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CANADIAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

FOUNDED BY SAUL HAYES, O.C., Q.C., LL.D., F.R.S.A.
FIRST EDITOR LOUIS ROSENBERG, F.R. Econ.S., F.S.S.

Nous nous souvenons

NEW SERIES 38

Forgetfulness leads to Holocaust;
Remembering is the root of redemption.
(Baal Shem Tov)

THE IMMIGRATION STORY III

THE YIDDISH THEATRE; THE ADLER

Compiled by
DAVID ROME

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THE YIDDISH STAGE

The theatre is a colourful element in the Yiddish culture of the period, in the social and ideological social sphere which the immigrants of century-end and century-beginning created.

It was one of the miracle cultural phenomena which are elements of modern Jewish history. Roughly speaking, it was created in the 1870's by Abraham Goldfaden in Rumania.

The Yiddish stage had a life of its own early in the history of the Jewish mass migration, adding dimensions of character, dance, song, décor, mime and fancy to a sombre historic tradition from which the dramatic complex of the arts had been practically absent.

This pioneering theatre was a sphere which, from its first mass immigratiom days, was an integral phase of Yiddish society and its instruments: Yiddish prose and poetry, press, schools, landsmanshaften, its sub-economy, libraries, idioms, folk art, personalities, syndicalism, mutual aid and fraternalism.

Curiously, this extension of interests also corresponds with its simultaneous discovery of Hollywood, which was in a similar state of primitivity when the Yiddish theatre came to Canada. Apparently those movies appealed to the readers of the new Yiddish press, if we judge by the substantial advertisements which the cinemas inserted in the Adler and Der Veg. By the same token, the Yiddish lighter theatre shared space with the anglophone vaudeville in such halls as the Novelty Theatre.

The Yiddish theatre in the New World centred on New York, but troupes and individual actors were constantly visiting Canada, and the characters of Gordin, Goldfaden and Sholem Aleichem were as familiar as the neighbours on Cadieux St.

The birth of the Yiddish theatre on the continent, it is doubly recorded, was attended by the "policing force" of the immigrant aid establishment, with a coroner authorized to disperse the presentation of the Goldfaden operetta Caldunia, for the play "mocks the Jews", as B. Tomashewsky records.

Joseph Barondes writes (it is to be hoped that it is of the same incident) that at the opening of the Rumanian Opera House -- the first Yiddish theatre in America -- a committee, with the Jewish coroner Levy at its head, came to warn the company that "the prominent, important Jews in New York will not permit a theatre where the players performing in the despicable jargon will mock the Jews. When the actors expressed doubt whether Coroner Levy had the legal power to prevent the presentation of a play in Yiddish, he told them that he

is authorized by many other wealthy and respected Jews to pay the expenses of the play with additional moneys for the actors to live until they can find decent and useful occupations, to learn trades or to peddle "in the countries".

Tomashewsky remembers that, failing obedience, the coroner threatened that "they will drive us out from America and ship us to Russia, direct to Siberia." Of course, both threat and bribe were rejected. (G.Z. Zilberzweig. Lexicon of the Yiddish Theatre. Yiddish, Warsaw, 1934, vol. 2, P. 803)

The brief conflict was a significant milestone in the history of the Jewish immigration and in the complex relationships between the strata of the community.

This vast array of social creation which the theatre mobilized was not the work of only men and women of talent, but truly of a small people; thousands of men and women created it, guided and united by many shared thought elements, inspired by ethical and human experiences out of a single and long history, with decades of unanimous positive and negative common responses. A shared glance communicated consent; deepening of meaning came later with the discovery of profundity in the men of sincerity and talent. With the passage of the decades the masses came to revere the leaders of the stage and to participate. In a universe before the ether vibrated with radio and pictures and advertising and records both cylindrical and flat, the musical theatre spread the echoes of song in the ghetto, the dramatization of family experience, the shared approval and condemnation of private deeds and of social practices. References to incidents and postures in daily life were stylized and mythologized by great dramatists and by vulgarizing songsters into a common idiom.

The theatre was one network in the rich texture of this society. Probably nowhere were men of the theatre so deeply surrounded by armies of collaborators: men for whom the Yiddish theatre was a Jewish religion, who brought actors together, who quoted the scripts, who convened the audiences, who revered the artists, supported the minor roles. They included vigorous young wanderers, middle-aged organizers, fundraisers, links with organizations, unions, ticket distributors, media, etc.

The assembled theatre was a congregation of its own with its particular rite, intimate with the denominations of the not too distant synagogue, close to the landsleit of their dialect and its warm local lore.

To visualize the social reality of the Yiddish theatre in Canada from its inception we need to understand that this cultural phenomenon is not a parallel of the stage experience in other areas of the Western world.

As we have seen, the establishment attitude to the Yiddish theatre at this period played a considerable role in its cultural development, if

only because the immigrants' reception of the stage seemed to be so striking.

While Goldfaden, the virtual founder of the Yiddish theatre, was still alive when the institution came to New York, Louis Mitnick became its Canadian innovator and established a centre in the Monument National in Montreal. Here its influence upon the very deeply rooted community, and upon its Jewish Times, was tremendous.

The young man who was the ticket seller for Ike Mitnick at the Monument National remembered that there were at least three semi-permanent Yiddish theatrical companies in Montreal at the time. L. Mitnick's was the most successful stock theatre but the Rialto and one other also did well. Admission ran as high as 75¢.

The players were largely local, but the leading stars were imported from New York.

Remarkably this phase of Yiddish culture won the frequent and admiring attention of those hostile to the language. A guest columnist from the Jewish Times attended a performance of the Kreuzer Sonata by the Yiddish playwright Jacob Gordin, presented for the benefit of the People's Kitchen. He confessed on March 7, 1908,

"There is a certain subconscious contempt in us, when it is not stronger, for the Yiddish dialect; though it must be left only to those who are familiar with it to tell why. But let nobody deny the possibilities of Yiddish. One cannot any longer go away with the idea that Yiddish is a primitive language, in which fine thought and feeling cannot be expressed at their best. Not after sitting out a really well-acted Yiddish play...

"We merely wish to say that it was an almost overpowering revelation to see so much genuine talent on the Yiddish stage."

Whether or not the established Canadian Jewish society was fully cognizant of the realities emerging under their eyes, a powerful Jewish world was visibly taking shape in the Canadian centres even as these philanthropists were helping the immigrants to take root there. Men and women were arriving penniless and desperate who, while retaining their physiognomy and their poverty, were at the same time on their own initiative assuming literary and theatrical form and social organization. Even while dependent on immigrant aid, they were erecting extraordinary cultural structures which were to continue to grow into ever new forms for a century: their lodges, mutual aid structures, bookstores, language, poetry, soup kitchens, schools, teacher training seminaries, politics, press, libraries and not least, its own theatre. (Canadian Jewish Archives, no. 10)

In the establishment the condescending tendencies from the earlier period were persisting, but also including a rapprochement with Yiddish literature and with its spokesmen.

For within months we find devotees of Yiddish, such as Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky, lecturing at the Baron de Hirsch Institute; Nathan Gordon presiding over the Sholem Ash lecture (Canadian Jewish Times, Apr. 15, 1910); Dr. Joseph Stern, S. Schneour and Maurice Typograph were cited with approbation as Yiddish activists.

This was not the last occasion in Dominion Jewish history when members of the establishment discarded their mask of unilingual anglophone to reveal a truer image of a much older Judaism; when many generations back on their Shalshelet Hayochsin met in traditions and languages; they met almost like actors in primitive confused comedies of mistaken identities. They crossed the lines of alienation and snobbery to partake of the folkish song and play being offered in the more crowded immigrant areas.

When the barriers eventually melted in the course of time, the Yiddish theatre proved one of the common attractions that bound the newly united communities from London, New York, Berlin, Amsterdam, Vilno and Liadi. Half a century later, when the broader currency of Yiddish declined in turn, a new generation of native Montrealers picked up the Mitnick tradition to maintain one of the few permanent Yiddish theatres, in the Saidye Bronfman Centre under Dora Wasserman's direction.

Within half a century of the invention of this Jewish theatre, The Dybbuk, a Hebrew play and its Yiddish translation performed semi-legally in revolutionary Moscow, became the liturgical and symbolic action of the national theatre of the restored Jewish state in Israel and was recognized as the peer of the world classics which had been composed in Greek, French, English.

ISIDORE (ISAAC) ZOLOTAREFSKY

Among the earliest names related to the Montreal Yiddish theatre is that of Isidore (Isaac) Zolotarefsky, born in Elizavetgrad in the Ukraine in 1833. He was orphaned early and spent the years of his youth wandering over Russia, working as newspaper vendor on railway lines, in libraries, etc.

In 1890 he joined his brother in Fall River, Mass., where, incidentally, many Quebeckers had migrated in search of jobs in the textile industry where Zolotarefsky, too, went to work as a webber.

His brother was an amateur of the theatre and was familiar with Goldfaden's work. He had formed a small company of players, which Isidore also joined, to put on Caldunia. This led to the formation of other amateur troupes who performed in Boston, Providence and Fall River. Zolotarefsky became one of the players who visited the eastern states, and formed a company in Fall River.

In the absence of adequate repertoire he began to search for English folk and popular theatrical verse and translated them into Yiddish for his concerts, and rich Yiddish verse into English.

He collected many of them into a book which he published in Montreal in 1897. This was probably the first book containing Yiddish matter to appear in Canada for 12 years, until Elimelech Levine's book on education, the Hebrew-Yiddish Erziung Bei Yidn.

His wanderings brought him to Montreal where he mobilized a company of amateurs to perform Gordin's The Jewish King Lear, reserving for himself the part of David Moisheles. In 1895 he had several professional actors come to Montreal and put on several plays in the Monument National -- the foundation of a stable Yiddish theatre in Canada. (Z. Zilberzweig. Lexicon fun Yiddishen Teater. Warsaw, 1934)

"Daniel," who wrote a short summary of the beginning of the Yiddish theatre in Montreal (Adler, Aug. 8, 1915), gives 1896 as the date of its first performance: playwright I. Zolotarefsky came to the city to present a Yiddish play. "In the absence of professional actors the author of Living Orphans brought together some young men and women and, with their help, produced Jacob Gordin's King Lear, playing the title role himself in the Monument National. The reception was not at all satisfactory, for the public had expected a new play.

"In the light of this poor reaction, Zolotarefsky announced that he would present Goldfaden's Shulamith, proposing to play the title role. To this end he brought Mme. Brown (the well-known actress Fanny Reinhart), the late comedian Torenberg and B. Young to Montreal.

"When the New York stars arrived in Montreal and learned that Zolotarefsky was planning to play the title role they proposed to return home. They demanded that the part be given to a responsible actor. Zolotarefsky was afraid of a strike and was forced to telegraph to L. Mitnick who was then playing with a company of his own in Boston and was considered an excellent Absolom."

THE EARLY STAGE

Yiddish drama was introduced to the English-language press in Montreal as early as 1902. (Jewish Times, Nov. 21, 1902)

The Jewish weekly wrote "The success which has attended the introduction of the Yiddish drama into Montreal deserves attention for several reasons. First of all it should be observed that, while moralists, lovers of the chaste in dramatic art and upholders of the higher traditions of the stage in Europe and America regret and condemn its debasement in recent years, they unhesitatingly declare that the Jewish stage, as presented in Yiddish plays, sets an example that more pretentious dramatists might follow with great advantage to themselves and the public. Old theatre-goers in this city, who have witnessed the performances in the Monument National are of the same opinion.

"Not only are the plays true to nature and instinct with the true purpose of histrionic representation, but the players as a rule are superior as artists to all but a few who have appeared of late in the other theatres of the city. Indeed it may be said with sincerity that, were Madame Lobel, Mr. Tomashewsky and their company to play in English before an English audience, they would score a triumph seldom achieved except by artists of the first rank of their profession. In parts of Europe, in the United States and now in Canada, the Yiddish stage has become a feature in Jewish life well worthy the attention of sociologists.

"Everywhere it reflects with singular faithfulness the loves, the sorrows, the faith and social peculiarities of the race, and a noted New York dramatic critic has had the courage to say that on the Yiddish stage alone in that metropolis is the drama presented with purity, strength and correct artistic expression. Jacob Adler has won the distinction in England and the United States of being the leading representative of Jewish characters, styled by his host of admirers 'the Henry Irving of the Yiddish Stage.'

"Jacob Adler was born in Russia where he received his education in Cheder and Yeshivah. Like the majority of young men who lived in the Pale of Settlement and desired to enter a larger world, Adler had to wage a long and bitter war against adversity. He first made his appearance in Warsaw; the critics, however, were not favourably disposed towards the newest recruit. Adler did not despair, but persevering, soon gained a respectful hearing.

"This was in the early seventies, and until he arrived in London a decade later, he appeared in various towns of Russia and Poland. At the Princess Street Theatre, from which have graduated not a few who

are now shining stars in the non-Jewish theatrical firmament, Adler's reputation as a good actor was strengthened.

"Adler's qualities were recognized, and he was speedily installed in the popular favour of the habitues of the Yiddish theatre.

"In 1886, after the closing of the Prince Street Theatre, Adler went to New York, where a company of Yiddish actors, in spite of the strenuous opposition of the German Jews there, were making headway. Shortly after his arrival in New York, Adler decided to strike out in a new direction.

"It was his ambition to reform the Yiddish stage. It was up-hill work, all the way steep. Adler had, for a time, to leave New York as the opposition was too powerful to withstand. Chicago was his venue, and there he remained until 1890, when he returned to New York, pitching his tent at the Union Theatre, now known as the Germanic Theatre.

"Fortunately there had arrived a new dramatist, Jacob Gordin, who, forsaking the old well-trodden paths, wrote realistic up-to-date dramas. His theme was the work-shop, the street, the life as lived in the busy cities of the New World. It was indeed a new world to the Yiddish play-goer. A new life opened to him. No longer the cramped, narrow life of the Ghetto, but that of a larger world. For the first time other than Jewish characters trod the Yiddish stage.

"Over fifteen years have elapsed since Adler set sail for the land of the Stars and Stripes. From the lowest he had climbed to the topmost rung of the ladder. His achievements have not been gained by favoritism but by hard work and a dogged perseverance. He had been taught in the school of patience to endure. And to-day Jacob Adler can smilingly glance back upon the days of Sturm and Drang. He had established his position." (Nov. 21, 1902)

Nor was Montreal's long the only Canadian Yiddish stage.

LOUIS MITNICK

The leading Montreal personages of the Yiddish stage in Eastern Canada for many years were Louis Leiser Mitnick (1866-1915), the son of a chazan in Kovno, and his son, Isaac.

The father began his Yiddish theatrical career in 1883 in London where his mother had brought him. He played in that city with the Adler company in the Princess Club. He then left for the United States where he appeared on the stage in many cities, starring in such Goldfaden roles as Absalom in Shulamith. (Adler, Nov. 23, 1908) In Boston he led a theatre company.

While in Montreal Zolotarefsky organized a local committee to persuade producer L. Mitnick to leave Boston for Montreal to replace the visiting companies who were coming to Canada each month. (Der Veg, in its obituary, gives 1895 as the date of his arrival in Canada. Oct. 21, 1915)

"Daniel", the nom de plume of A.M. Mandelbaum, continued the Mitnick Montreal story,

"Mitnick arrived in Montreal in March 1896. He was met at the Grand Trunk station by Zolotarefsky and his entire company and many amateurs of the Yiddish theatre.

"Shulamith was presented Wednesday evening. To present the play Friday evening was very risky; the people would simply not come. Mitnick presented it as a farewell, with Mme. Nissenblatt as Shulamith, Mme. Reinhart as Avner, Samuel Torenberg as Tzingetang, and Mr. Young as Monoach. The choir was composed of the daughters of prominent families.

"The last presentation took place on a Friday evening, the first time that Montreal witnessed a deliberate public desecration of the Sabbath by a dramatic group. Everybody expected the hall would be empty and the losses total. But they were wrong. The theatre was packed to overflowing, the box office take was $900, and the three performances brought in $2,700.

"The performance was successful in all senses. Before the third act Mitnick appeared on the stage and asked whether the public wished to have a Yiddish theatre. The response was stormy, 'Yes, we want a Yiddish theatre!'

"The origin and the development of this theatre began with this performance.

"The next performance, presented two weeks later in the Monument National, was Bar Kochba sponsored by the Franz Joseph Lodge of the Sons of Benjamin, under the direction of L. Mitnick and the cooperation of Mr. and Mrs. Herman. (Mrs. Herman later became Mme. Young.)

"With this second presentation Montreal learned to develop a taste for Yiddish plays. Some dozen Jewish businessmen agreed to support Mitnick and enabled him to bring to Montreal stars from New York from time to time who appeared together with local actors."

"Until 1905 the Yiddish plays were of a very ordinary type, mostly vulgar and light operettas; nor did the public respect the Yiddish theatre in the least. They felt there as if they were in their own kitchens. They sipped soda water, and ate oranges and cracked peanuts," historian A. Chiel records.

"But about that time the well-known theatre manager Relkin realized that Montreal may be a good spot where several hundred dollars may be earned by presenting Yiddish plays. For the first time he brought Mme. Kenny Liptzin and her company, which had been playing in their own theatre in New York. They came to Montreal and played in Mirele Efros, The Inheritance and The Bastard by Jacob Gordin.

"After that date Mitnick assumed the local direction of all New York Yiddish theatre companies visiting Quebec. Soon after he brought to Montreal for the first time the four New York stars, the Festive Quartette: Mme. Liptzin, David Kessler, Morris Moscovitch and Samuel Torenberg.

"Since then Montreal has seen great Yiddish actors in the best Yiddish plays. The theatre is in excellent condition in every sense. Such great actors as Adler, Schildkraut, Boris Tomashewsky, Mme. Bessie Tomashewsky, Mme. Rosie Carp, Mme. Kaminsky, Ben Ami, Mme. Young, Mme. Sarah Adler, Mr. and Mrs. Weintraub, Mme. Regina Prager, the late Sigmund Magulesco, Bernard Bernstein, Mr. Juvelier, Mr. Young and others.

"Mr. Mitnick attempted to establish a permanent Yiddish theatre in this city, but the effort has not proven successful for obvious reasons: he could not confine himself to stars, he was forced to content himself with second- and third-rate actors. But the public had become accustomed to the stars of New York; attendance at his presentations declined.

"Nevertheless, even in times of crisis the public attends the plays of visiting actors, paying their last pennies.

"The Yiddish theatre has attained a respectable level, the major factor in the cultural life of our Judaism. The public takes performances seriously. When actors like J.P. Adler or Schildkraut appear in

Montreal the audience includes some of our children who may not understand a word of Yiddish. They come to see them."

Mr. Mitnick had settled permanently in Montreal in the lifetime of Abraham Goldfaden who died in New York in 1909. He dedicated himself to the Jewish stage in various forms, even to supplementary High Holy Day services at the Monument National.

Both Goldfaden who died in New York in 1908, and Gordin who passed away in 1909 lived to see the Yiddish drama medium which they willed to their people grow in Canada into a tremendous means of pleasure and enrichment and an instrument for national survival during a crucial century.

On October 16, 1908 Mitnick told the journalists of the Adler, "I had hoped to have a permanent Yiddish theatre here this year. I have not yet succeeded in this; but I come from New York where I have arranged for the best actors to perform the finest plays here after November 4."

Impressario Mitnick sponsored Yiddish plays at the Monument National for many years, with brief interludes in a small theatre on Lagauchetière, just east of St. Lawrence, and in the Auditorium Hall. Those years before the war Montrealers saw Esther Rachel Kaminsky in Mirele Efros. (Her daughter Ida appeared in the same role at Place des Arts in her first appearance out of Communist Poland seventy years later.) Adler, Kessler, Tomaschewsky and Mme. Liptzin appeared in Montreal during this fifteen-year period of Yiddish theatrical glory under his management.

In this hall he sponsored a company which included Clara Herman, her husband and Bernard Young. Clara went off with Young to make a brilliant career for herself as Clara Young. The rejected Herman remained in Montreal and played in a small theatre on Lagauchetière St., east of St. Lawrence.

Under Mitnick's direction Montreal first saw the best Yiddish plays performed by the most popular actors of the time: Adler and his wife, Kessler, Mogulesco, Tornberg, Lipshitz, Esther Rachel Kaminsky.

For a time a Jewish company played in the baracks on Cathcart Street.

Mitnick did not confine himself to the theatre. In 1910 Mitnick reminded Montreal readers of the antiquity of the Jewish liturgy by reproducing the music for "Adir Hoo" of the seder ritual published in 1786 in the German weekly Der Jude by the convert Zelig Gottfried.

He did not hesitate to sponsor the 13-year-old Master Oxenhaendler who sang the Passover liturgy in 1910 in the Auditorium Hall on Bartlett St. (Adler, Apr. 28, 1910)

Mitnick organized festival services in the Monument National, 1908. He advertised in the Adler of August 3 under the conventional heading, "To hear the song and the prayer" that "the beloved cantor Benjamin Rosen and his well-trained choir will lead the services. An extra room will be provided for mothers, will be assisted by nurses in attendance for their convenience. The Russian-Polish Society has purchased tickets from Mr. Mitnick for the benefit of their society."

Mitnick's effort in this area was timely. The need for such facilities outside the existing synagogues was growing so that the Baron de Hirsch Institute, too, felt the need to organize High Holy Day services that year, presumably for those not affiliated with any organized congregation.

On Mitnick's initiative the Monument National became the scene of many of the significant gatherings in the soul biography of Montreal Jews. This building, which was erected by the Société St. Jean Baptiste as a monument to the French Canadian nation, also became a monument in the history of Canadian Jewry, the scene of great moments in the annals of the Yiddish theatre, of Zionism and of other emotional experiences of the community.

Olivar Asselin, Quebec nationalist and an uncertain friend of the Jews, wrote of St. Lawrence Blvd. where "the Monument National was built -- a noble pile of stone and mortar in the breast of which the heart of French Montreal was meant to beat for centuries to come. St. Lawrence Street today is a Yiddish street with all its fixtures -- clothing stores, second-hand stores, penny moving picture shows, and, every now and then, a barefoot youngster shrieking his way through the human throngs on the sidewalk.

"The Monument National with its spacious theatre, has come to be the preferred haunt of Israel for his great religious and social gatherings. The Rosh Hashanah and the Passover are celebrated there. Yiddish theatrical companies from New York play there three times a week to crowds of 2,500, well dressed, neat looking people; mostly young. On certain days of the week the posters outside and the exotic babbling inside would give the impression that the Jews own the place, and the St-Jean Baptiste Society, the real owner, is there on suffrance. Of course, this is merely an impression, for there are compensations in dollars and cents, and the Jew is there because a good earner is generally a good payer." ("The Jews in Montreal," in Canadian Century, vol. 4, no. 11, Sept. 16, 1911, pp. 14-19)

The welcome which the remarkable French Canadian national institution extended to the Jews for decades was more complex than mere suffrance. It came under discussion in the francophone press. Indeed the very location of the national monument so near the heart of the Jewish settlement is sociologically significant, in the belt which divided the city linguistically between French and English Montreal.

The Jewish community in its theatre history did not require, as Toronto did, to build a home for its stage for half a century. In 1909 the Canadian Magazine found it interesting that Toronto erected a Yiddish theatre with Shma Israel as the play for its inauguration.

Montreal a half a century later created in the "suburban" Snowdon area theatre facilities for the Jewish community in the Sadye Bronfman Centre, sharing them with anglophone and other Montreal cultural groups.

The Action catholique sociale of Quebec City carried a report from L. Trepanier, its Montreal correspondent, in May 1909 that "in the light of the continuing increase of the Jewish population of the city, it has been resolved to construct a theatre especially for the Jews.

"A Jew by the name of Aronson will soon build a theatre on the corner of Ontario and St. Lawrence St., that is in the heart of the Jewish centre.

"During the past two years the Monument National which belongs to our Societé St-Jean Baptiste was rented nearly every month to Jews for their theatrical presentations.

"Because of the construction of a Jewish theatre, French Canadians will doubtless soon have easier access to their national edifice." (May 22, 1909)

The Jewish Times baited the anti-Semitic Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne as it recorded the condition of Yiddish culture in Montreal.

This Quebec association, "who view with concern the invasion of Canada by our people and see grave danger in the increase of our social and charitable organizations, especially the Bnoth Zion Kadimah of Toronto, will no doubt feel less easy now that Montreal is to have a Yiddish theatre.

