

## THE PRESENT STATE OF THE LANDSMANSCHAFTEN

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## From Whence Is a Landsman?

HERE must surely lie a deep significance in the fact that when two Jews, who are total strangers, get together—this is irrespective of the circumstances under which they meet, or the city in which it happens—the words in which they attempt to befriend each other, like an invisibly outstretched hand, are: "From whence is a Jew a *landsman*?"

Seemingly they have been in this country for a longer time than they had spent on the other side, leaving the latter as children and carrying away with them the bitterest memories of the place; and yet, without having been conscious of the fact, the spark of the old home had been glowing in their hearts throughout this time. In the course of decades, they had stopped thinking of their place of birth and of the relatives they had left behind there; but, unexpectedly to themselves, these had been recalled to them.

To this day, the *landsmanschaft* society is the stepchild of the communal life of the Jews in this country. The individual member is quite often regarded as a particularly backward element in the cultural sense. The illiterate type of Yiddish language used at their meetings has repeatedly lent itself to ridicule; and the same is equally true of the manner in which the *landsmanschaft* carries on its business, of the "points-of-order", the benefits it dispenses, and the burial-plots. When the Yiddish Writers' Group had announced its intention of undertaking

a study of the various *Landsmanschaften* groups, it was laughed at for its pains, and told it was concerning itself with something that was moribund. "All these societies resemble one another like peas in a pod," the Group was told, "there is nothing in them about which you can write."

These belittlers, among whom were to be found writers and other public figures prominent in Jewish communal life, overlooked one simple fact: and this was that we had to deal here with an integral part of the Jewish community, indeed, with the most prominent quantitative group in New York. This institution, though numerically the largest, was at the same time our most neglected mass organization.

The most outstanding organizations among us, both radical and ultra-radical in nature, often overlooked a cardinal fact in their social mission: the individual—the human being in their membership, the beating heart of him who exists outside the humdrum duties and regulations. They were concerned with everything and every one, but remained indifferent to the narrowly personal interests of their own members.

But no man likes to be forgotten, or to go unnoticed. And the *landsmanschaft* society, instinctively recognizing this need, bound its members to itself with warmth and humane considerateness. Through sickness, death, need, and loneliness, whether rich or poor, active or inactive, each individual member was made to find his rightful place within the society.

To be sure, a number of these societies had developed into verbal battlefields in which unending disputes over money-matters soon brought about their ruin, still others disintegrating as the result of a split in the organization. Nevertheless, we still find many hundreds of societies today, and congregations too, which have existed for decades, whose leaders are paragons of honesty and whole-hearted devotion, public spirited individuals who sacrifice their time and energy for the benefit of their membership.

There is no denying the fact that the majority of the societies are even at the present time, in the critical year 1939, retarded ideologically, and their activities are limited to their own benefits and narrow business concerns. So that no outsider may gain admittance to their meetings, an inner guard is still maintained at the door. Thus when one of our writers, presenting proper credentials, tried to gain admittance to such a meeting, he was looked upon as someone from the enemy camp. Thus, instead of becoming the power that they easily might in Jewish life both here and abroad, in the main they remain isolated, "independent" as they like to call themselves.

At the same time, though the extinction of the *landsmanschaften* has been predicted for years—for such "logical" reason as the unhealthy condition of their benefit insurance, and the cessation of immigration from Eastern Europe—statistical data gathered by our writers' group reveals that the societies are currently gaining in membership. Those societies which became affiliated with a fraternal order retained their identity as *landsmanschaften* despite the amalgamation.

For some time, too, the various orders

have carried on discussions over whether to organize *landsmanschaft* branches or the more American form of territorial branches, the latter seeming the more sensible form of organization, though the argument for *landsmanschaft* branches still carries weight.

And this leads us to the question:

Why a Study of the *Landsmanschaften* of New York

From the numerous releases sent in by the *landsmanschaften* to newspapers with regard to their activities, readers of the Yiddish Press cannot help seeing that there is a great deal going on within these organizations. Particularly the deplorable condition of the Jews in Poland, Rumania and Hungary has stirred the *landsmanschaft* members to organize united relief committees in behalf of their native towns. These committees are a good indication of what might still be done if the *landsmanschaft* organizations recognized their common social interests and utilized their power in behalf of the commonweal.

Our study differentiates between the *landsmanschaft* benevolent society and the ordinary benevolent society—the "Manhattan Benevolent Society" is a case in point—because the name "*landsmanschaft*" denotes the specific character of this type of society which has played a historic role in the immigration of Jews to America.

From the table listing the founding of the various *landsmanschaften* by years, there may be derived a clear picture of the barometer of Jewish conditions here and abroad. Through the founding of the various *landsmanschaften*, we see the innumerable stages through which the Jewish immigrant had to pass.

The *landsmanschaften* furnish us with a key to the life of the broad Jewish

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masses, and are the inexhaustible reserve-fund of all mass organizations. When it was decided to work on a study of landsmanschaften in New York, our writers' group found itself blocked by numerous obstacles. Though landsmanschaft organizations had been in existence for over fifty years, no data about their number had been assembled and no record of their activities kept. Material which had recently been written about them proved to be confusing and, quite often, incorrect.

#### How Many Landsmanschaften Are There in New York

From responsible community leaders who had devoted some time to the subject because they felt it to be of special interest to their organizations, we obtained exaggerated figures. We might even say, "extracted", for everything seemed wrapped in a veil of secrecy.

A number of important bodies declined to help us in this work, curtly refusing to furnish us with their lists of secretaries and the addresses at which their societies met. It proved useless to tell them that we needed this data for the purpose of a study, and not in order to raise money; that our statements had the backing of the government which financed us, and of the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union, under whose auspices we were working as writers.

It was only possible for us to begin with our work because of a number of exceptions to the above. The "Hias" was the first organization to furnish us with a list of landsmanschaften and their addresses. Others who cooperated with us were the landsmanschaft federations, like the Polish Federation, the Galician Federation, the Rumanian Federation, and the workmen's orders of all types. Of aid to us also was the Yivva (Jewish Scientific Institute), the Bialostocker

Center, and a number of individuals.

When the question of the actual number of landsmanschaften in New York arose, each gave his individual estimate; the various figures furnished us ranged from 1,000 to as high as 10,000.

