



אפן שבל

AFN SHVEL

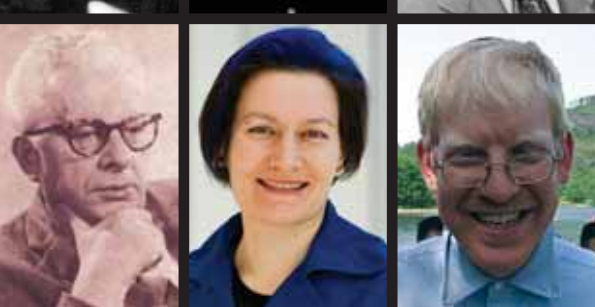
A Literary - Cultural Journal
The Voice of the League for Yiddish
 Special English Anniversary Issue
 Summer 2011 • New York



**70th Anniversary
 Afn Shvel**



**30th Anniversary
 League for Yiddish**



AFN SHVEL
Special English Anniversary Issue / Summer 2011
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AFN SHVEL – ISSN 0030-7718

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From the Editor



Dear Reader,

What you are now reading is a first ever: an English micro-issue of the all-Yiddish magazine *Afn Shvel* (*On the Threshold*) prepared for the occasion of its 70th anniversary. This special PDF edition contains the full English translations of three articles chosen to best acquaint a broader audience with who we are and where we have come from. (The color print version has only the first parts of the articles.) These three articles also appear in Yiddish in our 84-page anniversary retrospective issue, which features some of the most compelling and representative articles published by us over the last 70 years. The English translation of the Table of Contents of that issue, reprinted here on page 2, will give readers a sense of the scope and focus of the magazine over time.

Afn Shvel was initially the organ of the *Freeland League for Jewish Territorialist Colonization*, an organization founded in 1935 which sought a territory and safe haven for Yiddish-speaking Jews in areas as far-flung as Western Australia, Suriname and Alaska. In 1979 under the leadership of noted Yiddish linguist Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter, the *Freeland League* was restructured into the *League for Yiddish*, a non-political Yiddish cultural advocacy organization whose goals include: encouraging people to speak Yiddish in their everyday life; enhancing the prestige of Yiddish as a living language, both within and outside the Yiddish-speaking community; and promoting the modernization of Yiddish.

When you look up the continuation of the English articles online, take your time on our website, browse around and get to know the projects that best advance our goals. Pass this issue on to others who might be interested and tell all your Yiddish-speaking friends about *Afn Shvel*. If you read Yiddish yourself, please consider subscribing. Let us know if you would like to be on our mailing list. If you are able, please support our mission financially by making a tax-deductible contribution either online or by using the envelope provided. In any case, we look forward to your ongoing spiritual and moral support. Read and enjoy!

Sheva Zucker
Editor-in-Chief

Afn Shvel: The Changing Mission of a Yiddish Magazine

Leafing through old issues of *Afn Shvel*, I found — in the 20th anniversary issue — this sentence penned by Michael (Mikhoel) C. Astour, the author of the monumental two-volume *History of the Freeland League*, “The contributors of *Afn Shvel* inherited from the president of the first territorialist organization, Israel Zangwill, the courage to be ‘fighters for unpopular ideas’” (June-July 1962, p. 3). A few issues later we find this greeting from the Yiddish writer Meylekh Ravitsh, “It is good to know that Jewish thought has this platform, this non-conformist *Freeland*” (June-July 1962, p. 6).

To find out what these unpopular ideas were and what this “non-conformism” that Ravitsh lauds consisted of, let us go back 70 years to the year 1941 to see what *Afn Shvel* was writing about in those years and to examine to what extent it has remained with or departed from its original mission.

Afn Shvel (the words mean “on the threshold”) was, from its inception in 1941 until the late 1970s, the organ of a political territorialist movement called “*Di frayland-lige far der yidisher teritoryalistisher kolonizatsye*” (The *Freeland League for Jewish Territorialist Colonization*). *Freeland*, heir to the earlier Jewish Territorialist Organization which had disbanded in 1925 and the Socialist



Michael C. Astour,
author of *History of the
Freeland League*, 1975

Territorialists, arose as a result of the economic crisis of the 1930s and Hitler’s coming to power.

That *Freeland* and its organ *Afn Shvel* were a response to the world crisis at the time is clearly seen in the opening article by Ben-Adir (pseudonym of Abraham Rosin), the first editor of *Afn Shvel*. A territorialist on ideological grounds, Ben-Adir believed that modern Jews and Jewishness could not sustain themselves against the double threat of anti-semitism on the one hand and assimilation on the other. Only by living in their own territory, he believed, could Jews lead a healthy, vibrant Jewish life. The events of the late 1930s and early 1940s added new urgently practical motives to his ideology.

His editorial in the first issue entitled, “What Do We Want” begins with these words, “A world catastrophe has erupted and even before that and together with that — the greatest and most terrible catastrophe ever to befall the Jewish people. ...”

“The Jewish people,” Ben-Adir continues, “must create their own land and build their own home — a home that will be a refuge from specifically Jewish suffering, a home for a normal, natural, healthy and full-blooded national life” (p. 3).

Only near the end does he use the phrase “*afn shvel*” (on the threshold), saying, “The longer the consciousness that we are standing on the threshold of a new world penetrates into the broad strata of the population the deeper it goes. How should this new world be fashioned and how should the new life of the Jewish people be fashioned within it? — These are the problems of the day” (p. 4).

Ben-Adir’s insistence that the magazine not be narrowly partisan or dogmatic would lead one to believe, erroneously, that it would be a platform for all kinds of political ideas. His concept of “non-partisan” extends, however, as he himself says, only to “various directions and shades” as long as they are “directions and shades” of territorialism.

This orientation very much defined the content of the magazine for quite some time. Almost everything published in *Afn Shvel* during the first sixteen years of its existence, that is, until the death of its second editor, Dr. Isaac Nachman Steinberg [Yitskhok Nakhmen Shteynberg], was in some way connected to territorialism and to questions of peoplehood, the underlying philosophic issue informing territorialism. In short, the magazine existed to advance the goals of the Freeland League which had as its platform: a concentrated agricultural and industrial colonization in an unpopulated or almost unpopulated territory, in a democratic country, that would serve as a secure foundation for the social-economic and national-cultural development of the Jewish people (Preface, *The History of the Freeland League*, [Buenos Aires-New York: Frayland-Lige Publishing, 1967], p. 2).