"Yet, that such a project is on foot is, we understand, an undoubted fact. Mr. L. Mitnick, under whose management the various Yiddish companies appear in this city from time to time, has experienced great inconvenience in filling dates for theatrical companies owing to the difficulty of fitting in dates when the Monument National is vacant, and the companies are at liberty to come to this city.

"The only way out of the difficulty, it was considered, is the erection of a play-house for this particular purpose. Mr. Mitnick has interested a number of our local coreligionists, and a lot of ground on St. Lawrence Boulevard, just above Ontario St. has been selected. If plans do not miscarry, building operations will commence at once, and Mr. Mitnick hopes that before long Montreal Jewry will have a theatre of its own which will accommodate 700 people." (May 21, 1909)

At the time Mitnick reported on the condition of the Yiddish stage in America: Adler's Grand Theatre and Kessler paid $100 a week to actor Simon. A New York impressario travelled to Europe to engage actor Silbert. (Adler, Dec. 14, 1908)

"Until now we have had only visiting companies. The plan to establish a permanent theatre has failed." The editor of the Adler was not happy with this plan as "the quality of production will decline; we have had only poor plays such as those of Silbert and of Simon, The Yeshivah Student and "The Queen of Sheba.

"We understand that the Silberts are coming during the next season. We would advise against this." (Dec. 2, 1908)

On May 25, 1908 Harry Singer wrote in a letter to the Adler that in the past good theatre companies had played in Montreal even during periods of depression; but this has ceased recently.

The same year Mitnick sponsored a summer program opening on June 4 in the Auditorium Hall with Mme. Prager in Shulamith, Bar Kochba and The Destruction of Kishineff.

A fortnight later the Yiddish daily wrote editorially on "The Jewish Theatre in Montreal" in a vein that was to continue for decades on the entire continent,

Playwright Joseph Lateiner (b. 1853), who followed Goldfaden's style of light operettas, was the author of Hero Yehudah which Mitnick presented at the Monument National on November 4, 1908.

The Order Sons of Benjamin sponsored presentations of Goldfaden's Shulamith and Bar Kochba.

Hadassah was one of the plays which Mitnick produced at the Princess Theatre.

Montreal witnessed a notable Yiddish theatrical event early in 1909 when the Agudath Zion Society sponsored a presentation of the musical drama The Viceroy at the Monument National in aid of the Zionist organization. "The audience included many who had never witnessed a Yiddish theatrical performance before, and it must have been quite a revelation to those to see that the Yiddish stage possesses such excellent artistes as some of those who were in the cast of The Viceroy." (Jewish Times, Jan. 29, 1909)

The musical drama in four acts dealt with the Inquisition. Mitnick had managed the appearance of the New York Yiddish Theatrical Company in Montreal with K. Yuvelier, Mme. Prager and Bernardi. The latter, born in Lemberg in 1873, had played with Anshell Shore in Przmysl and later in Montreal under Herschel Zukerberg and during another season, under B. Tomashewsky in Toronto.

"Between the third and fourth acts, Mr. Clarence I. de Sola appeared on the stage, and made an eloquent appeal to all those who were not Zionists to join the Movement without delay, and to those who were, to take a more active interest in it. The battle is almost won; cable dispatches just to hand report that the last obstacle in the way of Jewish Palestinian emigration has been removed."

The Jewish-Russian company, which consists of the Myer Gold family of 10 performers, played in the Gayety Theatre in Montreal and in Toronto. (A photograph of the group appears in the Adler of Nov. 11, 1909)

Mitnick presented Rosa Karp and H.D. Levinson in Lateiner's The Golden Wedding and Father's Love on Feb. 10, 1910.

Two plays were presented with Regina Prager on March 22, 1910: Hadassah by Prof. Hurwitz and Disturbed Marriage Pledges by Nisnet, a talented writer who contributed to the Freie Arbeiter Shtimme. He left his literary activities before 1910. (Adler, March 22, 1910)

Anschell Shore was the author of First Love performed in the Monument National on May 19, 1910 starring the playwright and his wife, Mme. Prager and Yuvelier, under the management of L. Mitnick. (Adler, May 5, 1910)

David Kessler, one of the great actors of the Yiddish theatre of his age, appeared together with Rosa Karp in the Monument National on July 14 and 15, 1910 under Mitnick's management in David Pinsky's Yankel the Smith and Lateiner's The Jewish Heart.

In 1913 Mitnick established a permanent Yiddish theatre.

"The first 'stock company' which Mitnick brought to Montreal, played an entire season (1913) at the Monument National. This company included such names as Nathan and Rosa Goldberg, Isidor Meltzer, Louis Backshitzky, Meyer Honigman and Louis Goldstein. That season was one of considerable importance in the annals of Jewish theatre in Montreal: it was, in the first place, an achievement to have continuous Jewish theatre and of a quality, and in the second, it was indeed worthy by the fact that the great Rudolph Shildkraut played for five weeks." (Israel Rabinowitch. "Yiddish Theatre in Montreal," in Canadian Jewish Year Book, 1940-41. Pp. 166-67)

"When Schildkraut visited Montreal in 1913 the lovers of the Yiddish theatre arranged a banquet for him and presented him with flowers."

J.P. Adler appeared in the Monument National on July 31, 1914. He appeared again in Montreal in The Wild Man and in The Odessa Beggar on October 21 and 22, 1915. (Der Veg, Oct. 20, 1915) He granted an interview to the correspondent of Der Veg on October 25

THE PASSING OF MITNICK

Because of Mitnick's efforts the community had enjoyed the opportunity of seeing the best actors and the best plays of that day. Adler, Kessler, Tomashewsky, Madame Liptzin were frequent guests. When Esther Rachel Kaminsky toured America in 1911, Montreal too, thanks to Mitnick, acted as her host. She appeared in The Schechita, and Mirele Efros, by Jacob Gordin. Indeed, her talented artistry left an indelible impression.

Louis Mitnick died of a heart attack on October 29, 1915 at the age of 49. (Der Veg, Nov. 1, 1915)

He was laid to rest in the cemetery of the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society. The funeral was the most impressive in the annals of Montreal Jewry.

The obituary in the Adler noted his fearlessness in expressing himself boldly, which won him many enemies. These often came to appreciate his honesty and became devoted friends. He was a man of daring initiative. "He loved to appear on the stage, especially in Goldfaden's plays."

A benefit concert for Mrs. Mitnick took place at the Monument National on December 7, 1915 with J.P. Adler playing in Kobrin's The Enemies.

Mitnick was succeeded in theatrical management by his son, Isaac.

Isaac Mitnick was born in Boston in 1890 and received his schooling in Montreal. He appeared in children's roles in his father's Yiddish plays and assisted as cashier.

When his father passed away, he managed the local Yiddish theatre until 1923. (Z.Zilberzweig, ed. Lexicon fun Yidishen Teater. Warsaw, 1934)

When Mme. Liptzin and her company played in the Monument National in M. Richter's Her Awakening in mid-November 1915 it was under the management of widow Mitnick and her son. A member of the cast, Weinfeld, eulogized Mitnick during the performance and appealed for public support for the family.

Alexandroni hailed Galician Richter as the peer of Kobrin and of Libin. He summarized the plot: an immigrant woman who became a woman of the underworld of prostitution was about to introduce her sister, newly arrived from Europe, to the same society. But the younger woman resists, and the play ends with the repentance of the older sister and the murder of the older sister's husband. A movie scene is inserted early in the play. "Mme. Liptzin is not on the level of

performance that she displays in Mirele Efros and other Gordin plays." (Der Veg, Nov. 19, 1915)

Adler played a fortnight later in Kobrin's The Enemies and in Gordin's The Alien under the management of Isaac Mitnick.

The Novelty Theatre on St. Catherine and Cadieux Streets presented a season largely of light comedies and sentimental productions in the fall of 1915: Shulamith, Nov. 15; Caldunia or Bobe Yachneh, Nov. 16; Der Pintele Yid, Nov. 17; The Green Couple on Nov. 18; Kol Nidrei, Nov. 19; The Jewess, Nov. 20; The Scholar, by Lateiner; Gordin's The Orphan on Nov. 29; The Power of Love, Nov. 30; Justice on Dec. 1; In a Bad Way, Dec. 3; The Greenhorns, Dec. 4; Song of Songs, Dec. 5; Taibele, Dec. 9; King Lear, Dec. 10; Ben Hadar and Herzele Meiuches, Dec. 11; Who is Guilty?, Dec. 15; Three for One, and War Victims, Dec. 16, 1915.

Clara Kessman, Louis Gilrod and Eva Zimond, vocalists, appeared in these programs.

Mr. and Mrs. Schoenfeld resigned from the cast of the Novelty Theatre in November 1915 and began to appear in the Gayety Theatre on December 19 in The Tourist.

The Schoenfelds played in My Husband's Lover by Isidore Lesh in the Monument National on February 26, 1916; Tiger by Z. Cornblitt and The Price of a Mother on the 27th; Justice, December 2; Greenhorns, and In a Bad Way, on December 4; Song of Songs, December 3 and 4.

Jacob and Sarah Adler appeared in Three Generations on April 30, 1917 by Jacob Gordin, one of the serious philosophers of Yiddish literature and utopist of Jewish agriculture of the time.

Bertha Kalisch played in In Love and in Hate, March 21, 1917.

A competing group led by actor Wiseman played at the Atlantic Palace Theatre, formerly a church, at the corner of Prince Arthur and St. Lawrence Blvd., and subsequently at the People's Theatre on Coté St.

The Rialto Theatre on St. Lawrence and St. Catherine Sts. was very popular with Yiddish audiences.

THE MONTREAL THEATRE

Several remarkable confrontations in 1912 and 1913 illustrate the conflicting values and the emergence of populist institutions.

Even among the religious elements -- to whom the literary and dramatic developments were alien and dangerous as instruments of the secularising world and the stage was seen as flippant and immodest -- there were many who accepted dispensations and attended the plays.

Orthodox resentment at Sabbath desecration by the secularist society was consistent. In 1910 Clarence de Sola objected to the Poale Zion convening meetings on Friday evenings. Dr. Chaim Zhitlovsky responded that the high tenour of the Zionist meetings more than justified the assembling of the Jewish audiences on the day of rest.

The Jewish people were discovering the entertainment value of liturgy as well as its religious character. The awakening nationalism pointed up the fact that good vocalists could and did sing the liturgical prayers; that these can be enjoyed not only in the synagogue at set occasions; it was an art form, a pleasure form, a form of theatre. In the shtetel the liturgy was the property of the people; there was no clerical class of cantors. The Chassidic Nigun was not confined to the three set hours of the clock symbolic of the sacrifices, or to the house of prayer, and the melodies were not separate from the sphere of civil life, from the real, not limited to the private areas of religion.

But in Canada some were horrified when the respected cantor of Toronto's University Street Synagogue, Bernard Wladowsky, proposed to appear at the Victoria Rifle Armory in Montreal in the fall of 1912 in a recital of High Holiday chants.

Cantor Wladowsky was an active worker in communal affairs. He advertised as the most antiseptic Mohel in Toronto and as a most modern officiant at weddings. "Country people can also arrange for me to be present at their festivities. Poor people would be served without charge."

Rev. Meldola de Sola did not approve. This early Sephardi orthodox minister of Montreal found it easy to condemn the public use of Yiddish as desecration of the Holy Name, as when Yiddish was used for political meetings in 1900. (M. Melamed in Canadian Jewish Chronicle, Oct. 22, 1965)

Surprisingly de Sola was followed by Toronto's Yiddish Hebrew Journal and by Reuben Brainin in Montreal, each of them briefly out of step with their readers. It was blasphemous, undignified to have the choir in prayer shawls appear before Jews and Christians -- all for dollars and cents. The project was abandoned. (Montreal, Witness, Dec. 23,

1912; Toronto Hebrew Journal, Dec. 27, 1912; Jewish Times, Dec. 20, 1912; Gazette, March 11, 1913)

But within a few months the giant of cantors, Velvel Sirota, visited Montreal. Again the Jewish Times and the dignitaries of the community denounced the project.

But this time the Eagle supported the cantor. Above all, the public responded when they filled the Princess Theatre. Thus another breakthrough for a new form of Jewish culture was established by the non-observant among the new immigrants.

By the end of April 1910 the list of Passover services and the participating cantors in the Adler closed with the announcement of actors from the stage who will play during the second days of the festival, including Mme. Karp, Dora Waissman, Isaac Goldenberg, comedian Fishkind, Mr. Glickman, Mr. Sherenholtz, Mme. Shapiro and Mr. Honigman, in My Wife's Friend. (Apr. 28, 1910)

Rabbi H. Cohen objected to the want of respect for religious rites as evidenced by the photographs of cantors being displayed together with those of theatre actors, as well as the public auctioning of synagogue honours and by conversation during services. (Adler, Aug. 30, 1914)

Israel Medres describes the Yiddish theatre scene of Montreal before the First World War.

"When the Jewish immigrant went to the theatre it was quite a holiday for him. The majority of the regular patrons were cloakmakers, tailors and business people, who earned better salaries and who in general had more or less established themselves. Their progress was exhibited by the gold teeth in their mouths, by the thick gold ring worn on the finger and thirdly, by the massive gold watch and chain stretched across the vest. Women were judged not only by their gold teeth, but also by the jewellery they wore. Much of the jewellery may have been brought from Europe, but the gold teeth were Canadian-made. That in itself was proof that the wearer was more or less an old timer and that 'thank God , they were making a nice living.'

"These 'alriteniks' would occupy the orchestra seats and loges in the Yiddish theatre.

"Upstairs the balcony was occupied by the still quite green workers and peddlars, male and female boarders, who still had to stint, because they were saving their money to buy steamship tickets for their families. They had no gold teeth and could not attend the Yiddish theatre too often, although the Yiddish theatre was the world and everything in it for them. A visit to the Yiddish theatre impressed them greatly.

"The Monument National was always the centre and home of the Yiddish theatre in Montreal and many perhaps still remember Mitnick who was the pioneer of the Yiddish theatre in our city.

"From time to time, however, troupes would play in other theatres also; perhaps because they couldn't come to terms with Mitnick, or because they wanted to compete with him. A Yiddish troupe once played in a theatre located on Cadieux Street, at the corner of St. Catherine. For a short while a Yiddish troupe played at the Royal Theatre on Coté Street, which was for long the burlesque theatre of Montreal. At the corner of Prince Arthur and St. Lawrence there stood the movie theatre 'Atlantic Palace.' For a time it was where the Yiddish melodramas were produced.

"The smaller theatres, where these lesser troupes played, attracted the immigrant who was still a recent newcomer, and who had not established himself. But this crowd would more often go to the Yiddish vaudeville houses such as the Gem Vaudeville on St. Lawrence near Dorchester, and in other movies of that district. It was cheaper to go to these than to a Yiddish theatre, and in addition they could see a movie as well.

"The vaudeville programs consisted mainly of singing. A middle-aged man would come out upon the stage and in a strong cantor-like voice sing a few serious songs. One song might lament the 'Troubles of the Jews,' while a second would deal with the 'Years which speed by and return never again.' Then a young man would come out, almost a youngster, in a song and dance act. The first song might be about 'The Missus and her Boarder.' This would be a subtle song, full of inuendos. To atone for this, he would don a cap for the second song which would be a respectable number like 'On Friday Night the Jew is like a King.' This would appeal to the religious-minded listeners. Then an actress would appear. She, too, would sing. Sometimes the song would centre about the unfortunate maiden and the scoundrel; sometimes she would sing of a street-walker who wants to get out of the gutter but who can't because everybody's pushing her down.

"It goes without saying that many Jewish immigrants who witnessed these portrayals shed copious tears and sighed deeply at the tragedies of the white slaves. And they would leave the theatre deeply moved, to tell their friends and acquaintances to see the presentation and to enjoy themselves.

"When Madame Liptzin played Mirele Efros, -- that was an event! They would talk about it for weeks afterwards in the shops, in the halls, and wherever Jewish immigrants would congregate.

"Mirele Efros was Madame Liptzin's best role. But she would produce a greater sensation on the women and on many men when she appeared in the White Slave. The Jewish immigrant heard of the white-slave problem which was rampant in North and South America from these

melodramas in the Yiddish theatre. Romances and novels were published in the papers with white slaves as the principal figures.

"For a time the most important theatre figures were Jacob Adler and David Kessler, who would troupe from New York, for a few performances. Adler's principal role was King Lear, a lesson to the Jewish immigrant that too much loyalty to one's children does not pay.

"The lesser troupes which were not conducted by well-known actors produced various melodramas from Lateiner, Zolotarefsky and others; the main themes were white slavery, clandestine love affairs, unmarried mothers, etc."

"Ish Yehudi," contributor to the Adler, severely criticized Gordin for putting together The Wild Man in which Adler appeared in Montreal on October 23, 1915 as an incoherent and vulgar concoction of no value, but "the great repute of the star is highly deserved for keeping the audience involved; he is truly an artist of the highest rank."

He was much more enthusiastic about The Odessa Beggar, "a less pretentious comedy, but a clean comedy with a humour that does not make us blush for its rotted jokes which are so often introduced on the Jewish stage.

"David Levinson performs with sincerity. Gustave Schacht appeared in both plays as a very faithful actor." (Oct. 24, 1915)

Shortly before the First World War, a stock company led by entrepreneur Wiseman, including Nathan and Rose Goldberg, played good theatre on a high artistic level for over a year. During the same period, Wiseman led an operetta company in the Atlantic Palace, a restored church on St. Lawrence St. near Prince Arthur. When this structure was reconstructed into a garage, he played at the People's Theatre on Coté St. Other Yiddish companies performed at the Novelty Theatre on Cadieux and St. Catherine. Montreal became the scene of noisy competition which divided aficionados deeply.

The Scala Yiddish vaudeville and moving picture theatre in Canada opened on January 31, 1916 on Main St near St. Catherine St.

Reuben Brainin was invited to open the theatre; the proceeds of the first performance were dedicated to the People's Alliance Relief Fund for Overseas War Victims.

The theatre engaged a pleiad of young talent who had played in various American cities. They included Sam Winkler who had played with J. Adler during two seasons, and Molly Sophie who had appeared with Mme. Liptzin.

The theatre was open from 1 to 11 p.m. Admission, 10 cents.

The Scala Theatre presented a program of Yiddish vaudeville, with movies, on February 13, 1916, including one "in the French style," The Shop Girl on February 20.

In the spring of 1917 the Peretz Hirschbein Drama Group was formed for the study of classic Yiddish literature. It met at 1593 Cadieux St. (Adler, May 25, 1917.)

The Jewish Dramatic and Musical Club performed Herzele Meiuches on October 30, 1915 in the Modern Hall, 197 Notre Dame St. West, in aid of a family stricken by consumption, in cooperation with the Workmen's Circle branch 204.

It again performed The Truth by Gordin in aid of the war victims, on December 11, 1915 in the Monument National. The club's ten-piece orchestra played during the intermission. The play was directed by Schoenfeld. In the course of the program Yehudah Kaufmann delivered a lecture on "The New Ideals of Jewish Youth" on December 11, 1915.

On February 1, 1916 the Yiddish author Joel Entin spoke before the club.

For some reason the Adler in July 1915 published a letter from a reader attacking the young people's club as unworthy, spending their time in dancing. They would do better studying Yiddish literary composition, etc. This attack may have come because the paper was in one of its reactionary tempers, under the editorship at the time of H. Hirsch, having become intensely involved in a violent conflict with former editor Reuben Brainin who was supported by the Labour Zionists on the one hand and the literary community on the other.

H. Hirsch, editor of the Adler at this time had come to Canada in 1902. Ten years later he founded the Yiddisher Journal in Toronto. He published a collection of fables, Hundert Tropen Tint in Toronto. (Adler, Aug. 6, 1915)

Indeed the editor reminded the members of youth groups "that traditional dancing on Saturdays after the snooze is long past, or the dancing of neighbouring girls in a private home under the watchful eyes of the mothers. This was quite a different age from the present with stranger youths dancing turkey trots and tangoes in a club. It is ridiculous and naive to hope that dramatic-literary education can develop from such clubs. This newspaper will assist such groups with counsel, and will recommend them good speakers and experienced guides. But we oppose clubs which follow foolish dreams and dances."

The young people in the dramatic circles were very much on the mind of the Adler editor. As he foresaw the convening of the November 1915 conference which eventually led to the first Canadian Jewish Congress, the editor was confident that influential, well informed

veterans of Canadian life would attend and would concern themselves with the services and practical issues of Canadian and world Jewry.

"This will not be a gathering of men of empty fantasies who must come at the expense of empoverished small groups of electors; young men who devote their time in their home towns to dramatic clubs and such matters that may have some value but only as entertainment for the leisure of decent, honest youths."

Indeed on December 24, 1915 Der Veg published a letter from Elijah Maze, thanking its editor for his support of the musical and dramatic society and its efforts to elevate all classes of the youth of the community, particularly the recent program of December 11.

Jewish vaudeville was presented during the summer of 1915 at the King Edward Theatre on St. Lawrence and Dorchester by Stern and Marcus. Early in July the program included a drama, Cohen's Fortunes. (Adler, July 5 and 6, 1915)

THE PRESS AND THE THEATRE

From its first days the Yiddish theatre was intimately related in a complex bond with other major cultural phenomena. The theatre in North America was born during the East-European migration, with the emergence of its syndicalism, Yiddish literature, the Yiddish schools, the immigrant social and mutual aid institutions, the Yiddish press, etc.

This press was read by the theatre-going public; the press reported on the theatre; the theatre advertised in the press; the press criticized the actors and the authors; often the plays were written by the journalists, and the actors were often the celebrities of the society in which the theatre breathed; the Zionist and mutual aid groups purchased blocks of tickets; companies performed for the benefit of managers' widows; the theatre invoked the Zionist ideal for Jewish myths to endow it with values.

But the relationship was never perfect. The operators of the theatre needed to function in an economic environment. They were dependent upon the public who decided whether or not the theatre should be open on the Sabbath, what plays were acceptable, what was moral, amusing, artistic. The public was the ultimate judge, rather than the directors; certainly more than the critics, ideologists or journalists. These latter had their own following, but they in turn had to follow the regulations traditionally binding them.

The folkloric convention of the immigration world was fascinating, sentimental, sometimes suggestive, rarely pornographic; but it was primitive, simple, repetitive. Certainly it was unsophisticated, and did not meet the standards of the literary critics. These writers and journalists set the same standards for the playwrights as for the poets and novelists. Isaac Yampolsky prophesied in a review of a Moses Richter play, in Brainin's Der Veg, that the Yiddish theatre will never attain the standards of literature. "By the time it rises to that level, who knows where Yiddish will be," he wondered in 1915.

Conflicts arose between producers and drama critics in the Yiddish theatrical world, even as the journalists sought to educate their readers -- and the producers, managers and actors -- on the high tradition of the western stage. (B.J. Goldstein on the Austrian actor Sonenthal in Adler, May 2, 1910)

In Montreal the artistic quality of the Yiddish theatre was not always of the highest. But the watchful drama critics in the Adler encouraged the more serious stage efforts of the actors. Canada was fortunate to have two important journalists and literary personnages to watch over the Yiddish theatre for nearly half a century: Goldstein who wrote voluminously for the Montreal and Winnipeg press, and

Israel Rabinovitch, editor of the Adler for some forty years, musicologist, cantor and expert on the stage arts.

Goldstein watched over the Montreal theatre vigilantly since the Adler appeared until 1910 when he continued his mission in Winnipeg until 1918 when he returned to Montreal to direct the dramatic section of the Hazomir Cultural Centre. He published plays such as Jealousy and the one-act At the Back Door which he directed. After some years in Quebec he moved to New York to become a major drama critic in the Yiddish press and to direct operettas.

Such early reviews by B.J. Goldstein as his discussion of Yankel the Smith, from the pen of David Pinsky produced in the Monument National starring David Kessler during the summer of 1910, or when he commented on Esther Rachel Kaminsky's performance of Z. Libin's Men Without Faith, eventually won the critic a prime position in the Yiddish theatrical criticism of New York.

Goldstein reported (Adler, Jan. 5, 1910) that serious actors who participated in Libin's Men Without Faith considered that play without any merit, yet Mme. Kaminsky revived the dead, held the audience in suspense and evoked tears from the first scene to the last as one failing revolutionary after another sought to portray the characters of the drama. The cast included Mr. Shrager, Yuvelier, Mme. Goralsky, N. Rubin, Mr. Shore, Mrs. Moscovitch.

