

Jewish Currents

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March
1990

Marc Blitzstein Portrayed

By HERBERT HAUFRECHT



Benny Goodman Medal

Recorded Jewish Music Roundup

By DAVID PLATT

Poorim? Peerim? Purim? Curses!

By MAX ROSENFELD

BBW vs BBI: A Modest Proposal

By BILLIE PORTNOW

Jewish Currents

Vol. 44, No. 3 (480)
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Our Cover: The two faces of the Benny Goodman Medal created by sculptor Marika Somogyi for the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum in Berkeley, CA on the occasion of the musician's induction into the Jewish-American Hall of Fame in Oct., 1989. Photo courtesy of the Judah L. Magnes Museum. Goodman (1909-1986) was the first American bandleader to feature Black and white musicians in the same band. For Jewish Music Season, Feb. 10-April 30.

HAVE YOU MOVED?

To be sure you do not miss an issue, your change of address must be received by us no later than the 10th of the month. Changes received after that will not take effect for another month.

* The Editorial Board is not responsible for opinions expressed in signed articles or reviews.

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Dole's Meaty Message

An EDITORIAL

Feb. 7
BEN-GURION'S favorite maxim, according to Israel Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, was, "The less tension between the superpowers the better it is for Israel." Rabin quoted this pregnant truth to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in New York Jan. 12. On Jan. 16, reflecting the end of the Cold War and the lessening of tensions, U.S. Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-KS) sent shivers through this Jewish leadership with an Op-Ed *N.Y. Times* article proposing a 5% cut in earmarked foreign aid to Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan and the Philippines so that the \$357 million thus saved could be given to the needy East European struggling democracies (and to Panama, which the U.S. had, in "democratizing" it, devastated to the extent of about \$2 billion).

Israel's supporters rallied mightily and probably no cut of \$151.9 million will be made this year in the \$3 billion aid package (\$1.8 billion in military and \$1.2 billion in economic aid, which in fact amounts to 19% of all the foreign aid given to all countries). Since Israel is now being swamped by an upsurge of Soviet Jewish immigration, Israel undoubtedly needs all the economic aid it can get.

Rabin, however, also told the Jewish leadership that "a major burden" on Israel's economy is its spending about 10% of its gross national product on defense, among the highest such outlays of any democratic nation in the world. Therefore a successful peace process would seem to be Israel's biggest need for today, tomorrow and thereafter.

To guarantee Israel's future, new perception is needed of the new context of USA-USSR relations. Old thinking about Israel's security being dependent

upon Israel's offering its services as the best strategic ally of the USA in its confrontation with the USSR has to yield to recognition of a developing new climate in the Middle East.

"Bush Administration officials are increasingly confident that the Soviets are indeed prepared to play a more constructive role in the search for peace," wrote *Jerusalem Post* Washington correspondent Wolf Blitzer in *Hadassah Magazine* in February. And, he added, "... American experts suspect that Israel's strategic value to the U.S. in this new international era will be reduced. . ."

More and more American Jews are recognizing the peaceful role the USSR is playing by moderating Arab states' and Palestinian extremists. Already on Dec. 27 Syria, drawing its own conclusion from Soviet shift in policy, resumed diplomatic relations with Egypt, broken in 1977 when Sadat flew to Jerusalem on a peace mission ending at Camp David in 1979. Shamir's brake on the peace process is meeting rising resistance in Israel itself. Witness the *N. Y. Times* Op-Ed article Jan. 20 by Gideon Rafael, former director general of Israel's Foreign Ministry and Ambassador to the U.N.: Israel "must place the revitalization and intensification of the peace process on top of its national agenda. It must seek ways to reconcile its Zionist vocation of ingathering the dispersed with the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people."

Israel needs peace more than military aid, which of course is bound to decline as U.S. need for Israel as a strategic ally lessens. Dole's proposed 5% cut is a symptom. Shamir's resistance to a practical peace process makes it more difficult to be duly responsive to Israel's need for more economic aid to accommodate Soviet Jewish immigration. ■

Jewish Wedding in Tunisia

By SOPHIE C. AKSEL

TRAVELING to remote corners of the globe on my own, I have had many strange, fascinating experiences but none quite equal to my 1987 visit to Jerba, Tunisia, a remote island of great beauty in the Mediterranean, where two eras collide — the medieval life of its native people and the sophistication of its modern hotels, swimming pools and continental food.

In planning my itinerary I recalled the advice of another traveler I had met, to be sure to visit this island because of its Moorish architecture, long arc of dazzling beaches washed by the blue sea where I could relax, and the exotic quality of life I would encounter there. But little did I guess I would find a colony of Jews whose origin goes back to Punic Carthage, where a Judeo-African legend has it that Jews came to Jerba in King Solomon's time, and where another legend relates that the *kohanim*, escaping from Jerusalem in 70 C.E., carried one of the Temple's doors there, believed to be walled in the synagogue called Ghriba (the wondrous).

After my arrival in Jerba I immediately arranged for a tour for a quick overview. As I drove through the town of Mt. Souk I was intrigued by the sight of men dressed in long, flowing *jellabas*, heads covered with turbans, bare feet encased in baboushes, strolling leisurely under Moorish archways through narrow, cobblestone alleyways. Some were tending their little shops,

SOPHIE C. AKSEL, a new contributor, a former teacher and librarian, is a writer and photographer who has been published in *Hatikvah*, *Newsday*, *Daily News*, *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *Wilson Library Bulletin*, *Brooklyn College Literary Review* and *Popular Photography*.

which displayed a colorful array of hand-woven rugs, embroidered blouses and dresses, ceramics, blankets and copper cases. Women walked about covered from head to foot in their caftans, veils hiding their faces completely except for their darkly mascaraed, piercing eyes. As they walked along in the blazing sunlight their shadows fell on ancient walls of domed and minareted mosques and stone houses, brightened by the splash of brilliant bougainvillea and sturdy palms.

I was suddenly propelled in time to centuries past. In contrast to the isolation of city dwellers back home, here they were in continuous personal contact, evidenced by their friendly greetings of "*Salaam Aleikum*," stopping to bargain occasionally for the merchandise displayed or sipping their traditional mint tea.

As we sped along the two-laned road, dazzling bone-white beaches soon came into view with modern, handsome hotels in Moorish style, complete with white arches and domes, stretched out in grand array on one side of the highway. The guide hastened to assure us they offered every luxury imaginable — swimming pools, bars and discos — but my attention was riveted by the twisted trunks of olive trees on the other side of the road, budding olives on their branches, which stretched for miles and miles, their main crop here, as well as the variety of wind-swept palm trees.

Suddenly, to my great surprise, the guide announced, "Soon our next stop will be the synagogue of La Ghriba." A synagogue? Jewish people here on this small island? Probably the tropical heat has made me groggy, I thought. "Yes," the guide continued, "we have a colony

of Jews here. And this synagogue is the world's most ancient one."

Stepping off the bus, we walked past a white stone wall bearing the name of the synagogue. A blue archway framed the path toward the low building where a long-robed, bearded, elderly man, head covered with a yarmulke, greeted us, then ushered us inside. Wooden benches faced the platform where the Torah was encased. There was a separate area for women, stacks of *siddurs*, men sitting



drinks. The cool breeze wafted the fragrance of jasmine and as I looked about I observed many of the men wearing that flower behind their ears, an Arabic custom, I learned. Odd, I thought, that none of the women were wearing it.

Observing a young group of people seated at one of the tables talking in halting English I sat down near them and soon we were engaged in conversation. I hesitated to ask the questions so strongly needing answers but their



The bride and groom.

and *davening*, bent over them, and a candelabrum overhead illuminating the shadowed corners.

A man approached me speaking in Hebrew, but that language threw up a barrier I couldn't breach. "He's asking if you want a prayer said for you," someone explained. "Yes, of course," was my reply and now a covering was placed on my head and the prayer intoned. I sensed a contribution was in order and complied.

As I walked about hearing the prayers of the assembled people my curiosity knew no bounds but since all I could speak was Yiddish, unknown apparently to them, I would have to bide my time.

That night I hastened to the plaza, where the villagers gather to spend their time chatting and sipping their favorite

friendly manner, evident curiosity and interest in me soon disarmed me. Cautiously mentioning my visit to the synagogue and expressing my great surprise to one of the young men who had introduced himself as Sami, a sturdy, outspoken, no-nonsense kind of fellow, his response was, "Why you so surprised? Here many Jews live. Me, I Jewish too."

"You Jewish too?" I stuttered.

"Yes. And my friends here, they, too, Jewish." Quickly he introduced them to me. All I could mumble was "*Shalom*," as I was greeted by friendly stares and handshakes. At least we shared one word in common — *Shalom*.

"How can I meet more Jewish people here?" I asked. "My cousin," Sami replied promptly, "she marry in two days.

I invite you, my friend, to come. I take you there."

I mumbled my acceptance and now felt surrounded by friends, no longer a total outsider, realizing how strong a bond being Jewish could be, especially when you encounter Jews in distant lands.

Two days later, after observing the flaming sunset igniting the horizon, I walked over to the plaza and met Sami at our rendezvous. "My brother here," he said, pointing to a fellow standing alongside, his warm smile making me feel welcome at once, "he take you in his car. I have jewelry shop here still open. I meet you later."

Off we drove along darkened rough roads. After a few miles we turned into a narrow alleyway and stopped at a primitive stone house. Walking across the cobblestone path, I was ushered past a crowd of people congregated there and stepped into a courtyard jammed with women and children dressed for the most part in typical Arab fashion. Our stares were mutual. "Who is this stranger in our midst?" was the unspoken question. Evidently I looked as strange to them as they did to me. Trying to communicate ended up in complete frustration since they spoke French. Sami's brother came to my rescue, explaining, "American, American," as he nodded toward me. "*Shalom*" again helped to establish me, at which they relaxed, grasping my hand in greeting, making me feel very welcome.

Soon, squeezing past the crowd in a primitive courtyard, I stepped into a room where the youthful, attractive bride, draped in a flowing gold and brown gown, dark hair covered with a matching shawl, sat cross-legged on the floor. Her graceful hands were deeply hennaed, eyes mascaraed in Arabic fashion, heavy silver necklace, earrings and bracelets completing her wedding attire. Not a man was in sight. She was

surrounded by females, young and old, waiting on her. One was busily spooning out cous-cous to her, the popular Tunisian dish, another arranging her braids to keep them from falling into the bowl, another wiping perspiration from under her forehead and tucking in wisps of hair slipping out from under her shawl. The heat was overwhelming, as was the level of noise.

Suddenly a long procession of cars came down the alleyway, horns blaring, and groups of men stepped out, leading the bridegroom in high spirits as they wedged their way inside. I spied my friend Sami. Quickly he explained, "We come now from the synagogue. He is the bridegroom," pointing to a handsome, dark-skinned, robust young man dressed in a white suit, a blue and white silk tallis draped over his shoulders, a white yarmulke covering his dark hair.

"For seven days he not see his bride. Today he fast all day. And she, too," Sami whispered as my eyes riveted on the bridegroom. Accompanying him was a rabbi carrying a *siddur*, wearing an ankle-length white linen robe covering his portly body. A path was cleared quickly for them and the group of men and young boys escorting them into the house, some toting guitars and Arab drums. The crush as well as the noise were now reaching a crescendo.

Soon a semblance of order prevailed as the ceremony proceeded. The bridegroom stood at the threshold of the bride's room. Now the services were intoned by the rabbi with responses from the assembled guests, and at last I could anchor myself to something familiar, stirring recollections of past weddings of relatives and friends.

Watching the bridegroom as he uttered the prayers and sipped his glass of wine, I wondered why there was no traditional canopy, but soon the question was answered. Draped across a portion of the ceiling was a prayer shawl serving as a canopy. My eyes strayed to

the lit candles above the doorway, to the women guests, some of them clad in striking Arab fashion, heavily be-decked with numerous silver and gold necklaces and long pendant earrings, others in simple home-made dresses, eyes deeply mascaraed. Stars were visible above the courtyard, open to the evening sky, where occasionally a cool draft of air relieved the oppressive tropical heat.

At one point during the ceremony the groom entered the bridal chamber, where, Sami informed me, "he put the ring on her finger and kiss her," and then returned alone to the threshold, where he smashed the glass, symbolizing the destruction of the temple. Excited shouts of "*Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov!*" followed, guitars strumming, drums thumping, back-slapping, dancing of the hora.

One of the women rushed off to serve the guests. Another cleared a small space in the center of the courtyard where she pulled up a pitcher of water, like Ruth of old, from the tiny well there. Confusion reigned, but with a great outpouring of good spirits and conviviality.

I watched this incredible sight. How had Jews survived all those centuries, from even the time of King Solomon, despite pogroms, persecution, dispersion, forced conversion and the horror of the Holocaust? How had all those generations of people been able to follow their faith and traditions, suffering all the tortures imposed, but never surrendering? How had they survived here? Later I learned that in Tunisia, after the War of Independence from France, under the leadership of their highly respected president, Habib Bourguiba, Jews could live peaceably and enjoy a wide measure of cultural autonomy.

I felt a deep sense of gratitude to the Tunisian government for their official

**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
DAY, JAN. 15,**

was celebrated as a national holiday throughout the land, except in four states withholding support. Former Georgia State Sen. Julian Bond struck an important note in an address in Atlanta: "In some ways, we have smoothed Dr. King down. We don't remember the critic of capitalism. We don't remember the critic of imperialism. All we remember is the racial peace man, the black-and-white-together man."

In the Jewish community there were innumerable commemorations. Many emphasized the theme of Black-Jewish relations. At the Israel Embassy in Washington, at a commemoration co-sponsored by the Jewish National Fund of America, Democratic National Committee chair Ronald Brown said, "It is not Jews that have bombed and threatened civil rights leaders, and it is not Blacks who are painting swastikas on synagogues." On Jan. 17 Mr. Brown left for his third visit to Israel, his first in 10 years.

At the American Jewish Congress in New York NYC Comptroller Elizabeth Holtzman and NYC Personnel Director Doug White (representing Mayor David N. Dinkins) joined over 100 students from public, private and religious schools in a program that included readings by students on "What Dr. King's Life Means to Me." In Detroit, Rabbi Harvey Winokur took part in an interfaith M.L. King service at St. Philips Cathedral.

attitude despite the anti-Israeli pressures of other Arabic countries. I also felt a deep pride in my people who have survived down the centuries.

