KINDER ZHURNAL:

A MICROCOSM OF THE YIDDISHIST PHILOSOPHY AND SECULAR EDUCATION MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

BY

NAOMI TOZMAN

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION
McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL

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ABSTRACT

Using Kinder zhurnal, an American Yiddish children's literary magazine, as the focus for this thesis, the intimate relationships between the Yiddish cultural movement which began in East Europe and the Yiddish secular school movement in America are explored. As a product of and for the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, a now defunct educational organization, Kinder zhurnal demonstrated the key philosophical tenets of the Yiddishist education movement as it evolved.

In an analysis of the Yiddishist philosophy of education parallels are drawn between modern Yiddish secular education and that of John Dewey in their humanistic emphasis and underlying pragmatism. Utilizing the parameters of the Yiddishist/Deweyian theory, an assessment to determine the practical viability of the Yiddishist concepts is made. Kinder zhurnal, as representative of Yiddishist philosophy and educational methodology, provides the microcosmic source for much of this discussion. Its close affiliation with the unique educational philosophy of the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute provides the opportunity to examine the educational implications of teaching Yiddish as part of Jewish education.

RÉSUMÉ

Centré sur Kinder zhurnal, un magazine littéraire américano-yiddish pour enfants, ce mémoire étudie les rapports qui existent entre le mouvement culturel yiddish amorcé en Europe de l'Est et le mouvement scolaire laïque yiddish d'Amérique. Produit du et pour le *Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute*, organisme pédagogique aujourd'hui disparu, Kinder zhurnal illustre les principaux préceptes philosophiques du mouvement pédagogique yiddish et leur évolution.

Dans le cadre d'une analyse de la philosophie yiddishiste de l'éducation, des parallèles sont établis entre l'éducation laïque yiddish moderne et les principes pédagogiques de John Dewey, au chapitre de leur caractère humaniste et du pragmatisme qui les sous-tend. En utilisant les paramètres de la théorie yiddishiste/deweyienne, l'auteur évalue la viabilité pratique des concepts yiddishistes. Kinder zhurnal, qui représente la philosophie et la méthodologie pédagogique yiddishiste, sert de microcosme à l'argumentation. Ses rapports très étroits avec la philosophie pédagogique du *Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute* permet d'examiner les conséquences pédagogiques de l'enseignement du yiddish dans le cadre de l'éducation juive.

PREFACE

Without the Metterlin Foundation Scholarship (an endowment fund to promote Yiddish education) I received from the Jewish People's and Peretz Schools of Montreal, this thesis would not have been undertaken. Through the cooperation of the chairmen of two faculties, Professor Stan Nemiroff of the Department of Religion and Philosophy in Education, who has also served as my thesis supervisor, and Professor Barry Levy of the Department of Jewish Studies, I was able to pursue my goal: to combine an understanding of current philosophical issues in education with a concentration on Yiddish literature and East European Jewish history. I am greatly indebted to them both for their support and encouragement.

As to the topic of my thesis, it began with a research project on the Kinder zhurnal, suggested by Professor Ruth Wisse in response to my expressed interest in Yiddish children's literature. The journey into Yiddishism was initiated by her inspirational teaching of Yiddish literature not only as literature but as an integral part of modern Jewish history. My interest in John Dewey stemmed from looking into the predominant philosophies of education in the early twentieth century. As a research project for

Professor Stan Nemiroff, I delved into Dewey's purported association with Jewish education. In the process of these two separate explorations, the interrelatedness between the above two research topics became increasingly apparent to me. To articulate the relevance of Kinder zhurnal to modern secular Jewish education became the challenge.

Upon Professor Wisse's departure from McGill University, I was extremely fortunate to have Professor Eugene Orenstein as my liaison with the Department of Jewish Studies. His breadth of knowledge enhanced my research into the Yiddishist movements immeasurably.

A final expression of gratitude is extended to Professor Stan Nemiroff for providing me with a positive role model of "teacher as facilitator" and for guiding me towards the revelation that philosophy and education are inseparable.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis centers on the educational philosophy of a particular branch of secular Jewish education in which the Yiddish language played a critical and integral part. Modern Yiddish secular education was an outgrowth of the rise of a nineteenth century, East-European, revolutionary, Jewish cultural movement espousing a non-traditional, non-religious secular culture in the Yiddish language. This cultural movement was called Yiddishism.

Chapter One will elaborate on the genesis of the Yiddish cultural movement and its gathering momentum, as a result of the political and social upheavals in the traditionally religious Jewish society of late nineteenth century East Europe. In the revolutionary spirit of those times, and in response to pogroms and governmental repression against the Jews in East Europe, the increasingly disillusioned Jewish population became highly politicized in an effort to effect change. However, its politics were highly fragmented. The conflicts were many and the ideologies complex.

A major factor in the divisiveness was the emergence of 'Jewish nationalism' with its many interpretations and

implications for what language, Hebrew or Yiddish, and what political/social ideology, Zionism or Socialism, the Jewish nation, or people, should adopt. Hebrew naturally became the language of choice for the Zionist form of nationalism, while Yiddish, the vernacular of the masses, became the choice language of the Socialists and the supporters of Diaspora nationalism. Reverberations of the fermenting revolutionary ideologies and of the political/social struggle within the Jewish population were felt in America as a result of mass immigrations of Jews, primarily from Russia, and because fluid channels of communication existed between the Yiddishists on either side of the ocean.

Yiddishism was greatly enhanced by the almost simultaneous development of the Yiddish secular school movement in East Europe and America. The first chapter of this thesis will provide the necessary background and origins of the Yiddishist movements with which to understand the tenets and evolution of the Yiddishist philosophy of education.

The range of the overview will concentrate on developments in Russia and Poland (in the Interwar years) because they were the loci of the movements' origins and development. Gradually, the focus will be narrowed to one particular Yiddishist school movement, the Cysho schools in Poland, because, of all Polish Yiddish schools Cysho most closely embodied the principles and goals of the Sholom

Aleichem school system in America - the school system of primary interest to this thesis.

The second chapter will concentrate on the Yiddishist cultural and school movements in the United States. To begin, an analysis of these movements' development will be made. Then the focus will narrow somewhat to an overview of the school movement's various school systems, and finally narrow again to feature the Sholom Aleichem school system. This section will concentrate on the objectives of the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute (S.A.F.I.), the umbrella organization for the Sholom Aleichem schools and the Yiddish children's literary magazine, Kinder zhurnal (Yiddish for Children's Magazine). Whereas the final section of Chapter Two will review the phases of development in the Yiddishist *school* movement in America as an indicator of a parallel development in the Yiddishist *cultural* movement, the Kinder zhurnal will in turn serve as a source to track the phases of the American Yiddish secular school movement.

Kinder zhurnal will be the focus of Chapter Three, primarily to demonstrate its value as a reliable, informative guide to the changing character, philosophy and fortunes of the Yiddishist cultural and school movements. The major turning points in Kinder zhurnal's evolution will be shown to match closely those of the Yiddishist movements. Kinder zhurnal will also be highlighted as an

interesting phenomenon in and of itself. Although ostensibly a high-calibre children's literary and activity magazine, it was guided by an educational philosophy that originally perceived Yiddish literature as the backbone of modern Jewish secular culture, as containing the values and moral parameters to guide a modern Jewishness predicated on the Yiddish language.

The concept of a children's literary magazine in Yiddish was not pioneered by Kinder zhurnal. In fact, Kinder zhurnal simulated an East European Yiddish publication while imbuing it with an identifiable American character. Every Yiddishist school system had its own children's publication, but Kinder zhurnal survived the longest (1920-1981), and was deemed the most prestigious based on its literary merit.

Chapter Four will assess the success of Kinder zhurnal as an effective means to carry out the mission of its sponsor, the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute (S.A.F.I.) and, indeed, of the broader Yiddish secular school movement. While discussing the goals of the S.A.F.I., the similarities between John Dewey's philosophy of education and that of a leading Yiddishist education theorist, Leibush Lehrer, will be drawn. It will be shown that although, from a theoretical perspective, the two philosophies appear extremely close, the drawbacks to their implementation posed unique difficulties to their

respective educational institutions. In addition, the transferability of Dewey's theory in toto to modern secular Jewish education will be challenged. Using Deweyian concepts and terminology, an evaluative discussion of Yiddishist aims, means and ends will synthesize the overriding theme of this thesis: to establish the intimate relationship between Kinder zhurnal, the Yiddish secular school movement in America, and the Yiddish cultural movement - a humanist/socialist movement that developed uniquely on both sides of the ocean, that grew rapidly and flourished very intensely, only to wither to near extinction a century later.

Several aspects of Kinder zhurnal and the Yiddishist school movement have pedagogical implications and questions for secular Jewish education today, especially to a school system such as the elementary Jewish People's and Peretz Schools and Bialik High School of Montreal, Canada, which is the heir to the Yiddishist tradition.

First the effectiveness of day schools versus supplementary schools in achieving Yiddishist objectives will be discussed. Then the important role the teacher played in Yiddishist education will be examined in light of the drive in radical educational circles to empower today's teachers. Finally, the question will be raised whether Yiddish should be taught in current secular Jewish schools, and if so, then how should it be taught - as a living

language or as a language of research to access Jewish history. These issues will be raised in Chapter Five as a conclusion to this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

Yiddishism and the Yiddish Secular School Movement In East Europe

Introduction

The Kinder zhurnal, uniquely American despite its language of communication, Yiddish, has its roots in the development of the secularist Yiddish cultural movement that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in East Europe. However, East European Yiddishism was adapted in America to its own unique set of circumstances while still retaining a strong link to its East European counterpart.[1] The Yiddishists on both sides of the ocean proposed a modern revolutionary educational system that would at once confirm the validity of Yiddish, their mother tongue, and its inherent culture as well as the political and sociological tenets of the recently born Jewish diaspora "nationalism".[2] To fully understand the

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[1]Shmuel Niger, "Yiddish Culture," in The Jewish People, Past and Present, vol. 4 (New York: Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks, 1955), pp. 264-307.

[2] Jewish "nationalism" was a sense of "peoplehood"; "close to ethnic but not quite", according to Joshua Fishman's definition in Language Loyalty in the United States, vol. 3 (New York: Yeshiva University, 1964), p. 9. It either took the form of 'diaspora' nationalism which encompassed Jews who lived in dispersion all over the world, or Zionism which envisioned a culturally autonomous

role Kinder zhurnal played in the Yiddishist movement via the Yiddish secular school movement, the link between the East European and American movements must first be established.

The Yiddish Cultural Movement

Yiddish has been a language associated with Ashkenazic Jewry for close to a thousand years and a literary language since the mid thirteenth century.[3] From earliest times, it has been a language of everyday communication in Jewish community life; "as the vehicle of entertainment literature"; and "as a vehicle of popular religious education or indoctrination."[4] Traditional Jewish life in East Europe was all-encompassing in that every facet of individual life was intertwined with religion and community, including education. Hebrew, in contrast, was reserved for the holy texts. For those whose knowledge of Hebrew was insufficient to study the holy texts in the

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Jewish state.

[3]Ibid., p. 5. For a brief summary on the origins of Yiddish as a language see An Everyday Miracle: Yiddish Culture in Montreal, eds. Ira Robinson et al., (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1990), p. 12. For a somewhat more detailed review, see Joshua Fishman, Yiddish in America (The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton & Co., 1965), pp. 1-6. The most comprehensive and authoritative source is Max Weinreich, Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh, vols. 1-2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[4]Joshua Fishman, Yiddish in America, pp. 3-5.

original, primarily women and the poorer classes, Yiddish was used as the language of translation.[5]

Jewish traditionalism included a sense of worldliness even from the early beginnings of Jewish history. Jewish culture evidenced the infusion of world philosophical movements and knowledge from the time of the prophets to the start of the seventeenth century, when a period of shrinkage in worldly interests set in.[6] This period of withdrawal lasted until the mid eighteenth century, when the Haskalah (the Jewish Enlightenment) in Western Europe set in.[7] When the Haskalah later flourished in Russia in the mid nineteenth century, the detrimental effects of mass assimilation that had taken place in West Europe did not go unnoticed in East Europe. Awareness of this potential danger in conjunction with the harsh economic and political repression of Czarist Russia reoriented the drive for

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[5]J. Fishman, Language Loyalty in the United States, pp. 5-6.

[6]Saul Goodman, Traditsye un banayung, (New York: Farlag Matones, 1967), pp. 11-12.

[7]Haskalah is the Hebrew term for the Enlightenment, an ideology which began within Jewish society in the latter eighteenth century, most noticeably in Germany. It had its roots in the general Enlightenment movement of eighteenth-century Europe, but its character was different since its primary aim was to separate religion from secular Jewish life through change in the educational system. By incorporating secular studies into traditional Jewish education its proponents felt it would be possible to "Be a Jew at home, and a man abroad." This phrase, quoted from a poem by J.L. Gordon, later became the movement's motto. Solomon Grayzel, A History of the Jews, (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 525.

secularization. Jewish nationalism became a secular movement.[8] As Halevy states:

> Great social movements do not arise without cause; they are a response to major dislocations in the cultural, religious, economic, political, or psychological state of a nation. The traditional fabric of Jewish life was destroyed in Russia after 1863. As a desparate answer to the pressing problems of the day, several solutions were proposed, Zionism and Socialism being the best known and most influential ones.[9]

Indeed these revolutionary movements, Zionism and (Jewish) Socialism,[10] as the modern expressions of Jewish nationalism, greatly influenced the onset and character of the radical changes towards secularization in education both in East Europe and America.[11]

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[8]In Yiddish in America, Note (1), pp. 11-12, Joshua Fishman discusses the particular connotation of "nationalism" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Eastern Europe. In essence, he explains, the term "nation" or "nationalism", when applied to the Jewish context of those times, incorporates the qualities of self-determination and separate cultural autonomy leading to a sense of Jewish "peoplehood".

[9]Zvi Halevy, Jewish Schools Under Czarism and Communism - A Struggle For Cultural Identity (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 28-29.

[10]Although the terms 'socialism' and 'nationalism' are often considered contradictory, the 'Jewish socialism' referred to here is in reference to the socialist ideals adopted by many Jewish nationalist political groups. One of these parties, the 'Bund', originated in universal socialism but subsequently changed its focus to incorporate socialist ideology with Jewish nationalism (see footnote 23, Chapter 1). This seeming anomoly will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

[11]Some degree of secularization in Jewish education existed in Russia prior to the revolutionary movements, as exemplified in the Crown Schools for Jewish children and the government sponsored rabbinical seminaries in Warsaw,

Language became a crucial issue to these nationalist and revolutionary groups. Firstly it was a means of communication with the 'masses'[12] they were attempting to reach with their political and social messages. Language as an independent need was a later development in the effort to validate the legitimacy of the masses and the value of their folk-culture. It followed that education became the necessary vehicle to ensure that the language and all its cultural and sociological implications endured.

There ensued a battle between those who wanted Hebrew and/or Yiddish as the official language(s) of the Jewish nation. For the most part, the Hebrew language became associated with the political strivings of the Zionists, and Yiddish became associated with Diaspora nationalism. But the language issue entailed further complexities. Controversies raged over where the Jewish nation existed or should ideally exist; that is, whether the Jewish nation should be autonomous territorially, concentrated in Palestine or elsewhere, or whether Jews should be scattered

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Vilna and Zhitomir. Early proponents of Haskalah ideals, such as Isaac Ber Levinson (1788-1860), were cited by S. Goodman as an example of the pioneering spirit of "liberalism and Europeanism" in Traditsye un banayung, p. 14.

[12]The term 'masses' is here used in the context of the actual socialist spirit of the times which greatly influenced the concepts of 'society' used by the revolutionary Jewish political groups.

in the lands of the Diaspora, such as East Europe and America.

As early as 1907 at a Jewish Teachers Conference in Vilna, the primacy of Yiddish as the language of the Jewish nation and as the hub of future modern education was declared.[13] The ensuing First Yiddish Language Conference was the collaborative effort of cultural activists Dr. N. Birnbaum, Dr. C. Zhitlowsky and the American Yiddish writer Dovid Pinski. Prominent authors and intellectuals convened at the Czernowitz (Tshernovits) Conference of 1908 in the Austro-Hungarian province of Bukovina to officially declare the Yiddish culture movement's agenda.[14] However, existing hostilities emerged in the process between those factions supporting Yiddish as the official Jewish language, those supporting Hebrew as the official language of the Jews, and those who allowed for one or the other as the official language in tandem with the other being recognized as a Jewish national language. The 1908 Czernowitz Conference was certainly an historic moment in Yiddishist history. In

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[13]Chaim Kazhdan, "The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars" in The Jewish People, Past and Present, vol. 2 (New York: Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks, 1955), pp. 131-132.

[14]For a sociological perspective on the importance of the Czernowitz conference to the status of Yiddish, see J. Fishman, "Attracting a Following to High-Culture Functions for a Language of Everyday Life: The Role of the Tshernovits Language Conference and the 'Rise of Yiddish'" in International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Sociology of Yiddish, no. 24 (The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton Publishers, 1980).

subsequent decades, opinions have fluctuated as to its significance and success.[15]

The development of Yiddish as a cultural and literary language, that is, a 'high-culture' language in sociological terminology, was only a recent development of East Europe in the last three decades prior to the Czernowitz Conference. Until then, the language of Jewish scholars who traditionally held the most prestigious status in the Jewish community, was Hebrew/ Aramaic. For the modernizing Jews, European languages such as German, Russian or Polish were held in great esteem.

Yiddish as a high-culture language was first championed by the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Yiddish writers such as Mendele Mocher Sforim, Sholom Aleichem, and I.L. Peretz; and intellectuals such as Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky and Shmuel Niger, avid supporters of Yiddish language, Yiddish culture and ultimately Yiddish education. In many cases, ideological and political party affiliations were overlooked in the common struggle to build a Yiddish cultural identity.[16] Concomitant with recognition of Yiddish as a national language, these Yiddishists demanded equal status politically and culturally within the Jewish community and without.

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[15]Ibid., pp. 68-69.

[16]Z. Halevy, p. 73.

Yet what they sought was so revolutionary it was almost heretical. For it meant fighting the Jewish establishment in toto on all fronts. First they had to take on the Jewish religious establishment, which still overwhelmingly dominated the Jewish institutions and Jewish way of life. In the various areas of East Europe, religious Orthodoxy was predominant either in the Hasidic or in the traditionally Orthodox communities. In addition, the Yiddishists had to deal with the maskilim (adherents of the Haskalah ideals) wherever they had significant influence. Although maskilim supported the use of the dominant language of the land for most aspects of life, they generally supported the use of Hebrew for Jewish creativity.

Consequently, in Russia, the Yiddishists had to compete for educational funds from the Hevrah Mefitzei Haskalah (Society for the Dissemination of Enlightenment), the powerful private cultural and educational arm of the Russian Haskalah movement. Originally, this society was an agent of Russification. But by the end of the nineteenth century, it was dominated by the Hebraist maskilim. In addition to the Mefitzei Haskalah, in Russia, the Yiddishists had to compete for students with the national government schools, which the majority of Jewish children attended.[17] Finally, they virulently rejected existing

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[17]Ibid., p. 76.

institutions of education such as the cheders, yeshivas and orthodox Talmud Torahs.[18] Leibush Lehrer, in his book Di moderne yidishe shul (The Modern Jewish School), graphically describes the traditional cheder as being in "a frozen state," as "paralyzed," as "hanging like dead vital organs on the folk-body."[19] With time, this hostile rejection altered to a softened critique which acknowledged some redeeming qualities of the cheders.

In Poland, the Yiddishists had, in addition, to solicit private funds from an increasingly impoverished Jewish community to maintain their schools, since the Polish government not only refused to subsidize their

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[18] **Cheders**, or heders, were private primary schools which came into existence around the 13th century in Europe and remained largely unchanged to the onset of the twentieth century. They were usually held in a teacher's home, to which children from the age of three were brought in order that they learn how to read and to study religious texts. However, there is evidence of cheders affected by the Enlightenment as far back as the early 1800's in Russia and Poland, where secular subjects were introduced. For further elaboration on secularized cheders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see E. Gamoran, Changing Conceptions in Jewish Education, vol.1 (New York: Macmillan, 1924), pp. 186-7.

Talmud Torahs were schools supported by the Jewish community for those children who could not afford to attend cheders.

Yeshivas, such as those found in East Europe in the nineteenth century, were the higher institutions of talmudic learning, usually attended by those graduates of the cheder with an inclination towards rabbinic learning.

Originally, cheders were the predominant institution of Jewish education in America. However, that educational system was already in deep crisis prior to the advent of the modern secular Yiddish schools.

[19] Leibush Lehrer, Di moderne yidishe shul (New York: Farlag Max N. Maizel, 1927), p. 11.

schools, as they were required to by law,[20] but continually harassed and attempted to shut down the existing Yiddishist schools.

What was the vision these Yiddishists had other than of opposing the status quo or "anything that savored of the old life?"[21] Before this question can be answered, one must take into account that many of the originators of the Yiddish culture movement were also committed socialists. Their vision required reaching the vast numbers of poor and unemployed to make them understand all the social and political ramifications of their circumstances. Humanism, justice and social equality were fundamental to their social, cultural and educational vision.[22] Whether the socialists originated the Yiddish secular school system as a propaganda measure has been a debated point. The difference of opinion centers on whether the socialist Bundists[23] deliberately set out to develop a school

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[20] The Minorities Treaty was imposed upon the Polish government after the First World War. This issue will be discussed more fully in the later section on Poland.

[21] Z. Halevy, p. 77.

[22] A fuller discussion of the the importance of 'humanism' to the Yiddishist philosophy of education will follow in Chapter Three.

[23] The "Bund" was a Jewish political organization officially inaugurated in 1897 in Vilna, Russia. From the beginning, it was a socialist movement in support of the working class. At first, its emphasis was on merging with the larger revolutionary movement.

Zvi Halevy states in Jewish Schools Under Czarism and Communism, p. 64, "Although it was specifically a Jewish

movement with which to educate the masses to their ideological program,[24] or whether the secular school movement affiliated itself with the socialist elements because of the animosity of the Zionists.[25] Most likely it was a synergy of the two.

One must appreciate the ambitious grandness of the Yiddishists' vision. Given their minority position within the traditional, conservative Jewish community at large, both in numbers and in degree of influence, their intent to create a new society was either staggeringly naive or passionately visionary. With Yiddish as their basis, they vowed to start with a clean slate, without the restrictions of tradition. Their aim was to build a secular autonomous Jewish culture in the Diaspora in their mother tongue, since Yiddish at that time was spoken by the vast majority

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organization, the Bund always regarded itself as an integral part of the Russian Social Democratic Party." However, very early in the twentieth century, it began to support the Jewish nationalist mood sweeping East Europe although it maintained its strongly socialist ideology. Halevy argues that the Bund's adoption of Jewish nationalism was in large measure a counter-response to the growing popularity of the proletarian-style Zionism. For a more detailed account of the Bund, see Jonathan Frankel's Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[24]Miriam Eisenstein, Jewish Schools in Poland (New York: King's Crown Press, 1950), pp. 8-10. Also in Z. Halevy, p. 65. Most versions of this period of Jewish history tend to represent this point of view.

[25]Chaim Kazhdan, Fun kheder un shkoles biz tsisho (Mexico: Shloyme Mendelson fund bay der gezelshaft far kultur un hilf, 1956), p. 338.

of East European Jews. Their challenge was to elevate the status of Yiddish to a world language equal to all national languages by ridding it of its denigrated image both as a bastardized version of German and as a 'low-culture' language. Prescriptive corrective measures were taken to build up the terminology of some of its needy secular sectors, such as science, and to improve Yiddish prolificacy in literary and intellectual areas.