Political autonomy was not a requirement. Since the movement arose as a response to the problems of European Jews, and most specifically, Eastern European Jews, the official language of the territory was to be Yiddish. The attitude towards the language varied from editor to editor and from writer to writer. Some saw it as an end in itself while for others it was just the natural linguistic expression of the residents of the would-be territory.

It was fortunate for the Freeland League (and for *Afn Shvel*) that in those crucial years of territorialist dreams

they had as secretary-general someone as exceptional as Dr. Steinberg. Although largely forgotten today, he is arguably one of the most interesting and remarkable Jews of the twentieth century. At once a religious Jew and a revolutionary, he served as justice minister in Lenin’s first cabinet until he himself, seeing which way the wind was blowing, resigned early in 1918. In 1923 he fled Russia for political reasons, settling in Berlin, and ten years later, in 1933, he fled Germany to London where he became involved with the Freeland League, taking over as secretary-general in 1937. In his writings, many of which appeared in *Afn Shvel*, he emphasized spiritual Jewishness (*gayst-yidishkeyt*) as opposed to state Jewishness (*melukhe-yidishkeyt*). He, and through him, Freeland, sought a home for the Jewish body but also a place in which the Jewish soul could flourish in its infinite variety.

During its existence the Freeland League attempted a number of projects, with varying degrees of success, most of these under Steinberg’s leadership. At the Evian Conference in the summer of 1938 the League caught the attention of the world. Roosevelt energetically supported a plan in Guyana (then British Guiana). Other possible territories that were discussed at Evian and elsewhere were the French colonies — the Hebrides and New Caledonia — as well as Ecuador, Alaska and the Peace River area in British Columbia. Discussion of these various projects naturally found its way onto the pages of *Afn Shvel*.

There was one country, however, that Freeland never considered as a homeland and that was Palestine. On the contrary, it was often mentioned as a place where a homeland should not be established although that is not to say that the organization’s attitude towards *Erets-Yisroel* was completely negative.

In a very thoughtful and prescient article entitled “Freeland and Palestine” published in November 1941 Steinberg discusses both Freeland’s position on Palestine as a homeland and the Arab question.

Speaking from the territorialist perspective that the spiritual concept of the Jewish people is naturally higher than the physical concept of the Land of Israel, Steinberg cautions against discounting the importance of the reality of contemporary Palestine for that reason. If the claim to the land is not justified either on biblical grounds or due to the Holocaust there is one argument that may be brought to bear and that is the reality of the newly created modern Palestine.

These 500,000 Jewish people ... have created a new historical basis for the right to the Land of Israel. No peace conference can make light of *this*. ... True, even on the strength of this creativity one cannot conquer the will of the Arab nationalists to be masters "in their own home." ... Who says that it must be conquered using those ways in which official Zionism has gone until now? (p. 4).

Ultimately, Freeland, and by extension, *Afn Shvel*, rejected Zionism as *the* answer, because they found the question of the relationship between Jews and Arabs in Palestine to be complex, troubling, and without a solution. In addition, they felt that not all Jews who needed or wanted to settle there could do so, particularly if immigration were to be handled intelligently and systematically.

Steinberg warned that although a territory for Jews was perhaps possible in Palestine it ought not be the only haven:

Certainly the battle lines of Palestine should be defended and strengthened. Certainly the positions that the people have built there should not be weakened for even a single minute. But who — in modern day strategy — relies on a single line of defense (p. 4).

The search for other "lines of defense" particularly during and immediately after the Holocaust took the form of various colonization projects, those of Australia and Suriname being the most developed.



Cartoon depicting the issue of Jewish homelessness. *Londoner's Diary*, August 2, 1946

The immediate Holocaust-informed platform of Freeland can be seen in a resolution accepted at a mass meeting of the League held on January 17, 1945, printed in *Afn Shvel*, (January-February 1945):

"The difficult prospects of a ravaged Europe force us to find a new home for Jews in the democratic countries that want to increase their population. Australia distinguishes itself," Dr. Steinberg continues, "as the country that holds out the greatest hopes for the Jews" (p. 25).

In Australia Freeland placed its hope in the Kimberley Project, a plan to settle Jews in The Kimberley, in the north of the province of Western Australia, which had at the time a population of 460,000, almost half of which lived in Perth. The region was 10,600 square miles, or roughly the size of Belgium.

Dr. Steinberg was sent to Australia in May of 1939 and, due to the war, remained there until 1943. Naturally, *Afn Shvel* at that time carried many articles about Australia, with an emphasis on the political and philosophical aspects of colonization. In the column *Freeland Chronicle*, June 1941 we find this note entitled, "Australian Government Considers the Plan of Jewish Colonization":

...Dr. Steinberg who is presently in Australia, has already managed to interest the Australian government in his project, demonstrating that the district of East Kimberley, a tremendous area that is just lying there empty could provide a home for Jews and at the same time be a blessing for Australia as well as for the British Empire in general [...] (June 1941, p. 15).

The plan naturally had its opponents as well. Needless to say, there was fierce opposition from the Zionists. Not infrequently, *Afn Shvel* reported on how the Zionists, both in America and in the land of colonization, opposed the various colonization projects. In April-May 1945 in the article "Australian Zionists Combat Freeland" Dr. Steinberg records the reaction of Mr. Boaz, the vice-president of the Council of Australian Jews, who deliberately left Kimberley out of a memorandum on Jewish immigration to Australia.

After the failure of the Kimberley Project *Afn Shvel* went on to chronicle Freeland's attempt to create a Jewish territory in the Dutch colony Suriname which began in 1947 and lingered on until the beginning of the 1950s. The title "Holland Makes an Offer to the Jews" proudly graced the first page of the January-February 1947 issue:

The 17th of February the governor of Suriname telegraphed the Freeland League regarding the decision to invite an expert commission to explore local conditions and to discuss with the government all of the issues in relation to the matter.

The article stands in the right column on page 1 next to one in the left column entitled "Against Illusions — With the Truth" decrying the terrorism of the *Irgun* in Israel. The juxtaposition of these two articles speaks volumes.

The pages of *Afn Shvel* themselves, reveal, however, how marginal these territorialist projects were in Jewish life. Even Dr. Steinberg's admirers did not necessarily agree with him. One greeting offered by Leyzer Ran, the compiler of the volume *Vilna, The Jerusalem of Lithuania*, (in Yiddish) on the occasion of Steinberg's 60th birthday is particularly interesting (December 1948, p. 6):

Dear Yitskhok-Nakhmen Shteynberg,

By celebrating six wandering and redemption-thirsty decades for world, man and nation on all the foreign thresholds of the world, a quiet dream full of longing from a homeless dreamer from the Vilna Ghetto:

... It will certainly not be harder to deal with the government of Israel than with democratic Holland, and instead of a cold and alien favor-exile in Suriname, the long awaited hour has come to build a Freeland Center for the Mother Tongue in our own Jewish Negev.

