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הביטו אל-צור הצבתם



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CHICAGO JEWISH History

Jabotinsky:

The Zionist Leader and Ideological Forebear of Today's Likud Party Drew Attention Wherever He Went, Even During His Two Visits to Chicago

By Walter Roth

Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, recognized as the ideological ancestor of the Likud Party in Israel, was the founder of Revisionism, a breakaway movement from mainstream Zionism. A legendary figure today, who visited Chicago twice in his lifetime -- once in 1926 and again in 1935 -- Jabotinsky's image and memory have been shaped and reshaped by events that occurred after his death and by the deeds of those who claimed to be following in his footsteps. This is particularly noteworthy today since Benjamin Netanyahu, who recently achieved a tight electoral victory over Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, has been compared to Jabotinsky for his intellect, passion, style, dash and command of the English language.

Jabotinsky proved to be the most significant Zionist leader outside the mainstream Haganah-Labor tradition. His ideological descendants, including Menachem Begin and Netanyahu have reshaped Israeli politics, and his policies were instrumental in shaping many of Israel's state institutions.

While his visits to Chicago were mere stopping-off points for his career, they nevertheless came at crucial moments in a career marked by controversy and accomplishment.

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Jabotinsky's life is recounted in *Lone Wolf*, a recent work by Professor Shmuel Katz of Jerusalem. Often a polemic for Jabotinsky's views, the two-volume, 1,800 page biography follows Jabotinsky from his birth in 1880 in Odessa, Russia to his death sixty

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Annual Meeting Elects Five New Board Members and Has Fine Show

This year's annual meeting saw five new members elected to the Board of Directors and featured an entertaining performance by musician Leah Broner Fine.

Held at Temple Shalom before a crowd of nearly one hundred, the meeting proved an opportunity for members to make and renew friendships as well as to conduct the

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- The Deli Project Seeks to Record a Thick Slice of Jewish History
- Oral History of Manuel Silver, American Jewish Congress Executive
- Spertus Exhibit Shows History of Jews in Chicago Politics

President's Column

I recently had the opportunity to meet Mr. Johnny Holmes, a Chicagoan who



Walter Roth

served during World War II with the 761st Tank Battalion, an all African-American U.S. military unit attached to General Patton's Third Army. His unit served with great distinction during the Battle of the Bulge and during the drive into Germany which finally ended the War in Europe in 1945.

Holmes is married to a friend of mine who is the executive secretary of the Benjamin J. Rosenthal Foundation. The Foundation was established in 1923 by a leading Chicago Jewish merchant who was a pioneer in mail-order catalogues and the founder of Aldens, Inc., at one time the third largest catalogue house in

the United States.

Holmes's story of the struggle of the African-American troops against discrimination and bias in their own American Army is painful and distressing, but it is a story fairly well known now. Not so well known is the controversy surrounding an incident involving those troops and the way it was depicted in a recent film.

About two years ago, an independent New York-based film company produced a film for public television titled *The Liberators*. Holmes was one of the soldiers participating in this film.

The Liberators follows the 761st Battalion from its basic training in America to the battlefields of Europe. It culminates by showing the men of the battalion as they encountered a number of concentration camps. A narrator identifies these camps as Dachau and Buchenwald.

Both African-American and Jewish survivors are seen talking about the

liberation of the camps and the horrors that the African-American soldiers heard from Jewish survivors

A few weeks after *The Liberators* was first shown, stories circulated that the 761st Battalion was not a "liberator" of these camps and that the story of these troops knocking down the gates of Dachau and Buchenwald was "sensationalism" and not true. The film was subsequently withdrawn and has not been shown since.

Holmes confirms that his unit was not among the first American troops to liberate Dachau and Buchenwald, but he wanted me to know that he and his unit did liberate a "sub-camp," which was horrendous enough. He regrets the sensationalism that the film makers felt they needed in order to make their story compelling.

Holmes is a proud man and wants us to know that the story of the encounter of African-American troops with the bestiality suffered by the Jews created a commonality that should not be forgotten and for which there is no need to sensationalize.

To that I say amen. □

Your Memorabilia May Help Us Tell Communal History

One way you can consider helping the Society in our efforts to preserve and retell the history of the Jews of Chicago is to donate archival material that you might have tucked away in old drawers, trunks, boxes, or attics.

Given the constraints of our own limited archival storage space, we unfortunately cannot take most documents relating to individual families. What we are looking for instead are documents relating to the history of the larger community.

This might include synagogue directories, programs from Jewish events, records of *landsmenshaften* or other Jewish community groups, or photographs depicting vanished sites of

Jewish interest.

In doing local history, it is never easy to know what sorts of documents will solve the riddles of how the every day life of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents went.

All too often, the material that might make clear the Chicago of 60 years ago -- or of a century or merely 30 years ago -- got thrown in the trash or was allowed to yellow or decay in the attic or the basement.

The small mysteries of history often prove to be the keys that lead historians to ask the biggest questions.

The scrap of memorabilia that may appear meaningless and faded may be just the catalyst to set someone off on a project that teaches us to see ourselves in some new way.

There is no telling what little treasure will help fill in the story of Jewish Chicago, no telling what yellow page is actually golden. □

Society-Published Book Reprinted

Due to popular demand, the first volume of the Society's Minsky Award publications has been reprinted for the second time.

The volume, containing *Chicago Jewish Street Peddlers* by Carolyn Eastwood and *Memories of Lawndale* by Beatrice Michaels Shapiro, is available for \$5 at local bookstores.

In addition the second and third Minsky Award volumes are available for \$5 as well. The second volume contains *The Chayder, the Yeshiva and I* by Morris Springer and *Memories of the Manor* by Eva Gross. The third volume contains *The Cantors: Gifted Voices Remembered* by Bea Kraus.

The German-Jewish Emigration of the 1930's and Its Impact on Chicago is available for \$3. □

Spertus Exhibit Chronicles Jews in Chicago Politics

Precincts, Parties & Platforms: Politics and Chicago Jews opened before a capacity crowd at Spertus Institute on June 23 and continues to run through December 31.

Society board member Irv Cutler, former Alderman Leon Despres, archivist Norma Spungen of the Chicago Jewish Archives, and Spertus curator Olga Weiss spoke about Jewish involvement in Chicago politics and called attention to various components of the exhibit.

Precincts, Parties & Platforms coincides with Democratic National Convention this summer and the Presidential election in November.

The exhibit examines the political legacy of Chicago's Jews, including Lawndale's 24th Ward, Henry Horner's campaigns for Illinois governor, the Jewish presence in traditional and radical political parties, the "Jewish vote," and the current Jewish political scene. It makes use of a range of media, displaying photos of political figures and political events, letters from prominent political figures, historical campaign memorabilia, and audio tapes of candidates and campaigns.

"Jews played a major role in local politics from the very beginning," Cutler said. "This was a way for Jews to get ahead. In the early days, an alderman or a committeeman could help a lot of people. They had a lot of jobs to distribute. They could go to court if necessary. They helped immigrants become citizens.

"Jewish politicians used to be like social workers," he said.

Just as the beliefs, practices, and lifestyles of Jews differ around the world, so do they differ within the Chicago Jewish community.

German Jews were the first Jewish settlers in the Chicago area, with many arriving as early as the 1840s. They

frequently worked as peddlers or as other kinds of merchants and established roots in the downtown and South Side areas.

Since many had only recently escaped hostile and discriminatory environments, German Jews opposed slavery and supported Abraham Lincoln and the Republican party.