In conjunction with these socio-cultural goals, the Yiddishists actively pursued the avenue of education. Only by instilling these values in the upcoming generations could their dream be realized. And since the Yiddish language was intrinsic to the culture they were creating or reconstructing, cultural values and ideals could only be tr nsmitted in that very language.[26] The Yiddish press grew and became increasingly influential. Creation of Yiddish literature and theatre was encouraged and welcomed. Old and new works were received with respect and eagerness. Established literary masterpieces and books of secular knowledge were translated from other languages into Yiddish and made accessible to all. As the following sections of this chapter will reveal, several types of Yiddish schools existed in East Europe by the 1920's and evolved in

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[26] The role of language in ethnic culture is discussed at length in J. Fishman's The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival: Perspectives on Language and Ethnicity (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1984).

response to the degree of ethnic and religious freedom each country allowed.[27] New textbooks and readers had to be written and printed for the emerging modern Yiddish secular schools.

The evolution of a Yiddish children's literature was closely tied to the Yiddish secular school movement. In the first decade of the twentieth century, there were as yet no Yiddish children's journals or anthologies of children's literature in East Europe. Furthermore, Shmuel Niger claims, there were no readers for children's literature.[28] Children did not read for pleasure, only to study religious texts. Folk-tales, fables, songs, games and riddles certainly existed here and there. But only a few suitable stories for children by Sholom Aleichem, Yankev Dinezon and several others which were suitable for children existed when the Yiddishists began to tackle in earnest the task of

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[27]Z. Halevy, p. 250. In the eastern Borderlands of Russia, such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, "where the Jews were given unlimited freedom and government aid, they built a network of Hebrew and Yiddish schools which most Jewish children attended." (emphasis mine) However, support of Jewish cultural autonomy ended in Lithuania in 1926 and in Latvia in 1934. Only the Republic of Estonia maintained this policy for its tiny Jewish minority until the Second World War. In Russia and Poland, where the regimes were hostile to Jewish education through suppression and/or lack of government aid, the reverse situation evolved; that is, a minority of Jewish children attended such schools.

[28]Shmuel Niger, "Vegn yidisher kinder-literatur" in Shul almanakh, eds. F. Gelibter et al. (Philadelphia: Central Committee of the Workmen's Circle, 1935), p. 188.

creating a children's literature and curriculum for their new schools and new vision of the future.

Understandably, the initial writers of Yiddish children's literature were the teachers of the modern secular Yiddish schools. In 1912, publishing establishments were founded in Warsaw, Kishinev and Kiev, specifically to issue children's books, while various cultural organizations undertook to do the same.[29] Established Yiddish publishers, like B. A. Kletskin of Vilna, slowly began their involvement with children's literature by issuing books and, shortly thereafter, periodicals, such as Grininke beymelekh (The Little Green Trees).[30] The first, but unsuccessful, Yiddish children's periodical appeared in Warsaw in the form of a supplement to the journal Di yidishe vokh (The Yiddish Week), and was called Farn kleynem oylem (For the Young Audience). According to S. Niger, throughout the First World War, the Russian authorities prohibited any publication of Yiddish or Hebrew periodicals, resulting in what Niger calls a "wasteland" of Yiddish literature.[31] Niger acknowledges there was a limited supply of children's books, such as booklets of the

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[29]Ibid., p. 191.

[30]This particular children's magazine, though started by Kletskin, was renewed and popularized by S. Bastomski. In Shmuel Niger, "Vegn yidisher kinder literatur," p. 192. Grininke beymelekh will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

[31]S. Niger, "Vegn yidisher kinder-literatur", p. 193.

publisher 'Blimelekh'[32] and works by I.L. Peretz were available in the schools. Only after the First World War, did the creation of Yiddish children's literature earnestly resume in response to the needs of children's homes set up for war refugees and orphans and newly sprouted modern secular schools and secularized cheders (Cheder Metukkon).[33]

The Early Yiddishists

Since the effect of the prime movers of the Yiddish culture movement on education was profoundly felt both in East Europe and in America, it is vital to explore who these original ideological revolutionaries were and what their platform entailed.

I.L. Peretz (1852-1915) and Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky (1865-1943) were perhaps the two European Yiddishists with the highest profile in the area of education both at home and abroad. Although Peretz never set foot in America, Zhitlowsky settled in America in 1908. Their writings and activities had a tremendous influence on the Yiddishist movement and on its philosophy of education early in the century when Yiddish secular schools systems started to establish themselves in East Europe and America.

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[32]Ibid.

[33]See section below, "In Russia", for further reference on Cheder Metukkon.

Jonathan Frankel refers to Chaim Zhitlowsky as "a political nomad" because he changed parties and causes frequently throughout his career.[34] However, from his early adulthood in Russia, Chaim Zhitlowsky was consistently a proponent of socialism. While living and studying in Switzerland prior to coming to America, he was "a central figure among the Russian Folk Socialists."[35] Although he was never a member of the Bund or of a Zionist party in East Europe, he at times supported both parties. Once Zhitlowsky arrived in the United States, he became a member of the Poale-Zion (Zionist) party in 1913. In addition to being a founder of the Jewish Sejmist party, he at times supported the territorialists' position.[36]

From his earliest days as a secularist and Yiddishist, Zhitlowsky spoke out strongly for a socialist-oriented Jewish Diaspora nationalism and for a vibrant autonomous Jewish culture "whose ultimate individuality is the Yiddish

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[34]Jonathan Frankel, Prophecy and Politics, p. 258.

[35]Saul Goodman, The Faith of Secular Jews (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1976), p. 47.

[36]The Sejmists advocated a national parliament for each nationality - such as Ukrainian or Jewish - in each district of Russia, thereby granting each nationality its autonomy. As compared to the radical socialist group, the Socialist-Territorialists (S.S.- sionisti sotsialisti in Russia; S.T.-Socialist Territorialists in America), the Sejmist party held territorial considerations to be of far lesser importance.

A favorable portrait of Zhitlowsky appears in S. Goodman's The Faith of Secular Jews, p. 47, while a harsher assessment appears in J. Frankel's Prophecy and Politics, pp. 258-260.

language."[37] In 1908, he was an influential champion of Yiddish as the national Jewish language at the Czernowitz Conference. To quote Saul Goodman, "he saw in Yiddish and in Yiddish literature the central nerve of today's nationalism. Yiddish was for him equivalent to religion" except that Yiddish would "cement all factions" in contrast to the divisiveness religion caused between "the intelligentsia and the people".[38] Clearly Zhitlowsky viewed Yiddish as a potent signifier of the collective individualism of the Jewish people. He wrote:

> Yiddish simultaneously allows each Jew the freedom to believe or not believe what he wishes. And while the soul of a people is its culture, its language contains the clearest, most distinct expression of an independent household.[39]

Although he has often been criticized for basing his concept of cultural identity so restrictively on the Yiddish language and for contradictions within his thesis,[40] Zhitlowsky had a tremendous impact on softening

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[37]My translation from the Yiddish in Leibush Lehrer's Di moderne yidishe shul, p. 19.

[38]S. Goodman, Traditsye un banayung, p. 20.

[39] My translation of Yiddish quote of Zhitlowsky's taken from his "Gezamelte shriftn" as it appears in S. Goodman's Traditsye un banayung, p. 20.

[40]Criticism of Zhitlowsky's ideology can be found in the writings of J. Frankel, C. Kazhdan, S. Niger and S. Goodman referred to in the bibliography of this thesis.
Saul Goodman, in The Faith of Secular Jews, pp. 8-12, claims that, in essence, the contradictions reside in Zhitlowsky's basic theory of linguistic secularism, which, by 1940, was evidently untenable to many Jewish secularists who began to look to religion as the strategic base for the

the edge of the American Jewish radicals (socialists and anarchists) and on making them more receptive to his ideas on the compatibility of Jewish nationalism with their firm beliefs in internationalism.[41]

I.L. Peretz had tremendous influence, primarily as an outstanding literary figure. As such, he became head of the Yiddishist movement in the latter years of the nineteenth century and played an immensely important role in the Czernowitz Conference and intellectual circles of the early twentieth century. Perhaps he was more influential in East Europe than in America because of his hands-on involvement with the creation of Yiddish language children's homes in Poland at the onset of the first World War. These acted as both home and school to orphaned and destitute children and were "really the forerunners of the Yiddish schools of the post-war period."[42] Here the emphasis was placed on educating the whole child through the interaction of the home, school and community.[43]

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cultural survival of Jewishness. Just prior to his death, Zhitlowsky's writings indicated his awareness of the need to reexamine his theory, but he never did get to complete that goal.

[41]S. Niger, "Yiddish Culture," p. 296.

[42] M. Eisenstein, p. 19.

[43]Further information on Peretz's influence can be found in Halevy, pp. 79-81, 236-237.

The Yiddish Secular School Movement

The Yiddish secular school movement developed differently in the various countries of East Europe in response to their respective political and social relationship with their minority Jews.[44] This discussion will be limited to the most populous Jewish areas, Russia and Poland (in the Interwar years).

In Russia

According to Gershon Pludermakher, Vilna was the cradle of the modern secular Yiddish school and of the Yiddish cultural movement in general.[45] Only in Vilna, he

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[44]For a comprehensive history of the Jews in East Europe, see Salo Baron, Russian Jews Under Tsars and Soviets (New York: Macmillan Company, 1954) and J. Frankel's Prophecy and Politics.

[45]Gershon Pludermakher, "Der moderner yidisher shul vezn in vilne" in Shul almanakh, eds. F. Gelibter et al. (Philadelphia: Central Committee of the Workmen's Circle, 1935).

A brief synopsis of the complex history of Vilna is required here since Vilna was an important center of the Yiddishist movement and is referred to frequently in this thesis.

From 1323 to 1795, when it was captured by Russia, Vilna was the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It remained in Russian hands until it was captured by the Germans in the fall of 1915, during the First World War(1914-1918). After the war(1919-1920), a struggle ensued between the Poles and Lithuanians for the possession of Vilna. From 1922 to 1939, Vilna was part of Poland. At the outbreak of the second World War, Soviet Russia invaded Vilna but in October of 1939, ceded it briefly to Lithuania only to then incorporate it in the U.S.S.R. in the summer of 1940. However, the Germans captured Vilna in June, 1941 and retained control until the Soviet Army liberated Lithuania, at which point, it again became part of the Soviet Union. (Vilna returned as the capital of

maintains, could such a "grandiose institution" as YIVO have evolved.[46] For in Vilna, even prior to the 1905 revolution in Russia, there was a desire to find another means of education to replace the existing cheder and yeshiva system. Evening schools for working-class adults and young adults, offering courses in secular subjects and improved literacy, were instituted in Vilna and elsewhere by the Bund and quickly became popular. These early schools became legalized on condition that Russian was to be the teaching language. Yiddish could only be used as an aid language. But in the 1905 spirit of revolutionary daring, Yiddish was quickly substituted as the primary language rendering the schools illegal. Shortly thereafter the first Yiddish textbooks and chrestomathies, such as those by A. Reisin and M. Birnbaum, were issued.[47]

Even prior to the evening schools, legal and quasi-legal Yiddish schools sprung up in Jewish centres of

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independent Lithuania upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the last decade of the twentieth century.) In Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 16, pp. 138-151.

[46]YIVO is the abbreviation of **Yidisher Visenshaftlikher Institut**, known in English as the Institute for Jewish Research. Founded in Berlin in 1925 by Nahum Shtif, it was centered in Vilna until it was destroyed during the Nazi occupation. In 1940, the American branch of YIVO, then known as Amopteyl, took over the centralizing function. YIVO has served as a major factor in the preservation and development of the Yiddish language and culture.

[47]G. Pludermakher, p. 233.

Russia, some even as early as 1859.[48] The first legalized "shabbas shul" (school held on the Jewish Sabbath), which opened in Odessa, in fact met three times a week rather than only on the Sabbath. Other cities and towns followed suit, and in 1860, Vilna opened its first "yon-tuv shul" (school sessions held on religious holidays). However, the Russian authorities started closing these suspect anti-religious schools in 1862, leaving only the Odessa school open by 1863. These early Yiddish "shabbas shuln", such as Odessa's girls' school established by M.I. Glasser in 1898, already showed concern with the role of the Yiddish language, a reflection of the radical element of its teachers.[49]

The first legal elementary Yiddish school was established in Vilna in 1912. It was a girls' school and limited to only four grades. In the German-occupied Vilna of 1915, another Yiddish school for boys was established with additional elementary and nursery schools following closely thereafter.[50] Nathan Eck states that Vilna

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[48]Chaim Kazhdan, Fun kheder un shkoles biz tsisho, pp. 169-172.

[49]Ibid., p. 172.

[50]Nathan Eck, "Educational Institutions of Polish Jewry" in Jewish Social Studies, vol. 9 (New York: Conference of Jewish Social Studies, 1946), p. 6.

maintained its status as the "stronghold of Yiddish education" right up to the second World War.[51]

Generally speaking, in territories held by Russia prior to the 1917 revolution, Jewish education was primarily dispensed through the traditional cheder, through the Cheder Metukkon (the improved cheder), or through the Hevrah Mefitzei Haskalah (Society for the Diffusion of Enlightenment). By 1910, the Mefitzei Haskalah had significantly enlarged its program to admit Yiddish language and literature courses despite the fact that schools entirely in the Yiddish language were not legal. Out of 53 schools they subsidized in 1909, 27 included Yiddish in their programs. Some schools opened under the disguised auspices of authorized cheders.[52] In 1911, for example, in Demievka, "a town (a suburb) of Kiev," a collective cheder was legalized with its teachers obtaining certificates as "melammedim" (cheder teachers).[53] In the Cheder Metukkon, which integrated secular culture, Jewish nationalism of the Zionist variety and religious education, an effort was made to modernize the curriculum and methods. Leibush Lehrer acknowledges the contribution these schools

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[51]Ibid., p. 9. Nathan Eck cites that in 1938, there were eight secular Yiddish (Cysho) elementary schools in Vilna teaching 1176 girls and 707 boys.

[52]Chaim Kazhdan, "The Yiddish School Secular Movement Between the Two World Wars," p. 132.

[53]Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 6, p. 434.

made to modern pedagogical practices, such as incorporating illustrations in books, creating new songs and children's literature. However, he disdainfully limits their significance to **modern** Jewish schools since their educational orientation was not aimed to be separate from their Zionist orientation. He claimed they were not in "search for a movement for a school, but a school for a movement."[54]

After the 1917 Revolution, it was clear that the Yiddish school movement had picked up momentum as a result of end-of-war agreements in Russia and the new countries carved out of it. Indicative of the growing Yiddish education trend was the school section of the short-lived Ukrainian 'Kultur lige' (Culture League) which was deeply involved in pedagogical discourse in its journal Shul un lebn (School and Life) and in pioneering the production of children's literature and various textbooks.[55] Once the Soviets took over in the Ukraine, only the Kultur lige's

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[54] My translation from Leibush Lehrer's Di moderne yiddishe shul, p. 24. He argues that, by contrast, the Yiddish secular school movement, such as the Cysho schools, originally strove for a school with an independent educational orientation that focused primarily on the child and pedagogic issues.

[55]The Russian 'Kultur lige' was established in May 1918, but it lost its status as an independent organization after the Sovietization of the Ukraine early in 1919. The Soviet People's Commissariat for Education took it over and developed a new Yiddish school system. See Chaim Kazhdan, "The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars," p. 132. Also see Zvi Halevy, pp. 89-91.

publishing house remained functioning. It was replaced by a new Soviet Yiddish school system which, by 1930, had undertaken the publication of a major chrestomathy of Yiddish literature and hundreds of textbooks.[56]

In fact, government schools run by official ethnic committees allowed and even encouraged varying degrees of Yiddish and other subjects taught in Yiddish. Interestingly, Shmuel Niger himself[57] was briefly the first Jewish intellectual to join the Jewish Commissariat in the Lithuanian-Belorussian Republic shortly after its founding in 1918.[58] Initially, after 1920, a large proportion of Jewish children attended these government schools. For example, in 1924-25, they serviced 41% of all children whose mother tongue was Yiddish in White Russia (Byelorussia), an area of high Jewish concentration. This proportion increased to 64% (33,398 pupils) in 1931-32. According to Kazhdan's figures, fully 55.5% (31,340 students) attended Yiddish **primary** schools in 1932-33. In all of Soviet Russia, 160,000 children were getting a

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[56]Chaim Kazhdan, "The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars," p. 133.

[57]Shmuel Niger immigrated to the United States shortly thereafter and played a significant role in the American Yiddish cultural and educational movement, as will become evident in Chapter Two.

[58]Z. Halevy, p. 161.

Yiddish education.[59] The content and methodology of the Yiddish curriculum altered and constricted over the years with the increasingly repressive social and political policies of the Soviet Union.

The high attendance records of the early 1930's started to drop off significantly in the mid nineteen thirties and the downward slide continued until 1937-38, when most of the schools were closed. What precipitated this decline? Halevy argues cogently that it most probably was due to Soviet repressive measures.[60] He concludes, "Jewish schools in the Soviet Union were a victim not of assimilation, but of totalitarianism."[61]

Perhaps the most interesting and significant aspect of Soviet Yiddish education is its contribution to the creation and publication of Yiddish literature both for children and adults, to the creation of scientific terminology, to the enhancement of modern pedagogic experimentation in methodology and institutions, and to the prevalence of the "revolutionary-socialist" spirit in Yiddish education.[62]

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[59]C. Kazhdan, "The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars," p. 133.

[60]Zvi Halevy, pp. 210-202.

[61]Ibid., p. 250.

[62]C. Kazhdan, "The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars," p. 134.

In Poland

With the end of the First World War, an independent Poland instituted universal education for its people. Jewish schools were not outlawed provided they respected government regulations. But by the same token they did not receive the recognition and funding given to state schools. Much hope was set on the post-World War One Minorities Treaty of 1919, that was to have given Jews equal citizen status, cultural autonomy, and government sponsored Jewish schools.[63] However, the awaited changes never came to pass.

Unlike post-World War One Russia, where secular Yiddish was encouraged while religion and Hebrew were severely discouraged, traditional Orthodoxy in Poland remained relatively unhindered as the predominant lifestyle of the Jewish population. Polonization was more evident in the haute bourgeois and middle class segments of the Jewish community. No doubt, Polonization was enhanced by the fact that, in the Interwar years, most Jewish children to age fourteen attended the free Polish public schools for

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[63]This Treaty obliged Poland to provide primary school education to ethnic groups in their own respective languages in areas where sufficient numbers warranted it. In addition, the Polish government was to provide state funds for religious and charitable purposes to linguistic, racial or religious minorities. Whereas the school obligation was fulfilled to other minority groups, such as the Ukrainians and Germans, "not a single Yiddish or Hebrew school was so established." Nathan Eck, p. 6. Also see Miriam Eisenstein, p. 4.

economic reasons as well as a slightly better opportunity for acceptance into public institutions of higher learning. Into this scenario were introduced the refugees from Russia, many of whom had been exposed to socialist Yiddishist ideas and education.

All these factors contributed to the political fragmentation evident in Polish Jewish society and to the similarly heterogenous and discordant private Jewish education sector. Nathan Eck outlines the principles behind the educational conflicts as: 1) "the place of religion in education and the relation between religious and secular education;" 2) the language question; 3) the Palestine issue which sharply divided the Zionists and the anti-Zionists; and 4) the question of whether politics or social orientation should be "an essential element of education."[64]

Of primary interest to this paper are the Cysho (Central Yiddish School Organization) schools, which were founded in 1921 in tandem with the first Polish Yiddish teachers conference.[65] This school system most prominently embodied the Yiddishist philosophy of East Europe and America. As will be shown later, many similarities between

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[64]Nathan Eck, p. 3.

[65]Ibid., p. 6. More information on the Cysho schools can be found in Kazhdan's Fun kheder un shkoles biz tsisho; "The Yiddish Secular Schools Between the Two World Wars"; and in Pludermakher's "Der moderner yidisher shul vezn in vilne."

the newly founded Sholom Aleichem schools in America and Cysho existed, although they differed on the critical issue of the necessity of political orientation to education. This very issue was side-stepped in Cysho's second conference, in 1925, where socialism was not included as a basic principle of the school, whereas Yiddish and secularism were.

Because they never received the full approval of the state or of the greater Jewish community, which was dominated by Zionists and proponents of Hebrew as the dominant language of Jewish education, the Polish Cysho schools were privately funded. Responsibility for Cysho's financial support was therefore shouldered primarily by the Bund and the left Poale-Zionists (socialist Zionists). The friction between these two predominant political camps within the board of directors reflected the ideological diversity of Cysho's independently run member schools. The Cysho schools were an affiliation of many small Yiddish secular schools. Therefore each school had its own administration and steering committee which determined its curriculum and ideological orientation. However, Cysho was primarily made up of two factions - the majority Medem (Bund) schools, where the attitude towards Zionism and the revival of Hebrew was hostile; and the Borokhov (left Poale

Zion) schools, where Palestine and Hebrew were regarded favorably.[66]

Cysho schools never flourished among the masses the way its founders had envisioned. Its stronghold continued to be in Vilna, but its overall growth in numbers of elementary schools gradually decreased over the years. From their height in 1924-25 Cysho schools reached their lowest levels of enrollment in 1935. After the 1935 low, the trend reversed for a few years improving the 1938-39 statistics of newly established institutions. However, this brief upswing was deceiving because afternoon schools, designed to supplement Polish elementary schools, accounted for the largest increase during that period.[67]

While student enrollment declined in Cysho schools, the number of Yiddish-speaking students increased dramatically in the the government public schools, which some 80% of all Jewish children attended. Eck further claims that Cysho even conducted assemblies in the public schools to bring some Yiddish culture to the Jewish children. He states:

> Indeed, the Cysho went a step further and arranged assemblies in the Polish state-owned schools for the Jewish pupils. Programs for such occasions consisted of the reading of a story by Sholom Aleichem, the singing of Yiddish songs and the like.[68]

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[66]Nathan Eck, p. 8.

[67]Ibid., p. 10.

[68]Ibid.

Yet despite Eck's statement, it seems strange and somewhat unlikely that this type of program was in any way extensive. First it was contrary to Cysho's unwavering focus on the day school and the "whole, integrated" child. And furthermore, the hostility of the administration of the Polish public schools towards such activities would no doubt have limited them.

In his analysis of the Yiddish secular school movement's decline, Eck cites several factors: financial difficulties brought on by the worsening poverty of the Jewish working class; the decrease in American aid (undoubtedly influenced by the Great Depression); government hostility, which used various tactics to close down the schools; and a lack of commitment of the general populace to Yiddish education.[69]

Seven years after the founding of Cysho, the offshoot Shul un kultur farband (School and Culture Association), known as Shul-kult, founded its own school movement in reaction to Cysho's extreme Yiddishist position. It was supported by the non-socialists and the rightist Poale-Zionists who advocated the revival of Hebrew, Zionist ideology, and interestingly as well, the teaching of Yiddish literature and language, although not to the exclusion of other aspects of Jewish culture. As in Cysho, the law required Polish to be taught extensively,

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[69]Ibid., pp. 9-11.

making the schools trilingual. Eck refers to these short-lived Yiddish-Hebrew schools as a "compromise".[70] Shulkult schools can hardly be said to have been a success. They didn't appeal to a large segment of the secular Jewish population, not even to a majority of the Zionists. In fact, their nine elementary schools in 1934-35 were limited to the Vilna area and its surroundings.[71]

Cysho's waning success was duplicated, though not to the same extent, in the fate of the Hebrew language Tarbut Schools. Established in 1919, they were also modern secular Jewish schools but closely affiliated with the Zionist movement. Their consistently higher enrollment reflected the popularity of that movement in Poland in the nineteen twenties and thirties. According to statistics provided by Nathan Eck, in the years of 1937-38, Tarbut had 162 elementary schools with 27,372 pupils as compared to Cysho's 86 elementary schools (plus several more in 1938-39; the exact number is undefined in Eck's statistics) with close to 10,000 pupils.[72]

The Philosophy of the Cysho Schools

The modern Yiddish secular school movement had a broad agenda and lofty ideals. Not only did it set out to create

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[70]Ibid., p. 17.

