

# Der Bay

## The International Anglo-Yiddish Newsletter

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February-March 2006

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### IAYC Tenth Conference: The Exciting Plenary Sessions

Each month *Der Bay* reports on another phase of the IAYC conference. Last month the special Tenth Conference Ad Journal was covered and your editor hopes that you gave serious thought to supporting the IAYC and honoring your group/special person.

This month the plenary or entire assembly sessions are covered. There will be four—one each morning with two on Sunday.

Thursday, Prof. Eugene Orenstein opens the conference sessions as the keynote speaker delivering the Lerner Memorial Lecture. He is the distinguished professor of Yiddish and Jewish History at McGill University, Montreal. He has a dynamic presentation, and is a very popular speaker on the Yiddish Circuit. His appearances at IAYC conferences have had superior ratings. Prof. Orenstein's topic is, "Pionirn fun der yiddisher folkloristic".

Saturday morning Prof. Sheva Zucker will address the conference. She recently assumed the executive directorship from Prof. Mordkhe Schaechter, founder of The League for Yiddish. She is author of the well-known Yiddish I and II. Her topic is "Afn Shvel un ibern shvel: a yidish-zhurnal vert 65."

The entire Sunday morning will be in plenary sessions. First, "The Yiddish Forward —Today and Tomorrow: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the World's Leading Yiddish Newspaper." The Forward is now entering its 109th year. Be sure to visit their booth along with the array of over 20 other exhibitors/vendors

Participants include:

- Sam Norich: Executive Director of the Forward Association
- Boris Sandler: Editor of the Forward
- Itzik Gottesman: Associate Editor
- Rukhl Schaechter: News Editor

This will be followed by the Folksbiene Troupe in a not-to-be-missed program of 20-30 year-olds in Mama's Loshn Kugel. The six performers under the directorship of Motl Didner then will lead the attendees in group singing and dancing. It will be a rousing finale to the Tenth IAYC Conference.

The International Association of Yiddish Clubs Tenth Conference will be held on July 6-9, 2006 at the Glenpointe Marriott Hotel in Teaneck, NJ Visit website at: [www.derbay.org/teaneck.html](http://www.derbay.org/teaneck.html)

Enjoy the warm hospitality of the hosts, Gregg and Stephanie Hudis and their host club, the Jewish Center of Teaneck Yiddish Club.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

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**See the registration form on the inside cover. Visit *Der Bay's* website to learn all about the Glenpointe Marriott Hotel, the Teaneck Community and New York City tours.**

# Yiddish & Jewish Orgs Online

by Philip Fishl Kutner

We surely are aware of the Yiddish emphasis on sites like YIVO and the National Yiddish Book Center, but what about the major Jewish organizations like B'nai B'rith, American Jewish Congress, Hadassah, etc. It came as a total surprise when your editor did a search at the sites of some of the major Jewish organizations in the States.

## The Research Methodology

The procedure was to locate and evaluate the emphasis that Jewish organizations place on Yiddish language and culture. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations website had 52 organizations listed on December 17, 2005. The list below of 21 organizations was derived mainly, but not entirely, from this source.

Inserting the name of the organization in the Google Search engine brought up the home page. Then the search box was located and the word *Yiddish* was inserted (not all sites have a search box). Google gives the number of *hits* at that website. There was no attempt to evaluate the merit of the *hits* (pages). Thus no qualitative rankings can be made. However, a quantitative evaluation can give a rough indication of Yiddish emphasis or interest placed by the organizations that were searched.

