Despite his deep commitment to the German language, the German Jewish immigrant also wanted to integrate into his host country. On the one hand, the German Jewish press fought attempts to identify it as Yiddishist, and on the other it fought anti-Jewish discrimination as manifested in the behavior of the American elite then, an elite which the German immigrants aspired to join.

## Bush's Beginnings

Isidor Bush's weekly, the *Israel Herold*, appeared in New York in 1849. As most of the German-language periodicals, it was short-lived — three months in all. Bush had had printing experience in Germany, where he had published a

# Deborah.

Ein Beiblatt zum „Israelite,“ gewidmet den Töchtern Israels.

Herausgegeben von  
**Bloch & Co.,**  
No. 43 Dritte Straße, Ecke der Spramere.

„Es werde Licht.“

Redigirt von  
**Isaac M. Wise,**  
Redacteur des „Israelite.“

No. 1. Cincinnati, den 21. August, 1855. Erster Jahrgang.

## Die Deborah.

Endlich, endlich ist sie da, die liebenswür-  
dige Deborah mit ihrem blendend weißen  
Hem:

rauschschwarzen Haars

lieblichen Klänge der Mutter, in der Deine  
Kindheit lakke, mit Sanftmuth und Jactheit  
sprechen zu den Töchtern Israels, lehren,  
erzählen und untere...

## Das israelitische Weib.

Griechen und Römer widmeten den Frauen  
die schönsten und herrlichsten Erzeugnisse

the "Deborah," a German-language supplement to the "Israelite"

research weekly in partnership with his friend Meir Latrice before emigrating to America in 1848. Bush earned a respected place in the history of American radicalism, especially as an abolitionist. Active in immigrant organizations, he was a proud Jew, fluent in Hebrew, and a liberal who helped establish a liberal journalistic tradition. He lived in New York and in St. Louis.

## "Die Deborah"'s History

Isaac Mayer Wise, in his autobiography *Reminiscences* (1901, posthumous), described the birth pangs of *Die Deborah*, a historic German-language supplement. He had begun publishing the English weekly *Israelite* in 1854, and a year later he initiated the German supplement, which appeared until 1900. No one was interested in helping him publish either the English or the German paper, as many German Jews viewed themselves as Americans and were opposed to an ethnic press. Furthermore, since Wise was identified with the Reform movement, some Jews considered his weekly a tool of apostasy. However, with the assistance of his brother-in-law Edward Bloch and the Russian Jewish enlightened leader Dr. Max Lillienthal, he managed to bring our the paper. An attempt was made by G. Deutsch to revive it in 1902, but it was unsuccessful. Wise, in his autobiography, defined the difficulties of publishing an ethnic paper: lack of financing, debts and an absence of feedback from the public. Since the number of readers was limited, most of the German periodicals did not survive long, and, although it was the exception, *Die Deborah* did entangle Wise in substantial debts. At its height, it sold only 800 copies.

Under the assumption that only women would read German-language material, Wise had decided to create a women's supplement, naming it *Deborah: A Supplement Devoted to the Women of Israel*. Later he changed the subtitle to *Newspaper for the Jewish American Family*, and at the end, in 1902, it was called *German American Monthly Serving Jews in the Community, the Home and the School*. At first, *Deborah* published only literary material; later it also carried news. It was a vehicle for the Reform movement that reflected Wise's philosophy. Author of *Minhag America*, Wise waged a spirited "war of the Jews" against his well-known rival, Reform Rabbi David Einhorn, who composed the radical prayer book *Olat Tamid*. Wise, who has been compared to Moses Mendelssohn, fortified himself in the B'nai Jeshurun Congregation in Cincinnati and fought his battles against Orthodoxy, on the one hand, and Einhorn, on the other, through *Deborah*. The paper reflected his feminist views (he was the first, for example, to abolish the women's section in the synagogue), and his activities generated prestige and publicity for the paper. A superb organization and public relations man, Wise was distressed that the Reform movement ultimately adopted Einhorn's radical views. Einhorn led the Har Sinai Congregation in Baltimore and also published a German-language periodical — *Sinai* — which appeared during 1856-63. More radical than Wise, he was also more committed to the German language. He was known as an active abolitionist.

## From Freemasons to Purim Newspapers

The German periodicals that appeared between 1849 and 1900 can be divided into two categories: exclusively German-

# Appeal to Truman

THE PRESIDENT  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Approximately 5,000 men, women and children, unfortunates DP's marooned in Shanghai and other places in China, many for as long as 10 years, now in imminent danger of death or starvation. Common humanity requires their immediate transfer to place of safety such as Japan pending convening of Congress which can take definitive action. Together with other members of Congress, I will make every effort to get DP bill amended to eliminate discrimination against Catholics and Jews now contained in it and to broaden its scope. Will also demand action on Celler bill to admit above mentioned DP's in Shanghai, but urge first the saving of these souls by their transfer out of Shanghai now through use of U. S. shipping, otherwise Congress may well have no one left to account for.

November 16, 1948.

J. K. JAVITS, M. C.

# AUFBAU RECONSTRUCTION

AN AMERICAN WEEKLY PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK

by the New World Club, Inc., 209 West 48th Street, New York 19, N. Y. Phone: Circle 7-4662  
Entered as second-class matter January 30, 1940, at New York Post Office under Act of March 3, 1879.

Vol. XIV—No. 47 NEW YORK, N. Y., FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1948

USA 10¢

# Rettet die Shanghai-Refugees

Die Lage auf dem ostasiatischen Kriegsschauplatz hat sich in einem kaum voraussehbaren Tempo verschärft. Der stürmische Vormarsch der chinesischen kommunistischen Heere hat die strategische Stellung von Suchow umgangen. Die Spitze des Angriffes bedroht heute Nanking und Shanghai wie noch nie in der Geschichte dieses blutigen und langjährigen Bürgerkrieges.

Die amerikanischen Konsulate haben am Dienst-

tag nur eine Aenderung des von dem vorigen reaktionären Kongress angenommenen DP-Gesetzes ihnen eine Möglichkeit der Zulassung in die Vereinigten Staaten bietet. Die Abänderung dieses Gesetzes ist eine Aufgabe, die der "Aufbau" mit anderen Organisationen und Persönlichkeiten zusammen zu seiner eigenen gemacht hat.