Yes, Jerba has much to offer the Jewish traveler aside from its many other charms. ■

Devils Don't Die

By SOLOMON POGARSKY

WE are all on the border of Life; a broken seat-belt, a piece of spoiled cheese, a headache tablet of the wrong name, and we slip through an unseen crack and the ground opens up and envelops us in mystery. We are no more. Most of us, that is. The slightest mishap may be our *misfortune*. But there are some who walk through plague and pestilence, through Mafia and mayhem, through flood and famine. They are devils and devils don't die.

I knew a fellow once by the name of Casimer Goldsmith. He was on the hefty side, fairly tall, with an erect carriage, an imperious nose, a clipped iron-gray mustache and the powerful grip of a man who had worked with his hands all his life. He dressed well if somewhat conservatively, was not averse to smiling once in a while and could talk the ears off an African elephant. He was a member of my *shul* on Broome Street, which he attended regularly. Though he spoke impeccable English with a marked British accent, he was born in Poland and lived there for the first 12 years of his life, until 1938, a year before Hitler invaded.

He knew I was an English teacher and a writer, and he liked to talk to me of his early life before and during World War II. I must admit that his stories, at least in the beginning, were quite interesting, if somewhat repetitive. But they became more and more far-fetched, full of glaring inconsistencies, with errors of both time and place. He bridled when once or twice I mildly remarked on such

SOLOMON POGARSKY last appeared here in Sept., 1986, with a story, "Dance of the Mirrors." A collection of his stories just published was reviewed in our February issue.

contradictions. So I decided just to tune out. He would talk and I would say absolutely nothing.

I felt I was not put here in this world to correct adults' mistakes. They paid me to do that in the classroom with children. And even there I tried to be careful. I didn't need more enemies than I already had. But one day, a week before Hanuka, we were sitting next to one another before the beginning of services and he looked me fiercely in the eye and said, "You've got to listen to this one. And I mean really listen, because this horror story actually happened, exactly on this day, 49 years ago." It was a good topic sentence so I nodded my head as a sign of assurance that I would "really listen."

"Do you know," he began, "no, you wouldn't know. You were born here. But there is a small town in the Carpathian Mountains called Little Warsaw because everybody from Warsaw used to go there for their vacations. You know, a resort. In summer there is swimming and boating, but in wintertime it became a tobogganing and ski resort. I was always tall and athletic, even as a kid, and I spoke Polish perfectly, as did my whole family. My father was a master mechanic, as I am, a gift of God. He could fix anything, from a baby carriage to a Mercedes Benz to a locomotive caboose. He couldn't even explain to you how he did it. His brains were in his hands. If he weren't Jewish he would have been a millionaire. As it was we lived pretty comfortably, and every summer we would spend a couple of weeks' vacation in Little Warsaw, swimming and boating, and every winter we would go there for the winter sports. I learned to ski when I was maybe six or seven. My father built the skis for me and my sister, Toby. After a while we became champions, Toby and me. They even had our picture in the papers. Between us both we won 12

cups. And I mean cups, not like here, pieces of *blech* (tin). They were like sculptured vases with 18k gold faces, and the event we won and our names and the time and the year etched in by hand. Real trophies. I imagine that in today's market they would be worth a couple of hundred dollars easily, maybe more. We kept them on a mantel in our hotel room. Nobody stole as much as a pair of socks from us in Little Warsaw. It was not like New York, believe me. For five, six years we were as happy as larks during our summer and winter vacations. Then, toward the end of the Thirties, things began to sour. My father was a mechanic, but he was no dummy. That last week before Hanuka he embraced us and said, 'This may be our last vacation here. And even this may not be such a pleasant experience as other times. Don't take it to heart too much. Play with the friends you still have. As for the others, well, such is life. Do you understand?'

"What Jewish child doesn't understand? That kind of understanding is in our blood, our very bones. So we went on this last vacation in winter to Little Warsaw. Some vacation it turned out to be. Half of our Jewish friends didn't show up, and of our Polish friends, and we always had at least a dozen of them, only two or three bothered to say hello. It was an eerie feeling, like the handwriting on the wall was being written right in front of our faces. Toby was a brave little girl, built like a young Amazon, but she began crying silently, and to my surprise the tears began rolling down my cheeks too. We stared at the beautiful Paradise surrounding us, the tall aromatic Polish pines, the lovely, delightful ski range, and the falling snow, as white as sugar and as soft as goose down as it hit your face, and as comforting to the feel of your feet in the skis as those mechanical massage machines.

"How could I describe how we felt?

We were Jewish, but we were born in Poland. Our family had lived there for maybe 500 years or even more. Originally we came from Georgia in Russia, and my father said we were descended from kings. You know, don't you, that in Georgia at one time there were three official state religions, Christianity, Mohammedanism and Judaism. Interesting, isn't it? Anyway, here we were, Dec., 1937, and we weren't even officially people. So we wiped our hands over our faces and said, What the hell, these last few times we might as well enjoy the skiing, with or without friends.

"I went first down the Little Warsaw trail, the wind whipping my ski jacket, the snow beginning to come down more and more thickly so that I could hardly see. But I wasn't afraid. I knew this range practically blindfolded, as did Toby. We had won all our trophies here. I went faster and faster, as if I was in another competitive race. I was sure I could have won another cup. But halfway down the trail my right ski pole hit a rock or a piece of ice and it broke in two, just snapped from my hand. The grade was so steep now, and my momentum so great that I just couldn't stop right away, and before I knew it I had bumped into something or somebody. The snow was coming down so quickly now that I couldn't tell whether I had hit a human being or an animal. There was not the slightest sound. Then, suddenly I thought I heard a deep *Auf, Auf* (off, off). I was completely stunned, but when you're young your bones are like rubber bands. They stretch but they don't break so easily. So I picked myself up and saw through the pelting snow the large, strange form of a foreigner. I immediately knew he was no Pole or Jew. He wore a ski outfit that I had never seen before in Little Warsaw. It was green and bulky with a large black leather belt around the middle. He raised his head from the

ground, his lips taut, his eyes blazing into mine, and from the belt he slowly and very carefully, with the slightest odd smile, took out a long, dark revolver and fired two shots, one at each of my legs. 'You'll never ski again, *Verdamte Jude*,' he said.

"I was so startled I don't think I felt anything except, to my surprise, I was falling again. Was it my imagination but I seemed to hear Toby crying out, 'Cassie, Cassie.' Then, at the very moment that I saw all the red blood staining my suit and the snow I heard a loud noise, as of two bodies colliding, and that deep *Auf-auf* sound again, and again two loud explosive sounds, like revolver shots. Did he get Toby too? I began closing my eyes. It was strange. I felt only a mild pain, like someone had struck me with a tree branch, right above each knee. See?"

Goldsmith lifted up his pants' legs in shul and showed me his two legs with the white scars above each knee. He pulled his pants' legs down and went over to the coffee urn in the back and poured out two cups of coffee. "One sugar or two?" he asked. He came back and gave me my cup. I looked at him. I sipped my coffee and waited. Complete silence. I cleared my throat. "So? Is this a mystery story or what? What happened after that? How did you survive?"

He started. "Oh, didn't I tell you? I'm sorry. My mind was 3,000 miles away. Well, that's the way it was that day on the Little Warsaw range. I guess I passed out. Suddenly I felt someone shaking me and I cried, 'Let me alone, I'm finished.'

"'You're not finished.' It was Toby. She tied a scarf around each of my legs, one of hers and another strange green one, tourniquets, and she somehow made me get up. Her hands held me with a grip of steel, and we skied zig-zaggedly down the remaining slope.

When we came to the bottom my father and mother ran over to us and took over. Luckily the storm had become so furious that they were the only people remaining.

"Before I collapsed again I noticed Toby had no gloves. Her hands were red and raw, and horribly swollen, as if she had been digging with them. Anyway, in another two months, I don't know how, maybe through the bigshot friends my father made through fixing their Mercedes, but we were out of Poland and in London, England with my aunt. And then, sometime later on, we wound up in the good old U.S.A." He stopped talking and began drinking his own coffee.

"But the man, what happened to him?"

"What man?"

"The man with the revolver. The man who shot you."

"Is that what I said? I think I said that I fell and then I imagined I heard peculiar sounds. I passed out."

"But what about Toby? You remember her picking you up, and her red, swollen hands."

"Toby? My sister Toby? I don't know. I really don't know if that's the way it happened or it was just a dream, a nightmare. You know Jews are passive people, especially Jewish women. We heard a Nazi ski troop was due in town but no one had seen them yet. If, if that man was a scout he probably just walked away, skied away, and is shooting *katchkas* (ducks) somewhere in Deutschland today. Do your kids in school ask so many questions when you tell them a story? A story is a story."

"Anyway, by now he's probably dead," I said.

"Dead?" Casimer Goldsmith turned toward me and glowered. "Didn't you read about that ski captain, that bloody Nazi monster who's just been extradited to Israel?"

PUBLIC ENEMY RETURNS

THIS popular Black rap group, whose records sell in the hundreds of thousands and whose TV performances reach a huge Black youth audience, again triggered charges of anti-Semitism when it released "Welcome to the Terrordome" Dec. 27. (See our Sept., 1989 issue, pages 45-46 for its earlier offense.) The refrain of this song reads: "Crucifixion ain't no fiction/ So-called chosen, frozen/ Apology made to whoever pleases/ Still they got me, just like Jesus." In the *N.Y. Times* Dec. 26, music critic Jon Pareles "explains," "The 'so-called chosen' is a Black Muslim allusion; followers of Islam have insisted that they, and not the Jews, are God's chosen people." But since when have Black Muslims been associated with the crucifixion?

Writing Dec. 26 to CBS Records, which is distributing this disc (produced by Def Jam Records), the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith protested: "(T)he damaging impact of the group's message can hardly be overstated. . . ." CBS Records' response was a company memo denouncing bigotry in the music industry without referring to Public Enemy. . . . The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles had full-page ads Sept. 21, 1989 in *Variety* and *Hollywood Reporter* urging the music industry to take "a firm stand against the immoral spread of hatred and bigotry." The ad has also been placed in newspapers on racially troubled campuses.

"Is he the same man?"

"I'm not saying yes or no." Goldsmith bit his lips and said slowly, "But he was a devil, and devils don't die."

"Or do they?" I thought, and we both began *davening* (praying). ■

Staying Dry

By RICH YURMAN

AT that stop, outside
the subway entrance, I'd waited
for the bus fifty times
and knew you had
to wait in line

It was raining
the line already long
water dripped off
people's hats, collars, umbrellas

But she had us stand
in a doorway
to keep dry

'Grandma' I tugged at her
'If we don't get on line
we won't fit in the bus'

She didn't answer

Finally it came
brown and orange
around the far corner
squeezing down the street

It splashed to a stop
She took my hand
walked to the front
of the line and boarded
without a word

People stared
Not one raised a voice

RICH YURMAN of San Francisco, a new contributor, has had his poetry published in several magazines.



ISRAEL

Thirty editorial staffers, including most senior editors, quit the Jerusalem Post early in January, following the earlier resignation of editor Erwin Frenkel, over issues of editorial freedom. They were protesting the alleged intention of newly appointed president-publisher Yehuda Levy to turn the liberal daily into a platform for right-wing views. Levy had been named to the position by the Post's new Canadian owners, the Hollinger Corporation. He wrote a letter of intent pledging editorial independence, which a majority of the remaining staff of 300, including 50 journalists, voted to accept. Offered the chance to return, none of the ex-staffers agreed. They will attempt to launch an alternative English-language newspaper upholding the Post's traditional views. . . . Jerusalem police commissioner David Kraus ordered an investigation into charges that the police used excessive force in breaking up a Peace Now demonstration Dec. 30. Some 25,000 demonstrators, including about 1,000 peace activists from Europe, Palestinians as well as Jews had formed a "human chain" surrounding the Old City when police attacked with rubber bullets, water cannon, tear gas and truncheons. Among the 60 injured, half were non-Israelis, including an Italian woman who lost an eye.

Former Israeli intelligence officer Mike Harari, who had been sought for questioning by U.S. forces in Panama, denied Jan. 12 after his clandestine return to Israel that he had ever been an adviser to Gen. Manuel A. Noriega. . . . Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir fired Labor Minister of Science Ezer Weizman Dec. 31 for talking to the PLO. Two days later Shamir had to accept a compromise readmitting Weizman to the government though not to the decision-making inner cabinet. A criminal investigation of Weizman's dealings with the PLO was ordered. . . . On Jan. 19 the government yielded to right-wing demands and arrested the West Bank's most prominent Palestinian nationalist, Faisal al-Husseini, on charges of abetting an "illegal organization," presumably the PLO. He is regarded as a leading candidate in the long-promised West Bank elections. Husseini was released on bail Jan. 22. He charged that his arrest was aimed at keeping him out of a proposed Palestinian delegation to peace talks with Israel in Cairo. . . . Israeli soldiers Jan. 25 demolished six houses in the Gaza Strip and one on the West Bank for alleged security reasons. At least 61 residents of the houses were made homeless in severely cold weather. As of Jan. 30, at least 432 homes have been destroyed or sealed.

The radical right-wing underground movement Sicarii warned Citizens Rights Movement spokesman Moshe Horowitz by telephone that it had "sentenced seven left-wing [members of the Knesset] to death for treason stemming from their involvement in Peace Now." Named for a fanatical Jewish

sect of Second Temple days, the Sicarii has claimed responsibility for dozens of terrorist incidents. . . . In the '80's, the percentage of Jews in Israel declined from 83.9 to 81.5%, while the Muslim population rose from 12.6 to 14.4%, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported. Total population is estimated at 4,555,000. . . . Two Messianic Jews (Jews for Jesus) petitioned for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. They claimed they were Jews by virtue of Jewish parentage, and had never converted. The High Court of Justice rejected their plea in December, declaring that Jews who believe in Jesus have withdrawn themselves from the Jewish people. . . . Histadrut-owned Koor, Israel's largest industrial conglomerate, has given up hope of a credit write-off by its creditor banks, plus a government bailout. Koor is seeking outside buyers, who can expect to pay a fraction of its worth. A *Jerusalem Post* editorial Jan. 10 alleged that Koor's demise was due to "party-appointed bureaucrats" and "the guardians of worker interests in Histadrut's trade-union department."

