

to forego further civil rights legislation in the near future, and that no law now—with a sharper civil rights issue in the coming elections—would more effectively promote the adoption of a strong act in the next Congress. I think they are wrong. Despite its serious inadequacies, this new law provides the basis for a higher level of civil rights struggle and achievement in the period immediately ahead.

Bring into being the authorized Federal Commission on Civil Rights, with its powers of subpoena. Let it begin its inquiry into the disfranchisement of Negro citizens and violations of their other constitutional rights. Then have no doubt that the burgeoning Negro movement in the South will so overwhelm the commission with evidence that the scandal of Jimcrow oppression will be dramatized before our nation and the world as never before.

Establish the authorized Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, armed with new powers general can no longer plead statutory to obtain injunctions against actual or threatened abridgment of the right to vote. Then the attorney general can no longer plead statutory impotence—as he has always done in the past—when pressed to intervene in specific cases of franchise violation. Then will the people be in stronger position to make their civil rights demands heeded by the law enforcement officers of the Federal Government.

Prosecute violators of right-to-vote injunctions for contempt, as authorized by the new law. The civil contempt cases alone, decided

by the federal judges who issue the injunctions, will do much to heighten the respect of Southern officials for the Negro's right of franchise. And if juries refuse to convict in the cases of criminal contempt, that very fact will provide a powerful argument for stronger civil rights legislation.

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, which includes the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, several AFL-CIO unions, Jewish and other groups [the Jewish organizations are the AJ Committee, AJ Congress, Anti-Defamation League, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans, National Community Relations Advisory Council, National Council of Jewish Women, Pioneer Women and United Hebrew Trades—Eds.] said of the Civil Rights act: "The constitutional right of Negroes to vote is given Congressional recognition for the first time in 87 years and some new tools are provided for the enforcement of that right." I think this estimate is sound.

A stronger and more comprehensive Civil Rights act lies farther along the same path that led to the present law. It is the path of organized challenge to Jimcrow practices everywhere, in all their varied forms—Montgomery yesterday, Little Rock today, new centers of struggle tomorrow. It is the path of independent political action by the emerging democratic coalition, both inside and outside the major parties—with the focus now on 1958 and 1960. The Civil Rights Act of 1957—itsself an historic achievement—can help move our country still farther along this path to freedom.

## Soviet Jewish Cultural Revival—a Year Later

A visitor to the Soviet Union looks back on the promises made to him last year

By CHAIM SULLER

IN July 1956 I returned from a trip to the Soviet Union, where I had spent a little more than a month. Although originally planned as a personal visit with my family, this trip took on considerable significance when I turned out to be the first Jewish cultural worker from the U.S. to visit the Soviet Union since the disruption of Jewish cultural activity in 1948. I was thus the first one to bring back any sort of report concerning Jewish writers and Jewish cultural activity since that year. [See interview with Mr. Suller in our August 1956 issue.]

It is therefore understandable that my reports, which were printed in the *Morning Freiheit*, were reprinted in the U.S. and other countries in many Jewish and non-Jewish publications. My verbal reports here in our country and in Canada drew literally thousands of people and the subjects I touched on still concern large numbers of people everywhere. I believe, therefore, that it is important now, a year later, again to go into the matters which I discussed with various leaders in the Soviet Union and see what "the score" is now. I shall try to analyze the facts and point out what has been done about Jewish cultural activity in the Soviet Union since 1956.

Let me first review briefly what I found out last year about the perspectives for Jewish cultural work in the Soviet Union. Yiddish writers and important leaders of the Soviet Writers Union assured me that "new winds are blowing" in the Soviet Union; that the evil which was done in Soviet life since 1948 was being corrected. They showed me a proposed plan which was impressive in scope, especially since it appeared at a time when there had been no Jewish cultural activity for eight years.

### *This Was the Program*

According to this plan a Yiddish literary journal was to appear several times a week, the Yiddish publishing house *Emes* was to be re-opened, a permanent Yiddish State Theater was to be re-established, a conference was to be called of Jewish artists and leaders. I was assured that the works of many Yiddish writers were already being published in Russian translation. It is important here to recall something else I reported when I returned from my visit: this entire plan had been accepted by the Soviet Writers Union but had not yet been approved by the government. The Jewish writers assured me that the

plan would be carried through. They cautioned me that it was possible that some of the proposals would be realized at some later date, that some would be modified; they pointed out some difficulties that would take time to overcome. For instance, it would take some time to re-establish the theater, since actors and theater workers had to be found, etc., but that in the meantime troupes would tour the country.