Getreu unserer Aufgabe erheben wir daher heute erneut unsere Stimme, um allen verantwortlichen Stellen, Regierungen und Organisationen un-

tere Schritte werden hoffentlich die erwarteten Früchte tragen.

Das Echo aus unserer Leserschaft war ausserordentlich ermutigend. Wir danken allen, die uns ihre Unterstützung in unserem Kampf für die Shanghai-Flüchtlinge angetragen haben, aufs herzlichste. Wie in den meisten solcher Fälle aber ist Einheit das Grundgesetz jeder Aktion. Zersplitterung muss sie vereiteln. Wir bitten daher alle amerikanischen Organisationen unseres Lan-

the "Aufbau," a German-language weekly begun in 1934

language, and German and English. Most, in fact, were English periodicals with German supplements.

## A. German

1. *Der Israelitische Volksfreund*, monthly, Cincinnati, 1858. Editor: G. M. Cohen.
2. *Die Wahrheit*, St. Louis, 1871-72.
3. *Der Fruch Israels*, weekly, Baltimore, 1880-1907. Editor: F. Weber.
4. *Der Zeitgeist*, semi-monthly, Chicago, 1880-83, for the family. Editor: Isaac L. Moses.
5. *Freitag Zu Nacht*, weekly, New York, 1888 (?). Editor: Louis Shenel.
6. *Echo des Judentum*, weekly, Achva organization, New York, 1892 (?). Editor: Emil Hardelfield.
7. *Der Jude (Juedischer Anzieger)*, weekly, New York, 1895. Editor: M. Singer.
8. *Ordens Echo*, monthly, New York, organ of the Order of the True Sisters. Editor: Rubichak.

## B. German and English

1. *Hebrew Leader*, weekly, 1859-82, organ of the Freemasons. Editor: Eunice Bondi.
2. *Pacific Messenger*, weekly, San Francisco, 1860-61.
3. *The Hebrew*, weekly, San Francisco, 1863-1912. Editor: Philo Jacobi.
4. *Jewish Time*, weekly, 1869-79. Editors: Moritz Ellinger and Harry Marx.
5. *Jewish News*, famous periodical in English, Yiddish, Hebrew and German, from 1871. Editor: Jacob Cohen.
6. *The Jewish Chronicle*, Baltimore, 1876. Editor: D. Binswagner.

7. *Independent Hebrew*, 1876(?).

8. *The Jewish Advance*, Chicago, 1878-82.

9. *The Jewish Reform*, New York, 1886. Editors: Kaufman Kohler, Emil Hirsch and Adolf Mozes (Reform leaders).

Although research on most of these periodicals is lacking, we know that most contained news of the Jewish world, news about Germany and information about synagogue and community life. Literary works were sometimes included. Absent were the socialist and Zionist papers typical of the Yiddish press then. The German-language press focused on solving the immigrant problems of integration, identity crises and inter-generational relationships during the period between 1849 and 1900. The papers attempted to build bridges between the Jew and his non-Jewish environment. They encouraged cultural self-expression and joining German-language clubs. *Die Deborah* called upon its readers to attend New York's Germania Theater, a German-Jewish theater that functioned during the 1880s. Another major theme was the fight against anti-Semitism. Noteworthy were special Purim editions published by the New York German Jewish papers each year, focusing on the German experience.

## "Aufbau" — The Jewel in the Crown

The weekly *Aufbau*, begun in December 1934, constitutes the high point of the German Jewish press. The American public, and such personalities as Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Adenauer and many others, were aware of its prestige and its contribution both to American culture and to the German language. A weekly for refugees from Nazi

Germany, the *Aufbau* gained a special status in the world of journalism.

From the start, it was distinct from the rest of the American media in that it established itself as an anti-Nazi lobby in the then-oblivious American milieu. It was the *Aufbau* which aroused American public opinion to the Nazi threat, especially after "Kristallnacht" (1938), conveying the real meaning of Nazism. Ultimately, it was the organ of the refugees who arrived in America to rebuild themselves. One of the most outstanding of those refugees, Albert Einstein, gave it his blessing too.

An important professional turning point for the paper occurred in 1939 when Manfred George became editor. During the 1950s, the *Aufbau* had about 25,000 readers. George had published a book on Herzl in 1932, though he was not a Zionist. With the rise of the Nazis in Germany he had emigrated to Prague, and from there to the U.S. After his death, the *Aufbau* was edited by Hans Steinitz until 1984. During the past decade circulation has dropped, primarily because there is no new German-speaking readership to replace the old one. Today, the paper is a semi-monthly.

The *Aufbau's* success is attributable to the following factors: 1. It was a vehicle for Americanization, helping the

refugees in their integration in the U.S. 2. It was a vehicle for anti-Nazi propaganda. 3. It was home to great thinkers and writers, such as Franz Werfel and Thomas Mann. It preserved classical and humanistic German culture in the barbaric, crazed Nazi period. 4. From the 1950s onward, it focused on the subjects of restitution and reunification of families that had been split and lost in the Holocaust. 5. It was a liberal, humanistic weekly. 6. It supported Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel, reporting on Israel extensively. 7. Its real secret of success was the intimate tie it established with its readers. Their loyalty contributed to the *Aufbau's* success. The community supported the paper, which they regarded as an institution. Business people advertised in it in order to contribute to its financial viability. It functioned as a "matchmaking" institution in various areas: it played an advisory role, it fostered mutual aid and it helped immigrants build a new life for themselves in the new land.

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The author wishes to thank *Aufbau* staff members Will Taube and Mr. Fogler of New York for their kind assistance.

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## YIDDISH IS ALIVE AND WELL IN NEW YORK / Shlomo Shamir

*Der Algemeine Journal* ("The General Journal") and *Der Yid* are two surviving Yiddish weeklies in the U.S. today. They serve the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Yiddish-speaking public, primarily by providing news about Israel.

The fact that both papers exist and are in demand puts paid to the common wisdom that Yiddish is dead. Thousands of Jews depend on them for information and advertisements. While the secular *Forward* (founded in New York, 1887), once the bright light of the American Yiddish press, continues to shrink both in format and readership, the two Orthodox weeklies are flourishing. Their financial situation appears stable. *Algemeine Journal* is aggressive in expanding its readership and obtaining ads, while *Der Yid* is content with a more limited readership, although it too has grown during the last few years.