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*Israel's gross domestic product grew by only 1% in 1989, the same rate as in 1988. It was one-third higher than at the beginning of the decade. The standard of living rose by an average of 2% in the '80's, but dropped 3% in 1989. In the West Bank and Gaza, gross domestic product and national disposable income were down sharply in 1988. A Central Bureau of Statistics spokesman blamed the drop on the *intifada*. . . . Electronic exports totaled \$1.9 billion in 1989, an increase of 15% from 1988. . . . The \$31.2 million Negev Joint Venture 2 offshore oil exploration project is drilling a second hole, "Yam 2," about 11 kilometers off Ashdod. "Yam 1," half a kilometer away, had to be abandoned when high-pressure gas and water destroyed it, causing a loss of about \$13 million. The majority stake in the project is held by an investment group headed by U.S. oil magnate Armand Hammer.*

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*Dr. Nissim Dana, registrar of converts at the Ministry of Religion, reported early in January that 12,000 Christians have become Jews since 1948, about 300 a year. A third were "converts of convenience," who planned to marry Jews. Another third were motivated by guilt because their parents had taken part in the Holocaust. The rest had purely religious reasons. Conversion of Jews to Christianity was much rarer. Between 1,000 and 2,000 are now Jews for Jesus, compared to 300 in 1965. . . . 40-year-old Dr. Eytan Barnea recently received the Scientist of the Year award for 1989 for his work in unraveling the mysteries of infertility and improving the *in vitro* (laboratory) fertilization process. The gynecologist, obstetrician and researcher, formerly at Yale University, developed a "Superfusion" machine which recreates the reproductive process through the "critical" first trimester of pregnancy following implantation of the embryo. . . . Czechoslovakia and Poland announced in mid-January that they will soon resume full diplomatic relations with Israel. Hungary has already done so. The Eastern bloc countries, except Romania, had followed the Soviet Union in severing ties in 1967. . . . More than 100 Palestinians are studying Hebrew at the Martin Buber Institute of Hebrew University. The number has nearly doubled since the beginning of 1989.*

JONATHAN HARRIS

Recorded Jewish Music: A Selection

By DAVID PLATT

RUTH Rubin, the renowned 80-year-old Yiddish folklorist and folk-singer, has been singing folksongs all her life. She has over the years established herself as one of the world's foremost scholars, collectors and transmitters of the rich legacy of Yiddish song. Speaking of her own creativity in the field she once said eloquently, "I didn't 'come to' Yiddish. I was born into it. I did not, at first, learn or study it. I lived it. It was my one and only language to begin with, the language of my parents, grandparents, relatives, friends. It was *mame-loshn* and *tate-shprakh* at the same time," and, she continued, "the Yiddish secular school I attended was not a Sunday school, but a 'school after school' five days a week. And on the Sabbath and Sundays, we would go to *shule* to listen to stories about the Bible and about Jews all over the world. We sang Yiddish songs, went on hikes into the countryside in summer and on sleigh-rides during the long winter months. And everything was in Yiddish."

JEWISH CURRENTS will present the M. S. Aronson Award to Ruth Rubin for her extraordinary contributions to the Jewish cultural scene at its annual luncheon May 6, 1990.

When Moses Asch, founder and owner of *Folkways*, passed away, his entire catalogue was purchased by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. The following four Ruth Rubin recordings, originally issued by *Folkways*, are now obtainable in cassette form under the imprint of the Smithsonian:

1. *Jewish Children's Songs and Games*, sung by Ruth Rubin. Musical settings and accompaniment by Pete Seeger. *Folkways*, #722A.

2. *Yiddish Folksongs*, unaccompanied singing by Ruth Rubin. *Folkways*, #8720.

3. *Jewish Life: The Old Country*, selections from the Yiddish folksong and folklore field collections of Ruth Rubin. *Folkways*, #3801.

4. *Jewish Folksongs*, in Yiddish and Hebrew, sung by Ruth Rubin. Musical arrangements by G. Rady. *Folkways*, #8740.

Each cassette is packaged in the form of a book accompanied by descriptive material on the songs prepared by Ruth Rubin. The price per cassette is \$10.95, plus \$3 postage and handling. All Ruth Rubin cassettes may be ordered directly from her at 45 Gramercy Park North, #16C, New York, NY 10010, (212) 260-3863.

Yiddish Songs of the Holocaust. The Struggle to Survive, lecture recital recorded live, narrated and performed in Yiddish and English by Ruth Rubin (available from Ruth Rubin [see above], cassette only, \$12).

The Golden Years of Yiddish Music: Moishe Oysher, the Barry Sisters, Molly Picon, Aaron Lebedeff, Miriam Kressyn, Maurice Schwartz, Abe Ellstein's Orchestra (Nefesh Ami [NA], cassette only, \$10.95).

Yiddish Dream, a two-record anthology of Jewish songs, old and new, sung by Jan Peerce, Leon Lishner, Herschel Bernardi, Martha Schlamme, Nehama Davrath, others (NA, cassette, \$15.95).

Songs of Gebirtig and Warshavsky, sung by Susan Goldberg and Peter Schlosser, with Zalmen Mlotek at the piano. 12-page insert includes full text of 14 songs in Yiddish and

- English (Zhitlovsky Foundation, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Ladino Folksongs of the Sephardic Jews of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia.* Sung by Raphael Elnadav (NA, cassette only, \$10.95).
- Sephardic Folk Songs* sung in Ladino by Gloria Levy (Kirchheimer). This record of a quarter-century ago by a pioneer in Sephardic song is still available through Smithsonian/Folkways (cassette or record, \$10.95).
- Klezmer Music, 1910-1942*, historic recordings from the YIVO archives. (Smithsonian/Folkways, cassette only, \$10.95).
- Cholent with Huckleberry*, 12 Yiddish wedding songs and dances, Jewish tangos, freilachs and other wordless melodies recorded by Yale Strom and his klezmer band of four (Workmen's Circle [WC], cassette only, \$10.95).
- Mordecai Hershman Sings Yiddish Folksongs* (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Songs of Our People*, sung by Ben Bonus (WC, cassette only, \$10.95).
- Theodore Bikel Sings Yiddish Theatre and Folksongs* (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Vasserl*, 10 songs produced by Yugntruf (Youth Call — Youth for Yiddish). 12-page insert supplies texts in Yiddish and English (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- At the Yiddish Theatre*, songs by the legendary Victor Chenkin (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Isa Kremer Sings Yiddish Folksongs*, another authentic voice out of the 1920's and '30's (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Molly Picon at the Yiddish Theatre*, songs by the inimitable Molly Picon in her younger years (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Yosele Rosenblatt (NA, cassette only, \$10.95).
- The Art of Cantor Moshe Kussevitsky* (NA, cassette only, \$10.95).
- Art of Cantor Gerson Sirota* (NA, cassette only, \$10.95).
- Musical Settings to Yiddish Poetry*, composed by Lazar Weiner, sung by Bianca Sauler (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Passover Seder by the Malavsky Family* (NA, cassette only, \$10.95).
- Moishe Oysher, Passover Seder* (NA, record and cassette, \$10.95).
- A Unique Collection of 50 Great Israeli Folksongs*, in 3 cassettes, including booklet with music notation, lyrics in Hebrew, English, transliterations and translations (NA, \$24.50/set).
- Zubin Mehta and the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra* performs Mahler's Symphony No. 2 (NA, compact disc, \$17.95).
- Fiddler on the Roof* — in Yiddish — with Shmuel Rudensky (NA, cassette only, \$10.95).
- Emil Gorovets Sings Songs of the Martyred Soviet Yiddish Poets*, includes texts of songs in Yiddish and English (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Richard Tucker, Cantor*, the late Metropolitan Opera tenor singing Hatikvah and other Israeli songs (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Music of the Falashas of Ethiopia*, the only recording ever made of the religious songs of the Jews of Ethiopia (Smithsonian/Folkways, record, \$12).
- The Megilla of Isik Manger*, sung by the Burstein Family and Friends (WC, record or cassette, \$10.95).
- Tradition*, popular Jewish melodies performed by Israeli violinist Itzhak Perlman with the Israeli Philharmonic, conducted by Dov Seltzer. Includes *Kol Nidre, Eli Eli, Hatikvah, Rebbe Elimelech, Rozhinkes mit Mandlen* and more (NA, cassette only, \$10.95). ■

Liturgical and Art Music

Treasury of Immortal Performances by

Marc Blitzstein Portrayed

By HERBERT HAUFRECHT

Mark the Music: The Life and Work of Marc Blitzstein, by Eric A. Gordon. St. Martin's Press, NY, 1989, 605 pages, ill., indexed, \$29.95.

IN reading Eric Gordon's elaborate biography of Marc Blitzstein, one seems to be reviewing the cultural and political history of the first half of the 20th century as well as the personal story of one of its most talented and germinal composers.

Starting out as a child prodigy pianist, Blitzstein received an academic musical education, but at the same time he showed a predilection toward the theater and popular music. In a rare fusion of the skills of the academic with the direct communication of the vernacular, he had a great impact on the musical scene and was an important influence on composers to come.

His political affinity with the left was initiated by his socialist father, but was nourished by the social unrest of the thirties and the creative ferment in the theater at that time. Along with these themes, the book interweaves his personal relationships to his family, his homosexual orientation and liaisons, his *pro forma* wife Eva Goldbeck and his dealings with his colleagues in theater, dance and music.

Eric Gordon has devoted tremendous research to his subject and to accom-

HERBERT HAUFRECHT, a new contributor, was a contemporary of Blitzstein's and is a composer. Between 1929 and 1990, Haufrecht composed more than 90 works in many genres — for voice, piano, woodwind, string quartets, chorus, chamber orchestra and orchestra. He has also written and compiled eight books.

panying documentation and references. This must have been a difficult task, for despite Blitzstein's few popular successes, his career is littered with forgotten works and aborted performances. Contrary to the *N.Y. Times* reviewer, who thought too much space was devoted to "shows he never completed or that flopped miserably," the circumstances of their demise round out the portrait of the composer with his frustrations and hopes.

Blitzstein was a brilliant student and later a critic, lecturer and essayist who left a legacy of his views on contemporary music, theater and esthetics:

"A cultural epoch is made up not only of the perfect work of geniuses, but also of the combined efforts of lesser talents, a whole geological formation of them. With them wiped out, the genius exists without subsoil, becomes isolated, ingrown, 'eccentric'" (p. xv).

In a program note for a concert in Cleveland in 1948, he wrote:

"My field is musico-dramatic, musico-lyrical and just plain music. If I find myself tending in composition largely toward writing music for voices, for the theater, for films, for radio and television, it is because I am a product of my time — and my time is one of urgency and direct communication in the arts. . . . Subject-matter, as such, can never make or break a work of art. Its lasting qualities depend on the artist's personality, on the equation of content-and-form, and on a lot of intangibles. I am content to have my work undergo the test of repeated hearings, of Time and of Tarnish" (p. v).

He spoke at a lecture at Brandeis in the early sixties:

"In the days of the thirties [my think-

ing] was strict, even sectarian. It is now rather looser, more flexible and broader. . . . I believed then, as I do now, in the right of all men to have no need to ask favors in order to exist with dignity. I felt then, as I do now, that the questions who we are, how are we to live and by what, and by what values, are the most serious and basic questions there are. And that these questions cannot even be met unless such horrors as the making use of one man by another, one race by another, one class by another, one nation by another, are disposed of. . . .

“. . . About my music technically: I am not an inventor or an experimenter. I say this flatly. I don't seem to insist on finding new ways to say things. I suppose I want to find an exact way to say the things I wish to communicate, and I am still benighted to think of music as communication” (p. 502).

Blitzstein's life story is reported in great detail from infancy in a Russianized secular Jewish middle class family, his studies at the Curtis School of Music and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where he lived, with Alexander Silovi in piano in New York, and in composition in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and Arnold Schoenberg in Berlin. He sought relief from his antipathy toward the 12 tone system of Schoenberg by attending the political cabarets where the advocates of popular culture like Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill and Hanns Eisler held sway. These latter had a profound effect upon Blitzstein; it germinated and came to fruition in his later works in the U.S.A.

During the 1930s, Blitzstein lived a marginal existence, dependent upon lecturing, composing for the dance, theater and documentary films. He began to participate in leftwing groups, the Composers Collective, the Downtown Music School, the American Music League, writing for various journals and

supporting their causes. But the centerpiece of the book describes the writing of the music and text for *The Cradle Will Rock* in six weeks and the drama of its production on stage (and in the audience!) despite the obstacles thrown in its path by reactionaries in the government and unions, ironically against the pro-union play.

With the advent of World War II, the composer participated in many home-front activities until his enlistment in 1942, when he was sent to England, where he worked on short films, songs, etc. From 1943 to 1945 he composed a large-scale *Airborne Symphony*, performed after the war under the baton of Leonard Bernstein to wild acclaim by the audience.

The post-war period was devoted to composing incidental music to theater works, ballet and the opera *Regina*, based on the Lillian Hellman play, *The Little Foxes*. All this was accomplished in the midst of the Cold War while Blitzstein consistently fought the assaults on progressives. Early in the fifties, a production was mounted of *The Threepenny Opera*, the Kurt Weill work in Marc Blitzstein's translation. This was one of the longest-playing successes, which established the move toward the Off-Broadway theater. In contrast, Marc's opera, *Reuben Reuben*, was a dismal failure; it closed in Boston and New York's opening was cancelled.

The unrelenting House Committee on Un-American Activities summoned Blitzstein to its session in New York on May 8, 1958. There he read a statement admitting his membership in the Communist Party from 1938 to 1949, but unapologetically stating his credo and continuing support of many progressive causes. This directness and honesty had been a consistent quality throughout his career. Later that year, after the distractions of the political hearings, preparations began for the production of *Juno and the Paycock* as a

musical. It opened in Washington, played in Boston and arrived in New York on March 9, 1959 after a series of problems with the director. The work was a critical failure, but later some columnists considered it, despite its shortcomings, the season's best musical offering.

