LETTER FROM THE "PRINCE OF THE DIASPORA" TO THE "ORATOR OF MANKIND": A JEWISH DETAIL IN "CHRONIQUE DE PARIS," THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY DAILY / Baruch Mervorach

One of several dailies published during the French revolutionary period was Chronique de Paris, launched in March 1790 by "Anarches Cloyes," who was Baron de Cloyes, Jean-Baptiste du Val-de-Grace. Born into a noble Prussian family of Dutch origin, Cloyes was a radical rationalist and atheist who arrived in Paris with the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789 and was later granted the status of French citizen. Heading a delegation of 36 foreigners who identified with the Revolution and called themselves the "Embassy of the Human Race," he addressed the revolutionary National Assembly in June 1790. He began referring to himself as "Orator of Mankind," which reflected his internationalist ideology as well as his bombastic style. In 1792, he published the noted La Republique Universelle, and, in the spirit of the times, thereafter expressed increasingly anarchistic and radical views, advocating a revolutionary war by France against the rest of Europe.

Curiously, in contrast to most of the radical rationalists, French and otherwise, Cloyes was an admirer of the Jewish people. This sympathy was expressed in a slim volume published by him in 1783 in Berlin, Letter About the Jews to a Priest, One of My Friends, in which he ascribes to the Jewish people the beneficial historic role of promoting international commerce. Shortly after the appearance of his Republique Universelle, another public "letter" appeared, this time in his Chronique de Paris, on April 3, 1792, signed by one "Samuel Levi, Prince of the Diaspora." Speaking, as it were, in the name of the entire Jewish people, the writer of the letter extolls Cloyes' Republic as containing truths even greater than the prophets', and calls upon all Jews to regard France as the true Palestine. Obviously written by the "Orator of Mankind" himself, possibly with the assistance of a lifelong Jewish friend with like-minded views, J. Pernier, the letter heralded the exclusively religious redefinition of the Jewish people that was to come during the Napoleonic period some 15 years later, and that was to become the ideological basis for the assimilation of the Jews into Central and Western European society during the 19th century.

Cloyes, for his part, became the leader of the radical "Cult of Reason" which opposed all religious views and institutions, identifying himself with the opposition wing of the Jacobins under Jacques Hebert. Inciting the wrath of Robespierre, leader of the mainstream Jacobins, Cloyes was ejected from the Club of Jacobins in early 1794, removed from the revolutionary Convention thereafter, and finally arrested, together with other "Hebervists," in March 1794. All were guillotined.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Shalom Rosenfeld: head of 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.
Judge Sarah Sirot: Tel Aviv District Court.
Dr. Shoshanna Shiflett: Researcher in the Documentation and Research Unit of Israel’s Ministry of Defense; doctoral thesis on "Nahum Silone’s Road From Jewish-Political Positivism to the Zionist Movement."
Elisa Kaveh: Studied education and hebrew Literature at Tel Aviv University; staff of Yadid Abaranot.
Yehiel Limor: senior teaching fellow, academic program, New School of Communications, College of Business Administration, Tel Aviv; researcher, Smart Institute of Communications, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
Dr. Hillel Nozel: senior lecturer, academic program, New School of Communications, College of Business Administration, Tel Aviv; researcher, Smart Institute of Communications, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
Prof. Bruno di Porto: history of journalism, Department of Modern and Contemporary History, University of Pisa, Italy; specializes in Jewish history of Italy.

Dr. Uri Ezra: lecturer, Department of General History, Haifa University.
Dr. Dan Almagor: lyricist, translator and researcher of Hebrew literature and language and the milieu of Erez Yisrael in the modern period.
Prof. Sasson Somekh: Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Tel Aviv University.
Nessim Rejwan: journalist and editor; writer for the Jerusalem Post; former editor of the Arabic of Yawm, held senior positions in Israel Radio and TV.
Dr. David Assaf: lecturer, Department of Jewish History, Tel Aviv University; specializes in research of traditional Jewish society in Eastern Europe.
Uri Dan: Middle East correspondent for the New York Post; columnist for the Jerusalem Post and Ma’ariv; regular contributor to the French weekly VSD.
Prof. Baruch Mevorach: Department of Jewish History, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.