The original *Forward* readers did not pass on Yiddish to the next generation. On the other hand, a sizable proportion of Holocaust survivors who reached the U.S. were religious and were used to reading Yiddish papers in East Europe before World War II. Their fertility rate exceeded that of other groups of American Jews, and they passed on Yiddish as a spoken second language to the next generation. Thousands of students in New York Talmud Torah schools, yeshivas and *kollelim* speak Yiddish today.

*Der Yid*, which speaks for the Sattmer Hassidic community, is an unimaginatively produced tabloid with no illustrations whatsoever, although its size varies from 36 to 52 pages. It has a run of 5,000, with its existence guaranteed by the community. Its editor, Sender Daitsch, is a Sattmer Hassid who writes many of the articles himself under various pseudonyms, and also owns the paper's printing press. There are no regular reporters or editorial board.

The paper is devoted mainly to news and editorials about Israel which purport to show the country's moral laxity and apostasy. It attacks Israel's religious parties regularly, especially Agudat Yisrael, which is portrayed as a traitor to its principles. Permanent columns are devoted to historical events with religious implications, commentary on the weekly Torah portion, community events and news from educational institutions.

*Der Yid's* coverage of domestic American news reflects the interests of the Sattmer community in the Williamsburg neighborhood, many of whom live on welfare. Nationally, the paper tends to support the Republicans because of Republican non-identification with blacks — the bane of the ultra-

Orthodox community, which fears the spread of the blacks into their neighborhoods. Locally, the paper supports pro-welfare and pro-public housing politicians.

*Algemeine Journal* is an attractively designed, professionally edited paper with graphics and many photos. It averages 24 pages daily and 36 pages on holidays — approximately the size of Israel's morning papers.

Though an Orthodox publication, it covers a certain amount of news from all sectors of Israeli life and all three factions in American Jewry. This overall policy was inherited from the paper's predecessor, *Der Tog Morning Journal*, which closed in 1972. The new *Algemeine Journal* was begun two months later by Gershon Jacobson, editor and part-owner of the paper. An experienced journalist, he had been news editor of the *Tog Morgen Journal* and New York correspondent for *Yediot Aharonot*.

Writers are given free reign, even though the editor can anticipate negative reactions from the readership and the Orthodox establishment. Exposés on internal rivalries within Agudat Yisrael in the past earned *Algemeine Journal* rabbinic censure and a four-year excommunication period.

The paper has correspondents in major U.S. and Canadian cities, though most of its articles are devoted to news and editorials about Israel. It supports Israel unreservedly, identifying with the Rightist camp and maintaining hawkish views on defense matters. It covers religious and ultra-Orthodox news in Israel extensively. It favors the point of view of the Hassidic camp, especially Habad, which its editor supports. The paper prints a whole page each week on the Lubavitcher Rabbi's Torah commentary, in addition to other rabbinic commentaries, and highlights his statements and letters.

According to its editor, the *Algemeine Journal's* print run is about 100,000 and it has some 250,000 readers. To attract non-religious readers, articles on secular matters and literary, artistic and theater criticism are included in the paper. But ultimately *Algemeine Journal* represents the Orthodox community, as evidenced by the effort made by all Orthodox public figures to gain exposure in it at every opportunity.

Non-Jews also recognize *Algemeine Journal* as the representative paper of American Orthodoxy. Politicians and public figures keep in touch with its editors, especially during election campaigns. The paper devoted considerable space to the recent New York mayoralty campaign, though it refrained from supporting any one candidate.

The relationship between *Der Yid* and *Algemeine Journal* is antagonistic, based on vast ideological differences especially in their attitudes to Israel. *Der Yid* often attacks the *Journal* editorially, although the *Journal* tries to avoid public conflict.

While both papers are popular in the Orthodox community,

the fact that *Algemeine Journal* recently initiated an English-language supplement could mean that it foresees a drop in circulation and wants to develop the young generation of Orthodox readers whose attachment to Yiddish is weaker than their parents.'

## HOW TO AVOID DEFAMATION: A Practical Guide for Journalists / Gavriel Strasman

All the terms that have been used in the past to describe "defamation," "slander," "libel" and similar legal terms, are defined in the Defamation (Prohibition) Law, 5725-1965. Thus, "defamation" is anything which, when published, may

- lower a person in the estimation of others, or expose him to hatred, contempt or ridicule on their part;
- bring a person into disrepute because of acts, conduct or qualities attributed to him;
- injure a person in his office, whether it be a public or any other office, or in his business, vocation or profession;
- bring a person into disrepute because of his origin or religion.

A "person" includes "a body corporate," which means that it too can sue or file a private complaint. But, on the other hand, a person who belongs to an undefined group of individuals like lawyers, journalists or doctors, cannot sue or file a complaint against the person who allegedly has published the defamatory matter (hereinafter referred to as the publisher). This can only be done by the Attorney General who may indict the publisher.

There are special provisions in the law regarding a civil action against a person who has died after he has published a defamatory matter, and also regarding the rights of the family of a person who has died after he was defamed.

It is immaterial whether the defamatory matter is expressed directly and completely and whether it includes publication by speech, writing or printing, painting, effigy, gesture, sound and other means. Defamatory matter shall be regarded as published if it is intended for any person other than the injured party and reaches that person or another person other than the injured party; it will also be regarded as published if it is in writing and is likely, in the circumstances of the case, to reach any person other than the injured party — for example, letters.

The media have no privileges under the law and will be judged as any other person.

In most cases defamation is a civil wrong and this regards the publication of defamatory matter to one or more persons other than the injured party. But defamation is also a criminal offense, when the publication was done with intent to injure and the matter was published to two or more persons other than the injured party. In such cases the injured party can sue criminally by filing a private complaint with the court.

The remedies under the law are the prohibition of the distribution or the confiscation of copies of the publication containing the defamatory matter; the publication of a correction or retraction of anything defamatory or of the publication of the whole or part of the judgment; and, of course, payment of compensation to the injured party. There is no need to show specific damages caused by the publication. A person who is found guilty of defamation may be punishable by up to one year in prison.

The one solid defense of defamation in both criminal or civil action is that the matter published was true and the publication was in the public interest.