[71]Ibid., p. 18.

[72]Ibid., pp. 9-14.

a culture of the large working class in Yiddish and an appreciation of its literary works, it also worked to induct the upcoming generations into the dream of an economically accessible, socialist society with a universalist orientation. According to Miriam Eisenstein, the modern Jewish school, undoubtedly, set out to "break all ties with the 'old school', a product and perpetuator of capitalist society".[73]

Breaking with the old school also entailed a new scientific approach to education in alignment with world-wide progressivism in modern education. "Built on the foundations of the newly emerging educational psychology, the school set for its aim, the development of the **whole** child, both physically and mentally."[74] In fact, Eisenstein points out, Cysho sponsored "experimental and psychopedagogical research" as early as 1921 on this and other issues that were prominent in educational circles.[75] From the educational outlooks of Comenius, Pestalozzi and Rousseau, to the theories of John Dewey and Stanley Hall, to the ideas of the Dalton Plan, all these were studied by Cysho educators. Many of these works, like Dewey's, were translated into Yiddish.

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[73]M. Eisenstein, p. 21.

[74]Ibid., p. 26. The emphasis is mine.

[75]Ibid., p. 22.

Since the approach was child-centered and the aim was wholeness of the child in education, it followed that the language of learning had to be Yiddish, the mother tongue, to avoid a dichotomy between the content and the means of learning. If learning was to begin with the child's own experience, that experience, which was first conceptualized in Yiddish, had to continue to develop in that language. Much of the wholeness concept mirrors John Dewey's negation of dualisms between mind and body, between goals and methodology.[76] Continuing in the Dewey tradition, emphasis was placed on individual and interactive experience as the basis for learning, as opposed to the traditional text-book centered approach.[77]

To some extent, theory was put into practice in Cysho schools. In many ways the school was child-centered. Close ties between the child, the home, the school and community were greatly encouraged both by the curriculum and school-related activities. The schools were often community centres and in some cases, as mentioned earlier, children's homes. However, 'child-centered' did not mean that the children determined the social setting or direction their schooling was to take, a common misconception to this day

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[76] John Dewey's philosophy of education will be discussed below in Chapter 3 in relation to the American Yiddish secular school system. However, much of Cysho's psycho-pedagogical tenets can as well be likened to John Dewey's theory.

[77] M. Eisenstein, p. 27.

of a central tenet of Dewey's brand of progressivism. Quite the contrary, the children received a definitive social orientation to Marxist historical materialism, which led them to identify proudly with the working class, in opposition to the bourgeoisie.[78] Most Jews in this period were living in extreme poverty under the harsh economic conditions and restrictions of Poland. They were predominantly small shopkeepers and artisans whose access to occupations and economic opportunities were progressively strangled until the start of the second World War. Thus children were encouraged to think critically of their situations and of ways to improve not only their own lives but that of their families, communities, and eventually the world at large.

The curriculum of Cysho reflected the commitment to the unity of "aims and means", to borrow John Dewey's terminology. Nature and natural phenomena became an integral part of the program from the earliest grades, necessitating the creation of a Yiddish terminology for these areas. History was to be taught with the goal of developing in the students the critical sensitivity and analytical skills required to contribute to their understanding of society and its potential reconstruction.[79] However, there were conflicting views on

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[78]Ibid., p. 26.

[79]M. Eisenstein, p. 28.

how to teach Jewish history, each based on conflicting aims. For those wishing to stress universalism, Jewish history was to be handled as merely another study of history; whereas for those wishing to stress Jewish nationalism, it was to be a means for understanding the causes underlying events and behavior of the Jewish people with an eye to improving their present situation.[80]

Music was seen as an important educative vehicle for consolidating the home and school, in addition to its aesthetic and worldly value. Although Hebrew had a stronger link with the traditional life Cysho desparately wanted to leave behind, the Bible was studied critically and both modern Hebrew language and modern Hebrew literature were allowed as electives in only those schools controlled by the left Poale Zion.[81] And in keeping with their positive attitude to labor, the Cysho educators established an activity program, which emphasized good "work habits and attitudes" while actually engaging the students in artisan-type work.[82]

From the start of the Yiddish secular school movement, the issues of curriculum reflected the current concerns of the Yiddishists that were the topics of essays, literature and critique in the press of the day. Journals, newspapers

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[80]Ibid., p. 29.

[81]Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[82]Ibid., p. 31.

and periodicals were very instrumental in exposing the public to the latest debates and cultural analyses. As literature and intellectual thought proliferated in the Yiddish journalistic medium, it represented the new ethic, the new morality of the Yiddishist movement. Children's literature, as it was being created, was disseminated through much the same channels and reflected the new order. Children's magazines such as Grininke beymelekh (The Little Green Trees) in Vilna were a paradigm of the adult veneration for modern Yiddish literature, as was Kinder zhurnal in America.

The evolving interpretations, principles and objectives of the Yiddish secular school movement in the nineteen thirties and later decades were in response to the new ethics being formed by the intellectual debates of the times. For example, a little over a decade after Cysho was established and only five years after Leibush Lehrer wrote Di moderne yidishe shul (The Modern Jewish School), Abraham Golomb, the "non-conformist Yiddishist,"[83] stated in a

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[83]Saul Goodman in The Faith of Secular Jews, p. 219, calls Abraham Golomb a "Yiddishist non-conformist thinker and educator" because of his desire to "reevaluate all Jewish ideologies", his "passionate love of Israel, and a deep faith in Eternal Israel." As dean of the Jewish Teachers Seminary in Vilna(1922-31), he played a major role in the development of Yiddishist educational philosophy and materials.

1933 issue of a pedagogic/psychology journal,[84] that he was not prepared to continue rejecting everything associated with tradition nor to fully endorse universalism. His moderation of radicalism mirrored the mood of the contemporary 1930's press. Golomb redefined the three educational principles of the new Jewish school as "folkways, secularity, and the implications of the fact that we are dealing with children of a world people" as the direction for the future.[85] His argument centered on gleaning what was positive in the Jewish educational folkways, such as respect for individual differences in the cheders of old, and development of self-reliance in the yeshivas, and incorporating them into the "New School". Secularity was defended not as a rejection of "religious feeling in man" nor of "the whole cultural heritage which came down to us in religious garb," but in the spirit of universalism. "It means only that the material should be freed of its old character and adapted to modern forms of culture. Educationally it means to free man from dogma and blind authority."[86] Furthermore, the message of universality was to be thenceforth interpreted through

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[84]A. Golomb, "Pedagogical Problems of the Jewish School" in Shriftn far psikhologye un pedagogik, vol. 1 (Vilna: Yidishe visnshaftlikher institut, psykhologysh-pedagogyshe sektsye, 1933), pp. XVII-XVIII.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid.

Jewish nationalist eyes, with the emphasis on the state of dispersion of the Jewish people, their state of Goluth (exile), and their ultimate unity despite the differences incurred by living in different countries. In Golomb, the voice of Jewish diaspora nationalism was just as strong as the universalist message.

The degree or direction of change was not uniform among the Yiddishists, nor was consensus ever reached amongst the various factions of Jewish secularists. As seen earlier in this section, even amidst the Cysho organization there was ongoing controversy.

The following is a 1938 quote by Chaim Kazhdan, then chairman of Cysho, as he countered internal and American objections to Cysho's continued intransigence towards altering its anti-Hebraic and anti-traditional stance. Nathan Eck uses it to illustrate Cysho's philosophy. It also serves here to underline the attempts made to integrate old Bundist rhetoric on neutralism[87] with the strong trend of that period toward Jewish nationalism:

> Our school is Jewish-national because it introduces the children into the sphere of national problems of the past and the present time.
> It is Jewish-cultural because it forges Jewish culture, making the children participate both as builders and enjoyers of this culture.

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[87]Neutralism was a concept first used by V. Medem in 1903 to placate the warring factions within the Bund. It referred to striving for a neutral socio/political ideology which would allow for the collective will to either assimilate into the host country's culture or to ensure the continuity of the Jews as a people.

> It is thus clearly Jewish-constructive, creating a new type of person with ideals of physical and spiritual productiveness and social usefulness.
>
> Preservation of Jewry? No! We do not cultivate such things in our schools because we do not strive to make our children cultural chauvinists.[88]

Whereas traditional Jewish education reflected the goals of preserving a specific Jewish way of life entrenched in codification that had evolved over thousands of years, modern secular Yiddish education reflected its goals of preserving its unique Jewish way of life which necessitated use of the Yiddish language and the propensity to adaptability to "the sentiment of the particular day."[89] As A. Golomb so succinctly puts it, "The educational goals of a people invariably reflect whatever it regards as its particular goal in life."[90]

No doubt, the goals of Yiddish secularists were changing in tandem with their own interpretations of the sociological and political realities of their respective

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[88]Nathan Eck's translation of Kazhdan's statement into English is somewhat questionable in expressing important nuances of the Yiddish into English. However, the general idea is of greater importance here. The quote by Chaim Kazhdan is extracted from "Do We Need a Revision of Jewish Secularism?" (Yiddish) Shulvegn, no. 3, 1938.

Shulvegn (Ways of the School) was an educational journal published by Cysho shortly after its inception wherein ongoing educational topics were discussed by administrators and teachers.

[89]Yudel Mark, "Changes in the Yiddish School"(1949) in Jewish Education in the United States, ed. L.P. Gartner, (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1969), p. 193.

[90]Abraham Golomb, "Traditional Education," p. 106.

environments. In East Europe, still unaware of their impending doom, every faction of the Jewish people had its own interpretation of the problem and its own solution. Cysho, a leftist Yiddishist fragment of the broad range of Jewish secularism, nevertheless portrayed a wide spectrum of opinion within its own organization right up to the final elimination of its schools and its population in the ensuing Holocaust of the Second World War.

CHAPTER TWO

In America

The Growth of Yiddishism

Well before the onset of the twentieth century, the Yiddish language was no stranger to America. In fact, Yiddish language and culture can be dated back to the Colonial days when Jewish immigrants from West and East Europe brought their Yiddish mother tongue with them to the New World.[1] The existence of Yiddish books (primarily Yiddish translations of world classics from many languages, including Hebrew) and employment of Yiddish as a language of instruction in traditional Jewish schools were both indicative of some level of Yiddish usage in those early times up until the 1870's. Thereafter the change from "consumerism" to "creation" of Yiddish culture in the United States noticeably began.[2] It coincided with the large waves of mass immigration from Russia to America that started in the 1880's and provided a quickly growing Yiddish-speaking population.[3] Along with the swelling

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[1] S. Niger, "Yiddish Culture", p. 264.

[2] Ibid.

[3] From S. Baron's The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets, here are some figures of Russian emigration to America from 1871-1910: 1871-1880----40,000; 1880-1890----

number of East European immigrants came their rising demand for cultural activity and for Jewish communal welfare responsibility.

An attitudinal change toward the cultural status of Yiddish began to form and spread. It entailed shifting the "low" status of vernacular Yiddish to a "high" or literary level. As Joshua Fishman notes:

> The 'spread of language' does not always entail gaining new speakers or users...Frequently it entails the gaining of new functions or uses, particularly, 'H' functions (i.e. literacy-related functions in education, religion, 'high culture' in general...), (for) a language that is already widely known and used in 'L' functions (i.e. everyday family, neighborhood and other informal/intimate, intragroup interaction).[4]

That is precisely what began occuring in the late 1880's when a number of Yiddish writers, like Alexander Harkavy, broke away from the Germanized Yiddish so powerfully prevalent until then, and insisted on the dignity of simple Yiddish in everyday and cultural contexts, much like his contemporary compatriots in East Europe were doing. The trend continued and escalated with the enormous infusion of Yiddish-speaking immigrants into American society from the 1880's until the mid 1920's.

In the first few decades of the twentieth century there was much fluidity of communication between East

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135,000; 1891-1900----279,811; 1901-1910----704,245.

[4]J. Fishman, "Attracting a Following to High-Culture Functions for a Language of Everyday Life," p. 43.

Europe and America. Interchange of ideas, of information, and of their proponents was vigorous. While the Yiddishists were emerging from the bonds of traditional Judaism in East Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, in America the Yiddishists also largely represented "the new progressive or even revolutionary tendency."[5] Indeed, the Yiddishist fervor of Zhitlowsky and Peretz and the "cultural nationalism" of Simon Dubnow[6] found root in the fertile ground of New York, where radicalism was fast becoming the predominant character of the Yiddish working-class community in sharp contrast to the conservative, Americanized 'up-town' Jews.[7] High concentrations of Yiddish-speaking immigrant factory workers in a few large cities, like New York, coincided with the era of rapid

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[5]S. Niger, "Yiddish Culture," p. 286.

[6]Simon Dubnow, a noted Jewish historian, formulated a theory of Jewish history, "autonomism", which held that the cohesive factor of the Jewish people over millenia in the Diaspora was their "collective will to live - a will nourished by a common historical destiny." From S. Goodman, The Faith of Secular Jews, p. 13. Goodman offers a good summary of Dubnow's theory and importance in the development of Yiddishism in America.

[7]The term 'up-town' Jews is applied to the financially and socially established Jews who were the founders and philanthropists of many cultural and social institutions in New York. They were primarily descended from the German Jews of the second wave of migration of Jews to America, which began after the Napoleonic wars. However, a few of these wealthy, conservative, largely assimilated families were descended from the even earlier wave of Spanish-Portugese Jews who arrived in the United States in the mid seventeenth century. More extensive information can be found in E. Gamoran's Changing Concepts in Jewish Education, vol. 2, pp. 1-3.

growth in the American labor movement thereby suggesting a visible affiliation between unionism and Yiddishism. Joshua Fishman points out that this was not an ideological affiliation because many immigrant laborers were oriented to Jewish nationalism in contrast to the cosmopolitanism of their American fellow-labor unionists. He concludes, "Certainly Jewish unionism in America never became a bastion of Yiddish and Yiddishism as it had in Europe."[8]

From the large numbers of Yiddish laborers, factory workers and intelligentsia came the core that f. eled the Yiddishist movement and its creative literary, intellectual and theatrical activities in America.[9] Their common aspirations converged in the rising importance of the Yiddish publications, which educated the masses both in secular matters and in appreciation of good literature.

The Yiddish press in America was hardly an impartial vehicle for the many active political factions of the times. By the 1880's the radicals alone had several newspapers representing their differing ideologies. For example, the Arbeter tsaytung (Workers' Newspaper) in 1890 was the voice of the powerful Russianized Marxist

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[8]J. Fishman, Language Loyalty in the United States, p. 48.

[9]For a colorful picture of the early American Jewish immigrant community at the turn of the twentieth century, see Hutchins Hapgood's The Spirit of the Ghetto (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967).

intellectuals who were organizing a Jewish labor organization in the name of universal labor. Their concern with the increasingly large numbers of Jewish immigrants working in the deplorable conditions of the sweat-shops was diametrically opposed to all versions of Jewish nationalism in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In contrast, the New yorker yidishe folks tsaytung (The New York Jewish People's Newspaper), which only lasted for the years 1888-1889, was showing the beginnings of attempts to promote both Jewish nationalism and socialism. That ideological combination began to flower in America only at the turn of the century.

There were, of course, the representative papers of the conservative and orthodox sector as well, such as the daily Yidishes tageblatt (Yiddish Daily) which started in 1885. The Forverts (The Forward), founded in 1897, however, started out as a "militant, socialist, anti-clericalist, anti-Zionist, folk-educationist" daily paper.[10] With time, it evolved into perhaps the most popular and influential Yiddish newspaper. In 1923 it had a circulation of 153,639 out of the total 383,638 circulation of Yiddish dailies.[11] The Forverts is still in circulation today as a weekly

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[10]J. Fishman, Language Loyalty in the United States, p. 27.

[11]Mordecai Soltes, The Yiddish Press: An Americanizing Agency (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1950), pp. 184, 186.

paper with separate publications in English and in Yiddish, albeit with a very small subscription level of approximately 15,000 for its Yiddish version.[12] Many other newspapers and magazines carried the influential writings of the formulators of Jewish secularism. Yet, as Fishman interestingly points out, there was not one daily which espoused Yiddishism separate from political ideology as its official policy.[13]

By the 1890's, the Yiddish 'educating' newspaper and periodical had become the spawning ground of secular Yiddish literature in America, both for the writers and newly inducted readers. The literature produced in the early twentieth century increasingly had the stamp of American experience and sensibilities. The poetic medium in particular became distinctly American. Literary journals such as Zukunft (Future), founded in 1892 by a group of radicals who originally "were interested in more than literature,...who wanted to teach their contemporaries physics, philosophy and 'scientific socialism',"[14] gradually turned their focus toward literature, though not

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[12]This approximate figure, supplied by the Forverts office on May 21, 1993, does not include non-subscription sales.

[13]J. Fishman, Language Loyalty in the United States, p. 27.

[14]A. Hertzberg, "Speaking the Reader's Language: How a Yiddish Magazine Has Stayed Alive" in The New York Times Book Review, December 20, 1992.

to the exclusion of their original ideals. As mentioned earlier, this same phenomenon was at work in Europe, perhaps even slightly earlier. It was therefore not coincidental that this educative form of journalism was carried over to the children's realm in America as well. However, educative journalism geared for children only appeared upon the activation of the Yiddish secular school movement.

All cultural indices, such as thriving theatre and actively productive literary circles, indicated that "after World War 1 ...the center of Jewish life and Jewish creativity began to move to America."[15] Yet Yiddish instruction in schools remained limited and primitive until the second decade of the twentieth century, when it became the central issue of the Yiddishists.

American-style Yiddishist Education

The socio-political theories transported from East Europe to America were reshaped by the mitigating circumstances of big-city American life: democracy, a

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[15]S. Niger, "Yiddish Culture," p. 304. Undoubtedly, the 1920's were the peak years of the Yiddishist cultural movement. Yiddish theatre was at its height of popularity. In New York City alone, there were eleven theatres with another seventeen spread out throughout the rest of the United States. Only the decreased circulation of the Yiddish press of that decade from its 1915 peak indicated the oncoming decline of Yiddish culture. Encyclopaedia Judaica. Vol. 15, Col. 1627.

strong labor movement, and an urgency to become Americanized. Perhaps the most striking difference between the East European and American Yiddish schools was that the American schools were almost exclusively afternoon schools. These supplementary schools varied in the number of days per week classes were held, anywhere from one to five. From their inception they were secondary to the American public schools, where a good secular education was available to all. Although some limited support for day schools existed amongst the early founders of the Yiddish secular school movement in America, the predominant opinion that integration into the American fabric was an essential element of modern Yiddishist secularism prevailed. Day schools, such as the Catholic parochial schools, were perceived as separatist institutions which could pose a threat to the democratic liberalism so advantageous to cultural freedom for the Jews. They were seen by most American Yiddishists as dangerously isolationist and chauvinistic. However, early supporters of Yiddishist day schools encountered greater success in Canada, where several elementary day schools were created and have survived to present times.[16] In addition to their

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[16]Although the development of the Yiddishist movement in Canada requires a study of its own, it is interesting to note that Montreal's first day school, the Jewish People's School, was established in 1927. It originated as a faction splintered off from the National Radical School founded in 1913. In 1923, the National Radical School changed its name to Jewish Peretz Schools and in 1942 became a day school

elementary level supplementary schools, the American Yiddish secular school movement did establish several secondary schools and kindergartens as well as a Jewish Teachers' Seminary early on in their development, with several day schools following in later decades.[17]

What the East European and American schools did have in common, aside from their Yiddishist orientation, was their minority position in the various alternatives in Jewish education. Whereas the Cysho day-schools in Poland were far from being the preferred schooling for the majority of Jewish children, in America Yiddishist education represented an even smaller fraction than that of Cysho's already limited enrollment.[18] The passion and

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with a stronger Yiddishist orientation than Jewish People's School. In 1971 the two schools merged to create the Jewish People's and Peretz Schools elementary school system with an affiliated secondary school, Bialik High School (created in 1972). This comprehensive school system is presently one of the largest Jewish day school system in the world and the largest Yiddish-teaching institution, with an enrollment of 1600 students(1992-3).

[17]See pp. 64-65 of this chapter.

[18]According to Nathan Eck in "The Educational Institutions of Polish Jewry," p. 4, "Jewish schools organized along ideological lines, comprised...only about 15-20 percent of the Jewish school population (in Poland)."

S. Yefroikin cites some American statistics in "Yidishe dertsiung in di fareynikte shtatn," Algemeyne entsiklopedia, vol. 5 (New York: Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks, 1957), p. 211. In 1935, Yiddish secular school enrollment made up about 9.3% (including the extreme leftist International Workers Order (I.W.O.) schools normally considered outside the realm of the Yiddishist schools) of total enrollment in Jewish educational institutions whereas in 1954 that percentage was further reduced to just over 3%. Although Yefroikin's presentation

commitment of the Yiddishists could not compete for primary and secondary students with the attraction of complete integration within a democratic country offering free and equal education to all, or with the tenacious attraction of traditional religious education.

The Four Secular Yiddish School Systems in America

In New York, several Yiddishist school systems were started almost simultaneously with schools in East Europe. The first American Yiddish schools were pioneered by the various socialist Zionists who established the National-Radical Yiddish school system in New York City shortly after their 1910 convention in Montreal . These schools are also known as the Workers' Alliance, Farband schools or as the Hebrew-Yiddish Schools. Their affiliated organization, the Jewish National Workers' Alliance, undertook to organize and maintain this school system, which later became known as the Jewish Folk School (Yidishe folk shul).[19] In 1914, the National-Radical schools put out the first, albeit short-lived, children's magazine in America

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of data in Table form is confusing due to inconsistent and vague categories, one can still get a sense of the minor position held by the Yiddish secular schools in America.

[19]S. Yefroikin, "Yiddish Secular Schools in the United States" in The Jewish People, Past and Present, vol. 2 (New York: Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks, 1955), p. 144.

called Der yidisher kinder zhurnal (The Yiddish Children's Magazine) under the editorship of Joel Entin.[20]

Just as in Europe, conflicts ensued between groups advocating the supremacy of Hebrew or Yiddish and between the "far left" and the others on the issue of "universalist affiliation".[21] Similarly, those supporting Palestine as the Jewish homeland tended to advocate the supremacy of Hebrew, whereas those supporting the concept of Diaspora nationalism tended to advocate the supremacy of Yiddish. However, every permutation and combination of the factors of Hebrew/Yiddish, Palestine/territorialism/diaspora, socialism/universalism/Jewish nationalism, and religion existed, most in organized political groups advocating their position.

In 1913, one of the National-Radical (Farband) schools in the Bronx seceded on the grounds of differing educational philosophy. Enough young parents and cultural activists wanted a school that was not an arm of a political party such as the socialists and Zionists with whom they were thus far affiliated. Shortly after the death of Sholom Aleichem in 1916, they adopted his name in commemoration and called themselves the Sholom Aleichem School. By 1918, three more such schools with a similar

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[20]Shmuel Niger, "Vegn yidisher kinder literatur," p. 194.

[21]S. Yefroikin, "Yiddish Secular Schools in the United States," p. 144.

orientation opened in New York. At this point they organized under the name Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute (S.A.F.I.). Two years later they began publishing their children's magazine, Kinder zhur al.

The radicals, the Social Territorialist activists, who by 1913 had established a Yiddish school in Chicago under the direction of A. Glantz-Leyeles,[22] opened a Yiddishist school in 1915 in Harlem, New York, whose founding members represented the full range of socialist positions. This school was supported by the Jewish Socialist Federation and, shortly thereafter, by the Workmen's Circle (Arbeter ring). The latter organization, despite a great internal struggle of its cultural nationalist members (the 'yunge'[the youth]) against the assimilationist 'establishment' (the 'alte'[elders]) of the organization,[23] ultimately committed itself to the organizational and financial support of the culturally

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[22]A. Glantz-Leyeles recalls the beginnings of the Yiddish school movement in America , particularly from his viewpoint as a supporter of the Socialist-Territorialist party ideology, in "Zichroynes vegn der yidisher shul-bavegung in amerike" in Shul pinkes, eds. I. Pomerantz et al. (Chicago: Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, 1948), pp. 200-215.