Organization	# of hits
AIPAC –	4
American Jewish Committee –	22
American Jewish Congress –	16
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee –	47
B'nai B'rith International –	3
Central Conference of American Rabbis –	14
Hadassah –	93
HIAS –	38
Jewish Community Centers Assoc. –	No search box
Jewish Council for Public Affairs –	1
Jewish National Fund –	4
Jewish War Veterans –	0
Jewish Women International –	Error message
National Council of Jewish Women –	0
*National Foundation for Jewish Culture –	3
Rabbinical Council of America – <i>For internal use</i>	?
Union of Orthodox Jewish Cong. of America –	169
United Synagogues of Conservative Judaism –	242
Women's American ORT –	0
Workmen's Circle –	<b>An Entire Section</b>
Zionist Organization of America –	3

\* Indicates not on the list of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations

## Discussion

Being able easily to locate the *free search* box at each site would make this task simpler. The best location is right at the top on the home page, but some were located at the bottom of the page.

Perhaps the most unusual quote we came across during the research is one from a speech Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) made April 23, 2002 in an address to AIPAC.

“My father was the Mayor of Baltimore. When he was a young man he was a Shabbat Goy. I loved to watch the reaction of Jewish audiences when he spoke to them in Yiddish.”

An unusual situation existed at the site of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. At the top of the home page there are 3 pull down menus.

- On OU.ORG – 80 links to their own site.
- On the Jewish Internet – 61 links, one to PilotYid. It is for Jewish Palm software users. It has 2 lists; PilotYid Announcements & PilotYid Discussions.
- OU.ORG features – 25 links listed.

In all 166 links, the word Yiddish did not appear, but there were 169 *hits*.

## Conclusion

There is a great variation in the number of links to Yiddish on major Jewish organizations' websites.

A list of organizations needs to be created which can be traced over a period of time to ascertain organizational and group trends in fostering Yiddish culture and language.

Researching other terms such as *klezmer*, *Ashkenaz*, *East European*, to see if the results vary with those associated with the term *Yiddish*.

Much more research needs to be done to be able to both quantify and qualify Yiddish activity at major Jewish organizations.

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**Editor's note: Because B'nai B'rith International is not fostering Yiddish, your editor switched his efforts from being active on their District level to that of an organization that does foster Yiddish.**

# Yiddish and the Great Depression

by Philip *Fishl* Kutner

Yiddish is spoken today mainly by Jews who lived during the Great Depression and by the khasidic community. The major change from Yiddish to Hebrew occurred with those born after 1940. By the time the children would go to Hebrew school for their Jewish training, Israel had *banned* Yiddish, and assimilation in the United States resulted in the frowning on the use of Yiddish.

For the majority of Yiddish speakers today, looking back at the Great Depression should be more than for mere sentimental reasons. It is to remember what the role of Yiddish was during those hard economic times. For the younger generations it is a review of an historical period in which the Golden Age of Yiddish was drawing to an end. This is a brief summary of the highlights of the Great Depression

The 1930s was a time of stark reality and a sharp change from the Roaring 20s, all over the world. In the United States it was not a gradual evolution for most people, but a sharp turn from bountiful to scarcity. Historically, in the U.S. that period can be divided into two phases; the Black Thursday, Oct 24, 1929 Crash of the stock exchange until Roosevelt took office in 1933, and then the period up until World War II.

## Major Issues During The Great Depression

- **Immigration:** By the time of the Crash, the ban on immigration had been in effect since The United States Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the National Origins Act or the Johnson-Reed Act. It limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 2% of the number of person from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890 according to the census of 1890. It superseded the 1921 Emergency Quota Act that allowed 3%. The law was aimed at further restricting the Southern and Eastern Europeans—who were the majority of the Jews.

- **Prohibition** It began on January 16, 1920 when the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect, but it was abolished on February 17, 1933 by passage of the Blaine Act. The Eighteenth Amendment was repealed later that same year with ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment.

- **Unemployment:** is the most commonly cited indicator of business cycles, the unemployment rate, rose from 3.2% of the labor force in 1929 to 24.9% in 1933. Unemployment fell to 14.3% in 1937, but then increased again to 19.0% in 1938 and was still 9.9%

in 1941 before the military boom associated with World War II brought it down to 1.9% in 1943.

**Climate:** A condition of continued drought in the Midwest plus the exposure of the tilled soil, produced The Dust Bowl. One result was the migration from the farm to the urban areas.