After I returned from the Soviet Union, other Jewish journalists went there and had similar meetings and interviews: Dr. Hyam Shoshkes of the *Yiddish Day*, G. Koenig of the Paris *Yiddish Neie Presse*, I. Gershman of the Canadian *Wochenblatt*. Each of them confirmed the report I brought back. This made us all feel certain that the plan would really be carried out.

But it is clear to all that now, a year later, this plan has *not* been carried out. Not a single book has been published in Yiddish. There is not a single Yiddish newspaper except the one in Biro-Bidjan, which did not cease publication during all this period. There is no permanent Yiddish theater. The Jewish cultural conference was not called. The Yiddish literary journal has not yet appeared.

### There Have Been Changes

There are certain friends of the Soviet Union here who say that *nothing* has changed; that in regard to Jewish cultural activity the same approach obtains as was true in the 1948-1953 period. That this is *not* the case can be seen from a number of things which have happened in the Soviet Union during the past year. On my desk are a number of works of Yiddish writers which were recently published in Russian translation. Here are some of them: Sholem



Chaim Suller

Aleichem's *Enchanted Tailor and Other Stories*, splendidly illustrated, issued in 1956 in 225,000 copies; Sholem Aleichem's *Back From the Fair*, 690 pages, 1957, in 165,000 copies; Sholem Aleichem's *Motil*, 1954, in 30,000 copies; G. Dobin's stories, 1956, in 30,000 copies; N. Luria's *The Forest Calls*, 1956, in 15,000 copies, Peretz Markish's selected poems, 1957, in 10,000 copies; selections from David Bergelson's stories, 1957, in 75,000 copies.

A book of Sholem Aleichem in 225,000 copies is no trivial thing! There is no other country in the world, and certainly no other government, which would publish Sholem Aleichem in such quantities in *any* language. Whoever tries to waive this fact as "nothing," does the Jewish people no favor. It is an accomplishment of great positive value. Not without reason did Alexei Surkov, executive secretary of the Soviet Writers Union, tell me last year in Moscow: "I am not pleased with the translations of Sholem Aleichem which we have thus far published. We'll have to do much better." It seems that they went out and did so!

I often read in Soviet literary publications, poems, in original or translation, of Yiddish writers. The literary journal *Soviet Literature* (April), published in Moscow in English, contains, under a "Selection of the Poems of Jewish Poets," poems of I. Feffer, L. Kvitko and Peretz Markish.

There are positive achievements in other fields. Concerts of Jewish singers and readings of Yiddish works have been presented not only in the populous Jewish centers but in the most prominent concert halls of Moscow and Leningrad. Yiddish theater presentations have taken place in Vilna, Dvinsk, Baku. From reports it seems that the Yiddish theater is just beginning to unfold. In Vilna and a few other cities Jewish choruses have been formed; Jewish departments in the libraries have been opened. We recently received three records of Jewish folk-songs issued by the Ministry of Culture. All these positive developments are of tremendous importance and every friend of Jewish culture must recognize this.

### Is There An Audience?

But there are other things still to be corrected. There still has to be a fundamental change in the attitude of the Soviet government toward the question of Jewish cultural work in the Yiddish language.

*Why has nothing appeared yet in Yiddish?* Not a newspaper, not a book, not a magazine! All the arguments we heard from certain Soviet leaders—that the Jews themselves do correspond with reality. This is clear to everybody, whether they were ever in the Soviet Union or not. If it were true that Jews do not want Yiddish, then the Yiddish concerts everywhere in the Soviet Union would not be packed to overflowing. My own experience has convinced me

that large numbers of Jews in the Soviet Union are hungry for the Yiddish word; that every time they listen to a Jewish song at a concert or on the radio, it takes on the aspect of a real demonstration. That Soviet Jews are interested in having a Yiddish newspaper can be seen from the fact that close to 2,000 copies of the Warsaw Yiddish *Folks-Shtimme* come into the Soviet Union and are avidly read. Even the *Morning Freiheit* comes all the way to the Soviet Union and is read quite eagerly. We know this from the many letters which the *Morning Freiheit* receives from people trying to locate relatives, from such cities as Kovno, Tashkent, Vilna, Leningrad, Kiev and Dvinsk.

In addition to the printed Yiddish word there is a need in the Soviet Union for an organized Jewish community life. The only Jews in the Soviet Union who are organized are the religious Jews around their synagogues. The Jews who do not attend synagogue and are not religious do not have their own cultural or community organizations of the type of the Jewish Cultural-Social Association which functions in Poland. That such an organization is necessary in a country with three million Jews is no longer debatable. It is needed both for cultural reasons and for social reasons. If there were such an organization, it would be able to supervise the programs and personnel of the concerts and other cultural events, help in the reopening of Yiddish libraries, etc.