[23]For a detailed account of the struggle between the 'yunge'and the 'alte', see Y. Ishurin, (ed.), Arbeter ring in ranglenishn un dergreykhungen, 1914-1964 (New York: National Social Club, 1964).

nationalist Workmen's Circle Schools (originally known as I.L. Peretz Schools) in 1918.[24]

However, the ideological conflict in the Workmen's Circle between 1919 and 1926 reflected the strivings of the American far-leftist faction, which mirrored the Marxist ideology of their counterpart Yiddish schools in the Soviet Union. The resultant ideological friction caused them to break away from the Workmen's Circle schools. They took most of the leaders and teachers with them to their own school, the 'Umparteyishe arbeter shuln' (Non-partisan Workers Schools).[25] This institution was short-lived (1926-29) and most of its membership, in short order, affiliated with the International Workers Order.[26] The Jewish cultural sub-division of the International Workers Order predictably proceeded to issue a children's magazine entitled Yungvarg (Youth) that reflected its ideology.

The majority of the leftist 'cosmopolitan' schools stayed with the ultra-left organization (I.W.O.), while the remaining few socialist 'nationalist' Workmen's Circle schools soon grew significantly in numbers and

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[24]S. Niger, "Yiddish Culture," p. 303.

[25]In 1926, 17 out of 24 Workmen's Circle schools of far- leftist ideology left the organization. In S. Yefroikin, "Yidishe dertsiung in di fareynikte shtatn," p. 201.

[26]See footnote 18 in this chapter.

importance.[27] Each branch of the Workmen's Circle schools reflected the predominant brand of socialist ideology of its founding membership, whether diaspora nationalist or Zionist. The Workmen's Circle organization became actively involved in publishing ideologically-oriented educational materials and it sponsored its own children's publication called Kinder tsaytung (Children's Newspaper), which ran from 1930 to 1974.

Originally the Workmens Circle schools' goals and curriculum reflected their extreme socialist ideology. Religion had no place in their strictly secular curriculum. In addition to their primary goal of teaching their children Yiddish language and Yiddish literature, they espoused the following educational objectives:

> To acquaint them with the life of the worker and of the broad Jewish masses in America and other countries.
>
> To acquaint them with the history of the Jewish people, and with episodes in general history of the struggle for freedom.
>
> To develop within them the feelings of justice, love for the oppressed, love of freedom, and respect for fighters for freedom.
>
> To develop within them the feeling for beauty and physical and moral discipline.
>
> To develop within them idealism and the striving to perform noble acts, which are necessary for every

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[27]Statistics for numbers of students enrolled in Workmen's Circle schools in 1935 appearing in S. Yefroikin, "Yidishe dertsiung in di fareynikte shtatn" attest to this fact. See p. 203 and Table 5 on p. 204.

> child of the oppressed class in making his way through life towards a better order.[28]

By the March, 1920 opening of the Philadelphia schools, the Workmen's Circle had reached agreement over an issue debated at its 1918 and 1919 conferences in New York City and Chicago respectively.[29] It had resolved to officially limit the study of Hebrew to those Hebraic elements so intertwined in the Yiddish language so as to enable students to enrich their Yiddish. Study of tradition was to include commemoration of those Jewish holidays and significant historical events that symbolized the fighting spirit for freedom.[30] Clearly, the Workmen's Circle school intended to couch their secularist education within their socialist ideology. However, by the 1930's, the Workmen's Circle schools were distinguished by their primary regard of Yiddish as the binding element in Jewish nationalism and by their secular attitude towards religion and Hebrew, an attitude which was characterized by an objective,

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[28]Excerpt from the 1918 meeting of the Workmen's Circle Pedagogical Council and the Educational Committee as it appears in "The Beginnings of Secular Jewish Schools," Jewish Education in the United States, ed. Lloyd P. Gartner, (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1969), pp. 157-8.

[29]Shmuel Niger, In kamf far a nayer dertsiung (New York: Arbeter-ring-bildungs comitet, 1940), pp. 87-89.

[30]Lloyd P. Gartner (ed.), "The Beginnings of Secular Jewish Schools," pp. 157-160.

historical perspective of a "national cultural treasure."[31] This position was concurrently shared by the Sholom Aleichem schools.[32] Indeed, the Farband school program was similar as well, differing from the others only on when the teaching of Hebrew should commence and on their Zionist position.[33]

The Sholom Aleichem Schools

In sharp contrast not only to the Workmen's Circle but to all other Yiddish secular schools, the Sholom Aleichem schools were unique from the start in their publicly declared commitment to being non-partisan (that is, political affiliation of school members was of no importance); nor was the curriculum overtly hinged on any ideological basis. This is not to say that the ideological orientation of its membership was not socialist. Particularly in the latter part of the 1920's, the tenor of the times in Yiddishist circles was generally leftist and partisan oriented.[34] Evidence of this carry-over to the S.A.F.I. could be noted, for instance, in the high school

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[31]Lippe Lehrer, "Der Sholom Aleichem folks institute," p. 140.

[32]Ibid.

[33]S. Yefroikin, "Yidishe dertsiung in di fareynikte shtatn," p. 20.

[34]Yudel Mark, "Finf un draysik yor yidishe shul in amerike," p. 155.

sociology section, added around 1930, which taught the history of socialism and the labor movement.

In principle, however, the Sholom Aleichem schools' primary focus on education and overriding concern with the "interests of the child" as separate from any ideological issues allowed them to concentrate on modern pedagogic issues.[35] As discussed earlier, similarities existed between the child-centered approach used by the highly political Cysho schools in East Europe and by world-wide modern progressivist schools subscribing to Dewey's educational philosophy. But for the S.A.F.I. concept of education, intellectual and social growth and development of the child entailed active, emotional involvement with the ever-evolving Yiddish culture, as well as with American secular culture.[36] As early as 1917, the young Sholom Aleichem schools were taking their students on field trips to New York museums and parks, and a children's choir was established. Their first school in the Bronx became a cultural centre with a library and reading room available to all. Music, dance and drama courses were offered to all age groups through the schools and the adult education program (the 'Folks universitet') of the newly organized Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute. Yudel Mark noted that

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[35]Y. Mark, "Changes in the Yiddish School," p. 190.

[36]The S.A.F.I. concept of education will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3.

although the S.A.F.I. led the way, all the Yiddish secular schools became congregations of a non-religious nature. The Yiddish school became "not only a way to influence children, but a way to the hearts of the adults."[37]

The non-partisan position in Yiddish secular education, although highly influential pedagogically, was from the very beginning the least popular of the Yiddish secular school movement. Whereas, from the beginning, the partisan school systems had spread all over the continent establishing numerous schools, the Sholom Aleichem system remained highly concentrated in New York. At the height of their enrollment in 1929, the New York schools had only 1400 students. Although an affiliate S.A.F.I. was set up in Chicago in the early twenties to service its own three Sholom Aleichem schools and an additional three, including a secondary school, in Detroit,[38] nonetheless the enrollment disparity between S.A.F.I. and the other systems became even more evident from the late nineteen thirties onwards. For example, in 1938 the Workmen's Circle (which had started with only about 7 schools around 1926 after the secession of the 'Umparteyishe arbeter shuln')[39] had 122 schools with approximately 8000 students; in 1939-40 the

[37]Yudel Mark, "Finf un draysik yor yidishe shul in amerike," p. 155.

[38]In Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 6, col. 436.

[39]See footnote 25 in this chapter.

Farband had 70 schools with 4000 students; but the S.A.F.I. had only 19 Sholom Aleichem schools with 1100 children in the same period.[40] In 1956, the Farband had 57 elementary schools and 7 day schools, the Workmen's Circle system had 85 elementary schools and 6 secondary schools but the S.A.F.I had only 16 elementary schools and 5 kindergartens.[41] It seems that for most Yiddishists, education was conceived as inextricably bound to ideology and politics.

Phases of the Yiddish Secular School Movement

Yudel Mark categorized the Yiddishist school movement

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[40]S. Yefroikin, "Yidishe dertsiung in di fareynikte shtatn," p. 204.

[41]From Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 6, Col. 436. These quoted figures seem somewhat questionable since they neglect to mention that S.A.F.I. did have its own 'mittleshul', secondary school, in New York. However, they do illustrate the degree of discrepancy between the S.A.F.I. and the other school systems vividly.

According to S. Goodman in Our First Fifty Years (New York: The Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, 1972), pp. 15 and 33, the Sholom Aleichem system did make several attempts at day schools and secondary schools. He mentions a boarding/day school established in New Jersey and an all-day school in the Bronx, both prior to 1949. In the latter part of that year, another day school consisting of a grade one and a kindergarten opened.

Regarding the secondary school, Goodman further details how the S.A.F.I. and the Farband High Schools merged for ten years until the latter seceded from the union. The S.A.F.I. then merged with the Workmen's Circle High School in 1966 (p. 44).

in America from 1910 to 1945 into five distinct periods.[42] During the first period of 1910-1918, the national-radical movement predominated and preceded the other school systems. The second period ranging from 1919 to 1926 was one of tremendous growth for the radical ultra-leftist and the 'international' brand of socialism. The years between 1927 and 1930, the third period, were referred to as the 'party' period because the established ideological camps grew quantitatively and definitively. For example, the separation of the ultra-left factor of the Workmen's Circle into its own school system left the remaining Workmen's Circle schools to assume a consolidated ideological position. However, Yudel Mark's remark that 1927-1930 were the "best years of the Yiddish school" since in that "period...the separate ideologies became clarified"[43] seems strange in light of the fact that the failure of the movement to unify and consolidate its resources was a decisive factor in the decline of the Yiddish secular school movement in America.

Mark maintains that the downward slide of the Yiddish secular school movement began in the fourth period, the years 1931-1935. On the one hand, the reality of the economic depression of the early nineteen thirties did

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[42]Y. Mark, "Finf un draysik yor yidishe shul in amerike," p. 152.

[43]Y. Mark, "Changes in the Yiddish School," pp. 189-190.

serve to draw the Yiddish school systems somewhat closer to one another. In effect, that decisively forced the far left out of the mainstream of the Jewish community. But the movement's political fragmentation in concert with other factors that ultimately defeated the movement, began to make their effects felt.

Subsequently, in Mark's fifth period from 1936 to 1945, which he labeled 'nationalist/progressive', a definite trend towards a return to Jewishness and tradition began in all the school systems, particularly in the Sholom Aleichem schools. This intensified consciousness did not detract from the sense of America as home, but it reinforced the sense of what Mark refers to as a "common fate" between all Jewish people. Not surprisingly, this atmosphere had concurrently been permeating the Yiddish literature of that decade and was reflected in drastic changes in curriculum and emphasis toward more Hebrew and Bible studies. The emphasis had been switched from basing the curriculum predominantly on modern Yiddish literature to broadening its base to include and emphasize Jewish history.[44] Once again, this trend was concurrently reflected in the format and content of Kinder zhurnal issues of those years, as will be shown in Chapter Three.

Several historical and sociological factors contributed to the trend toward traditionalism. Given that

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[44]Ibid., p. 194.

Mark's fifth period extended from the years preceding and including the Second World War, it can readily be assumed that the threat of Nazism, virulent anti-semitism and finally the Holocaust itself were primary factors in the shift toward exploring and understanding Jewish history and tradition. Certain sociological factors played a role as well. First, the concept of group freedom in the United States was primarily interpreted in application to legitimizing minority religious groups, such as Jews. This served to de-ethnicize groups into the mainstream American culture. Individual rights to religious freedom, not communal ethnic rights were guaranteed by the constitution. Therefore, it was more acceptable to be identified with one's religious affiliation as a Jew than with one's ethnicity as a Jew.

Another important factor was the growing socio-economic shift of the Jewish population from the poor working class to the middle class with successive generations. American middle class reality did not lend itself to the Yiddish cultural movement's agenda of Jewish nationalism and a socialist way of life. Certainly, committed idealists remained and continued their work, but when their strength and energy weakened, replacements were fewer and scarcer to the detriment of the movement.[45]

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[45]J. Fishman, Language Loyalty in the United States, p. 21. Also, Sandra Parker, "An Educational Assessment of the Yiddish Secular School Movements in the United States"

Conclusion

In all their diversities, the Yiddish secular schools had three commonalities: their motives, their Yiddishist goals, and high regard for modern Yiddish literature. Overtly or covertly, the mainstream Yiddish secular schools shared the common motive of encouraging a sense of Jewish nationalism (except for the I.W.O. schools) and socialist ideals regardless of whether their emphasis was politically oriented or not. Beyond their various divisive permutations and combinations of ideologies and principles[46] lay a common commitment to Yiddishist goals - the creation of a Yiddish secular community with common humanistic and cultural values. This entailed building institutions, developing life styles and cultivating personal involvement in the construction of a humanistic, secular Jewish way of life in the democratic soil of America. As a reflection of their belief in maintaining the wholeness of the child as a Jew and as a human being, a Yiddishist education was the necessary thread to bind the folk element of East European

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in Never Say Die!, ed. J. Fishman, (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981), p. 499-501.

[46]Sandra Parker neatly summarizes the variety of ideologies represented by the different American Yiddish secular school systems in "An Educational Assessment of the Yiddish Secular School Movements in the United States," p. 496. Her account, however, is more accurate of the early phase of the Yiddish secular school systems prior to the exclusion of the I.W.O. schools from the mainstream of the movement.

and American origin together into a relevant common identity and sense of community. Parker states:

> The goal that was common to the four Yiddish secular movements in the United States was the creation, through Yiddish secular education, of community identification and commitment based upon common cultural and ideological values. Yiddishists conceived of this sense of community as a telescopic one that began with the close family unit and extended to encompass ethnic (peoplehood) and universal (general-humanistic) dimensions.[47]

Moreover, aside from the founding commitment of the Yiddishists to teach Yiddish because it was the language of the masses, their resolve also rested on the strong burst of literary creativity that began with the founders of modern Yiddish literature and particularly thrived between the two World Wars. Immense importance was given to the literary aspect of Yiddish culture as a source of values and morals. Lucy Davidowicz, noted writer and Jewish historian, herself a graduate of the Sholom Aleichem schools, recalls:

> Literature was more important then than it is today. So it seems to me. In those days literature seemed to embody our humanistic values. We elevated literature into an ethical code, whose morality was determined by Mendele, Sholom Aleichem and Peretz. We are less naive today, since the Holocaust, about the role of literature as moral preceptor.[48]

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[47]Ibid., p. 496.

[48]Lucy Davidowicz, "The Relevance of an Education in the Sholem Aleichem Schools" in Our First Fifty Years, ed. S. Goodman, (New York: Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, 1972), pp. 118-119.

Yudel Mark completed his analysis with the end of the Second World War. However, in retrospect, the succeeding fifty years can now be inclusively viewed as a period of hastened decline, with the rate increasing dramatically in the 1970's. In the aftermath of the Holocaust devastation, all Jews took stock and reevaluated their beliefs and ideologies. The realization that almost all the Yiddish-speaking Jews in East Europe were annihilated sent shock-waves through the Yiddishist circles in America, leading to the questioning of all convictions. Yiddish, the language of the masses, lost a major sector of its speakers and its fundamental source for its continuity. Its power as the unifying and rejuvenating force of generations of Ashkenazic Jewry from all over the world became questionable. Although it was becoming clear in America as early as the mid 1930's that modern Yiddish literature alone could not provide the spiritual and moral fortitude to sustain the perpetuation of the Jewish component in American secular life, it was not until the nineteen fifties that the Yiddishists formally conceded that the Yiddish language alone could not preserve the sense of distinctiveness they so sought to preserve. Commencing in that decade, the feeling of the Yiddishist educators of S.A.F.I. was that a return to the significance of living and experiencing essential Jewish tradition and customs in

daily life was crucially needed and could best be accomplished through Yiddishist day schools.[49]

The role of Yiddish literature was consequentially demoted from its lofty position as source of spirituality, as lighter of the way. The spiritual void was filled for many Yiddishists with the establishment of the state of Israel, for many others with religion, for some with total integration into the American melting-pot, and, for a small group, with renewed zeal for the old Yiddishist goals. Ironically, the question of why Yiddish should be taught at all became a legitimate topic in Yiddishist educational circles. Just thirty years earlier the answer to that question would have been because it is the mother tongue of most Jews. In the fifties, that answer no longer was true. In a 1956 symposium, sponsored by the S.A.F.I., entitled "Why Teach Yiddish," several presentations endorsing the teaching of Yiddish were heard. Dr. Israel Knox stated in his address:

> If we linger over Yiddish as a language we shall attempt to do artificially what life itself does not do. We shall cut the language off from the stream of experience and then it will become a collection of formal words.[50]

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[49]S. Goodman (ed.), "Foreword" in Why Yiddish For Our Children: A Symposium (New York: Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, 1956). Also in S. Goodman's "The Path and Accomplishments of the Sh.A.F.I." in Our First Fifty Years, pp. 49-56.

[50]Dr. Israel Knox, "A Gateway to Jewish Experience" in Why Yiddish For Our Children: A Symposium (New York: Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, 1956), p. 8.

Knox's argument for teaching Yiddish as a means to understanding Jewish history both emotionally and intellectually rather than as a living language of day-to-day experience was shared by many others.[51] The school's mission to encourage a sense of rootedness in Jewish history and culture, in his opinion, extended to include the Bible and its language, Hebrew; Jewish philosophy; rabbinic learning; and "with equal merit and validity, Yiddish (the literature and the language) as the most recent and inimitable expression of Jewish expererience, both individual and collective."[52]

Philosophical debate on the issues of language, religion, political ideology and the role of education continued in the Yiddish secular school movement. Despite the generalized shift toward a more common tolerance and acceptance of Hebrew, Zionism and traditionalism, the secular movement remained divided along its former political partisanship lines.

The movement remained fragmented. It never significantly amalgamated its institutions and organizations, much to the detriment of the language and the movement. The number of Yiddishist schools and their

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[51]Other participants recorded in the "Why Yiddish for our Children" symposium such as Saul Goodman, Leibush Lehrer, and Shmuel Lapin represented popular prevailing views.

[52]Dr. I. Knox, p. 9.

enrollment consistently declined. With the demise of the movements' leaders and activists, fewer, if any, replacements stepped in. In the case of the Sholom Aleichem schools, the few that were left at the end of the 1960's no longer exist, nor does the S.A.F.I.

CHAPTER THREE

Kinder zhurnal

Introduction

Kinder zhurnal was a Yiddish children's magazine published in the United States between 1920 and 1981. Like other Yiddish children's magazines of its day in East Europe and America, it was conceived as a cultural, literary and activity magazine for elementary school-age children. Three important factors, which will be explored more fully in this chapter, played a role in determining the onset, format and objectives of Yiddish children's literary magazines. They are as follows: most importantly, the gathering momentum of the Yiddish cultural movement (Yiddishism); the rising importance of the Yiddish press as an expositor and disseminator of current Yiddish writings, of world affairs and of general secular knowledge; and the creation of the Yiddish secular school movement.

Before the Yiddish press began to play a significant role in Jewish communities of East Europe and America, Jewish journals in German, Hebrew, Polish and Russian were already proliferating in response to the growing intellectual and ideological debates on the revolutionary changes overtaking traditional Jewish society in the mid

nineteenth century.[1] Judging by the vast array of journals and newspapers representing various political and ideological views, it was evident that the Jewish communities of East Europe and America were highly fragmented in their response to political, social and cultural change.

By the 1880's, the Yiddish press began to compete for readership with the Jewish papers and journals in other languages. Aside from participating in the intellectual activity of the times, its aim was to reach the great numbers of poor, working-class Jews with the various prevailing ideologies, worldly information and literary works. The Yiddish paper had something for everyone - from political commentaries, scientific information and literary criticism to serialized novels. Within its pages the Yiddish paper provided a well-rounded package of information on Jewish and universal issues as well as initial introductions to the latest in Yiddish literary

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[1]German Jewish dailies and journals such as the Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums abounded in nineteenth century Germany and Prussia. Some were available in Russia and Poland as well in the latter 1800's. Hebrew newspapers such as Ha-magid and Ha-meliz were popular among maskilim and intellectuals in Czarist Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century despite strict governmental censorship. In Poland, the first Jewish weekly in Polish was an assimilationist journal called Jutrzenka, which only lasted from 1861-63 but was replaced by the more nationalistic Izraelita from 1866-1906. In England there was The Jewish Chronicle, while in America, the weekly New yorker yidishe tsaytung, later to become the weekly Tageblat, began publication in 1872. From Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 13, cols. 1023-1047.

creations. Undoubtedly, the school organizations felt that utilization of this successful medium could serve their interests just as well.

Armed with the latest scientific, psychological and pedagogical findings available in the second decade of the twentieth century, Kinder zhurnal accordingly modified the adult press format to suit young children. The elements of play, music, contests and reader contributions were included to capture the involvement and interest of young readers. Great effort went into making the magazine as relevant, informative, attractive and entertaining as possible to young children. Simple illustrations accompanied most stories as well as songs, which often had the musical score printed alongside. Illustrators became important contributors to the magazine and were held in great esteem. Good quality paper, non-traditional colored type, such as green or blue, and varying type-size throughout each issue, were innovations readily available in America and utilized by Kinder zhurnal. Attractive visual presentation in conjunction with stimulating literary material made Kinder zhurnal a very popular magazine in world-wide Yiddishist circles.

When Yiddish children's magazines started appearing in the second decade of the twentieth century, about the same time as the new Yiddish secular school movement in East Europe and America, the intensely political atmosphere

permeating the adult Jewish press carried over to the revolutionary school movement. Invariably the children's magazines followed suit and mirrored the differing ideological orientation of their sponsoring organizations and publishers.

From its inception Kinder zhurnal was clearly designed as an educational tool to enhance and reinforce the educational and cultural aims of the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute (S.A.F.I.). The S.A.F.I. was the umbrella organization for the Sholom Aleichem schools, the publishing enterprise 'Farlag Matones' and the summer extension of the Institute's educational/recreational program, Camp Boiberik. Although the Kinder zhurnal did not overtly propagandize any political/social ideology, a reflection of the position of its non-partisan school system sponsor, a noticeable sympathy towards socialism nevertheless infiltrated its pages, especially in the first two decades of publication.

Kinder zhurnal/Grininke beymelekh

The distinctly American Kinder zhurnal was modeled upon an East European publication called Grininke beymelekh in both form and content. The latter was already available in the United States when Kinder zhurnal began its publication in 1920. Grininke beymelekh started in 1914 in Vilna and, with several interruptions, continued as a bi-

monthly magazine until the Second World War.[2] Kinder zhurnal, by contrast, was published ten times a year throughout most of its sixty-one year long history. From the start, the June/July and August/September issues were combined because students of the Sholom Aleichem schools were on vacation during the summer months. Only in the last few years of Kinder zhurnal's history was the number of yearly issues reduced to four. This was indicative of the slow attrition of the magazine's stalwarts through aging and death and the waning level of readership.

Apart from having a similar physical layout, each issue of Kinder zhurnal and its European counterpart Grininke beymelekh almost always contained certain elements: poetry, songs (lyrics and music), biographical sketches of modern significant personalities in commemoration of their birthdays or deaths, Jewish holiday motifs, original short stories and plays as well as reprinted classic pieces, translations into Yiddish of fables and children's stories from other languages, news and information related to world Jewry, and word games and activities.

Grininke beymelekh often carried the same new literary material as Kinder zhurnal, as did nearly all the children's magazines regardless of their ideological

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[2]See Chapter One, p. 20 (footnote 30) for initial information on Grininke beymelekh.

orientation. Kinder zhurnal tended to stay away from authors and works that were openly partisan. If such an author was used, his represented work was ideologically neutral. For instance, in 1924, when the socialist-oriented Farband had recently joined with the Kinder zhurnal team, both the Kinder zhurnal in America and the Marxist-oriented, avant-garde Soviet Russian monthly children's magazine Freyd (Joy) printed several short poems by the communist Soviet writer Itsik Fefer. But the poems that appeared in Kinder zhurnal in no way indicated Fefer's political partisanship.