He also analysed at length Schiller's Robbers before it was presented in Montreal with Morris Morrison in the leading role in the spring of 1910. (Adler, Feb. 18, 1910)

Goldstein continued his drama criticism after he settled in Winnipeg. In 1911 he reported to his Montreal readers that "a company of Jewish actors played Zolotarefsky's The Convert." His review was very severe. Goldstein doubted that the play was really written by Zolotarefsky; "it is beneath all criticism." He objected to a play in which a Jew prays with his prayer shawl, while an old goy is crossing himself; in which an earthy peasant becomes a philosopher, a superman.

"Nevertheless the star, Mr. Shaingold, has shown at several moments in the play that he is able to perform earnestly, if only he had dispensed with a long and useless speech. Madame Shaingold is truly a great talent and it is regrettable that she should perform in such a play.

"Mrs. Zimond sings better than she plays. Mrs. Yetta Rubinstein had a minor role, but she clearly can take on a more responsible task. The favourite actor, Mr. Meltzer, admittedly plays exaggerated parts and presents vulgar and indecent couplets."

Goldstein commented on the Winnipeg synagogue Amud as well as on the stage.

"The Shaarai Shomayim services are described as being on a higher level, reminiscent of a European choir synagogue with a very high measure of decorum. Mr. Kovalson is a fine Baal Tefilah and, above all, has a command of the Hebrew grammar. The members of the Shaarai Shomayim have a tradition of inviting good cantors who would conduct the service so that the Almighty could also understand them. This they have achieved this year.

"The Beth Jacob synagogue was very crowded with hundreds of people standing in the doorway. But this is not surprising because the compositions of Cantor Ginsberg and Mr. Jacob and his choir were excellent. In spite of the crowd there was very good order in the synagogue." (Adler, April. 24, 1911)

Chiel reports that the influence of the Montreal Adler and its Goldstein extended powerfully into the heart of the prairies.

"A considerable number of the young Jewish intelligentsia in Winnipeg, who were conversant with the best in Yiddish literature, severely criticized the local Yiddish theatre. Many of them frequented the general theatre and were impressed by the standards of the English stage. An editorial written in 1911 by Goldstein in the pages of Der Kanader Yid conveys their thinking.

"'Many theatre-goers have established their dramatic tastes and criteria through the English stage presentations which they have seen at the local theatres. They therefore demand the same high standards for the Queen's Theatre which they have observed at the Walker Theatre. They want the baby in swaddling clothes to walk as dignifiedly and as upright as the polished well-paid performers of the general stage.

"'On the other hand a considerable portion of our Jewish population has not the high criteria of the intelligentsia. True, they, too, occasionally see English productions but these are the movies and vaudeville at the Empress Theatre and the quality of these is very questionable. These people do not seek heavy drama. They want to be entertained.'

"In a large city like New York, contended the editorial, the tastes and needs of the separate groups could be met through the several Yiddish theatres that existed. 'Low-brow' vaudeville could be seen at the People's Theatre; 'high-brow' plays could be enjoyed at the Liptzin Theatre.

"What was the solution for Winnipeg? The editorial proposed that the sophisticates should develop a greater tolerance of mass thinking while at the same time persisting in their demands for better drama. In time perhaps the tastes of vaudeville fans would mature.

"The local intellectuals channelled their impatience constructively by organizing a competitive theatrical group, to offset the attraction of the Jewish Operatic Company. They established the Yiddish Dramatic

Club, drawing upon their own talents for the stage plays which they produced. By offering dramatic works of literary merit, well acted and tastefully produced, they succeeded in developing the taste of the Jewish public far beyond their original expectations. In time they created a genuine desire for the serious and legitimate dramas of Jacob Gordin, Peretz Hirshbein, Leon Kobrin, and David Pinsky. From time to time, too, they brought to Winnipeg the stars of the New York Yiddish stage, Jacob Adler, Mme. Kenny Liptzin and Rudolph Schildkraut. The Queen's Theatre did indeed continue to feature inferior parodies and tasteless adaptations, but this fare was balanced by works which satisfied more discerning minds. And so, gradually, the battle for better Yiddish theatre in Winnipeg was won." (The Jews in Manitoba, a Social History, University of Toronto Press. 1961. Pp. 120-21)

Enthusiastic as the Adler's I. Yampolsky was for the theatre as a vehicle for Jewish art values, he tended to refrain from discussing stage productions. He was aware of an intense inner contradition, he admitted, until he saw the brilliant actress Mme. Liptzin play in Zotolarefsky's The White Slave, a production on prostitution which had less than no merit. It had been playing since the beginning of 1910 in New York. Mme. Liptzin (1856-1918) played the title role 125 times before appearing in Montreal in the summer of that year. (Adler, May 30, 1910)

Fixing his attention upon her talent as she created the role -- the human part, the events of the play that might have come from the pen of an artist equal in value to the presence of the actress -- Yampolsky concludes that the Jewish stage art of his time is sadly incomplete; the Jewish actors are present but the plays have no merit, no Jewish creativity. The White Slave is the incorporation of the fine woman in the hands of the ugly merchant in human bodies. Pity is evoked not only for persona of the victim in the play, but for the starring actress, and no less for the profaned audience. The stage, the Jewish people, the actress are the victims of the white slaver, the pornographer, the producer. (June 19, 1910; the performance was repeated together with True Love, Jan. 9 and 10, 1912 at the Monument National)

The debate between theatrical promoters and the dramatic critics which went on for the half century which the Yiddish stage endured was characterized in the Adler at the end of May, 1910 when the editor asked, "Which plays are more successful financially?

"Our readers want to know only whether in recent months certain light operettas, to use mild language, have been staged only because they bring higher revenue than better plays.

"We believe that the managers consider that the public prefers the cheerful style, the ticklish joke, the lively dance. Only a single play by a noted writer needs to fail, as did J.L. Peretz's Temptation, for

all producers to reject all art. After the Peretz experience all theatres showed only Shore's Be a Man for months.

"No argument will alter their thinking. Pointing to the Adler or the Lifshitz theatres where good plays were constantly presented to packed houses will not avail; not even this season when Yankel the Smith by Pinsky was presented for many weeks, and it would have played longer if Kessler would not suddenly have been seized by the desire to appear in Tomashewsky's Pintele.

"All this for New York, where there are four theatres and a choice of repertoires. In Montreal there remains only the lower type of show, and played without rehearsal...

"We cannot believe that such cheap melodramas can net as much as plays by Gordin and Pinsky." (May 25, 1910)

Two days later Mitnick responded informatively to the editor,

"You did well to invite me to respond to your question, for it appears that you do not know the theatre business clearly. Permit me to reveal to you that a vulgar production or a cheap melodrama is a greater financial success.

"I can bring you any number of facts to illustrate this, but these would be quite unnecessary if you would glance at the ticket office, the most eloquent witness.

"Nevertheless, I would not pay any attention to the greater revenue and would prefer to produce such good plays as Libin's and Gordin's and others with which our present dramatic repertoire is rich. But I must tell you, and the others who pose the question, in secret, that you are maybe aware of what is happening on the stage, but not at all of the effort that is expended before the curtain rises. If you knew that you would understand without my help that I am not to blame for which types of artists exist and which are available to me. If I were to spend tens of thousands, I could secure no other.

"In spite of all this, there is some reason not to complain. Montreal has not yet been imposed upon by people without talent. I do my duty on each occasion. Thus I have had Adler several times this season with his whole company, Madame Kaminsky, Morris Morrison, Yuvelier, the Pragers, the Karps and the Waismans, and now Madame Liptzin is arriving.

"You see, I have always brought talented actors, artists. I shall always arrange for good artists to play here in good plays." (May 27, 1910)

After 1913 H.M. Caiserman wrote criticisms of Yiddish theatrical productions as well as poems in the Adler.

The great star of the Yiddish theatre, J.P. Adler, and his daughter Francis accorded a harsh interview to Der Veg on October 28, 1915,

"The theatre has no future. This is the fault of the unions. He feels forced to put on vulgar plays every night in New York's east side. Melodramas are the only plays possible. They cripple whatever innate talents the artists may have had. The Jewish press is a tool of the unions. It did not train the producers or the actors critically. The theatre is on the old line of Lateiner-Hurwitz plays.

"The theatre of Odessa and Bucharest developed quietly. Odessa even played the work of Lillienbloom. But when the Yiddish theatre in Russia was banned the actors dispersed to London, New York. etc. Tailors' apprentices took over the stage until J. Gordin arrived and created the second flowering of the Jewish theatre, as lofty as economic conditions permitted. Conditions in Russia are such that further developments cannot be expected there, in Galicia or in Rumania.

"The People's Theatre is a fine monument, but it had to rely on incapable artists.

"Adler has several literary pieces, but he will have to present them outside New York; in Chicago where he will pass the season. He had been offered an English theatre, but at last moment he rejected it, "I will not leave the Yiddish theatre after 30 years."

In a remarkable "confessional" essay the excruciatingly truthful poet J.I. Segal admitted that "the theatre art is not so close to me nor near my heart. I never explained this to myself.

"Often, as I sit in the theatre and enjoy every detail of the performance, every movement of the actor, all the colours, sounds, nuances, changes and environmental illusions, I experience in the performance of the actors, in the nearness of the clear language, veritable elements of the day I have been living. And I continue with the actors; they are my neighbours, and in their playing hints of our commonness steal in. Half revealed secrets of my own life become clearer and intelligible to me; my own half-hidden thoughts with which I have not yet made peace and which I would drive away as unripe spread themselves in midday light before me, like frightening black cats foretelling little of good fortune, and shake my equanimity. In a word, I experience the real life of my day and my forever as I face the stage.

"With strange suddenness I hear an unnatural hard grind in the play, and know not whence it comes. I blame not any actor, nor the expression of his language, the unnaturalness of any movements, the bend of any limb, nor the element of the impersonal which is common to the greatest of actors; it leaves a cold vacuum, destroys all bonds between the cast; they are not all grown into the unity of the play they live; all follow as without a shepherd.

"After all we are sheep, even when the greatest ambitions urge the innermost ego. We are not always sensitized in life to the loss of bonds. We follow the shepherd's flute, for after all, we are sheep and even when our deepest ambitions put aside the call of our innermost ego, 'Raise your head a little higher; show it by straightening out above the crowd with whom you walk. Do not lose yourself; underline your superiority (how often it means but your indispensibility).'

"But with all your justified awareness of your importance, you still go the way of all, you do not feel the empty distance between all. It is therefore natural not to feel it in good theatre, particularly in the face of the decoration, the illumination and other environmental elements which good angels in wings white and purple or what you will provide. But man and time and the world are chained and become a part of a global universe which the theatre people call a piece of true life.

"This piece of life I sense strongly on the stage, but the veracity of this performance suddenly flees from me; probably because of my own weakness; I may be demanding too much; my approach to the theatre may be false. But I cannot pretend exaggerated pleasure when I sensed but a half of true art in the performance, and am therefore very distant from the dream which my friend the artist B. Rivkin spins about the theatrical art in the hope that even Messiah will wander from the wings or from behind the stage and will reveal himself to us, the poor and the lost, and will redeem us from the Jewish and gentile and personal exile. I have probably not meritted such grace from God. I must therefore listen, and believe what my senses tell me, and not deny their truth. Possibly I must often bend justice, or artistic justice, bend a little in hard daily life with people. But I am a stubborn fanatic and these are often weightier reality than 'real daily life.'

"And often I feel a barrier in my excessive realization of insufficient bonding between the public and the stage; particularly in the best performances of the Yiddish theatre, with the full pretended absorption by many of the more educated who had, I felt, one foot at the theatre and the other at home.

"On the contrary, when I dropped in at one of the many Yiddish shows in New York, in a vaudeville, I saw the 'real' theatrical. There audience and stage played together, have grown together, not a pin width apart, according to the theory of the modern theatre.

"But I was not satisfied. For, just as one cannot separate the mob from the Golem who would jump out and turn worlds around, deny and erase all that is gentle and beautiful that exists on the sole path that had been researched and reached by the individual, so it is not easy to control the clown, the comedian in the worst theatre, the vulgar actor. The acrobat on the stage seizes the audience and they dance the true play to which modern theory will sound a positive accord with bells.

"So I often shuffled out after the first act, for I do not seek amusement in art. I seek repose and the purity which illuminates life and renders it transparent like crystal by the artistic medium. On the stage one consistent point, one movement which kept the play on a level, even one actor who covered all flaws which must arise or grow in the course of the play by his talent and artistic maturity, suffice." (Adler, June 6, 1930)

In a lesser manner the Adler was also the birthplace of some, presumably minor, popular Jewish drama.

J.L. Malamut, one of the journalists with the Adler, who edited the Winnipeg humorous Der Hohn and contributed to Brainin's Der Veg, was also a novelist-playwright.

Joel Leib Malamut (born 1886) acknowledged the aid of the Kanader Adler and Mitnick's theatrical initiative: "The newspaper was the constant advocate of the Yiddish theatre, particularly in supporting L. Mitnick's Yiddish theatre at the Monument National and Wiseman's People's Theatre.

"I recall that it was the Adler that introduced two Yiddish playwrights to the Montreal stage: I. Magid, author of Without Blood, and myself. Both these plays were produced under the direction of Reuben Brainin, then editor of the Adler.

"My play was based on the novel Torn Souls which was published serially in the Adler. It was Wolofsky who insisted that this work needs to be revised, for it contained the elements of a fine play. Torn Souls, under direction of Reuben Brainin became The Golden Chain, a realistic Chassidic play in four acts with songs and dances. I later regretted the new title because J.L. Peretz had already written a play by the same name with great values in symbolism. Later, when the play was performed in Winnipeg and Chicago and Minneapolis, I changed the name to In the Rabbi's Court..."

After his stay in Montreal Malamut left for Winnipeg where he was engaged in Yiddish journalism until 1916 as editor of the Kanader Yiddishe Velt. (Canadian Jewish World)

Brainin also directed the production of I. Magid's play Bloodless. (J.L. Malamut. "Pages of my Recollections, the Canader Adler Twenty-Five Years Ago," in the 1938 anniversary edition of the Adler. P. 44)

Another of his plays, The Egoist was also performed in Canada. (Z. Reisen, Lexicon of Yiddish Literature, 1927)

H. Hirsch, Adler editor in 1914, composed a sarcastic drama The Politician which was staged several times in Canada and in the United States.

S. Nepom (1882-1939), an early Yiddish poet from the first Adler school, was also the author of The Stable, an allegorical one-act play in three scenes. (Noted in his collection of poems, Pentes. Toronto, 1928)

A moment in the spring of 1912 is recorded by A.B. Bennett, then a graduate in Honours English from Queen's College, who came to Montreal to edit the Canadian Jewish Times for a number of months.

"Rudolf Schildkraut, the famous German Jewish actor, played the part of Shylock with a Yiddish company in Montreal. I wrote a review of the performance. My article reached Reuben Brainin's notice.

"It seems that Brainin was impressed with my article. He told me later that I appeared to know more about Jewish life, the Yiddish stage and the part of Shylock than he expected from a young Canadian student, and he expressed a desire to have me introduced to him." (Bennett. "Brainin in Montreal," in Jewish Standard, Apr. 1, 1962. P. 3)

Brainin confirmed to I. Yampolsky his intention to write a play centering on the figure of Dr. Theodore Herzl. (Adler, Jan. 24, 1910)

BETWEEN THE WARS

When peace was restored in 1918 Jewish culture entered a new phase of maturity centering both in Poland and in the United States, with important secondary developments in Canada.

The older, more elemental, simpler entertaining phases which dated back two decades still persisted, but more sophisticated, more literary plays overwhelmed the Yiddish stage, with theatrical talent to match.

With the maturing of the wordly Jewish culture in Europe and in the New World, education of the young in due course produced more serious generations who benefitted from critical perspectives and a realistic view of art and theatre. Schooling in the Western tradition created readers of poetry and fiction of a higher order. With it came a sense of language and folklore which were sensitive of speech and theatre.

These appreciations affected sheer volume in Jewish culture, in Canada no less than in larger centres. Whereas only several Yiddish works appeared in Canada before 1914 -- Joseph Goodman in Western Canada and Elimelech Levin in Montreal -- nearly a score were published by 1939, including work of J.I. Segal.

This was as true on the world scale. After the passing of the classic triad of Mendele, Peretz, and Sholem Aleichem by 1918, Yiddish literature began to endow its stage with plays by such younger, talented writers as P. Hirschbein, Sholem Ash, Leivick, J.I. Singer and Alter Katzisne. Most remarkably the magic of the Dybbuk by S. An-sky has been entering more deeply into international art and letters during the past half century.

In 1922 the Montreal Yiddish Theatre at the Monument National was directed by Herschel Zukerberg, with I. Mitnick as business manager. Their advertisement in Der Kval, edited by A. Almi, reported that they had recently performed Jacob Gordin's God, Man and the Devil and were proposing to present Sholem Aleichem's Stempeniu. They were presenting a literary drama every Saturday night. The actors of the group are listed (five ladies and six men) including Nellie Kasman, Mr. & Mrs. Bernardi, Mrs. Zimond, Mr. Shraga, Myer Groff and others. (Der Kval, Dec. 1922)

Visiting companies played Montreal and Toronto for seasons on end. The memory of the 1924-25 season remained long enshrined by the performances of a company which included Hannah and Isidore Hollander and the Skulnicks. They performed Gorky's Underground, Peretz Hirschbein's The Wayside Inn, The Blacksmith's Daughters and In a Forsaken Corner, and Sholem Aleichem's It is Hard to be a Jew.

("The Yiddish Theatre in Montreal" in 1927 Anniversary Edition of the Adler, Pp. 32, 80)

The new dimensions of the theatre in Canada are evident from the emergence of serious drama groups dedicated to study and to performance of Yiddish drama.

Significantly one such group which met in 1915 enlisted a young fiddler who had functioned as a Klezmer before coming to Canada. Years before Israel Rabinovitch was named editor of the Adler, while still working in a clothing shop, he became a leading member of such a group of amateurs of music and the theatre. In the course of time Rabinovitch became recognized as a distinguished musicologist, a refined critic of the stage and of the theatre, one of the energetic promoters of Yiddish drama and a highly respected figure in Canadian communal affairs.

ISRAEL RABINOVITCH

Israel Rabinovitch, distinguished editor and cultural leader of Canadian Jewry, recalled that "during the season 1924-1925 there appeared at the Monument National a troupe of young actors who so endeared themselves to the public that even to this day that season of play-acting is keenly remembered. The most important members of that troupe were: Hannah and Isadore Hollander, Jehiel Goldsmith, and Menashe and Sara Skulnick.

"These young and talented and ambitious artists, showed by their example what could be achieved in Jewish provincial theatre, provided one had the will and the necessary capabilities. Jehiel Goldsmith, Menashe Skulnick and Hannah Hollander had been previously associated with Maurice Schwartz' Art Theatre and almost everything that the Art Theatre had played. It was a season of the Yiddish theatrical art, although occasionally one compromised by throwing in a melodrama. The version of the Dybbuk as rendered by that troupe is unforgettable in the minds of many theatre-goers. Also distinguished was the playing of Leivick's Shmattes and of Peretz Hirschbein's idyllic plays were rendered with a great deal of temperament and grace. At the end of that season the Canadian Jewish Eagle arranged a farewell for the troupe...

"That season marked the commencement of deterioration of Jewish theatre in Montreal. There was no any longer room for a permanent troupe. The Montreal Yiddish stage was henceforth confined to the periodic visits of the better New York artists, such as Maurice Schwartz and the troupe of the Jewish Art Theatre: Jacob Ben-Ami, Bertha Gersten, Stella and Celia Adler, Samuel Goldenburg.

"A considerable role in the development of Montreal theatre was played by local dramatic clubs. There were such societies organized indeed, even before the professional theatre made its appearance, but none was as important or influential as the Hazomir.

"This club was founded in 1914 through the initiative of a local group, to which the writer of these lines belonged. The name, as well as the concept of this society was contributed by a young man named Pasternack, who had been a member of the famous Hazomir of Lodz, a musical society.

"In its heyday the Hazomir was a splendid organization. It contented itself not merely with putting on plays, but also with literature and music, even going so far as to attempt, alas, unsuccessfully, the establishment of an orchestra. There were lectures and discussions intended for the self-education of the membership; these sessions, indeed, constituted the more substantial phase of the club's activities. Among the plays presented by the club were a number from the Gordin

repertoire, Gerhart Hauptman's and some other European dramas. The members, moreover, cooperated appreciatively with the Hollander-Skulnick-Goldsmith troupe in that historic 1924-25 season. The director and 'spiritual leader' of this group was B.J. Goldstein." (Canadian Jewish Year Book, 1940-41. Pp. 166-71)

Leah Rosenberg, mother of Mordecai Richler, provides us with a sketch of her brother, the son of Chassidic rebbe Judah Rosenberg, and his dreams of the Yiddish stage.

"When Isaac arrived in Canada, father once again wanted him to give up his dream of the theatre. An actor for a son was hardly considered a proud asset to a rebbe. There was tension between the two, so Isaac finally went to work in a tailor shop. Gifted Isaac was to earn the magnificent sum of three dollars a week!

"Isaac and Vera soon returned to the theatre. Isaac became the prompter in the Toronto Yiddish theatre, the Lyric, on Agnes Street which later moved to Spadina Avenue. This enabled Isaac and Vera to move out of our home to rooms on University Avenue.

"Eventually Isaac was not content with being a prompter. He began writing, and his first play was produced at the Lyric. I recall that evening vividly. Vera and Chia managed to persuade mother to accompany them to the theatre. She was not told that it was the opening of Isaac's first play. During the intermission Isaac ran to mother and embraced her.

"As theatre prospered, so did Isaac and Vera. By 1919 Isaac's plays were already famous and were performed in outstanding Yiddish theatres in Europe. That year Isaac moved his family to Winnipeg, to the Yiddish theatre there. In 1920 they went to Detroit and finally in 1921 to New York, the North American centre for Yiddish theatre. The most exciting times began: Isaac had arrived. His fame spread, not only as a writer, but as a lyricist. Isaac wrote plays and songs, and Vera performed. Often when an actor failed to appear, Isaac played the part himself. Both enjoyed much popularity during the ensuing years. Pictures of the two appeared on billboards, in restaurants, in newspapers and Jewish homes. They were a husband and wife team who played and sang their way into the hearts of Jews in many American cities.

"In 1932 after several years in New York, Isaac and Vera were at last able to open their own theatre. It was located in the heart of the Jewish district in the Lower East Side near Delancey Street.

"The financial possibility of opening the Clinton Theatre was due to the fact that Isaac and Vera were successfully performing on radio for the 'Saks Furniture Hour,' which remained a popular program for fifteen years. Isaac supplied comedy with his beloved Yiddish characters. Vera became famous as 'the Yiddishe Shiksa.'" (The Errand Runner. Pp.58, 87)

The historian of the Winnipeg Israelite Press remembers the highlights of the Canadian Yiddish theatre,

"It was generally recognized that the best stage in Toronto was to be found in the Standard Theatre at Spadina Avenue and Dundas. Converted to a movie house in 1936, it is now known as the Victory.

"Menasha Skulnick, famous on Broadway in The Flowering Peach and The Fifth Season, opened the first show at the Standard in 1922 when it was built by public donations.

"Muni Wisenfreund, later to achieve fame and fortune on the English stage as Paul Muni; Molly Picon, Luther and Stella Adler all appeared on the stage of the Standard.

"Shakespeare was played in Yiddish, with Boris Thomashewsky once playing King Lear. Jacob Ben Ami split his acting chores at the Standard, where he once played the lead in Lilliom with the Hart House Theatre, where he directed.

"Jacob Caplan's restaurant was the headquarters for the intellectual and bohemian alike.

"The actors across the road were Jacob's best customers. One had a standing order for a bowl of soup which the proprietor delivered personally. One day, Jake, as he was known, located the actor by the sound of his voice when he was unable to find him by other means, and wandered out on stage without noticing the matinee audience. He broke up a love scene with the bowl of soup.

"Many habitués can remember Jake dimming the lights at 2.30 a.m. as a hint for the bull session in the terrace above the restaurant to clear out. Maurice Lesser would then play his violin for the benefit of those who stayed late. Now known as Mickey Lester, he is a radio personality.

"Sammy Sales, then a radio comedian, would get up and send the patrons into howls of laughter with his one-man routine." (Winnipeg, Israelite Press. Sept. 5, 1956)

CHAYELEH GROBER

One of the great developments of modern Jewish history took place in the new Soviet Russia when the anti-Zionist and anti-Hebraist communist movement assumed control of the government and began its persecution of all phases of Judaism.