By 1861, these earliest settlers had already given the city three aldermen and one city clerk.

Other, smaller groups of Jews soon began arriving in Chicago. Of them, the Bohemian Jews came to exert a strong influence on the politics of the Jewish community and on the city itself.

Fluent in Czech, German, and Yiddish, they formed natural political alliances with the large non-Jewish, Bohemian community in the Pilsen area.

In the late 1870s, Eastern European Jews began to arrive in large numbers. By 1930, they comprised approximately 80 percent of an estimated Chicago Jewish population of 275,000.

Unlike the German Jews in dress, demeanor, educational background, religious practices, and economic level, their differences led to unprecedented friction within the Chicago Jewish community.

For decades, the two groups remained separate from each other, having distinct neighborhoods, synagogues, and other community institutions. They also differed in their political views, with the Eastern European Jews favoring the Democratic party, which was more oriented to helping immigrant groups and the working class.

By 1910, the Eastern European Jews had begun to move from the crowded Maxwell Street neighborhood to other areas, including Lawndale, Humboldt Park, Logan Square, Albany Park, Rogers Park, and some of the South-Side neighborhoods that had known only German Jews until then.

As one reflection of the shifting demographics, the Lawndale area alone came to boast some 60 synagogues, all but two of which were Orthodox.

The exhibit also focuses on the historical involvement of Jewish women

in politics. Though not conspicuously involved until recent decades, they were very active on certain issues, including the labor union movement and a variety of political campaigns.

Jewish political strength enjoyed its heyday between the years 1930 and 1980, the half-century responsible for producing the only two Jewish governors in state history: Henry Horner (1933-40) and Sam Shapiro (1968-9). Others in that era of considerable achievement held posts as U.S. Congressmen, state legislators, county sheriff, city treasurer, aldermen, and judges.

Despite all of these Jewish officeholders, the area has yet to produce a Jewish Cook County state's attorney, an Illinois secretary of state, an Illinois attorney general, a U.S. senator, or a mayor of Chicago.

In recent years, as Jews have dispersed into the suburbs and outlying areas and as the need for patronage and political office in order to succeed has diminished sharply, fewer Jews have sought elected office. The result has been a decline in Jewish political clout.

Jews do still maintain a high political profile, however, as advisors, organizers, and fund-raisers through a range of business and social contacts. Others today are active in Jewish communal affairs.

Given the history of Jewish involvement in social welfare and in the health of the body politic, Jewish contributions are likely to carry on. "Today, Jews are not as dependent on political office," Cutler said. "Their role now is more behind the scenes."

Spertus Museum has the Midwest's most comprehensive collection of Judaica. In addition to temporary exhibits, it displays many objects from its permanent collection as well.

Precincts, Parties & Platforms is located at the Spertus Museum, 618 South Michigan Avenue. Spertus is open Sunday-Thursday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Friday 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Admission is \$4. The exhibit will continue until December 31.

-- Ellie Sandler

Jabotinsky

continued from page one

years later in New York. A brilliant student, he left home for Bern and Rome to study law and at the age of 17 landed a job as the Rome correspondent for an Odessa newspaper, often writing under the pen name "Altalena."

During his stay in Italy, he came under the influence of Italian professors and doctrines of economic theory which had a life-long influence on him. After several years he returned to Odessa, having achieved great distinction as a writer. He came back to a Czarist Russia embroiled in anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish violence.

It was the Kishinev pogrom of 1903 that deeply influenced Jabotinsky and brought him to Zionism. Jabotinsky joined a Jewish self-defense group in Odessa in 1903 when a pogrom appeared imminent there, one of the few places in Russia where Jews armed themselves at that time in defense of their rights. These Zionist activities and

his general brilliance soon made him a delegate to the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basle. He became a follower of Theodore Herzl and had emerged as the foremost Zionist lecturer and journalist in Russia by 1914.

At the outbreak of World War I, Jabotinsky was employed as a roving correspondent for a leading Moscow liberal daily, while continuing his active role in the myriad activities of the Zionist movement. He became convinced that the Turkish empire would collapse and that the Zionist movement should arm itself and abandon its neutral role in determining Middle-East Policy. While in Alexandria, Egypt he and a fellow Russian Jew and former Russian officer, Joseph Trumpeldor, conceived the idea of raising a Jewish legion from the displaced Jewish deportees from Palestine then living in Egypt to fight with the British against the Turks.

The first Jewish "army," albeit not what Jabotinsky really wanted, was the Zion Mule Corps, which took part in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign. Nevertheless, this small Jewish fighting force became the germ from which many of Jabotinsky's later accomplishments grew, such as the founding of the Haganah as a Jewish defense

force against the Arabs in 1920 and the idea of a Jewish Army to fight Hitler in the 1930s.

* * *

The founding of the Haganah and its confrontation with Arab rioters led to Jabotinsky's arrest by the British authorities, who were now the occupiers of Palestine under mandate of the League of Nations. After world-wide agitation for his release, Jabotinsky left prison in 1921, an acclaimed hero not only in Palestine, but to Jews in the entire Western world. He joined Chaim Weizmann in a leadership role in the World Zionist movement, and was with Weizmann in 1921 when he wrested control of the American Zionist Organization from the Brandeis group, whose Western ideology differed sharply from the East-European views of the Weizmann camp.

His speeches, as they did in Europe, rested on the premise that the first Zionist requirement was the building of a Jewish majority in Palestine and all the rest followed in logical progression.

Agitating for the restoration of a Jewish legion in Palestine, Jabotinsky quickly became further disillusioned with British rule in Palestine. In spite of their earlier collaboration, Jabotinsky could get no help from Weizmann, who believed in a less belligerent policy vis-a-vis the British. This

conflict, together with other disagreements regarding socialist versus capitalistic economic philosophy, led to Jabotinsky's resignation from the World Zionist Organization.

Having broken away from the collective of the World Zionist Organization, he was now on his own. He toured the Baltic States and Poland advocating his own program. In lectures during this period, he demanded a return to the idea of a separate Jewish state as Herzl had wanted, the restoration of the Jewish legion, and a wide political offensive to force England to change its policy and permit the establishment of a Jewish majority in Palestine. He included Transjordan in his definition of "Palestine", and advocated a mass immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, where he predicted a disaster if the Jews remained.

He also became active in the formation of a new Zionist Party, the World Union of Revisionists. It was in this setting that Jabotinsky made his first trip to Chicago in 1926.

* * *

The occasion was part of 20 lectures in the United States proposed by impresario Sol Hurok. On January 5,

1926 Jabotinsky sailed on the *S.S. France* for New York, primarily to raise money for the Revisionist cause and to attend a Zionist conference. The lectures themselves were peripheral to his fund-raising aims.

Financially the American tour appears to have been a failure. Katz, in his book, blames certain American Zionists for undermining the trip. Nathan Straus the New York philanthropist had promised \$75,000 to the Revisionist cause, but he later wrote Jabotinsky that he thought the idea of a Jewish military group was too "dangerous" and he withdrew his promise. The man who apparently had convinced Straus that the independent Jewish Army was too "dangerous" was Rabbi Stephen Wise, President of the American Jewish Congress and for many years a top leader of American Zionism. He would later become a bitter enemy of Jabotinsky.