The idea for an opera about Sacco and Vanzetti came to Blitzstein on a trip to Europe in 1931. The result was a 35-minute dramatic cantata, *The Condemned*, dealing with a generalized abstraction of all people persecuted or executed for their beliefs. Then in 1960, with a Ford Foundation grant to write an opera for the Metropolitan Opera, he chose the subject of Sacco and Vanzetti. From this point on he was attacked by George Sokolsky in the press on the choice of subject matter and his political record. Questioned by members of the Met's board and attacked by others, he was beset in his work on the opera by self-doubt and confusion as to emphasis, by interruptions for lectures, by a conference in Israel. Back in Bennington, VT, he met Bernard Malamud and began composing two one-act operas on the latter's *Idiots First* and *The Magic Barrel*. (Leonard Lehrman subsequently completed *Idiots First*.) Finally, Blitzstein rented a villa in Martinique to work on these operas. But, alas, the *Sacco and Vanzetti* opera remains unfinished. Blitzstein was murdered by three sailors in an alley next to a bar on Jan. 22, 1964.

My casual acquaintance with Marc Blitzstein in the Composers Collective and as a staff composer in the WPA Federal Theater was enriched by Gordon's wonderful study of his life and oeuvre. I will remember the last time I saw Blitzstein walking in front of Radio City Music Hall deeply absorbed in some inner thoughts amidst the crowd of people. When I said hello, he revealed that he was at that moment thinking about *Junio*.

"THE ATLANTA DECLARATION:

We Are Living With AIDS: An Interfaith Call to Hope and Action" was signed by 90 persons from 15 religious and interfaith groups at Emory University on Dec. 4, 1989, including Rabbi James Rudin and Benita Gayle-Almeleh of the AJCommittee; Rabbi Sue Ann Wasserman of Atlanta and Rachel Adler of Hebrew Union College, L.A.; Robert M. Rankin, M.D., Rabbi Joseph A. Edelheit of Chicago, David Schulman and Andy Rose of the UAHC Committee on AIDS. A summary of the Declaration:

AIDS calls for creative, compassionate action. We must assure access to accurate information about HIV and to supportive care; community service and public policy advocacy; and produce materials teaching the fundamental goodness of sexuality and responsible intimate relationships. We ask for Presidential leadership to protect against HIV-related discrimination; prioritize AIDS/HIV programs in minority communities; assure decent housing for homeless persons with AIDS; encourage voluntary AIDS testing with strict safeguards of confidentiality. We call for support for infected infants and children needing foster care and adoption. We call on our faith communities to eliminate racism, classism, sexism and homophobia.

The list of works by Marc Blitzstein at the end of the book astounded me by its length and breadth in view of his eventful and dramatic life and tragic early death. This well-written biography should appeal to musicians certainly, but also to the layman for its human story and its sweeping chronicle of turbulent times. ■

A Jewish Worker's Son Re-Interprets His Class Background

By MICHAEL J. BROWN

MY father sat on a stool all his life,
drinking coffee, listening to the radio,
pasting pieces of paper together with rubber cement.
He thought he wasn't a worker.
Recently, my mother told me
that he always said he "sold his time."
There, under the arm of the fluorescent light,
sleeves rolled up, elbows on the drawing board,
ceaselessly picking out bits of paper with ink on them,
opening envelopes that came breathlessly up the elevator.
A file drawer full of old bills and few receipts,
plunked out on a portable typewriter by my sister.
He thought, perhaps, because he sometimes
listened to the opera instead of the ball-game on that radio
that maybe he wasn't really "working for a living."
I must have known better,
when I saw him never come home,
never take me camping like he promised,
saw him too busy trying to support his four children.
I knew all along if he didn't sit on that stool
the money didn't come in
and sometimes even when he did, it didn't.
All those tales of customers that didn't pay, bills uncollected,
and my father, growing heavy and nervous,
silent,
like the Christmas tree that sat
in his parents' front window
when I was a boy
in their all-gentile neighborhood.
They thought maybe they'd fit in:
no one would discover they were really Jewish.
But I knew.
Even at two years old.
Something was wrong:
about the tree and the church up the street,
about my father,
who really worked for a living,
thinking somehow he could be
something different
than what he was.

MICHAEL J. BROWN of Jamaica Plain, MA, a new contributor, works for the National Jobs with Peace Campaign. His poems and articles have been published in several periodicals.

The
Editor's
Diary

◦ *Varieties of Jewish Women*

March 8 having been celebrated for decades as International Women's Day, March has now become Women's History Month. Relevant, therefore, is this eclectic, ecumenical volume containing interviews with 61 American Jewish women living in 35 cities in 20 states and the District of Columbia, with 105 expressive photographs: *The Invisible Thread, A Portrait of Jewish American Women*, interviews by Diana Bletter, photos by Lori Grinker (Jewish Publication Society, Phila., PA, 1989, 224 pages, not indexed, cloth \$35, paper \$24.95). Dramatically designed by Adrienne Onderdonk Dudden, the volume has a wide album format.

The "invisible thread that joins Jewish American women everywhere," the Introduction explains, is "their connection to Judaism — in all its manifestations," or, since some of these women are secularists, their connection to the Jewish people. Since the authors are not bound by any sociological or historical discipline, they set out simply "to examine how women were reclaiming traditional Jewish practices as well as creating new rituals to meet their spiritual needs. . . combine feminism with Judaism" (p. 8). The authors also see women as "a light unto the Jews" (p. 11).

Their range is wide but random. Geographically, Bletter and Grinker roamed from N.Y. State (21 entries) to California (7), from Vermont (2) to Florida (3), from Illinois (4) to Texas (3). Occupationally, I noted some women working as governor (of Vermont) or drug dealer; Supreme Court judge (in N.D.) or kosher butcher, art gallery owner or Navy chaplain, gardener or Las Vegas dancer, Jewish Center director or veterinarian, factory dressmaker or filmmaker, cantor or cook — or two score more. In age, the women range from a couple of teenagers to 98-year-old Fanny Wald of Brooklyn, who began as a sweatshop dressmaker, 52 hours, six days a week "including Shabbos," and now, "Sometimes I'm in such pain that I feel like I want to die. . . this is no kind of life" (p. 66). Where age is indicated or suggested in the text, I noted four women in their 20's and four in their 70's, 10 in their 30's, six in their 40's, five in their 50's, three in their 60's. Of the 61 women, 38 were or had been married and 35 were parents, three of them with four children each, one each with five, seven and eight. Space is allotted unevenly, from one to five pages, with one to four photos each. This variety makes for interesting reading, with the photos a high and often major asset.

The levels of Jewish consciousness vary from the intense to the minimal, from the highly observant to the ritually indifferent. The basis of selection is unclear, because there is a list of 64 women interviewed but not included. (We know that Rose Raynes, head of the Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Women's Clubs, agreed to an interview but then was ignored.) Two of the women we happen to know personally, Shirley Novick and Irena Klepfisz.

The first is given short shrift, a beautiful photograph and, after being interviewed for several hours, a too brief text. She affirms, "I was a rank-and-file union member. . . an activist for 47 years. . . . We fought for things that young Jewish women today — like other Americans, take for granted. . . . I went to the first demonstration in support of Social Security and unemployment benefits on March 6, 1930 in Union Square. . . . there were tens of thousands of Jewish women like me. We helped shape the unions, we helped shape America. . . . Only we didn't shape it well enough." Then we are told that "In 1947 I was sent by the women in my shop to Washington to canvass our representatives about establishing a state of Israel" (p. 34). Left out is the fact, told to the authors, that all the women in that shop were Italian, the boss was Italian and all insisted on taking a collection in the shop to pay Shirley Novick's expenses for the trip!

Irena Klepfisz, who has written for us and whose book, *The Tribe of Dina* (which she edited with Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz), was reviewed here, stresses, "I'm committed to forging a women's link to Yiddish culture." She adds, "I see how American Jews suffer from cultural amnesia. They're looking for something; they're experimenting with ways to live as fully identified conscious Jews. One way for them to do that is to embrace Yiddish culture. . . . That's why I've wanted to teach Yiddish again." (She comes from a prominent Bundist family in Poland.) She ends, "I'm a lesbian/feminist, a Yiddishist, an activist. None of that feels contradictory. I feel integrated. I feel whole" (p. 180).

The variety of Jewish women includes Rachel Wahba of San Francisco, born of Iraqi parents in India, who would have preferred to be "blonde, American and Ashkenazic" (p. 54); Victoria Gabayan of Los Angeles, born in Iran, who "celebrate(s) American holidays. . . . But I still don't feel at home here" (p. 62); Elizabeth Morfain of N. Miami, who doesn't "feel that my Cuban, Jewish and American identities are in conflict" (p. 64); Rusty [Glickman] Kanokogi of Brooklyn, who after the Holocaust "became a tough girl who loved to fist fight in the street," married a Japanese man, "started studying judo. . . . Women's judo has now become the most important cause in my life" (p. 98).

One theme, however, recurs, a return to or search for ritual, Orthodoxy or some form of "spirituality." Julie Greenberg of Philadelphia is "part of a community of women that meets every month to celebrate Rosh Hodesh (New Moon menstrual cycle). . . as well as baby-naming ceremonies" (p. 215); Pamela Steinberg of New York, whose mother never went to a *mikvah* (ritual bath), now does: "After soaking in the bathtub and taking a shower. . . in the *mikvah* I feel most closely connected to my Source, to God. . . . I feel like I'm in the womb and I'm about to be reborn" (pages 204-6).

Obviously this book opens many windows, but often, I must say, I wasn't sure what I was seeing out there. I invite you to come and look too.

◦ *Goldfaden's "The Witch"*

December 3, 1989

With Gedalia Sandler to a rousing, dynamic performance of this most memorable of the 26 plays by Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908) at the Jewish Repertory Theater at the Emanuel "Y" on E. 14th St. Since its opening in Odessa in 1879 and its first performance here in 1882, *The Witch* (*Koldunia*)

has enthralled Yiddish audiences on several continents. Now, directed and choreographed by the veteran Benjamin Zemach at 87 from an adaptation with English lyrics by his daughter Amielle Zemach, this first Yiddish musical turns out to be anything but old-fashioned. Yiddish folklore melds with show-biz snap and pep to provide the most joyous entertainment I've seen in many a year. Priscilla Quinby as Bobbe Yachne and Daniel Neiden as Hotz-mach head a talented cast that can sing 30 songs in English and Yiddish, dance and even act. Frances Blau's costumes are a visual delight, Ray Recht's set is ingenious and Kevin Connaughton's lighting is technologically advanced and resourceful. For more than good measure there is a lubricious belly-dance in Constantinople (not the renamed Istanbul) and a song by a gal wearing harem pants. There is a stunning finale: The company is singing the opening lyric, "*Amol is geven a shtetele*" (Once there was a town); then, with magical lighting effects and choreography, all are flung to the ground, writhing in pain, all destroyed; but then one by one they rise and start singing: "We are in God's sight/Where is the song He wants us to hear?" I walked out floating.

• *Paddy Chayefsky's "The Tenth Man"*

December 13

With Jesse Mintus to the Vivian Beaumont Theater to see a quite competent production, directed by Ulu Grosbard, of this best known play by Paddy Chayefsky (1923-1981). When, after it had played for a year on Broadway, I saw the original production Aug. 1, 1960, I headed my "Diary" entry, "Mish-Mash in Mineola" (Oct., 1960). This time I could have headed this entry, "Anski's *Dybbuk* Trivialized in Mineola." In Eastern Europe 80 years ago, even a disbeliever in *dybbuks* (a disembodied spirit that possesses another body) could be moved by the artistic authenticity with which Anski endowed his play. Even seeing Anski's play on stage or screen in New York not so long ago was a satisfying theatrical-aesthetic experience. But Chayefsky's attempt to transplant this old folk-lore superstition onto a little old Orthodox *shul* on Long Island in mid-century doesn't work for me. For a "second opinion," however, I refer you to Joel Shatzky's "Paddy Chayefsky: 'Americanizing' *The Dybbuk*" in our Jan., 1983 issue: "he (Chayefsky) at least recognizes the value of the human spirit in fighting against the vacuousness of modern American life, even if the playwright does not share the faith of those he admired."

One may smile when a *shul*-habitué says, "I am an atheist. If I had something better to do, would I be here?" Another remarks, "I left the C.P. when I found there are easier ways to seduce girls." When the Girl-Possessed (who has been in and out of mental hospitals) raves, "I am the whore of Kiev," you laugh. If she had at least said Kansas City. . .

• *Our Office Hanuka Party*

December 29

Some 15 (staff, volunteers, activists) crowded around our festive board (catered by the Willdorfs and Carol Jochowitz). Our candle-lighting ritual had each one there nominate a Hanuka Hero of the Year: Gorbachev 3, Dubcek 2, David Dinkins and Elie Wiesel 1 each — and Carol's: "the Chinese boys and girls I taught in English in Baoding in 1984, now among students

suppressed in Tiananmen Sq.” Then the Raffle Drawing (see winners, Feb. issue, p. 42), and our Hanuka gifts.

◦ *Max Gordon (April 10, 1910—Jan. 16, 1990)*

January 18

After checking into the office for an hour, I rushed to the by now all-too-familiar Plaza Memorial Chapel at 91st St. and Amsterdam Ave. I had known Mac for almost 60 years. I had just begun to teach at the City College in 1928 when he entered, class of '31. Sonya and I knew Mac and his wife, Mathilde, and we had attended the wedding of his son Nick (now 49) at the Gordons' Bronx apartment. Despite his illness, which led to his relocation in Boca Raton, FL, Mac had produced a fine piece, his last one published, "Miami Electoral Vice," the lead article in our Dec., 1989 issue. I had tracked down all the 14 reviews and articles he had written for us between April, 1971 and this last one, and was again impressed by his wide range, his integrity, his fund of political knowledge.