**Law:** During the 1930s the sensationalism of major cases had diminished. The “Lindbergh Kidnapping Trial (1935) of Bruno Hauptman was major news. This was unlike the litigious 1920s that had Sacco and Vanzetti (1921), Black Sox Scandal (1921), Leopold and Loeb (1924) and Scopes Trial (1925).

- **World Unrest:** It was not a period devoid of strife. The Spanish Civil War, Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia and the fall of Haille Sellassie who was the 111th emperor in the succession of King Solomon. He ruled Ethiopia from 1931 until 1974. The rise of Fascism (Hitler and Mussolini), Japan, and the threat of Communism, all were the seeds of unrest.

**Yiddish Radio:** This news and entertainment medium was at its peak with many stations in New York City. Henry Sapoznik’s research and archive of old reels is preserving this period.

**Children:** They were immersed in Yiddish in shuln, especially within the secular movement. Their Yiddish was enriched in summer camps, and children’s publications written specifically for their age level.

**WPA:** (Works Progress Administration) Yiddish Writers' Guild of the Federal Writers' Project was the source of income for aspiring writers, and it included the study of Landsmanshaftn. Today it is a rich source of genealogical information.

The promotional booklet *Who Are the Girl Scouts?* was printed in English, Polish, Yiddish, and Italian.

It was during this period that the Workmen’s Circle reached its peak membership of 85,000 with hundreds of Branches and shuln throughout the U.S. and Canada. Its emphasis on Yiddish was carried through to the children’s summer camps.

A thorough understanding of “Yiddish and the Great Depression” needs to take into account the roles played by Yiddish Theater, Yiddish Cinema, the Yiddish Newspapers and the 3000 Yiddish organizations like the landsmanshaftn.

# Of Tchotchkes, Mavens, Schmattes and Other English Words

by Harold Ticktin

My word processor told me that I am wrong about mavens. According to it, *maven* does not have to be italicized; it is an English word, but the others have not yet been admitted and are redlined. My bet would have been on *tchoktcbkes*. As long ago as 1990 I saw a headline in the Washington Post which read: Tchotchkes For Sale at Monticello (no explanation of the term) As we say in Anglicized Yiddish, go know.

If you haven't figured it out yet this column is about the impact of Yiddish on English and no matter what my word processor maven tells me it is not only the Post who knows that tchotchkes is English, so do the people at Christies and the New York Times, which informed its readers that "Brando knew that celebrity tchotchkes (no italics or explanation) don't reveal much," when turquoise jewelry, fringed coat and vest were put up for sale.

Lest one believes that the word is too esoteric for Anglo ears let us note two Ohio items: the first a column in the Plain Dealer on the coin investment scandal rocking the state, characterizing the coins, bunnies babies and baseball cards which the Bureau of Workers Comp invested in as "memorabilia", collectibles... and tchotchkes, spelled correctly and with no additional explanation. The second, from the boardrooms of industry no less, appeared recently in Cram's Cleveland Business with the bold headline QUALITY SERVICE WINS CUSTOMERS IN COMPETITIVE TCHOTCHKE MARKET. Here there was a bit of guidance for the perplexed by the term "ad specialty" meaning throwaways to business customers, like boomerangs and umbrellas that say "Canon." Not too bad a description if one imagines a *balaboste* (*Jewish female storekeeper*) *throwing in a couple of colored buttons with a swath of dry goods.*

Of course, as one might expect from the paper with the largest Jewish population in America, the New York Times leads the pack in reverse assimilation. But keep in mind that the Times is also a national journal and there does not appear to be any explanation of the Yiddish in the national version. All sections seem to participate, but most come from Arts. My favorite was a review of a play called The Audience, a musical in which a faux audience *was* the play. The headline read Coughers, Kvetchers and Other Stars in the Seats. Other dillies include The Muse Who Sold Schmattes (about Ron Rifkin), Shaking Things Up in Broadway's Shtetl, on the Gentilization of Fiddler on the Roof, and a dance review which read "A Mishmash of 2 Forms." Early in the 2005-6 season a review of an LA opera headlined Shlemiel! Shlemozzle!