Others in America, however, listened to Jabotinsky. He addressed meetings in New York, Detroit, Toronto, Montreal, Philadelphia and, of course, Chicago. He drew large crowds wherever he spoke. His speeches, as they did in Europe, rested on the premise that the first Zionist requirement was the building of a Jewish majority in Palestine and all the rest followed in logical progression: the demand for the creation of a land reserve; a policy for the protection of private industry, and a military defense unit for the defense of the Jewish national homeland. At first, a number of American leaders of *Bnei Zion*, a Zionist party faction, backed Jabotinsky, but under pressure from Stephen Wise and other mainstream Zionist leaders they backed off.

The Zionist Organization of America convention was held on June 22, 1926 in New York. After a bitter debate, the majority of the convention backed Jabotinsky's plank. This caused great consternation in the American Zionist ranks, with ominous portents for the future. Jabotinsky felt that if he had stayed a few more months in America he could have gotten control over the American Zionist movement, but unrest overseas compelled him to return to Europe. His impact on American Zionist policy receded and it took nine years before he would return to America.

* * *

Jabotinsky returned to Europe, throwing himself into the Revisionist cause. He also continued to write many books and essays. He was fluent in at least seven languages and a master translator, and he had great versatility in Hebrew and English. He translated Edgar Allan Poe into Hebrew and created and published the first World Atlas in Hebrew. In 1928 he returned to Palestine, becoming editor of a Hebrew daily in



Vladimir Jabotinsky (right) stands beside Chaim Weizmann (left) and others at a 1921 meeting

Jerusalem, while at the same time continuing his agitation for Jewish majority rule in Palestine. In 1930, while on a trip to South Africa, the British canceled his return visit and barred him from entering Palestine. He was never able to return to Palestine in his lifetime.

He continued his lectures in many countries, drawing attention to his disagreements with the shortcomings of Zionist political and economic policies in Palestine, including the pro-socialist labor policy of the Ben-Gurion-led Labor movement. His relationship with labor circles in Palestine grew increasingly strained and he was charged with "militarism," "enmity to labor" and even "Fascist leanings".

After Hitler's rise to power in 1933, Jabotinsky advocated a total boycott of Germany by the Jewish people and opposed the "Transfer Agreement" negotiated by the Jewish Agency with Germany. This controversial "Agreement" was made to permit immigration of a limited number of German Jews to Palestine in exchange for the transfer of their assets to accounts which would purchase German goods. Jabotinsky further widened the gap between himself and the Zionist leadership in Palestine by opposing the Transfer Agreement.

The murder in Tel Aviv of Chaim Arlosoroff, a labor

leader who had negotiated the Transfer Agreement, provoked the labor movement in Palestine against Jabotinsky, because they held him responsible for this heinous act. Jabotinsky vigorously denounced the act and denied any knowledge of it. In an attempt to alleviate the tension between Revisionism and Labor, Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky negotiated agreements in 1934 to settle their differences and avoid the factionalizing of the World Zionist Organization.

* * *

Thinking that the internal conflicts were sufficiently resolved for the Zionist movement to face the Nazi common enemy, Jabotinsky came to the United States in January 1935 at the invitation of some of his American supporters. A long article welcoming Jabotinsky to America appeared in Chicago's *The Sentinel* on January 24, 1935 [See reproduction on page 7.]

On March 21, 1935, *The Sentinel* wrote that Jabotinsky was slated to lecture on "New Deal for Jewish Life in Palestine" on March 27 in Orchestra Hall. *The Sentinel* noted:

Thinking that the internal conflicts were sufficiently resolved for the Zionist movement to face the Nazi common enemy, Jabotinsky came back to the United States

Fighting for years in the face of the greatest odds, without as well as within the Jewish fold, he continues to stand his ground in upholding uncompromisingly maximum Jewish rights in Palestine, and for that reason he is certain of a deliriously enthusiastic reception by his host of followers wherever he goes. He was last here ten years ago. Elaborate preparations have been made for his present visit.

A week later, *The Sentinel* announced that Jabotinsky was also speaking on March 28 at Anshe Sholom Synagogue at Polk and Independence Avenues. During his visit in Chicago, Jabotinsky stayed at the LaSalle Hotel at Madison and LaSalle streets. A letter obtained from the Jabotinsky Institute in Tel Aviv was written on the Hotel's stationary at that time. This letter is written in Ladino and bears Jabotinsky's signature.

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While Jabotinsky was warmly welcomed on his American speaking tour by large crowds, his relationship with mainstream Zionism grew worse. His accord with Ben-Gurion was rejected by the Labor Movement in Palestine and in America. Rabbi Stephen Wise led a vigorous campaign to impugn Jabotinsky's policies. The Zionist organization demanded "full discipline" for its

policies which Jabotinsky refused. In this acrimonious atmosphere, Jabotinsky and the Revisionist movement soon cut all ties with the World Zionist Organization. He returned to Europe, formed new organizations, and agitated for mass Jewish immigration to Palestine.

He and his followers forcefully supported "illegal" immigration to Palestine and a part of his organization soon evolved into the *Irgun Zeva'i Le'ummi* (the predecessor of the present Likud), which advocated violent retaliation against the Arab population.

With the outbreak of World War II (which he did not foresee), Jabotinsky sailed for America in February 1940 to enlist Jewish and non-Jewish support for his plans for a Jewish Army. Then in August, 1940 during a visit to the Betar (Youth Group) Summer Camp near New York City he died suddenly of a heart attack.

In a letter from the 1930s Jabotinsky had written: "My remains will be transferred [to Erez Israel] only on the instructions of a Jewish Government." Twenty-five years after his death, with

the approach of the Six-Day War, his remains, together with those of his wife, were taken to Israel by a Jewish government decision and buried in a state funeral on Mount Herzl.

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When Jabotinsky died he left a young Palestinian follower in America, Peter Bergson (a.k.a. Hillel Kook) as one of his followers. With America's entry into World War II, Bergson often came to Chicago and with the writer Ben Hecht, of Chicago fame, helped to stage pageants and to agitate for the creation of a Jewish army in Europe or the Middle East to fight the Nazis. They were vigorously opposed again by Rabbi Stephen Wise and the Zionist Organization of America.

After the end of World War II and the outbreak of hostility with the Arabs, Ben Hecht assisted in the purchase of a ship to bring arms to Irgun followers in Tel-Aviv to help them fight the Arabs. The ship was fired on by Haganah troops acting under orders of Ben-Gurion, who demanded that their arms be turned over to the new Jewish state and not used by the Irgun as a separate army. Many were killed and the boat sank. The boat bore the name of "Altalena," Jabotinsky's pen-name. Even though he had been dead for almost a decade, the internal conflicts within Zionism had carried on after his death. They do so to this day. □

Jabotinsky's American Tour

[The following article originally appeared in The Sentinel on January 24, 1935 when Vladimir Jabotinsky paid his second visit to Chicago.]

It was hardly to be expected that the names of many in the upper brackets of American Jewry whose forte is fund-raising and putting a damper on "agitation" of any kind, especially of a Jewish character, would be found listed on the huge nation-wide reception committee assembled by Jacob de Haas to tender a hearty welcome to Vladimir Jabotinsky on his arrival in this country and provide him with sponsorship and support necessary to enable him to make the most of his presence here at this time. The things, nevertheless, that the virile visitor uncompromisingly stands for and symbolizes, commend him to all who haven't utterly lost that which is most vital and essential in coping with the internal as well as external problems confronting Jewish life, namely Jewish spirit.