The figures available to us in print proved to be no better in this respect. According to Judah Piltch, in a paper on the landsmanschaften in the Year Book for 1938,<sup>1</sup> there are approximately 3,000 landsmanschaften in the United States. New York and vicinity, his figures show, contain 950 of these landsmanschaften. He claims that the total membership enrolled in the landsmanschaften throughout the country is about 20,000. From the most recent and thorough study of Jewish communal life in the United States, by Dr. M. J. Karpf,<sup>2</sup> we learn that the exact number of landsmanschaften existing in large American cities is not known, but it is estimated that there are several thousand. What the nature of their activities is, and the amounts of money raised by them, is also not known.

It therefore devolved upon us to do the pioneer work, to go to the original sources, that is, to the landsmanschaften themselves. We decided to tackle the following landsmanschaft organizations:

1. Anshes, societies and congregations.
2. Independent societies.
3. Ladies' Aid Auxiliaries.
4. Landsmanschaft branches in the various Orders.
5. Family circles and name societies.

1. "Yearbook of American Jewry", edited by Menachem Rublick, published by the Histadruth Ivrit of America, New York, 1938. (In Hebrew.)

2. "Jewish Community Organizations in the United States", by Maurice J. Karpf, Ph.D., Bloch Pub. Co., 1938. (English.)

#### 6. United relief committees and patronati.

Further along we will discuss each type of organization separately. At present, it is enough to state that those who had had any experience with the societies predicted discouraging results for our undertaking. Their own achievements in that direction, they told us, had been slight. But we do admit that, had the societies cooperated with us more willingly than they did, our information would have extended beyond the 2,000-odd societies we succeeded in contacting to include an additional 500.

Yes, it proved to be quite a difficult matter to get past the inner guard, and to convince the various secretaries that we had come to them not for help, which thing God forbid; but that, on the contrary, we had arrived to make a contribution to their work.

Our workers carried with them the following questionnaire:

1. Name of organization ..... District .....
2. When founded ..... Purpose .....
3. How founded .....
4. No. members at time of founding .....  
Average age .....
5. Have you helped found other organizations.....
6. Are you a member of a federation .....  
Which one .....
7. Present membership of your organization.....
8. Membership classification: workers .....  
businessmen ..... others .....
9. Present average age ..... Per cent  
non-landsmen .....
10. No. members American born .....  
Proportion of youth members .....
11. Time of meeting ..... Place of meeting .....
12. Do you engage in cultural activities .....
13. Lectures ..... What kind ..... Theatre  
benefits ..... Where .....
14. Language used for meetings .....  
correspondence ..... minutes .....
15. Do you pay benefits ..... Amt. death-  
benefit ..... sick-benefit ..... others .....
16. Amt. of dues in your organization .....
17. Have you your own burial plot .....  
Amt. paid in ..... Amt. still due on it .....
18. Have you a printed or written constitution .....
19. Have you published any material .....
20. Have you participated in the raising of

funds for the benefit of your native town

21. Through what agency: Joint .....  
Indep. .... Other .....
22. Amt. raised until now ..... Have you sent  
a representative to Europe .....
23. What ties do you maintain with the old  
home .....
24. How much aid have you given the various  
institutions in your native town .....
25. Do you help support any Jewish-American  
institutions .....
26. Which ones ..... Amt. contributed  
annually .....
27. What are your assets .....
28. Is your society: Zionist ..... Orthodox .....  
Progressive ..... Radical .....
29. Are you losing members ..... gaining .....
30. Name of your society ..... Address .....
31. Name of interviewer ..... Date .....

Our representative approached the secretary at the place of meeting prior to the time at which it was scheduled to start. He showed his credentials, spoke in the Yiddish language, and otherwise conducted himself in a friendly manner. When the secretary at last consented to reply to the questions, he still showed reticence at the question concerning the assets of his organization. Fully three hundred out of a thousand organizations declined to furnish us with information on this point. Sixty-three out of 257 congregations (Chevrohs) also refused to give such information.

In many other instances, the secretary accepted the questionnaire from our representative, promising to take the matter up at their meeting, fill it out himself, and mail it back to us. The facts reveal that out of 621 questionnaires which were left with the secretaries, only 68 sent in replies. Our writers were often obliged to make several repeat calls to these societies, and as a result succeeded in obtaining filled-in questionnaires from 224 additional ones. Eight secretaries replied stating that their organizations categorically refused to fill out the questionnaires for reasons of their own. A typical reply follows:

Gentlemen:

One of your writers left a questionnaire with me which I promised to fill out; but as you no doubt understand, a paid official of a society cannot take upon himself alone the responsibility of giving out any information concerning his organization without first taking the matter up with his superiors. Accordingly, I brought the matter up on the floor of the meeting, and one of our members proposed a resolution that positively no information be given out to any one, and therefore I am obliged to deny your request.

(Signed)

Not only were our writers obliged to visit the same society several times; but, more than once, when the question was brought up on the floor for discussion, they were invited to appear before the membership and to explain why this information was needed.

The Jewish press, without exception, came to our aid, publishing our releases and in general cooperating with us in every way. The Galician Federation permitted our representative to speak on its radio time.

The first filled-in questionnaire was secured in October, 1937, and the 2045th in July of 1938. Altogether 154 different meeting places in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx were visited and investigated by our writers. In the newer communities, no landsmanschaft bodies are to be found. Their stamping ground is still the East Side, and the *landsman* who lives in Staten Island or Queens continues to visit his landsmanschaft society on the East Side.

From our questionnaires we see that the largest place of meeting for landsmanschaft societies is the Central Plaza Annex, with 250 organizations. Next in order of importance is the National Theatre building, with 175 organizations. Among the more truly "Americanized" landsmanschaften it has lately become customary to "settle" in the better-class hotels, located in the heart of Manhattan

(Edison, McAlpin.) The family circles tend to hold their meetings in private homes except where they have many branches, in which case they meet in hotels or well advertised neighborhood centers.

#### The Different Types of Landsmanschaft Bodies

Two thousand and forty-five landsmanschaften responded to our questionnaires. But four hundred and twenty-three declined to do so or failed to give complete information. We have information on a total of 2,468 landsmanschaften, and complete statistics on the following:

1. *Anshes*—290
2. Societies—715
3. Ladies' Aids—71 and Ladies Auxiliaries—287
4. Orders: Workmen's Circle branches—164; Women's clubs—63; Youth—6; National Workers' Alliance—14 branches and 2 women's clubs; International Workers' Order (Jewish Section) 53 branches, 11 women's clubs, 2 youth clubs. Lodges—23; Ladies Auxiliaries—2.
5. Family circles—76
6. Name societies—45
7. United Relief Committees—39
8. Patronati—25
9. Miscellaneous centers, clubs—18

#### The Anshe Type

A type of religious congregation, these are the very oldest of the New York landsmanschaften. From our questionnaires, we learn that two were founded in 1862-64; five between 1868 and 1877, twenty-five between 1877 and 1887; and, at the beginning of mass immigration into this country (1888-97), sixty-six *anshes* were founded.