At that period of civil war and famine a group of high-minded activists from the Zionist universe who had formed a Hebrew theatre, the Habimah, under Nahum Tzemach in Poland, gathered in Moscow in defiance of the regime which was persecuting and suppressing hundreds of thousands of Jews intent on the survival of Judaism and Hebrew.

It was not until the Jewish state was established decades later that world Jewry became excruciatingly aware of the saga of their oppressed fellow Jews.

In the meantime the tiny Moscow group continued in their devotion to the cause of the Hebrew theatre in spite of the persecution by communist zealots, particularly those of the Yevsektzia, the Jewish section of the Communist Party. The continuation of Habimah in the heart of Red Moscow over the years was a miracle, explicable in part by the support of the Russian art director Vachtangov who did not know Hebrew, the language of the plays which he directed, and of Stanislavsky, another Russian friend who put his stamp on the world annals of the theatre.

The group founded by Nahum Tzemach and Chanah Ravina continued their work in Red Russia until 1926 when they were permitted to leave for Europe and Palestine. The free world was able to see the work of Habimah, now become legendary. Even distant Vancouver witnessed the Vardi team in an east end plank floor hall on far out Hastings Street.

Most of the company came to the Holy Land where they reestablished as the star theatre of the Jewish society. Their renascent productions of An-sky's Dybbuk, performed strictly within the Vachtangov tradition, became the classic theatrical rite in Israeli life.

One of the founders of Habimah, Chayeleh Grober (1894-1978), a native of Byalostock who found herself in Russia during the war, joined the Habimah in Moscow. She came to Montreal first in 1928 and settled here in the 1930's. She lived in Canada for forty years as a performer and teacher of the refinements of the acting arts and as a writer on drama.

On the Canadian and American stage she transmitted and helped to perpetuate the refined traditions of Habimah which in fact were far ahead of the crudities of the early generations of the Yiddish theatre.

Jacob Isaac Segal recalled, "I have seen Chayeleh Grober several times with the Habimah ensemble. I have seen her emerge from the whole like a white sailing vessel in a storm, and disappear again in a foggy estuary.

"Vachtangov's interpretation in the Habimah presentation was not particularly close to me; often as distant as the sky; not Jewish, not intimate, not Hebraically translucent; the direction seemed to come from left to right, and I needed to concentrate unnaturally in order to appreciate his wonderfully artistic and fine conception. The Jewish in the Dybbuk did not always respond to Vachtangov's which was always a searching yet firm hand. The art in the work did not feel quite comfortable in an alien dress. That was my impression then; it might have altered if I had lived longer with the theatrical art life of the Habimah. But a certain alienness has lived with me to this day. The static Goyishe hand pulled disturbingly hard on the fence of Jewish dynamism; even though Vachtangov did not lack temperament, sometimes excessively and harshly. The Habimah was a crying need for our people, for it brought an ocean of earnestness, artistic labour, artistic release and love. There was vast effort and initiative, though the effort was unbalanced. But playing together by certain artistically clearly evoked gestures concealed those who were less talented under its generous apron.

"Chayeleh often challenged the apron of the ensemble and showed her originality and differentiation. Her own colour glowed brightly from among the bright harmony of the generality. It was an artistic event. A contour cutting herself from the play, from one of the pillars which supported the entirety; a sharpness shone out from her linguistic expressiveness, from her intonation. The words cut forth as with fiery selectiveness. I remember well the effect of several moments of her silence, of her playing internally, of the hiddenness of her silent limbs, of her shoulders and of her entire body. It was a mystical experience shared by the entire theatre structure. That was no ploy but the weaving of a legendary web. The theatrical of the Habimah acquired the language of the silent and dumb for minutes. Something created a thin bridge over the abyss between life and death, the real and the unreal, the wandering between two universes, two forces which are mutually destructive and awaken in resurrection. The dybbuk element and the ecstasy in the secret of man, in the mystery of the world began to speak in an intelligible language. Like Leivik's Golem during the moments when the Schechinah of the Maharal rests on him, when the tragic and the heroic speak from him with a hidden weeping and with mighty pride within one voice, so the mystical that is in man spoke out from Chayeleh Grober in the simple daily language and the not less mysterious greyness for ever and for ever.

"That was Chayeleh in the communion of the Habimah and in her personal appearances. In these concerts she began to appear and to communicate fully. She came out on the stage her own way.

"Naturally the traces of the Habimah characteristics remained engraved upon her. But they do not strike the major tone. It is only a thin, distant indication which is filled in with the vivacity of her unique performance. She plays, interprets, improvises. But beyond all these forms she paints her song in colour, paints her picture in sound, with a delicate silk brush, as you barely see her do it. The song begins to ring of itself as she lets it sing itself out; it is as if she were standing aside watching with her subtle ear that the tone may not exceed by a fraction.

"As I see her white hands and the play of her fingers I often see the piano keys sending out variations into space. But for the talent of her fingers, it seems her lips could not utter the least syllable. She paints finely lined, Chagallian works of song with a charming humour which caresses and prays and makes life so wonderously light.

"How well Chayeleh knows the folk's song! And because she knows the folk so well she can penetrate it with its song; and because she loves the hidden, the inner, the secret lyrical magic light that shines from the genuine folk song, that love radiates which is the soul of art. As we respond to the invitation of each of her movements to the balcony, to the kitchen where she is doing her washing we are transformed, with all our fashionable vestment and experience, into shtetel men promenading some narrow streets with the echoes of a girl and her wash steeped in love woes and yearning on which no speck of dishonest sentiment has yet fallen.

"Chayeleh not only sings for us but invites us into the inner world of the song in which she has kindled her own candle and in the pains of love which the girl has inspirited her own love and pain; for how else can a true artist transform himself into the object, and the object into himself? The measure of life which is inspired into an object is so concentrated that it conveys the sense of eternity, of what has surpassed the transient within us; the eternal which will endure even when the form of our present life will split off from us as a peel, a kliphah.

"It is therefore difficult to convey the impression of joy we derive, no matter the words we select; they remain darkling, sometimes brighter; but the essense is too refined, too luminous for words; it will be visible only through the subtlest expression as through transparent panes. So the beauty of a poem beats its way past words, and liberates itself from them; so with a true picture; so with Chayeleh's playsong.

"How much beauty of tradition her playsong breathes; how much modesty emanates from gentle white motherly hands blessing the candles as sadly imploring Sabbath faith, invites angels of peace into

Jewish homes; how much we need to thank her for inducing us for a few minutes at least into the integrity and beauty of that world where God's blessing emanated over our childish heads. All of us are virtual agnostics, but Chayeleh comes and consoles us with her artistic breath to exorcise all dybbukim of atheism from us, all the empty winds of the dry sands of radicalism so that for a moment we are all whole and pious and the religion which lives in all of us relights and illumines us."

Art lovers of all cultures were captivated by the graceful exquisite artist as she peopled an empty stage in dramatic solo performance of quiet speech, mild song in her flexible voice breaking into thistledown light dance steps. The slender woman revealed a rare chassidic type who carried her audience away with her somewhere into sublime universes.

When Chayele Grober appeared in Toronto in May 1941 on behalf of the Mobile Kitchen Fund of the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Globe and Mail called her "the Ruth Draper of the Jewish stage." (May 18, 1941)

"During her Canadian years she spread the delicate, richly emotional, subtle, rare art of the Jewish folk song which derived from the simple activities of the day such as cooking or chess; the Chassidic nigunim were created by the rebbes at the table. This Jewish music grew at the work tables, by women at their dressmaking and stitching, men at tailoring. They borrowed from their neighbours wherever they lived, in Russia or Lithuania. It developed in recitative liturgy, the people making answer" (Rose Macdonald, in Toronto Telegram, May 19, 1941)

She wrote two volumes of recollections, Tzu der Groiser Velt (To the Great World) and Mein Veg Alein (My Way Alone). Her Oif Fremder Erd (On Alien Soil) was performed in Melbourne.

For a number of years she led a small group of enthusiastic young people in dramatic sketches. This Yiddish Theatre Group (YTEG) in the Jewish Public Library trained a large school of actors and amateurs and theatre lovers. A significant moment in this cultural life of Montreal Jews developed when she prepared the play, The Divine Ghetto, with stage decorations by Aleksander Bercovitch.

After performing in Canada for a number of years she retired to Israel.

HERTZ GROSBARD

Another great drama person who exerted a powerful influence upon Canadian audiences during many years was Hertz Grosbard who developed the stage interpretation of Yiddish poetry (and some prose) into a remarkable fine art.

It speaks eloquently for the Yiddish cultural spheres of post World War II in Canada, notably centering on the Jewish Public Library then located at Mount Royal and Esplanade (now the annexe Fauteux of the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec), that a rare and refined artist could appear on a stage time after time to read for a whole evening, without accompaniment or commentary, the poetry of a single Yiddish poet. David Bergelson wrote, "Grosbard prays Yiddish literature. He discovers precious values in the poem, reveals them in his implied comment and becomes a senior partner of the poet. Like a modern literary cantor, he points up new depths in the creation, and as the Public Messenger of Prayer conveys them from the audience -- beyond."

The classic Yiddish fabulist Eliezer Steinbarg ascribed to Grosbard,

"The force that is sealed in the Yiddish words,
The charm that is locked in the Yiddish verse,
The tear that is mirrored in a Jewish smile --
You derive them all with the Name that is bewinged."

The very walls of Salle Gésu, Temple Emanuel and McGill's Moyse Hall -- even like the Jewish Public Library -- must have been surprised that Yiddish reverberations made them tremble with unique power and beauty of human expression, to cite Klein.

As the Gazette wrote, "Grosbard -- for the last two decades the flag-waving Canadian patriot-citizen -- remains the private property of the venturesome of four continents who know him as the sole interpreter and recreator of a rare universe. For thousands he reveals the power and the truth and the glory that is modern Yiddish poetry. After you have heard Grosbard, and enjoyed his Steinbarg, you decide to rid yourself of him. You open the volume of poems and try to be your own Grosbard. But you are hooked. For either you will find yourself reading with his inflections -- or it will not come across at all. Surrender: Grosbard has imposed himself upon Yiddish literature."

The literature on Grosbard includes a Klein essay on "The Art of Hertz Grosbard."

"Whoever has not heard Hertz Grosbard reading, reciting, elocuting -- these verbs are but pale descriptions of his performance -- whoever has not heard him rendering from the masterpieces of Yiddish

literature, not seen him flash forth its gems, vivify its printed pages, such a one has not ever really known the power and beauty of human expression.

"Last week I went to listen to this wizard who turns into magic the simplest of words. It was an experience.

"It was with misgiving that I went. Elocution can be such a dire deadly art. A man -- and women are even worse offenders -- gets him upon a stage, a sheaf of papers in his hand, or a burden of books weighing him down, he pauses before the microphone, he surveys his audience, and then -- methodically, relentlessly, he either pursues his listener with a sickening drip of prissiness, or drowns him in a sea of monotony, or seeks to tear him to shreds, passion by ranted passion. One keeps looking at one's watch.

"Not thus Grosbard.

"For Grosbard brings to his recital, over and above a multitude of other talents, one paramount excellence: intelligence. He so studies his text that he himself is woven into its texture. He does not comment upon the selections he includes in his repertoire; his reading is the commentary. As, garbed in formal dress, he moves from reading to reading, pausing a space between the varied selections, he so transforms his manner that it is as if one were watching him go through a special kind of make-up, right upon the state, -- only the make-up is a make-up of personality, of changed articulation, and not of raiment or beard.

"In heavy ponderous voice he announces the title of the piece he is about to read -- you <u>see</u> the bold face capital letters.

"He raises his eyebrows -- you <u>know</u> that what he is reading is in italics.

"Even the commas in his text are somehow expressed.

"Those three significant dots that so frequently appear at the end of literary sentences -- with a gesture, a shrug of the shoulders, a crinkled nose, he pronounces them.

"The result is -- protean. Last week he read about fifteen selections -- and the stage was peopled with over a score of characters, each different from the other, and all owing their existence and personality to the articulation of Grosbard's voice, to his subtle and subdued mimesis.

"And these characters, they were not routine. They hailed from the kingdoms human, animal, vegetable, mineral.

"Yes, he endowed with a personality and a typical mode of expression even the cat in the fable by Steinbarg. That cat, it doesn't simply

meow; it takes all of its sentences -- as Grosbard reads them -- and makes them feline; it me-ollifies the Yiddish language.

"Take his reading of Lutsky's piece about the contents of a cooking pot. Under Grosbard's specially devised mode of reading, these contents, onion and bean and long thin loksh, all are made to speak with accents bean-bold, onion-involved, loksh-like.

"Many can mimic human speech. Grosbard ventriloquizes vegetables.

"His reading is not simply a reading, it is an animation of the inanimate, -- a Disney cartoon in words.

"As one recalls his varied program, -- monologue, dialogue, mass mise-en-scène, fanciful fable and Chassidic tale, exercise in naiveté, nostalgic poem, parody, satire -- one hears him again reciting, intoning, whispering, sneering between the hyphens, weeping, almost-weeping, thundering, confiding, even neighing. (Did you ever hear a horse neigh Yiddish? A talking horse? A horse talking Yiddish with inflections truly equine?) Grosbard does all that; and then, in the next poem, he will show you how a sentence actually dreams.

"To achieve these virtuosities, Grosbard comes admirably endowed. A fine presence; a face wonderfully expressive, it is like some rugged landscape over which cloud and sunshine play hide-and-seek; a resonant voice, agile in transformation; eyes like the ancient mariner's; and above all -- intelligence.

"And these are not simply physical traits; they are, these traits, each of them actors in a cast, directed by Grosbard, obedient to his bidding.

"Hertz Grosbard has been in this country but a short time, and has already given a number of his word-concerts, everywhere bravo'd and encore'd. In Europe he enjoyed a far-flung reputation as a diseur; his performances were rightly considered events.

"Alas, the Jewish audiences of Europe are no more, and Grosbard must perforce seek his auditors upon this continent. I think he ought to be given the widest hearing possible; his is a cultural contribution of the first order.

"Is it necessary to understand Yiddish to appreciate Grosbard? It helps, of course, but it is not essential. I venture to believe that even those totally ignorant of that language may find in his readings much that is at once entertaining and rewarding. For at the very same time that Grosbard is pronouncing Yiddish, he is -- in tone, in gesture in inflection -- communicating speech universal. He converts, by mere reading, Yiddish into an already-understood Esperanto.

"His program, it is to be noted, is chosen with the same intelligence that he brings to his reading. Large portions thereof are pure entertainment -- humour and parody and satire, fun with significance, gaiety that does not evaporate with its laughs. When I consider the wandering lecturers on Jewish humour, peddling, as much too often they do their parcels of vulgarity to Jewish centres, or the Jewish impressarios of skits and revues that bring to the face a blush as red as the borsht they sing, and contrast this fare with that which Grosbard provides -- I am unable printably to complete this sentence.

"Elocutionist? Reader? Diseur? Actor? Grosbard is all of these; he is also, this Grosbard, bard. Bard is he not only in that he brings his own poetic addition to his texts, but bard also in his métier and the manner therof. For he makes real and vivid again the old tradition, that of the bard wandering among the folk, meeting in camp after camp with gathered tribesmen, and there reading to them, reciting before them, tales of tragedy or of high exploit, song of love, epic of enemy resisted, -- the remembered treasures of the heritage.

"Such a bard is in our midst again. Let the tribesmen gather."

The E A V Lexington Educational Audio Visual Inc. of Pleasantville, N.Y. has issued ten long-playing records, a veritable audio-anthology of Yiddish literature, readings by Hertz Grosbard. It is doubtless the most valuable item of Jewish audio-Canadiana. These records which perpetuate his art bear witness to Grosbard's talent to express the poet's intent no less finely and richly than the writer's.

In these "volumes" Canada is represented by J.I. Segal.

The chronology of the Yiddish theatre becomes complex at this point. Between the wars the Yiddish stage in North America becomes, on the one hand, richer and more sophisticated, possessed of a more numerous audience. On the other hand it becomes more assimilated linguistically and culturally, subject to the competition of the Anglo-Saxon and universal theatre. Plainly and in full knowledge North America drops Yiddish in all its applications; it becomes fully unilingual.

The process clearly began at the end of the 1920s; by the end of the 1930s and by the mid-forties it had proceeded far. Largely this decline of Yiddish has been continuing. This vast process has not, in fact, been limited to the New World or even to the Western World. There are strong indices that this decline of Yiddish was as patent in Poland and Roumania, not to say in Russia.

All this except for a remarkable interlude following the six year cataclysm of war.

After the Second World War there arrived in such lands of refuge and restoration as the U.S.A. -- and notably as Canada -- a large number of wartime survivor-refugees and an incalculable mass of talent and

indescribably historic experience, impelled by idealism and by a desire to survive culturally and even ethnically. Yiddish culture was the central instrumentality for these activists who flooded the institutions dedicated to these ends such as the Jewish Public Library, the theatre groups, Yiddish schools, etc. These suddenly bloomed in value and in numbers, and new power resources became evident. Visiting actors and theatrical directors came to Canadian cities to perform and to seek permanent homes here. Poets who were premier figures in Europe established themselves in Montreal and Toronto, published volume after volume which won international Jewish prizes. More than ever before Montreal became a central Yiddish capital. The government of Quebec honoured poet Melech Ravitch at a formal dinner in the provincial pavillion at Expo 67. The Jewish Public Library erected a beautiful structure on Fletcher's Field and was preparing for another in Snowdon, more appropriate in the light of urban development.

Melech Grafstein was a London, Ont., businessman but his beginnings were in the Warsaw Yiddish Peretz world of theatre and press; he never for an hour forgot the makers of that drama at century's beginning. It was therefore natural for him to contribute to the early Montreal and Toronto press. He issued two numbers of Canader Yugnt in Toronto, and later several critical volumes on The Age of Peretz and The Sholem Aleichem Panorama.

Canada even entered the popular Yiddish theatre as a subject as well as a consumer. The producer and playwright Jacob Mestel wrote a musical comedy based on American Jewish folkloric melodies, Fraide Comes to Canada, and presented it before Montreal and Toronto audiences numbering over 5,000. (Mestel. "In Defence of the Production Fraide Comes to Canada, A Reply to an article by Braine Bercovitch," in Freie Arbeiter Shtimme of New York, July 18, 1947)

The monumental Lexicon of the Yiddish Theatre (Warsaw, 1934) was made possible through the participation of Montrealer H. Hershman.

But after two decades of this immigrant flow, the Yiddish impulse suddenly weakened. The older writers passed away. Yiddish became even less the lingua franca of the community and the long trend of its decline of its sixty or seventy years continued its flow.

End of interlude, even as nostalgia came to long and love its past.

All over the country Yiddish courses were set up in universities. Love of Yiddish groups were formed, folk song programs were instituted. In Montreal Dora Wasserman continued the stage education program she initiated with story-telling for children, then with the drama group of the Jewish People's School and more recently with the Sadye Bronfman Centre at the YM/YWHA, veritably one of the important Yiddish theatre companies on the continent.

WINNIPEG

As early as October, 1895, the Winnipeg Jewish community was treated to professional Yiddish theatre when one Madame Annie of New York City, played a two-night stand at the Bijou Theatre. Madame Annie was the star and her two children the supporting actors of the Hebrew Operatic and Dramatic Society. The trio presented Life in Egypt, a piece described in the press as 'a comic operetta.' The newspaper expected that the audience would include 'a large turnout of Jewish and Gentile citizens, as a Hebrew opera is a novelty in the West.' The advance notices announced that the children virtuosi would also present 'a programme of specialties' in song and dance.

Some of Roumania's literally barefoot migrants who settled in more distant Winnipeg, that remarkable, isolated Jewish community that was for many decades an autonomous cultural society on a par with Montreal and New York, may have established a theatre in the west as early as 1904.

A.A. Chiel has reconstructed "the four lively decades of Yiddish drama in Winnipeg. It came to be a regular respite from work-laden weeks during the long and severe winters. Those who recall the glory of the Queen's Theatre of yesteryear say that a night at the Queen's was a combination of a family picnic and a circus. A description out of the early period suggests the Shakespearean theatre pits of Elizabethan England.

"Yiddish drama had its permanent beginning in Winnipeg, in 1904, with the arrival of a semi-professional actor-director, Morris W. Triller. Born in Bucharest, where Yiddish theatre had been flourishing for some years, Triller had had an opportunity to learn theatre craft under the great Yiddish playwright, Abraham Goldfaden. An electrician by trade, Triller was asked by Goldfaden to supervise the lighting effects for some of his plays. Inspired by Goldfaden and fascinated by the theatre, Triller looked for the opportunity to become a full-time actor. In 1899 he and his wife came to New York City. There he worked as an electrician doing lighting effects for Yiddish theatres from time to time.

"In 1903 Triller left New York for Winnipeg where he could pursue his theatre avocation fully while earning a livelihood from his trade. Shortly after his arrival in Winnipeg he produced his first play, Moshiach's Tzeiten by Goldfaden, in which he played the leading role.

"The audience clamoured for more Yiddish drama. To supply this demand Triller organized the Jewish Operatic Company. In this project he was substantially aided by members of the Singerman family, Zena Shore, and A. Nussbaum around whom grew a larger permanent troupe.

"Among the dramas presented by the Jewish Operatic Company during the years which followed were The Greenhorn, The Jewish Hamlet, The Jewish King Lear, Shulamith, Bar Kochba, and The Sacrifice of Isaac. The bill was varied, drawing large audiences. It included tragedies, musical comedies, and variety shows.

"An interest in Yiddish theatre grew, its creators and supporters determined to acquire a permanent home. The chief sponsors were Triller, Hyman Roller, Morris Waisman, and Ben Sheps, all of them members of the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society which had earlier ventured into theatricals for money-making purposes. When in 1907, the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society purchased St. Giles Church on Selkirk Avenue in the heart of the Jewish district, the former church was converted into a theatre. This was the famous Queen's Theatre which became the heart of communal creative endeavour and remained so for more than 35 years. It was from this stage that Moyshe Oysher made his debut on the North American continent. (Jewish Post, March 3, 1966)

Roz Usiskin notes that in that city the Poale Zion established a Yiddish drama group in 1906. The Poale Zion dramatic circle with members from the Zionist Territorialist group produced Bar Kochba, The Destruction of Jerusalem and Shulamith.

When the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society was founded in Winnipeg in 1906 it sponsored a performance of the ancient traditional play The Sale of Joseph in the Edward Hall of the Shaarey Tzedeck Synagogue.

"From 1904 to the early 1940's Yiddish theatre was a vigorous part of Winnipeg's cultural and social life. It helped to develop the literary and cultural tastes of large numbers of people and it fostered a growing movement for amateur theatre."

"In the Queen's it is common to hear soda-water bottles uncorked throughout the performance, usually at the most melodramatic points in the play. It is not at all unusual to hear peanut shells being cracked, apples being crunched. It just isn't nice! After all, not too long before curtain time people had had their full evening meal at home. Is it therefore necessary to pack large family baskets and to trundle them into the theatre?

"Jewish settlers were delighted with the Yiddish theatre and responded wholeheartedly. When they cried with the heroes of the melodramas, they cried for themselves and their own problems. The situations enacted before their eyes were like their own; thus externalized, they became less pressing and less painful. When they laughed uproariously at the antics in the comedies, they were able to forget, at least for a time, their own troubles. Actors and actresses became heroes and heroines whose personal lives were of deep interest to their audiences. Witty stage repartee was long remembered and the songs from popular shows were sung everywhere." (Chiel, Pp.118-20)

TORONTO

In Toronto young crusading journalist William Lyon Mackenzie King, reporting anonymously on the Jewish community in the Mail and Empire of September 25, 1897, noted that "a short time ago an effort was made to establish a Jewish theatre on the corner of York and Richmond Streets, and a troupe of Jewish artists came here from the United States to run for a season. The older Jews, however, did not take much interest in the venture, and the younger did not appreciate Jewish wit or understand the jokes and allusions intended for another older generation. After a few performances the doors were closed."

N. Shemen reports that the Hebrew Choral Society of Toronto performed in Victoria Hall on December 21, 1905. The program included Joseph and His Brethren, Dos Pintele Yid, Merry Chienne, and The Stipnitzer Cantor. Singing classes were held at the Bnai Zion Hall on Wednesdays and Sundays.