Whatever else the hard-hitting Revisionist Zionist chieftain now in our midst, lacks, he markedly resembles the elder Roosevelt (and the present incumbent of the White House as well) in the matter of the highly desirable quality characterized by Americans as "intestinal fortitude" (not commonly credited to Jews) and that is why he continues to be a dynamic figure with an irresistible appeal to all who are content with nothing less than action and results. In this respect he is unique among Jewish leaders of our time, rendering invaluable service by the not to be discounted and despised opposition he can be depended upon to provide within as well as without Jewish life.

There is something undeniably Maccabean about the battling proponent of a "New Deal for Palestine," who inaugurated a three months' tour of this country and Canada with his arrival in New York this week, revealing in the first interview he gave out, a grip on the situation that is as noteworthy as his ability to express himself in strikingly original fashion. "The whole face of Zionism," he illuminatingly observed, "has changed. It is no longer a 'movement' - it is a frozen Exodus; frozen because the gates are closed and only a fraction of the millions of Jews who must enter Palestine or perish, are permitted to enter. That is why a New Deal has become

imperative, both on the part of England as mandatory, and of the Jews themselves."

Jabotinsky said several things in his first interview on our shores that should cause a revision of the way he is regarded in some quarters. Striking with his usual vigor at the "class war" idea applied to Palestine," he said: "Class war" may or may not be a good thing for countries already 'made'; but Palestine is only in the making. When every new enterprise is a pioneering experiment; when you want 'capitalists' to go on founding such enterprises so that you might bring in more workers from abroad; when even the 'national' funds have to be collected from bourgeois, - then the obsession to 'fight' that very bourgeoisie becomes not only preposterous but immoral." The Jews of this country are in for a lot of airing of the points at issue in the struggle going on in Palestine between the organized labor group and the Revisionists of whom little is known outside of Palestine except their alleged "terroristic" activities.

That Jabotinsky is as free from the taint of fascism as he is from any communistic or radical labor predilections is evidenced by his statement: "Should any of my generation among the Revisionists live long enough to be present at the shaping of Palestine's constitution as the Jewish State, we shall insist on a constitution based on the most old-fashioned principles of liberalism and democracy -- probably simply copy the best part of Britain's constitution, or America's."

These views voiced by the rugged Revisionist leader on his arrival here are probably as new to many in this country as are his scholarly attainments as well as his heroic service on the fields of battle and the part he played in making it possible for the British to rule Palestine. In addition to a number of his own works, he translated Dante into Hebrew, and Bialik's poems into Russian, and collaborated in compiling the first Hebrew atlas. He is more conversant than most Americans are with the writings of James Fenimore Cooper, Bret Harte, Edgar Allan Poe and other standard American authors. His genius is thus many-sided and his mission here accordingly must be considered as of major importance by all elements constituting American Jewry.

A.A. Freedlander

***Jews of Chicago* Puts Board Member Cutler on Best-Seller List**

Long-time Board member Irv Cutler has received popular acclaim to match the warm critical response he has found for his new book, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*: according to a representative of University of Illinois Press, copies of the book are "just flying off the shelves."

As a result of a number of recent readings Cutler has given as well as strong word-of-mouth recommendations, the book has made the *Chicago Tribune's* local hardcover nonfiction best-seller list for the last two months, climbing as high as number three at one point, sandwiched between books by Chicago Bulls Dennis Rodman and Phil Jackson.

A third printing of 5000 is due out in August; many academic presses are satisfied with sales of only one-tenth that total number of books.

Cutler's presentation before a Society open meeting drew a large and appreciative audience. His June 23 talk at Spertus, in conjunction with the opening of the *Precincts, Parties & Platforms* exhibit [see page three] drew a standing room only crowd. He has spoken at a number of book stores and for a variety of additional groups as well.

"It's keeping me busy," Cutler said. "I'm getting calls all day for tours and talks. ... People are even coming by the house to get books signed."

Cutler is no stranger to good press. He is a long-time tour guide in the city and has been written up many times in area publications. His book *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent* has had three different editions and has served as a text for many different college classes.

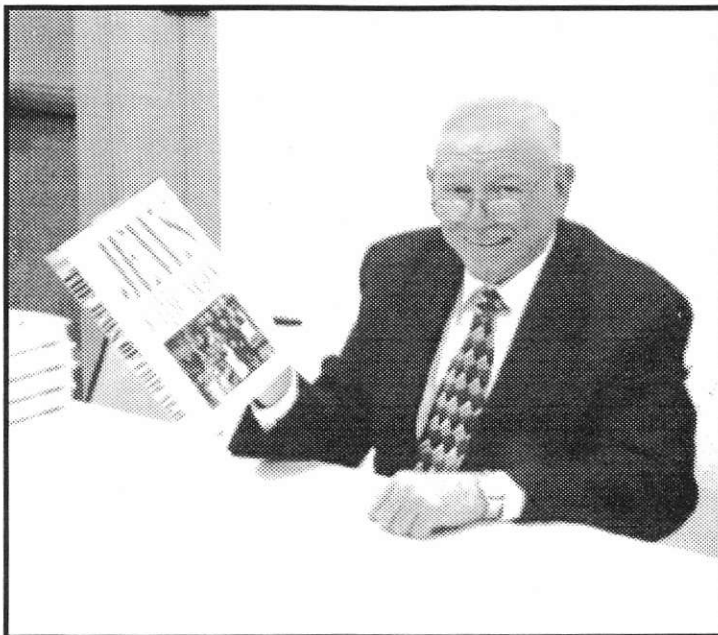
The reaction to *The Jews of Chicago* has been something more, however.

"I meet people all over now who say they've seen the book and read it. I've met people from Baltimore and New York who have it," Cutler said.

Cutler is self-deprecating when it comes to analyzing the book's success.

"Jews are good book readers and they're very nostalgic," he said. "You're getting a lot of parents who buy the book for their children, and a lot of children who are buying it for their parents. We're getting it both ways."

He also suggests that some people have bought the book because it includes a history that is personal to them. "One woman said she saw her father's name in the book and that she bought four copies of it for her children," he said.



Photograph by Norman Schwartz

Irv Cutler displays a copy of his book, *The Jews of Chicago*, at a Society open meeting

Reviews have praised the book as a good overview of a broad history that manages to weave a good narrative with good detail into a book that is well-enough illustrated to sit comfortably on a coffee table.

The book is especially strong in the way it recaptures the geography and spirit of Chicago's historic Jewish neighborhoods. Although trained as a geographer -- he is a professor emeritus of Geography at Chicago State University -- Cutler believes his affinity for local communities goes back even further.

"I grew up in Lawndale," he said. "I sort of came up through the Jewish neighborhood system."

The book's success has naturally pleased its publisher. Stephanie Smith of University of Illinois Press remarked that it had become something more than a typical academic release. "We don't do that many books that you'd expect to find in the front of the bookstore," she said.

Smith said it is possible the book will eventually be released as a paper back, but she said it will certainly continue exclusively in its hardcover format for another year.

Cutler said he is enjoying the book's success, though he is already planning his next project, a revised edition of *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent*. "It's sort of fun now," he said of *The Jews of Chicago*, "but it was a pain when I was writing it."

Copies of *The Jews of Chicago* are available in bookstores throughout the Chicago area, and they retail for \$29.95. Given the book's initial sales, it should be available for quite some time. □

Minsky Contest Announces Call for Entries

October 31 marks the deadline for submitting manuscripts to the fourth Doris Minsky Memorial Fund publication competition. The Fund offers a \$1000 prize as well as publication of the winning manuscript.