However, several publications are permitted even if they are defamatory. These are:

- publications quoting a member of the Knesset or a member of the Government;
- a publication made at a meeting of the Government;
- a publication by the Government or by a member of the Government as such and a publication made upon the instructions of the Government or a member thereof;
- any publication by or on behalf of the State Comptroller;
- any publication by a judge, a member of a religious court, an arbitrator and the like, made in the course of a proceeding before him or in his decision.

It should be noted that this doesn't give any immunity to the media, unless the publication was made in open session. The same applies to a publication of proceedings before a commission of inquiry. There are also no grounds for action if the defamatory matter was said at an open session of an international organization of which the State of Israel is a

member; if the publication was required under law or by an empowered authority; and if a transcript or summary of a record was kept under any enactment.

All that a plaintiff has to submit in his action under the Defamation (Prohibition) Law is the publication (the original copy of a newspaper or a taped broadcast), and he must claim that it has defamed him. Contrary to most legal proceedings, the onus of proof here is shifted from the plaintiff to the defendant or the accused. If he has proved that the publication was true and that it was in the public interest, he wins his case.

But if he cannot prove either, he can still try and show that the publication was made in good faith under the following circumstances (these are reviewed here in a concise and abridged manner):

1. He did not know and need not have known of the existence of the injured party;
2. The relations between him and the person to whom the publication was addressed imposed on him a legal, moral or social duty to make the publication;
3. The publication was made in order to protect a legitimate personal interest of the accused or the defendant, of the person to whom the publication was addressed or of someone in whom that person had a legitimate personal interest;
4. The publication was an expression of opinion on the conduct of the injured party in a judicial, official or public capacity... as revealed in such conduct;
5. The publication was an expression of opinion on the conduct of the injured party as a party or a witness in open

court or public inquiry proceedings;

6. The publication was a criticism of a literary, scientific, artistic or other work...;
7. The publication was an expression of opinion on the conduct or character of the injured party in a matter in which the accused or defendant was a superior of the injured party;
8. The publication was a complaint submitted to a competent authority against the injured party;
9. The publication was a... report of a public meeting or... session of a body corporate that the public has access to...;
10. The publication was made for the sole purpose of denouncing or denying defamatory matter published previously;
11. The publication was the delivery of information to the editor of a communication medium in order that he might examine whether to publish it;
12. The publication was made during a live radio or television broadcast.

Generally speaking, one may say that the courts in Israel have not made life easy on the publishers. When attempts are made to shield an untrue publication by the legal cover of good faith, the courts have demanded from the defendants a heavy onus of proof. In most cases, the ruling has been against the media. One should be aware of the fact that the American legal doctrine as defined in *New York Times v. O'Sullivan* doesn't apply in Israel and therefore public figures have no advantage over the media in cases of defamation.

## THE YIDDISH ANARCHIST PRESS IN ENGLAND, 1885-1914 / Mina Graur

The story of the flowering of the Yiddish anarchist press in London during the 30 years preceding World War I tells the story of the Jewish anarchist movement in Britain.

The Jewish community of East London was established in the 17th century by Spanish and Portuguese immigrants. Jews from Germany, Russia and Eastern Europe joined this community in the 1870s, among them many political refugees from the Russian revolutionary and the German socialist movements. Another wave of immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe reached London in the 1880s and '90s — mostly poor workers and petty tradesmen. The newcomers' poverty, combined with the socio-political environment

created by the previous generation of immigrants, resulted in a unique atmosphere of Jewish political activism.

The politically involved Jewish worker sought out small, informal political groupings along the lines of the Russian revolutionary cells or, on the other hand, the traditional religious study groups. In 1885 the *Arbeiter Freynd* ("Worker's Friend") was founded — a socialist newspaper for Jewish workers which would become the first Yiddish anarchist paper. Its editor was Philip Krantz, a veteran Social-Democrat.

The paper set out to be independent, open to all streams of socialism. It was anti-religious and anti-nationalist, with an



emphasis on theoretical socialism. Its policy-makers believed it their duty to prepare the masses of Jewish workers for the forthcoming social revolution, and regarded all gradual steps, such as trade unionism or the efforts to improve the workers' shocking standard of living, as marginal.

Even though it was essentially a theoretical organ, both religious and secular Jewish community leaders saw it as a dangerous threat to the community and mounted a concerted campaign to close it. The paper, nevertheless, survived and even grew under a new editor, Constantine Nallop, a social-revolutionary.

Toward the end of the 1880s, the paper's policy-makers abandoned their neutral approach to the various socialist factions and began to lean toward anarchism. With the arrival of Saul Yanovsky from New York as editor, the paper became an anarchist organ. Yanovsky, though personally abrasive, was a talented journalist and propagandist. He changed the paper's emphasis from theoretical to practical, urging penetration of the trade unions. At this point a group of social-democrat dissenters split from the paper to form *Die Frei Welt* ("The Free World") in 1891, which led to a worsened financial situation for *Arbeiter Freynd*.

During the 1890s, anarchist riots broke out in Europe and the U.S., resulting in the assassination of several heads of state. The morality and the usefulness of terror was debated within the anarchist movement, with Yanovsky opposed. He repeatedly argued his point of view in *Arbeiter Freynd*, but was branded a reactionary by the younger generation of anarchists and resigned his position in 1895. Thereafter he edited a New York Yiddish anarchist newspaper, while the *Arbeiter Freynd* ceased publication.

A new period for the paper and for the Jewish anarchist movement in London was initiated in 1898 with the arrival of Rudolf Rocker as editor. A non-Jew, Rocker grew up in the German social-democratic and anarchist movements and later spent time in Paris where he came into contact with Jewish anarchists. Arriving in London, he became involved in the Jewish anarchist movement of the East End and was soon regarded as its spiritual mentor. Rocker decided to learn Yiddish and was offered the editorship of the revived *Arbeiter Freynd*.

Most of the Jewish immigrants who arrived in London regarded that city as a way-station to the New World — the U.S., Canada or Argentina. When they eventually reached their destination, they brought with them the organizational patterns they had been used to in London and also continued reading the *Arbeiter Freynd*. London continued to be a kind of Mecca of the movement. But, continuously beset by financial problems, with Rocker working at a starvation wage,

the paper closed down in 1900.

