



LIBRARY

## SUMMER MEETING IN SAN FRANCISCO

### President's Report

The Caucus's meetings in San Francisco were both informative and fairly well-attended. Those who attended the program at the Judah Magnes Museum and Western Jewish History Center and Archive heard an interesting discussion of what oral history is and how the Center is participating in the oral history program at the University of California. Attendees received a packet with informative material on the Magnes Museum, the Center, and the Oral History Project, including bibliographies and a list of the Museum's publications. Many of us were also able to tour the Museum before the program and to see the varied collection of Judaica. The Museum is located in an old house on one of Berkeley's beautiful side streets, and many of us were interested to know how the space had been utilized without ruining the integrity of the building. All in all, it was an informative afternoon.

Although only about 15 people attended the business meeting which was on a Saturday night, we discussed a number of important issues for the organization. The most important was whether we will continue. By virtue of the fact that you have this newsletter in your hands, you will see we have a new editor. Cookie Lewis-Soldinger resigned as editor earlier this year because of other responsibilities.

The perceptive will note that I am continuing as president. No one else who was at the meetings in San Francisco was willing to take over the responsibilities, so I agreed to continue for *one more year*. I have been elected vice-chairman/chairman-elect of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table, for which I am also program committee chairman; I am working with the local law library association and its annual educational program; and I hope to be working on the local arrangements for the 1983 ALA conference which will be held here in Los Angeles. I would, therefore, like to turn over the reins of the Caucus to someone else.

We will be meeting at Midwinter, which will be held in Denver, CO, late in January. Any members who are planning to attend that meeting should get in touch with me before the end of this year so we can make plans. The meeting will probably be on Saturday night unless there are conflicts with such things as the President's Program.

Annette Blank has agreed to help plan a program for the 1982 conference in Philadelphia.

The big issue for the Caucus at this year's conference was the scheduling of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) conference in Minneapolis which originally conflicted with Rosh Hashanah. Joe Rine and other members complained to ACRL and the schedule was changed--although not without some difficulty. Since the wave of the future for ALA's divisions appears to be holding mini-conferences at times other than Midwinter and annual conference, we must work to sensitize those responsible for planning such programs to avoid conflicts. If the divisions are unwilling to take our concerns into consideration, we have several choices--the most obvious being to vote with our feet (or checks) by dropping membership in the offending organizations.

Although there is no real support for a resolution asking that ALA units consider Jewish holidays when scheduling events (churchgoers are concerned because meetings are scheduled on Sunday mornings, thus preventing them from attending services), there is a bright spot on the horizon. Council has voted to establish a standing committee on ethnic concerns, and we have been invited to recommend prospective members. Hopefully by our active participation in such a committee we can indeed raise the consciousness of ALA and its members to the special problems observant Jews face in dealing with their employers and their association.

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I did not attend the membership meeting, but I understand the Italian Librarians' Caucus presented a resolution asking that offensive subject headings be dropped from the LC list. As you know, this is a question we have been concerned with. The motion has been referred for study.

Best wishes to all for a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Sue Kamm,  
President

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**Notes...Notes...Notes...Notes...Notes...**

An exhibition on "*Hebrew Micrography, One Thousand Years of Art in Script*" was shown at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem this past spring. Hebrew micrography is a unique Jewish art form in which Hebrew script is written in a variety of shapes, including animal forms, human figures and abstract art. Created by Jerusalem scribes during the late ninth century, this unusual Hebrew calligraphy then spread to Egypt, Yemen and Europe. Dr. Leila Avrin, a lecturer at the Hebrew University Graduate Library School and formerly at the University of Michigan School of Library Science, was the guest curator for the exhibition.

Former newsletter editor Cookie Lewis-Soldinger has just published an *Index to Legal and Business-Related Bibliographies*. This reference work provides access to almost one thousand research bibliographies compiled by American and Canadian law libraries and business associations, many of which are not indexed in any other work. Order from Inform Press, 4150 St. Clair Avenue, Studio City, California 91604 (\$20.00 plus \$2.50 for postage and handling.)

The *Media Information Bulletin* is an informative newsletter listing filmstrips, television programs, movies and non-print bibliographies of Jewish interest. For further information, contact American Jewish Congress, 15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028. Attention: Julius Schatz.