Suitable manuscripts dealing with some aspect of Chicago Jewish History may be submitted to the Fund in care of the Society offices, 618 South Michigan Ave., Chicago, 60605.

"We are looking for manuscripts which, while making a contribution to the record of Chicago Jewish history, will also be of interest to the general reader," Society President Walter Roth said.

The competition is open to anyone

excluding members of the Society Board of Directors.

The judges prefer that manuscripts be less than 15,000 words, but that requirement will be waived in some circumstances. Manuscripts should be completed work, typed double-spaced, and essentially ready for publication.

The Fund awarded two prizes in 1991, both of which were published in the Fund's Publication No. 1. One manuscript is entitled *Chicago's Jewish Street Peddlers*, by Carolyn Eastwood. The other is *Memories of Lawndale*, by Beatrice Michaels Shapiro.

The Fund also awarded two prizes in 1993, both of which were published in the Fund's Publication No. 2. One manuscript is *Memories of the Manor*, by Eva Gross, and the second is *The Chayder, the Yeshiva, and I*, by Morris Springer.

The third Minsky publication features *The Cantors: Gifted Voices*

Remembered by 1994 winner and new Society Board member Bea Kraus.

Judges of the competition look for work that both makes a contribution to the work of our Society and also presents its material in a professional and interesting manner.

Individuals considering topics for monographs should keep in mind that topics that are overly broad are likely to lack the detail that a genuine contribution to the study of local history should offer.

On the other hand, potential writers should recognize that a well-researched piece on an individual or institution may not have broad enough appeal for the contest.

Anyone interested in further information on the competition should contact the Society at (312)663-5634.

The Doris Minsky Memorial Fund was created in memory of the late Mrs. Joseph Minsky of Northbrook, a founder and long-time officer of the Society who died in 1988. □

Society Newsletter Seeks Memoirs of Jewish Chicago

Chicago Jewish History, the newsletter of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, occasionally publishes memoirs of individual Chicagoans.

Examples of the sort of memoirs we publish include one man's memories of growing up as the grandson of a West Side butcher and one woman's recollections of helping to entertain Jewish soldiers during World War II.

Individual memoirs give us the opportunity to present history in its narrowest confines. The stories that you might recall from your childhood or from some unusual situation in which you found yourself often prompt other peoples' memories to flow as well.

The memoirs we seek are refined versions of the same stories you may well tell at family gatherings or when

you and old friends come together.

Keep in mind that manuscripts should be no longer than six double-spaced pages and, preferably, should be submitted on IBM-compatible disk in WordPerfect 5.1 or earlier, Microsoft Word or in ASCII or DOS format. (For those of you without access to computer technology, good old paper will work also.)

The editors consider both the caliber of the writing and the originality of the subject matter in weighing which memoirs we will be able to publish.

We attempt to comment on every memoir submitted, but are not always able to do so. Be certain to include a return address and phone number with your submission.

We encourage you to record what you remember from your first-hand experiences. Memories are most convincing when they are most personal.

Much of the rest of the work we publish in *Chicago Jewish History* focuses on broad themes, famous

individuals, or notable events. Memoirs allow us to focus on the history that most of us actually lived.

Suitable memoirs may involve distinctive personal memories -- details as obscure as the name of the corner market or the way a neighbor might hang her laundry -- but should do so in a way that helps evoke a broader past.

Keep in mind that your story ought to be a good one, but that the best memoirs function by inspiring the reader to recall his or her own story.

The editors recommend that prospective writers focus on narrow subjects: either narrow periods of time extending across a neighborhood or large family, or narrowly focused recollections of an individual childhood or career.

The editors accept query letters, but cannot guarantee the publication of any work that is submitted.

Submissions may be sent to Joe Kraus at 1416 W. Catalpa, Apt. 2, Chicago, IL, 60640. □

Annual Meeting

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business of directing the Society for the coming year.

The five new board members offer a variety of interests and skills to the Society. Ethel Shulman, Judy Gutstein, Dr. Albert Erlebacher, Bea Kraus, and Paula Chaiken bring different backgrounds to the Board, but all share an affection for history.

Bea Kraus is familiar to Society members from her winning the 1995 Doris Minsky Memorial Award for her manuscript, *The Cantors: Beautiful Voices Remembered*. She has also authored a history of the Jewish South Haven resort area for the Michigan Jewish Historical Society and has co-authored a book about a Skokie woman's struggle with the disease lupus.

Kraus was born in Brooklyn, but has lived in the Chicago area since she was 15. She taught in the Chicago Public Schools for many years, chiefly at Hibbard Elementary School in the Albany Park neighborhood. There was still a sizeable Jewish presence in the neighborhood when she began teaching, but she witnessed a succession of demographic changes. "We represented 35 different languages at one point when I was there," she said.

Kraus says she is particularly interested in adding to the Society's pool of researchers. She hopes to become involved in the proposed Lawndale area synagogue history project. As she said, "I would love to see those synagogues re-established, not physically, but historically."

Ethel Shulman has had a ring-side seat for Society Board discussions for several years as the wife of long-time Board member Milt Shulman. She said that she enjoyed hearing accounts of Board meeting presentations and arguments so much that Milt finally asked her, "Why don't you get on the Board yourself?"

Shulman has been a member of the American Art Club for 40 years, has a background in the *Left Poale Zion* and

grew up in the Humboldt Park area attending Yiddish schools. She reports that her chief interest with the Society is in finding ways to tell the history of the labor, political, educational, and entertainment institutions that comprised Chicago's secular Jewish community.

"I think such organizations were a very big cultural part of Chicago, not just Jewish Chicago," she said.

Dr. Albert Erlebacher is Professor of history at DePaul University, and he holds a Ph.D. in American history from the University of Wisconsin. He specializes in political and economic history as well as history of higher education.

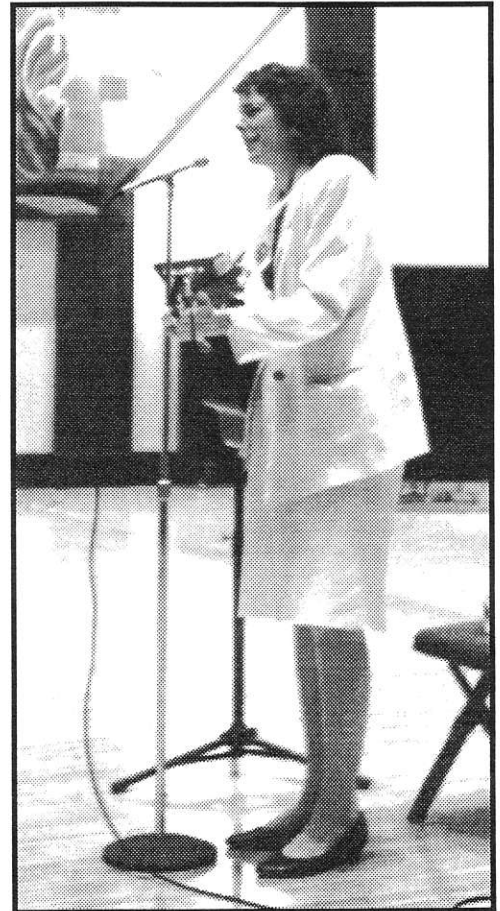
Born in Germany and raised in Wisconsin, Erlebacher has taught at DePaul since 1965 and has announced he will retire at the end of the next school year. In addition, he has taught at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh and at several different public schools.