Here is only one example of many: I mentioned that a group of Yiddish poems were printed in English translation in the Soviet journal *Soviet Literature*. In a brief introduction it is stated that Itzik Feffer is known primarily as a children's poet. Now, although he did write many good poems for children, he was *not* best

### At the Moscow Youth Festival

**T**HE gathering of youth from 127 lands at the Moscow Youth Festival in July and August was a tremendous demonstration for Peace and Friendship, the key words at the festival. The 200-strong delegation from Israel made a deep impression. Their artistic performances were praised in the Soviet press and won many medals. Soviet Jews manifested great interest in the Israeli delegation.

However, reports indicate that the Israeli delegation suffered discrimination from the festival authorities. They were not permitted to distribute any literature nor was anyone allowed to see them off at the station.

known for them, but for his poems for adult readers. Such an error could not be committed in a Soviet magazine if there were a responsible body of Jewish cultural workers.

### Needed—A Secular Jewish Center

Can we imagine for one moment that Jewish culture can really begin to bloom in the Soviet Union without a central Jewish body to lead it—especially after an interruption of almost ten years? Without such a body, who will say what magazines, what newspapers, what books, should be issued? Who will help to cultivate and encourage new writers? It will not be enough only to print Yiddish books. They have to be distributed. They have to be publicized. Interest must be awakened in the spoken and written Yiddish word. Who will do this? Who

can do it better than Jews—in the Yiddish language?

I am convinced that just as there are nationalist tendencies among other national groups in the Soviet Union, so there are among the Jews. And I discovered that these tendencies were especially strengthened by the administrative shutting-down of all the Jewish cultural institutions. A Jewish cultural and communal body would also have before it a responsible task of explanation and education. There are in the Soviet Union large numbers of Jews who have lived elsewhere during the past 39 years. There are Jews from the Baltic countries, from Western White Russia, Western Ukraine, Bessarabia; there are many Jews who fled Poland during the war. These Jews, even more than those who have lived under socialism during the last 39 years, need cultural and communal work in their own language.

I recently discovered, for instance, from a letter from a friend in Moscow, that preparations were made to mark the 40th anniversary of Peretz Markish's creative work. On the basis of this information the *Morning Freiheit* sent a greeting to the celebration. Is it right that the *Morning Freiheit* discover something like this from a private letter? Today we receive little direct correspondence from the Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union. Most of the material that the *Morning Freiheit* prints come from the Warsaw *Folks-Shtimme* or Yiddish publications in other countries. When we printed a greeting from the Soviet Yiddish writers on the occasion of the *Morning Freiheit's* 35th anniversary, it was of a purely private nature. The writers represented no one but themselves. How much more it would have meant if the greeting had come from an organized body representing the

Jewish community in the Soviet Union!

The leaders of the Soviet government are doing a great deal to establish cultural exchange with other countries. Well, in the United States there are more than five million Jews. In other capitalist countries there are a few more million. Why should the Soviet Union not have a Jewish theatre which would not only serve its own Jewish population, but which would travel to other countries as was done in the 1920's, or as the Polish Yiddish State Theater is doing now? Why should Soviet Yiddish writers not travel to other countries and meet their colleagues and, yes, the broad Jewish masses, face to face?

We here in the U.S. complain that our government prevents cultural figures such as Paul Robeson, Howard Fast, Rockwell Kent, Paul Novick and

others from visiting foreign countries. Our government sets up obstacles for artists from the socialist countries who want to come to the U.S. Nevertheless, some of them do come—David Oistrakh, Emil Gilels, others. Arrangements are now being made for a new interchange of artists between the Soviet Union and the United States. If there were a Jewish cultural center in Moscow, it might be possible to have such artists as S. Halkin, Anna Guzik, I. Kamenko and others come here. We could then at least fight to send a similar delegation to the Soviet Union! This would not only enrich the culture of both countries; it would be of great help in the struggle for peace which is now going on throughout the world. Jews are just as much interested in peace as other nationalities!

(Continued on page 40)

## CORRECTION

**S**EVERAL important sentences were omitted in the course of translation from the Yiddish of the article, "Toledo Answers Racism," by Abe Strauss, in the September issue. The article dealt with a successful united community action to defeat an attempt at housing discrimination and violence against a Negro family in Toledo.

At the bottom of page 9, first column, in reporting talks with several Negro leaders about cooperation of the Toledo Jewish Community Council in vigorous pro-democratic activity, Mr. Strauss' original added: "These warm words of recognition were later confirmed in my conversation with Mr. Philip Winkfield, prominent Negro leader and assistant secretary of the Board of Community Relations, and with Mr. Frank Fager, Protestant secretary of the Board."