*Night of the Broken Glass* is a collection of Holocaust poems by Emily Borenstein. The work is handprinted on a typeset press and contains original illustrations. Order from Timberline Press, Box 294, Mason, Texas 76856. (\$5.00 for paper copy and \$7.50 for hardcover, add 75 cents for postage and handling.)

*Journey into our Heritage: The Story of the Jewish People in the Canadian West* by Harry Gitlin, surveys the history of our Canadian-Jewish *landsman*. Profusely illustrated, this oversize book focuses on the Jewish communities in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Order from Lester and Orpen Dennys Ltd. 42 Charles Street East, Toronto, Ontario M4Y1T4 CANADA. (The book costs \$24.95 in Canadian dollars.)

*Special thanks to Ms. Rose Vainstein of Ann Arbor for material.*

**Deadline for next issue is December 10.**

## Book Reviews

*Echad: An Anthology of Latin American Jewish Writings* edited by Roberta Kalechofsky, Marblehead, Micah Publications, 1980

Roberta Kalechofsky has presented us with a multi-faceted look at an unfamiliar area of Jewish thought and community.

In *Echad: An Anthology of Latin American Jewish Writings*, she has edited a fascinating anthology which covers, in her own words, a "spectrum of Jewish thought and sensibility in Latin America, a blend of Judaism, Eastern European, a particular country, and the influences of Spanish and Indian cultures."

The range of geographical Jews featured in these selections is enormous--the banks of the Amazon river, among the India rubber trees, the sophisticated, cultured capital cities, isolated villages in Peru, Ukrainian towns, Jerusalem and Manhattan. The collection uses a variety of genres--literary, journalistic, scholarly, and polemical to portray varied Jewish cultures which both touch on yet veer away from our own, as the chronological distance between our shared roots grows.

A quietly distanced article by an Israeli diplomat on the protection of Nazis in Paraguay tells us much about life and its terrors in a dictatorship. The psychological terrors of ordinary living are defined in the passionate writings of Esther Seligson and Teresa Porzecanski.

Other stories tell of the familiar exultation of the immigrants arriving in a land of freedom juxtaposed by the painful isolation of their descendents who must integrate the two cultures.

Included in the volume are biographies of the writers and translators which detail their exceptional range of scholarship and the many prizes they have won for their work.

Dr. Kalechofsky intends to follow *Echad* with collections of Asian and African Jewish writers. This first of the series is both a literary achievement and an introduction to unfamiliar history. The anthology is a crucial addition to the knowledgeable understanding of our varied Jewish and human identities.

The book is available from the publisher, Micah Publications, 255 Humphrey St., Marblehead, Mass. 01945 for \$9.00 plus \$1.00 postage and handling.

*Lillian Kahn (Fleischman) is Acquisitions Librarian at Wheaton College and former Yiddish teacher.*

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*No. 12 Kaiserhofstrasse: the story of an invisible Jew in Nazi Germany* Senger, Valentin E.P. Dutton, New York, 1980

The street has an imperious name. In fact, it is only one block long, surrounded by rather nondescript houses dating from the 1870's. Number 12, which I hurried to find while in Frankfurt last year, long ago gave way to a multi-level parking garage. A five minute walk from Kaiserhofstrasse is the one hundred year old opera house which, after over thirty years, is finally being restored. But like much of restored Germany, the visitor should not be fooled by its exterior. When completed, the house will play host not to Wagner and Puccini, but to conventions and trade shows.

Around the corner from Kaiserhofstrasse is the ever-crowded Fressgasse ("swill street"). As long as anyone can remember, that has been its nickname; its real name, Grosse Bockenheimerstrasse, means nothing to most Frankfurters. Their beloved Fressgasse stretches for a few blocks and is lined with restaurants, cheese shops, and bookstores. It was the street that Valentin Senger played on as a child and returned to after serving briefly and without distinction as a soldier of the Third Reich. If this were indeed the whole story, *No. 12 Kaiserhofstrasse* would be a decidedly unremarkable memoir. But there is more to it than that, for as Senger declares: "I am myself--the son of Moissey Rabizanovich of Nikolayev and of Olga Moisseyevna Sudakovich of Ochakov, an East European Jew, born and bred in Frankfurt, who escaped from the Nazi murderers thanks to a thousand lucky breaks."

