

when women in Palestine drove heavy trucks with ammunition and supplies in the British Army. Although women in Israel, even those with past army careers, agree that women should not serve on the frontlines today, Dina Wirth, former commander of the Women's Army Corps, said that she had to struggle in her days against both her parents and the army brass each time she tried to broaden the opportunities for service to women.

In this war, few women were called up for military service. While the few men who were not called up struggled to maintain the economy, thousands of able bodied women with good education wandered around the home front with nothing to do, becoming a burden on the various voluntary bodies. It seems that their frustration caused home front morale to sag.

While a study is now being conducted at Hebrew University on the subject of neglected womanpower, the Ministry of Labor in Israel is trying to solve this problem. According to Mr. Israel Goralnik, Director of the Department of Vocational Training at the Ministry of Labor, only 30% of the Israeli female population is employed. "This is more than it used to be five years ago," he told me, "when the percentage of women employed was only 25% of the total female population. Each year since, the female working power has increased by one percent." Statistics indicate that in Sweden, 40% of the total female population works while in the U.S., 42% do. The highest participation of women in the labor force is in Japan where 46% of the total female population works.

Israel is not the easiest country for a working woman. Preconceived ideas, particularly in the Oriental communities and lack of education in certain strata, are responsible for the lack of advancement opportunities. Insufficient numbers of child care centers, short school days, no tax deductions for household help and very difficult shopping hours add to the problems working mothers face in Israel. Nevertheless, because of emergencies like the present, the male world is slowly becoming more flexible, finally realizing that a great resource is being wasted. "We at the Ministry of Labor," Mr. Goralnik said,

"would like to see women's participation in the labor market in Israel increase to 42%. This is a great energy potential which has to be exploited in the proper way!

"More than 20,000 workers are needed in the metal, electronic and electrical industries in the country but no matter how hard we tried to promote women for such jobs during the last few years we still face many obstacles. Since we began our courses, women were only assimilated into semi-skilled jobs like the assembly of components. Women are not welcome in these industries because, so far, it is still a man's world. I believe that today is perhaps the opportune time to fight for placing women in responsible jobs in the above industries," he concluded.

And this is how the new plan by the Ministry of Labor was born—to train women for higher skills which would enable them to enter the middle echelon of industry thus giving other women opportunities for advancement. "The demand for more technicians already started in 1967 when industries began developing at a rapid pace," Mr. Goralnik added. "Engineers were transferred to management and higher positions, creating a vacuum ready to absorb 16,000 workers. Out of the 6,000 we trained, only 250 were women. This refers to architecture and building also.

"What happened during the Yom Kippur War is very interesting. In the places where there were a few women technicians, they saved the situation. At the electronics factory AEL there was one female technician who kept the enterprise from closing down as all the men were mobilized. She was so good that her employer decided to pay her baby sitter and other expenses so that she could work overtime. This is a typical example of how wage scales change with demand. Another example. At the offices of the National Insurance Institute all the equalization funds had to be prepared during the war for those mobilized. There was one woman remaining in the department and she organized a group of other women and the job was done. Things are slowly returning to normal but something has happened to the mentality of men. They finally realized that work in our country will have to be divided equally between men and women so that in cases of

emergency, when men are mobilized, offices and industries will not be paralyzed again."

Another achievement reached by Mr. Goralnik was to convince the Egged transport cooperative to open courses for female bus drivers to replace the male drivers still mobilized. Egged was rather reluctant to agree and as I was interviewing the various parties concerned, I discovered that the membership rules specify that no women are to be admitted into the Egged bus cooperative. A most undemocratic set of rules for a company which is subsidized by the government, which means taxes contributed equally by men and women.

However, they were apparently not serious for when I recently asked the cooperative's spokesman Mordechai Shifman, about training female drivers, he replied, "What courses? What women? We have plenty of drivers now." But as soon as Israel has another emergency, public transportation will be paralyzed again as it was during and after the war. As it is, transportation is still very bad and people have to wait as long as an hour and a half for a bus in the evening. Where are your drivers Mr. Shifman? Other enterprises in Israel have agreed that women should be trained for more technical jobs than in the past.

The demands of Israel's emergency post-war economy have assumed special importance in the current programs of Moetzet Hapoalot/Pioneer Women. Working in cooperation with the Labor Ministry's Employment Department, Mrs. Hettie Beer, vocational training director of Moetzet Hapoalot is encouraging female employment in the metalworking and electronics industries by offering them special training programs in these fields. Also, a training program for pharmaceutical and laboratory specialists and hospital nurses has been started by MH/PW. Many of the trainees are women who had previously worked in these branches and have left those professions in the past.

This special program is conducted through more than 100 vocational training centers. Incidentally, the number of children in the care of the Council's day nur-

(Continued on page 27)



OUR YIDDISH WRITERS

A HISTORY OF YIDDISH LITERATURE, by Sol Liptzin. Jonathan David, publisher, 521 pp. \$10.00.

Their names were household words if you were fortunate enough to grow up in the right household. Their world was marvelously alive and vital, a source of irresistible debate and discourse. We—the younger generation—gloried in their achievements. It seemed, to us, a melancholy judgment on the taste and acuity of the wide world that it wasn't equally caught up in the mystique of these doings. We understood, however—for these were, after all, *our* Yiddish writers.