The *anshes* too have their locale. Most of them are to be found today on narrow Henry Street. In the neighborhood of

a few blocks, there are to be found about 100 *anshes*. Not each *anshe* occupies its own building, however. A number of them rent space from other *anshes*. In a single two-story building may be found from four to five *anshes*, notwithstanding the fact that they can barely get together enough people required for a *minyón* (the minimum of ten required for the conducting of common prayers.)

Our writers had to make many trips before they finally found the door unlocked, and a sexton or group of men inside. The majority of sextons feared to disclose the "secrets" of their congregations, often refusing even to furnish the address of the presidents or secretaries.

In answering the question about assets a number of the secretaries gave characteristic answers: one had the word "dead" inserted; a second requested that the words "study the torah" be filled in. In one of these synagogues our representative, a young poet, recognized in the sexton his former Hebrew teacher from his native town. He recognized him by his voice.

On the whole, the *anshes* were sympathetically disposed towards our questionnaire. There was no cynicism apparent in their attitude, though they were all hesitant because of fear. Our chief problem was to find out the exact time the various *anshes* met. During religious services, our writers were handicapped by being unable to write. Still another difficulty lay in the fact that a number of our writers, ordinarily wearing no hats, could not gain admittance for this reason. On the other hand, on several occasions the timely arrival of one of our writers during religious ceremonies helped to complete a *minyón*.

A number of *anshes* designate themselves as relief societies, and with them

the synagogue takes a secondary place. From their constitutions we learn that the *Chevroh Kedushah* (burial officials) and the *misaskim* (their lesser assistants) in every *anshe* occupy a leading position in the organization's activities.

The Kletzker Society, for instance, which owns the synagogue building wherein are located its headquarters, has the following items inserted in its constitution bearing on its synagogue:

"Each member is in duty bound to conduct himself quietly and with decency and not wander about the synagogue during services.

"During the time of specific prayers, he must refrain from carrying on conversation with others, and it is up to the trustees to see that this is carried out faithfully.

"No one except the designated cantor may go to the altar, without first securing permission for this from the trustees.

"When two bar-mitzvahs (confirmations) or two weddings of members are scheduled for the same Saturday they must draw lots as to who should read the part of the Torah especially designated for this purpose. When it is a question of deciding between a bar-mitzvah (male candidate for confirmation) and a bridegroom the former must be given priority in this respect."

The services are to be conducted in "Ashkenazi." In reference to the *Chevroh Kedushah* the constitution contains the following, among other items:

"Every 15th day of Kislev the Chevroh Kedushah is to call a meeting and elect two of its members as first president and second president. The elections are to be conducted by means of the ballot. The presidents must know how to read and write, at least in the Yiddish language.

"Every 8th day of Succoth (Feast of the Tabernacle), the last day of Passover, and the second day of Shevuoth the "aliyos" (the special honor of being called to the reading of the Torah) belong to the Chevroh Kedushah. Else the presidents pass them on to the highest bidders, and when there are no purchasers the presidents have the privilege of distributing these among persons of their own selection.

"The presidents of the Chevroh Kedushah are held responsible for all the details pertaining to the cemetery owned by the congregation.

"Every 15th day of Kislev the Chevroh Kedushah is to give its members a supper."

traditional!

### Societies

These are usually divided into "Independent", "First" and "Progressive Sick Benevolent Organizations." A good many of these still designate themselves by the prefix "Young Men's", though the organization may often have been in existence for almost fifty years. This might best be explained by the fact that, at the time of the society's founding, its membership consisted of young men between eighteen and twenty-five. An outsider, when visiting one of these "Young Men's" societies, and seeing none but gray-haired men in the positions of leadership, is certainly bound to smile at this easy paradox.

The older generation that came to this country was orthodox in outlook and, accordingly, first of all founded a congregation for purposes of prayer—that is to say, an *anshe*. But the generation following them, the youth fleeing from compulsory military service, from poverty, persecution, or for political reasons, seemed more intent on becoming Americanized and so gave American names to the societies which it founded.

Let us examine a number of typical replies to the question, "How was your society founded?" as given to our writers by the secretaries or oldest members of these societies.

1. Our men, having left their wives or sweethearts in the old country, and being beset by loneliness in their new environment, assembled at the home of a married *landsmans*, drinking tea, playing cards or listening to reports of conditions in their native town.

2. A *landsmans* was about to be deported because of illness. His *landsmen* recognized the importance of having their own organization for mutual aid in times of stress.

3. A *landsmans* dies suddenly in a factory. Mistaken for a Greek, he is buried in Potter's Field. His *landsmen* learn of this, and have him disinterred. They decide to have their own organization with a cemetery plot, etc.

From the names borne by societies, it may be seen that serious disputes often arose within an organization: orthodox against free-thinkers; provincialists against Americanizationists; conservatives against progressives. The result was a split within the organization, and the consequent founding of a new society. ("First" against "Independent").

At that time, the society was the original laboratory for social experimentation. The more progressive, recognizing the importance of current trends, helped build the trade-union movement, the political parties, the language press, and the various orders. The more cautious ones remained within the society, taking over its leadership. Nonetheless, we find outstanding men of all walks of Jewish life in America, writers and other professionals, who are to this day affiliated with these societies. Ask them the reasons for this, and they will inform you that it is not because of the various society benefits; but, on the other hand, for reasons of sentiment associated with their past in the Old World, of friendship with the members, and of course, nostalgia for the old home.

There are societies which came into existence not merely because of an immediate need like the death of a *landsmans* or loneliness of members, but solely because of idealistic aspirations. The Czechonovtzer Society, for example, founded in 1899, assumed the responsibility for founding a village named after its native town. Its members, having been forbidden to do so as Jews under the Czarist regime, wished to settle on land. They called their organization "The Home Land Society" and looked for a suitable location near New York. Subsequent disputes wrecked the organization, and nothing came of the plan.

In a number of our questionnaires we came upon the following typical answer as regards the founding of the society: The town after which the society was named has been wiped out completely (war, fire) so it was decided to aid the neighboring town.