The pioneering Zionist association Bnai Zion included in its second annual program on Lag B'omer, April 24, 1905 the first act of Bar Kochba. ("Jewish Life in Toronto, 1905-7", in Canadian Jewish Congress Yiddishe Nayes, June 1962, p. 3)

Early in the century P. Frumharz, one of the founders of the Workmen's Circle, later of the Zionist Territorialists in Toronto, helped to form the Progressive Dramatic Club which presented a spectacle to mark the birthday of Mendele Mocher Seforim.

The Montreal Canadian Jewish Times followed the theatre-goers reactions,

"It is not often that in Toronto an actor is threatened by some of the more sensitive of our people, but such was the fate of Sam Stern, a vaudeville singer who, in the course of his act last week, presented a gentle burlesque on Yiddish opera.

"One afternoon a Jewish gentleman in the audience stood up and called Mr. Stern a liar, adding a few adjectives as emphatic trimmings. Later on another well-known citizen called at the theatre and threatened to make trouble, saying he would prevent Stern from doing his act." (Mar. 11, 1910)

Stephen Speisman notes that "the attempt to open a Yiddish theatre staffed by local performers met with disappointment. For instance, in 1906 a certain Michaelson, who operated an ice cream parlour at Agnes and Elizabeth streets, together with a Mr. Abramov, a self-styled local actor and director who probably made his living by some more practical means, opened a hall for Yiddish performances on Elizabeth Street.

Michaelson and his wife had aspirations as actors and the three became the company. The effort was unsuccessful...

"But things had begun to change. Increasingly there were Jews who had seen Yiddish theatre in the United States or in the larger cities of Eastern Europe. Increasingly, also, there were secularists and those who, while remaining religious, were more tolerant. For the Yiddish theatre served an important psychological function for the Jewish immigrant; it was a place where he could laugh uproariously after a day in the factory, where he could rise out of the indignity of his existence as a rag-picker to heights unattainable outside the fantasy of the stage, where the catharsis of weeping simultaneously over one's own lot and over the tragedy of the fictional character was to be had for ten cents.

"Charles (Chanina) Pasternak, an able entrepreneur who had achieved success through the judicious purchase of properties in and adjacent to the Ward, was the first to see new possibilities for success with Yiddish theatre. When Goel Tzedek moved into its grand new structure in 1906, he purchased the old synagogue at University and Elm and a powerful cultural vehicle in Toronto was born. The People's Theatre, as he named it, drew a few local artists but primarily attracted American touring companies which, for lack of accommodation, had had to perform previously in the Orange Hall on Queen Street, east of Yonge. This was inconvenient to the Ward and consequently performances had been poorly attended. Actually, the People's Theatre did not do well either at first. Perhaps it acquired an unfavourable reputation because its balcony nearly collapsed at one performance and the men in the audience had to hold it up while its occupants made their escape.

"The unpopularity of the People's Theatre was certainly not due to a lack of desire for Yiddish performances. When the local Zionists, in an effort to raise money to refurbish their building, brought Jacob Adler's company from New York in 1909, two thousand local Jews filled Massey Hall.

"Pasternak was quick to capitalize on the situation by joining forces with another enterprising businessman, Simon Rabinowitch, and moving to the former Agnes Street Methodist Church at Agnes and Teraulay in 1909. Renamed the National, after the popular New York Yiddish playhouse of the time, the remodelled church held nine hundred people and, for several weeks following the opening, it was 'packed to the very doors' as family groups flocked to see a Yiddish version of Hamlet." (The Jews of Toronto, A History to 1937. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1979. Pp. 236-38)

A contemporary colour picture of the reconstruction in the Canadian Magazine shows that the first play produced there was Shma Israel by Ossip Dimov. A London newspaper reported that "an excellent company gives regular performances there of all the best known Yiddish plays. The theatre, as regards safety, lighting and ventilation, is

one of the best playhouses in Toronto and can seat an audience of about 1,000. The theatre has had full houses at every performance since its opening night.

B.J. Goldstein noted a resurgence of visiting New York actors to Toronto after 1907. Scarcely a month passed without an important star opening in Ontario. Indeed, American artists have prevented the establishment of a permanent Toronto Jewish stage.

The famed actor Adler was the first to discover the Canadian public in 1908 when he was well received in his role of The Merchant of Venice. Adler was followed by Yuvelier and Prager; Mme. Liptzin performed Gordin's The Orphan, Mirele Efros, and The White Slave. She was followed by Kessler in Gordin's God, Man and Devil and in David Pinsky's Yankel the Smith. The local Zionist groups helped to popularize the Yiddish stage. (Adler, Aug. 8, 1910)

A correspondent of the Canadian Jewish Times reported,

"As a sign of the times and progress of Toronto Jewry, it is interesting to note that it now possesses one of the finest theatres in the city... The new theatre promises to be a great attraction in Toronto, and the repertoire of the company is one that cannot be excelled.

"The building, as regards safety, lighting and ventilation, cannot be beaten in Toronto, to quote a prominent theatrical man in this city. Seating about 1,100, from the opening night it has been packed to the very doors, for when the Jew attends his own theatre, it is a noteworthy fact that he brings the whole family. Mother, father, sister, and even mother-in-law must all come along and share in the enjoyment. Such has been the custom at the Lyric Theatre, for during the opening week two thirds of the audience has been made up of family groups.

"Mr. Joseph Silbert playing 'The Prince of Denmark,' in a version of 'Hamlet,' is an altogether new and interesting conception of the part.

"It is the intention of Mr. Silbert to render all the Jewish classical plays, which are many and varied, and unfortunately, all too little known to the vast majority of Jewish people.

"In conversation with a local rabbi, he observed, however, that he was sorry that Friday nights and Saturdays made no difference in the presentation of the plays. Too much blame must not be attached to the management of the Lyric in this case, for, sorry to say, Friday night and the Saturday matinee seem to draw the biggest crowd. The management of the theatre can hardly be blamed altogether, for, according to them -- and the box office receipts bear out their statement -- without the Sabbath performances, they could not make it pay, and so long as the Jewish public demands such performances, they do not see any reason to withhold these plays from them.

"A noteworthy fact is that Jewish women, strict to go to the Synagogue in the morning, visit the matinee in the afternoon. Too much effort cannot be devoted to doing away with this practice, and it is to be hoped that the time will come when Jewish Toronto, at any rate, will frown upon theatre-going on the Sabbath."

"This theatre at University and Elm streets was sponsored by the Michaelsons, candy store proprietors and actors.

"The National Theatre, on whose site the Ford Hotel now stands, was also devoted to Jewish-language plays."

For the anti-Semitic La Vérité of Quebec the Canadian Yiddish theatre was an index of flourishing Jewish communities. The editor cited the Teraulay St. theatre of Toronto as a prime example. (May 29, 1909)

On October 29, 1909 the Jewish Times reported "the largest gathering of Jewish people that ever took place in Canada, assembled at Massey Hall on Wednesday night, when Jacob Adler and company presented The Stranger, before an audience of over 2,000 people. The play is by the late Jacob Gordin, and was put on here under the auspices of the United Zionists, and great credit is due to Mr. B. Stone (chairman), and Messrs. Cash, Ram and Korotkin, who had the arrangements in hand. About $350 was realized from the play."

A year later the Canadian Jewish Times wrote of "a contract that has been closed in the office of Mr. Louis M. Singer between Messrs. Pasternak and Rabinowitch, and Edwin A. Relkin, of the first Yiddish Theatrical Exchange, located on Agnes, corner Terauley streets, for the season of 1910-1911. Mr. Relkin has engaged the best New York Yiddish theatrical company and the theatre will be known as 'Edwin A. Relkin's Lyric Theatre.' The season commences September 9, and the temporary local manager is Mr. M. Oser Glickman."

"Littman managed the theatre for two years, during which he assembled one of the finest Yiddish theatrical companies on the continent. Indeed, the Toronto company played Cleveland, St. Louis, Chicago and Detroit, and even performed regularly in New York. After he was persuaded to leave for Detroit, however, a steady decline set in by the mid-thirties.

"The demise of the Standard did not eliminate Yiddish performances in Toronto. Touring companies still played at public facilities such as Massey Hall, or at Alhambra Hall on Spadina Avenue. These, however, were invariably sponsored by local organizations in fund-raising efforts." (Pp. 238-39)

The correspondent of the Montreal Adler reported from Toronto that "In the past good New York theatre companies had visited Montreal even during times of depression. Recently this has ceased."

B. Tomashewsky had visited Toronto and D. Kessler is scheduled to do so."

David Kessler had played Toronto in vulgar plays in the Lyric Theatre, Lot's Daughters and Isaac's Sacrifice. (Adler, May 30, 1909)

Jacob Silbert opened at the Lyric Theatre in Toronto on May 4 with a number of plays: Money, Pride and Family, The Green Mother, or The Gentle Heart, Uriel Acosta, Luria Brothers by Gordin and The Yeshiva Student, (Adler, May 5, 1909) and in Gordin's Meturaf (The Insane Man) and in David's Fiddle. (Ibid., June 1909)

The Subitz of Toronto also played in Montreal under Mitnick. (Apr. 26, 1909)

Mitnick of Montreal was managing the Lyric Theatre in Toronto, starring Silbert in several plays in May 1909. Among the plays: Sholem Asch' The God of Vengeance, The Jewish King Lear, and The Coquette by Shmulevitch. (Ibid., May 13, 1909)

Speisman continues his Toronto report, "The new impressarios, however, realized shortly that the only visible means of continuing was to lease the theatre to American managers. Soon renamed the Lyric, the theatre became the site of a variety of productions during the next decade, including the New York Yiddish Opera and what the Jewish Times called 'the better class of Yiddish dramas...' The three weekly performances in the season between September and May attracted almost capacity audiences, but the frequency with which the lease changed hands suggests that Yiddish theatre was not a profitable concern in Toronto.

"There was still competition. The really famous New York troupes of Jacob Adler, Boris Tomashewsky (b. 1866) who may have organized the first Yiddish plays in America, David Kessler and others, who would perform plays by Ibsen and shakespeare, came usually to Massey Hall and not to the Lyric, when sponsored by the Zionists in efforts to raise money for the proposed new headquarters or for colonists in Palestine. The fault was that although Toronto Jews were served well in the theatre, local talent never had the opportunity to develop. Although a few aspiring local actors did succeed in joining the company, most of the group continued to be professionals from New York.

"Performances at the Lyric took place Friday and Saturday evenings and Saturday afternoons, much to the consternation of the orthodox, many of whom objected to the theatre as an irreverent pastime. Some of the religious element would attend Saturday evenings after the Sabbath, but the extreme orthodox would not enter the building. Indeed, the strictest congregations expelled members for attending the theatre or at least deprived them of the privilege of leading services. On the other hand the more acculturated orthodox congregations, Goel

Tzedek for instance, were not above holding benefit performances at the Lyric."

Weissman, Auerbach and Litman advertised that the Lyric Theatre on Agnes and Terauley streets were playing on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings, under the supervision of Ram and Brown.

Ha'Ivri Hatzair of Toronto was running a concert with readings from Hebrew writers including those of Toronto. (Adler, Mar. 22, 1917)

Speisman continues his report,

"By the early 1920s, the Ward was no longer sufficiently Jewish to warrant continued operation of the Lyric, the management having been reduced to renting the theatre for boxing matches on Thursday evenings. But even before it closed, plans were afoot to build a new Yiddish theatre on Spadina Avenue. The sponsoring group included some of those involved in the Lyric -- Pasternak, and Isidore Axler, a bright young entrepreneur. The projected new Standard Theatre was to be the first in Canada actually built as a Yiddish playhouse and it would accommodate twelved hundred people.

"From the time of its opening in August 1922, the Standard was a success, due in large measure to the perspicacity of Abraham Littman, who assumed the position of manager. Abe Littman was no stranger to Toronto; for a brief period in 1912 he had taken over the Lyric and his tenure was one of its few profitable periods. He had since returned to Brooklyn, but just prior to the opening of the Standard had been recalled to the Lyric and was in the process of turning the tide again."

In Toronto actor Goldstein used a real sword in a duel with actor Goldberg and inflicted serious injuries on him in the play The Wise King. (Ibid., Aug. 10, 1909)

THE WORKERS AS PHILANTHROPISTS

The established society of Montreal which had adopted philanthropy as its work and creed was surprised in the spring of 1908 at a reversal of roles when the young Jewish working men adopted aid to the suffering poor as their major program.

In making this confusing discovery Montreal Jews were, in effect, learning about the unique character of the Jewish labour civilization developing in North America -- and in Israel. It was a society whose perspectives reached infinitely beyond mere bread and butter.

The Jewish Times explained the phenomenon by referring it to the religious tradition, ignoring the fact that it was not the synagogues that initiated the People's Kitchen; nor for that matter the Baron de Hirsch Institute and its subsequent network of establishment philanthropy.

Nor did the Jewish Times foresee the social and political role which the same "young Jewish working men" would soon be playing in the Canadian community and far beyond the Dominion when it wrote editorially,

"It has fallen alone to the lot of a number of Jewish young workingmen, above all the other elements of our Montreal population, to come forward to the immediate relief of the army of the workless, who are suffering great hardships during these winter months, more than in previous seasons.

"We refer to the People's Kitchen (Volkskueche) that has been opened at No. 10 Ontario street east, where poor men and women may obtain a solid, comforting meal for five cents; or for nothing at all, when they have nothing.

"The place owes its existence exclusively to the energetic exertions of our workingmen brethren, to whom we Jews generally feel indebted for demonstrating to the world that we know how to make that great racial trait of ours, charity, effective even amongst our Christian neighbours. For it is a patent fact that of the hundreds of the hungry who flock daily to avail themselves of the bounty of the soup kitchen, fully ninety per cent are non-Jews.

"But what is of the utmost importance to us here, and of far-reaching significance, is the fact that the promoters of that laudable charity, as all the rest of its active spirits, are almost without exception of the class known as the Social Progressive Party. These young men and women of our blood are out of sympathy with all our most cherished traditions and beliefs; they would fain persuade themselves that they are Jews by the merest accident of birth, Jews for whom Judaism is an empty letter, without a past, without a future.

"Yet while they imagine themselves apart, they are still unconsciously part of us. Once more it is proven to us that, for better or for worse, the Jew cannot get away from himself. Even as the dejudaized or Christianized Jew has in spite of himself to bear his share of that eternal Judenschmerz, so must he also inevitably retain with him all that is good and noble in the race.

"At No. 10 Ontario street the miserable people who are compelled to seek relief there are not handled like so many cattle. They are not being shouted at or buffeted about, as is so very generally the case at the doors of organized charity. The poor men are being spoken to in the kindliest and softest accents; all the time they are there they are being looked after with a solicitousness as if they were so many tender little children. 'Would they have more soup?' 'Could they eat more bread?' 'Is the tea nice?' These are the questions put to them with a kind concern by the volunteer officials and attendants present.

"'I'll never forget you, sir; I'll never forget this kindness,' said one strong, middle-aged man, passing the manager, on his way to the exit, after rising from his meal. There was an earnestness in the man's voice and looks that made one feel with him. He was a Montreal-born man, and he had never before put in such a hard winter.

"A couple of young women, each with a child in her arms, happened to find their way to the Soup Kitchen the same evening, to seek relief. They were received with warmth, and every one hastened to do the honours.

"It would be altogether impossible to exaggerate the spirit that animates the workers in behalf of the Soup Kitchen. It is a study to spend an hour there any evening or forenoon.

"It might be remarked also that the food is Kosher.

"Some interesting items may be gleaned from a look over the balance sheet, brought up to Feb. 15. The number of meals served since the inception of the Kitchen, merely a fortnight from the date given, stands at 2,223, and out of that number 556 have been given away free, the loss incurred thereby being $32.71." (March 7, 1908)

THE LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT

When the Jewish Times was barely two years old it had occasion to report on a mysterious Yiddish competitor.

"A jargon paper, printed in New York but dated at Montreal and sent here for distribution has made its appearance. We cannot say that it is any addition to Canadian journalism, for there is nothing Canadian about it but the date line, and that is not a truth. Another thing which is not in accordance with fact is the statement that it is the only Jewish paper published in Canada. As it is not published in Canada and does not comply with the law of Canada governing newspaper publications, the publishers are in a curious position both legally and morally, as they may discover to their cost some fine day. Benevolence, or some other object may have prompted the issue of the paper to Yiddish readers in Montreal, for certainly there is not much money to be made out of them." (Nov. 24, 1899)

This unidentified publication was another precursor of the great Yiddish press of the nation.

In 1906 or 1907, A.B. Bennett recalled forty years later, "Yiddish journalism in Canada was decidedly embryonic. I saw an interesting example of it in a weekly leaflet produced by a printer in Toronto, chronicling events in two dialects: one purporting to be Yiddish, the other honouring the chaste idiom of Ostrovce English." ("H. Wolofsky -- Keeper of the Public Conscience," in Canadian Jewish Chronicle, Nov. 8, 1946)

Born in Byalostock in 1860, Abraham Leon Kaplansky received the traditional melamed and cheder education and attended the Jewish commercial school in Warsaw. Some members of his family were printers, and young Kaplansky was long interested in the craft.

He crossed the Atlantic and settled in the U.S.A. as an agent for a shipping company for a short time before settling in Montreal in 1885 when he had occasion to pursue an absconding ticket agent to the Canadian metropolis.

He brought a printing press to this city and began by making rubber stamps. Then he acquired a hand machine, ordered Jewish type and opened the first Jewish printery in Canada. Later he bought much more type and expanded his shop.

Even with the mounting immigrant population there was little demand for any Jewish printing, even business cards, bills, etc. One of the most prominent merchants in the city denied that he needed cards, "If I write my address on a piece of paper, the woman find her way to

us." But eventually Kaplansky secured the patronage of such firms as Ogilvie's.

At this time he decided to publish a Jewish periodical and even set type for an issue of Die Licht, ("Light") as it was to be called. But he did not secure any advertisements and, after keeping the type for nine months, he scattered it.

Writing of Kaplansky's 1897 effort to issue a Yiddish periodical in Montreal, A.L. Mandelbaum (1885-1952) remarked, "although the Jewish community was very small, there was no lack of writers. There were many kindhearted residents who were prepared to submit their writings, but what the hopeful publisher lacked was advertising." (Pinchus, nom de plume of Mandelbaum, "Die Yiddishe Presse in Canada," in Adler, Aug. 8, 1915. C.L. Fox identified the author behind the nom de plume.)

Fox reports that Kaplansky imported the first Jewish type to Montreal in 1895 to print Yiddish election posters for the elections of that year.

In July 1897 Kaplansky put out an early Canadian Jewish imprint, a souvenir pamphlet of the 8th annual meeting of American Reform rabbis convened in Montreal. The pamphlet notes that it was "printed by A.L. Kaplansky, the only Jewish printer in Canada...who has produced satisfactory work for all Jewish synagogues amd societies in Montreal as well as for synagogues in Halifax and in Winnipeg."

B.G. Sack calls the convention the first Jewish national assembly in the dominion.

Among other early samples of his work was an invitation to the circumcision of his son William, born in 1899.

Years later he wondered whether there was a need for a Jewish paper then "but I certainly would have had readers. If but one Jew would have bought a paper, ten would have read it," he told Sack in May 1930.

Kaplansky became associated with immigration work, legal aid and other welfare activities of the Baron de Hirsch Institute.

In 1910 the Adler announced that the Rev. Kaplansky would officiate over the Passover services at the Bnai Jacob Synagogue. The newspaper also carried the musical score of his composition for the folkloric "Adir Bimluchah" of the seder ritual (Apr. 22, 1910), one of the earlier Canadian Jewish musical creations.

Josph Cohen, K.C., M.L.A., addressing a testimonial meeting for Kaplansky said,

"We in the forefront of public affairs, bearing the brunt of blows aimed at Montreal Jewry and facing hostile representatives of counties

and constituencies, thank Mr. Kaplansky for the good name he has brought to local Jewish citizens.

"Kaplansky was a director of the Dominion executive of the Prisoners' Aid and Welfare Association, officially visits the St. Vincent de Paul Penitentiary, Bordeaux Jail, Kingston Penitentiary and Dorchester Penitentiary, New Brunswick." (Canadian Jewish Chronicle, Jan. 12, 1934)

Years later Kaplansky recalled the small Jewish community where only a few were truly wealthy, such as Bernard Boas, founder and long time president of Temple Emanuel, the de Solas, Josephs, Lazarus Cohen, Kellert, Kortosk and Levinson.

The division between Downtown and Uptown had not yet developed. All residents felt free to attend Jewish weddings in the community. Temple members and the Portuguese kept apart, the latter largely because they knew less Yiddish.

There were only two Jewish doctors; Max Lauterman was the first to graduate from McGill in 1895; a year later Regina Lande became the first woman to graduate in Canada when she was awarded the degree by Bishops' College. There were three Jewish butchers, and a Christian who sold kosher meat under Jewish supervision. (B.G. Sack, "A Page of Montreal Jewish History," in Adler, May 22, 1930)

Kaplansky died in Montreal in 1939. Saul Hayes, one of the pillars of Canadian Jewry during the middle of the twentieth century, was a grandson.

Soon after P. Frumharz reached Toronto in 1906 he was apprenticed to Wolfe the first Jewish printer in the city, at Queen and Dundas streets. There was no Jewish linotype machine, but before elections they put out papers filled with advertisements.

The Yiddish silence of this generation may be misleading. They found a voice in the Jewish press of the continent, and in their own newspaper, they spoke with a sophistication and a practical wisdom which indicated that it was not a newcomer to the public and social scene.

In spite of these tentative efforts in Yiddish, the Jewish Times remained for a full decade the only journalistic expression of Canadian Jewry, and this in English. But the magic of nascent Yiddish journalism was beginning to operate in Montreal by 1905.

Bennett noticed that "Yiddish journalism fared rather badly everywhere save in New York.

"In that metropolis the Jewish community was massive, compact and, in a large measure, autarchic. It comprised a variety of segments, many of them civilizationally as well as culturally self-sufficient, possessing

the basic attributes of complete milieux. In it there was a distinctive economy -- a Jewish industry, a Jewish labour movement, a Jewish commercial pattern, and within its social framework, there flourished a literature and a theatre worthy of the genius of the constituent population.

"In the provincial centres, even the large ones, such as Chicago, Philadelphia or Los Angeles, the Jewish element was comparatively small and lacked the pervasive integrality needed for sustained, dynamic self-expression.

"Large portions of the Jewish communities in those cities, to be sure, still employed the Yiddish tongue as their medium of communication. But the areas of concern in which the Yiddish idiom was dominant were too limited in range and kinetic pressure to furnish the soil for a significant literature, or even, journalistic effort, in the Yiddish language. Yiddish dailies did exist in several of the major provincial communities -- the Jewish Courier in Chicago, the Yiddishe Welt in Philadelphia, among others -- but they were decidedly 'small-townish' in quality and appeal. The Yiddish readers in those cities, as in every other community, looked to the New York publications for broad news service and for the publicistic and literary offerings of big-name contributors." ("The Eagle" in Jewish Standard, July 1, 1967)

The year 1907 witnessed a great event in Jewish journalism -- indeed in Jewish history on the western hemisphere -- in the founding in Montreal of the Yiddish Canader Adler (Canadian Eagle)

THE EAGLE'S HERO

The unquestionable hero of Canadian Yiddish publishing was Hirsch Wolofsky (1878-1949) who fulfilled the social function of this press on the North American continent more effectively and for a longer period than anyone else outside New York.

The manageably smaller scale of the Canadian city helped him achieve his end as publisher in the community as even Ab Kahan of the New York Forward could not do for the totality of American Jewry. On the Canadian scene, where the Yiddish press had better fortune, neither Mark Selchen of the Israelite Press of Winnipeg nor the Daily Hebrew Journal of Toronto could match the Montreal daily of Wolofsky and, later, of Israel Rabinovitch.

Wolofsky came to Canada from Warsaw and Lodz in 1900 to join his brother, Aaron, an insurance man. He came alone; his wife Sarah (née Bercovitch), joined him a year later. His first occupation in Montreal was as a fruit dealer.

Mrs. Sarah Wolofsky (1880-1941) was born in Pavianitz, Poland. She passed away in the Jewish General Hospital on May 7, 1941, survived by three sisters as well as her children and grandchildren. (Obituaries, Montreal Star, May 7, 1941 and Gazette, May 8, 1941)

Philip (Felix) Wolofsky, the eldest son of Hirsch Wolofsky, was brought to Canada at the age of six months.