The time has come, Yitskhok-Nakhmen!

May you be blessed with long life and may we celebrate your 70th birthday in New Vilna by the Kinneret.

Leyzer Ran

Cuba

In those days almost everything in the magazine was directly or indirectly related to territorialism. This might be reflected in book reviews, articles on agriculture or even poetry. Book reviews, for example, always focused on colonization, agriculture, or exploring new territories, in short, on those topics relevant to establishing a homeland based on agriculture. Articles about

colonization, both Jewish and non-Jewish, abound. In 1941 *Afn Shvel* published a series on colonization, which included the articles, "How the Chinese Colonize" (July-August 1941), "The Colonization of Greece" (September-October 1941) and "Colonization in Libya" (November 1941). In 1949 Meyer Bursuk published a series about Jewish colonization in Argentina. The intent was clear: readers were to learn by example how to create the future Freeland colony.

Even poetry was generally connected in some ways to these themes. A number of poems by such authors as Leyb Wasserman, M.M. Shaffir, Eliezer Greenberg, to name but a few, express longing for the Old Country, which is, after all, a kind of yearning for a Yiddishland, and further evidence of the need for a new home.

Since *Afn Shvel* arose as a response to the plight of the Jews following Hitler's rise to power, the war was, of course, reflected in its pages, but not as directly as one might imagine. One did not and would not read *Afn Shvel* for accounts of what happened, how the Jews "lived" in the ghettos and camps, and how they were annihilated. This would be the province of a newspaper and what's more, the editors probably felt that their readers were well aware of the tragic facts. Indirectly, however, the magazine was very much concerned with the Holocaust and one could even say that, given its mission of finding a homeland for Europe's long-suffering refugees, it was its main preoccupation. This concern might therefore be reflected in poetry as well as in essays or the very occasional factual reporting. Take for example this poem by Ezra Korman, a sacred parody of the traditional women's prayer "God of Abraham," published in the August 1944 issue:

Oh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Oh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob —
Thus did my mother with pious thoughts
In words soft, simple and quiet
Whisper with motherly worry her prayer.

I'm full of unrest, my heart is embittered,
My spirit is in a quandary, encumbered and in shock,
And I cannot find any pious words
With which to come to you, as my mother would have done.

I don't possess the simplicity, the wise humility,
The belief in eternal greatness and importance,
And I cannot, like her, only praise you and thank you
In this time of slaughter, of Jews being extinguished.

I am not one to announce or lament, like Job,
But there are no more Jews left in Kiev,
And I know that they call you God of mercy and compassion,
But I have not heard mention of that.

I feel no despair, not even a spark,
Nor do I seek defense in my inferiority,
But I have a complaint to you, compassionate God,
For there is not a single Jew left in Ukraine.

I don't have the simplicity, the humility of heart,
The belief in eternal greatness and importance,
My thoughts cannot comprehend you,
Oh God, without Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Literal translation by Sheva Zucker

After the Holocaust the newly established State of Israel becomes a central issue causing a crisis of identity and direction for the Freeland League and *Afn Shvel*. "A number of members gave up hope in territorialism and consequently in its organ, *Afn Shvel*, some quietly so and others slamming the door so that everyone might know" (July-September 1986, p. 1).

What would and could now be the direction of a magazine whose *raison d'être* had been the establishment of a territory for Jews once another such territory was already established? Whether they wanted to or not, the people connected with *Afn Shvel* had to reckon with Israel.

Israel and its relationship to the diaspora is a frequent topic in the magazine. *Afn Shvel* was a rare vehicle through which the more radical sector in Israel tried to reach an audience abroad. Left-wing writers like Natan Hofshi, Natan Alterman and others were often published here.

Natan Hofshi, the founder of an Israeli pacifist group, argued for a bi-national state. In an article entitled "Literary War against the Truth," November-December 1952, a response to an attack by Yiddish writer A. Almi on his book *The Other Voice in the Land of Israel*, he writes,

There are two things that Almi does not believe: the first — that we could have come to terms with the Arabs peacefully on the basis of a bi-national-state, and that the Arabs were in most cases driven forcefully from their cities and villages by our military... If Almi were to bother to come and live here in Israel ... we would show him that the Arabs of Ramla, Lod, Yafo, Migdal-Gad, Dir-Yasin and many other settlements

were driven from their homes with fire and sword. And the greater part of them fled in fear! Does the Jew not know the taste of fleeing in fear! (p. 13).

At their second conference shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel the Freeland League drafted a set of resolutions stating its position on the newly formed country which were published in the October-November 1948 issue. They are at once congratulatory but also very explicit that Israel could not be the only Jewish homeland nor could Hebrew be the only language of the Jewish people. Resolution no. 3 is relevant here:

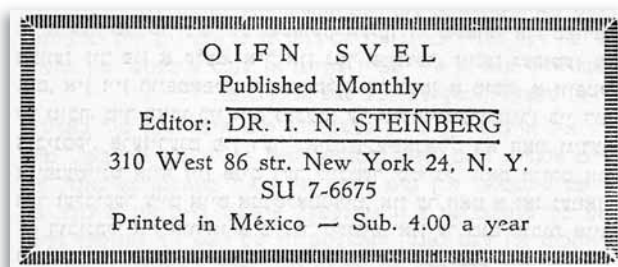
... By introducing Hebrew as the only official language of the *yishuv* and because of its negative attitude to Yiddish and Yiddish culture the State of Israel has set up a wall between the Jews of Israel and the Jews outside of Israel who speak Yiddish and live out their lives spiritually in Yiddish (p. 18).

**What would and could now be
the direction of a magazine
whose *raison d'être* had been
the establishment of
a territory for Jews
once another such territory
was already established?**

That was written in 1948 but how does one explain the fact that *Afn Shvel* remained the organ of the Freeland League, a political movement with an unpopular past and an even less promising future, until 1979? Given that the establishment of a Yiddish-speaking territory now seemed highly unlikely, Freeland activists turned their thoughts and efforts towards what was called *kley-n-kolonizatsye* (small-scale colonization). If even this could not materialize

then efforts must be put into choosing to build a rich, spiritual Jewish life — without land and without borders. Ultimately, *Afn Shvel* became less territorialist and more Yiddishist in orientation.