Later that year Rocker accepted a proposal to establish a new paper, *Germinal*. Where *Arbeiter Freynd* was written in a simple style, intended for the masses, *Germinal* was conceived by Rocker as a vehicle for theoretical and philosophical debate and for the analysis of new political ideas as reflected in literature and art. It included Yiddish translations of European literature and contemporary criticism and reflected Rocker's intellectual interests. It was produced by him virtually singlehandedly, from writing to proof-reading.

A 1902 conference of the 17 Jewish anarchist groups in London decided to revive the *Arbeiter Freynd* as an umbrella organ of a new Yiddish anarchist federation, and Rocker resumed his editorship of it.

In the early 1900s, *Arbeiter Freynd's* circulation reached 4,000, although the actual readership was higher, as every copy was read by several people. Rocker initiated varied educational activities through the paper, and also published political literature, booklets and translations of European authors in the press owned by the movement. These books helped keep the paper going. He also published non-Jewish and Jewish literature on social themes in the paper, in the conviction that by identifying with a fictional character, the reader would become aware of the real injustices in the society around him.

The paper influenced its readers on the importance of the union movement, urging strikes to protest the exploitation of the workers and focusing on the evils of the sweatshop system. Rocker also believed that unionization would elevate the status of the Jewish immigrant worker.

In 1906 the *Arbeiter Freynd* called a general strike in the garment industry. The strike failed due to poor organization and effective strike-breaking measures by the employers. But in 1912 the unions led a successful railers' strike in Western London, in which *Arbeiter Freynd* played an active role. The strike gained support throughout East London, with Rocker heading the financial aid effort for the strikers. The paper functioned as a daily during the strike, supplying vital information. Eventually, the employers agreed to all of the workers' demands, Rocker's status reached legendary proportions in East London and the newspaper grew.

True to its ideology, the paper took a pacifist stand with the start of World War I, urging the workers not to fight a war that was not theirs. Rocker anticipated his eventual arrest for pacifist agitation, which occurred in 1914, and the paper was closed by the police in 1916. Although it functioned again during 1920-27 and 1930-32, its influence had become negligible.

## JEWISH NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALISTS IN IRAQ / Nissim Kazzaz

In the Ottoman period, the Jews of Iraq were generally not permitted to enter politics, and the area of journalism was avoided by them as well. During the entire 19th century, only one Jewish paper appeared — *Ha-Dover*, or *Dover Meisharim* ("Speaker of Truth"), published in Hebrew in Baghdad (1863-71) and edited by Barukh Moshe Mizrahi. The Ottoman authorities imposed strict limitations on the press from 1867, a situation which lasted until the Young Turks' revolution of 1908. Several Iraqi Jewish writers did publish articles in the Jewish press in other countries, especially in three Calcutta papers published by Iraqi Jewish emigrants — *Hamevasser*, *Perah* and *Maggid Meisharim*.

The spirit of liberalism that attended the Young Turks' revolution resulted in increased political as well as journalistic activity by Baghdad's Jews. In 1909 two Jewish papers appeared: *Al-Zuhur* ("The Flowers"), in Arabic and Turkish, edited by Nissim Yosef Somekh and Rashid Efendi Al-Saffar, and *Bin al-Nahravn* ("Between the Two Rivers"), edited by Yitzhak Yehezkel and Menahem 'Ani. *Tafakkur* ("Thinking"), owned and edited by Sulayman 'Anbar, appeared in 1912. All were short-lived.

The Young Turks' period of liberalization also proved short-lived, and from 1912 the authorities were no longer as tolerant of minorities as previously. Their goal was now Turkification rather than liberalization. Many newspapers founded after the 1908 revolution were closed.

Sulayman 'Anbar, the editor of *Tafakkur*, was an unusual figure because he became an anti-government political activist, participating in the Arab National Congress in Paris in 1913, which was sponsored by the Al-Lamarkaziyya and Al-Fatat associations. These groups demanded increased Arab representation in the Ottoman government. 'Anbar was probably the only Jew to attend this congress. He was exiled by the Turkish authorities, together with other Iraqi journalists, in 1915, though was later allowed to return.

The British conquest of Baghdad in 1917, while benefitting the Jews, did not result in their increased participation in political or journalistic life. A single Jewish weekly, *Yeshurun*, in Hebrew and Arabic, did appear in 1920-21, edited by Zion Eder'i and Ya'akov Zion, and owned by Zionist leader Aharon Sasson. A more substantial paper, *Al-Misbah* ("The Lamp"), appeared in 1924 as a literary and news weekly, published by Salman Shina, a lawyer, and edited by 'Ibn Al-Samaw'al, pen-name for 'Anwar Sha'ul. This paper dealt with the Iraqi Jewish community and with Jewish and Zionist ideological

issues. It played an important role in exposing anti-Semitic incitement, including that of Iraqi folk poet Mulla 'Abbud Al-Karkhi and ex-White Russian officer Saddiq Rasul Al-Qaderi. It also championed the Iraqi nationalist cause, which reflected both its publisher's and its editor's point of view, as well as that of the Jewish intelligentsia. Topics that symbolized Iraqi unity and the new monarchy were emphasized in the paper, and the editor's poems of identification with the Iraqi homeland and the Arab people were published. *Al-Misbah* appeared regularly for 2½ years, and continued on an irregular basis until 1929.

However, from late 1926 onward, the Iraqi Jewish community no longer had an effective organ for combatting growing Iraqi anti-Jewish activity and for bringing the Jewish community into the Iraqi nationalist movement. A literary magazine begun in 1929, *Al-Hasid* ("The Harvester"), avoided politics.

The death of King Faysal I in 1933, and growing Nazi influence in Iraq, resulted in a deteriorating situation for the Jewish community. The Jewish leadership dared not protest these developments, for the sense of security felt by the community during the British Mandate period had been replaced by fear fostered in an atmosphere of terror.

In 1936, shortly after the Bakir Sidqi revolution, the literary *Al-Hasid*, edited by 'Anwar Sha'ul, became a political, in addition to a literary, weekly, probably as a result of a positive official attitude toward the Jews at the start of the new regime. *Al-Hasid* was an intellectual forum for Iraqi Jewish writers such as Na'im Salih Tuwayq, the poet Murad Mikhael, attorney Shalom Darwish, educator 'Ezra Haddad and journalist Yosef Mukammal. The paper also printed works by leading non-Jewish writers.