Philip (1901-47) graduated from Montreal High School, where one of his friends was Dov Joseph. During the First World War both of them enlisted in the Jewish Legion. While serving in Egypt he acquired encephalitis and later Parkinson's disease. With the coming of peace Joseph settled in Palestine and quickly became one of the political leaders of Palestinian Jewry.

Another of their Canadian friends in the Legion, Leon Cheifetz, returned to Montreal where he assumed leadership positions in the Canadian Poale Zion; he served as city editor of the Adler for many years. Later he returned to Israel and administered the veterans' Beth Hagdudim at Avichail. Young Philip Wolofsky remained office manager of his father's daily newspaper and of the Canadian Jewish Chronicle to the end of his life.

His other children were Daniel; Sophie, who married Leon D. Cresthol, M.P.; Max; Dinah who died in an accident at the age of seven; Moe (or Moses, or Bill Walsh) and Sholem (or Saul or Sam), labour activists, and Miriam, the wife of a doctor who, as a child, had been one of the orphans brought to Canada after the First World War by H.

Hershman and by his associates Dr. F. Leavitt and Mrs. Lillian Freiman.

Hirsch Wolofsky was succeeded as managing editor of the Adler by his sons Daniel (1947-1956) and Max (1956-1967). Max Wolofsky was a graduate of McGill University ('25) and held the Ll.B. degree from St. Lawrence University ('28). He practised law in New York City from 1930-1947)

After his visit to Israel in 1954 he published his impressions under the title, "And the Desert shall Blossom like a Garden" (40 p.)

AN EAGLET IS BORN

Shidlowitz-born Zvi Hirsch Wolofsky (1878-1949) founded the Adler together with several partners, aided at one time by loans from Mortimer Davis. But he soon became the sole owner and managed it to his last days with great energy as a commercial undertaking as well as an instrument of expression and combat for ideas and for a philosophy-based way of life which were very dear to him and to the Yiddish-speaking immigrant society.

A.B. Bennett, historian of the early Jewish migration whose life span of community observation and leadership paralleled the annals of the Yiddish newspaper, later recorded his memories of the founding of the Adler as it registered in his mind while a youth in Kingston,

"As a fledgling, it had limited its soaring performances to a single effort, once a week. After a while, as its wings had gained strength, it launched its flights on a daily schedule, and performed at this frequency until its ebbing vitality forced it to confine its activities to three appearances a week.

"By a coincidence I happen to have been in the know about the expected materialization of the aviary entity for some little time prior to its emergence from its hatching egg.

"I was then living in Kingston. The more intelligent members of the small community managed to keep in touch with the outside Jewish world by subscribing to the Yiddish newspapers appearing in New York. The economic principles governing these journalistic enterprises seemed to call for the maintenance of a staff of 'reisende agenten,' or travelling representatives, whose business it was to make periodic visits to the scattered communities and look after the fiscal arrangements as between the subscribers, old and new, and the publishers in New York. My father was a reader of the Yiddishe Velt, published and edited by the great Jewish tribune, Zvi Hirsch Masliansky. The accredited emissary of this journal was a Mr. Willansky of Montreal.

"Now, I recall an evening when Mr. Willansky, presumably after a hard day's work, had chosen to spend a few relaxing hours at my parents' home, sipping tea and engaging in pleasant conversation about current topics in the realm of Jewish affairs. My father, an avid reader of the Yiddish press, was eager to get some inside information about the lustrous personages whose wit and wisdom had illumined the pages of his favourite publications. He plied his guest with questions about Leon Zolotkoff, 'Prof.' Getzel Zelikovitz, Tashrak, Morris Rosenfeld, Yehoash, A. Tanenbaum, M. Seifert and others whose names adorned the columns of the journals that claimed his readership.

"Mr. Willansky was generous in dispensing oddments of information about the notables in question. Tashrak, the great humorist, creator of the 'Chayim the Custom Peddler' and 'Joe the Waiter' series, was a deformed little hunchback. Getzel Zelikovitz had been interpreter in General Gordon's army in Khartoum, and was reputed, for some reason or other, to have been obliged to flee for his life. Report also had it that for a short time he had delivered some lectures in Temple University; hence his never-failing title of 'professor.' Leon Zolotkoff, editor of the Velt, was in reality a lawyer with some professional experience in Chicago. John Palay, editor of the Tageblatt, the Orthodox organ, had, according to whispered rumour, been guilty, at one time, of a bit of apostasy.

"In the course of these literary conversations Mr. Willansky vouchsafed the information that he and a group of associates had made plans and preparations for the early appearance, in Montreal, of a new Yiddish publication. The proposition had gone beyond the stage of mere wishing or hoping. The necessary steps had been completed for the definite launching of the proposed journal.

"He informed us in a sort of confidential whisper that he, together with a group of Montreal entrepreneurs, were planning to start a paper of their own in Montreal... They would get some good stars to make the Canadian venture worthwhile. Besides, there is something about the atmosphere of a 'redakzie' (editorial office) which creates a halo around the head of anyone associated with its enterprise.

"He mentioned then the connnection with the project of Mr. Wolofsky. We in Kingston had met Mr. Wolofsky before. He had functioned once on the occasion of the High Holy Days, when the congregation happened to be without a regular official, as the 'ba'al tefilah' pro tem.

"In due course, not long after Willansky's visit, the Kanader Adler came into this world, a bird of good omen." (Jewish Standard, July 1, 1967)

Even as Wolofsky was planning his historic initiative, in 1907 a Mr. Hyman of the strict orthodox began issuing a weekly by the name of Yiddisher Shtern (the Jewish Star).

Later Bennett wrote,

"In Montreal, the local product, the Kanader Adler, in the pre-Brainin era, could by no stretch of the imagination be considered to have been an outstanding success. It was fortunate to have at its helm so brilliant and devoted a leader as was H. Wolofsky.

"Several other gentlemen were associated with Mr. Wolofsky in the ownership of the paper... but the major backing was supplied by a wealthy real estate operator, Carl Rosenberg. However the brains of the enterprise were furnished by the rare little man, Hirsch Wolofsky.

"I got to know Wolofsky rather intimately in later years, through my association with Brainin.

"Wolofsky loved the game for itself. As a matter of fact, through the years he developed quite a style of his own and wrote many interesting and perceptive articles and columns for his own paper. He was a good judge of writers and writing, and always strove to get the best possible material obtainable within the limitations of his budgetary capabilities."

In his memoirs Wolofsky recalls that early in 1907 rumour had it that the government planned to impose a tax on foreign papers. This impelled him to establish a Yiddish newspaper. He convened some friends on July 1, 1907 and proposed to form a company to this end. (His "Twenty-five Years of the Canadian Jewish Adler" in the 1931 Souvenir Edition of the Adler, Pp. 23-25)

"The historic gathering took place in the home of the late Mr. Willansky who was supposed to be an 'expert' in the publishing business. It later transpired that his experience consisted of pasting the addresses onto the newspapers."

(When the Adler appeared, the first issue carried Willansky's advertisements for his "largest Jewish bookstore in Montreal offering religious books.)

"Seven we were who attended the meeting. Two immediately fell out, their optimism being unequal to the prospects of the paper. The five who remained -- myself, Willansky, Sam Greenfeld, Jacob Lecker, and Sam Sternklar -- decided to contribute a thousand dollars each and, with the capital of five thousand, to proceed to the publication of a journal to be known, in accordance with Rabbi Glazer's suggestion, as The Canadian Jewish Eagle. Within a month, the Adler was a functioning journal, located at 508 St. Lawrence Boulevard, and boasting the first Jewish linotype machine in Canada.

"When I consider to-day what a paltry pittance a sum of five thousand dollars constitutes in the publishing business, I am amazed at the temerity of the five entrepreneurs. We were, as a matter of fact, like tyros, undertaking to swim across a river, little realizing either its width or the perils of its currents. Indeed, apart from Mr. Sternklar, who remained as the last of the Mohicans, none of the other shareholders ever reached the other side of the river.

"And so the first issue was about to appear. We had calculated that the Adler would swoop down upon the world, under the direction of Mr. Aaronson, our first editor, on the seventh of August. But such was the skill and prowess of our first compositor, whom we had imported from New York, that we barely appeared on the thirtieth! When the pages were taken over to The Herald for printing, there wasn't a cent left of the original five thousand dollars. We each had to contribute an additional fifty dollars to meet unexpected expenses.

"It was when I came to the Herald printing presses that my dreams received a terrific shock. There I saw what the machines and the equipment which are required to put out a paper really looked like; when I reflected upon our meager capital I almost gave up in despair.

"It was only an incident, half-comic and half-serious, which made me forget my feeling of hopelessness. For as the machinists took the pages of the Adler off the presses, a peculiar monster appeared. Where the first page should have been, the last page showed its type, and vice versa. No matter how the pressmen worked and manipulated, the topsy-turvy journal could not be set straight. At last I fell upon the secret, 'Where you put your first page of The Herald,' I told the pressmen, 'place the last page of the Adler, and the rest accordingly.' The fledgling Adler thus appeared, correct and proper, orderly and without defect.

"It first appeared on August 30, 1907. Joseph Edelberg on the delivery truck kissed the first papers as if the Yiddish writing was holy writ.

"That first issue of the weekly was snatched up as at a fire-sale. Its reception was enthusiastic; a new spirit entered the community, and we were encouraged to plan a future for the new-born babe."

The first issue consisted of 8 pages, one in English.

In Yiddish the front page carried "Our Program."

"We shall strive indefatigably for Canadian Jewish interests so that Judaism which has maintained our unhappy people throughout the long years of dark exile shall persist here; that our children may be educated in the Hebraic spirit to become an ornament for our people; that Montreal charity institutions become models for all communities; that our people who have suffered beyond comparison from pogroms and persecution may find consolation and aid in our pages; that Canada, this great land with space and resources, may become a new Jewish centre where our wandering brothers in Europe may find liberty and protection.

"The Adler will defend Jewish workers and support just demands from their bosses. Sound Jewish education, national awareness, political independence, unity, genuine charity and universal justice are the basic principles which it will propagandize."

The first page reported on the new unique Quebec legislation which permitted storekeepers who observed the Jewish Sabbath to remain open on Sundays, "a privilege for which Rabbi Glazer had militated." (Canadian Jewish Archives, no. 14)

The United Garment Workers, with quarters in the Labour Temple, were leading a tailors' strike. "Nowhere else are the shops in as sad a condition as in Montreal. Workers operate in cellars and basements

without daylight, from early morning to late at night. Wages are paid at the good will of the employers. They are demanding shorter hours of work and better wages to be paid weekly.

"Several employers have already settled with the union: Montreal Waterproof Co., Vineberg Co., H. Kellert and the contractors with Freedman Co."

The fourth issue, dated September 20, 1907 was written by Editor Michel Aaronson, as Wolofsky later testified.

The journalist happened to be on the street that Kol Nidrei evening when he was surprised to meet up with a group of poor Jewish immigrants carrying their packs to no destination they knew of. No one in Montreal had met them at the train or provided them with shelter.

The reporter led them to a police station, but the sergeant on duty denied any competence in such a case. He then took them to the Roumanian synagogue. (B.G. Sack, "Turning the First Pages of the Adler," in Adler, Sept. 11, 1942)

The early issues speak of a carpenters' local, a tailors' and operators' union, a pressers' union, a ladies' Union local, a pants makers' local and a cutters' union. They describe the library of the Poale Zion party at 847 St. Lawrence.

The United Russian Hebrew Immigrant Society with 695 members had been chartered by the government to assist immigrants.

Rabbi Glazer had founded a Hebrew Free Loan Society within months of his arrival in the city in 1907 in the Austro-Hungarian synagogue, with Leib Solomon as president.

The advertisers included several furniture stores, watchmakers, ticket agents and custom tailors. "The Odessa cantor Meir Rabinovitch and his choir will conduct holy day services at the Laurier Political Club, 54 Main St."

Among the literary contributors were M.E. Levine, author of an early Canadian Jewish book on Education in Jewish Society, and B.G. Sack's sarcastic article on Israel Zangwill and the territorialists.

Since the earliest days of the Adler its medical column, initiated by Dr. Max Wiseman who was the popular dean of medicine in the Jewish society for many decades, functioned as more than the free clinic-by-mail in the intimate language of the immigrants for 23 years.

His successor in 1930, Dr. A. Stilman, formulated the ethical principles of their anonymous relationship with their readers, not least in such areas of intimacy as sex life. To mark the 35th anniversary of the Adler and his twelve years of conducting the section he wrote a

minor classic on this relationship between the doctor and the unnamed patient who never met, in the interests of health and of intelligent self-awareness and balance which will long be worth rereading. (A. Stilman, "The Medical Column" in Adler, Sept. 11, 1942)

There are reports on early synagogues such as Chevra Kadisha, Bnai Jacob, Shaarei Tefilah, and Beth David, and on the Talmud Torah. (I. Medres, "Fifty Years since the First Issue of the Adler" in Adler, Aug. 30, 1957)

Wolofsky recalls "As we perceived after the third issue of the Adler that our finances were fast disappearing, a meeting was held which formally decided that we had had enough of publishing, and that our project should be abandoned. I alone vigorously opposed this decision; in fact, I exonerated my partners from their obligations, and determined to issue the paper myself. For some time, thereafter, I did publish the Adler, but now as a bi-weekly."

During this period Greenfeld and Willansky retired and were replaced by Schwartz and Dr. Stern.

"The beginnings were beset by difficulties, at once amusing and heartbreaking. Hardly had I got into the swing of things, when in five days I discovered that our plant was without gas or electricity; the company had discontinued the service for non-payment. Nor was there a dollar in our bank account to meet the emergency. Moreover, engrossed in the heavy routine of the business, overcome with my own anxieties and the anxieties which Jews gratuitously brought into the office every day, I suddenly lost my speech. I couldn't utter a word. I was rushed to the General Hospital.

"When I heard the doctors' opinion that my speechlessness would last but a couple of hours, I felt much better. Later when I completely recovered, I referred to this period as the one in which our paper was 'powerless, penniless, and speechless.'

"Another indication of the financial hopes entertained for my enterprise was the attitude of the late Jacob Lecker. We required coal at the time, but he insisted that we purchase our requirements by the pail, and not by the ton. He did not think we would last another ton's worth! Our bookkeeper, too, entertained the same optimism. He earned twenty-five dollars a week, but he sold me his whole month's salary for fifty dollars! The following month, of course, impressed either by my energy or the miraculous intervention which seemed to follow me, there was no sale." (Journey of My Life)

The Adler began publishing on Fridays, and then on Tuesdays and Fridays and soon as a daily. (David Dubin in 1932 anniversary issue of the Adler)

Three months later the Adler began to appear as a semi-weekly.

Wolofsky recalls that the Adler had its first quarters in 1907 in a more or less modern building at 508 St. Lawrence. Its later addresses were 516St. Lawrence, then 10 Ontario St. W. and, finally, 4075 St. Lawrence. Soon after Carl Rosenberg built the Eagle Building.

Jews were not only passive tenants of these areas but participated in building them and in introducing advanced styles of construction, he recalls,

"At the time, Mr. Carl Rosenberg was engaged in constructing a new building but two doors away from our office. He proposed to build a place for us, and undertook to finance us to the extent of ten thousand dollars, taking as security my house and all my shares. With this capital I set to publishing a daily again. Mixed feelings take hold of me when I reflect upon my temerity in staking all I had in the world upon a venture of this kind, particularly after the first two inauspicious beginnings..."

As late as January 18, 1910 the Adler referred to Carl Rosenberg as head of the newspaper which he financed for four years, and on August 6, 1915 as having been the financier and the president for five years until December 1913.

"In 1912, after the Adler had been in existence for five years, Montreal witnessed a real estate 'boom'. Our business, too, prospered, until I was able to pay back Mr. Rosenberg his investment, and remained owner of the publication... I sold these shares to S.W. Jacobs, Lyon Cohen, Isidore Rubinstein, Alderman Louis Rubenstein, and to Mortimer B. Davis. The directorate of the company included Wolofsky, president; Lyon Cohen, vice-president; Sternklar, secretary; I. Rubinstein and Alderman Louis Rubinstein.

"The war however, again altered our financial condition, whereupon the late Mortimer B. Davis, still a mere esquire, financed the paper to the extent of fifteen thousand dollars. After a while, he sought to control our editorial policy. When he found this impossible, he not only ceased his help, but threatened to shut down the journal.

"Methods were accordingly adopted to put our business upon more solid foundations. The price of the daily paper was increased to three cents a copy and economies were introduced. Sir Mortimer -- he had already won his title -- was paid off."

"At first a cylinder press was used, and the papers were folded by hand. At the 516 address a Duplex machine was introduced. The pressman, one Graham imported from Battle Creek, Mich., turned out to be a native of bottle creek, and the paper almost failed to appear because of his indisposition.

"As a child Philip Wolofsky's tasks were to wake Graham up, to call for the copy from the Jewish theatre at the Atlantic Palace, to collect want ads as far away as Aqueduct Street, to count the coupons for

the piano contest (the piano had been given in payment for a music house advertisement) and to wash the plates for the printing of the Talmud." ("Recollections of Twenty-five Years with the Adler," in the 1932 Souvenir Edition of the Adler, P. 110; Pinchas, nom de plume of M.A. Mandelbaum. "Di Yiddishe presse in Canada," in Adler, Aug. 8, 1915)

When the Adler was first established M. Glickman of Toronto was listed as its local agent as were M. Aronson of Ottawa and H. Brachman of Winnipeg. (Adler, Nov. 11, 1908)

In March 1909 the Adler maintained an office at 15 Queen St. East in Toronto for a short time. In 1912 the Daily Hebrew Journal began to appear in the Ontario capital. Its later editors included H. Hirsch, Abraham Rhinewine and Samuel Myer Shapiro. Early in January 1915 H. Hirsch was running a serial "Pearls from the Bible" in the Toronto Daily Hebrew Journal which were in effect translations of the Book of Isaiah.

In later years the Adler occupied part of a building at 4075 St. Lawrence Blvd. which became one of the major structures of Canadian Jewish history, the centre of thought, activism, politics and literature of nearly all sectors of the community. The main floor was the unpretentious business office; a mezzanine floor for the editors and, in the basement, an extensive printery for the linotype machines, composition and presses. On the ground floor above the presses was the famed Horn's Restaurant, where coffee drinkers and diners exchanged greetings with all levels of doers and shakers of St. Louis and Laurier and Cartier constituencies, with politicians, unionists, characters, poets, public relations operators, salesmen, tourists, customer peddlers, Hassidim and others who needed Danish pastry and company.

THE VOICE OF THE ADLER

Bennett recalls the dynamics of that process. The younger and more vigorous elements of Montreal's Jewish society had "attended the various grades of school, up to and including the university level, but did not follow the practices of the home in their verbal exercises. They were completely at ease in the vernacular of the street and the school. They were well on the road to qualifying for membership in the Shaar Hashomayim, and the other sancta of Judeo-Canadian purpose and ambition.

"To this community, comprising some thirty or thirty-five thousand persons, enjoying metropolitan prestige on the Canadian scene, Wolofsky addressed his appeal on behalf of his fledgling Adler. What were the probabilities of attracting an adequate clientele to make the venture a success?

"Certainly, nothing but complete indifference could be expected from the socio-religio-economic upper stratum, albeit a goodly proportion of its components were of good Litwak stock. Most of them had definitely outgrown their Yiddish background, and could instrumentalize lingually only with the speech tools of their environment -- English.

"Among the populous strata of the multitude the reading habits and practices were determined largely by the ideological bias of the dominant credos of the diverse discipleships and fellowships.

"The proletarian masses of the needle trades leaned toward the Socialist and quasi-Socialist publications that catered to their occupational interests and prejudices. The religio-nationalist element, eager to maintain contact with Jewish life and thought, found in the New York Yiddish press all the necessary ingredients for a sustaining Jewish diet. News, informative articles, publicistic treatises, essays, poetry and fiction were all served up in satisfying measure to the readership of the Yiddish daily and periodic press. The Montreal Jewish population furnished its quota of subscribers to the Yiddish journalistic output from New York...

"The Jewish population was not as monolithically shaped as it is today. The diverse segmentary divisions, new on the scene, were concerned chiefly with their own demarked spheres of interest and activity, and were seldom aware of an inner thrust toward a unified pattern of communal totality.. The need of an organ of community-wide service, therefore, did not appear compelling to folks taken up with the affairs of their immediate organizational setups." (Jewish Standard, Aug. 1, 1967)

"For awhile the Adler appeared as a weekly, skimming lightly over the landscape, not making any heavy impact on any of the squares or

circles of specialized group interest. Under the shrewd guidance of Wolofsky it probably managed to hit spots of responsive reaction here and there, sufficient to keep its body and soul together. It is conceivable that the small societies and lodges rather relished the scraps of publicity that were tossed their way, tending to magnify the importance of their small-time 'big shots,' and they reciprocated by buying bits of advertising space, on occasion, and getting their printing needs filled in the publication's printing shop.

"After awhile -- I do not recall how long the period was -- the enterprising Mr. Wolofsky found it wise to convert his journal from a weekly to a daily. Apparently he had succeeded in crystalizing a body of readership and generally creating an atmosphere of receptivity, that could be counted on to provide enough circulation and advertising good will to sustain his ambitious venture. The astute publisher used his utmost ingenuity to make his paper as appealing as possible, under the handicap of limited budgetary resources." (The Jewish Standard, Aug. 1, 1967)

On another occasion Wolofsky recalled,

For these new Canadians suddenly cast from the Russian-Rumanian world, shaped by profound religious and humanistic lore -- which was often propagated for motivations not distant from the materialist -- for these men and women thrown into the burgeoning cities of Canada, the Adler was a school and a guide. Like other American Yiddish periodicals, the Adler rose to the challenge of transforming the last migrants from Russia and from Babylon into progressive citizens of the New World. This became its specific raison d'être.

Wolofsky later summarized his achievement,

"Throughout its existence the Adler has been an influence for good in our communal life. Many an institution and many a philanthropic enterprise owes its origins to the movements and support initiated by the Adler. Thus, hardly had a year passed since the founding of the paper, when in 1908, the Adler undertook to launch a campaign for the construction of a new building for the Sanatorium, to replace the utterly inadequate quarters which existed at the time. With the cooperation of Sir Mortimer B. Davis, Mark Workman, and Lyon Cohen, the project was realized. In that year Lyon Cohen was elected president of the Baron de Hirsch Institute, much to the gratification of the needy of the community who knew in him a conscientious and philanthropic soul."

It was to endure as such for over three score years. Its history constitutes its own version of Canadian Jewish culture and of community life.

The Adler was more than the paper which brought news to its readers. It served as a certificate of membership in the Jewish civilization of the young century.

B.G. Sack recalled, "The Adler spoke in his own language to the immigrant, a language he understood, expressing what he felt and thought. It knew how to interpret and to voice these, his feelings." (Sept. 11, 1942)

It was the voice of the immigrant society, heirs to an ancient and colourful culture developed during nearly a millenium in Central Europe, in Poland and in Russia. Those who came to Canada in consequence of a long and complex evolution were of the Yiddish tongue, alien as yet to the Canadian environment, poor, young, ambitious materially and profound ideologically, involved in anti-Czarist and anti-monarchist traditions, labour oriented, resentful of the European persecutions, militants in many revolutions who had played their roles in the vibrant ghetto -- Zionists, atheists, Talmudists, Yiddishists, Hebraists and ideologists of many varieties of prophetic dreams.

Bennett recalled that "in the hectic years of the struggle of the Jewish immigrant masses for orientation in the American environment the role of the Yiddish press was of incalculable importance.

"Hordes of new arrivals, ripped out of familiar contexts of economic, social and intellectual formation, found themselves dumped in an alien milieu. Their resources of experience and apperceptive wisdom were for the most part inapplicable to the challenges of the new world. They thrust themselves into a racking grind, on hostile terms, to eke out their bare sustenance. In the course of time there did evolve certain crystallizations of practice and procedure embodying tentative accommodations of their capacities and dispositions with elementary features of environmental demand. But the rapprochements involved limited areas of contact and superficial aspects of mutuality. Indeed, the relationships thus achieved were shot through with a degrading compromise of basic outlook and sense of values.

"The emergence of the Yiddish press, in fact the entire literary ensemble -- newspapers, poetry, fiction, drama and discursive treatises -- in the midst of the welter of frustrations and inhibitions was a happening of the rarest good fortune. The agglomerate of bewildered people found itself possessed of superior media of articulation framing its jumbled experience in an image of coherent meaning and purposeful significance.

