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## News for Jews

CHAIM KRIEGER

# "THE SHITTEL IN FACT AND FICTION" BEGINS TODAY ON ETERNAL LIGHT RADIO

In our current concern to remember the Holocaust, we often fail to note the unique qualities of the culture which the Holocaust destroyed.

Beginning today Dr. Roskies, assistant professor of Jewish literature at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, will recreate for the American radio audience the shtetl and the culture it embodied. In a series of ten half-hour programs to be aired on the Eternal Light on Sundays from now to Labor Day, he will separate fact from fiction, history from legend, showing listeners the shtetl as it was, and sharing with them descriptions of shtetl life in the works of such au-

thors as Peretz, Sholom Aleichem, and Asch.

Dr. Roskies was born in Montreal, and grew up in a household that not only spoke Yiddish, but served as a center for the Yiddish writers and intellectuals of the post-World War II years. To him, the language and the literature created in it are among the greatest achievements of the Jewish people. In his courses, both graduate and undergraduate, he aims, he says, "to rescue Yiddish literature from the popularizers, sentimentalists, and bad translators, and to reestablish it in the mainstream of Jewish cultural expression."

In his radio series, Dr. Ros-

kies will attempt to do the same thing for the shtetl. He will define its social structure; explain the security it afforded to Jews living in a largely hostile society, often under a government which barely tolerated them. He will separate nostal-



Dr. David Roskies

gia for the shtetl, often based on half-remembered tales of foreign-born grandparents, from genuine understanding of shtetl life, portrayed with its problems as well as its advantages.

The titles of the ten programs give some idea of the scope of the series. They are: "Myth and Memory," "History as Legend," "The Social Order," "Cultural Geography," "Growing Up in the Shtetl," "The Woman's World," "Jews and Gentiles," "The Shtetl at Play," "The Shtetl in Crisis," and "Modernization of the Shtetl."

Questioned about the thrust of the Eternal Light series, Dr. Roskies ventured that there might be important lessons for all Americans in a social system which endured for more than 800 years. "A model for ecumenism it was not," he said. "There was no love lost between Jews and Poles — or, for that matter, between Ukrainians and Poles, Poles and colonial Germans, and between all of the above and Jews. Yet in that very breeding ground of petty rivalry, religious animosity, and rabid nationalism, Jewish life managed to thrive. In the radio programs," he continued, "I try to show that, if we resist the temptation to sentimentalize a civilization so totally and brutally destroyed, and if we

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## SHITTEL IN FACT AND FICTION

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attempt conscientiously to separate its life from its death, we may be able to retrieve meaning and possible models from its experience."

The Eternal Light is produced by The Jewish Theological Seminary of America in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company. Milton E. Krents is producer for the Seminary, and Rhoda Grady is executive producer for NBC. The programs are aired on Sundays, from 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. in New York. To ascertain the broadcast time in your community, check with your local NBC station.

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