Two weekly magazines edited by Jews which appeared during this period were *Al-Burhan* ("The Proof") in 1927, edited by Sha'ul Haddad, and *Al-Mithaq* ("The Covenant") in 1935, edited by Yosef Haddad.

With Bakir Sidqi's murder in 1937, and the fall of his government, the situation of the Jews worsened again. Subsequent Iraqi governments were sympathetic to the Arabs of Eretz Israel and took an active interest in the Palestinian question.

*Al-Hasid* closed in 1938 due to the threatening atmosphere to the Jewish community and warnings to the editor, as well as financial difficulties. Once again, the Jewish community had no organ, while Nazi propaganda was intensifying.

Jews did serve as journalists and editors in other papers, including Menashe Za'rur, Na'im Salih Tuwayq, Murad Al-'Imari, Salim Al-Bassoon, Menashe Somekh and Suhayl Ibrahim. Several Jewish intellectuals also wrote for radical nationalist papers. A paper connected with Jews, *Al-'Usba* ("The Band"), was published in 1946 by a group of Jewish Communists with an anti-Zionist point of view. It attained a wide circulation but was closed by the authorities and its editors imprisoned. During the 1940s, Jewish Communists were involved in writing other underground Party newspapers as well.

A daily Jewish paper, *Al-Barid al-Yawmi* ("The Daily Mail"), appeared in 1948, published by Meir Mu'allim. Although its editor was a Moslem, the rest of the staff was Jewish. But in an atmosphere that was anti-Jewish, the paper had little chance for survival. It was closed by government order after 28 issues and its editors were exiled.

The absence of a newspaper, after 1938, that could defend the Jewish community in the face of intensive Nazi and anti-Jewish propaganda reflected the failure of the Jewish

leadership to adjust to new realities. They relied on the traditional defensive methods of personal contacts and private meetings with the authorities on behalf of the community, ignoring the possibility of influencing public opinion through the press.

The Christian minority in Iraq, unlike the Jews, owned major newspapers and played an active role in politics. They were exceedingly pro-nationalist, and went along with the current anti-Jewish policy. Generally, the democratic and moderate elements in Iraqi politics felt pressured into an anti-Jewish position.

Despite the hostile anti-Jewish atmosphere of the '40s and early '50s, most of the Jewish journalists continued to believe in a better future for the Jews in Iraq. Most were Iraqi nationalists. Unlike the Jewish masses, most of the journalists — and the community leaders — chose not to leave Iraq for Israel in the early '50s. Eventually, though, their hopes were bitterly disappointed and they were forced to leave. Many did settle in Israel.

## THE RED JEWISH PRESS: TWO JEWISH NEWSPAPERS IN AREAS ANNEXED TO THE U.S.S.R. IN 1939/40 / Dov Levin

In September 1939, when the Red Army entered western Ukraine and Belorussia, there were only three Jewish dailies in all of the U.S.S.R. — *Der Shtern* (Ukraine), *Oktober* (Minsk, Belorussia) — both founded in 1925 — and *Birobidzhaner Shtern* (Birobidzan), founded in 1930. There were also four Yiddish literary journals and one children's monthly.

As all Soviet papers, the Jewish papers devoted a great deal of space to the "liberation" of the western Ukraine and Belorussia and their Sovietization. Clearly, however, these papers failed to satisfy the demand by the local Jewish population, which had been used to a large variety of Yiddish periodicals. In Vilna too, with its large population of formerly Polish Jews, all four Yiddish dailies were closed down, although at least one, the *Vilner Tog*, had been pro-Soviet. Shmerke Katcehergiski, a leftist writer in Vilna, observed that some of the Jews still expected the Soviet authorities to permit the re-opening of the Yiddish press, as a Polish paper and a Russian paper had already begun to appear, but they were to be disappointed, especially the Communists among them who had believed that once the Soviet regime replaced

the Poles, Jewish culture would blossom.

Within the entire formerly Polish zone annexed by the Soviets in 1939, containing a Jewish population of at least 1.5 million including refugees, only one Jewish paper was permitted — the *Bialystoker Shtern*. Although officially it was a local Communist Party paper, it became, in actuality, the only organ of the Jews of eastern Poland and the western Ukraine. Yet it was limited to four pages and a run of 6,000. Its manager was the Yiddish author Zelig Axelrod, who wasn't a member of the Communist Party but had been approached by a Jewish Communist functionary, Hirsch Smollar, to help establish the paper. Most of the staff were non-Bialystokers, including a group of talented Warsaw journalists and authors, mostly leftists. However, they had no experience of the Soviet mentality and method. In this area they were assisted by the arrival of a former Minsk printshop worker, Beinish Shulman, who was well-versed in Jewish as well as Soviet literature and in the complicated dealings with Soviet authorities. He became the paper's editor.

The paper had to struggle with the obligation to fit in great quantities of official Soviet news material, which took up

most of the space, forcing the Jewish content to a minimum. The editors had to be careful in their handling of topics that could be interpreted as nationalistic. For example, when Shulman was shown a yellow star smuggled in by Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied areas, he immediately assigned a strong article on the subject but was prevented by the Party from printing it because of the pact between Germany and the Soviet Union. The suffering of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland was only hinted at in some of the articles and in the classified ads requesting information about missing family members. There was practically no news about Jewish life outside the Soviet Union. Similarly, only a very few of the many Polish Jewish authors who had escaped to Bialystok were published in the paper.

Despite all these limitations, the paper did play an important role in the Jewish community, especially in the areas of literature, theater and education, by providing a modest forum for Jewish intellectuals and some information to the masses. It lasted for 20 months, until the outbreak of the war in the Soviet Union in 1941 and the Nazi occupation.

Vilna, too, was eventually allowed one Jewish paper by the

Soviets, the *Vilner Emes*, in August 1940, edited by David Umru. Here, too, there was an abundance of official news items, although there was also Vilna-area news. As in Bialystok, there was a large group of talented local Yiddish writers and poets, including Avraham Sutskever and Chayim Grade, as well as refugee writers. The *Vilner Emes* gave broad coverage to Vilna's Jewish cultural life, such as YIVO activities and the establishment of a Yiddish department in the University of Vilna, as well as to Yiddish theater, education and literature.