"The Yiddish writers in the daily and periodical press and in the more enduring forms of expression, brought into focus the abiding qualities of Jewish character, nurtured in the intimacies of an age-long saga of spiritually enriching experience, and, with their glow, warmed the hearts of their fumbling generation. Undoubtedly there were latent in the current situation the ingredients and inspiration that make for good literature. But the quality of the productions exceeded normal expectations. It reached the plane of the superlative. And the literature of the unsettled period of adaptative effort was not merely luxuriously decorative. It was vital. It was integral in the processes

of Jewish life, stimulating its potences for characteristic functioning in a new world of strange demands and criteria.

"The observer of the Jewish scene in Canada, traversing the stretch of the formative decades of this century, cannot fail to note and appreciate the influence of the Yiddish press in the shaping of Jewish attitude and sense of purpose in the Canadian milieu. Of course the picture of Jewish communal enterprise and personal participation in environmental interests and activities has changed appreciably. But the conditioning factors are still, in a measure, operative of those adjustments and strivings of the preceding generations of immigrants whose basic syntheses were apprehended and articulated by the servitors of the cult of the Yiddish printed word." (The Jewish Standard, Nov. 15, 1964)

Jacob Wolofsky, son of Philip and grandchild of the founder of the Adler, recalls his grandfather's presence amid friends or family as royal. "He almost always seemed to be holding court. Even when confined to bed by sickness he was surrounded by such leaders of the Federation of Polish Jews in Canada and other community spokesmen as Rabbi Hirshprung, Sender Greenfeld and S. Gold who were listening intently to his conversation. The photographs of the assembly of the Canadian Jewish Congress places him in the centre of the first row. They still exude leadership, dignity and wisdom seventy years after the event.

On a formal occasion Archibald B. Bennett, who himself came to impose a strong stamp upon Canadian Jewish culture, drew a personal sketch of this Yiddish publisher. It is perspicacious of the intercultural process and of the authentic action which reveals the springs and drive in the immigrants' new world,

Bennett's essays provided a fine picture of the struggles and tribulations of the publisher in the first years of the journalist's career.

"He was a pediatrician of rare skill to have succeeded in nursing the delicate infant through its besetting hazards to its robust maturity...

"A keeper of the public conscience and a bearer of communal responsibility (as all Jewish publishers and publicists are supposed to be) he seemed weighted under the load which rested on his shoulders. His mien was suffused with the hoariness of the traditionalist orientation governing his outlook.

"In a way he always appeared older than he was.

"At the same time his nimbleness of mind, his flashing wit and his sense of the humorous in all situations -- often almost puckish in manner -- created an impression of carefree youthfulness. He talked with the intonation of a Chassid, and he thought with the adroitness of a Talmudist, characteristics of an era that stretches a long way

back in our history. But he could play a prank with the zest of a college freshman...

"I first met H. Wolofsky in 1912. I had come to Montreal to edit the Jewish Times (precursor of the Chronicle) as a student's summer chore during the vacation period. In due course I was honored with an invitation to call on Reuben Brainin, the famous Hebrew writer who was gracing the editorial chair of the Adler. My first conference was a bit strenuous for me. I struggled to carry on a conversation in my university German. Everytime I had to pronounce the soft 'g' I conjured up a vision of my German professor, a Scottish Canadian with a degree from Leipsig University who used to open his mouth wide enough to permit us to peer down at his tonsils in his valiant endeavors to pronounce the soft 'g' Leipsig fashion. In the shadow of the towering personality of the editor there hovered the unpretentious little man who occupied the modest position of manager of the paper. (I believe Wolofsky was at that time only the managing director, the late Carl Rosenberg was president, and Sternklar, treasurer -- really only figureheads). I recall that Wolofsky cracked some joke when I was first introduced to him. It was a relief to hear his Polish Yiddish; better even that than the Germanic idiom of the great man. Wolofsky was then a mere stripling of some thirty-six. He wore a little beard which gave him an aspect of solidity. With care his hirsute sprout might by now have flowered into a magnificent growth perhaps even of the proportions of Rabbi Hirsh Cohen's chin pendent. However, he chose to keep it down to vestigal dimensions.

"What impressed me particularly in H. Wolofsky's demeanor at that time was his glowing pride in the quality of his publication, and his intense ambition to maintain it at a high level.

"The advent of the Adler marked a significant advance in the estate of Canadian Jewish journalism. The publishers took pains to make their journal presentable and big-league in tone and style. They imported a succession of big time writers to act as editors.

"Many a time I saw Wolofsky fingering issues of his paper as they rolled off the press with the loving caress of a proud parent fondling his own flesh and blood. He had his troubles keeping his paper afloat. Provincial Yiddish publications were precarious ventures. Most of those that appeared in other cities were anaemic things, filled with copy lifted from other publications. Their outlay for literary material was negligible. The Adler was different. And Wolofsky had to do a lot of manipulating and juggling to make ends meet. But always he insisted on a high literary quality for his Adler. Through the years the Adler remained perched aloft in the exalted plane of literary excellence. Even today, when the supply of journalistic talent is running short, the Adler can boast of an array of distinguished writers on its staff that would do credit to the biggest of the New York dailies. Men like Israel Rabinovitch (the editor), J.J. Segal, the poet, Melech Ravitch, the essayist, and Benjamin Sack, the historian, are topnotchers in Yiddish journalism, and the by-line reporters M.

Ginsburg, and I. Medres, are stars in their field. They do not look like the movie type of newshound, but they do cover their reportorial assignments, quite adequately. I hate to invoke comparison of the Adler with othe provincial dailies that I know. They employ the same dialect; their similarity ends there.

"H. Wolofsky is a man of quick perception and keen judgment.

"There was a humorous vein in him, touched with the sardonic. He could give this idiosyncrasy play in a newspaper where so many of the foibles and peculiarities of human nature come into focus. He wrote humorous articles in a trenchant satirical style in which he heaped ridicule on the pretensions and frailties of people about him.

"His personality is essentially simple. It is grounded in the old country tradition of all-encompassing Jewishness. It has ripened here in the process of harmonizing native qualities with the essential conditions of the new setting.

"To Wolofsky, life in Montreal did not involve a nerve-shocking break in manner or outlook. It did not mean the opening of a new world, terrifying in its challenges, demanding radical readjustments, perhaps crippling in its impact of change. Rather it stretched forth as a vista beyond the horizon of his Polish town, unfamiliar in some ways, but capable of exploration by the guiding rules which had steered his direction in the past.

"In Montreal there was a large intelligent Jewish community. Wolofsky found himself completely at home in it. He had aptitudes and ambitions. He proceeded to apply these to his new environment. He had faith in his categories of values. He did not doubt for a moment that they would work in his new habitat in the Canadian metropolis.

"While in Warsaw he had cherished a desire to embark on a career of newspaper-publisher. If not Warsaw, let Montreal be the scene of his operations. Quite simple. He was a traditionalist; a believer in religion; a disciple of the Zionist cult. Any publication of his would naturally reflect his cardinal credos. A man of practical turn of mind, he would direct his energies to the practical affairs and needs of his immediate surroundings.

"Wolofsky, the man of simple faith in Jewish tradition and destiny, of confidence in his own gifts, the immigrant from Poland, created a newspaper which stands preeminent in its field, and has played a tremendous part in the shaping of the character of the Montreal Jewish community. The Montreal Adler reflected in its makeup, in its biases of interest, in its consistent adherence to the Jewish conservationist tradition, in its treatment of local practical needs, and withal its emphasis on high literary standards in its columns -- the Montreal Adler reflected the fundamental characteristics of the personality of its publishers." ("H. Wolofsky -- Keeper of the Public Conscience", in Canadian Jewish Chronicle, Nov. 8, 1946, Pp. 9, 15)

A.M. Klein summarized the rôle of the Adler,

"With the extraordinary flow of Jewish immigration, there was still felt the lack of a communal life, a congregational solidarity, an organ which should express their concepts of citizenship, their religious and racial individuality. The frequent meetings and gossip sessions which took place in Chenneville Park -- Peanut Park as it was so descriptively called -- were a poor substitute. Even the opportunities afforded by the Sabbath and by festival meetings in the double-parlor synagogues were, perhaps, a satisfaction to the Lord, but not to His servants. The Sunday morning assembly at union headquarters, too, were as yet a thing of the future, and would be facilitated only after this first want was fulfilled -- a Jewish newspaper...

"At long last the Adler mounted from its nest at 508 St. Lawrence Boulevard. By way of symbol of victory, there was placed in the window of the printing plant, the linotype machine which had done it -- the first Jewish linotype in Canada...

"The positions the community won were not with a magic fiat, or a set of prayers. A Jewish public opinion had to be organized, the political issues had to be explained, the sense of citizenship further developed; and here the Adler stood ever on guard. One still recalls the valiant battle it fought on the Jewish School question... In retrospect today, however, that battle assumes importance for the splendid expression of Jewish educational and national principles which found voice in the pages of this journal.

"Nor have the Adler's flights been confined merely to the local and Canadian. In the field of world-wide Jewish culture, the Eagle has to its credit the publication of the first American edition of the Talmud -- a feat which put its press in the same class category as that of Romm and Soncino." (Canadian Jewish Chronicle, Sept. 11, 1942)

On Wolofsky's sixtieth birthday A.M. Klein confessed that he had constantly admired the publisher's dedication to the public weal. "You have bridged the ocean of the Talmud, gave the community a voice through its press, advanced charity and education, contributed to the progress of that miracle in Jewry called unity; even when bodily your nerve and muscle have been shaken by illness, you have remained morally strong and fine in your mind.

"I leave the fullness of my recognition until I shall be 87, and you 120." (Translated from the Yiddish Adler, Sept. 30, 1936)

On the eighth anniversary of the Adler (the Canadian Eagle) editor H. Hirsch, author of Fables, published an unsigned fable "The Fowl and the Eagle" on the failed effort of the chickens in the farmyard who, watching the lofty flight of the eagle, tried to emulate it. Out of breath, each of the poultry sought to explain its failure, but the eagle enunciated the morale: "I watched your beginners' efforts; the secret of your failure, it is clear, lies within you. All may fly, the air

belongs to all. But you are accustomed to search within the dirt and therefore cannot see far, and your effort is therefore vain; for to fly, wings do not suffice; you also need the eagle's distant gaze."

HIS WRITINGS

Wolofky's own writing is of some interest, even though he preferred to make his contribution to Yiddish literature as an editor.

The editor was a major spokesman for the community in important questions such as immigration.

He recalled visiting Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1910 in the company of parliamentarian Bickerdike, M.P. for Montreal-Cartier when the prime minister paid tribute to Jewish initiative in developing Canadian industry. The statesman remembered that before the immigrant businessmen entered the garment industry most Canadians imported their ready-to-wear garments from the United States and other countries. The Jewish manufacturers virtually created the Canadian industry and gave employment to many thousands.

Many years later in 1923 Wolofsky, together with Lyon Cohen and S.W. Jacobs, met with the minister of immigration to plead in behalf of refugee Jews in Roumania. As Wolofsky himself relates, he was a poor spokesman because he burst into tears as he evoked the conditions of European Jews. His associates had to take over the pleading.

The outcome of this interview was historic: the admission of several thousand immigrants, the largest single group of Jewish immigrants before the end of World War II. (Adler, Nov. 23, 1941)

His bilingual pamphlet A Kehillah for Montreal, Outline of a Plan for the Formation of Such a Body, for the organization and administration of a united Judaism in Montreal issued on September 30, 1922, was remarkably far-sighted and well structured. (16 p.)

In controversies such as the formation of the Canadian Jewish Congress, in the school question, in other communal issues, as in his "What is Happening in Outremont? How the Complexion of the Community has Changed". (Canadian Jewish Chronicle, Jan. 17, 1936) or in conflict with Brainin, he showed great sharpness and strength.

In August 1937 Wolofsky issued "Half an Ultimatum to our Jewish Leaders" in which he drew attention to the widely circulated anti-Semitic Key to the Mystery distributed in French as well as in English by Adrien Arcand, Dr. Lambert and their associates. He felt that such propaganda constituted imminent danger to Jews in Canada and should be refuted in the courts of the nation even though substantial risk was involved.

He cited a meeting between a Jewish delegation and "one of the highest leaders of the country, a liberal person who took quite an interest in the problem" of this vicious literature.

Surprisingly, the gentleman nevertheless asked his Jewish friends why all Communist leaders in Russia, including Stalin and Lenin, are Jews. He had read it somewhere, and the lie stuck in his mind.

Wolofsky also remembered James MacDonald, former League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, telling a Jewish assembly at the Montefiore Club that, after spending some time in Hitler's Germany where anti-Semitic propaganda was overwhelming, he felt that he would become infected with these constantly repeated lies if he spent any further time in the Nazi land.

Wolofsky's conclusion: Canadian Jewry must act in the courts to refute this flood of attacks regardless of the immediate results. The opinion of some lawyers available to Congress was to the contrary because Canadian juries might be infiltrated by anti-Semites, but the very airing of the Jews' reputation would eventually clear public opinion, the Jewish editor insisted. "It is the duty of the Jewish lawyers in the Canadian Jewish Congress to bring the anti-Semitic forgers before the bar. If they will not do so, we will undertake to do it with the assistance of understanding Jews. 'We' includes this newspaper who can wait no longer for practical work, and who expects the support of many right-thinking Jews. But we await the response of those whose duty it is to carry out this task. Let this article serve as half an ultimatum to our leaders of the Canadian Jewish Congress." (Adler, Aug. 31, 1937)

This plea from Wolofsky evoked one of the great debates in Jewry of this early Hitler period both in regard to the specific issue which Wolofsky raised but even more significantly about the communal social attitude towards its environing society.

It is possible to present a version of Jewish history of the century based upon the principles underlying this conflictual debate. Much of these discussions in Canada were shaping and forming the Canadian Jewish Congress and the annals of Canadian Jewry during the succeeding five decades.

The issue had deep roots in Canada as elsewhere, and in fact legal action of this character was instituted by Abugov against the publishers of the anti-Semitic press; Maurice Pollock was involved in law cases of this character.

Within a week of Wolofsky's representations, Hananiah Meir Caiserman, one of the founders of the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1919 and in 1934 and its General Secretary, responded to the editor of the Adler in a memorandum.

"Even as Mr. Wolofsky was writing his 'Half an Ultimatum' the Congress was presenting the federal government with specific demands: That the Post Office should not rent postal boxes to anti-Semitic organizations; that the Post Office should refuse to transmit anti-Semitic literature through the mails; that an investigation

should be begun of the activities of the destructive and racial elements which are being sponsored by the Nazi Party, and that the government should enact legislation to penalize those who defame and libel the Jewish people.

"Various persons and organizations were conducting talks with governmental agencies on the same topic."

Mr. Caiserman pointed out the fact that it was the Canadian Jewish Congress that first unmasked the perfidious activities of the Nazis in Canada.

"The problem is constantly on the Congress agenda. Within the limits of its abilities the institution refutes any attack, identifies the attacks and draws public and community attention to the Canadian and foreign organizations at the root of the anti-democratic and anti-Jewish campaign.

"The problem is aggravated by the failure of the community to provide the means of response. If each Jewish citizen, each association, each synagogue, each union local would offer a few pennies for the cause which is at the base of our survival, our victory may come in time."

Caiserman reiterated, "A special meeting of its dominion council is being called within the week, but legal counsel is unanimous against seeking recourse from the courts."

From a hospital bed in 1937 Wolofsky vowed -- and willed -- to commence legal action against the Canadian anti-Semites, the clouds in the thirties who were agitating against Jews. He boldly accused the young Canadian Jewish Congress officers by name of "The Sin of Indifference" in his Adler of October 31, 1937.

A lengthy and interesting response came from one of the fascinating figures in the annals of Canadian Jewry: Michael Garber who presented the case of the founders and of the established leaders of the renewed Congress in its first, pre-Bronfman phase. And to anticipate, he continued as the spokesman of the Congress throughout the Bronfman decades and later even succeeded the industrialist-philanthropist as national president.

But there was another side, or a more profound dimension to Michael Garber, the dissident. Before these eventful years of the 1930's, in his youth, he was already a noted Canadian libertarian, an associate of Reuben Brainin, a leader of Canadian Zionism who had helped depose Clarence de Sola from the presidency of the Zionist federation and a talented Yiddish journalist.

Significantly he remained the unorthodox, dissident, fresh thinker and policy adviser during all his years as the respected leader of the established community.

By 1937 he opens his reply to Wolofsky with a confession that his Yiddish pen had become dulled -- a sad signal from on high as to the threatening fate of the language and culture in Canada.

His response was double. In writing he set out the difficulties and dangers of legal proceedings. He reminded Wolofsky that the national organization had studied the advisability of such action very thoroughly at a number of meetings in Montreal, Kingston and elsewhere, taking cognizance of the situation in Canada and beyond its borders, and concluded against such proceedings.

"The Yiddish press is perused carefully by our enemies, so that it is not advisable to set forth the rationale and the strategy for our conclusions. Suffice to say that in our opinion the atmosphere and the mechanism in our criminal courts are not unconditionally favourable for the type of action which we need to follow.

"Our Quebec committee has inquired from our central division whether they were prepared to institute such a case in Toronto where similar anti-Semitic publications appear; their response was negative. Nor were lawyers alone in reaching this judgment; there were also A.A. Heaps, Rabbi M.N. Eisendrath and A.B. Bennett." (Adler, Oct. 27, 1937)

But Garber also reacted "orally," in a sense that he did intend for the press. Yet it did appear on the same page of the Adler. In character, he had another view of the anti-Semitic condition in Quebec at this time -- this at a time when all others who concerned themselves with the problem, studied it and acted on it felt it was literally vital for the lives of Canadian Jews.

In his view, "the entire anti-Semitic provocation in Canada and particularly in the province of Quebec is totally lacking in significance. It has not as yet touched the Jews materially or morally, for it has no influence. The tumult is confined to the anti-Semitic camp and, on the other hand, to the circles of the Adler."

It was a remarkable opinion. Nor was it an opinion which he kept unuttered. Yet it was the view of the leader of the community and of one of the heads of the Congress.

Indeed, it was a measure of the respect in which he was held that this deeply dissident man was able to head the sub-group which the Congress was at this time, and later the entire Canadian Jewish community.

Wolofsky still being indisposed, his case was taken up by his editor, Israel Rabinovitch who had been following Quebec racism for more than a decade and had indeed presented an important paper on anti-Semitism before the Congress-in-formation in the fall of 1933.

In the same issue which carried Garber's response, Rabinovitch published one of his most eloquent essays, "A Reply to a Reply" in which he set forth the imperative need for the community to place the issue before the tribunals of law and of public affirmation of the truth, regardless of risk and consequences.

Here the editor printed Garber's "oral" perception of the Quebec condition; not necessarily without the president's permission.

To his last months Wolofsky's watchful eyes sought to defend the traditions of the community against all desecration. When the century-old house of worship of the Portuguese was destroyed by its owners in June 1948, Wolofsky wrote, "The former Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue on Cheneville St., the oldest on Canadian soil, has now been destroyed; on the site there will be built... It matters not what will be built there. I only know that the destruction of that building should not have been permitted."

Wolofsky's books, his Journey of My Life, his reportage on Europe and Eretz Israel after the War (1922. 280 p.), and his traditional From the Eternal Well, considerations of contemporary life strung out on the thread of the liturgical reading of the Pentateuch, (1943. 265 p.) situate him in the Yiddish writing of his society.

Readers of his Journey "look upon it as pages out of their own lives. For the story which H. Wolofsky tells is not his personal, or family story as much as a series of snapshots taken along his life journey. They are of unusual interest because his journey is in effect the odyssey of all the Jews of Canada after 1880, the coming of immigrants from Russia, Poland and Roumania, their adaptation to the Canadian life and their creation of a community all its own, with its own traditions, institutions and personalities which is one of the most colourful components of Canada.

"The unique character of Montreal Jewry among the communities on the continent can be ascribed in part to only a few leaders who left the imprint of their persons on the entire group. It so happens that Mr. Wolofsky was the central figure of this unique group so that it is natural to find that the unique character of his Shidlowitz in Poland harmonized with such men as Clarence de Sola, Sir Mortimer Davis, the Freimans, Rabbi Ashinsky, S.W. Jacobs, Peter Bercovitch, Lyon Cohen, Alderman Blumenthal, Reuben Brainin, Rabbi Cohen and such emerging leaders of the community as the Bronfmans, Michael Garber, and A.B. Bennett.

"We read about the Jewish Legion of the last war, the founding of the Adler, the combined old peoples home and orphanage, the Jewish Mayor of Rome and the Montreal City Council, the school question, European pogroms discussed in the Canadian parliament, butchers and shochtim, the printing of the Talmud in Canada and the author's visit to the Kremlin.

"What makes the volume so interesting to read is that the author did not seek to put himself at a distance from his younger years, to see himself sub specie aeternitatis, and to rationalize on some generalized lines the meaning or the direction of the journey of his life. He is still a young man at seventy, vigorous, with his sense of humour and readiness to action as keen as ever. His reminiscences are in the fresh vein of unstilted glimpses into a past of common interest to all. At times he forgets that he is speaking of himself and becomes a historian of institutions referring to himself in the third person.

"Mr. Wolofsky is unusually modest for an autobiographer. He minimizes in many cases his personal contribution to the Canadian community. There is scarcely any reference to his work for the formation of the Canadian Jewish Congress or to its program even though he is one of its respected officers. His pride is perhaps greatest when he speaks of his Adler and of his edition of the Talmud.

"The community is fortunate that the author holds high the value of history and of record, for this book is an invaluable addition to the growing library of Jewish Canadiana. It is an additional good fortune that Mr. Wolofsky has found in Mr. Klein a translator who is sympathetic; their two distinct styles merge into a synthesis which will make this volume one of the proudest on the expanding bookshelf of McGill University's lecturer on Poetry." (Congress Bulletin, Sept. 1946. The original Yiddish text, Mein Lebensreise, Recollections of Half a Century of Jewish Life in the Old and in the New World, was issued by the Adler. Journey of My Life, its English version, was translated from Yiddish by A.M. Klein. The autobiography had appeared serially in the Canadian Jewish Chronicle, March 12-Dec. 17, 1943. H. Wolofsky. "Recollections of Twenty Years of the Adler," in 1927 anniversary issue of Adler. Pp. 4-6)

But there is another body of his writing which is of the greatest interest, yet remains obscure. Much of his contribution to the Adler is pseudonymous and is therefore difficult to ascribe. It is in a peculiar, humorous, oral, rambling form very alien and difficult to translate and evaluate for more modern readers. This style was very common in Canadian journalism at the time, even more in Toronto and in Winnipeg. It is another phase of this culture nearly lost for those who would restore this period of history.

VIVID, LIVELY

From the beginning, the office of the Adler, which was never silent or shut, became an information and organization centre for the workers. It became the meeting place for the exploited; but at the same time a medium for occasional contact with their class antagonists who were also Jewish, who at times were ready to hear the moral and religious pleas of their co-religionists. Access to this instrument inevitably created cooperation with the editorial institution which, consequently, became an independent and influential force.

The appearance of the Adler marked the true beginning not only of Yiddish press but also of a new social reality within the Jewish community.

The internal politics of synagogues, unions, and mutual aid groups were often set in the editor's office. It was there that Mitnick's Yiddish theatre in the Monument National was established, that the election of A. Blumenthal to city council was manipulated and that the People's Kitchen for the hungry was organized. Here the religious Talmud Torah schools were convened and administered, the economics of Kosher food were negotiated and the Va'ad Ho'ir formed for its regulation, that the long battle for separate Jewish schools was waged, that mass support for a Jewish General Hospital was mobilized and that the politically ambitious sought victory at the grass roots.

The attitude of the readers of the Adler was reflected in the call of the striking cloakmakers union to the editor on September 4, 1908,

"Inform the Jews of Montreal about conditions at the Empire Manufacturing Co. We went on strike because we no longer have the strength to bear their inhuman treatment... A family man earned $6 weekly, and was paid only every two weeks, when he was given his wages as if they were charity...

"The bosses apply any means of breaking the strike which any human being would condemn... They have already arrested two strikers, and have issued warrants for three others. No one knows whose turn is next to be dragged to the police station.

"The Adler is a Jewish paper. It is your duty to tell the bosses of the Empire Manufacturing Co.: Stop!"

When the Labour Self-Help Association at mass meetings in the Labour Temple and elsewhere approved the establishment of a cooperative bakery to combat the high price of bread, the purchasers of the shares were told to bring their moneys to the Adler. Mr. A. Blumenthal would then bring the share certificates to their homes. (Adler, Sept. 17, 1908)

As editor Brainin complained to his diary, "My door is open to all comers, from near and far, to each claimant and to each activist, with his problems and his needs. I gave them my efforts and my energies...