There were over 100 people in the Chapel when David Gordon, 51, the older son, opened the service with a few words of sorrow, then read an eloquent letter about Mac by David Goldway, editor of *Science and Society*, and then called on me. After my address, the widow, Mathilde, walked up to the podium and recited a poem she had written to Mac, "How fortunate I am" to have lived with you — a touching tribute. Finally Nick sketched his own relation to his father, from the time, age 5, when he was dragged to long meetings he could not understand, to his adolescence, when he had aspired to become, like his father, a Communist Party organizer, to his "disillusionment, before the Khrushchev report" and distancing from the father he still honored, to the past few years of reestablished intimacy in the wake of Mac's "new thinking." Visiting Mac in the hospital in the last few days of his life, Nick found him still following current events, still planning another article, this one on Gorbachev's view of a new federation and Lenin's approach to the nationality question. And then Nick said, now I want to sing our favorite song, "Joe Hill," and if you will, sing along: "I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night. . ." We sang along in hushed voices, to "don't mourn, organize."

In my address, after condoling with Midi, David, Nick, Patricia Lamanna, 41, and the eight grandchildren right in the front row, I recalled our association at City College, I a depression teacher, he a depression student. Upward Bound, we wanted to move occupationally out of the working class, yet not away from it, but in association with it. I remembered Mac as an example of a new type on the American social scene, the radical intellectual, Jewish, oriented to the working class. I quoted liberally from his article on the successes of the CP in the '30's (*J.C.*, Dec., 1985), from his "Why Socialism?" (*J.C.*, July, 1982), from his "Stalin Dissected — His Historic Role and Anti-Socialist Crimes" (*J.C.*, Oct., 1979). I noted that, after breaking with the CP in 1957, Mac, while making a living as a medical writer, was also published in the *Columbia University Forum*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Monthly Review*, *Science and Society*, *In These Times*, *Socialist Revolution*, *New Left Notes*, *Marxist Perspectives*; and, in 1971, his monograph on *Vietnam and the U.N.* was issued by Princeton University Press in a volume edited by Richard Falk. I closed with an excerpt from the poem, "Kaddish," by Olga Cabral (Kurtz). M.U.S.

JEWISH WOMEN NOW

BBW vs BBI: A Modest Proposal

By *BILLIE PORTNOW*

IN Oct. 23, 1988, B'nai B'rith Women (BBW) declared itself to be "a separate, independent and autonomous organization identified with B'nai B'rith [BB]." In so doing it unleashed a controversy which may lead to the complete severance of BBW from BB, thus splitting the world's largest Jewish service organization.

B'nai B'rith was founded in 1843 as a fraternal organization. Today its half million members include the 120,000 members of BBW, established in 1897 and chartered under Sec. 15 of the BB constitution. Hillel (the student arm of BB), the Anti-Defamation League, and the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO) complete the B'nai B'rith family, of which B'nai B'rith International (BBI, the men's organization) and B'nai B'rith Women are the major components.

In keeping with societal changes relative to the status of women, BBW obtained incorporation in 1962 as a self-governing organization and has been functioning as such since then. However, proposals for integration of the sexes kept cropping up at international conventions. In response to these an integrated membership category was created consisting of "units," which co-existed with the lodges (men) and chapters (women). BBW, while not very

happy with this development, went along with it as long as the women in the units were considered members of BBW and the men members of BBI, with dues paid to the respective organizations. When the 1988 international convention effected a change whereby women members of units were given the option of becoming full members of, and paying their dues to, B'nai B'rith, BBW, feeling threatened by this, adopted the controversial "separate, independent and autonomous" resolution.

This was followed by the adoption on Dec. 3, 1989 of the equally controversial resolution by the Board of Governors of BBI ordering BBW to rescind its Oct., 1988 resolution and return to its status under Sec. 15 of the constitution, whereby its chapters were under BBI's "jurisdiction." BBW was given 14 days to comply or else no longer be considered part of BB. Before BBI voted on this resolution, BBW presented it with a six-point peace plan whereby (1) BBW, retaining its self-governing status within BB, would be acknowledged as the only women's organization affiliated with BB, and (2) BBI would be considered an organization of men and women — thus presenting women with a choice of which to join. (3) While each organization would have its own agenda, there would be coordination on sensitive issues affecting the Jewish community. (4) BBW would continue to provide

BILLIE PORTNOW of Seattle, WA last appeared here in Dec., 1987 with a discussion of Torah and secularism.

financial support for BBYO and Hillel and would continue to hold positions on those commissions. (5) Both BBI and BBW would have the right to create revenue-producing programs and finally, (6) there would be non-voting representatives of each on the other's leading bodies. These proposals, according to BBW, were never voted upon nor seriously considered by BBI.

Then followed claims and counter-claims. BBI, during the year preceding its Dec. 3 resolution, had offered BBW equal representation on all governing bodies and a rotating presidency of BB with men and women serving alternate terms. BBI claims these offers were rejected. BBW says they were never presented as a unified plan within a specific time frame, and that in fact "BBI's concept of equality involves the elimination of BBW as an organization."

To editorialize: An examination of BBW's programs and priorities would convince one of the importance of keeping BBW intact. These include: the physical and emotional health of children; the quality of life of the aging and their caretakers; aid to victims of domestic violence; advocacy of reproductive choice; and sponsorship of the internationally acclaimed Children's Home in Israel, which has pioneered drug-free therapeutic treatment for emotionally disturbed boys and adolescents.

My own experience as a BBW chapter member suggests to me that, while the integrated units are currently growing faster than the lodges, it is also true that many women (widows particularly) are more comfortable in an environment with other women. A certain bonding takes place as they meet over lunch (prepared by themselves) which would be absent in a mixed group. These women would not go to a meeting in the evening, when it would be more likely to be held in a gender-integrated unit, and many of them could not pay the higher dues men pay.

BBW has reiterated throughout the past year that "it is not our desire — and never has been — to separate from B'nai B'rith" and avers that their Oct., 1988 resolution simply reaffirms their independent status under their incorporation. BBI's insistence, expressed in its precipitous Dec. 3, 1989 resolution (despite urging against it by former BB presidents William Wexler, Philip Klutznick and Jack Spitzer) that BBW disavow its Oct. resolution and affirm its acceptance of Sec. 15 or else no longer be deemed "the organization referenced in Section 15 of the B'nai B'rith constitution," is disingenuous. Of course BBW is no longer the organization it was in 1897. No self-respecting women's organization today would accept the status of a subordinated auxiliary to a men's organization.

BBW's Oct. 23, 1988 resolution was an error which was compounded by BBI's Dec. 3, 1989 resolution. As I was studying this situation a peace proposal presented itself to me and I summon all my hutzpah and present it to the contending parties herewith:

- 1) Cool the rhetoric.
- 2) Delete Sec. 15 from the BB Constitution. It's not amendable, and its premise is wrong.
- 3) Substitute for it the first two points of BBW's peace plan (see above) and add the equality proposal of BBI (equal representation on all governing bodies of BB).
- 4) BBW could then rescind its Oct., 1988 resolution. Its security and integrity would be assured.

5) BBI's Dec., 1989 resolution would no longer pertain because BBW's resolution would be rescinded and Sec. 15 would no longer exist.

A unified B'nai B'rith would have lodges, chapters and units working in harmony so that B'nai B'rith can grow and prosper in the future. ■

Poorim? Peerim? Purim? Curses!

By MAX ROSENFELD

BELIEVE it or not, there was a time not too long ago when at least half the Yiddish-speaking Jews in the U.S., Canada and Latin America called the holiday "Peerim." (Probably more than half, but who wants to start an argument?) In the interests of uniformity, the pronunciation and spelling has become "Purim," but once in a while, for the sake of Jewish pluralism, we ought to recognize that *kigel* (pudding) is just as "correct" as *kugel*, and *Peerim* is how Jews pronounced it when they made up the saying, "*Az m'hot af Peerim yeseerim, iz af Peysekh kheyshekh.*" (If you have worries at Purim, you'll have real trouble on Pesach. Meaning: A poor family that can't afford to celebrate a minor holiday will most certainly be unable to celebrate a major one.)

In any case, Purim is a time in the Jewish calendar when it's traditional to become a little indecorous, so let's talk about Yiddish curses.

The most comprehensive way to curse in Yiddish is to do so "*mit der gantser toykhekh*," to curse with the entire Book of Curses. How does one do that? *Deuteronomy*, Chapter 28, has become known as *Di Toykhekh* (accent on the first syllable), which means "warning." These are dire warnings about what will happen to the Jewish people if they don't obey the laws in the Torah. Yiddish-speaking Jews made a curse out of it: *Oygsisn af im di gantse toykhekh*, to pour out the whole Book of Curses on his head.

The whole thing consists of about 75 verses, beginning, "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to

do all the commandments which I command you this day, then all these blessings shall come upon you." The first 15 verses are the blessings.

"But if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice," etc., then all these curses shall come upon you. (Note that "you" is a collective pronoun, it applies to the collective Jewish folk.) In Hebrew the word for the noun "curse" is *klole*, which was taken over by Yiddish.

So here are the kinds of curses that shall come upon you. "Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy land. The Lord shall smite thee with consumption, with fever" — the word for fever is *kadokhes*, which also became part of Yiddish and means a sickness that causes you to shake, like malaria. It has nothing to do with "caduceus," the emblem of the medical profession.

The curses go on for about 50 verses. The Lord will smite you with boils and with "emerods," which is not in my dictionary, but hemorrhoids is, and that's close enough. The Yiddish word for that affliction is *mereedn* (accent on the second syllable), which gave rise to the notion that it's a Jewish malady, i.e., *mir Yidn* (we Jews).

So there you have one curse that encompasses every plague (Yiddish: *maake*) in the Book, and if you wish to put this on "your worst enemy" all you have to say is "*Ikh vel oygsisn af dir di gantse toykhekh*" and you're finished — and so is he.

The Yiddish language has the reputation of being highly emotional, which applies to its earthier as well as

to its affectionate side. But there's a definite technique. For one thing, Yiddish contains readymade phrases or formulas, inserted parenthetically into sentences, whose function is to give form to the speaker's emotional attitude at the moment. It may be possible to do this in other languages, but in English it sounds silly. For example:

Mayn eydem — zol er zayn gezunt un shtark — iz a doktor vos git zikh op mit kindershe krenken — m'zol nit visn fun azelkhe zakhn, zol got op-hitn. (My son-in-law — may he be well and strong — is a pediatrician who treats children's diseases — may we never know of such things, God forbid.) This is all done to protect oneself, you understand.

Mayn lendler — a krenk zol im arayn in di gedeyrim — vil hekhern dos diregelt. (My landlord — may a disease infect his insides — wants to raise the rent.) "Lendler" is of course a Jewish immigrant coinage.

Mayn shokhn — a klog tsu im (not clog, but kluhg)—*hot tsvey groyse hunt vos biln a gantse nakht — zey zoln far-shuamt vern!* (My neighbor — damn his hide! — has two dogs that bark all night long — may they be stricken mute.) There are at least 10 different ways to use the word *klog*. *Oy, a klog*, means simply alas!

Der President — ayngeszunken zol er vern — ken undz nokh araynshlepn in a milkhome, nit-do-gedakht. (The President — down may he sink — may yet drag us into a war, may it not happen here.) *Nit gedakht* suggests something unthinkable.

Curses with *ruekh* (evil spirit) present the same problem as *kägel-kugel*. Personally I never heard anyone say "a *ruekh in dayn tatn*." Maybe Litvaks don't use it. My relatives always said "a *reekh in dayn tatn's tatn!*" (an evil spirit take your father's father).

There are various degrees of Yiddish cursing. The mildest form is *durkh-*

vertln zikh, to exchange words. The next level is *ziedlen*, to insult. The next is *sheltn*, to curse. But the fiercest curse, the most heartfelt curse in Yiddish consists of two short Hebrew words and is reserved for someone who really should never have been born in the first place. Like Hitler. When you utter his name, you add (with feeling) *yimákh she-móy!* — may his name be obliterated!

This phrase has become a kind of formula in Yiddish writing, whenever the name of Hitler occurs, but of course it originated with Haman. Nowadays we use groggers on Purim when the *Megila* is read, but the original method of noise-making was to write HAMAN on the soles of your shoes and then stamp your feet to obliterate his name.

Of words that express hostility Yiddish has a rich store, depending on how hostile you feel. For example: *zol er lign in drerd (der erd)*, may he lie in the earth. Or conversely, *di erd zol im aroysshpayen*, may the earth spit him out. But much more imaginative is: *zol er fartsn in zamd*, may he fart in the sand.

(For an academic but still tongue-in-cheek treatment of this subject, see James A. Matisoff's *Blessings, Curses, Hopes and Fears, Psycho-Ostensive Expressions in Yiddish*, published 1979 by the Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Phila., PA.)

We now get to the more elaborate curses, which are not effective unless you utter them with real "expression" and cadence. Example: *Vos s'hot zikh mir gekholemt di nakht, un yene nakht, zol zikh oyslozn tsu zayn kop, tsu zayn layb un lebn.* (What I dreamt last night and the night before should happen to him, to his body, to his whole life.) That's the long version. But if you're in a hurry, you don't have to say all that. Just spit out: *A vistn kholem!* (a dismal dream!) and that's enough.

There are some historical curses, too.

Zol im trefn Homen's gedile un Koyrekh's nes. (May he have Haman's glory and Korach's miracle.) In the Book of Esther (the Megila), you may remember, Haman is expecting a high royal appointment but what he actually gets is the job of leading Mordecai around town on a horse. Korach was the unlucky fellow who tried to organize a rebellion against Moses' leadership, but the earth opened up and swallowed him and his followers and they were never heard from again.

Concerning the effectiveness of all these curses and maledictions, Yiddish folk-wisdom asks us to consider two things:

A curse is not a telegram, it doesn't arrive post-haste. And furthermore, *fun a krole shtarbt men nit* — nobody ever died from a curse. . .

Meanwhile, enjoy your *homentashn!*

We mourn the loss of
a dear friend
MAX GORDON
Our heartfelt sympathy to
Midi
and to their children
and grandchildren.

Emil Asher
Martha Stone Asher
West Orange, NJ

In memory of
our beloved friend
MAX GORDON

Jim and Marge McCluskey
Amherst, MA
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For Purim, March 11

Chickens as Only I Have Known Them

By SYLVIA KHAN

I grew up in a bi-lingual family in a multi-lingual neighborhood of first generation Americans whose homes were small enclaves of "the old country." Some of us didn't fully learn English until we were nearly adults. For instance, the word for gizzard that I knew was *pupik*. Boiled, the *pupik* is deservedly renowned, and for me it translated only into bellybutton!