Erlebacher is at work on a book about the history of DePaul and he said he is interested in the full scope of the Society's work. He said he looks forward to exploring the different committees and projects of the Society and he joked that he does not have "an Erlebacher agenda" in mind for reforming the Society's direction.

Judy Gutstein has lived in the Chicago area ever since arriving as an infant, fleeing Germany with her family. She is a retired teacher in the Chicago public schools, and she continues working as a substitute.

Gutstein is active in a variety of Jewish organizations. She is a board member of *Chewra Kidoshim Ezras Nidochim*, a German Jewish burial society, a docent with the Council of Jewish Elderly, and regularly lights candles for Jewish patients at Rush North Shore Hospital in Skokie. She is a member of Congregation Or Torah.

Gutstein says she is most interested in working to draw attention to the contributions and experiences of the many German Jews who arrived in



Photograph by Norman Schwartz

Leah Broner Fine Performs

Chicago just before and after World War II. "The German Jewish contributions to the Chicago Jewish community are impressive," she said. "In spite of the hardships they had, they still found time to give to the larger community that needed them."

In addition to oral history work in the German Jewish community, Gutstein says she would like to help publicize the work of the Society and hopes, in particular, to raise our profile in the suburbs.

Paula Chaiken is a newcomer to Chicago, but she has left quite a mark on the community already. A native of Philadelphia and a graduate of Duke University, Chaiken has worked at the Spertus Museum for three years. She is currently the Assistant Curator of Education.

Chaiken is active in a range of Jewish community organizations. She is a member of the Associate Division Executive

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Outreach Efforts Continue to Net New Members

The Society is pleased to announce our second consecutive quarter of unusually successful new member recruitment. New members are the life blood of an organization like ours, and nothing bodes better for our future than to find our membership list lengthening.

Much of the credit for such increased recruitment goes to the co-chairs of our Membership committee, Elise Ginsparg, Mark Mandle, and Clare Greenberg. All three have made it a priority to promote the Society to their friends and in the organizations within which they are active.

We welcome the new members of this quarter, and invite them to join us veteran members in working to publicize the work we do as a Society.

We have no paid staff in our Society, so everything we accomplish comes about as a result of the efforts of volunteers.

We have a range of different committees that help us pursue our overall mission: to research, preserve, and re-tell the history of the Jews of the Chicago area.

Our oral history committee, program committee, membership committee, editorial board, and other committees

formed for specific projects, all do work that contributes to recording a history that may otherwise never be recorded.

We are pleased that so many new members will now join us in that work. We would like to welcome the following people to our Society and encourage them to continue and expand our projects:

<i>Ann Albert</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Albert</i>
<i>Leonard & Dr. S. Cahman</i>	<i>Milstein</i>
<i>Dr. Albert Erlebacher</i>	<i>Clara Pellish</i>
<i>Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Glassenberg</i>	<i>Sylvia Rice</i>
<i>Bea Glenn</i>	<i>Judy Roth & Steven Zeldes</i>
<i>Lillian Gordon</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Larry Savitt</i>
<i>Beverly Groudine</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Sol Siegel</i>
<i>Mr. and Mrs. Shalom Kohn</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Kurt Simon</i>
<i>Jeff Kondritzer</i>	<i>Lauren Simon</i>
<i>Florence Kovin</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Slobodien</i>
<i>Mr. & Mrs. Gil Levy</i>	<i>Edith Spiegel</i>
<i>Scott Mandle</i>	<i>Helen Tucker</i>
<i>Marion Mayer</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Edward Wein</i>

The Jews of the Chicago community may number in the hundreds of thousands, but we are a small community for all of that. Each of us has played "Jewish geography," finding long-time connections to new-found friends.

Recording the history of that community involves keeping larger

issues in perspective, but it also requires sorting out the details of our history as well.

The history of our community is a history of large institutions and significant demographic shifts, but it is also a history of families, a history of friendships, and a history of intimate neighborhoods.

Members new and old can take part in uncovering that history in any number of ways. Come to our open meetings, listen, and respond to the speakers there.

Join us in our committee work, or consider submitting material to *Chicago Jewish History* for possible publication. We are always interested in memoirs that shed light on our shared past.

Consider also donating any materials that might augment the Chicago Jewish Archives. While our storage and preservation facilities require that we be careful in selecting the material we accept, we are nevertheless always looking for such items as old photographs, old audio recordings, programs from significant community events, small-circulation books and periodicals, or other unusual items.

As we near our 20th year as a Society, we are pleased to find that we have continued to grow. We look forward not merely to having our new members contribute to the work we have already accomplished, but also to their broadening our work and taking us in altogether new directions. □

Annual Meeting

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Committee of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, and she teaches in the Evanston Midrasha program serving confirmation-age students from Beth Emet, the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation, and Temple Beth Israel.

Chaiken has been a regular contributor to *Chicago Jewish History* and has volunteered on a number of Society projects in the past year, including helping to send out membership cards to new and renewed

members. (She is engaged to *Chicago Jewish History* editor Joe Kraus. The two will be married August 25.)

In addition, she has published an article on museum education in *Shofar* (scheduled to be reprinted in a Routledge Press volume next year) and has spoken at the 1994 American Jewish Congress Jewish Feminist Symposium and the Nuveen Forum at the Field Museum.

Chaiken hopes to lend her organizational skills and enthusiasm to the Society's Program Committee. "I want to attract more young people to our programs. ... History isn't just for our

parents and grandparents. It's who we are, too."

Leah Broner Fine's performance held her audience rapt for 45 minutes as she performed Jewish music from around the world. Accompanying herself on the guitar, Fine proved herself remarkably adept at switching from one musical style to another.

Singing in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, and English, she demonstrated that Jews have incorporated all sorts of musical elements into their music as they have lived in different cultures, but she demonstrated as well that Jews have also often managed to transform the

Deli Project Serves Up History on Wry

L. John Harris is a Jewish historian of a different sort. And The Deli Project, a project that he founded to record the history of the Jewish delicatessen in America, is Jewish history of a different sort as well.

Harris is a San Francisco-area resident who clearly loves to eat and clearly likes his history with a pickle on the side.

The Project sets out to record the history and document the present of an institution beloved inside and outside the Jewish community.

Among the Project's different undertakings are a pickle eating contest, a series of deli correspondents, and a compilation of recipes to be known as *The Deli Book*.

In the first issue of his newsletter, Harris reports that a group of Los Angeles comedians, including such well-known figures as Don Knotts, Harvey Korman, and Don Adams, meet regularly at delis to swap jokes, gossip, and tall tales.

One member of the group, former *Dick Van Dyke Show* writer Sam Denoff, is even at work on a screenplay that incorporates much of the *shtick* he sees in the delis the group visits.

As much fun as Harris has with the Project, however, he sees it as serious history as well. He has even enlisted the assistance of the Judah L. Magnes Museum at Berkeley.

Harris believes the deli has been an important cultural institution, one that resonates with Jews across the country.

As he writes in *The Deli Project*, "As our Project has developed, it has become increasingly clear that we have struck a chord: there is obviously a nostalgia shared by many Jews for a simpler life, a life symbolized in many respects by the culture of the Jewish Deli, that family operated neighborhood deli/restaurant we all remember from our childhood."

To preserve the history of the deli, he has begun an oral history project,

interviewing owners, cooks, and even patrons of delis around the country.