However, Grininke beymelekh and Kinder zhurnal did differ in several ways that reflected their respective social and educational environments. Starting with the names of the magazines, a shade of difference can be detected. Whereas the name of Kinder zhurnal was straightforward in describing the nature and purpose of the magazine, the name Grininke beymelekh referred to a famous poem by Chaim N. Bialik, later set to music, entitled 'Unter di grininke beymelekh' (Under the Little Green Trees). In it, Bialik uses the young trees as a metaphor for the young Jewish children who represent the continuity and future development of the Jewish people.

From the first issue, April 1920, the American Kinder zhurnal cover page characterized a sense of freedom and abandonment with the silhouetted image of a lone, bare-

footed girl on a tree swing, her hair flying and skirt billowing. It was quite different from the East European Grininke beymelekh of April 1914, where three boys dressed in traditional Orthodox Jewish garb are contentedly relaxing in a park-like setting with other children playing in the background of young trees and grassy fields. These contrasting representational logos visually expressed the significant factors in the development of the Yiddish secular school movements in America and East Europe.

A cursory analysis of the two cover pages immediately reveals the differing societies and attitudes existing in America and East Europe. The American image strongly conveys the cherished democratic value of rights to freedom and equal opportunity regardless of gender, religion or race; of individuality and pursuit of happiness. It is also suggestive of the new progressive attitudes in education that placed great emphasis on good physical health, play and activity as essential prerequisites for learning in young children. In contrast, the European cover exudes an aura of traditionalism. For one, only boys are represented as students. Girls are absent from the picture. Secondly, the boys' Orthodox appearance with ear locks and 'tsitsit'(a four tasseled undergarment worn by Orthodox Jews) in a traditionally Jewish male study group, adds to the traditional image. However, there is an intrusion of modernity in the picture. Significantly, these boys are in

a park rather than indoors. They are at play rather than conventionally studying religious texts in a cheder from early morning till evening. The revolutionary trends in Jewish attitudes to child rearing and pedagogy since the beginnings of the Jewish Enlightenment are evident despite the generally traditional tone of this picture.

Kinder zhurnal's Founders

One of Kinder zhurnal's originators was Fayvl Holmstock, who, as an active Yiddishist leader and teacher with the Sholom Aleichem schools, first established Camp Boiberik in 1919 and then the Kinder zhurnal in 1920. Holmstock was an educator and writer who was born in Minsk, White Russia, in 1880. After spending a short time in America involving himself in Yiddish literary and educational life, he returned to Minsk in 1922 where he resumed his promotion of Yiddish secular education and became involved with Soviet-Yiddish research.[3] His whereabouts after 1937 are unknown.[4]

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[3]S. Niger, ed., Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur, vol. 3 (New York: Congress for Jewish Culture, Inc., Marstin Press, 1965), p. 18.

[4]It is possible that Holmstock was liquidated in the Stalin purges of the late 1930's which were directed against members of the Yevsektsii (Jewish sections of the Communist Party). When Holmstock returned to Minsk in the early 1920's to continue his activities to promote Yiddish education, Soviet Yiddish culture was flourishing within the Yevsektsii of White Russia and the Ukraine. However, Stalin's new policies liquidated the Jewish sections and got rid of the Yevsektsii's Jewish Communist party members, many of whom

Unlike Holmstock, Kinder zhurnal's co-founder, Lippe Lehrer (1890-1963), did remain in the United States once he arrived from Russia in 1913 to join his older brother, Leibush, in New York. Although not an educator by profession, by 1921 his dedication to Yiddish culture led him to become an activist in the S.A.F.I. A year later he became the driving force and hands-on manager of the Kinder zhurnal magazine, the same year Holmstock departed for Soviet Russia. His personal dedication and commitment was matched by the director of Grininke beymelekh, Shloyme Bastomski (1891-1941), who almost single-handedly kept his magazine in operation financially and administratively until his death.

Through a series of correspondence between Lippe Lehrer and Shloyme Bastomski, we learn of the close interrelation between the two magazines.[5] Lippe Lehrer's circumstances in America were not ideal, especially in the Depression years. Like Bastomski, he had to struggle to keep the magazine alive. Gathering material for each issue and enlisting financial support for the enterprise was a never-ending struggle. Lippe Lehrer ful lled Bastomski's

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were involved in the Yiddish press and Yiddish education. Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 16, col. 779-781.

[5]From a series of letters between S. Bastomski of Grininke beymelekh and Lippe Lehrer of the Kinder zhurnal, dating between June 3, 1928 to January 24, 1940, found in Kinder zhurnal file no. 63 in YIVO Archives, New York.

frequent requests for literary material and financial assistance to the best of his ability. However he did express some impatience and resentment of Bastomski's liberal use of Kinder zhurnal material in his Grininke beymelekh without publicly acknowledging its source. In a final request, dated January 24, 1940, written on a postcard mailed from Vilna (then in the Republic of Lithuania), Bastomski poignantly asked his American colleague for help with back issues of Kinder zhurnal to rebuild his publishing business ruined by the war. Bastomski himself did not survive much longer. According to the Lerer yiskor-bukh (Teacher Memorial Book), he died just prior to the German invasion of Vilna on April 5, 1941.[6] His eulogy appeared in the May 1941 issue of Kinder zhurnal.

Lippe Lehrer continued his involvement in the magazine's affairs until 1963 as a manager, director and/or editor. His dedication to Jewish cultural life was legendary and his zeal encouraged Yiddish writers and poets to write and contribute works to the magazine. There were several other renowned Yiddishists, dedicated to Yiddish secular education, who devoted a good deal of their careers to running the magazine. Three are worthy of note - Shmuel Niger, Solomon Simon and Saul Goodman. Shmuel Niger(1883-

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[6]Chaim Kazhdan, ed., Lerer yiskor-bukh (New York: Committee for the Remembrance of Deceased Teachers of the Cysho Schools in Poland, Marstin Press, 1952-54), p. 32.

1955) served as editor of Kinder zhurnal from 1922 to 1948. When he arrived in New York City from Russia in 1919, his enormously prestigious reputation as a writer and literary critic had preceded him. Although Niger's politics in his youth were socialist oriented, as his roles as a leader and active member of the Zionist-Socialist party indicated, by 1908 he had already laid aside his partisan views and concentrated on building and promoting modern Yiddish literature through the journal he founded, Literarishe monatshriftn (the Literary Monthly). By providing a forum for serious Yiddish literature, this journal became an important turning point in the history of the Yiddishist movement. Throughout his life, Niger continued to edit and to publish other literary journals and magazines as well as to contribute his writings to many publications.

Within a short time of his arrival to America, Niger began his tenure at the newspaper Der tog (The Day) where he carved his niche as a highly respected, prolific Yiddish literary critic. Indeed, Niger has been credited with establishing the highly intellectual field of Yiddish literary criticism. In addition to being a dedicated scholar of Jewish literary history, he was an active publicist of and participant in Yiddish cultural life.[7] His vast knowledge and illustrious reputation certainly

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[7]Bibliographical information on Shmuel Niger was primarily taken from the Leksicon fun der nayer yidisher literatur, p. 191-197, of which he was co-editor.

influenced the content and prestige of Kinder zhurnal in his years at its helm.

Solomon Simon(1895-1970), born in Belorussia, emigrated to America the same year as Lippe Lehrer, in 1913. And just like Lippe Lehrer, his love of Yiddish and Yiddish culture led him to become involved in Yiddish education. He became a devoted activist of the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute where he served as editor of Kinder zhurnal from 1948 to 1951 and remained a regular staff member and contributor of poems and stories well into his seventies. Many of his writings were based on Yiddish folk-tales and were later collected and published in book form by Farlag Matones. He also wrote extensively on the Scriptures and on Jewish problems.[8]

Saul Goodman (1901-), born in Poland, came to America in 1921. His involvement with the Yiddish cultural community has been a life-long affair. After completing university, he worked as a teacher for the Workmen's Circle (Arbeter ring) schools for many years. Later in his career, he taught Jewish philosophy and Yiddish literature at the New York Jewish Teachers Seminary. He authored many books on the Yiddishist movement and on the origins of the Jewish community in America. In the latter phase of his career, he

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[8]Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 14, cols. 1583-84.

became involved with the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute and its Kinder zhurnal until 1977.[9]

Upon Goodman's retirement, Beyle Schachter-Gottesman, a long-time participant with the magazine both as a contributor and as an administrator, carried on devotedly until the Kinder zhurnal's last issue in the fall of 1981. In my private meeting with her in November 1992, she wistfully admitted that as editor in the last few years of the magazine's life, she had lost touch with the Yiddishist educational circles. She continued with the standard format as editor, yet, as the sole contributor of original work, she was unaware of the magazine's readership profile or the extent of its distribution.

Major Turning Points

The symbiotic relationship between the Yiddish cultural movement and the Yiddish secular school movement resulted in similar trends throughout their development. Changes in Kinder zhurnal's popularity, form and content over the years indicate a reflection of those changing trends. Within the pages of Kinder zhurnal a partial record is found of the social and cultural history of a distinct segment of the American Jewish secular community, replete

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[9]Biographical information on Saul Goodman found in Berl (Kan) Kagan's Lexicon of Yiddish-Writers (New York: Rayah Ilman-Kagan, 1986), p. 151 and in Shmuel Niger et al.'s Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur, vol. 2, p. 186.

with its pedagogic and literary interaction with American and world events.

The sharp contrast between Kinder zhurnal's early popularity and later decline corresponds to the fortunes of the Yiddishist movement in America. A most telling indicator of their mutual highs and lows can be deduced from the difference in frequency and size of issues between the early and late years of Kinder zhurnal's existence. Whereas in the 1920's and 1930's there was ample variety of material and contributors in the ten issues appearing yearly, in the 1970's only four seasonal issues, which contained a limited amount of material from a constricted roster of contributors, appeared yearly. As mentioned above, by 1981 there was only the original material of its last editor to supplement the recycled works from which the last edition of Kinder zhurnal was compiled.

A clue to Kinder zhurnal's initial popularity was its relatively high price of twenty cents an issue, two dollars for a yearly subscription. Considering that Grininke beymelekh was selling for six cents an isssue in America, Kinder zhurnal did not seem to be worried about its own comparatively high price. In its heyday, many Yiddish schools in North America became subscribers, as did individual families and Yiddish secular schools throughout the world. However, the situation had drastically changed by 1970. Although the yearly subscription rate was still

two dollars, the number of issues had been drastically cut to four, with each quarterly single issue costing fifty cents. But for most of the fifty years that Kinder zhurnal was issued ten times a year, the unit price never changed despite the progressive decrease in the dollar's value. Keeping the price low was most probably necessary to maintain whatever diminished number of subscriptions remained. Although the pricing detail is a minor point, it is an interesting indicator of the declining fortunes of Kinder zhurnal from its initial height of popularity to its gradual demise.

The Formative Years

The 1920's were perhaps the most highly concentrated and productive phase in the development of the Yiddish cultural and literary world. The locus of Yiddish literary activity was shifting to America, although there was similar intense activity in East European Yiddish centres such as Warsaw, Moscow, Kiev and Minsk. The Yiddish cultural movement and Yiddish secular school movement were in full swing. Gradually over the decade, the various American Yiddish school systems were becoming more ideologically distinct while most were losing their radical edge, as seen in Chapter Two. Creative output by the intelligentsia, particularly in the medium of poetry, was produced at a frenetic pace. Writers, poets, playwrights

and actors became famous celebrities on both sides of the ocean. Many of these noted writers and personalities contributed original material to the Kinder zhurnal, elevating its status as a high-quality journal.

A perusal of the first year's monthly Table of Contents reveals contributing poems and stories by the most celebrated contemporary Yiddish literati - Mani Leib, the poet; Joseph Opatoshu, the novelist and short-story writer; and Sholom Asch, perhaps the best known Yiddish writer between the two World Wars.[10] The July 1920 issue contained a poem about a frog by the revered writer Yehoash, which was accompanied by the beautiful illustrations signed in English by S. Witkewitz.[11] Other contemporary writers, like Ephraim Auerbach, B. Glassman, Leah Hoffman and Nachum Yud, also wrote specifically for children and became regular contributors to the Kinder zhurnal. Leon Elbe's classic children's story, 'Dos yingele mitn ringele'(The Boy With the Ring), was printed in

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[10]For a detailed picture of the life and times of Mani Leib as well as a background setting for Opatoshu, Asch and other Yiddish writers of that era, see Ruth Wisse, A little Love in Big Manhattan (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[11]In the early years, English script did not generally appear anywhere other than the mandatory occasions required by state publishing laws. Most illustrators signed their names in Yiddish but several used their English initials or their full English name. In later years, English appeared when vocabulary translations of the Yiddish text was employed. Also some advertisers began to use English in their ads.

instalments over many months. It was later assembled in book form by Farlag Matones. Similar instances occurred in the adult Yiddish press where popular serialized novels or collection of poems were subsequently published in book form. By the end of the 1920's, most of the literary elite had found their way into Kinder zhurnal. Jacob Glatstein,[12] a renowned modern Yiddish poet, was contributing stories and poems as early as 1927, and Kadia Molodowsky, perhaps the most beloved children's poet, began appearing in 1928, even prior to her arrival to America from Poland in 1935.[13]

Within the first few years of publication, many of the long-term activists in Kinder zhurnal were already involved, some also writing stories, poems and plays on a regular basis. Israel Goichberg was a classic example. A dedicated teacher with the Sholom Aleichem schools for fifty years, he was already working as a staff member and co-editor of Kinder zhurnal by 1929. His monthly column 'Fun altn kval' (From the Ancient Source), which started appearing in 1937, introduced young readers to Jewish history of ancient times. He also edited a popular children's poetry book called Di goldene pave (The Golden

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[12]For a very comprehensive book on Jacob Glatstein and his work see Janet Hadda, Yankev Glatshteyn (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980).

[13]For biographical information on Kadia Molodowsky, see Berl Kagan's Lexicon of Yiddish-Writers, pp. 355-359.

Peacock)[14] in 1948. A long list of other activists and contributing writers, such as Sarah Liebert and Joshua Kaminsky,[15] remained involved and dedicated to Kinder zhurnal for almost half a century. Their deaths, all of which occurred in and around 1970, left a major gap in the source of driving energy and new material that had sustained Kinder zhurnal.

The very first two editions of Kinder zhurnal established the framework for content and format in its future publications. From the May 1920 issue, young readers and their parents were informed about the Yiddishists' decision to modernize the orthography of the Yiddosh language. Incorporating all the variations of Yiddish into one universally acceptable version was a step toward upgrading the status of Yiddish, a primary objective of the builders of Yiddishist culture. The first issue in April, 1920 also set the precedent for encouraging active reader involvement by incorporating the element of play with intellectual challenge. An activity section of puzzles, word games and riddles was introduced, and an invitation

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[14]The image of 'di goldene pave', the golden peacock, originated in a Yiddish folk song and came to symbolize love and the spiritual power of song through the poetry of Yiddish poet, Itzik Manger. In 1924 another collection of poetry entitled Di goldene pave, written by Moyshe Leib Halpern, was published. A new edition was issued in 1954.

[15]For a short summary on the contribution of Liebert and Kaminsky, see Saul Goodman, ed., Our First Fifty Years: The Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, pp. 174, 181.

was extended to readers to submit their own creations that would appear in the magazine. Major Jewish holidays as well as the change of seasons became issue themes upon which much of the month's material was based. The precedent was also set for an annual commemoration of Sholom Aleichem and his beloved children's stories. Works by the other founders of modern Yiddish literature such as Mendele, Peretz, and Abraham Reisin also appeared on commemorative occasions but they were not represented quite as often as Sholom Aleichem.

As the Yiddish secular school movement expanded in the United States in the 1920's, Kinder zhurnal began welcoming within its pages new schools from all over the North-American continent. Interest in all the major Yiddish secular school systems was shown throughout the magazine's history by periodic articles updating their major events and conferences. In the first few years, inter-mural sports activities between the Workmen's Circle schools and Sholom Aleichem schools were publicized.[16] Such encouragement of physical activity was a totally modern, revolutionary concept in Jewish education. Through sports a spirit of friendly competition was introduced, but it was always accompanied by a sense of fraternity and community.

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[16]In the Kinder zhurnal of March, 1921, the Workmen's Circle school in the Bronx offered a tongue-in-cheek challenge to any school that was looking for a fight to do so through field game matches of punch-ball and handball.

Essential to the concept of community was a sense of moral obligation and responsibility to those in need, whether at home or in East Europe. Awareness and involvement were encouraged through appeals to the children and published letters to the editor. Young readers in 1921 were solicited to help their needy fellow Jewish students of Cysho schools in Poland through contributions to the Pencil Fund created specifically for that purpose. Again, in January 1930, a published letter from Poland's director of Cysho schools to the young American readers of Kinder zhurnal enlisted their empathy and assistance. It told of the poverty and social unrest in the cities and villages of Poland. It described how 25,000 Jewish children attended 250 Yiddish schools where all subjects were taught in Yiddish.[17] These schools, it continued, saved Polish Jewish children from neglect in the dirty streets which had become, in effect, their homes and raised them to be proud, free and healthy young people. The letter recounted the children's heroism against the anti-semitic authorities who tried to close down their school. Clearly an underlying kinship between the Yiddish secular schools in America and East Europe was assumed and encouraged.

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[17] Although the letter does not state it, the subjects of Polish history, language and literature were required by government regulation to be taught in the Polish language. In Nathan Eck, "The Educational Institutions of Polish Jewry (1921-1939)," p. 8.

The above-mentioned letter also suggests that Kinder zhurnal was distributed in the Cysho Yiddish secular schools in Poland to some extent. The Lehrer/Bastomski correspondence, referred to earlier, also alludes to loose reciprocal distribution arrangements regarding their respective magazines plus other Bastomski publications that contained material extracted from Kinder zhurnal back-issues.

This same January 1930 issue also reflects the ravaging effect of the Great Depression in the United States both upon the Jewish community and the nation at large. The call for help is once more extended by an appeal from the board of directors for donations towards the purchase of a headstone for the grave of the writer, Leon Elbe, who had died in the past year. His children were too impoverished to bear this cost; and so the young readers, who had so enjoyed his work, were asked to become involved and contribute towards the dignity of his memory.

By the late 1920's, the magazine reflected the dynamism, global scope, and adaptiveness to American society of the Yiddishist cultural and educational movements in the United States. Travelogues on exotic countries by well-known Yiddish writers appeared, as did stories about Jewish communities world-wide.[18] In its

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[18]In the December 1929 issue, renowned Yiddish writer and playwright Peretz Hirshbein first recounted his travels in Africa.

first decade, Kinder zhurnal focused primarily on current times in its choice of literary material and general information. It strove to involve the children simultaneously with their American environment and with Yiddish, the language and culture of Yiddishists world-wide. Over the years, the magazine increasingly took on an American urban character while its East European small-town (shtetl) image receded. Signs of increasing urbanization and modernization were concurrently being similarly reflected in the East European publications. Protagonists in stories gradually acquired Americanized names rather than the traditional Yiddish names. Story lines introduced American activities like going to the bank and riding on the subway. Yet 'shtetl' happenings and settings were still generously included in the first decade's issues, both in the older recycled works that appeared regularly and the newly created material.

A Change in Focus

Pivotal changes in Kinder zhurnal's form and content began with the 1930's. First came the apparent change towards an older target audience. The two major factors influencing this direction were (1) a maturing of the school's original group of students and (2) financial difficulties exacerbated by the Depression. When Kinder zhurnal started out a decade earlier, its potential

readership stemmed primarily from children of elementary school age. This initial generation of students was the most deeply immersed in Yiddish in the history of America. In tandem with their language proficiency, the growth and development of these students required a corresponding change in reading material, no doubt a need Kinder zhurnal was attempting to meet. Parallel adaptations could be seen in the growth of 'yugnt' (youth/young adult) magazines and books issued by all the children's publishing houses both in America and in East Europe.

As to the financial factor, it is obvious that the Depression must have affected Kinder zhurnal's already strained financial situation. Clues to this effect can be found in Lippe Lehrer's corresondence with Bastomski. As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, the initial contributors to the creation of a Yiddish children's literature were teachers of the Yiddish secular school movement. Indeed, many contributors of literary material to the Kinder zhurnal in the 1920's were teachers in the Sholom Aleichem schools. But as Lippe Lehrer confided to S. Bastomski in a February 2, 1930 letter, their material was no longer welcome by the end of the nineteen twenties. They had become unreasonable in their demands for space and accompanying illustrations by the best illustrators. Consequently, he was shunning their work. Surely Lippe Lehrer's decision was initiated to a large extent by the

financial difficulties Kinder zhurnal was experiencing in the Depression years. The net result of a reduction in literary and illustrative material for very young children contributed to the magazine's older image.

Other indicators pointed towards an older readership as well. The stories were longer and in many cases serialized. In short order, illustrations ceased completely, most likely due to lack of resources to pay illustrators. Photographs of featured writers or personalities were increasingly used. More space was given to biographies and informative articles. There was a marked increase in folk tales of other cultures. Each issue was filled to the brim with poetry, conventional rhyming poetry and the new style free verse by leading poets, as well as translations of American English poetry into Yiddish. Even the activity section included increasingly challenging word games like crossword puzzles. Certainly the addition of a world news section in December, 1930 suggested a trend towards an older audience.

This last change is of interest for several reasons. It is indicative of the growing interest in, and awareness of Jewish history in the making, a trend simultaneously prevalent in the adult press of the day. Furthermore, the editor's selective reporting suggests some commonly shared cultural values and socialist ideology with the larger Yiddishist movement. At first the news items were

predominantly about economic hardship and unemployment, leading revolutionary figures such as Gandhi, or events such as the Spanish Civil War and revolution in Cuba. One news item in January, 1935 briefly reported a recent John Dewey speech, which claimed that capitalism will lead to revolution. However, within several months this universalist approach to world news changed to a Jewish-centered one, although socialist issues, unusual human interest stories and scientific innovations were still very much represented. Admiration for Germany's high level of culture, technology and architecture quickly faded, while reports of Hitler's rise to power and persecution of Jews increased. From the end of 1931 to 1939 there was a steady update of the worsening condition of the Jews in Germany, Poland and other East European countries. However, up to the start of the Second World War, news of Soviet Russia continued to be presented in a sympathetic light. It centered on Soviet cultural achievements, technological advances and trends affecting Soviet Jews and the working class in general. In the early thirties, one news item reported on the large numbers of Soviet Jewish children attending Folk shule (People's Schools), and only positive aspects were related in 1934-35 about the Biro-Bidjan settlement for Jews in Siberia.[19]

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[19]The Soviet government Yiddish schools, referred to as the 'Folk shule' in Kinder zhurnal, experienced their height of enrollment in 1932, when one-third of Jewish children in

Another significant phase that developed in the nineteen thirties was a gradual increase of material content in Kinder zhurnal reflecting the accomodating change in attitude of the Sholom Aleichem schools and the Workmen's Circle schools towards the Hebrew language, and the land of Israel (Palestine). Disagreement over these issues had been a most divisive factor in the development of the Yiddish cultural and school movements. Whereas the study of ancient Jewish history had been problematic to most Yiddishists only a decade earlier, in the thirties Kinder zhurnal exhibited a gradual warming in that direction as well.

While the profile of English had been progressively rising through the frequent use of English sounding names and words in stories and poems, Hebrew was rarely introduced in the pages of Kinder zhurnal during its first decade. Stories translated from many languages appeared

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the White Russian and Ukrainian republics of the U.S.S.R. attended these schools. Despite the brief peak of heightened popularity, the Folk shule generally met with great resistance from the majority of Jewish parents.