As interesting as was all the political talk, perhaps even more so, were the articles about peoplehood, language and Jewish life that discuss the ideological foundations of territorialism. Even though the dream of establishing a territory was no longer viable many of the reasons for wanting to



In the March-April 1959 issue, more than two years after Dr. Steinberg's death, he is still named as editor of *Afn Shvel*.

do still obtained. The question remained both during Dr. Steinberg's tenure and long after: how could modern Jews create a rich spiritual life and maintain their own culture and language, now not so much in the face of anti-semitism but in the face of assimilation?

In an article entitled "Territorialist Thoughts" — one of the many by Avrom Golomb, famed educator, essayist, national thinker and frequent contributor to *Afn Shvel* — he accuses Jews of being guilty of their own cultural deficiency as well as of the low quality of Jewish life, in general:

Why do we make gentiles of ourselves? Why do we sweep every sort of Jewishness out of our homes? Why are we embarrassed about our names? [...] It appears that the *goles* (diaspora) is inside of us. We create it, we build it, we convince ourselves that we are living in an alien world because we don't want to build our own world for ourselves.

A territory of our own, he goes on to suggest, might not even help. "We don't need to look for a territory, even were we able to find one, but we need to have *Jews with a territorialist psyche*" (p. 10) (See A. Golomb's article on p. 29 of issue #352-353). This "territorialist psyche" expressed itself in a striving to preserve one's own culture in one's

own language, Yiddish, which was very clearly visible in the second phase of *Afn Shvel*, a phase that the journal itself called "militant Yiddishism," bearing the mark of its main coworker Mordkhe Schaechter.

Since Dr. Steinberg's demise in 1957 until issue #236 (April-June 1979) when Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter officially became editor-in-chief, *Afn Shvel* was edited by an editorial board consisting throughout the years of Mordkhe Schaechter, Aaron Glanz-Leyeles, Saul Goodman, Beyle Gottesman, Michael Astour, Leybl Cahan, Leybl Bayon (of Mexico), Avrom Kin, Zeydl Khabatski and Yankev Levine.

Even though it is generally acknowledged that Mordkhe Schaechter (in partnership with Leybl Bayon) was the de facto editor, it took Schaechter more than twenty years actually to claim that title, perhaps because the reverence for Dr. Steinberg was so great — so charismatic and so beloved was he — that it was felt that no one could take his place. For ten years after Steinberg's death his name continued to appear on stationery and from time to time in the magazine as editor-in-chief and as secretary-general of the Freeland League.

A piece of archival evidence found at YIVO suggests that Steinberg was not exactly the household word we think he should have been. At the bottom of a letter addressed to "Mr. So-and-So" asking people, probably members, to make a contribution to the organization in honor of the 10th *yortsayt* of Dr. Steinberg and his daughter Ada Siegel who died very young, we find handwritten at the bottom:

- 1) Who the hell are Steinberg and Siegel?
- 2) If I had been the one to die 10 years ago, would they have written a greeting for me?
- 3) If Dr. Steinberg died 10 years ago, I notice that he is still Secretary-General of the Freeland League — don't you think it would be appropriate for him to resign and give over the post to someone a bit more alive?

Sincerely,
Mr. So-and-So

In the immediate post-Steinberg period one could still find articles on territorialism and politics. Israel appears frequently, both as the subject of articles as well as in the press review. Some of the topics covered include: the absence of a Yiddish translation at the Eichmann Trial; why Yiddish is practically neither seen nor heard at Yad Vashem;

or why an anthology of Israeli literature includes Arabic but not Yiddish writers.

A fateful moment came in the October-December issue in 1979 when the Freeland League finally dissolved and reconstituted itself as the League for Yiddish. This was hardly a sudden break, — ideological waverings had been evident in *Afn Shvel* since Dr. Steinberg's death and persisted for the next twenty-two years. In this turning-point issue in which the magazine now defined itself as "A social-literary quarterly" as opposed to the "publication of the Freeland League," the mailing panel on the back still carried the words, "published by Freeland Territorialist League of America for Jewish Colonization, Inc."

In an article entitled, "A New Name, A Fresh Start," Mordkhe Schaechter, now fully claiming the title of editor, outlines the direction of the newly constituted organization. Formerly the organ of a very specific political movement *Afn Shvel* now sought, like its new publisher, to transcend all political and religious boundaries within the Jewish community and to unite all who spoke Yiddish and viewed it seriously. One could call this an evolution rather than a revolution because the magazine had been in the process of moving from territorialism to Yiddishism for quite some time.

This Yiddishism was reflected in two ways, both in an interest in the language as a language, the province of Mordkhe Schaechter, Yiddish linguist and professor, as well as in what was referred to above as "militant Yiddishism." The hallmark of the mag-

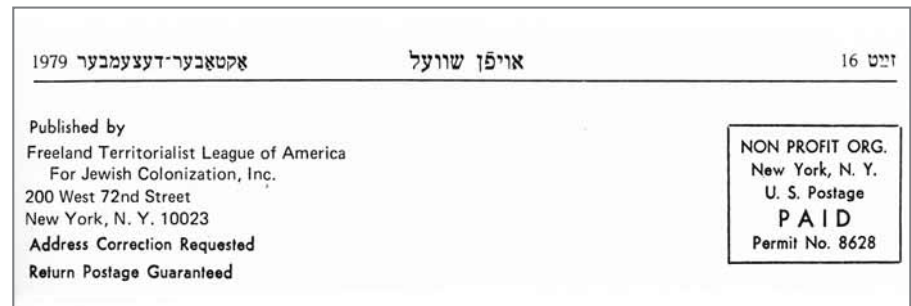
azine was *Laytish Mame-loshn* (Authentic Yiddish), a column introduced by Schaechter in 1957 and which came to occupy a more central role as *Afn Shvel* moved away from politics. Mordkhe Schaechter was very much concerned that Yiddish be a language suited to life in the twentieth century offering its speakers the possibility of saying everything that modern Jews might want to say, whether it be on the subject of plants, telephones, computers or space travel. The column featured frequent discussions on how to convey various, not exclusively but often modern, terms in Yiddish such as power plant — *kraftstantsye*, *elektrische stantsye*, or *elektray* (July-December 1983); weightlessness in space — ought one say *voglozikeyt* or *onvoglikeyt in roym* or *in kosmos* (July-September, 1985).

A look at the term "shredder" in the January-March, 1988 issue helps illuminate Schaechter's approach. First of all, Yiddish has to keep up with

people were talking about whether North's secretary Fawn Hall had gotten rid of North's documents with a 1) *tsepitsler*, 2) *tseloksher*, 3) *papir-pitsler* or 4) *papitsler* (p. 19). Although Schaechter was often accused of linguistic despotism the opposite is evident; here as well as in other issues he asks that the readers let him know which term(s) they prefer.