But the worrisome issue of the physical security of Vilna's Jews, a generations-old problem which was as palpable under the Soviets as under previous regimes, was addressed only circuitously. Anti-clericalism and anti-nationalism were the issues stressed in propaganda articles.

The Lithuanian Communist Party closed the paper in March 1941 after less than seven months and merged it with Kovno's *Der Emes*, claiming a need for greater administrative efficiency. In any case, three months later, the war between the Soviet Union and Germany had begun.

## "BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT S. PERES" OR: EIGHT NEWSPAPERS COVER A CONGRESS / Mordecai Naor

This comparative study focuses on the treatment by the Hebrew daily press in Eretz Israel of the 22nd Zionist Congress that was held in Basel in 1946. The papers studied are: *Ha-Aretz*, *Davar*, *Ha-Boker*, *Ha-Tzofeh*, *Ha-Mashkif*, *Mishmar*, *Hadashot Ha-Erev* and *Yediot Aharonot*. The congress, which took place during Dec. 5-29, 1946, with its executive committee meeting during four additional days to choose a new executive, was of great interest to the Eretz Israel press.

Politically, the congress was divided into a fragmented leftist camp and a seemingly unified center-right camp. Of a total of 383 delegates, the Left had 151, divided into three groups, the General Zionists had 130, which included two rival groups, Mizrahi had 60 and the Revisionists, who participated in the Congress after years of boycott, had 42.

It was a fateful congress, convened after an interval of over seven years, after the Holocaust. It took place in the shadow of the past and in an atmosphere of uncertainty regarding the status of Eretz Israel. The main issues were: 1) whether to continue active struggle against the British in Eretz Israel,

2) partition of Eretz Israel or not, 3) participation in a proposed tri-party (British-Arab-Jewish) conference on Eretz Israel in London, and 4) re-election of Chaim Weizmann as president of the World Zionist Organization.

The Eretz Israel newspapers varied widely in their news-gathering efforts for the congress. *Ha-Aretz* gave the subject high priority, assigning three reporters to its sessions and utilizing news agencies as well. *Davar's* reporting was sketchy, relying primarily on news agencies. *Ha-Boker* sent three reporters who filed a great deal of varied material on the proceedings and behind-the-scenes activity, and also used news agencies. *Ha-Tzofeh* used more agency reports than correspondents. The Revisionist *Ha-Mashkif*, not a large paper, nevertheless sent a contingent of four reporters to the congress. Ha-Shomer Ha-Zair's *Mishmar* relied mostly on the agencies, as well as on an anonymous "Congress Mishmar Office." *Hadashot Ha-Erev*, a new paper which was considered to be a Mapai organ, announced it would send a staff of seven reporters, including Shimon Peres (then Persky) who was then a member of Mapai's "Young Guard."

Apparently, though, these were Mapai delegates who were requested to supply articles. *Yediot Aharonot* sent its editor, Azriel Carlebach, who outdid all the other journalists in the variety and quality of his reporting.

Did the papers' coverage reflect political influence by the bodies or parties which sponsored them? They can be classified in three groups on this question: 1) Competent coverage: *Ha-Aretz*, *Davar*, *Ha-Tzofeh*, *Mishmar* and *Hadashot Ha-Erev*. These papers generally, but not always, reported fairly. 2) Aggressive journalism: *Ha-Mashkif* and, partially, *Ha-Boker*. The writing style, and especially the headlines, conveyed an emotional, sarcastic approach. 3) Carlebach's special style: this editor's one-man show falls somewhere between the first two categories. He covered everything thoroughly and professionally, yet his approach was non-objective, even demagogic — and sophisticated.

Some of the papers hardly devoted any editorial-page space to the congress, possibly because the coverage was extensive

on the front page and elsewhere. Others published many editorials. *Yediot Aharonot* didn't actually publish any editorials, but Carlebach blended editorial material into his daily reports.

Most of the papers ran "local color" articles along with reports on the congress sessions, but these were mailed rather than cabled, and their juxtaposition in the papers alongside much fresher news was jarring.

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this comparative study: 1) Because coverage was not impartial, many newspapers must be studied in order to gain a true picture of the events. 2) The party-sponsored papers were quite selective in their reporting. 3) Sometimes, the reason for omissions in coverage was not a policy decision but a logistic or managerial problem. 4) In researching an event such as the 22nd Zionist Congress through the contemporary press, there must be an awareness of pitfalls to be avoided if an accurate picture is to emerge.

## A ONE-MAN NEWSPAPER: AVIGDOR HAMEIRI'S "HA-MAHAR" / Yohanan Arnon

Avigdor Hameiri (Feuerstein) was a writer, poet, playwright and journalist who immigrated from Hungary to Eretz Israel in 1921 and quickly integrated into its cultural and artistic life. A sharp-tongued writer who aimed his barbs everywhere, he was unsuccessful in finding work in the existing newspapers and periodicals and so created his own vehicle. It was called *Ha-Mahar* ("Tomorrow") — A Platform for Ideological Conflict.

At first *Ha-Mahar* was a monthly which began publication in 1927. However, it appeared on a regular basis only briefly, and afterwards only at long intervals. Between 1927 and 1940, 16 issues were published. Hameiri wrote nearly all the material himself, lashing out at both the right and the left,

sparing no person, institution or development in the small Jewish Yishuv of those years. A large portion of his literary work was first published in this organ.

During the early years he generally took a rightist stand close to Jabotinsky and the Revisionists. Later, his opinions changed and he aspired to a settlement with the Arabs. In the social and human arena he was an uncompromising spokesman for the little man versus the establishment and the various government bodies.

*Ha-Mahar* is an outstanding example of a one-man newspaper which reflects the opinions and spirit of an independent-minded thinker and a rebel.

## MOSHE NADIR IN THE AMERICAN YIDDISH PRESS / Ephraim Shedletzky

Moshe Nadir — Yiddish poet, humorist and literary critic — was also one of the most outstanding Yiddish journalists in America. Born in a *shtetl* in Galicia, he arrived in the U.S. at age 12 with his family, and experienced the gamut of the immigrants' struggles.