As to Birc-Bidjan, established in 1928 to encourage development of Jewish agricultural settlement, it was declared a Jewish Autonomous Region in 1934. But the Jewish leadership was liquidated in 1936 under Stalin's new policy enforcements. The agricultural experiment was a disaster and the Jewish population quickly declined as Jews left for the industrial centres of the Russian interior. However, a Yiddish press was founded in 1930, Der birebidjaner shtern, which has continued to be published, with a few interruptions, until today. A fuller picture of the Jews in the Soviet era can be found in Salo Baron's The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets.

frequently, but not so from Hebrew. Only toward the end of the 1920's did Hebrew literature become an occasional source for translatable material. These initial stories, such as appeared in January and October, 1929, were not as yet about contemporary Palestine or on Biblical and aggadic (Biblical narratives attributed to the rabbis of the Talmudic era) material. Rather they were standard children's stories on traditional children's themes.

Interestingly, the work of selective Hebrew/Yiddish writers, such as Yehoash, was published from Kinder zhurnal's first year. However, either the selected works were written in Yiddish and American in texture, such as the following October, 1928 Yehoash titles (my translations from the Yiddish) indicate - "How Joey Falls Asleep", "Dick"; or they were Jewish holiday material such as Yehoash's story of The Chanukah Lamp, which was transformed into a short play by a teacher/writer for Kinder zhurnal in December, 1929.

Preliminary signs of the Yiddishists' abandonment of their old taboo on traditional Jewish studies emerged on the cusp of the third decade. The full impact only began to be reflected in Kinder zhurnal in the late 1930's. At first, the odd poem or Bible-related story appeared. Gradually 'loshn koydesh' (Hebrew/Aramaic words incorporated into the Yiddish language) began to be used in this material. By the latter 1930's, Bible stories appeared

regularly in Israel Goichberg's column 'Fun Altn Kval'(From the Ancient Source). Even a regular game quiz and contest on biblical topics was created, in addition to the word games and activities.

Much the same pattern was repeated regarding the subject of Palestine as the land of Israel (Eretz Israel). My survey has revealed no mention of Eretz Israel in Kinder zhurnal prior to May, 1934. On this first occasion, it appeared as a brief news flash comparing the speed of airplane travel from Egypt to Palestine in modern times to the ancient, arduous, forty year journey in the Bible. Starting in 1935, almost every news column included some brief mention of Palestine either in the context of a haven for refugees of persecution or in relation to the trials and tribulations of the Zionists. By 1937 stories about Jewish life in Palestine and by writers living in Palestine began to appear occasionally. Still, there was no discernible sentimentality in the writings of the nineteen thirties on the land of Israel such as there had been in past references to eastern European life. Writings on Palestine were more in the brief, facts-only, style of journalistic reports.

As if to emphasize the new focus and direction of Kinder zhurnal, the traditonal magazine cover depicting 'the girl on a swing' was permanently retired in April, 1938. Henceforth the illustrated cover page varied in

tandem with the magazine's changing priorities. For instance, the new April, 1938 cover page featured an elaborate border evocative of traditional Judaica ornamentation. No doubt this reflected the magazine's increasing absorption with biblical material and its desire to enhance its attractiveness to an older readership.

The war years, 1939-1945, did not indicate any significant change in the new reverence for Jewish history or in the attitude towards the land of Israel in the pages of Kinder zhurnal. Each issue contained a considerable number of Bible stories and occasional biblical references, as well as material relating to the land of Israel either in the format of news items or literary pieces translated from Hebrew. Typically, in two 1943 issues, adaptations and translations of stories by the later famous Nobel Prize - winning Hebrew writer S.Y. Agnon were printed, as were Chaim N. Bialik's poems. Agnon's stories in Kinder zhurnal were of Jewish life long ago, and the selection of Bialik's poems and stories featured biblical characters or common-place themes. The representative works of neither author dealt with life in the land of Israel or with Zionism.

Despite several brief lapses from the regular news column from 1941 to 1943 and a complete news blackout throughout 1944 until mid 1945, the young readers of Kinder zhurnal were not spared knowledge of the horrors emanating from Nazi Germany. The unspeakable anti-Jewish atrocities

and persecutions in East Europe were briefly reported on a regular basis in the sporadically appearing news column. However, these news blurbs were now usually accompanied by anecdotes about a child's heroic act or an escape of children from the Nazis. In photographs appearing in 1943 issues, American children of Yiddishist schools were shown participating in memorials for their annihilated 'brothers and sisters' overseas. Kinder zhurnal readers were continually met with articles encouraging them to speak out publicly against the ongoing genocide of their people.

Predictably, the traditional humanist and socialist ideological orientation of the editorial committee headed by Shmuel Niger did not alter in the pages of Kinder zhurnal during the war years. Along with the news of destruction by the Nazi war machine and their fascist allies, came news of union victories, struggles of farmers, and world-wide unemployment and homelessness.

Perhaps the only deviation from the pre-war direction of Kinder zhurnal was a gradual reclaiming of a younger audience. Although the updated cover page inaugurated in April, 1938 intimated an older audience, illustrations accompanying the literature slowly reappeared, albeit sparingly. A few poems and stories in large, bold print began to appear in most issues. By April 1944, the magazine definitely had a younger image, especially with the third revision of the cover page design. This time the cover

depicted very young children surrounded by American-style toys like baseball bats, dolls and pets. Even a song accompanied by music, a long-abandoned form reminiscent of the early days of Kinder zhurnal, was once again included.

As seen in Chapter Two, the Yiddish cultural movement in America was no longer in the growing stages throughout the thirties and the early 1940's. Large-scale immigration had stopped,[20] Yiddish speakers were dwindling and Yiddish theatres were closing. Yet, the adult and children's Yiddish press was still extremely active despite its lowered circulation. In 1931, there were still forty-one Yiddish newspapers in America out of three hundred world-wide.[21] The Workmen's Circle had successfully launched a competitive publication called Kinder tsaytung (Children's Newspaper) in 1930. The adult Yiddish newspaper Morgn zhurnal (the Morning Paper) had started a children's section entitled Kind un keyt (Kith and Kin) in January, 1936, run by Kinder zhurnal contributor, Ephraim Auerbach.

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[20]The Johnson Act of 1924, in response to "racist and nativist movements" active in America at that time, had effectively stopped further immigration of Jews by 1925. The newly inaugurated quota system gave preference to Nordic-born (Northern and Western Europeans) immigrants as opposed to those born in Slavic, Mediterranean or oriental countries. Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 15, col. 1626.

[21]The August/September news section of Kinder zhurnal contained some interesting statistics on the Yiddish press. Out of 500 newspapers world-wide dealing with Jewish interests, 300 were in the Yiddish language. The rest were in other languages such as Hebrew, Russian and English. Of the 300 newspapers, 171 came from Poland.

In fact, several adult newspapers in New York, like the Forverts and Der tog also had children's sections. In May 1943, two new children's journals were launched under the auspices of the Folk shuln (People's Schools) of Philadelphia and New York. They were respectively called Shtraln (Rays) and Kindervelt (Children's World).

Kinder zhurnal managed to survive despite its earlier severe financial difficulties between late 1932 and early 1933.[22] It had attracted new regular contributors such as the renowned poet and children's writer, Kadia Molodowsky; poets Malka Heifetz Tussman and Celia Drapkin; Naftali Gross and Yankev Krepliak, socialist activists and writers; Shimshon Dunsky, the noted Montreal educator and writer, and numerous others.

Throughout the 1930's, including the war years, Kinder zhurnal's frequent regular announcments of new school openings and new school subscribers in America, namely the People's Schools (Folk shuln), Peretz schools and Workmen's Circle schools, incorrectly gave the impression that the Yiddish secular school movement was growing. The previous chapter clearly showed the opposite was true. Occasional news of recent Yiddish secular schools openings in Johannesburg, Mexico, and even Palestine (October, 1941),

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[22]Kinder zhurnal published three appeals for help in the October and November, 1932, and January, 1933 issues. They warned that without quick assistance the magazine would shut down.

suggesting that Yiddishists fleeing the Nazis were spreading the movement to their countries of refuge, only further confounded the illusion of growth, as did reports on the thriving large secular Yiddish day schools in already long established Yiddishist communities such as Montreal, Canada and Mosesville, Argentina.

After the Second World War, Kinder zhurnal began to seriously reflect the growing currents in the American Yiddishist movement towards Hebraization and Jewish religious tradition. For the first time, the November, 1947 cover of Kinder zhurnal displayed the Jewish calendar date written in Hebrew alongside the Gregorian one written in Yiddish. New artwork on the October, 1949 cover page was prominently accompanied by a call for children to come study Torah. Quite a reversal had taken place from thirty years ago, when studying Torah was far from a priority for the secular Yiddish school movement.

Furthermore, this same October, 1949 issue was printed in the blue and white colors of the newly established state of Israel. Over the subsequent decade, Israel became the new emotional repository for the young readers of the magazine. It was vested with the virtues of heroism, freedom and vitality through stories about building a new life and a new country. Although the news section no longer appeared as a regular column, Israeli happenings frequently

were relayed through profile articles on Israeli heroes, politicians and writers.

The nineteen fifties encapsulated the process of coming to grips with the Holocaust through increasing pride in Israel and Jewish history in the pages of Kinder zhurnal. With the retirement of Shmuel Niger as editor, Lippe Lehrer, the original co-founder of the magazine, once again took over. Under his direction, the magazine remained geared to an elementary school level readership with respectively appropriate material in a variety of forms.

Suddenly, in the mid-sixties, a marked change in target audience interestingly occurred. Once again, Kinder zhurnal became obviously geared to a higher literary level, to a more sophisticated reader. The increasing difficulty in language was compensated by English word translations that accompanied the literature. An example of the extreme to which this trend was taken is epitomized in I. Goichberg's short two-page story in the January, 1968 issue, which had fifty-six words in its vocabulary translation list. Works from the adult press of renowned poets like Jacob Glatstein were printed with encouraging pleas by the editor for the young readers to seek their teachers' assistance in understanding, and thus appreciating, such important poetry.

Several indicators in the Yiddish cultural movement of the times could perhaps offer some insight to this drastic

change of focus in Kinder zhurnal. First, from the various presentations given at an American conference of Yiddish secular schools as early as 1948, one can deduce some disappointment of the movement's leaders in the students' level of achievement in the study of Yiddish and appreciation of Yiddish literature. Some educators felt that good classic literature rather than the second-rate material being created by educators should provide the curriculum material for the Yiddish schools.[23] Twelve years later, at the S.A.F.I. celebrations of Kinder zhurnal's fortieth anniversary, Kadia Molodowsky echoed that concern by expressing her reservations as to what constituted good children's literature. She pointed out that literature for children first had to be good literature and not merely stories or poems about little children.[24]

However, this last thrust towards upgrading the level of literature within the magazine was short-lived. The experiment obviously did not live up to its expectations. Possibly the difficulty level discouraged rather than inspired the older students. In any case, Kinder zhurnal

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[23]Yakov Zipper, a Montreal Yiddishist educator, expressed that very opinion in "Vegn literatur in der elementar shul," (On the Subject of Literature in the Elementary School), Shul pinkes, eds., I. Pomerantz et al. (Chicago: Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, 1948), pp. 427-433.

[24]From hand-written draft of her forthcoming talk at this occasion. Found in Yivo Archives No. 190 on Kadia Molodowsky.

returned to its middle of the road position and resumed its previous format by 1969. It then began its final phase of producing a progressively reduced number of issues per year with significantly fewer pages until its last issue in Fall, 1981.

Conclusion

Kinder zhurnal was an important aspect of the Yiddishists' ultimate aim of creating a new Jewish society based on a new social order structured by democratic, humanist, and socialist principles rather than on tradition and religious observance; a society based on Yiddish language as the common denominator and on modern Yiddish literature as the guiding light. It was conceived to play the same role as the Yiddish press, that of an educating medium. Literature and secular knowledge were introduced to children through its pages. By means of its form and content it implemented many new concepts of modern pedagogical studies and thus became an important educational tool, especially in the Sholom Aleichem schools where it was an official part of the curriculum. In many cases Kinder zhurnal became a vital link between school, home and community.

Kinder zhurnal's contribution to the development of Yiddish children's literature was significant. All the major Yiddish children's writers and their classic works

got their initial introduction through the Kinder zhurnal. Stories such as 'Yingele, ringele' by Leon Elbe and 'Shmerl nar' by Solomon Simon were good literature and suitable for the young children of their time. To be sure, not all the literature that appeared in Kinder zhurnal was of the highest calibre. However, through the careful scrutiny of its editors, a high level of excellence was sought and, for the most part, maintained. This was the legacy of Kinder zhurnal to Yiddish children's literature. How successful a tool Kinder zhurnal ultimately was in executing the vision of the Yiddishist secular school movement remains to be discussed in Chapter Four.

In addition to its important contribution to children's literature, Kinder zhurnal is invaluable as a rich material source for the history of the American Yiddishist movement. The magazine clearly reflected the changing attitudes of the Yiddishists towards traditional areas of study, such as Hebrew and the Bible, starting in the 1930's. It also mirrored the Yiddishists' humanistic vision and socialist bent from its inception until the 1950's. Through its editors' choice of literature and stories, Kinder zhurnal's initial reluctance towards acknowledging Zionism, which changed to outright support of Israel a few years following the 1948 establishment of that state, represented the majority Yiddishist position. After the Holocaust, Kinder zhurnal obviously reflected the

shifting locus of primary importance to Jewish history and religious tradition as the unifying factor of secular Jews world-wide. This growing trend continued until the late nineteen sixties. From this point onward, the decline in Yiddish language use both at home and in the ever-decreasing number of Yiddish schools corresponded to the leaner format and reduced number of contributors and original content of the magazine's last decade.

The discussion thus far has shown and will continue to illustrate how gradual modifications over the years occurred in response to the changing profile of secular Jews within the American reality. These adaptations took place either through increased religiosity, traditionalism, Zionism and identification with the State of Israel, or through decreased identification with any form of Jewishness because of its perceived irrelevance to American secular life. Either scenario, the return to religious Orthodoxy or negativism toward Jewishness, presaged the demise of Yiddish language use and with it, Yiddish culture. The classic Yiddish children's literature became accessible to fewer and fewer children. The initial dream of the Yiddishists, that Yiddish was and would remain the predominant unifying factor of the Jewish people, did not materialize.

The Yiddishist striving for a culture that would spearhead a humanistic society, where continual growth and

reconstruction would be welcomed in its midst, in essence, sowed the seeds of its own demise. Fulfillment of Yiddishist objectives increasingly brought secular Jewish society closer to the vortex of "non-Jewish modernity", where it came dangerously close to losing its distinctiveness.[25] The very change and adaptive reconstruction the Yiddishists sought altered the very nature of the culture itself to the point where it became more marginal than ever. Kinder zhurnal's raison d'etre was reduced to an untenable level, and it too had to succumb to the powers of pragmatism and change.

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[25]I. Howe, et al., eds., The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse (New York: Viking Press, 1987), p. 44.

CHAPTER FOUR

An Assessment of Kinder zhurnal

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the significance of the Kinder zhurnal within the Yiddish secular school movement of America. Towards this end, the success of the Yiddish secular school movement, with particular emphasis on the Sholom Aleichem schools of the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute (S.A.F.I.), will be discussed in terms of achieving their defined range of objectives.

As the previous two chapters have indicated, the S.A.F.I. and the entire Yiddish secular school movement underwent several changes over the years. By 1927 most factions of the Yiddishist movement and the Yiddish secular school movement had consolidated their identity and direction.[1] Therefore, a reasonable point of departure for this discussion will be this period of consolidation and clarification of positions. At this significant juncture in the development of the Yiddish secular school movement, the S.A.F.I. held a conference in 1927. An outline of that

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[1]The one exception to this consolidation were the 'Umparteyishe arbeter shuln'(Non- Partisan Workmen's Schools). See Chapter 2, p. 59.

conference's resolutions is contained in the Shul almanakh and will be used as the starting point for the ensuing discussion.[2]

Before tackling the issue of whether the S.A.F.I. goals as well as the Yiddishist goals were achieved, it will first be necessary to expand on the similarity in terminology and concepts between John Dewey and Leibush Lehrer, a Yiddishist educator and writer and a chief formulator of Yiddish secular education.[3] Since Leibush Lehrer and John Dewey shared common ideas in their philosophies of education, it will be useful to have a common language with which to discuss their ideas in relation to the S.A.F.I. philosophy. Dewey's and Leibush

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[2]Lippe Lehrer, "Der Sholom Aleichem folks institute" in Shul almanakh: di yidishe moderne shul af der velt, ed. F. Gelibter et al. (Philadelphia: Central Committee of the Workmen's Circle, 1935).

[3]I assume the reader's acquaintance with John Dewey's contribution to modern philosophy of education and will not elaborate on anything other than what is pertinent to the discussion at hand.

Leibush Lehrer (1887-1965) immigrated to the United States from Russia in 1909 and became a leading founder of the Sholom Aleichem schools and a director of its Secondary School. He taught at the Jewish Teachers Seminary in New York and was involved with the psychology and education section of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

He wrote two influential treatises on modern Yiddish secular education: Di moderne yidishe shul (New York: Farlag Max N. Maizel, 1927) and Psikhologye un dertsiung (New York: Farlag Matones, Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, 1937). In the former, he elaborates on the development of the Yiddish secular school movement and its modern, secular philosophy. In the latter, he argues for the incorporation of relevant modern disciplines and the spirit of experimentalism in Jewish education.

Lehrer's conception of **education** with its attendant **aims**, **ends** and **means** needs to be elaborated so that Lippe Lehrer's account of S.A.F.I.'s ideals in the Shul almanakh can have a common terminological and conceptual frame of reference.

Once the assessment of S.A.F.I.'s goals has been completed, the role of Kinder zhurnal will be evaluated within the S.A.F.I. framework and the Leibush Lehrer/John Dewey philosophy of education.

John Dewey and Leibush Lehrer: Concepts and Terminology

Humanistic Education

Both John Dewey and Leibush Lehrer advocated a humanistic education. Their humanist philosophy is a "man-centered theory of life."[4] They strived to "deal with the wholeness of the person and not simply his cognitive or affective structures."[5] John Dewey, in his philosophy of life and education, sought to dispel the basis of the dualisms on which formal traditional education is founded and instead proposed a thesis of unity and continuity.

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[4]As quoted in Gerald Teller, "Humanistic Education: A Clarification of its Meaning for Jewish Education" (Ph.D. dissertation, Wayne State University, 1976), p. 7.
Teller's quote is reproduced from Albert Ellis, "Toward a New Humanist Manifesto," The Humanist, 33:1 (January-February, 1973), p. 17.

[5]Gerald Teller, p. 7.

Dewey also endorsed pragmatism[6] in combination with his humanist bent. In the two schools of thought, pragmatism and humanism, it is held that "man can comprehend the world with the use of his reason." Truth, therefore, "emerges out of man's exploration of his world. Truth, for the humanist, is not something given by God. Truth emerges out of the testing process, out of man's use of his critical intelligence."[7] John Dewey and Leibush Lehrer would most closely subscribe to the "ethical or secular" type of humanism (as opposed to "religious" humanism), although it is questionable whether Leibush Lehrer would subscribe to the ethical humanist call for the "rejection of the limits of loyalty of nationality and ideology which separate men into parties, sects and religions."[8] At the same time, it is likely he would agree that "Living in a world of instant communications, human beings must become transnational and transcultural."[9] In his book Psikhologye un dertsiung,[10]

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[6] As defined in the Webster's dictionary (1988), **pragmatism** is "a doctrine which tests truth by its practical consequences. Truth is therefore held to be relative and not attainable by metaphysical explanation."

[7] Gerald Teller, p. 7.

[8] Ibid., p. 24.

[9] Ibid., p. 25.

[10] Translated, the title Psikhologye un dertsiung means "psychology and education." It must be noted that the word 'dertsiung' has two meanings - "education" and "upbringing." When Leibush Lehrer wishes to speak of formal education, he refers to 'shul dertsiung', "school education." What is suggested by the merging of the two

Leibush Lehrer strongly decried the use of polemicism in education. He concurrently encouraged the use of Yiddish in building a new Jewish society that was an integral part of American society.[11] Much as he condemned partisanship in the business of education, Leibush Lehrer was unequivocally a Jewish nationalist and supporter of ethnic/cultural education. Having somewhat qualified Leibush Lehrer's full support of ethical humanism, there can be no doubt that both he and John Dewey envisioned education's goal as "produc(ing) an ethical human being."[12]

Dewey's definition of education derives from the movement of humanism and doctrine of pragmatism. In his book Democracy and Education, the unfolding of his theory begins with the premise that human life is social, and with the principle of continuity. "Education ...is the means of this social continuity of life."[13] As such, education is a

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interpretations into the one word 'dertsiung' is that education and upbringing are, in effect, the same - a very Deweyian concept!

[11]Leibush Lehrer, Psikhologye un dertsiung, p. 49.

[12]Ibid. For a longer outline of philosophical principles upon which humanistic education is based, see Teller's list of ten principles taken from John A. Zahorik and Dale L. Broubaker, Toward More Humanistic Instruction (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company, 1972), pp. 93-94. Teller also provides ten central propositions in secular humanist philosophy taken from Corliss Lamont, The Philosophy of Humanism (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1949), pp. 22-23.

[13]John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: Free Press, 1966), p. 2.

necessity of life, it provides the means for socialization of the child into society; it offers direction in the meaning of life; its goal and its means are growth and development. Dewey summarizes:

> Our net conclusion is that life is development and that development is life, growing is life. Translated into its educational equivalents, that means (i) that the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end; and that (ii) the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming.[14]

Clearly, life and education are inextricably intertwined and, in Dewey's estimate, equivalent. Both have growth and development as their ultimate goal.

Deweyian Terminology

Dewey does not utilize the word 'goal' to denote an objective. Instead, he uses the terms 'aim' and 'end' in discussing the objectives of education. Throughout this chapter, these terms will be used whenever they relate to Dewey's concepts. To summarize, his concept of an aim consists of an objective that is thought out in light of the factors in a given situation and of the various consequences attendant upon acting on any of the alternatives.[15] To use an example of Leibush Lehrer, an aim is evident when a child collects boards and puts them

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[14]Ibid., pp. 49-50.

[15]A lengthy clarification of the term aim can be found in Chapter 8 of Dewey's Democracy and Education.

together with the intention of building a house.[16] On the other hand, an end is an objective "which grows up within an activity as plan for its direction."[17] Thus, in the above example, sawing the boards a certain length or stacking them in a certain order would constitute an end or end-in view if the intention was to build a house. In such a case it would simultaneously be the means of "carrying activity further as soon as it is achieved. We call it end when it marks off the future direction of the activity in which we are engaged; means when it marks off the present direction."[18]

Dewey's theory not only stresses that the process of continual reconstruction is one and the same in life and education, but it also places equal importance on the implication that the means and end of life and education are the same. If the end in life is development, then developing is the means to being alive. This is equally true in the reverse.

Leibush Lehrer's ideal conception of the modern Yiddish secular school incorporates much of Dewey's interpretations of the term education. In addition, Lehrer's interpretation of the terms aims, ends and means correspond to Dewey's, if one removes the ambiguity of the

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[16]Leibush Lehrer, Psikhologye un dertsiung, p. 114.

[17]John Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 106.

[18]Ibid.

Yiddish terminology Lehrer uses by referring to the examples and explanations he offers in the context of his writings.[19] In essence, Lehrer's concept of life is that of a series of steps where each step is preparation for the next. Therefore, an aim can not be realized until an end-in-view had been achieved. In other words, a reasoned objective that takes into consideration existing factors and potential consequences of alternative actions (aim) cannot be attained unless various steps taken with that goal in mind have been completed (end-in-view). The end lies in the person's intention, or as Dewey would say, purpose. In addition, it always assumes a social connotation, according to Leibush Lehrer.[20] In an attempt to clarify this last point, he differentiates between an end and a result ('sof', in Yiddish) claiming that the term 'results' generally denotes negative or uncoordinated results whereas an end is usually thought of as a positive result that is in direct relation and relevance to a societal/social matter.