"I received a letter from a young man jailed because he had shot at his employer who had failed to pay him his salary for two weeks. The employer was a man of evil repute who had converted from Judaism, deserted his wife who had borne him eight children. The man in prison was a revolutionary who fled from Russia. He had argued that he had shot into the floor to frighten his employer...

"A sixteen-year-old girl was threatened with deportation to Russia for stealing from the dime store where she was working; she had thought that Canada was a free country, where this was permitted." (Diary entries, Apr. 26 and Mar. 23, 1914)

With this bond between spiritual philosopher-journalist and the oppressed clerk it was natural that the newspaper became the resort of workers faced with violence on the picket line outside the Vineberg shop during the 19-week-long strike in January 1914. He rushed by sleigh to the scene of conflict where three policemen who knew not Brainin were in the fray. Only the presence of J.B. Miller who knew the sergeant saved the editor of the Adler from a more intimate education in social science. (B.G. Sack, in Adler, Apr. 11, 1960)

In times of wars the Adler office was the cynosure, with its bulletins from the fronts and from threatened Jewish communities. It was the mobilization and recruiting centre; thence the sons of Wolofsky and of Reuben Brainin and staffman Leon Cheifetz departed for overseas in the uniform of the Jewish Legion.

"When the First World War broke out, the entire population began to crowd about the Adler demanding the latest news. Before each issue they gathered about the editorial offices and the presses, and each copy was seized upon as a treasure. The Jewish population was hungry for new reports from the eastern front where many had all their relatives. Postal and telegraphic communication with their relatives and friends had ceased. The paper began to appear in two editions daily. The newspaper was the only resort." (D. Rome. "Der Kanader Adler", in André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin, eds. La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours, vol. 4. Quebec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1979. Pp. 253-256; Joel Leib Malamut. "The Adler Twenty-five Years Ago" in the 25th anniversary issue of the Adler, 1938. P.44; Israel Rabinovitch. "Fifty Years of the Adler" in 1957 anniversary issue of the Adler. Pp. 6-7; H. Wolofsky. "Twenty-five Years of Kanader Adler" in 1931 anniversary issue of Adler. Pp. 23-25)

The campaign which the Adler launched in his time in December 1915 for the more intensive Jewish education of girls was remarkable.

Historically the community had centred on the schooling of boys and men in chedarim, yeshivot and in circles of adults. The training of girls had been left to mothers in the home.

The revolt in education, largely by secular circles, came into being in part to correct this evil; in Montreal, too, the Jewish National Radical School, the Peretz School and the Jewish People's Schools had this objective. The immigrant tended to entrust their daughters to these schools, reserving their sons for Bar Mitzvah training in the Talmud Torahs. For years the more modern schools had to campaign for an even balance in their enrollment.

"We seldom find a Jewish father who appreciates the value of a national education for his daughters. He may send his sons to cheder but he considers teaching his daughters Yiddish totally unnecessary.

"In the Old World there had been such books as the Tz'enah Ur'enah and the Menorath Hamaor composed for women. But as we deprive our daughters of Jewish education we cannot expect our next generation, our grandchildren to appreciate the very existence of our nation or to prepare to suffer the cost of being Jewish. Our women should fight for equality with their brothers in the Jewish camp, rather than for political equality at the side of the women rebels; that would be an easier battle to win."

S. Percal remembers the arrival of the first shipload of 350 Jewish immigrants after the armistice in 1918. Many did not even have addresses in Canada; others had no means of subsistence; various exclusionist immigration clauses were immediately applied against scores of these searchers for refuge.

"Wolofsky did not wait to be called. He was immediately on the spot, on the dock, in the offices of the uniformed men in authority in the port and in Ottawa, with Caiserman constantly at his side.

"The consultations for their reception, accommodation and approvisionment were constant, always in the offices of the Adler. Clearly the problem was only beginning, and on a national scale.

"The newspaper carried the urgent call. It became a spontaneous national campaign. A house was purchased on Notre Dame St. W. which was for long a home for incoming immigrants. Thus was formed, on a functional foundation, the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society of Canada."

Subsequently in 1918 the Adler published its famous edition of the Babylonian Talmud, a publication which raised the prestige of the Adler, but also brought renown to our city.

In January, 1919 the Montreal Herald wrote,

"One of the singular circumstances due to the war is that it has been found necessary to reproduce the plates for the printing of the Talmud, originally produced in the town of Vilno, Russia.

"The setting of this Talmud originally had taken fifty compositors, twenty-five years, while one thousand authors worked nearly eight hundred years for the contents of this important book.

"To re-set this Talmud anew would take nearly ten years on five linotype machines, and even then it would be very hard to get these five different faces of letters used on the original Talmud. It would take about twenty-five correctors and proof readers to complete this work.

"It was, therefore, found necessary, in order to produce this book, that the original should be reproduced by the means of photo-engraving, and this enormous and large work is now being done by the Eagle Publishing Co. Ltd., publishers of the Jewish Daily Eagle, Montreal, under the auspices of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada.

"The Talmud contains nine thousand pages, size 8 x 14, and it is divided in eighteen volumes. The first volume is finished, and the second volume is in print now. It is estimated that it will take about two years before the whole work is completed. Montreal is the only city in the whole world where this great work is reproduced at present."

The Montreal edition of the classic encyclopaedia of religion, law and of lore was published by the Talmudic Literature Publishers, incorporated under the laws of the State of New York, capitalized stock $250,000.

The Montreal bookbinder, Mr. Rubin, for decades shared the pride of the sacred task with Mr. Wolofsky.

When Vilno, Russia was captured during World War II by the Nazis, the original leaden metal plates from which the Talmud had been printed nearly a century earlier were discovered by the Jewish partisans surviving under the city who used them for ammunition against the Germans. The Talmud was literally turned into bullets, as the Yiddish partisan and classic poet Abraham Sutzkever witnessed and recorded.

LATER ANNIVERSARIES

The 35th birthday of the Adler, in the wartime summer of 1942, befell at the most tragic moment of Hebrew history when Hitler and his German and other murderers were killing millions of Jewish children and their families. J.I. Segal was pouring out his own multiple ancient testamentary lamentations in the Adler, yet felt it necessary to place the historic Montreal anniversary in the tragic context.

"Occasions and anniversaries must go unnoticed, for this is no time for good recollections, but rather for prayer that time may pass rapidly; that the present may soon become a memory to be recalled in more joyful time. Mere survival will be joyful, when we may put up candles recollecting our heavy bitter present years.

"The truth will be more real and other, for as we open our eyes there are vast fields with lit candles. For where are the wandering roads on which hundreds of thousands of our brothers, little sisters and kin have not been extinguished; children that have not seen the world, not looked in its face, not judged it -- the world of men? Beyond and outside this world, they certainly saw much beauty and elevation ahead insofar as they could perceive this sublimity in their innocence, with their complete, fresh child senses. Memories of occasion are shamed at being recalled.

"But we must not concede to the Satan of despair. We must with sheer force overcome him and raise our mourning above his darkness. We must turn the pages of history before his eyes to the pages of consolation and hope.

"The pentateuchal columns of the Sidrot and Parshiot recall the spiritual courage and strength. It is true that we had never met so wild an enemy in our ranging history. Our trust and our faith in salvation will need to become more superhuman strong than ever in the midst of the greatest test in our national life. Out of heavy despair must grow the will to merit redemption. As we are being proved, let us endure the unprecedented test.

"Under these circumstances it is the more essential that we do not divert our eyes from every part, from every corner of the structures which we build wherever we arrive to make the world our home; to the pages which mirror our quotidien life in all the forms and shades in all the lands where Jews planted their packs and bundles to rest on a new shore; always out of the antique Judaism which they bring with them, a new Judaism begins to emerge.

"In each settlement where Jews struck root there had to be a stubborn man who insisted that Jews cannot accept refuge without a Yiddish word, a Jewish press. With such papers the new environment becomes

homelike; a new home is created wherever Jews find rest. On Canadian soil the stubborn Jew turned out to be H. Wolofsky.

"The historian can learn from his bound volumes how a settlement is shaped, acquires body and life, its own language and says its own word, utters its own statement. Throughout its periods in tumult it has had to say and do much. It had much to say to Canada, and Canada had much to say to it, both positive and negative. As in all cases where our life begins to bloom and branch out, where we become visible and noteworthy, large eyes come to exaggerate us and see us as tiny or as boundless.

"As honest citizens we could defend ourselves most honestly, and the Adler has been its strongest advocate. A Jewish newspaper is to a great degree an educator. If Jewish life here has a distinctive shape, it is largely because of the newspaper which guards all its corners." (Adler, Sept. 11, 1942)

On the fiftieth anniversary of the Adler Louis Rosenberg commented that "The Canadian community has been fortunate in its daily Yiddish newspapers. It is no small achievement for a daily Yiddish-language newspaper to be able to celebrate 50 years of continuous publication.

"The great Yiddish and Hebrew daily newspapers which appeared for many years in Russia, Poland and Lithuania, such as Der Haint, Der Moment, Hatzefirah, and Hamelitz no longer exist, and only Hamelitz was able to reach its 50th year of publication. All of them fell victims to the historical events which destroyed organized Jewish life in those communities.

"The Yiddish Express, Yiddisher Journal and Zeit, daily Yiddish newspapers, none of which existed long enough to celebrate their 40th anniversary were published in London during the first half of the 20th century, but not even one daily newspaper in Yiddish is now published in Great Britain.

"In the United States the number of Yiddish daily newspapers dwindled. Those published for some years in Chicago and Philadelphia no longer exist, and there are now only three Yiddish daily newspapers being published in the United States, all of them in New York.

"It is an accomplishment which has not been achieved in London, England; or in any of the cities of Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston in the U.S., all of which have larger Jewish populations than Montreal.

"The Jewish Daily Eagle, or the Canader Adler as it is called in Yiddish, is not only a Jewish newspaper and a newspaper published in Yiddish, but in its scope and field of interest a Canadian newspaper." (Congress Bulletin, Oct., 1957)

S.M. Selchen remarked, "There are today only two Jewish newspapers in the world that are over fifty years old, the Forward in New York and the Canadian Eagle in Montreal.

"Among Jewish newspapers, the mortality rate is much higher for quite obvious reasons. In Eastern Europe, Jewish life in recent decades had no stability, and the disturbance resulted in the continuous appearance of new newspapers. Later all was destroyed by the cruel hands of Hitler on the one hand and Stalin on the other. As far as America is concerned, tremendous changes in Jewish life since the early years of mass immigration occurred, and the newspapers which were created then to serve the immigrant masses failed to adapt themselves to the changes or lost their functions and were themselves lost.

"The American Jewish community today is the greatest in the world and numbers over 5,000,000 souls. It is no wonder then, that at least one daily newspaper there has survived its fiftieth anniversary. But if in the comparatively small Jewish community of Canada, a daily newspaper such as the Canadian Eagle has succeeded in attaining that age and is celebrating now its fiftieth anniversary, and still seems to be rooted deeply in the life of the Montreal Jewish community, this may be truly considered as a real miracle.

"However, miracles, as it is known, no longer happen today unless you prepare the soil for them to enable them to happen in a natural way. And this is actually what happened in the case of the Canadian Eagle.

"The founder and publisher of the newspaper, the late H. Wolofsky, was himself a person dedicated to the cause. He was a public worker and he believed firmly in the mission of his newspaper.

"The newspaper was fortunate in its veteran editor, the well known journalist, Israel Rabinovitch. He maintained in the newspaper a dignified tone and, with his columns and editorials, gave direction to Jewish life in Montreal, the Jewish metropolis in Canada, influencing therewith the entire Jewish life in the country.

"The newspaper was blessed with a fine editorial staff. On this staff were included such prominent Jewish writers as Melech Ravitch; the Jewish learned historian, B.G. Sack; some talented journalists such as our old friend, I. Medres and Mordecai Ginsburg (well known also to the readers of the Israelite Press and some others who are not personally known to us.)

"Thanks to that combination, the newspaper became an influential force in Montreal Jewish life. The same combination also had the effect of bringing forth 'the miracle' and the Canadian Eagle became one of the two daily newspapers in the entire Jewish world to celebrate a fiftieth anniversary jubilee and to plan for a long, continuous existence.

"The Canadian Jewish community has a respected name in the Jewish world. The Jewish community of Montreal distinguishes itself with its Jewish educational and cultural institutions including its people's library which has no equal in any Jewish community on the North American continent.

"The community likely influenced the character of its newspaper. We are quite sure, however, that the influence also went in the reverse direction and that the Canadian Eagle did much in the formation of the character of the Montreal Jewish community and consequently also of the entire Canadian Jewish community." (Israelite Press, Dec. 13, 1957)

After the passing of the founder in 1949 the future of the newspaper and even of the publishing and printing firm could come into question even though the liquidity of the company and the understanding of the sons might have assured the stability of the well founded newspaper.

By 1962 the matter became in issue of public discussion. The statement of Max Wolofsky outlining the publisher's problems reflects sensitively what had been the underlying strength of the newspaper in his father's days,

"If, in the opinion of organized Jewish life in Montreal, the paper was no longer necessary, he was prepared to accept this view and would suspend publication immediately. If, on the other hand, it should be the view of this meeting that the paper should and must be continued in the future, as in the past, as an instrument of public service, the financial burden should not be permitted to rest solely on his shoulders as the publisher.

"Whereas production costs, including union scale wages, paper, rent, etc. have increased enormously in recent years, not only has the income not kept pace with these rising costs but, on the contrary, has declined. The most marked drop in income has come as a result of the decrease in advertising space used by local organizations during the past two or three years. One of the reasons for this, he said, is that these organizations are using, in ever increasing amount, the non-Jewish press.

"Because of their own budgetary limitations for advertising and publicity, increasing use of the non-Jewish press for advertising and publicity has forced them to curtail or eliminate entirely use of the Jewish press. The loss of income came about because organizations which, in the past, have given their commercial printing work to the Job Printing Department of the Adler, have, for a variety of reasons, taken this work elsewhere in recent years. This was not any reflection on the prices charged for printing by the Adler or the quality of its work, but was due to internal situations in the various organizations which prompted them to take their printing elsewhere." (Minutes of meeting at De Sola Club, May 17, 1962. CJC Archives)

In spite of months of efforts by friends of the Yiddish press the Adler ceased publication as a daily on May 14, 1967 after sixty years of continuous service to Canada.

It was revived and later reorganized, in September 1971, by the Canadian Jewish Congress as a non-profit making weekly venture, edited first by Joseph Gallay and later by M. Husid.

OTHER YIDDISH PERIODICALS

The remarkable Wolofsky achievement in establishing a Yiddish newspaper in Montreal becomes clearer when situated in the context of the outline history of other efforts in that direction in Montreal and elsewhere in Canada.

The very eventful communal career of Rabbi S. Glazer had led him to organize a group of businessmen to establish a weekly Di Yiddishe Velt in 1912 to advance some partisan cause of the time. It lasted but a short time.

The Montreal Poale Zion issued a Bulletin for several years before the war.

When the First World War broke out a group of radical-national members of the Montreal community combined to issue an afternoon daily, the Ovent Courier to offer fresh news from the fronts. Moishe Dickstein was connected with the project. It was issued for four weeks.

In 1914 also the Jewish Branch of the Socialist Party of Canada published Di Arbeiter Zeitung in magazine format with the cooperation of the Pressers' Union for the advancement of socialism and trade unionism, under the editorship of Abraham Joseph Zusman, formerly of Winnipeg. Only three issues appeared between January 1 - July 1, 1914. C.L. Fox notes that the periodical ceased publication on government orders. (100 Years of Yiddish and Hebrew Literature in Canada. Yiddish. Montreal, 1980. P. 122)

The true challenge to the Adler came in 1915 after an editorial strike which, either as consequence or as cause, was related to the conflict between Wolofsky and his distinguished editor Reuben Brainin. The circumstances in this veritable personal tragedy and communal explosion constitute a chapter in the Brainin biography. One of the developments in the press history of 1915 was the establishment by Brainin of an excellent daily, Der Veg, which lasted between October 1915 and the following March whose pages form an anthology of Canadian Jewish literature.

The Brainin paper constituted the only threat to the Adler until after the passing of Wolofsky and the advent of the new Jewish society in Canada which may have led to the Adler becoming a weekly under direct community management.

TORONTO

The Toronto Jewish Weekly appeared in 1906, issued by a printer during an election campaign and "edited by the typesetter" in both English and Yiddish. L. Rosenberg notes that it was the first attempt at a Jewish newspaper in that city. He describes it as mainly an advertising sheet with some reading matter of poor literary quality in Yiddish and English. It existed for about a year.

Rosenberg records that this attempt was followed in 1907 by a similar weekly, the Toronto Yiddishe Presse which existed for four months.

The Daily Advertiser was circulated by inclusion as a premium in the New York Yiddish newspapers sold in Toronto. It consisted only of advertisements.

The Yiddisher Journal appeared as a weekly in November 1913; a year later it became a daily newspaper. The initiators were H. Hirsch, and printers S. Goldenberg and Rabinovitch. In the course of the years such names as Abraham Rhinewine, S.M. Shapiro, M.Z.R. Frank, D. Rome and Ben Lapin have been associated with the newspaper.

WINNIPEG

Winnipeg was either an important colony of the Montreal immigrant cultural society or, for complex reasons, a rich independent parallel society of its own with a history as durable and as extensive as Montreal's, with its own range of leaders, ideologists, institutions. Its influence upon the Canadian entity, when the provinces learned to assemble and were as able to call upon the prophets of the immigrant world, was comparable to Montreal's.

Whether it was the proximity of Jewish farmers or, more likely, of the uneasy pluralism of a variety of European cultural communities, the Winnipeg Jewish group felt at ease in constructing an intense autonomous entity. Also, more clearly than anywhere else in Canada, no other single assimilative society was strongly interested in integrating the tiny Jewish group, or any other western minority.

So a galaxy of western personalities such as A.J. Cherniak, B. Sheps, J. Hestrin, J. Zipper, Mark Selchen, E. Hanson, J. Goodman, M. Hyman, L. Rosenberg, Rabbi Israel Kahanovitch, M.A. Gray, A.A. Heaps, B. Miller, W. Keller, J. Auerbach and H.E. Wilder came to exert a unique creative social influence in an isolated geography in a variety of social activities similar to those that engaged Montreal: the theatre, libraries, schools, Yiddish, the People's Alliance, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Poale Zion and the periodical press. This prairie activity came to the attention of world ideological leaders such as D.C. Zhitlowsky and A. Golomb.

As usual in this cultural sphere, literate participants were abundant even like E. Hanson who wrote his Yiddish tales from the northern trappers' bush. Some of them had apprenticed in New York or in Montreal; many of them practised on the prairies, developing an aesthetic and communal tone which for long marked the Canadian West.

Before the Yiddish "wireless" connected Wolofsky to Winnipeg, the prairie town decided in 1906 to establish a Yiddish weekly, Viderklang. Although not durable the Winnipeg periodical established a serious tradition with several issues before expiring.

Joseph Goodman, the Yiddish journalist and poet who was the spirit behind Viderklang, was a Lithuanian who settled on a Sonenfeld farm in 1888 but left for Calgary and Winnipeg. He became an official in the Manitoba immigration department and a contributor to the English-language press as well as to the Hebrew press in Russia.

Chiel reports that by 1906 Goodman was conducting a regular column "The Jewish World" in the Manitoba Free Press which must have been the first journalistic feature of its type in a Canadian daily newspaper.

It was there that Goodman announced in March 1906 the appearance of Viderklang. The periodical was largely filled with his own literary compositions.

In January - September 1912 Goodman and A.M. Mandelbaum, who had been a successful contributor to the Adler in Montreal, issued eight numbers of the bi-weekly Mazik, the longest lived of Canada's kibetz humourous magazines.

Goodman's versatility is reflected in his 1919 collection Gezamelte Lieder which includes prose sketches as well as poems. The book may be considered as the first volume of Yiddish poetry to appear in Canada. He later contributed to Der Yid and edited the 17 issues of Der Burger (to June 20, 1913) a periodical for poetry and sketches. It also carried his "serial novel The Pioneers on the life of the first farmers in Western Canada, seen from close up, and drawn with talent," as the paper described it.

He drew upon his considerable experience to contribute two articles upon Jewish immigration for Brainin's Der Veg of February 23 and 24, 1916.

One of the earliest Winnipeg Yiddish periodicals was the weekly Di Shtimme edited by A. Ossovsky (1878-1948). This journalist often reflected the Winnipeg scene in the Adler.

Born on a farm settlement in the Ukraine, he arrived in Canada in 1903 and worked laying the CPR tracks. Devoted to Jewish education and community affairs, he taught in the Talmud Torah and helped organize western Canadian Poale Zion.

There was scarcely a Yiddish periodical in Canada which failed to benefit from his excellent reportage which was often flavoured with a folkloric tinge. He was associate editor of Der Yid and edited Dos Yiddishe Vort, Die Neiye Zeit and the Canader Yiddishe Velt.

In 1946 he published his recollections Tzvei Veltn, Drei Doires. (Winnipeg, 1946. 368 p.)

Manitoba historian Arthur A. Chiel placed the Winnipeg Courier in the political framework of the community of 1910.

The Courier was a radical bi-weekly edited by Abba Joseph Zusman (1877-1951) and Chaim Saltzman. The first Jewish socialist publication in Western Canada.

Both editors devoted their lives to the socialist cause in the United States and in Canada as organizers and journalists. Saltzman was also a leader in Yiddish education and immigrant aid work in Canada. After the First World War he went to Russia, together with Montrealer S. Belkin, to help distribute relief materials gathered in Canada and in the United States.

The Jewish socialists established the Courier to fight the candidacy of Liberal S. Hart Green in the elections for the Manitoba legislature. After the campaign the Courier folded.

Dos Freie Vort was edited by a group of writers to counter the Courier during the Hart Green campaign.

It was those Liberal supporters, according to Chiel, who endowed Winnipeg with its major durable Yiddish newspaper.

Toronto historian and editor Abraham Rhinewine notes that the equipment of the Courier was purchased by Der Yid which began as a weekly and later published twice a week under the editorship of B.J. Goldstein. It became a daily in 1914 but could not sustain that rate of production for long, and ceased publication.

J.B. Goldstein contributed an entire serial novel "Stormy Life" to Der Yid.

The newspaper was revived in 1917 by Frank Simkin as a weekly and soon after came to appear as a semi-weekly Dos Yiddishe Vort issued by the Israelite Press.

Among its earlier editors were A.M. Mandelbaum and Hertz Emanuel Wilder.

Under the editorship of Mark Selchen (originally Slechenko) it was soon recoganized as one of the important Yiddish newspapers on the continent.

The early story of the Yiddish press in Winnipeg is also connected with another Montrealer, Joe Leib Malamut (1886-1966). Both had edited newspapers in Montreal before coming west. Malamut came to Winnipeg later. In Winnipeg while Goldstein edited the Israelite Press, Malamut edited the Canader Yiddishe Velt.

He had published a small book, Facing the Sun and wrote a sketch, A Cup of Tea, which was very popular in the West and was recited many times on various educational occasions. The Dramatic Circle of the National Union performed his piece In the Rabbi's Court. Later he moved to Los Angeles. (Jacob Silverstein in Freie Arbeiter Shtimeh, Nov. 15, 1957. P.3) He wrote many plays, novels, short stories, and humorous works. When Brainin edited Der Veg in 1915 Malamut contributed a story "Once Upon a Time" to the November 10 issue.

The Canader Yiddishe Vochenblatt appeared in Montreal under the editorship of J.L. Malamut in 1913; only in two issues.

In 1915 he appears in Fort William as principal of a National Radical School which collected $70 for Jewish victims of the war. (S. Belkin. Di Poale Zion Bavegung in Canada. P. 252)

S. Frankel arrived in Winnipeg in 1912 to teach in the Talmud Torah. He was a serious researcher in Russian literature and a fine translator; he published studies in this field in Dos Yiddishe Leben which he established in 1913. (Fox) Although it received economic support from the community it was unable to continue. Only four issues, each 16 large newspaper format appeared.

A. Chiel notes that Frankel is remembered in Manitoba for his organizing Winnipeggers to purchase land cooperatively in Palestine where they would settle. Chiel writes, "Only a few local people followed Frankel to the Holy Land, but the educational effects of his proposal were important." (P. 157)

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