Nadir began publishing his humorous stories in the Yiddish press before World War I. He worked for the Yiddish Communist *Freiheit* ("Freedom") most of his life, and was sent to visit the Soviet Union during the 1920s. Although he had certain doubts about what he had learned, he

continued to defend Soviet Communism and was a sharp critic of the bourgeois world.

The Arab riots of 1929 in Eretz Israel and the sympathy of the Communist world for the Arabs caused Nadir to begin to break away from Communism, although he continued to work for *Freiheit* until 1939. After the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement, Nadir publicized his letter of resignation from the *Freiheit* both in the Yiddish and the English press, denouncing Communism in his typically biting style and

likening it to Nazism.

Hired by the *Tog* ("Day"), albeit with misgivings, as he had been a frequent critic of it, Nadir worked there in difficult conditions until the day he died, age 58, in 1943. In a confession titled "*Modeh Ani*" ("I Confess"), he expressed regret for his sins in his characteristic style.

Moshe Nadir was brilliantly talented, a linguistic artist and one of the best Yiddish journalists ever.

## THE RISE AND FALL OF THE YIDDISH PRESS IN POLAND /Mordecai Tzanin

The beginning of the Yiddish press in Poland is bound up with one individual — Samuel Jacob Yatzkan (1876-1936), who began publishing the daily *Yiddishes Tagblatt* ("Jewish Daily News") in 1906. All previous attempts at bringing out a Yiddish paper had failed, including one by author Y.L. Peretz, because the authorities had refused to grant the necessary permit.

The *Yiddishes Tagblatt* established itself firmly, thanks to Yatzkan's talents. He was also the first to publish serialized novels in the Yiddish press, which helped increase circulation.

World War I brought Yatzkan's success to an end, in part because of the ban on circulating Yiddish and Hebrew papers outside Poland's borders. The German occupation didn't improve the situation, as the German censor forbade printing any news about plagues and famine, imposing heavy fines for each infraction.

But the situation changed after the war, under the independent Polish regime. Despite financial difficulties and a constant struggle against censorship, which grew increasingly more sophisticated and extreme, the Yiddish press expanded greatly and gained in influence. The Yiddish paper *Heint* ("Today") developed into a press empire, controlling a sizable number of papers in Warsaw and throughout Poland. It was a moderate, Zionist paper and, like nearly all other Jewish papers, it did battle against anti-Semitism.

*Moment*, founded by Noah Prilutsky, became a Revisionist organ under Marc Cahan who put it at the disposal of Vladimir Jabotinsky and Uri Zevi Greenberg. Although this resulted in a drop in circulation, the paper held on until the end — that is, the elimination of the entire Jewish press by the Nazis.

Bundist newspapers had begun to appear clandestinely in

Tsarist Russia. Under the independent Polish government they were repressed more severely than other papers, hounded both by the censor and the secret police. Bundist papers were constantly confiscated and their staffs arrested, but after each confiscation, a new paper would replace the old one. *Folkszeitung* ("The People's Newspaper"), the main Bundist paper, was the last newspaper to appear in Warsaw in September 1939 when the Nazis blew up the city's electricity supply.

The ultra-Orthodox community also had an important press. Oddly, Agudat Israel's *Dos Yiddishe Tagblatt* ("The Yiddish Daily") was printed in the Bund printing press, together with *Folkszeitung*, despite the ideological gulf which separated the two camps. *Dos Yiddishe Tagblatt*, supported by the Gur Rebbe, made wide use of material from another ultra-Orthodox paper, *Israelite*, published in Frankfurt. It even ran translated serialized novels, maintaining a large circulation within the ultra-Orthodox and Hassidic communities.

The Communist *Freynd* ("Friend"), published in Warsaw in 1935 by a wealthy Vilna Jew, Boris Klachkin, was edited by author Alter Kacyzne. Although both these men were far removed from Communism, they, like other non-Party intellectuals, had decided to support Soviet policy. Nonetheless, their strategy failed and the paper soon closed.

*Di Tat* ("The Deed"), focusing on Eretz Israel, was published by the Revisionists' radical wing.

An amazing number of dailies, weeklies and other periodicals were published in Poland between the two World Wars. They all came to an abrupt end in September 1939 with the German invasion.

## "DI GOLDENE KEYT" AND ITS EDITOR, AVRAHAM SUTZKEVER / Alexander Spiegelblatt

The quarterly *Di Goldene Keyt* ("The Golden Chain") was founded by the poet Avraham Sutzkever in 1948 shortly after he arrived in Israel via Moscow, Poland and France. He edits it to this day, with issue number 128 about to appear.

The periodical is as much Sutzkever's life's work as are his volumes of poetry and prose. He set out to publish a modern, artistic Yiddish periodical, different from what had existed before World War II. Managing to elicit support from then-Secretary General of the Histadrut Yosef Sprinzak, despite the opposition of a considerable portion of the population to the use of Yiddish then, Sutzkever soon established a prestigious quarterly sponsored by the Histadrut, with the finest Yiddish writers throughout the world contributing to it.

*Di Goldene Keyt* played an important role in bringing Yiddish-speakers and Yiddishists closer to the State of Israel. In fact, it turned Israel into the center of Yiddish literature, despite the fact that most of the writers lived in the U.S.

Sutzkever also succeeded to a great extent in eliminating the psychological barriers between Hebrew and Yiddish writers. With his encouragement, writers like Dov Sadan and Eliezer Steinman began to write in Yiddish once again, and even to publish, after years of silence.

Today, after 40 consecutive years of publication during which the quarterly has gained recognition and acclaim by readers and academic institutions throughout the world, Sutzkever must grapple with a serious problem: The entire generation of Yiddish writers which developed in the period between the two wars, including those who survived the Nazis, is disappearing, and there is no new generation of Yiddish writers to replace them.

Still, Avraham Sutzkever continues to publish *Di Goldene Keyt* with characteristic attention to detail, maintaining its high artistic level as in the early years.

### Contributors to this Issue

**Shalom Rosenfeld:** head of the Journalism Studies Program and the Institute for Research of the Jewish Press, Tel Aviv University; a founder of *Ma'ariv* and its editor-in-chief, 1974-80; chairman of the board of directors of Ma'ariv Company.

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**Ephraim Shedletzky:** journalist and editor; former director of Yiddish broadcasting, Kol Yisrael; former editor of the Yiddish monthly *Folk on Zion*.

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