When I was about 19 I went to Champaign-Urbana, Illinois to work, attend school and discover the facts of life. I was an "au pair girl" for a quintessentially American family, from fried chicken and apple pie after church on Sunday to three children under the age of 10. Father was a doctor and mother had a B.A. in home economics.

In addition to her academic background in nutrition, the lady of the house was an excellent cook, whose menus and recipes enchanted me, since I had never eaten real American food before. Sometimes her meals posed philosophical problems, such as the time she served, among other tasty dishes, a bowl of cottage cheese. First I thought, what a ridiculous combination, then, why ridiculous? At last it dawned on me. A bowl of cottage cheese cheek by jowl with a platter of roast beef! My mother didn't keep kosher, but old habits are hard to break. She never served, nor did my father, also a free thinker, tolerate, dairy and meat at the same meal.

One memorable mealtime my employer served another of her, to me, highly original side dishes, a bowl of chicken gizzards. How could I ask these reserved and proper people for the bellybuttons? With what I thought was admirable delicacy, I hesitatingly asked, "Would you please pass the navels?" Forks poised in mid-air, Doctor and Mrs. gaped at me, dumbfounded, before they began to snicker. What had I said wrong? Being a man of science, the good Doctor kindly explained that chickens are not mammals and aren't blessed with navels. I tried to explain, but they weren't listening.

Doctor and Mrs. probably never forgot that ignorant girl — and her remarkable chickens with bellybuttons!

SYLVIA KHAN, a new contributor, is a social worker and amateur storyteller in N. Hollywood, CA.

For our dear friend
FAY PEVZNER
A memory we will
always cherish.

Carl and Fannie Hineser
Malibu, CA

We condole with
Sam Pevzner
on the death of his
beloved wife
FAY

The Bensonhurst Fraternal Society
Sol Moser, President
Sam Eisenberg, Vice-President

INSIDE THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

And Now—Operation Exodus

The United Jewish Appeal (UJA) announced in mid-January the largest fundraising campaign in its history, a three-year effort for \$420 million with pledges for the entire amount solicited in the first year. Entitled Operation Exodus, the campaign's purpose is to finance resettlement of an expected 165,000 Soviet Jews in Israel in the next two years and more thereafter. Some spokesmen expect the total number of immigrants to reach a quarter million in three to four years. Originally plans formulated together with Israeli officials called for raising \$500 million from world Jewry outside of Israel in two years but changes now call for \$600 million over three years, of which \$420 million is the U.S. Jewry quota.

Marvin Lender, of bagel bakery fame, chair of Operation Exodus and national chair-elect of UJA, said he does not believe the limited success of last year's Passage to Freedom campaign reflects on Operation Exodus. The earlier effort raised \$50 million, well short of its \$75 million goal. Lender says it was controversial because it divided funds between U.S. groups and Israel for resettlement purposes. Operation Exodus is earmarked solely for Israel, since that is where Soviet Jews are now going, and Lender thinks it will be more acceptable. He did not discuss the implication that he expects more American Jews to give on condition Soviet Jews go to Israel.

On Anti-Semitism USA

The annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents issued Jan. 19 by the Anti-Def-

amation League of B'nai B'rith, reported 1,432, highest in 11 years. There were 845 incidents of anti-Jewish vandalism and desecrations and 587 episodes of harassment, assault or threats against Jews and Jewish institutions. Vandalism includes arson, bombings, swastika daubings, etc. against Jewish-owned property or institutions or public property. Skinheads were responsible for more than 100 such acts.

The number of campus incidents rose 28% to a total of 69 acts at five colleges. New York and New Jersey lead the country in number of anti-Semitic acts. New York reported 213, up 5 from 1988; New Jersey, 112, a 67% increase. In Connecticut, the incidents declined from 13 to 10. ADL National Director Abraham H. Foxman said current efforts by law-enforcement agencies to combat anti-Semitic crime revealed increased sensitivity over preceding years. • The American Jewish Committee is distributing a booklet, "Skinheads: Who They Are and What to Do When They Come to Town," prepared in conjunction with a CBS-TV film, "So Proudly We Hail," aired Jan. 23 (available from Morton Yarmon, AJC, 165 E. 56 St., New York, NY 10022). The booklet says there are about 5,000 Skinheads in the U.S. ranging in age from 13 to 27; though not all are racist, most are violent. AJC is also launching a series of programs to investigate and combat anti-Semitism and promote democracy in Eastern Europe. Sholom D. Comay, president of AJC, cites the calls for rebirth of the Arrow-Cross party, the fascist party of the 1930s, in Hungary and anti-Semitic signs and handbills in the Soviet Union as stimulus for the new programs.

Synagogue Affiliation

Allan Goldman, chair of the Board of Trustees of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Reform) reported to its November convention in New Orleans that the movement has 284,630 dues-paying families and 822 affiliated synagogues, making it the largest branch of Judaism in North America. Officials of the Conservative and Orthodox movements disagree. A spokeswoman for the United Synagogue of America said the Conservative movement has about two million members and between 820 and 850 affiliated synagogues while Orthodox spokesmen said there is no single address at which Orthodox figures can be compiled.

The UAHC convention also received a summary of a study by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University and the UAHC's Committee on the Jewish Family. The study examined synagogue membership in seven mid-sized Jewish communities, finding that more Jews identify with Reform than any other branch but the movement has the lowest rate of synagogue membership. Orthodox Jews, while fewer in number, have the greatest proportion of membership.

Who Speaks for Jews?

Seymour Reich, chair of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, addressed the question of who speaks for American Jewry at a discussion with representatives of the Council of Jewish Federations and UAHC and the editor of *Tikkun* magazine in mid-December. Reich declared that his organization does not claim to speak for all American Jews but is the "most representative." He challenged others to "count the numbers" but was gracious enough to admit that "it doesn't make us right."

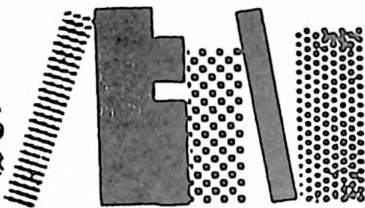
• Less yielding was Milton S. Shapiro,

who on Dec. 7, stepping down as president of the Zionist Organization of America, told delegates to ZOA's convention that a major goal should be "recognition by American political leaders and the American public that Israel's most vehement American Jewish critics are outside of the mainstream of the American Jewish community."

• Taking a different tack in speaking for some Jews, the Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA) Jan. 10 demanded the recall of representatives of Israel's Chief Rabbinate who are reviewing the "Jewishness" of potential immigrants at the Israeli consulate in Moscow and are said to be rejecting those they claim do not meet "halakhic standards." Rabbi Eric Yoffie, executive director of ARZA, said, "There will be many Jews applying for visas who may have only one Jewish parent, whose spouses are not Jewish, whose children are not ritually circumcised, and who know no Yiddish. Nonetheless, they feel themselves to be Jews."

• In Philadelphia, New Jewish Agenda has been defending its right to speak to Jews, let alone for Jews. NJA charges that for about 18 months the Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent* refused to print responses to attacks on NJA coming from ZOA, Americans for a Safe Israel (AFSI) and CAMERA, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America. These groups are generally considered to be on the right wing of American Jewish opinion. Oct. 13 the *Exponent* finally printed a statement from NJA detailing its policies and rejecting the charge of being anti-Israel. The attacks continued, eliciting a statement, Nov. 20, from the Board of Rabbis, affirming pluralism and dialogue in an atmosphere of "derekh erez" (appropriate behavior). Dec. 17 the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran an article on the controversy. NJA is interested in experiences of other progressive groups in similar situations. JOSEPH DIMOW

BOOK REVIEWS



Fighting Anti-Semitism at Home

By HAROLD TICKTIN

Square One, by Arnold Forster, foreword by Elie Wiesel. Donald I. Fine, New York, 1988, 423 pages, \$21.95.

Not for Myself Alone, by Herman Edelsberg, foreword by Rep. Claude D. Pepper. Interstellar Media, 2153 Russell St., Berkeley, CA 94705, 1988, 274 pages, \$20.

WHEN I was a mere Jewish strip-ling during the 1930s I had an aunt who began every political conversation in the family (Jews sensed the deadly potential of "politics" in those days) with a reference to authority. "Walter Winchell says. . ." was the inevitable opener, designed basically to put a final word at the beginning of those endless discussions, which we children followed avidly, about Hitler, Roosevelt, Abba Hillel Silver (this was Cleveland, after all), Father Coughlin, fascists and Stalin. Looking back I now think of Winchell as a kind of American Kitsch, vaguely Jewish (only to Jews and anti-Semites), super-American, exposing American foibles in a brisk, show business style; yesterday's Mike Wallace.

Perhaps I underestimated my aunt, because here, 50 years later, with these two books, it seems that Winchell was

HAROLD TICKTIN of Cleveland last appeared here in our Feb. issue with a review of a book on the Pollard case.

a kind of binding force not only for Jewish solidarity but for both authors, who refer to him not infrequently in connection with the events they lived through, almost always with the same kind of approval my aunt had in those days. For me, at any rate, the Winchellian style of both books is a problem and therein lies the story of this review.

Arnold Forster, the long-time general counsel for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, currently engaged in private law practice in New York, is a well-known figure in international Jewish life. The late Herman Edelsberg was more of a laborer in the union and ADL vineyards, having served the CIO as attorney and then as director of the Washington, DC office of ADL. At one time he was executive director of the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). His old mentor, Claude Pepper, for whom he worked as an assistant right after World War II, wrote the foreword to the book. Both books are descriptions of the struggles of Jews against anti-Semitism, on behalf of labor, liberal and progressive causes during the difficult times from the 1930s to the 1980s. The principal association of both men was with ADL, hence the anti-Semitism theme looms large.

Elie Wiesel's foreword to the Forster volume sets out quite nicely the problem that bothers me about both

these books. Coming from a European milieu that requires hard, theoretical questions, he queries:

"How does one explain the anti-Semitism of the Fathers of the Church? Or that of a Voltaire or a Wagner? Or that of a Dostoevsky and a Celine? How is it possible to be a great moral thinker *and* the enemy of a community of men rooted in the memory of God? How can one write masterpieces and at the same time propagate hate among one's peers — is it that Jews were not considered peers? How can one in our own country, founded by foreigners for other foreigners, foster ugly and dangerous hatred for men and women because they are of a different color or because they remain faithful to a more ancient covenant?"

Wiesel's question is a dead serious historical one, basically stemming from Europe with its two millennia of involuted problems, especially for Jews. And what does Wiesel say as to Forster's answer to this dilemma for America?

"You will learn things you did not know about Jewish life in the U.S.A. The author's memories of Hollywood (John Garfield, Dore Schary) will make you smile. The book will also make you cry: Forster's last meeting with David Ben-Gurion; his radio broadcasts of the Eichmann trial; his race by car to Brandeis University, where his son had just been assaulted and wounded by a gang of the K.K.K."

In effect Wiesel asks an ancient question and Walter Winchell answers.

Forster's autobiography is often interesting, sometimes even riveting. He and Edelsberg are almost clones in terms of their early non-observant, secular Jewish backgrounds, leading ultimately to the same organization, the ADL, though Edelsberg detoured through the labor movement and a series of government jobs (notably under

the tutelage of then Sen. Pepper, with whom he shared some adventurous times in Europe and Russia after the war) before linking up with the premier American Jewish organization on the anti-Semitism front.

Forster was really *there*, whether doing battle with the crude Coughlin/Silver Shirt anti-Semitism of pre-war America or trying to shore up Jewish unity (no easy task) in the wake of the Lebanon War. For those of us over 55 or so, his memories are ours and the cast of characters is fascinating not only because people like Sen. Bilbo, Joe McCarthy, William Dudley Pelley, William Townsend, Gen. Robert Wood and Merwin K. Hart (to say nothing of Charles Lindbergh) are only a generation gone, but also because the changed circumstances of American Jewry make the attitudes of the 1930s, often so taken for granted by fearful Jews, seem almost antique, lost wraiths of a distant past.

Despite the brisk, well-written style, I kept feeling bothered by sentences like: "Walter Winchell and I were lounging in the upstairs private quarters of [the] now defunct Stork Club on E. 52nd Street in Manhattan. It was the spring of 1945, well past midnight." As I read that line, all I could see was snap felt hats hopping to the task of combatting anti-Semitism, a kind of early Jewish Dragnet.

Fortunately for the reader, and perhaps a younger reader than this one would not have felt the same, the book gets a lot sharper in the post-war period. Despite the tightening focus, I still had the feeling that I was reading a kind of political version of Ken Murray's *Blackouts*. Israel is the featured star, supported variously by Dore Schary, John Garfield (a childhood friend of Forster's whose tragic end following implacable political persecution is one of the riveting scenes), Paddy Chayevsky and a lesser cast of characters.

Forster sketches deftly some poker-playing and jockeying with Joe McCarthy. He claims to be the person who retorted to Roy Cohn's jibe, "How are all the god-damned Jews in New York?", with "Fine, I had dinner with your father last night." The failed effort to rehabilitate John Garfield's ruined career is interesting, a classic case of the damage wrought by the era of the loyalty oath (done by Truman in 1949, long before McCarthy). The portraits of Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, Walter Mondale, Jimmy Carter and Jim Farley (at Coca-Cola, after FDR, a key figure in the ADL's fight against the Arab boycott — he was a reluctant dragon) all help buoy one's interest in the book, but always with the patina of political show biz.

Forster's "Blackout" on the Rosenberg case is four pages long. He states flatly that the ADL's two central concerns about the case were "to counter efforts of anti-Semites to make bigoted hay out of the Jewish backgrounds of the defendants, and to prevent the case from being used by Communists for their own political purposes."

In the event, both purposes were blunted, as he readily admits: a "schism" resulted between those who wished to play down the Jewishness of the defendants and those who believed that their very Jewishness was part of the accusation against them. Forster admits "that Jewish defense agencies were themselves prompted more by fear and insecurity than principle in urging Jews to avoid allowing extreme leftwingers to utilize their facilities." As to more basic problems which the Rosenberg case presents, Forster pretty well dodges the issue, referring the reader to books "charging the evidence with having been falsified." He asserts the court record "contains persuasive evidence supportive of the court's findings of guilt." Not a word about the dragnet charge of

conspiracy that gathered in so many so ferociously as to vitiate any pretense that the trial, in the atmosphere of the day, was "fair." As for many others, it suffices for Forster to say that the punishment "does seem remarkably excessive," not exactly an excessive emotion.