Increasingly, the magazine occupied itself with questions of language, linguistics and, of course, issues that have to do with attitudes to the language. *Afn Shvel* comes to see itself as the guardian of a pure, correct Yiddish. Writers and publications who used the language well, or who employed a particular "good" word, were praised and new books published in the Standard Orthography would earn themselves a place on the list of "orthographically correct books."

Lest one get the impression that *Afn Shvel* concerned itself only with topics that emphasized its militant



Although in this issue, *Afn Shvel* is defined as a "social-literary quarterly," the organization's name still appears in the address as "Freeland Territorialist League...".

the times. Although it came as a question from a reader, the need for such a word was probably a response to the infamous Oliver North affair. The Yiddish speaker actually needed to know this word because everywhere

Yiddishism, this is not the case. Although the magazine was ever vigilant against foes of Yiddish and wrongs against the language this was by no means its full scope. Over time the balance shifted from militant

Yiddishism to broader cultural, literary and linguistic topics. *Afn Shvel* was home to the best Yiddish writers: the poets Avrom Sutzkever, Beyle Schaechter Gottesman, Rifke Basman Ben-Hayim, M.M. Shaffir, Malke Heifetz Tussman, the sociolinguist Joshua Fishman, the prose writers Blume Lempel, Lili Berger, Tsvi Aynman, Yehuda Elberg and Yechiel Shraibman, and young academicians like David Roskies, Rakhmiel Peltz and Hannah Kliger. It was indeed, as the words following the title suggest, a “*gezeshaftlekh-literarisher*” (social-literary) magazine.

It is with this orientation that *Afn Shvel* has come into the third phase, the post Mordkhe Schaechter phase, under the present editorial staff. We are no longer “officially” militantly Yiddishist although we are still committed to Yiddish as a living spoken language and a vehicle for Jewish cultural expression. We are no longer territorialists (most of us, probably not even in some secret corner of our hearts) and we are far enough removed from it that we are no longer afraid of our territorialist past. The issue of creating a place for Yiddish and Yiddish culture in Jewish life is still crucially important to us.

We publish solely in Yiddish. Those who write for us are both young and old and come from the world over; most are from the United States but we also have contributors from Canada, Israel, Moldova, Australia, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Belgium, France, among others. Since the “rejuvenation” of the magazine in 2005 we’ve introduced several columns. In “About Books” librarians or scholars discuss a particular collection of books or archival material. In “On the Jewish Street,” Marc Brukhes writes about popular culture from a specifically Jewish perspective. Taking into account that many of our readers are not totally proficient in the language we publish several articles accompanied by fairly extensive glossaries.

We understand that the members of the younger generation will not read a Yiddish magazine simply to fulfill the *mitzvah* of reading Yiddish; there is plenty of fine literature to read in the language without it. People should not be reading our magazine out of a sense of guilt or pity but rather because they want to do so. We believe that Yiddish readers have the right to a magazine that is just as interesting and enjoyable as the magazines they read in English (or whatever the language of their country is). The contents and the appearance must go hand in hand — one enriches the other. Thanks to our won-



This image which accompanies Marc Brukhes column “On the Jewish Street” is entitled “Roots,” from the cycle “When I Return” by Alexander Vaisman, 1991.

derful art director Yankl Salant we have been able to achieve this synthesis.

Although a Yiddish magazine must be just as interesting and as vibrant as anything one might read in English it must be something that one would not be able to find in English. It must bring readers into the deeply complicated and often contradictory world of that which I.N. Steinberg would have called “*mentsh un yid*” (human being and Jew), which expresses itself in a Jewish language and can only express itself in Yiddish.

The Place of “Freeland” in Jewish Life¹

by Isaac Nachman Steinberg

The following speech was authored just after the establishment of the State of Israel. It addresses, among other things, not only the relevance, but the necessity of achieving the objectives of the territorialist movement. The “Suriname Plan” referred to in the first paragraph and beyond was the most current, and possibly the most viable, territorialist colonization project of that historical moment. Negotiations with the government of Suriname were in full swing and there were bright hopes for the procurement of a territory there for concentrated Jewish colonization.

The place and future of the Freeland (Frayland) movement must be considered altogether *independently* of the Jewish Suriname Plan. If it should appear that there is no real need for new Jewish colonization based on the principles of Freeland in the context of current or immediate Jewish historical development, then any Suriname plan must be rejected even if it is presented to us with the best of conditions. However, if an analysis of the current situation of the Jews should lead to the conclusion that a new Freeland colonization project is necessary, then we must fight with all our might for the implementation of the Suriname plan and plans similar to it.

Now is a critical time for all Jewish grassroots movements. An earnest and thorough stocktaking is in progress right now at the Bund conference in New York. It is high time to set in motion a fundamental reassessment of the values of Zionism. And logically, we in the territorialist camp must also rethink the core principles and requirements of Freeland in light of the monumental events that have affected and continue to affect our people. Allow me to reiterate the main tenets of our movement — ideas that have perhaps not yet been formulated as precise points, but are nonetheless engraved in the consciousness of every Freelander.

Reprinted from the Oct.-Nov. 1948 Issue of *Afn Shvel*
Translated by Yankl Salant

A) We strive, first and foremost, to establish for the *Jewish people* all the conditions (economic, social, political and spiritual) necessary to ensure its undisturbed, independent development. We are passionately dedicated to the ongoing existence of Jews as a people.

B) This people is comprised, however, of individuals with their infinite personal abilities, feelings and strength of character. This is what we strive for: that in the context of being a free people, each Jewish *individual* shall be afforded the opportunity to develop fully as a human being and to live in harmony with his or her fellow Jews.

C) But neither the Jewish people nor the individual Jew can reach their highest level of development without a bona fide alliance with progressive *humankind*. Jewish national and individual ideals derive from and strive towards humanity — the spiritual origins of all life and culture.

We believe that the best way to bring these three ideas (which actually comprise *one* idea) closer to realization is to procure for the Jewish people a piece of ground beneath our feet, in other words, a *territory*. But the Freeland League does not have in mind just any tract of land that appears to be physically and economically viable. We hereby put forth four requirements which the organization demands of itself, and only then, of the world at large.

