

NEWS OF THE YIVO



No. 150

341

September 1979

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1048 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10028

100th Anniversary of Birth of Albert Einstein

An Appeal by Einstein, Freud, Dubnow and Other Jewish Scholars To Support YIVO

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Albert Einstein, world-renowned Jewish scientist.

Einstein early on served as Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the Yiddish Scientific Institute — YIVO. In this capacity he, along with a group of Jewish scholars, issued an appeal to support the then recently founded YIVO Institute. This appeal to aid YIVO (then in Vilna) has been reprinted from *News of the YIVO*, #31, April 1930.

Since the Holocaust, YIVO in New York has become a world center for research pertaining to Jewish life past and present. Just as its multi-faceted activities have continually expanded, so too, have YIVO's need for funding become ever greater.

This appeal is thus even more timely today.

An Appeal to the Jews of America

The Honorary Presidium of the Board of Trustees of the Yiddish Scientific Institute consider it their duty to call the attention of the Jewish public at large, the Jewish communities and organizations, as well as of all friends of Jewish culture, to the important work of the Institute, the young offspring of Jewish science. Just five years ago the Yiddish Scientific Institute was founded. From modest beginnings a work full of vitality has grown

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International Conference on Research in Yiddish Language and Literature

From August 6th to the 9th, 75 scholars from ten countries assembled at the University of Oxford, a stone's throw from the Bodleian Library, for the International Conference on Yiddish Language and Literature. As David G. Roskies, one of the participants reports, the English setting was most appropriate for the presentation of the more than 40 papers given in Yiddish, English, Hebrew and German; for the very oldest sources in this field are indeed located in British universities.



Participants in the Oxford-Conference. From left to right: Meyer Wolf (Jerusalem); Chaim Rabin (Jerusalem); Sarah Zfatman (Jerusalem); Ruth R. Wisse (Montreal); Beatrice Weinreich (New York).

אנטייל-נעמערס אין דער אַקספּאָרד-קאָנפֿערענץ. פֿון רעכטס צו לינקס: מאיר וואָלף (ירושלים); חיים רבין (ירושלים); שרה צפֿתמאַן (ירושלים); רות ווייס (מאָנטרעאַל); בינה ווינרניך (ניו יאָרק).

What became immediately apparent was the division of labor among the three present-day centers for Yiddish-research. In North America—the stress is on Yiddish linguistics, and on aesthetic problems and critical evaluation of Yiddish literature; in Israel—on the history of modern Yiddish literature and the interrelationship between Yiddish and Hebrew; and in Germany—the

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Appeal to the Jews of America

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up with branches and auxiliary organizations in seventeen countries.

Through its achievements to date, its published series of historical, philosophical, economic, ethnographical and bibliographical volumes, through the extraordinarily rich material in cultural documentary evidence which it has accumulated, through the erection of its own building in Vilno, the home of Jewish science, it has won the recognition of both the Jewish and the non-Jewish world, and the warmest sympathies of the widest circles of the Jewish public.

It is the duty of the Jewish public to aid a non-partisan institution such as the Yiddish Scientific Institute is.

The Honorary Presidium of the Institute's Board of Trustees, accordingly, appeal to all Jewish communities, to all Jewish organizations of the whole world, and to all those to whom Jewish science and culture are dear, to support to the limit of their powers the center of scientific work in the Yiddish language, the Yiddish Scientific Institute of Vilno.

The Honorary Presidium
of the Board of Trustees
of the
Yiddish Scientific Institute

Dr. Eduard Bernstein (Berlin); **Prof. S. Dubnow** (Berlin); **Prof. Albert Einstein** (Berlin); **Prof. Sigmund Freud** (Wien); **Dr. M. Gaster** (London); **Prof. W. Haffkine** (Paris); **Prof. Edward Sapir** (Chicago); **Dr. Ch. Zhitlowsky** (New York); **Prof. D. Simonsen** (Kopenhagen); **Dr. Bernhard Wachstein** (Wien).

Einstein's letter to Simon Dubnow

Translation of the Text (See p. 3, *Yiddish*)

The impoverishment of Eastern Europe caused by the great political events, has brought about hard economic conditions among the masses. Of course the most urgent need was, first of all, to take care of the bare necessities of life.

But men do not live by bread alone, and Jews certainly do not. When they gather, in the Yiddish Scientific Institute, a handful of men "Chosen of Spirit," in order to preserve and, as far as possible, to advance the spiritual and moral traditions of the Jewish People, the task merits the sympathy and active help of all those who are in a position to give them. The names of the responsible persons guarantee the proper employment of the resources placed at their disposal.

With highest respects,
A. Einstein

International Conference on Research in Yiddish Language and Literature

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stress is on Old Yiddish literature. From the very beginning, a common language was established which allowed both for communication and debate among the scholars.

Two kinds of papers were offered: morning sessions were devoted to full papers where the scholar developed a broad thesis; afternoon and evening sessions—to short reports of research work in progress.

The first morning session dealt with the Cambridge Geniza Manuscript of 1382. Walter Röll of Trier University discussed the literary and historic background of Old Yiddish epics based on biblical motifs—where they originated and why they were recorded. Chone Shmeruk of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem used the manuscript as the ultimate piece of evidence that the Old Yiddish literature had grown out of the circle of scribes and punctuators rather than among the so-called *shpillayt* ("Spielmänner"). According to Shmeruk, earlier Yiddish-researchers had adopted the Spielmann theory, espoused by German scholars, uncritically and in spite of the lack of evidence for the existence of *shpillayt* in the Jewish environment of the Middle Ages. The important difference between transcribed and translated versions of German folk literature was also discussed.

At the second morning session, Itamar Even-Zohar and Menakhem Perry, both of Tel-Aviv University, each spoke about the interrelationship between Yiddish and Hebrew. Even-Zohar stressed the fact that the specific relationships between Yiddish and Hebrew can serve as an example of literary "poly-systems" common to all ethnic groups. With specific comparisons between Mendele's and Bialik's own Hebrew and Yiddish versions of the same works, Perry demonstrated that in each of the languages a different reality of time, place and ideas is created. He underscored the fact that this is in no way related to a dearth of appropriate vocabulary. In Bialik's "In shkhite shtot" (City of Slaughter) for instance, the relationship between God and man is an intimate one. In his Hebrew version, "B'ir ha-hareyga" his God is a distant one who speaks to His anointed prophet.

During the third morning session, Ruth Wisse of McGill and YIVO discussed the place of America in the world view and in the poetics of *Di yunge*. According to Wisse, America was no longer a new home, a new landscape and a new arena for discovering oneself. Instead, America became a place of exile, a place where social ideals, the language, the very people themselves became alien to *Di yunge*.

The last morning session, Thursday, August 9, was devoted to "New Perspectives on the History of Yiddish." Vera Baviskar, of Columbia University, indicated how the *Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry* could contribute toward the solution of problems in the fields of Yiddish and general linguistics. The discussants, Edward Stankiewicz, Yale University and Herbert Paper, Hebrew Union College, referred to the founder's keen awareness of the application possibilities of atlas data to Ashkenazic Jewish history as well. Afterwards, three scholars spoke on topics pertaining to the chief components of the Yiddish language. Robert King of Texas University in Austin spoke on the German component; Edward Stankiewicz of Yale University—on the Slavic expressive component in Yiddish; David Katz of Uni-