The very oldest *landsmanschaft* is the Dutch (1859), the first Polish *landsmanschaft* being founded in 1870. At present, its membership is 180. The youngest society was founded in 1937, with 15 members. Today (1938) it has 75 members, 71 of whom are native-born.

### Ladies Societies

Inasmuch as the *anshes* were the first example of *landsmanschaften* among the newly-arrived immigrants from Eastern Europe in the eighties of the last century, and the societies were the second, the ladies' societies—with but few exceptions they usually are called either the Independent Ladies' Aid Society or the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Men's Society—are the third and fourth examples of such organizations. The Independent Ladies' Aid Society was the symbol of the progress made by the new Jewish women.

Our questionnaires were filled out by 71 ladies' aid societies and 286 ladies' auxiliaries. The oldest ladies' aid society was founded in 1895, the youngest in 1935. Our writers went to great pains in gathering their information from the ladies' aids. After the secretary was made to realize the importance of our work and was ready to answer our questions, she frequently was restrained from giving out any information by one of the active members.

It is a characteristic of the ladies' aid societies that to this day the majority of their secretaries and presidents are not women, but men.

The ladies' aid societies hold their meet-

ings in those places where the men's societies meet.

There is a definite distinction between the ladies' aid society, which is an independent organization having its own constitution and benefits—and the ladies' auxiliary, which is no more than a part of the men's organization.

The male secretary of the Mezritcher Ladies' Aid Society has this to say in his introduction to the society's constitution,

"We now look upon our society as a big, growing organization. We are certain that our Mezritcher Ladies' Aid Society will exist forever and for all time. The past has taught us to honor and respect our society because of the many good works we have accomplished. Therefore, and so that our sister love may under no circumstances be destroyed, we look upon it as a sacred duty to uphold the by-laws of this society."

### The Landsmanschaft Branches of the Orders

The growth of the Jewish orders is due to the fact that they were able to absorb the societies without destroying their *landsmanschaft* spirit. For, despite the fact that the branches are subject to all the rules and regulations of the parent body, the atmosphere which prevails in the *landsmanschaften* is very homelike. Its members reminisce about the "old days" and, during an election, the former residents of a single town will band together for the purpose of electing a candidate hailing from that town.

The Jewish orders of radical bent exert much effort in getting the societies to join up with them.

The Independent Order Brith Abraham which was, in effect, founded through the exertions of the *landsmanschaft* societies, declined to give out to us any information regarding its *landsmanschaft* branches; it declared it didn't have any, although in its annual report for 1930 we found 75 lodges bearing *landsmanschaft* names. We have been able to se-

cure information in answer to our questionnaire from only 18 lodges of the Independent Order Brith Abraham.

In the orders too there is much discussion as to what part the wives are to take in the life of the branches. Everywhere the importance of recruiting the wives of members in separate clubs, activities or auxiliaries is recognized.

#### Family Circles

The latest form of landsmanschaften is the family circle. It has been nearly impossible to determine the exact number of such circles in New York because of the habit most of them have of holding meetings in private homes, and at irregular intervals. The bigger and the more firmly organized family circles meet on a designated day, at regular meeting places or in hotels.

We did obtain information on 76 family circles with a membership of 7,734, of whom 3,821 were native born. In principle, the objective of the family circle is similar to that obtaining in the society: sick benefits, burial plots, aid for their members in the old country, and the needy on this side. One constitution states the objective as being "to keep the family society united forever." Another family circle informed us, "Our purpose is to help the sick, lend money, and, above all, to furnish relatives in Europe with aid."

The family circles are much concerned with retaining influence over youth. For this purpose, they organize youth leagues or "cousin clubs", and junior leagues for children.

Most of the family circles have their own burial plots, sick benefits, etc. Many of the circles were founded for purely social reasons. Members meet once a month over a table spread with food and delicacies and have a good time.

The latest developments in Europe have placed important responsibilities on the family circles: helping their relatives in the old country with money, clothing, and aiding some to escape from their present "hell." In time, this will lead the family circle to seek the assistance of central organizations such as the "Hias", "Joint", and landsmanschaft federations, and thus they (the family circles) will be drawn step by step into the general life of the community.

#### Name-Societies

They are classified by us as landsmanschaft societies; for their founders were mostly *landsmen* who, owing to their activities, made a name for themselves and were rewarded with "immortality" upon their demise, and sometimes even before this took place. The name organizations are to be found in all forms of landsmanschaften. Thus, an *anshe* is named in honor of some rabbi; a society after a notable *landsmen*; and an order branch after an outstanding revolutionary figure.

Our questionnaires were filled out by 45 pure-name organizations, whose landsmanschaft identity was not apparent in their name. Their combined membership is 7,482 of whom 1,762 were born in the United States.

#### Relief Organizations and Patronati

In times of mass disaster—war, pogroms and persecutions—the landsmanschaften unite for purposes of aiding their native town. Even independent organizations are formed for this purpose. Relief organizations came into the limelight chiefly during the war years 1914-20.

The very latest form of relief manifests itself in the united relief committees and the patronati (organizations whose sole task is to aid the political prisoners in Poland). We have information on 39 such relief committees form-

ed between 1913 and 1938.

We also have information on 25 patronati. The patronati are supported by all types of landsmanschaften, not only by the radically-minded branches but also by those who are politically more conservative, once they learn of the sad plight of acquaintances or of the children of *landsmen* rotting in Polish dungeons.

#### Membership of the Landsmanschaften Number, Type, and Percentage of Non-Landsmen

There are 256,924 members in 1,840 landsmanschaft organizations of all types (*anshes*, societies, order branches, family circles and individual members in the relief committees and patronati) or an average of 140 members per organization. On the basis of this average, the total membership in the 423 organizations for which we were unable to secure any figures would be approximately 60,000. All told, there are about 3,000 landsmanschaften in New York, with a half million members; in other words, every fourth Jew in New York is affiliated with a landsmanschaft.

Most of the landsmanschaften were organized between 1903 and 1909. Notwithstanding the curtailment of immigration, 32 landsmanschaft societies sprang into existence within the last decade. The situation among the *anshes* is somewhat different. From 1928 to 1938, only six new *anshe* landsmanschaften were founded. The first family circle, according to our questionnaire, was founded in 1887. In 1934, eleven family circles were founded.