1) The acquisition of a Jewish territory must happen on the basis of *peace*. The Freeland movement is in principle a peace movement. The events in *Erets-Yisroel* have convinced us more thoroughly than ever before of this truth. We must not lead any of our people into a country where we confront the enmity of the resident people. The Jewish future cannot be built on the military victories or diplomatic successes of the moment; we must clearly foresee the obstacles and dangers of tomorrow. “*Al kharbekha tikhye*” [by your sword will you live] — is no longer a solution for even the most powerful countries of the world; it certainly does not guarantee Jewish survival. Therefore, the Freeland League is seeking a territory based on open and mutual understanding with the native citizens of that country.



¹Speech delivered at the Second Freeland Conference in New York [1948]

2) It is not necessary to seek the trappings of power of a *state*. In the current geopolitical situation, no one could seriously claim that a tiny, newborn nation would have the capacity to pursue unhindered a peaceful and independent existence. "That which our people truly needs, on which its continued survival depends, is internal *autonomy*: the chance to live freely and fully as Jews in our own culture and according to our own traditions in a regime that upholds

problem of Jewish spiritual continuity. In Israel, a people is being formed with a language and culture that are in essence cut off from the majority of the Jewish people. It is difficult to imagine how the *merkaz rukhani* (spiritual center) of Israel will be able to affect the spirit and soul of the masses of Jews who live in the rest of the world.

It is clear, however, that we do not want a "new" people whose organic structure and spiritual aspect would be

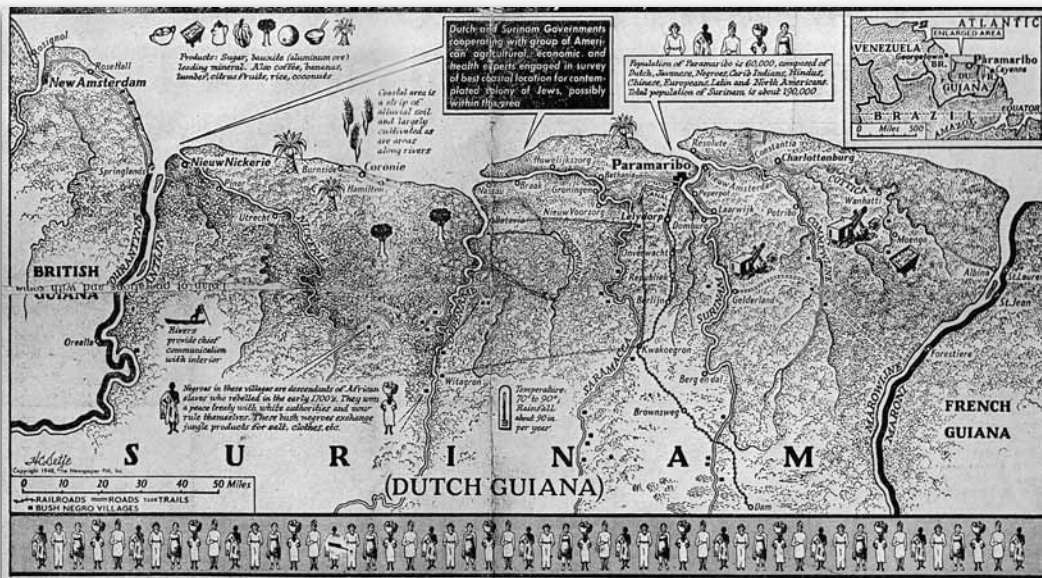
detached from *that* Jewish people that took form during the "generations of exile." We specifically do want Polish, Lithuanian, Russian and Galician Jews to have their own historical continuity, to maintain and evolve their own particular way of life and their *Yiddish* language. This means *creating* a territory for Jews outside the Land of Israel (although in no way in opposition to it!). This requirement was recently best expressed

by the Freeland refugees in Austria: "Building a new, thriving community in Suriname means reviving the decimated Jewish community of Poland."³

2. Outside the Land of Israel

What is the state of world Jewry today, at the beginning of the year 5709 [late 1948]? Three significant factors prevail. First, the sad fact that we have just lost millions of our fellow Jews along with many centers of Jewish life that had been solidly rooted for generations. Second, there are mass Jewish populations in the so-called "stable" countries (America, Russia, England and its dominions). And third, a strong Jewish community has arisen in the form of a state in Israel.

Let us consider this situation from the standpoint of the Freeland movement. Is the movement necessary and



A map of Suriname, from the newspaper *The World*, an illustration to the article of Jan. 11, 1948, "All-Jewish Colony in Surinam Sought."

liberty and social justice." These are the words of the Bundist theoretician, Prof. L. Hersh,² but it is important to add: autonomous Jewish life must be built upon the solid foundation of a territory with a concentration of Jews. But this absolutely does not mean a separate Jewish state with all the accompanying risks and dangers.

3) The Freeland territory must be built upon the personal *labor* of its builders and upon the fullest utilization of *cooperative* economic methods. The economy of such a new land must avoid the imbalance of embracing only agriculture or only industry. A system of agro-industrial labor should provide the colonists with the opportunity for comprehensive economic and intellectual development.

4) We want to see a vigorous Jewish *culture* take root in the Freeland territory. Only now, with the creation of the State of Israel, do we have a better understanding of the

²Liebman Hersh, *Undzer Tsayt*, May 1948, from his article "A zeltshtendike melukhe in der yidisher geshikhte" (An independent state in Jewish history) ³See the resolutions of the second conference of Freeland refugees in Austria (*Afn Shvel*, August 1948)

viable in light of the three aforementioned factors? There is no doubt that the great catastrophe perpetrated by the Nazis necessitates the creation of a free, Jewish territory which can guarantee our ongoing survival. The question is whether this need can be met by the other two positive factors in today's Jewish reality: the world's "stable" Jewish communities and the State of Israel.

But other very tangible dangers

lie in wait for them.

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— the emptying of the Jewish soul and spirit —

which renders them

half-Jew and half-American.

What is the situation in the Diaspora, in the *stable* Jewish communities — and especially, in America? These Jews appear to be solidly grounded both politically and economically in their adoptive lands. But other very tangible dangers lie in wait for them. First comes the danger of mass assimilation — the emptying of the Jewish soul and spirit — which renders them half-Jew and half-American. We all know what that means for the future of a people. But we also know that where there is assimilation, the curse of anti-semitism cannot be far behind. Let's not fool ourselves after the horrific experiences of Europe at the hands of Hitler and his silent partners. Anti-semitism no longer simply means discrimination or social exclusion: the definition has expanded to include the specter of extermination. In this time of continual turmoil, Jew-hating amounts to nothing less than mass murder and genocide.