We knew who *we* were because they told us. The Yiddish language was a bridge, spanning the globe, reaching back through the decades. Within its boundaries there was room for even the most divergent viewpoints. Its travelers might bicker among themselves—as often they did—but as they themselves pointed out, and as we well knew, it was done in our behalf, in quest of something better—a novel, a story, a poem, a better world.

Interest in Yiddish from *without* by non-Yiddish speakers is on the upswing these days. But books that cover the field are still hard to come by. Much of what was done—and is, in fact, being done now—in Yiddish has remained locked within the language and culture, inaccessible to the outsider. What filters through is often incomplete or inaccurate. That is why Prof. Sol Liptzin's *A History of Yiddish Literature* is such a welcome addition. Of all the volumes dealing with Yiddish literature in English, this one has the widest scope. Its twenty-four chapters, beginning with "Old Yiddish Literature" (The Bovo-Bukh, The Shmuel-

Bukh, The Tseno-Ureno . . .) through "The Post-Classical Narrative" (The Peretz Circle, Pinski, Abraham Reisen . . .), and "American Eclectics" (Lutzky, Eliezer Greenberg, Tabachnik . . .) and concluding some five hundred data-filled pages later with "Yiddish In Israel" (Papiernikov, Tsanin, Hofer . . .) are ashimmer with the names and doings of hundreds of Yiddish luminaries. Their achievements are chronicled with loving care by Prof. Liptzin, who has obviously spent a lifetime reading and studying these authors.

Many of them appear strange and startling in their new English-alphabet garb: Aaron Zeitlin, poet of religious mysticism, has also written a distinguished novel, essays by the hundreds, dramas and short stories. Yet only a few pieces in scattered journals and anthologies have been translated. Abraham Sutzkever, poet of sublime phrasing, founder and editor of *di goldene keyt*, Israel's most prestigious Yiddish periodical. Of his poems, essays and stories only *Siberia*, a long poem, has been published under separate hardcover in English. Jacob Glatstein, poet of word wizardry, novelist, dramatist, short-story writer and essayist. Two novels have been translated: *Homecoming at Twilight* and *Homeward Bound*. A pair of verse volumes (one translated by Etta Blum, the other Ruth Whitman) composes his English *oeuvre*. Chaim Grade, poet of musical splendor. He has given us novels, essays, short stories. One novel, *The Well*, has been eloquently translated by Ruth Wisse.

All four of these authors have appeared in the Howe-Greenberg *Treasury of Yiddish Stories*. But for an overall view of their achievements one must turn to Liptzin. This is similarly the case with the rarely translated Bergelson, Kulbak, Markish, Hirshbein, Reisen, Opatoshu, Leivick, Mani-Leib, Halpern. . . . A glance at Dina Abramowicz's YIVO compilation *Yiddish Literature in English Translation* from 1945 to 1968 shows us the importance of Liptzin's history. Abramowicz informs us in her introduction that prior to 1945 only eighty Yiddish books had been translated into English; since then, 247 more items have enlarged the list. Omnibus volumes, though, such as the

dish Stories or Leftwich's *Yisroel*—which contains a section of twenty Yiddish authors—are not itemized. (So while Bergelson makes no appearance in the YIVO listing, one tale apiece of his can be found in the aforementioned collections.) Since 1968 a number of new translations have come out, sparking even greater interest with language and culture. In Yiddish itself, poets, essayists, novelists and spinners of tales carry on as if an insistent crowd still clamored at their door. Few Yiddish books today are not published at the author's expense; yet the number of these volumes—approximately 135 a year, emanating from about fifteen countries—has scarcely diminished over the last two decades. For the English reader, prior to Liptzin, no systematic history of these activities existed. Now much of what is available can finally be put into its proper context.

Not everyone, of course, will agree with Liptzin's judgments. Liptzin, for instance, berates I. B. Singer for "a distorted demonic view" of Jewish life, and concludes, "Though his [I. B. Singer's] fame in the 1960's and 1970's exceeded that of any Jewish novelist since Sholem Asch, it was not likely to be as enduring as that of his older brother, I. J. Singer, whose novels presented a sounder insight into Polish-Jewish reality before its extinction." This view is not widely held by most American critics.

There are also some omissions: Liptzin calls Lutzky's *A bukh tsum leben* the poet's "final volume." The 1958, 360-page *Fun aldos guts* bears that distinction. Israel Goichberg's life and work are summed up in one sentence. There is no mention of I. B. Singer's novels, *Shadows on the Hudson* (1957) or *A Ship to America* (1958). Neither have been translated into English, but both appeared in the pages of *Der Forverts*. But these are very minor matters. What counts is Liptzin's panoramic view, his vast knowledge of Yiddish letters, and the intensity he brings to his task. Those who are at all active in the field of Yiddish will find *A History of Yiddish Literature* indispensable. It is a volume that one gratefully turns to time and again—as this writer has done—for guidance and illumination.

ISIDORE HAIBLUM