The subject of one of his first oral histories, Abe Lebewohl, owner of New York's Second Avenue Deli on the Lower East Side, was recently murdered as he was returning receipts to his bank.

Harris writes eloquently of his friendship with Lebewohl, and he has announced that he plans to dedicate The Deli Project to Lebewohl's memory.

Chicagoans can contribute to the Project by passing along any anecdotes, recipes, old menus, photos, or advertisements having to do with area delis. At last word, Harris had not yet lined up an official deli correspondent from Chicago.

For more information or to pass something along, contact L. John Harris, The Deli Project, 1563 Solano Avenue, Suite 201, Berkeley, CA, 94707. His phone number is (510) 527-6616. □

Have Tape Recorder, Will Travel

One of the ongoing projects of the Society is to capture the history preserved in our midst through the recollections and stories of community leaders, business pioneers and other exceptional Chicago Jews. We invite you to take part in that effort by joining the oral history committee.

Conducting an oral history is a way to record and publicize history that can be as rewarding to the interviewer and the subject as it is to the Society and community. Many Society members are experienced takers of oral histories and are available to give you advice on how to prepare and conduct interviews.

Think for a moment about friends and neighbors with rich backgrounds. Let us know about them so we can record their stories for future generations. Better yet, let us know about them and then work with us to record those stories yourself.

Such oral histories are invaluable documents for recording history. We make it a practice to publish excerpts of

a different one from our files in each issue of *Chicago Jewish History* where we hope they are of some current interest, but there is no way of knowing what uses future historians will find for them.

Taking and preserving oral histories is a means of stockpiling raw material for the writers and story-tellers to come.

The oral history project has been a priority of the Society the past year and we are anxious to include as many of our members as possible in the work and planning. The voices we record and transcribe may well turn out to be the voices that tell today's history to tomorrow's historians.

For information about how to get started conducting oral histories, contact the Society office (312)663-5634. □

Information Request: Looking for Book from Synagogue Diamond Jubilee

Society Past President Norman Schwartz is looking for the Diamond Jubilee Book of March 14, 1948 issued by Beth Hamedrash Hagadol Ub'nai Jacob Anshe Luknit.

One of the foremost researchers of Jewish history in the city, Schwartz is seeking the book to help him round out the references available to him as he looks into the many research requests the Society receives each month.

Please check old files in the basement or look through boxes of old papers in the attic. The book may be there, and it may be that you will uncover other interesting looking material that will help recover our local history.

The Chicago Jewish Archives are always looking for new material, but its resources are limited and it can accept only some of the material offered to it.

Anyone finding a copy of the Diamond Jubilee Book or something else that seems useful to the mission of the Society should contact Norman Schwartz at the Society office, (312) 663-5634. □

Oral History Excerpt:

Former AJCongress Director Manny Silver Recalls Jewish Community Projects

The following is an excerpt of an oral history of former American Jewish Congress executive director Manny Silver. It was taken by Society Past President Norman Schwartz on October 31, 1983.

Norman Schwartz: I'm now in Manny Silver's office, and we're going to talk about some of his experiences with the American Jewish Congress during the period when he was Executive Director.

Manny Silver: Yes, I served from 1968 to 1981. My background included involvement in community work, in social action, educational work, volunteers, and so on, so that I had a thorough background before I came to Congress. What I had to do was to get a "handle" on what we should concentrate on out of the total American Jewish Congress program, which is very wide, when there were such minimal resources both from the point of view of staff and volunteers, and from the point of money.

In cooperation with the local governing council and the New York staff, we were able to establish areas of importance in Chicago which needed concentration. One of them was communal visibility, a difficult concept because there are so many groups that are involved. One of the priorities was to try to involve the Jewish Federation and other prestigious groups with the American Jewish Congress in activities which would give us and them coverage. We would be able to give service to the community but in a much bigger way than we could do on our own.

One of the projects was the one that you were involved in. The Bicentennial celebration, "I Am My Brother's Keeper," in 1976, developed out of a discussion that took place at a CJA [Commission on Jewish Affairs] meeting in Chicago in somebody's home where we explored doing something on a volunteer basis in spite of the decision by the Jewish Federation and other groups not to have anything communal for the Chicago Jewish community. In every other big city they were having a lot of money put into the Bicentennial celebration to highlight the Jewish community's role. The Federation and the other groups had decided not to do anything on a communal basis but to let each group do its own "thing." The CJA decided that we should get others to join us and do a communal project. Fortunately, the Jewish Federation and certain individuals felt that that was very worthwhile in spite of their previous decision: and, once they got on the bandwagon, it became

the two of us as the sponsoring agencies bringing in almost every synagogue and every communal group and individuals and everybody else.

It was a project that was very worthwhile, and people identified with it. This is just an indication of how the executive director has got to get going on something where the priority is clearly established for AJCongress -- however, we must act not on our own but as a catalyst until the whole community is involved.

Schwartz: And of course the net result of that was the rebirth of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

Silver: Yes. My emphasis has changed now. I'm dealing with one of the many problems I dealt with in the American Jewish Congress, and that is religious discrimination. A complainant came to me just the other day who learned about us because she is a member of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society and saw the *Guide to Jewish Chicago* or another guide, in which BJEP [Board of Jewish Employment Problems] was listed. So she learned about us through her contact with the Chicago Jewish Historical Society and, therefore, came to us with her complaint of discrimination in employment, which we are dealing with right now. So these things turn full circle, and I see this as one aspect of how we, as professional Jews, give service to the total community even though we are working in only one organization. That is the name of the game, or it was in the American Jewish Congress, where the idea is to serve the total community.

From my point of view, I had to establish where I could use my professional expertise in order to get going on those things, and one of the areas was visibility. It doesn't negate the excellent work that is done in other areas, but it is important to let people know that you exist and that you are doing something if you believe in your principles. Using our resources as a fulcrum, we were able to move the total community.

Another exhibit you may not have been aware of at that time was "Art in the Concentration Camps." You've heard of that? That was again a situation where an opportunity was being bypassed by others in Chicago. In 1971 the famous "'I Never Saw Another Butterfly' drawings" actually were brought from the Prague Museum to America for one year, and they were exhibited in about six or seven cities. I noticed that Chicago was not one of the cities. I found that no Jewish organization had picked up the option in order to have it brought here. You had to guarantee finances and security - these are pieces of art apart from the reminiscences.

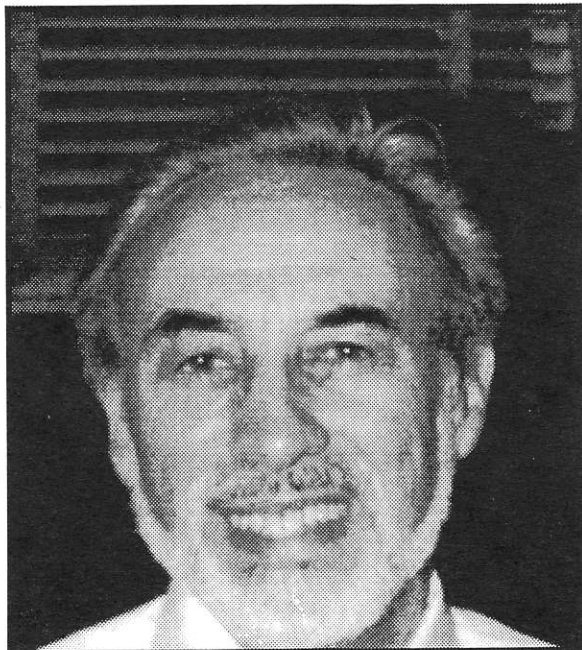
I was able to get a committee involved and to get the interest going in AJCongress. We then were able to persuade the Jewish Federation to co-sponsor something, so that, with all the strength of the Jewish Federation and

the American Jewish Congress, we sponsored a free exhibit for three weeks. That was the opening of the little museum of Roosevelt University in the new Crown Student Center on Wabash, and we had the exhibit there. That was an example where we had many, many volunteers who came to us in order to help bring the message of the Holocaust which today, many years later, is much more of a message which has gotten a lot of publicity. In those days there were very few involved before the exhibit. We dealt with it, and we were able to get the publicity; and again, because of our interest in trying to get the message across to a larger audience than our own members, we were able to do so for the whole community.