To the first sentence in the last paragraph of the article, reading, "To my question whether the Board of Community Relations of Toledo deals with acts of anti-Semitic discrimination, the answer was that the Board is no less sensitive to this type of discrimination," Mr. Strauss' original added: "Whenever a suspicion of anti-Jewish discrimination comes to my attention, the matter is followed up with the greatest speed and determination 'to root out the evil at the roots,' Mr. Winkfield added."

We regret these omissions from the article.

## SOVIET JEWISH CULTURE

(Continued from page 25)

### False Theories and Actuality

Why has Yiddish publishing activity not been resumed in the Soviet Union? In my opinion this failure stems from the fact that the leaders of the Soviet government and the Soviet Communist Party still cling to an incorrect policy developed during the post-war period—that all the Jews in the Soviet Union are linguistically and culturally assimilated and have no need for separate institutions. We have seen that Soviet reality does not bear out this claim! It is clear that among the leading figures of the Soviet government there are still false theories about the historic period which the Soviet Union has entered. According to these theories the national culture of a people like the Jews, who are scattered through the length and breadth of the Soviet Union, should by this time have disappeared. According to these theories the Jews no longer need their separate language and culture. It is not my intention here to discuss whether these theories are even *theoretically* false. But the *reality* of the Soviet Union does not fit this theory at all!

Nor can this situation be explained by "technical difficulties." There has been enough time now to overcome these difficulties. One need not be an expert to understand that if the Soviet government were convinced of the correctness of doing these things, they would be done with dispatch. Smaller states than the Soviet Union—Poland and Rumania—have Yiddish publishing houses, schools, theaters; the Soviet Union could do the same!

We must therefore conclude that this failure to satisfy the cultural needs of the Jewish population is a

violation of the fundamental principles of socialism as they relate to the national question. No socialist and no friend of the Soviet Union can overlook this, nor can he condone it.

There are some people who would attribute this incorrect approach to anti-Semitism. This too is false. The fact is that Jews in the Soviet Union have the same civil rights as all other nationalities. Jews are represented in the government even in greater proportion than their number to the general population. Jews play a role in all phases of Soviet life. They were not the only ones to suffer from the errors. It is our conviction that other nationalities in the Soviet Union still suffer from this wrong approach. If we place the emphasis on Jewish matters, it is not only because we are Jews and because in large measure Soviet Yiddish culture is of special interest to Jews all over the world. It is also because this is a matter of general interest to Americans.

Advocates of the Cold War, enemies of socialism, use this question for their own ends. They do not hope for improvement; indeed, they do not want it. But the attitude of fighters for peace, of followers of socialism, must be entirely different. The fact that many of the injustices committed against a number of Soviet nationalities are being corrected gives us the right to expect that the injustice still being done to the Jewish population will also be corrected. The fact that the Soviet Union is governed by a socialist government gives us the guarantee that Jewish culture in the Soviet Union will yet thrive. The fact that many aspects of Yiddish culture are already being revived gives us the right to believe that the plans which the Yiddish writers in Moscow last year told me about so hopefully will come true.

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF:

JEWISH LIFE, published monthly at New York N. Y., for October 1, 1957.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, Progressive Jewish Life, Inc., 22 East 17th Street, Room 601, New York 3, N. Y.

Editor, none.

Managing Editor, Louis Harap, 22 East 17th Street, Room 601, New York 3, N. Y.  
Business Manager, none.

2. The owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual member, must be given.)

Progressive Jewish Life, Inc., 22 East 17th Street, Room 601, New York 3, N. Y.; Albert E. Kahn, President, 538 De Vera Way, Santa Rosa, Calif.; Louis Harap, Secretary, 83 Horatio Street, New York 14, N. Y.; Sam Pevzner, Treasurer, 4 West

93rd Street, New York 25, N. Y.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required from daily, weekly, semiweekly and triweekly newspapers only.)

LOUIS HARAP  
Managing Editor

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 6th day of September, 1957.

DAVID CANTOR

Notary Public for the State of New York  
(My commission expires March 30, 1959.)  
(SEAL)

### "We (Soviet) Jewish Writers Are Not Silent"

"WE Jewish writers are not silent," Soviet Yiddish writer Joseph Rabin said to a group of foreign Jewish newspaper people at a meeting with a number of Soviet Yiddish writers in Moscow during the recent World Youth Festival. "We are constantly demanding our rights before the Union of Soviet Writers," continued Rabin. "We are demanding a Yiddish publishing

house and a Yiddish theater. The Union of Soviet Writers is completely behind us around these just demands."

In reporting this meeting the progressive Yiddish Paris paper, *Naie Presse*, wrote on Aug. 25 that "the Soviet Jewish writers said that major steps were being taken to publish a Yiddish newspaper and that Boris Polevoy was assisting in realizing the project."