We as a people must protect ourselves against this twofold threat of assimilation and anti-semitism by strengthening our internal unity, cultivating a healthy Jewish-national consciousness and winning back our alienated youth. But is this enough to withstand the test of time? The Bund, for example, is deeply concerned with the survival of our people. But true to its ideological past, it hopes to preserve the national character of the Jewish people solely through work *where Jews are already living*. It plans to intensify all sorts of cultural activity in the Yiddish language; it intends to call for democratic elections of Jewish communal leaders. But it does not understand that the advancing waves of assimilation (economic as well as cultural) cannot be turned back with bits of purely cultural activity, nor does it understand that cultural activity cut off from a vital national and economic

infrastructure becomes rarified "culturism" [culture for its own sake]. How can we keep our youth together using the Yiddish language alone if the concrete, day-to-day workings of a Jewish, national life are not reflected in that language? How will Jewish communities last if they are not based (as they were in Poland!) on living authentically as Jews in concentrated communities.

Jewish culture as well as Jewish democracy can only grow on Jewish soil, in concentrated communities where Jews are not only strong in number, but also connected through common social and economic activity. As long as the Bund remains blind to this fundamental fact, it will not really be able to change the situation of Jews in the "stable" countries. It will instead succumb to the danger of being passively neutral regarding our future.

Fortunately, American Jews are not under immediate pressure from these two historical threats. But as time goes on, they will increasingly feel anxious and the far-seeing among them will have to embrace the idea of concentrated Jewish settlement — of a Freeland which could be the solution for at least some of them. Perhaps they will also realize, before it is too late, that they must take advantage of the stability and security that history has granted them in order to build a more unshakable base for their future survival. *It is therefore essential that the Freeland movement be ever vigilant and ever more public about the historical imperative of a territory for Jews.*

3. Within Israel

What is the situation in Israel where the ideals of the Zionist movement are being implemented? Has the creation of the Jewish State with its doors open to homeless Jewish wanderers rendered the role of Freeland obsolete? Should the

Freeland League follow the example of Israel Zangwill when he dissolved the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) in 1927?

The truth is that the attainment of the Zionist goal has revealed the limitations of Israel. The country cannot meet the tremendous needs of the Jewish people in a normal and peaceful way. First of all, it is limited by its physical *borders*. Widening these borders in order to increase the necessary area for colonization can only be done through expansion. Given the situation in the Middle East today, expansion means nothing less than war. The Arab world understands this and is now preparing to face Israel. Can the Jewish future really be built upon such hostile prospects?

At the meeting of the Zionist Executive in Tel Aviv in August 1948, Ben Gurion warned its members: "We must not be triumphant because we have not yet achieved a victory. And even if we do win, the Arabs will never be at peace with our victory. We have won only the first stage of the conflict

**Fear and hatred of one's neighbors
will color the very fabric
of [Israeli] national life at all levels,
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within Jewish society itself.**

— we, a small collection of 700,000 Jews against 30 million Arabs. So far we have shown a greater capacity for organization, but what will happen when the Arabs overcome their various technical difficulties and reveal their full strength? And let's not beat around the bush! It is not the Jewish people — 12 million strong — that is in conflict with the Arab nations, but Israel alone."⁴ These words have not lost their

meaning even after the "victories" of October [1948].

The second threat looming over Israel results directly from its new identity as a *sovereign state*. Israel cannot simply declare itself "neutral" and in so doing be sheltered from the scorching winds of global politics. In order to stay on its feet, it will have to concentrate more and more power in its state institutions and hold the population in the ever-tightening grip of authority. There are already enough symptoms today of a system in which the citizen is increasingly subjugated to the military and the government. Of course, the war is partially to blame for that. But the example of present-day governments has also taught this new state to employ all the "light" methods of coercion, force and domination internally, while on the world stage it will have to practice "diplomacy." Israel will be required to join this or that coalition; it will become either an instrument of or a partner to the global policies of the so-called great nations. All the lofty and lowly conflicts that afflict the present-day non-Jewish world will be added to the already heavy burden of Jewish destiny. How will this new course of our history affect the average Jew?

The third danger threatening the people of Israel is spiritual. The country will come of age in a militaristic atmosphere, in a continual state of readiness to battle its permanent opponents: the Arabs. A significant portion of the education of its youth will have to be devoted to military-strategic requirements; and at the same time spiritual, moral and cooperative values will lose priority. As can be expected, fear and hatred of one's neighbors will color the very fabric of national life at all levels, but wherever there is a continual source of hatred directed outwards, the poisonous seeds of suspicion and distrust must also grow inwards, within Jewish society itself.

And that is not the half of it. The people in Israel will become increasingly cut off from the Jewish Diaspora. The division resulting from the exclusive use of Hebrew and the spiritual wall that will go up between them will impede mutual influence. Jews have two languages and neither of them can get along without the other. But how can Hebrew — even with the power of statehood behind it — dominate Jewish life elsewhere in the world? Israeli Jews will also have their own interests and concerns. And those interests and concerns will not always coincide with the needs and desires of the millions of Jews outside Israel...

⁴*Bayot ha-zman* (Problems of the Time), Jerusalem (August 27, 1948)

Who knows in what direction the *economic* development of Israel will be forced to go? This is the fourth, but not the least important aspect of the Israel problem. The spirit of freedom and cooperation in which the *kibbutz* was initially built there was dear to us all. The shining example of the *kibbutzim* revealed what free Jews can accomplish with their abilities in a voluntary system, free of government control. Palestine as a *collective* of working *kibbutzim* sparked the imagination of all its supporters.

The creation of the Jewish state must by definition transform the entire economic structure of the land. Any country under military threat must organize its economy in the interests of military preparedness. It will be an authoritarian economy that will control and influence every economic initiative and undertaking of its people. Rapid industrialization will occur, bigger cities will be built, the economic process will become centralized.⁵ The once-cooperative colony — in village and city — will, by necessity, subordinate itself to the requirements of the state and politics. Tel Aviv, despite itself, will begin to threaten the Degania [Degania was the first of the cooperative *kibbutzim* upon which many others were subsequently modeled.]

4. Freeland — A Necessity

Under such conditions, can anyone claim that the establishment of the State of Israel precludes the need for Freeland? The question can also be asked in this way: Has the founding of the country introduced a *qualitative* or *quantitative* change into the lives

of the world's Jews? Has anything happened to transform Jewish life at its base, at its core — or has there been no more than a surface change? The problem of Jewish homelessness raises the question: Will Israel as a state eliminate or merely reduce this homelessness? (The same question can also be asked regarding other issues, such as the growth of anti-semitism or the epidemic of assimilation.)