From our tabulation with regard to the economic status of the landsmanschaften members, we find that 75% of the membership consists of wage-earners, 15% of retail merchants, and

10% of professionals. It was not possible for us to determine with greater preciseness the specific occupations of the members because the secretaries of the organizations had kept no records of these. Only in recently-published bulletins of some of the societies has there been a tendency to include statistical data. Thus, the "The Progressor", the English-Jewish bulletin of the Brodyer Young Men's Benevolent and Educational Alliance, for March 1938, it is stated that out of 104 members 75 were born in Poland, 21 in the United States, 4 in Russia and 2 in Rumania, one in Germany and one in Austria. The members have a total of 151 children. Eighty-four percent of the members are American citizens. Forty-seven members were born in Brody (Poland).

As has been seen, no statistics on the occupations of members were assembled. From the personal replies of some secretaries, however, it may be safely assumed that the majority are employed in the needle trades, as retail merchants, and as professionals.

A number of secretaries stated that when their society was founded, years ago, the majority of the members worked in one specific trade. For, when a *landsmen* came to this country, his fellow-townsmen secured employment for him in the shops where they worked themselves. Thus, according to one secretary, his society consisted solely of vest-makers. And, to this day, there are a great many Marmorischer (former inhabitants of the town of Marmorisch) in the necktie industry.

Even more bound together economically are the family circles. The founder of a given family circle has attained success in the delicatessen business, let

us say; therefore, a number of families in his circle went into the same line.

Every landsmanschaft has a certain percentage of non-landsmen as members. How did they happen to become members? We find Litvaks in Galician societies, Poles in deep-Russian organizations. The reasons for this are many. A Russian Jew married a Galician girl; his father-in-law took him into his landsmanschaft. Or it may be that a shop-brother took him in, or a neighbor who was a member, or he may have joined for business reasons.

All told, there appears to be an average of 30% non-landsmen in all types of landsmanschaften.

The greatest enemy of all benefit organizations, as of every individual, is pitiless old age. As we have seen, most of the landsmanschaft organizations were originally founded as "Young Men's" groups. The members were young in reality at the time of founding, and they did not fear illness or death much. But today, when the 25th or 35th or even the 50th anniversary of the society's existence is being celebrated, the dangers connected with old age hang much more menacingly over it. The mortality-rate increases. The member can barely pay his dues. He no longer works; he is poor and sick. True, the societies have established various funds for the production of their members: loan funds, welfare funds and above all, funds with which to pay the dues of aged members. The old-age fund in many societies operates in the following manner: after one has been a member of the organization for twenty years and is unable to meet his obligations, his bills are paid for him by the fund, entitling him to all of the society's benefits.

In view of the foregoing, one of the chief problems in the landsmanschaft societies consists of attracting new blood into the organization.

#### The Problem of Youth and Americanization

One of the most interesting sights, when visiting a landsmanschaft, is to observe three generations present at one meeting. You meet a patriarch in an Old World skullcap, whose word has much weight with all the members. He is one of the founders of the society, knows everyone by his first name, and at varying times has held most of the offices of the organization. Today the society's responsibilities are borne by a younger member, a man in his early forties. He is the second-generation American Jew. He was not among the organization's charter-members. He is possibly not even a *landsmen*, owing his appointment to office to his ability more than any other factor. He is already more Americanized and, when the necessity arises, can conduct the meeting in either English or Yiddish. The chairman of the arrangements committee, on the other hand, is thoroughly Americanized, and may have never seen his landsmanschaft town, or left it while quite young.

Our questionnaire has the following to tell with regard to the American born members of the landsmanschaften:

Out of a membership of 256,924 in 1,840 organizations, 38,441, or 15% are American born. They are distributed among the various forms of landsmanschaften in the following proportions: out of 42,416 members of the *anshes* and congregations 5,214 are native-born; out of 114,360 members of the societies 17,695 are American born; out of 29,872 members of the Workmen's Circle

1,862 are native born; out of 11,761 members of the International Workers' Order 1,065 are native born; out of 1,267 members in the National Workers' Federation 120 are American born; and out of 4,240 members in the various lodges 690 people were born in the United States.

The greatest proportion of native-born members are to be found in the family circles. Out of 7,734 members of such circles, 3,821 are native born.

In the ladies' aid societies we find 6,101 members, of whom 594 are native-born; and out of 22,496 members in the ladies' auxiliaries 2,689 are native-born.

Most of the landsmanschaften have no statistics on the proportion of youth groups in their midst. The secretaries attempted to give an approximate answer like "a small number", "between 5% and 10%." Nonetheless, there are exceptions to be met with, especially in the more orthodox groups.

What draws the American-born Jewish youth into the landsmanschaften? To this, they failed to give a reasonable enough reply. But tradition appears to play a significant part herein. The father had been an active member, earning for himself a good name in the society; so the son too wishes to be outstanding, doing so by holding office, and feels that he is doing a worthwhile job of which his family may be proud. Others are talked into joining by members or friends of the family; with many, again, it comes about as a practical matter. Their personal interests demand it of them, and membership aids them in their business or profession. Still others are prompted to join for the sake of the benefits to which membership entitles them.

Three generations attending the

same meeting naturally do not find their interests coinciding; for various problems arise, among which the question of language is often a painful one.

#### Language and Cultural Activities

In the past, all societies conducted their proceedings in the Judeo-German dialect. Not only the Galician and Hungarian landsmanschaften, but also the Russian ones, used a "Yiddish jargon" at their meetings. The constitution of every society carries a clause with reference to language. This is a typical example:

"All proceedings and also the book-keeping of this society are to be conducted in the Yiddish language, but the members are entitled to use either German or English in debate." (Constitution of the Brisker Bnai Brith Sick and Benevolent Society, adopted March 12, 1921.)

The finest example of language development, in our opinion, is furnished by the constitution of the Kolomeyer Friends Association. Three separate editions of the same constitution give the date of the society's founding, but each with a variation that may be slight yet indicative of the change that was taking place. One states that the society was organized "on the 31st of January, 1904", a second that it was "founded on the 31st of January, 1904", and the last "founded the 31st of January, 1904", dispensing with the preposition "on" which was superfluous in the language of the above phrase.

Now let us see what these three separate editions of the Kolomeyer constitution have to say with reference to the type of language to be used in their organization.

*Edition number one:* "All proceedings of the society, minutes, and finan-

cial books shall be conducted in German. But when the necessary officials are not familiar with the former, they may use either Yiddish or English."

*Edition number two:* "All proceedings of the society, minutes, and financial books shall be conducted in German. In the event no member can be found to do this who is proficient in the former, the books may be kept either in Yiddish or English."

*Edition number three:* "All proceedings and protocols may be conducted in Yiddish. However, it is left to each member to use the English language, instead, whenever he finds this to be more expedient."