Without each and every break, Senger's story would have gone unwritten. He and his family would have been swept away by the maddening tide of Nazi brutality had it not been, for example, for the policeman who quietly changed "Hebraic" to "Nonconformist" on the family's registration card, for the doctors who, on more than one occasion,

*continued on page 4*

inexplicably ignored Valentin's ritually circumcised penis, for the Hitler Youth who somehow forgot that their old friend Valentin was a Jew, and for mama who drew up the family tree which conclusively demonstrated that the Sengers were not Slavic Russians but Volga Germans.

Rather than an examination of the motives and actions of his fellow Germans, Senger's monograph is a pained family portrait in which he seeks to understand his love for his father, who on numerous occasions almost gave away the family's most dangerous secret, and his confused feelings for his mother, who preserved the family by denying and destroying its identity. *No. 12 Kaiserhofstrasse* is a stunning work both for the simplicity with which the story is told and for the complexity of the struggle he and his family endured to remain alive during a period of unspeakable horror.

*Edward Bayone is a loan officer at The First National Bank of Boston and has an MA in European History from the University of Rochester and an MA in International Banking and Finance from the Columbia University School of International Affairs*

*Free Enterprise & Jewish Law: Aspects of Jewish Business Ethics.* Levine, Aaron New York: Ktav, 1980.

In this admirably conceived volume in Ktav's *LIBRARY OF JEWISH LAW AND ETHICS* series, the author, who is both an ordained rabbi and a professor of economics, provides a detailed, provocative, and wide-ranging picture of how a self-governing, halachically observant Jewish polity would presumably regulate its economic life--within, that is, a free-enterprise framework. He discusses, to give a brief sampling, how Jewish law regulates monopolies and restraint of trade, making and breaking contracts, and permissible profit margins; consumer protection, and consumer obligations; polluters and disruptive tenants; and a possible halachic basis for rent control. Throughout, the text reflects the sensitive balancing among competing rights, values, and claims characteristic of the halachic process. There are extensive notes giving detailed halachic sources, a rather inadequate index, and a depressing glossary that defines difficult economic concepts in terms of even more impenetrable ones.

Indeed, the most serious problem with the book is that its highly complex, technical prose will surely be quite difficult for readers not well versed in economics to follow. (I have in mind people for whom this typical sentence: "The product differentiation characteristic of each market signifies that each seller faces a downward-sloping demand curve" is something less than clear.) Even understandable discussions of issues within the ken of economically illiterate but intelligent laymen (e.g., pollution) are subsumed under abstruse, forbiddingly technical headings (in this case, "External Costs"). This book would make a first-rate introductory work for an economist interested in the Jewish legal approach to various social and economic issues; it would be useful to have a companion volume, of comparable scope and thoroughness, which had as its subject an organizing principle economic issues and value conflicts as they impinge on the ordinary Jew *qua* buyer and seller, employer and worker, and taxpayer and economic citizen.

Finally, the book implicitly regards as outside its scope a Toraitic critique of the underlying values and assumptions of the free enterprise system itself. This is the level of Bertolt Brecht's question: "If robbing a bank is a crime what must the founding of a bank be?"

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Robert L. Cohen is an editor living in New York who created and produced the "Yedid Nefesh" radio program on Jewish identity and culture.

## Interview with Roberta Kalechofsky

Editor of *Echad: an anthology of Latin American Jewish writings*, reviewed on page 3

*How did you make contact with these 24 writers from 12 countries?*

I didn't take the easy way which would have involved putting ads in the papers announcing that a publisher is seeking manuscripts. That way, I felt I would be flooded with manuscripts and therefore I preferred not to go that public. Instead, I contacted Jewish organizations and Israeli consulates for recommendations and then wrote individual letters to each author suggested in order to establish my credentials. Each respondent was asked to suggest other names and thus there was a chain letter effect.

This process took an entire year because I wanted to avoid sending form letters. It was complicated by the fact that there is no international directory of Jewish writers and publishers. Our publishing house would like to publish such a resource book. Perhaps one of your readers would be interested in compiling it.