The staid pages of the financial sections of the Times and Barrons reflect our subject. The latter described a high powered analysts meeting in California so: Minyanville analysts and also traders, hedge fund managers... at the mountain retreat in Santa Barbara. For its part the Times chronicled "A Bond Maven Consults His Crystal Ball, but of course Maven is English. Both publications have featured language that can only be adequately understood as translations from Yiddish.

The embattled hear of MG, the world's largest insurer, Maurice R. Greenberg, quarreling with just about everyone, stopped a group of insistent analysts cold with an emphatic, "You'll wait!" There were no more questions. A recent cover of Barrons featured a space pilot (the stock market) who was supposed to go straight up. It read "So fly already!" Exclamation marks are not Yiddish, but they help!

Times book reviewers, avatars of the avant garde seem not to get it. Only one entry there, a review of a biography of Russ Meyer, the originator of big bosomed soft porn, referred to one of his early flicks as featuring a "schlumpy voyeur." Since the comment came from the book it is clear the Book Review sections remains unenlightened. Note that at least the review followed the standardized rules by putting a "c" between "s" and "h."

I read a number of right wing publications but, consistent with mostly being Paleo conservatives, unlike the heavily Jewish Neo, their pages are bare of reverse assimilation. Not so for the venerable and liberal The Nation which accuses the "right wing" New York Times of being run by machers.

Intramurally, just among us Jews, perhaps the oddest example of Yiddish penetration of English is the International Jerusalem Post (English language). In Israel, during the very early years, Yiddish was scorned as the language of exile. Now we find items such as the cartoonist Dry Bones conducting an annual Shmendrik Award and another feature article is entitled "Judaism as menschlichkeit (note the "sch" vs. "tsh" problem) But far outweighing these is an Arab councilman from Kalkilya (in the West Bank) who dubs one of the roads in his city as the "Alte Zakhn" road, Yiddish for old things and castaways!

If Yiddish can permeate Arab speech on the West Bank it probably will show up some day in Jordan, Egypt or maybe even Saudi Arabia. As we say in English, who knows?"

## From Las Vegas to Vilnius

By Charles Casper

My love for Yiddish started early, as both of my parents came to the United States from Poland after World War I and spoke Yiddish. My Mother lost her entire family in the Holocaust. She often spoke about them and the shtetl in which they lived. I felt I missed a lot in my life by never having known them.

Then, several years ago, I came across an article on the August Yiddish Program in Vilna, once the "Jerusalem of Lithuania." I was excited by what I read. It was a Yiddish program that included reading, writing, and conversation, taught by accomplished and caring teachers. It was exactly what I was looking for.

Shortly after arriving at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, we were introduced to our professors. Soon, we met our lecturers on shtetl life. They were Holocaust survivors still living in the villages, towns, and cities they would be taking us to in the coming weeks. They shared their life experiences with us. We laughed together, shed tears together, held hands, and sang together at concerts and synagogues. We bonded with one another.

It was in Vilna that I found my roots and the family I had never known until then. My personal experience in the program enhanced my life. If you attend the Yiddish Program in Vilna with a thirst for knowledge and an open heart, it can do the same for you.

The new website for the Vilna Yiddish Program is:  
<http://www.yiddishvilnius.com/summer/>

### ***GRINGA: My Love Affair with Panama***

By Hindi Diamond

My book, *GRINGA - My Love Affair with Panama* was recently published. It has 70 news photos I took during my 20 years living there and working as a foreign correspondent for United Press, Time & Life and Newsweek magazine. There's a chapter about Jewish life in it, and I used many Yiddish expressions—like ex-dictator Juan Peron of Argentina, whom I photographed for LIFE magazine when he was writing his memoirs. I said he was sitting in his "gatkes" which he was. The website is at:  
<http://www.essentialbooks.com/id114.htm>  
The book can be ordered from there.