*(Translator's note: From the original of the above, almost impossible to render into English, may be seen not only the hastening process; but also the development in the use of the Yiddish may well be likened to "Old English", "Middle English", and "Modern English", consecutively.*

The constitution of the Rebecca Kotlerov Lodge, founded in 1893, has half of its title page printed in the Yiddish alphabet, and half in the German. The Yiddish half reads as follows: "By-laws of the Rebecca Kotlerov Lodge, No. 4, A.A.A.I." The German half reads: "Founded on the 17th of April, 1893, adopted the 2nd of October, 1900, New York, printed by H. Kastenbaum, 289 Second Street."

At present, it appears that Yiddish is preferred in the *anshes* and congregations, which permit the books to be kept in English but insist that the meetings be conducted in Yiddish. Article 2 of the Kletzker Sick Benevolent Society bears this out. "The proceedings of the society, as well as the financial and minute books, also all notes, may

be in English or Yiddish. Meetings of the society must be conducted in the Yiddish language *only*."

Most of the constitutions of the family circles are published in English, but they include a provision that transactions may be carried on in English or Yiddish, though in the youth branches of the family circles only English is used.

Out of one hundred constitutions in our possession not one uses the article "der," grammatically correct in Yiddish. Everywhere it is "*Die ershte verein*" (the first society), not "*Der ershter*", and so on.

At any one of a given society's meetings one can hear a babel of tongues. The old generation speaks a rich Yiddish, interwoven with Hebrew words and Talmudic sayings; the second generation speaks a mangled Yiddish-English, and the member of the new generation, speaking English, frequently throws in a number of Yiddish words and sayings just as his grandfather does with Hebrew.

Seventy-six percent of all societies draw up their minutes in Yiddish. Ninety-six per cent of all fraternal workers' orders prepare their minutes in Yiddish. Of the lodges, 70% write their minutes in Yiddish, 15% in English, and 15% in German. One thing is clear: there is full tolerance for every language.

The question of language, in the activities of the societies, is closely related to the cultural problem.

To the query: "Do you carry on cultural activities?" 898 replied in the affirmative and 904 in the negative.

Distributed according to organizations, we discover that 89 *anshes* replied in the affirmative, 157 in the negative.

Of the independent societies 273 re-

plied in the affirmative, 410 in the negative.

Of the ladies' societies 167 replied in the affirmative, 192 in the negative.

Of the fraternal workers' orders 287 said yes, 26 no.

Of the lodges, 3 answered in the affirmative, 17 in the negative.

Of the family circles—43 yes, 72 no.

Of the relief committees and patronati—36 yes, 30 no.

The nature of its cultural activities reflects the spiritual state of the organization. Most of the *anshes* and independents have no lectures on political or social questions. In the *anshes*, the Rabbi delivers a sermon or a guest-speaker talks on Zionism. In the independents, the society's doctor is asked to speak on health topics. The fraternal branches, on the other hand, tend to have a specific political outlook, and the cultural aspects of a program predominate over the rest at every meeting.

Time marches on, and in a number of societies there are discussions as to whether or not to admit this or that leader of a specific political trend of thought. A number of them boast that they are receptive to all political views.

When our writers had occasion to visit societies during city elections, they were asked by those "inner guards" who were politically biased, if a release of our inquiry had appeared in the Yiddish newspaper which boosted their favorite candidates. In order to stand in well with these people, and not only verbally, our writers supplied themselves with all the Yiddish papers containing our release, thus being enabled to produce the proper paper at the requisite time and to gain the ear of the "inner guards."

The modern Yiddish orthography

used by our writers to fill out the questionnaires often did not carry any favor with the presidents or secretaries of various societies. They accused our writers of being ignorant in the language. "What sort of writers are you," they said, "when one has to break his teeth in order to read your type of Yiddish?"

Almost every landsmanschaft "runs" a theatre benefit. The proceeds derived from the sale of theatre tickets are one of the society's chief sources of revenue. And nearly the entire Jewish theatre of New York is supported and maintained by the benefits conducted by the societies. That explains why most of the plays produced on 2nd Avenue are practically landsmanschaft pieces. The play begins on the other side of the ocean; the heroes are "greenhorns" who become Americanized. Act One takes place in the small hometown; the remaining acts are located on the East Side or Riverside Drive. Of recent years, this has been somewhat reversed: the first act portrays the Americanized Jew returning to his native town, etc., etc.

The selection of the theatre has of late been the subject of heated debates in the societies. The more Americanized members would like to select a Broadway theatre playing in English. The older generation does not wish to desert 2nd Avenue. But experience has shown that plays in English have not brought in the revenue which a play in Yiddish brings. The societies as a whole prefer the Yiddish theatre, but many would like to have this theatre located on Broadway.

Aside from the benefit performances, the souvenir journals published by the landsmanschaften on their jubilee and

annual affairs, add considerably to their income. The "ads" bring in many hundreds of dollars. Of late, many societies have published journals which are "de-luxe" both in paper and type of binding. In those societies where the president is an outstanding businessman the journal is sure to bring in a profit of several thousand dollars. As one example, we might point to the Lipkaner Bessaraber journal which carries ads of the larger fur firms in New York, the president of the society being an important member of the industry.

The language problem is evident also in the journals. Even here tolerance reigns, though in most of the journals Yiddish seems to have the dominant position. An exception to this are the journals published by the family circles, which are printed in English; yet the best journal of its kind in our possession, the *Pam-Flicker Family Circle*, is published entirely in Yiddish.

There is also in evidence a tendency to issue printed bulletins, some on a monthly basis and others irregularly. These usually consist of from four to eight pages. The Broder bulletin, "*The Progressor*", has been issued regularly for almost ten years. Most of the bulletins, concise in language and business-like in content, are in the English language.

#### Help and Self-Help

The backbone of the landsmanschaften is the individual aid given to members in time of sickness or need, and to families in case of death. The society knows each member personally. In the older societies the members know each other, or knew each other's families from way back. When an individual member falls upon hard times his fellow members show a personal interest in his plight. They

do more for him than in prescribed by the society's constitution. And what aid is given, is given in a direct manner. There is no red tape, no humiliation involved for the unfortunate.

It appears from this that workers and small tradesmen chiefly are members of the landsmanschaften. They are often in need of loans. To satisfy this need, loan funds have been created, providing for little or no interest. The granting of loans is one of the most important achievements of the societies. There is also a mourner's fund to compensate those who lose several days' wages while observing the prescribed "shivah" (seven days' mourning) for the departed kin. The fund for aged members has proven to be very practical. The secret fund (distress and relief fund for needy members) keeps members' families from being put out on the street. Many societies also provide for a tuberculosis fund.