His attitude toward the Rosenbergs contrasts remarkably with his detailed description of the suit against *Time* magazine brought by Ariel Sharon. After retirement from the ADL, Forster joined the redoubtable firm of Shea & Gould, which agreed to bring that most difficult libel action on Sharon's behalf. The chapter on that case is probably worth the price of the book, concentrating as it does on the procedural niceties of American libel law and the linked subject of Henry Luce's longstanding and apparently candidly admitted anti-Israel attitude. Whatever one thinks of Sharon, *et al*, the level of discussion and legal strategy is as absorbing as any "great trial" book I have read recently.

The longest chapter in the book describes Forster's observer role at the Eichmann trial, which later flowered into a long-running radio show called "Dateline Israel" (again show biz). He documents clearly the distinction between Eichmann's genocide trial and the war crimes aired at Nuremberg. It is a good journalistic account of the trial, far, far from the kinds of questions raised by another European-conditioned mind — Hannah Arendt.

In the end, some 50 years after the organizing of the Junior Guild, an informal arm of B'nai B'rith (that later merged with ADL), in fighting low-life street anti-Semitism, Forster finds much change on the positive side. He sees a 180-degree turn in Christian majority attitudes toward Jews in contrast with the kind of viciousness that was taken for granted in the mid-1930s when he started out. Things are so

good, one suspects, that he is a bit rueful about Ben-Gurion's unfailing greeting to him, "You still at it, saving Jews from the anti-Semites?" One gathers that not even Forster believes that anti-Semitism is the best framework from which to analyze Jewish life.

As to Herman Edelsberg's description of much the same territory, one can only view a good try sympathetically but nevertheless call a failure by its right name. Mr. Edelsberg's life seems to have been an exemplar of social justice striving in the best Jewish sense; however, other than a few tidbits gathered along the way (99% of the grades Morris R. Cohen gave were C's) the book adds little to an understanding of the times it reviews. It bears innumerable marks of poor organization and tortured sequence; one gathers that this was a memoir looking for a publisher for a very long time. One reference to "now" is actually 1981, though the publication date is 1988, by a publisher unknown to this reader.

There are some interesting episodes, particularly the post-war ride through a devastated Europe, Russia and the Middle East with the ever ebullient Claude Pepper. But mistakes dot the pages: 6,000 Syrian Jews were not forced out of the country after 1948; that is precisely their problem, they are held prisoner now. The 80th Congress was not called the "no good" Congress but a "do nothing" one. An author's stream of consciousness is no substitute for a clear narrative, e.g., a mention of Estes Kefauver, among others, as one who once signed a restrictive covenant is not an opening for a discussion of how campaign committees work. Huey Long did not say that if fascism ever came to America it would come under the banner of Americanism; he said it would come in the guise of anti-fascism.

With that much working against the reader, it is difficult to enjoy some of the better items, which include a comic-opera rendition of a conference with the blatantly prejudiced president of George Washington University, Cloyd Heck Marvin, who governed the school from 1927 to 1958.

Edelsberg too winds up questioning whether "Jews have not. . . [shown] excessive concern over anti-Semitism." One gets the impression from both Forster and Edelsberg that Jewish self-defense organizations have done their work too well. I am probably being a little unfair on that one. What has happened is a rising concern among Jews not so much for anti-Semitism but for the quality of Jewish life. Both authors recognize that the context of Jewish life in America has changed, that the emergence of the state of Israel has sharply modified attitudes towards Jews by gentiles and by Jews toward themselves. Both books, Forster's less so, leave the reader unsatisfied with our future direction, especially since they explicitly allow that the past is probably not a sure guide to the future. ■

In Memory

of

MAX GORDON

Our Daily Worker Colleague

**A thoughtful, compassionate
mentsch who never wavered
in his pursuit of peace,
justice and truth**

We will miss our friend

*Bernard Burton
Lester Rodney
California*

Is It to Laugh?

By JOSEPH DORINSON

Humor Is No Laughing Matter, by F. L. Marcuse. Vantage Press, NY, 1988, 73 pages, \$10.

- Show me Joseph Stalin's grave, and I'll show you a communist plot.
- In medical school, a class was asked why it was that males were less likely than females to have hemorrhoids. The answer was that when God created man — he created a perfect asshole!
- Remember, 50% of all surgeons graduated in the bottom half of their class.
- A bee was observed by another bee to be wearing a yarmulke and when asked why, he replied: "To differentiate me from a wasp."
- The trouble with political jokes is that they sometimes get elected.
- Church sign: "Pity the poor atheist; when he is happy, he has no one to thank."
- Faculty group landed on a cannibal island and saw the following menus:

Roast Assistant Professor	\$6.50
Roast Associate Professor	7.50
Roast Full Professor	9.00
Roast Dean	876.50

Why is the last item so expensive?
Answer: Did you ever try to clean a dean?

Of the many jokes that F.L. Marcuse offers his readers, the latter will no doubt appeal to disgruntled academicians. The rest, I fear, will generate sparse laughter. Marcuse, who has written a half-dozen articles for *JEWISH CURRENTS* between 1960 and 1983 on the need for sensitivity to expressions

JOSEPH DORINSON, *professor of history at Long Island University, last appeared here in Oct., 1988 with a review, "The Taste of Jewish Humor."*

of ethnic prejudice, has compiled a book on the mechanics of humor consisting almost entirely of joke samples — many of them tasteless or downright unappetizing. In the absence of almost any interpretation or analysis by the author of his material, that tastelessness unfortunately becomes the flavor of the book — a disappointing development for any reader who remembers Prof. Marcuse's earlier articles.

Marcuse informs us that *Humor Is No Laughing Matter* is both the title and thesis of this 73-page book. In the introduction, Marcuse delineates the seven w's of wit: what, who, when, why, where, why and warnings. In the *what* section, the author recites several extremely tasteless jokes. Then he proceeds to explain, all too briefly, that their prevalence functions as a defense mechanism. This, he adds, is closely related to funeral humor, a fitting rubric for many of the jokes that follow. The *what* raises more questions than it answers, especially when applied to national humor. Is British humor dry? Does Jewish humor remain the same once it leaves the Diaspora behind?

The *why* section triggers the author's digestive juices. He plunges into a discussion of one-liners and returns to his mainstream of humor as defense mechanism. As a professional psychologist, he fixes on projection, rationalization, imagery and therapy as the principal wellsprings of most humor. Correctly warning the reader against simplistic interpretations, Marcuse states his goal clearly — "To make one laugh with not at" and to improve memory.

Operating in a virtual vacuum, Marcuse does not cite salient sources which explain the various modes of comic ex-

pression. He constructs a rich edifice bricked and mortared by almost 200 jokes. Yet the cupboard is bare. He uses the third person singular and the first person plural coyly and awkwardly when referring to himself. He catalogues his jokes with H-1, H-2, H-2, H-*ad infinitum, ad nauseum.*

In Chapter 4 we are exposed to developmental behavior; so we witness a number of poignant jokes on the aging process concluding with this gem: "For the Catholic life begins at conception; for the Protestant at birth; and for the Jew when the dog dies and the children grow up and leave home."

The jokes in this collection are strung together like a Henny Youngman monologue. They lack scholarly depth and penetrating analysis. To be sure, E. B. White's warning is relevant: "Humor can be dissected like a frog can, but the thing dies in the process. . ." Nevertheless the joke anthologist owes the reader some explanation, some historical context, some sociological space. Joseph Boskin on *Sambo* and Alan Dundes on joke cycles provide the necessary ingredients for a sumptuous feast for thought.

For example, when Alan Dundes discusses the Jewish American Princess or J.A.P. joke in his pithy collection, Cracking Jokes: Studies of Sick Humor Cycles & Stereotypes (Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA, 1987), he salts his study with contextual analysis. He invokes the Jewish American Mother as a distorted mirror image of the J.A.P. Stereotypically, but with a morsel of truth, the mother force-feeds her children with dreams as well as food. She wants her daughters to marry wealthy and her sons to become professionals. Working this concept through dialectically and materialistically, Dundes demonstrates that the J.A.P. joke, however sexist, is not anti-Semitic. According to his analysis, in Reagan-



In Memory of
ABRAHAM JENOFSKY
 (Jan. 29, 1901—Feb. 17, 1976)
 who dedicated his life to YKUF
 (Yiddisher Kultur Farband)
 and a better world for all people.
 He will never be forgotten
 as long as Yiddish culture exists.
Freida Jenofsky
and family

Bush country, where the booboisie run rampant, "You don't have to be Jewish to be a J.A.P." This stereotype is seen as a commentary on our age by those who believe women want their cake and the *fressen* (gorging) too: equality coupled with special treatment. As one who is all take and no give, according to Dundes, the Jewish American Princess in whatever ethnic garb is a negation of the all-give no-take Jewish American Mother.

What Marcuse should do in a sequel to this slim, vanity-pressed volume is to take his collection of jokes, after reading Alan Dundes, and apply the critical scalpel as well as the creative brush. The ingredients are present for a first-rate book on a very popular subject. If he needs inspiration, let him recall the sage remarks of an old Jewish man to a midwestern tourist who asks: "Say, bud, I'm a stranger here in New York City. What's the quickest way to Carnegie Hall?" The old man replies: "Practice, practice, practice." ■

letters



FROM READERS

Opinions expressed in letters are not necessarily those of the magazine. Letters will not be published unless accompanied by the name and address of the writer. Names will be withheld from publication on request. -- Ed.

Yiddish Theater Lore

In rummaging through the closet I discovered memorabilia of the Yiddish theater. I found a poem that my mother would recite to us when we were children. As an actress she had portrayed the role of "Yente Telebende." To alter the image of this harsh woman, she would tell us that every mother, no matter how overbearing she may have

been at times, had love for her children that never wavered. I made a loose translation of the poem (author unknown), taking a few liberties. Here it is.

*Di tier fin mine hoiz ven ich efn
Bafalt mich mine veib mit a geshray.
"Di kinder, di shlock zol zay trefn,
nit oishaltn ken ich fin zay.
Oib di vest zikh nit nemen tzim
graysn
in pletn in shmasn zein kop,
zol ich Brahne Sosseh nit hayasn,
ich gay doch fin zinen arup.
Er hot heint gevorf'n di baby
in Benny tzigroblt di nuz.
A kranker ligt doch fin ihm Abie,
er hot heint tzibrochn a gluz.
Oif yaydn gevorf'n a shmateh,
in mich noch gevizm dem tzing.
Vus shvagsti, di bist doch a tahueh.
Di zolst zich yetst nemen tzim
ying."*

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Please accept this Life Subscription in honor of the 70th birthday of my father, Sol Jaffe, from whom I inherited a passion for Jewish cultural and progressive political concerns.

Stanford, CA, Dec. 26, 1989

DAVID JAFFE

[Harold and Tamar Kirschner of Chapel Hill, NC are the latest to join the large and, we trust, continually growing contingent of Life Subscribers who have sent in \$100 to bring their original price of \$200 up to the present \$300.]

*Ich fiel vus zi hot du gelitn
in loz zich mit a strahp tzu ihm tzee.
In ot iz di mama in mitn
in bayt — Gay, loz ihm tzuree.*

and some English lines are not in the Yiddish text), but that's the nature of folklore. —Ed.]

We Folks

At night when I open the door of my house

My wife lets loose with a cry:

"The children — the devil should take 'em —

I tell you I'm going to die!

If you don't get after the oldest

and tear him limb from limb,

I swear by everything holy

I'm going crazy from him.

This morning he dropped the baby and Benny he punched in the nose.

He spit at his brother Morris

and he tripped his sister Rose.

He refused to go to the market

and he stuck out his tongue at me too.

What are you standing there for?

You're a father,

Do what you have to do."

I feel how she suffered so I approached him

Ready to break every bone

And there is his mother between us and says

Ah — leave him alone!

JACK BERNARDI

W. Hollywood, CA, Nov. 28, 1989

[JACK BERNARDI appeared here in Nov., 1988 with a memoir of his brother, Herschel Bernardi. In 1971, Jack wrote the book, My Father the Actor. In the above, the translation and the transliteration do not quite match (some Yiddish lines are not translated

Enclosed, a check for \$100 — \$15 for a renewal and \$85 as a contribution.

You folks do wonderful, important work!

NAOMI GROESCHEL

Richmond, CA, Dec. 14, 1989

Pen Pals for Polish Jew?

I have a request to you. Would you be kind to publish my name anywhere to contact with young Jewish people for correspondence? I will be very grateful for that. I will answer to anybody from the States, and NYC!!!

My address:

Andrew Shmaya (32 years old)

62-800 Kalisz

Gliniana 2/2

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Dec. 8

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NINA ROSENBERG YARDEINI

(Dec. 15, 1903—Nov. 28, 1989)

The funeral of Nina Rosenberg Yardeini, Life Subscriber and tirelessly generous supporter of JEWISH CURRENTS, was held at the Rubin-Zilbert Bayside Chapel in Miami Beach, FL on Sunday, Dec. 3. Presiding was Meyer Zakheim, representing JEWISH CURRENTS and the Coordinating Committee of Progressive Jewish Organizations of Miami Beach, who also spoke on behalf of YKUF (Yiddisher Kultur Farband). Other speakers were Clara Gavurim of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, David Gutterman of the Greater Miami Benevolent Society and Nina's nephew, Dr. David Silnitzer.

Arrangements were made by Anne Nechemias, Secretary of the Miami Beach JEWISH CURRENTS Committee. A message from Morris U. Schappes was read, hailing Nina's "whole-hearted and open-handed" support of the progressive Jewish press and her lifelong efforts for peace, equality and brotherhood. All honor to her memory!

CORRECTIONS

- Jan. issue, p. 9, first col., 2nd paragraph: The 2nd sentence should have read, "In fact, I was reading it silently *as* [not *was*] my children were playing. . ."
- Jan. issue, p. 40: Jack Winocur's name on the memorial to Fay Pevzner should have been accompanied by that of his wife, *Rita*.
- Feb. issue, p. 8, author's note: Cheryl Greenberg's review of Julius Lester's autobiography appeared in Feb., 1989 (not 1988).