**Editor's note:** Hindi lives in Boca Raton, Florida. She can be reached at: [hindi@adelphia.net](mailto:hindi@adelphia.net)  
Her telephone number is: 561-470-0970

## Dr. Jack Berger Comments

Rae, [Melnick] I saw your article in Fishl's *Der Bay*, and felt a need to respond.

You may recall that I have translated Holocaust Memorial Books for some years now, and I self-publish them. Since you work as a volunteer at the National Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., you can actually inspect the five volumes I have produced to date, which the Museum owns (the sixth is in progress).

I have found that my local Sir Speedy is a very cost-effective and good-looking alternative. I have opted for tough, but flexible vinyl covers, with gold stamping on the front. The binding is drilled along the edge, but doesn't have a back. Lest you think this isn't strong enough, have a look at the Volkovysk Memorial Book (600+ pages) and the Zamosc Memorial Book (800+ pages).

Production costs are not prohibitive. Obviously, if you can order a run in volume (say at least 100 copies), the unit cost will come down.

If you take this route, a good way to defray the costs is to solicit *subscribers* in the venerable manner that Jewish writers did for centuries. You can offer the *abornirer*, an incentive of having their names placed in an "Honor Roll" at the front of the book (see how I did it). You can offer an inducement to not only get a copy for themselves, but to donate one to the library of their choice. I have had tangible success with this for over fifteen years.

**Editor's note:** Dr. Berger lives in Mahwah, NJ. He will lecture at the IAYC Teaneck Conference.

### **A Letter from San Francisco from Manya Bertram**

Thank you for printing my letter about pen pals. I hope others will share some of their experiences.

I have a dear friend in Belvedere, CA with whom I share my wish for more Yiddishkayt in San Francisco. She has been married many years but remembers moving here as a bride and she told a relative that San Francisco seemed to have a remarkable Jewish community, but she missed the lack of Yiddishkayt. The new relative replied, "Don't worry. You will get over it!" But my friend and I never did "get over it".

She had not discovered *Der Bay* and, therefore, I would like to send a gift subscription to her.

## Go for Zucker

Box office smash played 44 weeks in Germany and 15 in Israel with over a million admissions so far. It stars German-Jewish comedy sensation Yiddish star from Warsaw, Golda Tencer

Dani Levy's controversial farce "Go for Zucker" is said to be the first German-Jewish comedy made in Germany since World War II. This cultural phenomenon dominated last year's German Film Prizes including best picture, best actor (for Henry Hübchen), best direction and best screenplay.

It was released in Washington, Boston, and Dallas. On the heels of its New York opening at The **Landmark Sunshine**, 143 East Houston Street (a former Yiddish vaudeville palace appropriately enough), "Go for Zucker" went to Fort Lauderdale and Miami the first week in February.

"Go for Zucker" ("Alles auf Zucker!") slated for TV, was almost never made. There was anxiety over its unapologetically Jewish humor as well as political incorrectness, and a story line centering on two estranged brothers -- one secular, the other Orthodox -- who are separated for decades by the Berlin Wall. They are forced to reunite to receive their dead mother's inheritance. The film mixes slapstick humor with a jaundiced eye for sharply drawn social satire. Its pedigree as a German-Jewish comedy and portrayal of a comically dysfunctional Jewish family raised eyebrows. The story of two brothers from opposite sides of the Berlin Wall proved to be a powerful metaphor for the cultural and social estrangement that Jews and Germans (East & West) have grappled with since the Holocaust.

The film stars Henry Hübchen and Udo Samel as the two brothers -- one a hard-living former East German celebrity sportscaster (Hübchen) now down-on-his luck, and the other (Samel), his quasi-Orthodox brother from the West. Tencer plays the wife of the Orthodox brother. Running Time: 91 min. Film is not rated.