A number of societies have established special strike funds. This is an innovation, for the majority of constitutions make no mention of it. The Independent Bukarester Benevolent Society, founded in 1901, includes an item in its constitution which makes each member vow that he will never be a strike-breaker. The penalty for strike-breaking is expulsion. The same is true of the Kolomeyer, and a number of other societies. The Lieberer Association provides an unemployment fund. According to the Oshmaner journal, the society aided its striking members during the prolonged clothing strike of 1926 to the amount of \$1,500. There are societies which extend aid to strikers in their home towns abroad.

A number of the landsmanschaften have helped to found homes for the aged. (The First Romaner Sick and Benevolent Society is the founder of the Menorah

Home on Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn.) Other societies aim to found their own centers containing homes for the aged on the premises. The Bialystocker landsmanschaft points with pride to its center, the largest of its kind in the United States. Homes for the aged were also founded by the Mohliver, the Lemberger, and Warshawer societies. The home of the last mentioned, the Haym Solomon Home for the Aged, is on Second Avenue. One of the founders of the Mohliver Society is at present an inmate in the Mohliver Home for the Aged.

So much for self-help. Every society also does much for other needy institutions in New York and throughout the country. Among the foremost is the Hias; others are the various sanatoria, the day nurseries, yeshivas, talmud torahs, charities, the Jewish Congress, the Anti-Nazi League and Palestine. All of these find a warm response in the landsmanschaften. As was stated by one of the landsmanschaft secretaries, "no one leaves our organization with empty hands."

This soft-heartedness on the part of the landsmanschaften is bound to attract professional mendicants of all kinds. For this reason, the landsmanschaften are very strict about whom they admit to their meetings. Some of them meet in hotels, where it is not quite such an easy matter to get at them.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the landsmanschaften come to the aid of purely Jewish institutions alone. The Ushitzer (founded in 1900) contributed money to the Red Cross during one of the recent floods. More than once, local newspaper columns list the landsmanschaften as contributors of funds for the relief of victims of local or nationwide catastrophes.

Recently the landsmanschaften have demonstrated their sympathy for all victims of fascism. The Progressive Slutsker Young Men helped the Spanish Loyalists through the Dubinsky Fund. Quite a number of societies and *anshes* are affiliated with the Polish Patronati, whose object is to furnish aid to the victims of Polish reaction.

But the chief activity of the landsmanschaften is to render aid to their native towns, a work beyond appraisal. Of late years, when thousands of Jewish families have been brought to the verge of economic ruin, the aid of the landsmanschaften has been particularly timely. Thanks to the work of the special relief committees, larger corporations have been formed, corporations whose objective is not merely to aid the victims with a few dollars, but to put them back on their feet in an economic sense. A significant part is taken by the Joint Distribution Committee through its organization of a landsmanschaft division; also helpful are the Federation of Polish Jews and the ORT, which utilizes American funds to establish trade schools and re-orientate constructively the Jewish economy on the other side of the ocean.

Outside of aiding the native born collectively, the landsmanschaft also renders individual assistance, this being particularly true of the older societies. Institutions on the other side, children's schools, talmud torahs, community kitchens, hospitals or homes for the aged, are supported by them. Needless to say, the forwarding of various sums of money for Passover has become a standing tradition with the societies. Distribution of the various funds sometimes leads to disputes within the societies themselves, for the more progressively-minded members are averse



to supporting religious institutions of their native town without equal aid to secular organizations. If a talmud torah is to be helped, then the Jewish library of the town should likewise be provided for. Never yet, however, has a split occurred within a society as a result of such a dispute.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the societies are very retarded in their general outlook. The Golomeyer Society boasts of having helped, many years ago, to organize the fourth Socialist district on the East Side, from which Meyer London was elected to Congress. The Tcherkaser Society consists mainly of radical elements, and so forth.

The following figures summarize the amount of assistance rendered by the landsmanschaften to domestic and foreign institutions:

During the post-war period 1,251 landsmanschaften organizations of all types raised a total of \$7,248,988 to aid those in the old country.

In 1937, 1,004 landsmanschaften donated \$108,078 to domestic benevolent institutions.

#### Attempts to Unite the Landsmanschaft Societies

From time to time attempts have been made to unite the independent landsmanschaft and benefit societies into a sort of federation, all of them proving unsuccessful. One attempt was made in 1934 in Chicago, and another in New York in the same year. The organizer of the proposed Chicago landsmanschaft federation issued a circular titled "On Guard" in which the plans for the federation were formulated in the following manner:

"The associations of *landsmen* are the only organizations which symbolize a united Jewry on a minor scale, because

only in a landsmanschaft society does one find Jews of opposing political views and differing economic status, orthodox and non-orthodox, sitting down side by side to discuss questions pertaining to their organizations. Therefore, it is but reasonable that a union of all landsmanschaften into one central body will point towards a united Jewry, and that is what a landsmanschaft federation should stand for; therefore it is the duty of every landsmanschaft organization to join up." (Circular letter addressed to the landsmanschaften by H. Geil, president of the Landsmanschaft Federation of Chicago and Vicinity).

In the same circular various departments needed by the federation are proposed. These are a medical department, a dental department, a legal department, youth department, and a child-training department.

The "United Jewish Organizations," founded in New York by Chaim Weintraub for the purpose of establishing a federation of the landsmanschaften, issued a special edition of its journal "Brotherhood," on the occasion of its second conference in 1936. This issue of the journal was intended to "serve as a teacher and guide to the leaders of the landsmanschaften and societies. Various problems of insurance, benefits and incidental benevolent activities will be treated in a professional and scientific manner."

The following are some of the objectives and obligations of the proposed union:

"The United Jewish Organizations is a free federation of independent landsmanschaften and benevolent societies for collective activity, not encroaching on the full freedom and self-expression of each individual organization.

"The Jewish landsmanschaften have been the pioneers of organized Jewish life in America. Even today they are building an important and vigorous nucleus of organized American Jewry. Notwithstanding, their participation in the mapping and orientation of new forms of Jewish life in America is hardly noticeable."

Among the tasks to be undertaken by the federation were to be:

"To study the general and social conditions of the various individual landsmanschaften and benevolent societies.

"Help the organizations to inaugurate comprehensive and lively cultural and educational activities.

