

Dear David,

18 Feb. 1990

Two days ago I sent you an alarming card about Der Sotn in Gorycy let me tell you the whole story. When I was in New York I managed to get some Jimper's works in Yiddish in book form, I also made copies from Forverts. I didn't however make a copy of Sotn because from what I knew Polish publishers weren't interested in that particular novel (which was silly, because it's the best one). Fortunately, prof. Shmeruk convinced them that they should publish it first. Actually, he convinced the publishing house in Wrocław (they started publishing a whole series of Yiddish classics two years ago and most of the books published so far are reprints of pre-war or early post-war translations). On

Shmeruk's advice I contacted the Wrocław publisher and they would like to sign a contract with me as soon as they receive the copyright. They are having some problems with it, mainly for financial reasons. They would like me to translate 10-15 pages of the novel before they sign the contract. I knew it's a very

difficult undertaking, my Yiddish is not good enough, although my passive knowledge of Yiddish is not too bad. I spend at least 1 hour with Yiddish every day. Recently, I translated Gimpel Traus and compared it with the version I did in 1980 from the English.

The new version is much better. Some sentences  
in a sense "translate themselves" naturally into  
Polish. All the nuances of syntax, that disappear  
in English, can be rendered. It's good that  
I can always compare my versions with the  
English ones. I can also consult my old Jewish  
friends whose Yiddish is very rich. I know I can  
also ask you for help or explanation of most  
difficult passages. Before it's published, someone  
will read it and revise. Anyway, it has always  
been my dream to translate Simpa from Yiddish  
into Polish. Isn't <sup>that</sup> symbolic about it: me  
studying Yiddish 45 years after the war  
in order to acquaint Poles with the  
writer of the destroyed community? I  
see it as a kind of mission, a tribute to  
the murdered and a step to reconciliation.  
I rarely use such big words but this is a  
special case. Do 1933 and 1943 versions  
differ? If they do, I'd translate the earlier  
version & mention the changes in the  
introduction. While reading your article about  
Sholem Aleichem I had some reflections on the  
name of Uosa in Joseph & Uosa. Is it also an allusion  
to the animal used as a sacrifice? Uosa in Polish  
is sometimes used as a nickname for an innocent,  
careless & slightly silly girl. (it's not the case in the  
story). Does Joseph & Uosa have its Yiddish version?  
Sholem couldn't help me in this respect. Do any of his  
stories for children have Yiddish versions? As for the Hebrew  
they are based on stories for adults, but only  
based.

Love. I hope to hear from you soon. We still don't know  
whether you are coming. We hope you will show us