

18 April 1989

Moscow

Dear David,

I received from you the "Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature" and I am very thankful for it. I found there some articles of great importance for me, and of course very helpful is essay on Lensky. I sent you with a tourist from the US two books - an album of Meir Axelrod pictures and poems of our Yiddish avant-garde poet Lev Berinski, he is the only poet of the "middle" generation (he is 50), so I had no choice...

Now became visible first fruits (or perhaps only flowers) of the liberalisation on the "yidisher gas" in our country. The first Jewish monthly in Russian is going to appear in Riga. The first issue ought to be out of print end April. It's circulation is approximately 50,000 copies. It calls "VEK - Vestnik Evrejskoj Kultury" (Bulletin of Jewish Culture). I am asked to consult the poetical section in this edition. There works a talented young poet and translator Valery Slutzky from Leningrad and in collaboration with him I am preparing an "Anthology of Jewish poetry of XXth century" (Jewish means in this fall Yiddish and Hebrew).

In each issue of the journal we will represent one name: about 250-300 lines in Russian translation of Slutzky and two short essays: one biografical (about 1-2 pages) and one critical (about 5-6) pages. It seems to me that the most interesting for Russian readers, who have an experience in reading good poetry, will be the list of names like this: David Hofstein, Shmuel Halkin, Moishe Kulbak; Hayyim Lensky, Shaul Chernikhovskiy, Avraam Shlionsky; Peretz Markish, Leib Kvitko, Osher Shvartzman; Nathan Alterman, Uri-Zvi Greenberg, Jonathan Ratosh; Mani Leib, Moishe-Leib Halpern, Itzik Manger; Rabbi Kook, Shin Shalom, Dan Pagis; Mordkhe Gebirtik, Avraam Sutzkever, Leizer Volf; Yehuda Amichai, Hayyim Guri, Lea Goldberg; Moishe Teif, Motl Grubian, Shike Driz; Bialik will be published more widely in various journals, so I am not sure that he will be included in this list.

I am very interested to hear your opinion of this idea. I have tried to compose triads of poets, alternated in Yiddish and Hebrew, which seem to me to have some common traits or affinity. Sometimes I am not sure in my choice, especially to the end of the list. I guess, we will change it, and your advise is very important. Our intention is to represent the best poetry, and the literary quality is the main criterium. The second condition is the interest for the Russian (Jewish and non-Jewish) readers, for whom the Jewish poetry is almost unknown. It is their first encounter and we want to make it striking.

I would like to request you also, if you find it acceptable for you, to participate in this project. I mean, that maybe you (or somebody else - for example, your sister Ruth Wisse or Robert Alter) will be ready to write an essay or/and to choose 250-300 lines of some poet (not necessary from my list, it is open for discussion). It would be excellent, while it seems that meanwhile I am alone here in the field of Jewish literature, and my capacities are very limited, you know it.

I am waiting an answer from you,

sincerely yours *Michael Krutikov*  
Michael Krutikov