"Help the organizations to initiate activities that are well-adapted to fulfill the needs and desires of the American-born or American-educated youth, so as to win them over to their parents' organizations."

At the second conference of the United Jewish Organizations talks were delivered by Dr. Herman Frank on "The Insurance Problem of the Independent Societies," and by S. Niger on "The Cultural and Youth Activities in the Landsmanschaften." Landsmanschaft problems were also discussed by John L. Bernstein, Dr. S. Margoshes, and Dr. M. Soltes, president of the United Jewish Organizations.

The landsmanschaft federations that exist today (the Federation of Polish Jews, Galician Federations, the Lithuanian, Rumanian, and Hungarian federations) have undergone various transformations. Of these, only the Polish Federation survived its various vicissitudes. The others disintegrated and were revived again. The Ukrainian Federation, in its time, played an important part; but since the Soviet Government came into power, the functions of the federation

have become unnecessary and it has dissolved.

Time, no doubt, will further develop the course of the landsmanschaft societies and amalgamations.

#### Publications of the Landsmanschaften

Hundreds and perhaps thousands of journals and bulletins have been published by the landsmanschaften, but very few books. Those books that have been published deal more with the native town than with the activities of the landsmanschaften here in the United States. *Wilno*, for example, containing more than a thousand pages of considerable value, devotes too little space to the Wilner *landsmen* in this country. Another book, *Felshtin*, deals mostly with the pogrom victims of the native town of Felshtin. Other books such as *Der Landsman*, published by the Wishkover Society, the *Zabludovker Pinkus*, and the *Smargoner Anthology*, likewise suffer from inadequate data about *landsmen* in this country. The splendid book, *Lodz*, tells of an unsuccessful attempt made to assemble data on the Lodzer Societies in America.

The publications of the Bialystocker may well serve as a model for similar works by other landsmanschaft societies. Here a good deal of space is devoted to the Bialystocker *landsmen* in the United States.

Of great value are the anthologies, *Polish Jew*, published by the Polish Federation as a continuation of its former monthly journal. These contain very interesting data on the history of the Polish Jews in America.

Lately books have appeared in which the landsmanschaften have been used as literary material. Books of poetry seem to predominate: Kalman Heisler's *Kumaner People*; Radoshitzky's book, *Rado-*

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*shitz*; Menke Katz's *Swenzion*. Prose-works in this field are: Ch. Gottesfeld's *My Trip to Galicia*; Jacob Glatstein's *When Yash Traveled*. One should include also the book *Tarastche*, by the non-professional writer-landsman, J. Robin, dealing with the history of his native town.

The landsmanschaften have of late made a noteworthy attempt to publish books by their *landsmen* turned authors. Thus, the Warshawer Branch 147 of the International Workers Order published M. Borenstein's *Short Stories*, and the Baltic-Witebsky Branch 33 of the International Worker's Order published S. Y. Kosinitze's plays. The Moziral *landsmen* published Baruch Glassman's novel, *Lands and Lives*; and the Mlaver-Bendiner Opatoshu Workmen's Circle branch published an Opatoshu bibliography.

#### By Way of Forecast

What is the future of the landsmanschaft movement in America? It would not be wise to rely too much upon the forecasts of those whose predictions with regard to Judaism in America have proven to be fallacious. These are the ones who, thirty years ago, predicted that the Yiddish language would become extinct

in this country within a few decades. Yet today we see thousands of Jewish children's schools flourishing in all parts of the country, as well as magnificent children's journals and story-books published in the Yiddish language. We are also cognizant of the fact that native born young men and women are in training to become teachers of Yiddish.

The end of the landsmanschaften has been predicted innumerable times. Perhaps that is the reason they have been neglected, and given scant attention by the Jewish intelligentsia. May the figures contained in our tables prove of some value to those desiring to understand Jewish life in the United States. These figures, which we gathered from original sources, are authentic. We have sifted the records of 2000-odd organizations which still take pride in their place of birth.

Good works never perish. They take on new forms, but their context remains unaltered. The form of the landsmanschaft organization may perhaps change, but its spirit—the spirit of self help, of concern for the weak, the oppressed and the needy—will remain intact.

## FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

By J. B. LIGHTMAN

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### Social Security Provisions in the Land of Israel

IT is a rather interesting observation, when one notes that highly-developed social forms appear in western civilization only after the maturation and long experience of a country, that they should also manifest themselves in a rather effective fashion in Jewish Palestine today, which still constitutes a physical frontier and land of pioneering, and is literally speaking, a country of preliminary land-breaking. Yet, in fact, social insurance does exist in Palestine today, as noted in an article in the *Palestine Post*, by Meir Benensohn, a member of the Insurance Institute of London, and as referred to in a recent issue of the British-published *Zionist Review*.

The writer is careful to point out, however, that while by social insurance in Palestine is meant employers' liability insurance, health insurance, life insurance of working people, pension insurance and unemployment insurance, the Palestine government itself has not shown too great a degree of initiative in this respect. It did enact a workmen's compensation ordinance in 1936, providing for indemnification by an employer in certain industries to his employees, for such losses as they suffered through accidents in the course of their employment. But this is regarded as only an interesting initial step in government extension of a program of social security, for it stands out as practically the only real effort on the part of the Palestine government to date in this field, aside from some financial grants the government does make for

services of a health nature.

It is however, the famous Histadruth—the General Federation of Jewish Labor—which has taken a tremendous step forward in the initiation of social insurance measures, and in having the employer group contribute toward these measures, although of course as a preliminary to that, the workers themselves early agreed to make their own regular contributions toward an insurance fund. The program is all the more remarkable because it is founded on a voluntary basis. The health insurance aspects of the Histadruth's scheme are administered through a Workers' Sick Fund, known as the Kupat Cholim. This provides medical consultation and treatment, aid in maternity cases, preventive hygiene, compensation during illness for working days lost, and compensation to those permanently disabled.

Figures quoted for 1937 indicate that some 71,630 members, who with their families constituted 132,000 individuals, comprising almost one third of the total Jewish population of Palestine, subscribed to the benefits of this Kupat Cholim. One hundred and eighty-four clinics furnished this medical aid, and in addition to two hospitals with a capacity of 192 beds, the facilities of other hospitals and of Hadassah were used.

During the same year, some 26,613 days were spent by convalescents in the sanitarium maintained by this voluntary Workers' Sick Fund and, in addition, 25,000 visits were made at 13 dental clinics, likewise maintained by the Fund. It is interesting to note that through its