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[19]In Psikhologye un dertsiung, Lehrer uses the terms 'tsvek' which is defined in Harkavy's Yiddish/English dictionary as "aim, purpose, object"; 'tsil' defined as "aim, end, purpose, object"; 'takhlis' defined as "end, result". However, in his discussion in chapter 5, these terms become clarified and analogous to Dewey's. Thus: 'tsvek' - "end-in-view"; 'tsil' - "aim"; 'takhlis' - "end".

[20]Leibush Lehrer, Psikhologye un dertsiung, pp. 114-116.

Pragmatism: Values and Valuation of Studies

The much debated aspect of Dewey's theory is his pragmatic approach to the directionality of education. His critics find a lack of permanent, consistent core values as a result of his approach.[21] However, there are several checks within Dewey's theory that would steer an individual's growth in the direction of universally accepted values. First is Dewey's specific understanding of educative growth. If growth occurs in a direction which inhibits continuity, that is, in a direction which retards further growth, it is not educative.[22] This is based on the requirement that socialization takes place into a culture or a society. Interaction within this community provides an individual with essential intrinsic attitudes, values and morals towards his/her environment. Leibush Lehrer echoes that position in his statement: "education of a child is not a separate thing but is interwoven within the societal web."[23] The language of the culture gives direction to social development, as do common shared activities and experiences. Moreover, favorable results

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[21]For example, see critique by Reginald D. Archambault, "The Philosophical Bases of the Experience Curriculum," and by C.D. Hardie, "The Educational Theory of John Dewey," both in Dewey on Education - Appraisals (New York: Random House, 1966).

[22]John Dewey, Experience and Education (New York: Collier Books, 1963), pp. 35-37.

[23]My translation from Leibush Lehrer, Di moderne yidishe shul, p. 12.

could more likely be expected if growth takes place in a truly democratic environment. Dewey states: "Democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated being, of conjoint communicated experience."[24]

Finally, there is an essential intentionality in education, in the "specially selected environment, the selection being made on the basis of materials and method specifically promoting growth in the desired direction."[25] Furthermore, Dewey argues, selection should be made on the basis of experimentally tested evidence. Leibush Lehrer was in full agreement with Dewey on the issue of selectivity based on empirical evidence to enhance growth in the desired direction. Lehrer points out that in later years, Dewey's original position, that assumed the child would naturally grow without external direction towards the essential skills of the three R's, changed in the face of empirical evidence from various experimental schools proving otherwise.[26] In Chapter 7 of Experience and Education (first published in 1939, twenty-three years after Democracy and Education), Dewey does incorporate the issue of subject-matter into the newer version of his thesis and justifies formal subjects as sound educational methodology within the structure of his philosophy.

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[24]John Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 87.

[25]Ibid., p. 38.

[26]Leibush Lehrer, Psikhologye un dertsiung, p. 53.

However, the quintessential element in providing directionality within Dewey's theory of pragmatism is "self-control". According to Dewey, "formation" is that essential informal component of education which must be coupled with acquired self-control in order to give meaning and direction to life and education. He states that "The ideal aim of education is creation of power of self-control."[27] Self-control is the intellectualization of the reconstruction of impulses and desires in living experience. It involves thinking about ramifications and consequences of acting upon impulses. "Thinking is thus a postponement of immediate action"[28] so that the significance of the observed information can be processed. Thus intellectual growth as well as social growth requires the reconstruction of experience. Experience and its reconstruction is then the key element in Dewey's philosophy as seen in his technical definition of education: "It is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience."[29]

In short, Leibush Lehrer subscribed to many aspects of Dewey's philosophy of education. His writings demonstrate

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[27]John Dewey, Experience and Education, p. 64.

[28]Ibid.

[29]John Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 76.

agreement with Dewey's ideal aim for education and its implicit marriage of socialization and intellectualization; with Dewey's equation of life and education as continual growth, as continual reconstruction of experience through thought and reason; with Dewey's conception of education as fostering intentionality and direction by providing educative experiences through the school and formation through language, interaction and continuity in society; and with Dewey's basic premise that individuality can only exist in a social context and that transmission of culture is essential to the continuity of life. Furthermore, he would concur with Dewey's statement: "A genuine community life has its ground in this natural sociability. But community life does not organize itself in an enduring way purely spontaneously. It requires thought and planning ahead."[30]

Similar concerns about modern schools were expressed by the two theorists. Leibush Lehrer sensed the same dangers associated with the establishment of a new school movement as did Dewey, who stated:

> ...that in rejecting the aims and methods of that which it (new movement) would supplant, it may develop its principles negatively rather than positively and constructively. Then it takes its clew in practice from that which is rejected instead of from the constructive development of its own philosophy.[31]

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[30]John Dewey, Experience and Education, p. 56.

[31]Ibid., p. 20.

Indeed, the emergence of the modern Yiddish secular school was not a movement to modify the traditional religious mode of Jewish education, Leibush Lehrer argued. Rather it was born of the necessity to create one from anew. Therefore from its inception, its outlook was positive and constructive. He writes:

> Our school did not appear because we wanted to improve the faults of the cheder or because we decided to create new ideas in school education in response to certain new callings. Far, far from that. The process was played out in a much simpler manner. The Yiddish, non-religious, progressive, secular modern group felt left out because society and education lay in the hands of the Orthodox.[32]

Regarding the issue of which subjects should be studied, again we get a similar stance between the two theorists. For Dewey the ultimate criterion was the educational (functional and relevant) value of the subject under question. Dewey expresses it thus: "The proof of the good is found in the fact that the pupil responds; his response is use. His response to the material shows that the subject functions in his life."[33] This statement contains perhaps the closest definition of what Dewey considers 'good'. Although humanism generally presupposes that man is inherently good, Dewey defines good as whatever leads to growth, and growth can only occur if the criteria of functionality and relevancy (instrumental value) are met.

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[32]My translation from Leibush Lehrer, Di moderne shul, p. 11.

[33]John Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 242.

Thus, 'instrumental value' is Dewey's true yardstick for valuating studies. But instrumental value also has the "intrinsic value of being a means to an end."[34] In other words, a subject can be instrumentally good for something (end) or intrinsically good, that is, good for itself, "a means of achieving something of intrinsic value," such as heightened spirituality or increased aesthetic sensibilities.[35] Thus, he justifies the value of studying Latin, for example, if the student genuinely wants to learn Latin, "for that is of itself proof that it possesses value."[36] Leibush Lehrer certainly used this criterion in justifying the formal studies of the modern Yiddish secular school. At the time of his writings, not only were the studies of Jewish history, Yiddish and Yiddish literature relevant and functional in the lives of the students of the modern Yiddish secular school, but they also possessed intrinsic value through their appreciative and aesthetic qualities.

The issue of values and valuating segregated subjects raised the moral question, according to Dewey, of how to organize the various studies to optimize the "unity or integrity of experience".[37] Lehrer agreed with Dewey's

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[34]Ibid., p. 243.

[35]Ibid., p. 242.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid., p. 248.

criticism of the segregation of studies in education. Dewey argued that such segregation

> ...represent(s) the divisions and separations which obtain in social life. The variety of interests which should mark any rich and balanced experience have been torn asunder and deposited in separate institutions with diverse and independent purposes and methods. Business is business, science is science, art is art, politics is politics, social intercourse is social intercourse, morals is morals, recreation is recreation, and so on. Each possesses a separate and independent province with its own peculiar aims and ways of proceeding. Each contributes to the others only externally and accidentally. All of them together make up the whole of life by just apposition and addition.[38]

In effect, Dewey claims, the composite character of school curriculum created by the "aggregation of segregated values is a result of the isolation of social groups and classes. Hence it is the business of education in a democratic social group to struggle against this isolation in order that the various interests may reenforce and play into one another."[39]

Dewey claimed a detrimental effect of segregated values, and therefore of studies, is that the overall transformation of old studies and the integration of new methods and aims of education are hampered.[40] Leibush Lehrer also regretted this obstacle to the practical

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[38]Ibid., p. 247.

[39]Ibid., p. 249.

[40]Ibid., p. 247.

execution of the 'wholeness' theory in education.[41] He saw the "separation of knowledge" as a "method, not a principle and certainly not an expression of the workings of real life."[42] However, unlike Dewey, he believed that this segregation was nevertheless a necessary procedure.

Leibush Lehrer saw another impediment to the implementation of Deweyian theory into practice in the Yiddish secular schools. This obstacle centered on the critical need for empirical evidence on which to base change in the methods and aims of education. An empirical sociological study of the traditional schools or of the ever-changing secular Jewish community had not yet been done, he claimed. The lack of harmony within the Jewish secular movement had preempted the kind of organization and standardization essential to determining a common secular Jewish educational goal and ultimately a suitable program. Subsequently the appropriate materials with which to render the new subject-matter of the Yiddishist schools relevant to the students' experiences were never determined and therefore not implemented.[43] As a result, Lehrer declared that there existed, and would continue to exist (unless the situation was rectified), a deep discrepancy between theory

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[41]Leibush Lehrer, Psikhologye un dertsiung, p. 56.

[42]Leibush Lehrer, Di moderne yidishe shul, p. 13.

[43]Leibush Lehrer, Psikhologye un dertsiung, pp. 285-87.

and practice, the present practice being "quite conservative, backward, run according to long-accepted methods and on a traditional track."[44]

In Lehrer's estimation, as well as in Dewey's, the ideal school "must always remain experimental in character, just as life is."[45] Without this characteristic, the school will not be able to improve and offer a program that is attuned to the changing environment and the means for educative growth of its students.

Cultural Agenda

Although much of the S.A.F.I.'s cultural agenda was shared by the larger Yiddish secular school movement of the time, it was nevertheless unique to its own small non-partisan organization. The following synopsis is my translated and edited version from the S.A.F.I.'s 1927 Shul almanakh:

> The Yiddish secular school was born out of the Jewish secular environment and geared to the masses within this milieu. The language of the masses is Yiddish and their culture is new, modern and secular. Religion is not the foundation of their spiritual life since the religious customs are merely a part of the generations-long creation of peoplehood. Hebrew and Aramaic belong to our national cultural treasure and therefore should be treated objectively and historically. Socially and politically, the Yiddish secular movement is progressive throughout. It is made

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[44]Ibid., p. 288. An expanded discussion of the rift between theory and practice in Yiddish secular education will continue in the next section of this chapter.

[45]Ibid., p. 280.

> up of those elements that strive to build up all forms of human community life - economic, social and nationalistic. Regarding Jewish life, it believes in the possibility of constructive growth wherever Jewish masses exist.[46]

Undoubtedly, in 1927 there was genuine hopefulness in the positive development of Yiddishism, as expressed above by Lippe Lehrer, despite hints of evidence to the contrary. Of course, the coming Depression and the Holocaust were not clearly foreseeable in 1927 and Yiddish was still the primary mother tongue of a sizable sector of the immigrant Jewish community. But further mass immigration of Yiddish speakers to America had recently ceased due to new restrictive quotas following the Johnson Act of 1924.[47] New converts to the Yiddishist movement were not readily forthcoming from the general Jewish community. The lure into American society was so strong it was difficult to maintain whatever membership they did have. As seen earlier, the Yiddish secular school movement's growth in America was grinding to a halt ten years later. The schools were poor. New schools, students and readers of Yiddish were increasingly difficult to come by. By 1937, whatever consumers there were of Yiddish children's literature came solely from the student body of the secular Yiddish

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[46]Lippe Lehrer, Shul almanakh, pp.140-141.

[47]See Chapter Three, footnote 20.

schools.[48] Although other institutions and organizations such as camps, community centres, and clubs did exist and thrive, in the long run they were not strong enough to stand up to the formidable sociological pressures against maintaining a Yiddish way of life. In actuality, the circle the Yiddishists so wanted to broaden did not ultimately expand. In fact, it constricted to the point where it became hardly viable.

It therefore becomes necessary to question if the above principles remained relevant to North American Jewish society over the years. If not, one can hardly expect any ramifications to come to fruition. Restated in Deweyian concepts, if the principles were not based on functionality and relevancy, growth could not be expected as a result.

In examining the factors underlying the principles, the issue of the masses must be discussed. The masses to which Lippe Lehrer referred did not remain the poor, downtrodden, Yiddish-speaking immigrants of East Europe for long. Indeed, two or three generations later, the socio-economic bracket of the majority of Yiddishists and their off-spring had changed primarily to that of middle-class. One of the first signs of immigrant-status to be cast off was their first language, Yiddish. Their new language for their new life became English. Therefore the composition of

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[48]C.S. Kazhdan, "Finf un draysik yor yidishe kinder literatur" in Shul Pinkes, ed. S. Bercovitch et al., (Chicago: Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute, 1948), p. 337.

the very people for whom the Yiddishists felt they were creating and developing a culture changed dramatically. This in turn affected the few community organizations and institutions that were established in the early days. As could be surmised, they did not continue growing and proliferating as the Yiddishists had hoped. Instead they significantly thinned out without the infusion of new blood and continued support, preempting the possibility of constructive growth.

In contrast to the altered socio-economic profile and preferred first language of more recent American Jewish secularists, the 1927 stance towards religion and Hebrew has survived. Although, with the establishment of the State of Israel after the devastation of the Holocaust, many more have increasingly accorded greater importance to modern Hebrew, Zionism and/or religion, still, there remains a significantly large group for whom Jewish nationalism is defined in terms of 'Yiddishkeit' (Jewish cultural affinity), rather than in terms of religion.

Assessment of Cultural Agenda

If the stated aim of the S.A.F.I., as part of the American Yiddish cultural movement, was to create a lasting modern Yiddish culture with the Yiddish language as its hub, it did not wholly succeed. Undoubtedly, Jewish secularism in general has continued to grow, change with

and adapt to the times. But Yiddish is no longer a primary language of Jewish secular life. Its literature, press and theatre no longer are the energy force for a distinctive secular Jewish culture.

Jewish groups that use Yiddish as their language of everyday communication still exist. These are the Hasidic communities[49] worldwide where the secularist Yiddishist movement did not affect the traditionalist attitude to Yiddish as "the language of daily life and formal instruction in classical texts."[50] The Yiddish cultural movement and secular Yiddish schools are totally foreign to their concept of Jewishness. Yet the Yiddish language as mother tongue remains very much a living language and legacy within their communities.

Educational Agenda

The summarial statement of principles at the 1927 conference was followed by a section stating S.A.F.I.'s goals.[51] Naturally, they derive from the above statement

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[49] Hasidic communities are a distinct segment of the Jewish population that have resisted modernization and secularization. Hasidism is a socio-religious movement which originated in Poland in the eighteenth century. It has many factions, each with its own philosophy and leader.

[50] Joshua Fishman, Language Loyalty in the United States, p. 10.

[51] I will henceforth use 'goals' to denote objectives in general, whether they be aims, ends or ends-in-view according to Leibush Lehrer's and Dewey's terminology. However, wherever there is occasion for applicability of

of principles and apply specifically to the Sholom Aleichem school system. S.A.F.I.'s primary goal was to broaden the circle of the Yiddish secular movement. To achieve this, Lippe Lehrer stated that institutions such as schools had to be founded, and lifestyles had to be developed for all the movement's followers so that they would become, both personally and communally, active co-builders of the newly crystallizing Jewish life. In light of the fact that, in the last decade, the Sholom Aleichem Folk Institute has been disbanded, leaving behind only one or two independently-run schools, and that its membership, as well as that of the entire Yiddishist cultural and school movement has radically declined, an analysis of the S.A.F.I.'s goals is in order.

Not only did S.A.F.I. declare its aim to build up the most important institution of all, the new secular Yiddish school, it intended furthermore to make this school "responsible for the comprehensive education of the Jewish child and for his growth into the culture of his people."[52] This latter objective very clearly indicates the intricate correlation between education and socialization in the S.A.F.I. and, undoubtedly, in the broader Yiddishist pedagogical circles as well. The primary

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their terminology to the S.A.F.I.'s principles and objectives, it will be inserted in brackets.

[52]Lippe Lehrer, "Der Sholom Aleichem folk institut," p. 141.

goal of a **comprehensive** education suggests a striving for thoroughness and wholeness in their approach to the child and to the content of the program (ends and means) despite the very serious limitations to wholeness inherent in a supplementary school. Lippe Lehrer writes:

> The ideal program of the school is the systematic fusion of the improved programs of the general American and the Yiddish school. But as of now this is still a lofty ideal. Till it is reached, our children must go to the existing public school.[53]

Equally important to the concept of education as socialization is the developmental aspect of growth. The school is responsible for the child's intellectual and social growth but in a certain direction, into that of the culture of his people. We can assume that this objective met with a small measure of success in the larger Yiddishist school movement since a sufficient number of Jewish children were successfully educated to continue the minimal but surviving Yiddish culture and Yiddish schools existing today.

Additional goals cited by Lippe Lehrer were more specific as to the content and methodology of such an education. The objective of providing "the child with the rich, educational material being created in the Yiddish school that he/she can't get in the public school"[54] was quite realistic and indeed did succeed. In the true

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[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid.

Deweyian sense, the end was the means and vice versa. Kinder zhurnal was just such a creation. It became at one point an integral and compulsory part of the Yiddish literature program (means), while maintaining its purpose as an end in itself, a compendium of Yiddish children's literature.[55]

The S.A.F.I.'s further goal of ensuring that "the Yiddish secular school has the program and character to express and confirm the qualities of Jewish secular life"[56] was achieved through its curriculum focus.

> Its (S.A.F.I.'s) primary focus should be on the students and on activities which are compatible to Jewish secular life and work; for example, Yiddish, Yiddish literature, Jewish peoplehood, Jewish history. Religion must be viewed from a cultural historical perspective. Hebrew and Hebrew literature should be studied in higher grades as part of the collection of Jewish treasures.[57]

The program of the Sholom Aleichem schools in 1927 was divided into ten semesters over five years. Every semester had its main subjects from among the following:

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[55]In the November, 1935 issue of the monthly Buletin put out by the S.A.F.I.'s pedagogic committee for the teachers of the Sholom Aleichem schools, there is a notice informing teachers of the decision that Kinder zhurnal was considered a compulsory part of the reading course in the fifth to seventh semesters.

Likewise in the February 1938 issue, teachers are informed that the upcoming reading exams will include material from Kinder zhurnal as part of its literature chrestomathy.

[56]Lippe Lehrer, "Der Sholom Aleichem folk institut," p. 141.

[57]Ibid.

conversation; games/riddles/social skills/study habits; songs; speech; reading; writing; poetry; synonyms; idioms; Jewish history; phraseology in Yiddish, then in Hebrew; literature; grammar; composition; sociology of the home; demographics of world Jewry; geographical, political, socio-economic and national aspects of Jewish culture.[58] This program was altered repeatedly over successive years in response to changing sociological factors and historic events.[59]

The goal to "unify various factions despite political party divisions because of financial limitations and divided energies that could be used towards constructive purposes in our culture and our school" was one that could not be declared entirely successful. As noted in Chapter Two, there were two occasions when a Sholom Aleichem (High) school combined with two other school systems for a period of time. However, to date, the various school systems that have managed to survive are still separate as well as financially strapped entities. Sandra Parker, with good reason, considers the entrenched separateness of the

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[58]Ibid., p. 139.

[59]For a sample curriculum of a One-Day Sholom Aleichem School in the early 1950's, see Our First Fifty Years, pp. 141-157.

Yiddish secular school movement as a chief factor in its decline.[60]

A commitment to progressivism as part of the proposed reform in the Yiddish school movement was exemplified in the S.A.F.I. goal "to make use of methods of modern pedagogy and child psychology".[61] Testing, theories of learning and child development, curriculum design, the role of the teacher, and the importance of play were only a few of the issues that were under discussion in contemporary Yiddish journals such as Shriftn far psikhologye un pedagogik (Writings for Psychology and Pedagogy), issued in Vilna.[62] After all, the early decades of the Yiddishist schools corresponded to the era of Dewey's experimental schools and his theory of pragmatism. Educational and philosophical theories abounded as did empirical research. Dedication to pedagogical progressivism in the Yiddishist schools remained a theoretical priority in later years, but its implementation continued to be problematic.

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[60]Sandra Parker, "An Educational Assessment of the Yiddish Secular School Movements," p. 497.

[61]Lippe Lehrer, "Der Sholom Aleichem folk institut," p. 141.

[62]Shriftn far psikhologye un pedagogik (Vilna: Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut, psikhologish-pedagogishe sektsye, 1933), published its first and only issue under the editorship of Leibush Lehrer. Interestingly, it contained a few English synopses of the Yiddish articles.

Many other published titles on education appear in this journal's article by Y. Anilovitch and M. Yoffe which features a bibliography of published Yiddish school texts and books on pedagogy.

Theory Versus Practice

The commitment to modern pedagogy and its methodology was, in fact, stronger in theory than in practice throughout the Sholom Aleichem school's history. The reasons were not difficult to find. Inadequate financial and personnel resources continued to be a problem throughout the history of the school movement. "The austere conditions under which the Yiddish secular school movements began their activities were probably partially responsible for their emphasis upon content rather than upon the process of transmission of that content."[63] Moreover, the time constraint posed by a supplementary school was an additional formidable contributing factor to the lack of adoption of modern methodological theories.[64]

Leibush Lehrer stated that modern education evolved over the centuries in precisely this manner, with practice lagging behind theory. He claimed that philosophical theories and generalizations have not provided the practical 'what' and 'how' of praxis that was so needed to

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[63]Sandra Parker, pp. 500-501. She goes on to say that:

> In spite of a considerable body of literature about child-centered learning and some early experimentation in this area by the four movements, it is clear that the Yiddish supplementary school was a traditional rather than a developmental learning environment. The Yiddish teacher emphasized group rather than individual instruction, and utilized primarily standardized methods and materials.

[64]Ibid.

further educational achievements.[65] This assessment no doubt included Dewey's updated theory by the time Leibush Lehrer wrote his 1937 book, Psikhologye un dertsiung. With the understanding that progress was inevitably based on practical modifications, empirical research of what already exists needs to be the driving force behind the advancement of education, not polemicism or moral issues, Lehrer argued.[66] He saw the necessity for the methodology of the Yiddish secular school to evolve from its goals and, most importantly, from empirical evidence of on-going experimentation. This conviction led Leibush Lehrer to suggest that the modern secular school system had much to learn from the cheders in the "purely Jewish" problem areas, such as Jewish survival. Because "the cheder evolved in an atmosphere of Jewish national life where it had to become a purely defensive social mechanism," it should therefore be more accurately researched for positive achievements that could be modernized and modified. In effect, Lehrer stated, "the old cheder has no less to teach us than the most modern school technique."[67]

Leibush Lehrer's position that education was of necessity predominantly a matter of practice rather than philosophical theory is consistent with Barry Chazan's

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[65]Leibush Lehrer, Psikhologye un dertsiung, p. 41.

[66]Ibid., p. 49.

[67]Ibid., p. 289.

conclusion four decades later that "contemporary philosophy of Jewish education is concerned with the practice of Jewish education, which is probably regarded as the reason for its existence."[68] Chazan did, however, qualify his support of this position. "While well meant, such an emphasis is detrimental, implying that ideas, theory, and philosophy in Jewish education are only valuable if they are 'relevant' or 'applicable'."[69] In Chazan's view, there was a need for directionality in valuation and values that was Jewish, not only humanist, if continuity of a Jewish way of life was the goal.

Chazan proposed that the Jewish "language" of education contained the Jewish philosophy of education. The Yiddishists believed in that same principle. However, their language was Yiddish within the framework of non-religious humanism/socialism, whereas Chazan's language insisted that "there can be no Jewish education which does not encompass both religious and moral concerns."[70] Chazan maintained that moral education, not indoctrination, was one of the central precepts of Judaism and would give the definitive directionality to Jewish values and a Jewish way of life that Dewey's tenet of instrumental value did not guarantee.