We've done other exhibits. I was personally involved in one which had a Jewish emphasis at the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center. Just three or four years ago there was an opportunity to bring in some beautiful photographs of Hassidim in Williamsburg. Photographs taken by an excellent photographer were blown up and exhibited in New York. Nobody picked up the option to exhibit in Chicago. I was able to get a committee -- the Committee on Jewish Life and Culture -- interested in bringing in the photographs for exhibit. Although we have a few Hassidim in Chicago, people don't know about the life of the Hassidim, and these photographs -- beautiful large pictures -- were on exhibit for a couple of weeks at the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center. Together with them, I was able to put together programs on dances, lectures, discussions, a Jewish Film Festival with five films, so that, with the committee working on different levels, we were able to get a public message across to Jews and non-Jews with the help of the Chicago Public Library in this case.

Schwartz: Do you want to talk about any of the personalities that you dealt with in this period that were outstanding for some reason or another - people who were in the forefront of pushing forth the objectives of the American Jewish Congress?

Silver: It is difficult to do that without listing the leaders of the American Jewish Congress from the president and vice-presidents, the chairmen of the committees, and the volunteers. It is difficult because, although a chairman might be the one whose name appears on the letterhead,



Photograph by Norman Schwartz

Manny Silver in 1983

very often it could be a member of a committee who picks up a challenge and runs with it. I don't think it would be fair for me to pick out any one more than another. I must have been involved in maybe a hundred different projects, and in each one there are different people -- lawyers, Jewish teachers, or what have you -- involved in different areas. If I talk about those on that level of involvement on a day-to-day basis, you also have those who were involved on a national basis -- local leaders who were our representatives on the national level, so that it wouldn't be fair to one or the other to pick any names.

Schwartz: Well, then maybe we can pick some subject. We know

that the American Jewish Congress was very active in getting the Fair Employment Practices Act passed in the State of Illinois. During your tenure, were there some items like that, so that we are not slighting some person, we're just dealing with an issue?

Silver: In this case, as long as you mention a specific area, sometimes there is a specific person. Joe Minsky was president of the American Jewish Congress for a couple of years and is now sitting on the board of the Bureau of Jewish Employment Problems. [Editor's note: Minsky subsequently served as a Society Board member as well.] At one time, he was the legal counsel for the FEPC before it became the FEPC, and he was instrumental in the decisions that were taken in Springfield in order to get this law on the books. Now he was doing this before he was involved in the American Jewish Congress, and then he became a part-time employee of the American Jewish Congress as our legal counsel. So here again you've got the development from someone from the outside becoming a part-time employee and then becoming a member and eventually being in charge of the total administration as the president. From the point of view of discrimination, he has always been one of those who was very involved, particularly in immigration and labor laws; I see him very frequently, and I am pleased that he is continuing his participation as a volunteer.

Schwartz: Was an issue like the Fair Employment Practice Act unanimous in the American Jewish Congress - that they should be involved in that, or were there people in the Congress who thought that it was not an issue for Congress to be ...

Silver: The history of the FEPC pre-dates the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Claude Benjamin in 1937 was vice-president of American Jewish Congress in Chicago. He and others were involved in American Jewish Congress in fighting for equal rights. However, he latched on to the point of discrimination in employment, and he found that, even though we had a committee, there was a national program in the American Jewish Congress on eliminating religious discrimination, and, though they were trying to do their best, they saw what is still a problem in Jewish life. American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee and other groups were also involved but acting separately without coordination, and it is to the credit of the American Jewish Congress and to these leaders that they called meetings and decided that in Chicago, no matter what the rest of the country does, let us sink our differences and create one agency to represent the organized Jewish community instead of each organization doing its own thing.

What we did was create a coalition which said, look, we have all of these organizations ... and we represent a majority voice of the Jewish community.

Claude Benjamin was the first president and founder of the Bureau on Jewish Employment Problems which was created by the American Jewish Congress, bringing in the B'nai Brith and the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee, and then other groups.

So that what was originally a project of the American Jewish Congress became simply an interest of the American Jewish Congress, which gave up its own activity in favor of the overall group. American Jewish Congress takes the credit for initiating this organization in which I am working. So it is a logical continuation. One of the activities of this coalition way back in 1937 was to involve the non-Jewish groups and to create coalitions which brought pressure on the Legislature and eventually resulted in the Fair Employment Practices Act. The local coalitions were a result of American Jewish Congress and the other organizations getting involved. In AJCongress, not only was there no opposition, this was one of the basic tenets of the American Jewish Congress, and, although they did not continue to act on their own after 1937, they were responsible for the organized fight against religious discrimination in Chicago.

Schwartz: But this group is independent of the American Jewish Congress at this time, from the point of administration?

Silver: Yes. They decided way back in 1937 to form one agency on which each of the Jewish organized groups has representatives, so that today Joe Minsky and Sylvia Neil

are representatives from the American Jewish Congress on the BJEP board, and all of the Jewish organizations have agreed to give up their own activities on this area in order to have one overall group.

Schwartz: Were there any groups within the Jewish community that were opposed to this?

Silver: No, not to my knowledge.

Schwartz: We know that in the past history in the Jewish community there were some indications in the early days, like in the end of the 19th century, the whole community was not behind everything.

Silver: The differences were on techniques. There were those who wanted to be very gentlemanly: to discuss things, to educate executives of corporations; and there were those who wanted to go out on marches and boycotts and publicly show that some company was discriminating. Eventually they reached agreement as we continue to do

today. We have to agree on the best tactics for a particular objective. With regard to the basic idea of obtaining equal rights for Jewish employment, I have never heard of any disagreement about that. There was always agreement....

Schwartz: It's kind of interesting when you read the newspaper or talk to people and one asks is there a Jewish position, and then one says no there isn't because nobody can speak for all the Jewish people, and certainly, since the ERA was not defeated overwhelmingly but was not supported overwhelmingly, there must have been a fair segment within the Jewish community that was not in favor of the ERA.

Silver: Of course. The Orthodox community has always opposed it. In fact, that was one of the questions, and you've touched on it. Any Jewish communication to the legislative or public had an emphasis from the Orthodox. They are entitled to their viewpoint, but, because theirs was the only viewpoint propounded, they were the only ones who gave testimony, they were the only ones who really came forward, it was accepted as if this was the viewpoint of the whole Jewish community.

What we did was create a coalition which said, look, we have all of these organizations listed who do not agree with the Orthodox, and we represent a majority voice of the Jewish community. So again, one of the basic principles of American Jewish Congress was, and still is, the democratization (if I could use the expression) of the Jewish community so that no one individual or one committee could speak for everyone. □