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In memory of
BLACKIE DAVIDMAN
(April 12, 1928—December 19, 1989)

He was our friend, our brother.

*A guteh neshoma,
a mentsch.*

He befriended all —
was loved by all.

We will miss his gentleness,
wisdom, creativity —
his love.

Naomi, children, grandchildren —
we embrace you.
We mourn with you.

*The Yackel Family
and Friends*

In memory of
my beloved wife and friend
ROSE NOON
(October 25, 1914—October 8, 1989)

A warm-hearted, loving
and devoted human being

In her name I contribute

\$500

to

JEWISH CURRENTS,

to which she was a

Life Subscriber.

Max Noon

Brooklyn

In Memory

of

MANYA

HALPERN

Bratslav, November 15, 1908—

Tibbett Towers, Bronx,

March 5, 1989

Caring wife of *Irving*;

mother of *Bret Louis, Kimiko*
and *Richard Philip*;

grandmother of *Aaron Raphael*
and *Jason Isaac*.

We loved stories about her
shtetl in peace, pogrom and
revolution.

She was proud of her heritage,

and to the last day

regretted that she allowed

the presiding judge at her

swearing in to "Americanize"

her name to Margaret,

a name she used

only when voting,

or on legal documents.

To her intimates she was always

Malke or Manya.

She was a devoted friend

and a good cooperater.

We miss her smile and laughter,

but most of all,

the affection

which surrounded us.

Her Husband, Children
and Grandchildren

Deerfield Beach—
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will speak on
"Democratization in the USSR
and Eastern Europe and the Jews"
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and family

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•

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In memory of
my brother and
sister-in-law
**LOUIS and RUTH
ROTH**

•
Rickie Roth
Los Angeles

In loving memory
of
my husband
BERNARD SUSSMAN
and my dear sister
REVA

•
Wife: Alma Sussman
Brooklyn

Our Goals

Fund Drive	\$100,000
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FINAL REPORT for 1989

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TOTALS	\$87,224.43	223

AROUND THE WORLD

AT HOME

How a Black journalist reacted to an anti-Semitic slur was the subject of a column in the *New Haven Register*, Dec. 24, 1989. Frank Harris III, describing his hunt for an inexpensive Christmas tree, reported that a man selling trees offered to cut his price because "The guy before you 'jewed me down' . . ." Harris comments, "I thought of the irony of his remark. . . I thought of who I am, and who I am not: I am a Black American who is not of the Jewish faith. I know that I was not the target of his remark and that he probably did not think that it would be offensive to me. But despite the fact that I was not Jewish, I was offended by his remark, just as I would have been had he said something derogatory about the Black people." Harris refused to buy the tree, and told the man why.

National Jewish leaders were warned not to meddle in Washington, DC local politics in the *Jewish Week*, N.Y. Jan. 26 by Marc Pearl, "a long-time Jewish activist and former director of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action." Commenting on the scramble to fill the post of D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, Pearl noted that the Jews are the second largest voting bloc in the area, second only to the Black majority, and that "Jewish contributors played an important part in keeping Marion Barry in office" but would no longer support Barry or Jesse Jackson. Pearl "cautioned national Jewish leaders not to meddle in the District's turbulent political situation." Pearl added: "They have to develop a sensitivity to this. If the District begins gravitating toward Jackson, it will only exacerbate racial tensions if national Jewish leaders try to tell voters

here what to do. They're going to have to keep their mouths shut and let the District work through this process."

The Mississippi Sovereignty Commission was revealed to have spied on a B'nai B'rith youth meeting of 300 in Dec., 1960 by reports Jan. 28 in the *Jackson Clarion Ledger* and the *Jackson Daily News*. Functioning between 1956 and 1977, the Commission spied on hundreds of teachers, preachers, students and other citizens in the search for civil rights expressions and other "subversive" views. Studying 700 Commission documents, the *Clarion-Ledger* found wholesale violations of privacy, including a list of 250 organizations and 10,000 names under suspicion. At the B'nai B'rith five-state youth assembly, the spy "could observe nothing. . . that indicated they were advocating subversion, integration or anything of a Communist nature." Six years after the Supreme Court ruling on integration, B'nai B'rith youth were indifferent to the issue?

"With the Black and Hispanic children there appears to be no liking of learning," wrote NYC Councilmember Arthur J. Katzman, chair of the City Council's Education Committee, in *This Week*, a L.I. newspaper appearing Jan. 6 and quoted in *N.Y. Newsday* Jan. 5. "The children of European-born parents," Katzman added, "brought with them a love and respect for learning." And children of Oriental and Indian parents often outscore whites in our schools. Blacks and whites protested instantly, including Sandra Feldman, United Federation of Teachers president: "His remarks display a terrible ignorance about our kids and about their

schools. I can only hope that as chairman of the Education Committee he will become more educated." Katzman, a City Councilmember from Forest Hills in Queens since 1962, apologized, claiming he had been misunderstood and admitting "I was insensitive." Mayor David N. Dinkins accepted the apology. Jan. 9 the *N.Y. Times* editorially noted, "This is not the first time the argumentative Mr. Katzman has displayed racial insensitivity. His colleagues have grown accustomed to his inappropriate outbursts at Council hearings." Jan. 18 at a City Hall meeting of the Education Committee, some 20 adults and school children interrupted proceedings with demands for Katzman's resignation, while the City Council Black and Hispanic Caucus stated that, in view of Katzman's apology, it would give him a year as Committee chair and then judge.

The U.S. Senate Jan. 25 voted 62-37 to override Pres. George Bush's veto of a bill protecting Chinese students here from deportation, but fell four short of the two-thirds majority needed to override. Of the eight Jews in the Senate, six voted to override: Democrats Kohl, Lautenberg, Levin, Lieberman, Metzenbaum, and Republican Boschwitz. Voting against overriding were Republicans Rudman and Specter. Jan. 22 the American Jewish Committee had called on the Senate to override the veto.

Because the British colony of Hong Kong has begun to expel back to Vietnam the 44,000 "boat people" coming to Hong Kong in the past 18 months, the *Detroit Jewish News* Dec. 15, 1989 wrote editorially, "Shame on the governments of Hong Kong and Britain. And shame on all who have ignored the latest plight of the so-called Boat People of Vietnam. . . . And where is the outcry from American Jewish groups, who know all too well about the deadly implications of remaining silent? . . ."

ABROAD

Romania: Dec. 24, 1989, two days after the overthrow of the totalitarian Ceausescu regime, Haim Rimer, editor of the only Jewish newspaper, *Revista Cultului Mozaic*, rushed to press a special two-page issue, uncensored for the first time, containing the manifesto and the 10-point program of the National Salvation Front and Chief Rabbi Moshe Rosen's congratulations to the new leadership. . . . The regular 12-page issue of Jan. 1 (in Romanian, Yiddish, Hebrew and English) listed the names of three "Jewish martyrs fallen for Romania's liberty" and printed an editorial by Dr. Rosen, "Servants or Free People?", declaring that "The great, the enormous achievement of the Dec., 1989 revolution consists in the rehabilitation of human dignity, in the straightening of backbones." . . . When the new U.S. Ambassador to Rumania, Allan Green, called on Dr. Rosen Dec. 27, Dr. Rosen "voiced his profound trust in Romania's new leadership, which constitutes the best guarantee of the country's democratic development and against the danger of any form of anti-Semitism being revived. He also emphasized the authorities' concern for defending the Jewish institutions against any threats on the part of the terrorists who are trying to spread panic. . . ." . . . Challenged by some Jews as having "collaborated" with Ceausescu, Dr. Rosen retorted: "All of my work — to save hundreds of thousands of Jews and bring them to Israel — was only possible through working with Ceausescu. Could I do what I did through going against him?" Acknowledging that he had helped Romania get most-favored-nation status with the U.S., Dr. Rosen insisted that "this was because it was good for all Romania — not just Ceausescu — and also good for the Jews and *aliyah*." . . . Since 1979 Dr. Rosen has owned a flat in Tel Aviv and spends several months there each

year, but said he had no intention of leaving Romania until "a satisfactory solution is assured for the future of the Jewish community." There are 23-24,000 Jews in Romania. . . . Four Jews have been prominent in the National Salvation Front leadership: Secretary of State Corneliu Bogdan, Silviu Brucan, senior member of the governing Council, Prime Minister Petre Roman (his father was Jewish) and Aurel Dragos Munteanu, head of state TV and radio (his mother was Jewish; he speaks Hebrew and is observant). He resigned Jan. 30 to demonstrate TV's impartiality in the election scheduled for May 20. (Jan. 1 Mr. Bogdan died, aged 68, of heart failure while at work in the Foreign Ministry.). . . Feb. 3 the 145-member Council of National Salvation dissolved itself as Romania's provisional parliament. The same day Silviu Brucan resigned, as a target of opposition forces.

USSR: Jewish emigration in January was 4,713, compared with 2,796 in Jan., 1989; 4,585 (97%) went to Israel. . . . In Moscow Jan. 18, a meeting at the Writers Union headquarters of a group of liberal, dissident writers was raided by 30 hoodlums shouting, "Yids, mongrels, your times are over. Get out to your Israel! Next time we'll bring submachine guns." In Odessa (Jewish population 90,000), local authorities issued a warning to leaders of popular front and ethnic associations against provocations to hatred and pogroms. In Moscow Feb. 1, *Moskovskaya Pravda* carried an article by a Jewish scholar, Valery Rabinovich, "On the Difficult 'Jewish Question,'" exposing the history of anti-Semitism. . . . In *Sovetish Heimland* the new chair of the scholarly Russian Palestine Society, Oleg Gerasimovich Peresyphkin, declared in an interview that he repudiated the anti-Semitism of the Society's vice-chair, Evgeny Semyenovitch Yevseyev, and

said, "We do not wish to be associated with Yevseyev and his supporters." . . . *Birobidjaner Shtern* has a long page and a half article by R. Sandik, Second Sec. of the Communist Party of the Jewish Autonomous Region, reporting receipt daily of letters from Jews asking for protection from "rampaging nationalists" and anti-Semites and urging the Birobidjan leadership to "undertake a great initiative to defend Jews in the entire country." On Jan. 5 there was a long Open Letter by B. Korsunsky, First Sec. of the Birobidjan Communist Party, addressed to the Editorial Board and Communist Party fraction of *Molodya Gvardia* (Young Guard), containing a polemic against the anti-Semitic materials frequently published in that periodical. . . . In Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, the first officially recognized Jewish Student Union was founded last fall and has affiliated with the World Union of Jewish Students. In Dec., 1989 in Western Georgia a synagogue was vandalized; Jews staged a protest rally outside KGB headquarters. Georgia now has 30,000 Jews; 50,000 Georgian Jews have emigrated to Israel in the past 15 years. . . . In Moscow early in January, Israel's Habimah Theater gave performances in Hebrew of Isaac Babel's *Sunset* and Yaacov Shabtai's *The Spotted Tiger*. . . . In Simferopol, in the Crimea, a Jewish Cultural Association was born for the Tartar-speaking Jews known as Krymchaks (the city has 15,000 Jews). Boris Achkinazi, chair of the new group, said, "We aim to revive our language and literature," and a school has been established. . . . In Moldavia, Hebrew has been recognized by the Parliament as an official language and will now be taught there like other spoken languages. . . . In Lenin-grad, the local Association for Jewish Culture has established an evening University and a Jewish Sunday school. Hebrew is being taught by 15 teachers to about 600 students. M.U.S.

Would It Be Enough?

Dear Reader:

A young reader of our magazine, who, like you all, has been subjected to my repeated Fund Appeals, has sent me a message that I should cut out the gab and say only this:

"Listen, People:

If you don't send us any money, we'll go under.

Then you'll be sorry.

Yours in solidarity,

M.U.S."

Well, now, tell me, if I stopped right here would you promptly turn to the coupon that would be occupying this space and send in your generous contribution? If you vote yes, you'll relieve me of the burden of wracking my brains to justify our periodic pleas (demands?) for monies. So why don't I just stop here and wait for your checks/cash/money orders? Because I can't afford to gamble on the success of such an experiment. Should you, *haleela* (heaven forfend), disapprove of such brevity and *not* send money, we'd be sunk, *spurlos versenkt* (sunk without a trace), as the Germans in World War I used to report on sinking an Allied submarine. Yes, in this 44th year of our survival we could go under in 44 days or less if you, our sole resource and support, should turn away from us even briefly. And while it might *pain* you to be sorry on the 45th day when the magazine stopped coming, it would simply kill us to be dead.

So, as this Brave New Year breaks, with a Black mayor in New York and a Black governor in Virginia and Eastern Europe in a tidal wave of democratization, the "objective situation" in this office is that we are barely afloat as I write this. On Friday, Jan. 12, I had to make a choice: do I meet the payroll for the four of us employed as editors and office staff, a weekly payroll of \$620.58, or do I make sure that we can pay the taxes due on Jan. 15 amounting to \$1,092.86? What would you have done?

Not that 1989 was a bad year for us financially! It was a good year: of our \$100,000 Fund Drive, we collected 87%. But because our goals state our needs, our minimal needs, not our aspirations, the 13% we did not collect is the problem. And even a bigger problem is that, with a modest goal of 700 new subscribers, we obtained *only* 223. That means we lost an inch of ground: our cancellations (death, eyesight, disaffection) were greater than our new subscriptions by a few dozen. Not fatal but not healthy!

As the only consistently secular, progressive Jewish magazine in the country in English, trying to "cover" (attend to would be a better word) the world Jewish scene (our columns "It Happened in Israel" and "Around the World"), trying to help our readers make sense of the whirling scene, applying "new thinking" as much and as best as we can, we have a distinct place in the American Jewish community, which we try, in our modest way, to influence. And in addition we print enough fiction and poetry to have attracted the notice of anthropologists, who more than occasionally reprint from our pages.

That's it. I dare not say take it or leave it — it must be take it take it take it. And may the New Year be kind and gentle to you and yours. . .

Semper in solidarity,

Morris U. Schappes, Editor