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[68]Barry Chazan, The Language of Jewish Education: Crisis and Hope in the Jewish School (New York: Hartmore House, 1978), p.36.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Ibid., p. 18.

Within Chazan's analysis of the different types of philosophies in Jewish education, the Yiddish secular school movement would predominantly fall into the non-philosophical category of Jewish educational "theory".[71] As exemplified in the earlier discussion of the S.A.F.I.'s 1927 cultural and educational agenda, Yiddishism, typical of educational theory, is concerned with "principles... which can guide educational practice," and with "the development of such operative principles through a process drawing on several relevant disciplines and fields of discourse."[72]

Assessment of Educational Agenda

Two questions must be addressed in evaluating the S.A.F.I. educational agenda. First is the issue of how to define and understand the S.A.F.I.'s mission. At the outset of this chapter, it was suggested that the Yiddishist

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[71]Barry Chazan categorized philosophy of Jewish education into five different types: (1) historical-descriptive; (2) normative-synthetic; (3) analytic; (4) meta-philosophy; and (5) Jewish educational theory. The Language of Jewish Education, p. 21.

Yiddishist ideas are not limited to only one of Chazan's categories, such as (5) 'Jewish educational theory'. For instance, according to (1) the 'historical - descriptive' category, Yiddishism also "posits Jewish peoplehood or 'community' as the central dimension of Jewish existence" and it regards education as "both a vehicle of socialization of the young into the community, as well as a measure of or critique, revitalization of that community." Ibid.

[72]Ibid., p. 33.

educational agenda, through its formulation and application by active educators and theorists like Leibush Lehrer and Lippe Lehrer, strongly resembled John Dewey's philosophy of education in terminology and concepts, thus making it a meaningful frame of reference.

Barry Chazan and some modern Jewish traditionalists would argue that Dewey's philosophy is not genuinely transferable to Jewish educational philosophy.[73] However, Yiddishists like Saul Goodman, did not see a conflict between Dewey's definition of "religious" and the post-Holocaust Yiddishists' accomodation of voluntary theism into its concept of secularism.[74] Moreover, even if the

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[73]Ibid., p. 21. Barry Chazan states:

> Any serious analysis of Dewey and the philosophy of Jewish education would lead to basic contradictions, since Dewey's theory of value and his metaphysics are inconsistent with the classical Jewish conceptions because of Judaism's commitment to eternal and universal values such as God and Dewey's belief in change, experimentation, and relativity.

Also, Ronald Kronish in "The Influence of John Dewey on Jewish Education In America" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1979), p. 222, claims that Jewish education has adopted the administrative aspect and methodology of Dewey's theory without his philosophy. Whereas in Dewey's thought relativism rules, Jewish thought, no matter how liberal, still holds on to some

> ...absolute values which are not amenable to change, and...certain aspects of Jewish traditional knowledge (that) stand against new knowledge about the nature of nature or the nature of man, or the nature of history (p. 266).

[74]Saul Goodman, Traditsye un banayung, p. 45. Goodman states that Dewey's adjective 'religious' implies:

> ...education, affiliation, disposition to ideals, causes or things. Therefore all activities in the name of the above are of a 'religious nature'.

issues of theism and absolute values were ignored, it would be difficult to conclude unequivocally from Dewey's writings if he indeed supported cultural ethnic communities as envisioned in a multicultural philosophy, or whether his concept of community and culture was broader, more homogenous, more in tune with the melting-pot philosophy of America. Nevertheless, the similarities between Dewey's philosophy and that of the Yiddishists, or what William F. O'Neill[75] categorized as the "liberal/liberationist" intellectualism of "Yiddish progressivists", were explored and became apparently applicable to understanding the platforms of Leibush Lehrer and Lippe Lehrer. The Deweyian model did provide a meaningful paradigm to discuss the success of their ultimate goal, the continuity of a Jewish secularism.

The second question to be addressed arises from a need for clarification of the S.A.F.I.'s 1927 objectives. S.A.F.I.'s goals clearly implied the continuance of a Jewish secularism predicated on Yiddish. In other words, its ends and its means were the same. Given that Yiddish was symbolic of the radical departure from traditional

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[75]William F. O'Neill, Educational Ideologies (Santa Monica, California: Goodyear Publishing Company, Inc., 1981), pp. 341-347.

O'Neill identified four approaches to Judaism, as well as their respective styles and philosophy of education. The fourth group, the ethnicists, were subdivided into three sub-categories: the reconstructionists, the nationalist-secularists, and the Yiddish progressivists.

Jewish life and of its reconstruction in a modern, secular, yet Jewish context, the crucial question becomes whether Yiddish, the language, or what Yiddish represented, is the real issue.

On the other hand, if one of the aims of the movement was also to ensure a constantly critical, that is, a reasoned approach to change, within a liberal, humanistic, secular culture that nonetheless identified with Jewishness (a sense of identity with Jewish peoplehood), then the ends and the means no longer necessitate Yiddish. Other cultural and educational means could then conceivably be implemented to achieve the redefined goal. In this scenario, the Yiddish language as a language of community interaction and cultural exchange is not crucial, but it certainly remains an asset to understanding Jewish secularism. If that was the intended interpretation of the Yiddish school movement's aim, it only partially succeeded. There is a vibrant secular Jewish community in America that is strongly identified with Jewish peoplehood. But in the last decade of the twentieth century the majority is no longer associated with extreme liberalism but has shifted closer to the comfort zone of the establishment.

However, if the aim of the Yiddish secular school movement was to create and preserve a living Yiddish culture in America both through its schools and its literary and cultural media, including the journal Kinder

zhurnal, it did not succeed. When A. Glanz-Leyeles in 1946 asked the rhetorical question if the Yiddish school movement was a success, he responded:

> It depends which question you ask. If you look upon the Yiddish school movement as upon a completely new idea in the history of our people, we have no right or basis to talk about failure. The fact is we have managed to interest an extensive segment of the Jewish population.[76]

But by the eighth decade of the twen ieth century, the Yiddish secular school movement of America had significantly atrophied despite Glanz-Leyeles' optimism that with its solid foundations, its ideals would eventually be borne out. Much to the contrary, Yiddish could no longer be considered a living language of the majority of Jewish secularists. Yiddish as a language of communication might still be heard among the elderly of East European origin but certainly not among their successive generations.

Interestingly, Joshua Fishman, a sociologist of language, shares Glantz-Leyeles' passionate belief that Yiddish will survive, though for more esoteric reasons than the above. He writes:

> The language of the poor and the powerless, the language of the homeless and the despised, the language that was so frequently abused and unappreciated - that language is now being taught at a number of America's best colleges and universities. If this triumph can be attained, when the ranks of the

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[76]My translation from A. Glantz-Leyeles "Zikhroynes vegn der yidisher shul bavegung in amerike" in Shul pinkes, p. 214.

> afficionados have been so thinned and weakened, then certainly there is a mystic fire to Yiddish, then obviously Yiddish is allied with eternity, then there is no telling what future success may be ahead for those whose devotion knows no bounds.[77]

The two interpretations of the Yiddishist school movement's objective have different implications for Jewish secular education and the teaching of Yiddish in America on the cusp of the twenty-first century. These will be discussed in the concluding remarks of Chapter Five below.

Kinder zhurnal: An Aim, an End, a Means

There are several aspects to Kinder zhurnal that must be discussed in an assessment of its importance in the Yiddishist movement. To begin, Kinder zhurnal must be seen in the role of an educational tool, the means to the Yiddish secular *school* movement's, and particularly S.A.F.I.'s goal. Consequently, by promoting the Yiddish secular schools' goals it also fulfilled its role as a means to the Yiddish *cultural* movement's objective. A thriving, popular Yiddish children's literature was the goal of Yiddishists like Lippe Lehrer. In that sense, the Kinder zhurnal was an end in itself.

The Kinder zhurnal served the objectives of the Yiddish secular school movement throughout its history by providing, on a consistent basis, the elements of Yiddish

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[77]Joshua Fishman, Language Loyalty in the United States, pp. 24-25.

culture that were variably deemed important throughout the years. First and foremost was the very creation of a Yiddish children's literature and relevant educational materials. In the area of literature, Kinder zhurnal attracted contributions from the best known Yiddish children's writers.[78] True, as a magazine, it could only accomodate compact literary pieces, such as poetry, short stories and plays. Moreover, because its format was geared to children of all ages and levels of Yiddish proficiency, the magazine was again limited by the ever-decreasing level of Yiddish language, both spoken and written, especially among the second and third generations.

Indeed, Kazhdan was of the opinion that children's magazines (and the children's sections of some New York newspapers) were, to a great extent, responsible for the demise of Yiddish children's literature in general.[79] He viewed the situation as a catch-22: the writers were eagerly welcomed at the journals but the journals were directed by the needs of the schools. Because of the restrictions in their readers' Yiddish proficiency, whether due to their young age or limited Yiddish, the writers

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[78]In Chaim Kazhdan's "Finf un draysik yor yidishe kinder literatur," pp. 350-363, he summarizes all the leading Yiddish children's writers of America who published books from 1911 to 1946. All those mentioned in his summary appeared in the pages of Kinder zhurnal at some time over the years.

[79]Ibid., pp. 365-367.

could not spread their wings and give full flight to their language and creativity. Similarly, in reverse, the readers could not appreciate good literature appropriate to their age level because the language was too difficult, as was seen in Chapter Three regarding Jacob Glatstein's poetry. Furthermore, when that same chapter noted that Kinder zhurnal was gearing towards an older audience, most likely the problem was the double-edged sword of finding the readership for the available material or of creating material to suit the available readership.

Kazhdan's argument must be challenged, however. For the reality of the times was a diminishing use of Yiddish as the vernacular or as a functional second language for children. Writers, after all, write to be read. It would only be logical for them to write for an audience that could read their work and in a publishing medium that would more likely be read.

Kazhdan also faulted the disunity of the Yiddishist movement, with its various ideologically oriented organizations, for inadvertently restricting availability to writers and readers by the very isolationist state of their publishing arms. If there were some centrally organized Yiddish children's publishing consortium, Yiddish children's literature could potentially reach a wider and varied audience, including some of the Yiddish-speaking

Orthodox community, he claimed.[80] Once again, Kazhdan's reasoning must be questioned. The Yiddish-speaking Orthodox community had never been allowed to read secular Yiddish literature. In fact, Yiddish literature was considered to be more potentially subversive than secular literature in other languages such as Russian. There is no reason to believe that this attitude would change significantly with easier accessibility to the literature.

Whether children's magazines such as Kinder zhurnal actually did preempt the full development of Yiddish children's literature does not detract from the fact that they provided the Yiddish schools with a fresh supply of Yiddish reading material that was at once interesting and accessible to a good portion of their students. Throughout the years when Kinder zhurnal was an integral part of the Sholom Aleichem schools' reading curriculum, it was both the means and the end for the S.A.F.I. It fulfilled the need for creation of a body of literature and secular knowledge for children. That literature reflected the non-partisan Yiddishist culture and the philosophy of education the S.A.F.I. espoused.

The Deweyian principle of instrumental value, both in its functional and intrinsic sense, was clearly satisfied as was the provision of directionality for social development provided by the Yiddish language (for as long

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[80] Ibid.

as the Yiddish language was their mother tongue). Once Yiddish was no longer the language of conceptualization of the youngsters, Kinder zhurnal was no longer vested with the sense of relevancy it had earlier. Its role, along with that of the Yiddish language in general, transformed into a that of a link with the past, a means for identity with the long history of the Jewish people. The literature was no longer an end in itself, it primarily became the means.

The urgency of creating a new Yiddish culture in Kinder zhurnal's first decade increasingly transformed into an urgency for maintaining Jewish distinctiveness through a sense of identity with an ancient past and an ancient tradition. From its start, Kinder zhurnal did not reject all tradition. Major Jewish holidays provided the themes around which entire issues revolved. Those holiday issues were ideal for teachers to use as material for their projects and program. As the importance of Bible study grew within the S.A.F.I., so did the amount of material on that subject. Similarly, as Israel became an acknowledged area of Jewish concern after the Second World War, the amount of material related to Israel increased proportionately in Kinder zhurnal.

In its last phase, beginning in the nineteen seventies, Kinder zhurnal again truly reflected its symbiotic role in the Yiddishist cultural and school movements. As American Jewish secularism was developing and

changing in response to sociological factors, and the marginal Yiddishist community with its dwindling institutions and resources became more marginalized, so did Kinder zhurnal become increasingly less relevant. Its standard format and content no longer reflected the character of the altered secular society nor was it any longer of instrumental value to a sufficient number of readers. In the Deweyian interpretation of what is educative versus noneducative, the Yiddish children's magazine was no longer educative. To continue in Deweyian terminology, Kinder zhurnal succeeded admirably well when it was a means to the Yiddishists' end, but when the end became untenable, so did the means. Similarly, while Kinder zhurnal was a resounding success as an end in itself (a children's literary publication) for a long period of time, it could not ultimately sustain its initial success because its means had been unalterably eroded.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: Pedagogical Implications

Introduction

The historical journey through the Yiddishist cultural and educational movement, with Kinder zhurnal in its wake, raises several important pedagogical issues. This movement simultaneously sought to redefine the concept of education in Jewish life and to perpetuate a secular Jewish culture that was both unique and well-integrated into the mainstream culture of its host country. The contrast between how these aims were executed in East Europe and in America make apparent the implications arising from day school systems versus supplementary school systems in achieving their goals.

Contained in the Yiddishists' redefinition of education was the concept of education as an empowering agent of social and political change; as an agent of pedagogic experimentation; as a cultivator of aesthetic and creative sensibilities; and as a venue for the development of the whole child whose Jewishness rested on his culture and not necessarily on his religion. The question can then be posed whether supplementary Yiddish secular schools in

America can possibly be an effective institution to achieve such lofty aspirations as those set out by the Yiddishists.

In many ways the teachers were the creators and the driving force behind the Yiddishist school movement. They developed the programs, the materials and provided the direction for the schools. The activists and ideologues were for the most part the teachers themselves. Their role in the Yiddishist secular school movement has significant implications for the role of teachers in education in general.

Finally, this chapter will pose some crucial questions regarding the relative importance of teaching Yiddish in America as we enter the twenty-first century. It will deal with whether Yiddish should be taught at all, and if so, at which level of schooling it should be introduced. These debatable factors are understandably associated with methodological issues.

This chapter does not set out to answer definitively the questions it poses, but rather to comment on how the experience of Kinder zhurnal and the Yiddish secular school movement have shed some light on the ensuing implications for Yiddish education and education in general. Neither does this chapter raise the issue of whether secular Jewish education should be pursued at all. The author assumes a priori that it is a legitimate and desirable format of

education compatible with democratic and humanitarian principles of society.

Day Schools Versus Supplementary Schools

The experience of the Sholom Aleichem schools, as well as of the other Yiddish secular schools in America, clearly illustrated the inadequacy of the supplementary school system in building a culture or, at the very least, maintaining it. Nor could such a system become an agent for social change without other reinforcing factors at home and in the community. By the time the Yiddishists formally acknowledged the limitations of their chosen option of supplementary schools in the nineteen fifties and sixties, their newly declared support of the day school format as the possibly superior alternative in achieving their goals came too late and fell on too few ears.

In contrast, in East Europe, where day schools were the norm for Yiddishist schools, their success waxed and waned with the political circumstances, that varied in their degree of repressive policies and actions of their host country. Although East European day schools were more effective in accomplishing the educational and social mission of the Yiddishists, they were limited in their true potential in effecting social change within the Jewish community and society at large. Their impediments were the prevailing traditionalism and conservatism within the

Jewish community, and the lack of democratic conditions interlaced with anti-semitism, in its various guises, without.

Therefore, in analyzing the Yiddishist experience on both sides of the ocean, it appears that, in order to inculcate a strong sense of identity with a particular cultural or religious group through schooling, two preconditions must be in place. First there must exist a strong sense of cultural community with which the child identifies. Then there must be national societal consensus that group difference is not dangerous to the cohesiveness of society but is rather an enhancement to its cultural richness. Although the first precondition was met in East Europe, the second was not. In America, timing became a complicating factor. The first precondition barely lasted through the first immigrant generation, and the second was not perceived by the Yiddishists as adequately in place until the nineteen fifties and sixties.

Within a day school format, the simultaneous tasks of ethnic education and integration into general society can be more readily achieved without conflict of interest. Certainly the Yiddish secular school movement never sought to create an isolationist, parochial type of environment in their school systems. Quite the reverse, it was this very attitude which so permeated their own traditional society and of the world at large that they sought to

revolutionize. They wanted to create an educational environment where the young could learn to think critically rather than follow blind dogma. They wanted the Jewish child to become an equal partner to the rights and opportunities of all children and an integral participant in the transformation of society into a more humanistic, just format. Yet at the same time, they equally wanted the child to treasure his/her Jewishness.

In the final analysis, it appears that Yiddishist supplementary schools, generally speaking, could not achieve the needed synthesis between uniqueness and integration by their very nature. They were too occasional to achieve a positive attitude in their students towards maintaining their own uniqueness in relation to the overwhelming attraction and relevance of integration into American society. Nor could supplementary schools achieve the desired degree of influence in the lives of their students to become agents of social change. One could argue that some exposure to Yiddishist culture is better than none at all, and that is quite true if that is all the school sets out to do. However, if the school regards its role as the builder and keeper of that culture, then supplementary schools cannot possibly be adequate as the principle force in sustaining the culture. Perhaps all that could be expected is expressed by Joshua Fishman thus:

> If Yiddish will hardly become a living language of the third generation family as a result of attendance at

> such schools, these schools do help keep alive a nodding acquaintance with the language and a sentimental attachment to it.[1]

Furthermore, the Yiddishist supplementary schools failed to develop in their second and third generation students adequate Yiddish language skills to compensate for their lack of Yiddish at home. Without such proficiency, students could not continue in their studies of the Yiddish language, literature and culture to the point where they could become potential Yiddish writers or teachers. Perhaps more than anything else, the dearth of trained progressive Yiddish teachers to replace the original pioneers of the Yiddishist movement contributed to its near demise. The unfortunate 'catch-22' situation evolved whereby increasingly inadequate numbers of qualified teachers were matched by a decreasing number of employment opportunities in Yiddish secular schools.

The Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher in the Yiddish secular school movement cannot be underestimated. From the outset the training of competent teachers was considered of the highest priority to the Yiddishist school movement. One of the most important Yiddishist institutions in East Europe was the Teachers' Seminary in Vilna, where Yiddishist

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[1]Joshua Fishman, Yiddish in America, (The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton & Co., 1963), p. 25.

teachers received their academic and pedagogic training. Likewise, a Yiddish Teachers' Seminary, supported by all the Yiddishist organizations of America, was established in New York early in the secular Yiddish school movement. From the beginning, teachers were given a tremendous amount of freedom to develop and implement their own materials and programs. Their convictions and creativity colored, and gave substance to, any prescribed curriculum or methodology. As the focus of the school system changed over the years, the teachers adapted and reorganized their materials and programs to reflect the desired changes.

In essence, teachers were the crucial hub of the Yiddishist school movement both in East Europe and America. They were the facilitators and interpreters and co-authors of the curriculum and materials. Without their input and power, Yiddishist education could not be sustained, no matter how many books, magazines and newspapers were published. Only empowered teachers could effect growth and development of their students in the Deweyian sense.

However, despite the considerable latitude Yiddishist teachers had, their influence was restricted, due to the time constraints of the supplementary school. Their projects were many, but their time and financial resources were limited. Much as Dewey and Leibush Lehrer had envisioned a progressivist, child-centered, experimental type of school, their vision was impeded by the realities

of practical restraints on the teacher's time and resources. Indeed that was certainly the case in the supplementary Yiddish secular school.[2]

The integral role played by the teacher in Yiddish secular education has implications for education in general. Whereas in present times in America educators are considered radical if they encourage politicalization in education or if they encourage minorities to fight for equal voice and opportunity in education and society, in the modern Yiddish secular schools teachers were expected to act as the true agents of social change. And indeed they did by encouraging students' political and social involvement in their communities.

Yiddishist teachers were not mere executors of public policy and values. For the most part, they were an integral factor of their creation and definition. Teachers devised the induction program of children into the adult Yiddish culture through their creation of stories, poems, music, drama. They also set out to develop their students' aesthetic sensibilities in art and dance. Their mission was to seek improvement and positive growth by encouraging a positive attitude towards change and challenging the status quo. At first, the desirable direction of change was towards a more humanist, equitable, and integrated society. But after the Holocaust, the emphasis shifted to developing

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[2]See Chapter Four, p. 140 (footnote 63).

better defense mechanisms for maintaining secular Jewish identity, though not at the cost of separatism or isolation from American society. Yet whatever the direction of change, the Yiddishist teachers were an integral part of its initiation and execution - certainly an enviable position according to those radical social activists seeking empowerment for American public school educators. Ironically, as we enter the twenty-first century the American Yiddishists are lacking the schools and the teachers with which to carry out their mission, while the public school system has both the manpower and institutions without the mandate to challenge the status quo and without the license to operate as a true agent of social/political change.

Why Teach Yiddish?

Given that Yiddish is no longer the mother tongue of the majority Jewish secular community in North America, one can argue that it is no longer necessary to teach it as a language of Jewish communication. This approach could perhaps condone the teaching of Yiddish as a living language in those small pockets of Jewish communities where it is still used, particularly among the elderly. In this scenario, it could be readily justified in order to help encourage inter-generational communication and activity. However, this position would argue: what possible relevance

can Yiddish have to most North American Jewish children whose families no longer have Yiddish-speaking members and in whose community very few, if any, know Yiddish? Furthermore, it would be difficult to justify teaching Yiddish as the only medium through which the Yiddishist objectives of Jewish and societal reconstruction might still be continued. After all, the Yiddishist objective of maintaining an ever-evolving secular Jewishness that challenges the traditional bonds of religion have been, and continue to be, very much in process, albeit in all the various languages of the Diaspora and Israel.

Perhaps teaching Yiddish can be more readily justified today as a language that accesses an important chapter of Jewish history. By knowing Yiddish, the doors to a thousand year old literature, culture, political and social history are opened. This option raises methodological questions. For if the intent is to utilize Yiddish as just another scholarly language, its acquisition could wait until the university level where most likely its usefulness as a research tool in Jewish studies could be implemented. In fact, Joshua Fishman notes that the study of Yiddish at the university level as a high-culture language has increased in popularity and status.[3]

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[3]Joshua Fishman, Language Loyalty in the United States, p. 25.

In addition, the original Yiddishist argument for maintaining a sense of kinship with and loyalty to Yiddish as a Jewish language to provide a powerful link with Jewish peoplehood, still carries much validity, in my opinion. That sense of intimacy develops over time through familiarity and relevance in everyday experience. To be able to read Yiddish literature in its original or to study Jewish history in the Yiddish language certainly helps the scholar understand Yiddish culture. For the human thought and behavior underlying culture and history is embedded in language.[4] To have a sense of belonging within a language offers the student the opportunity to feel history through the eyes of its participants, to feel the thoughts and emotions of a people through its writers and poets, to feel the intricate ties between the past, present and future.

To achieve this level of language intimacy, Yiddish should be taught at an early elementary level of schooling when attitudes and language acquisition are most readily acquired. Furthermore, the Yiddish language must be taught as a living language that is not only associated with literacy but with song, play, aesthetics and daily experience. Only then can it become a personal, relevant language. Given that Yiddish will not necessarily be reinforced outside of the school environment, it needs, at

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[4]Joshua Fishman. The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival. p. xi.

the very least, frequent exposure from a young age, preferably at a Jewish day school. An updated Kinder zhurnal geared to present society could certainly be an asset once again.

Whether the student chooses to continue his use of the language once he has mastered its basics will most likely depend on personal experiences and motivation. However, the identification with the Yiddish language and culture will have at least provided an optional potential source of self-identity and a sense of kinship to stave off the insidious sense of alienation of our (post)modern era.

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