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*One of your books La Hoya takes place in Spain. This anthology deals with Latin American Jewish writers. How did you get interested in the Spanish speaking literary world?*

It was totally accidental. My first novel takes place in Mexico. I had just visited Mexico and had driven hundreds of miles and saw much of the rural farming people. My book dealt with an unsophisticated community in a foreign setting and Mexico seemed an appropriate choice.

*La Hoya deals with a child's first awareness of the existence of torture in his world. I can literally remember my first experience. When I was 10 or 11, one of our neighbors, a boy my age, told me of various horrible tortures that had been done to people. I kept staring at him and could not take in what he was saying to me. Nothing I knew made me relate to what he was saying. We are not born knowing of torture, and for me, it was a mind-boggling experience. Later, I did research on the Inquisition and got the framework for my story. Though the Inquisition spread over much of Europe and South America, I chose Spain as the setting because of the connection I wished to make with an El Greco painting.*

*Another of my books, Stephen's Passion, is set in British Guyana off the coast of Brazil. This, like other Caribbean countries, appears Latin American but its major influences are French, Dutch, and British.*

*Your selections in Echad appear both in geographical order by country and also in a chronological order related to the Jewish history of Latin America. Why did you choose this scheme?*

Argentina and Venezuela accounted for the largest numbers and varieties of pieces in the book. I wanted to separate them to prevent the contributions from other countries being swamped by them. Alberto Gerchunoff, at the beginning of the book, is almost the grand-daddy of Latin American Jewish writers.

*In your biographies of the writers, you indicate that many of them are now living in the United States. Is this because of political problems in their own countries?*

There is a whole spectrum of reasons why people left--from the political situation, e.g. in Cuba, or lack of contact with other writers and other personal reasons. Yet others stayed in similar situations. For instance, Samuel Rovinski of Costa Rica is the only Jewish member of the Association of Costa-Rican Authors and has not left. Victor Perera of Guatemala left many years ago and is now teaching at the University of California in Santa Cruz. He does not appear to have left for any political reasons.

*You used a number of translators for these works. Is there anyone who stands out, in your opinion?*

Yes, David Pritchard. He was so conscientious that he would submit 3-4 versions before he was satisfied. He handled very difficult work with many different levels of language and meaning, e.g. the work of Esther Seligson (of Mexico). Her work is intense, philosophical, dense and lyrical and is difficult to translate. Davis is himself a writer and his wife is a playwright and these factors contribute to his fine translations.

*Is there any difference in the Jewish content of writers of different countries?*

There is a distinct difference. The Argentinian writers have a sense of Jewishness in their writing while the Venezuelans, outside of Alicia Segal, have almost none. In this way, they resemble American Jewish writers such as Norman Mailer.

Sosnowski's article on the contemporary Jewish-Argentine writers applies to other Jewish writers in Latin America. As they became more conscious of themselves as Latin Americans, they struggled against their bourgeois backgrounds and their parents' heritage, which was often European. There was a generational dispute--children against parents. Alicia Steimberg in *Musicians and Watchmakers* writes of people who tend to become narrow in their thinking and attitudes--the impeccability of the provincial. The emphasis on correct social behavior can be maddening. She shows much contempt for these people but she may be recording what actually existed.

*The women writers in your anthology seem to have quite extensive literary and educational backgrounds. Did you find this to be so?*

Yes, I have prepared an article for the 1982 edition of the *Jewish Book Annual* on Latin American Jewish writing. I found that in Latin America (and in South Africa, as well), there are as many women writers as men writers in the Jewish community. These women study and travel in many countries and are actively involved in different movements but not necessarily the women's movement. Elisa Lerner, for example has a great interest in the world at large. She has written 2 or 3 volumes of essays on every conceivable topic and has touched on almost every movement and direction.

Something else which interested me is that none of these writers are full-time writers. All have professions in other fields.

*How did you decide to prepare this anthology?*

A state of mind evolved which made me feel this was a necessary thing to do. A good part of the world, including the Jewish world, is unaware of the diversity of Jewish life. Jews are now selfconscious in their reawakening and rediscovery of our Diaspora community. I wanted to build bridges to these other communities.

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