Built in 1898, the Sunshine Cinema building was formerly the Houston Hippodrome motion picture theatre and a Yiddish vaudeville house, but for over 50 years it was a hardware warehouse. Landmark restored the theatre back to its artistic roots. The Sunshine Cinema has special presentation and amenities including stadium seating, Dolby Digital Surround EX sound and gourmet concessions. The theatre has a Japanese rock garden and a viewing bridge that offers breathtaking city views from the glass annex. It is located at 143 East Houston Street on the Lower East Side, phone: 212-330-8182

## Yiddish tog at Yugntruf

by Myra Mniewski, Yugntruf ekzekutiv-direktor

Every year Yugntruf runs a special Yiddish tog in mid-winter to provide an opportunity for people – young and old – to get together and participate in a variety of activities and utilize and improve their Yiddish.

In 2006 Yidish-tog will be held Sun. February 19<sup>th</sup> and takes place at the Workmen's Circle/ Arbeter-ring Building at 45 East 33<sup>rd</sup> Street in Manhattan Between Park and Madison.

The theme for the day is Yiddish Folklore.

As well as talks and discussions we are planning workshops in the afternoon that are especially suitable for students whose Yiddish may not yet be fluent. In particular we have a *zamlers varshat* that will take place after a kosher lunch. We intend to pair a young person with an older person to gather *folklor* much as the *zamlers* did in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A questionnaire will be provided in Yiddish and in English and the whole experience of talking one to one with a sympathetic native Yiddish speaker (who also of course speaks English) will be an enjoyable and educational experience for students of Yiddish.

We have a number of older people signed up and are looking for 20 or more students who would want to participate. We hope that Yiddish students across the country will consider taking up this opportunity by registering for Yiddish Tog 2006.

Cost of Yidish-tog 2006: \$30, \$25 for members and \$15 for students.

In line with partnering younger Yiddish learners with older native Yiddish speakers Yugntruf is planning a *kompyuteray-varshat* (computer workshop) for the spring.

Young and old, partnered at computer stations, will be instructed in using Yiddish language word and graphic programs. The instructor will teach in Yiddish, employing vocabulary developed to express computer terminology in Yiddish.

Our assumption is that the younger partner will aid the older one in the technological aspects of the class while the older member imparts his/her knowledge of Yiddish. This reciprocity will prove to be advantageous to both.

Ph: 212-889-0381

E-mail: office@yugntruf.org

## My Own Roommate, My Own Buddy

Our first matched roommates for the Teaneck IAYC Conference is a repeat of the Milwaukee Conference. This *shidakh* is a perfect match of an author/translator from Toronto, Canada and a Yiddish teacher/activist from Wilmington, Delaware.

Do you remember your bunk pals when you went to camp, or was it your roommate at college or in the services? Some have been lifelong attachments. Come to the Conference. Make new friendships/contacts. They are inspiring invigorating, and informative invitations to a new way of looking at Yiddish.

Every Yiddish Club Conference attendee is either interested in Yiddish or accompanying someone who is. It is like attending a very special Yiddish club meeting with a large crowd, excellent programming, enjoyable entertainment, exciting vendors, and across the Hudson River from Yiddish New York.

So if you have a significant other, why not bring him/her along. If not, let us match you up with a perfect roommate. Contact your editor at: 650-349-6946, or the conference hosts, Gregg & Stephanie Hudis (evenings) at: 201-833-4748

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If you're blessed, Please send a LITTLE extra  
**Label date is when you LAST contributed.**

Networking is having others help you get what YOU want. *Der Bay* is a great networking tool.

## Looking to the Future

On Friday, January 13, your editor will be going in to repair an ascending aortic arch aneurysm, get a new heart valve and a few bypasses. Since he does not know the outcome, the next issue may be a little late.

He will have plenty of time to think about the wonderful people and experiences that Yiddish has permitted him to meet and have. She has really been like a *mame* to him.

When he thinks about the upcoming Teaneck conference and all the brilliant and dedicated presenters and entertainers, He is humbled by the array of talent and knowledge they possess. See you there.