As long as the Israel continues to be unable to eliminate Jewish homelessness and all other related problems, "Freeland" is the solution. It logically follows that the Freeland movement remains a historical imperative in our lives.

This places a great responsibility on us, especially in this time of crisis. We must not forget that the whole of Jewish life now courses between two steep banks. One bank is composed of the ostensibly "stable" Jewish populations in the Diaspora. The other is *Eretz-Yisrael*. Between these two banks millions of our exiles are being swept along in a surging current, including those whom we already know of and those who might come along later. We are a people in flux. And this unstoppable flow is rushing headlong towards one goal: Freeland. A free land that will be secure from anti-semitism and assimilation on the one hand and from statehood and its pitfalls on the other. A land that will be steeped in freedom and Jewish cul-



The masthead of the first issue of the journal *Frayland* (Freeland), Warsaw, Sept.-Oct. 1934. Steinberg did not participate in the publication of this particular issue.

ture and help build a *peaceful, productive and authentically Jewish home*.

The Freeland movement must place itself in the service of just such a free land. It should do so with love for those Jews who are building Israel, while at the same time remaining loyal to the goals of the great concept of Freeland.

Isaac Nachman Steinberg (1888-1957) was the second editor of Afn Shvel. He took over from Ben-Adir in 1943 and held the position until his untimely death. In London he was one of the founders of the Freeland League and for many years was its secretary-general and charismatic leader. In this essay he confirms the continuing importance of an organization such as Freeland in particular and of territorialism in general after the creation of the State of Israel. He published numerous essays on Jewish issues in Afn Shvel as well as in his book In Kamf far Mentsh un Yid [In Struggle for Man and Jew] (1952).

⁵Obviously utilizing capitalist structures

A New Name, A Fresh Start

by Mordkhe Schaechter

Reprinted from the Oct.-Dec. 1979 Issue of *Afn Shvel*
Translated by Beatrice Lang Caplan

The 1930s. Jews in need. They had lost their status, their means of livelihood, were forced out of some jobs and not granted access to others. Harassed and oppressed by anti-semitic regimes in Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Romania, terrified by Hitler's growing power, these Jews, desperate to find a



safe haven, sought a refuge. Some found it in Palestine, although the Mandate power closed its doors ever tighter. Some managed to get past the all-but-closed door to the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, etc. Millions, however, stayed where they were, lacking the strength, the money, the legal documents, the connections that might help them; no country opened its doors to welcome them. Most states kept their doors firmly locked.

In this atmosphere the Freeland League for Jewish Territorialist Colonization was founded in 1935, heir both to Israel Zangwill's Jewish Territorialist Organization and to the United Jewish Socialist Workers' Party. The Freeland League sought not only to solve the pressing problem of Jewish emigration but also to safeguard the Yiddish language, Yiddish literature, Jewish life. In contrast to the Bund, which believed that socialism would bolster the cause of Yiddish, the territorialists didn't want to close their eyes to the simple, obvious fact that due to secularization, Jews were assimilating faster than they had in earlier times when the bounds of custom and Jewish law were stronger than the strongest police force, more powerful than the most powerful state.

The territorialists longed for their own country, for their own territory, with its own economy, and with a state-supported education system from kindergarten to university. They wanted to be a people in the majority. While the Zionists wanted to realize this ideal in the Land of Israel, with Hebrew as the state language, territorialists — most specifically, the Freeland League — sought a free, friendly piece of land anywhere. A home for the homeless language, not just the homeless people.

Several difficult years of seeking, and, to some extent, finding, passed. There were colonization projects in the Kimberley (Northwest Australia) — a tract of land "much bigger than Great Britain and Northern Ireland," in Tasmania, in Suriname (South America). These were years of struggle, to some extent with the Bund, but mostly with the Zionists who pitted themselves against these projects.

But then came the Holocaust, the greatest catastrophe in Jewish history. The potential settlers of the longed-for Freeland, of the all-but-acquired territory, perished in the gas chambers. It seemed for a while, in the years following the Holocaust, that there were still Jews in need of a place to live: the survivors. After a few years, however, this problem too was solved by immigration to Israel, Canada, Australia and the United States.

But Yiddish, the tottering language and culture of Eastern European Jews, was still in a precarious situation. In the years following 1948 (when hopes for a colonization project in Suriname had come to nought), the Freeland League concentrated more and more on safeguarding the survival of Yiddish. Initially it tried to rouse interest in small-scale settlement, seeking at the very least to establish one if not several towns. The Hasidim actually succeeded in this; they established several Jewish, Yiddish-speaking towns: New Square (near Spring Valley, N.Y. — Skver Hasidim who came mostly from Marmarosh, the Carpathians and Hungary), Kiryas Yoel (Monroe, N.Y. — Satmar Hasidim) and others. And we too entered into negotiations to build a secular Jewish town near Lakewood (N.J.), near Vineland (N.J.), near Roosevelt (N.J.). Nothing, however, came of it.

As time passed, the Freeland League and its organ *Afn Shvel* increasingly became the conscience of Yiddishism and of the Yiddish sector. We are the only Yiddish group that dared to take a stand against those who profess Yiddishism in public but speak English (or Spanish or Polish or French) in private. This position earned us a number of enemies.

For us — the people associated with *Afn Shvel* — speaking Yiddish is the first principle of Yiddishism. Of course, literary prizes, conferences, resolutions, committees and commissions cannot do any harm, nor can translations into other languages. But without Yiddish as a spoken language at home, in the offices of Yiddish organizations, at summer camps, in classes where Yiddish language, literature, folklore, etc., are taught, the whole Yiddish movement is worthless.

And above all, we are the only communal organization that includes, as part of its mandate, the promotion and cultivation of the language. We are the only ones who have repeatedly spoken out in favor of adopting the Standard Orthography, of modernizing and urging respect for Yiddish (and therefore, respect for ourselves, its speakers) by freeing it of the provincial *daytshmerish* (superfluous German borrowings) element, by treating it no differently than English or French or Russian: with the respect that is afforded a language of high culture.

The time has thus come for a reassessment, for looking the truth squarely in the eye. If we haven't done any territorialist work for thirty years and we are engaged solely in activities that further the survival and quality of Yiddish, why hang onto an anachronistic name? For all practical purposes, we've given up and stopped looking for a *free land*. Why call ourselves the "Freeland League for Jewish Territorialist Colonization" if all our thoughts and actions are now only on behalf of Yiddish; does it not make more sense simply to call ourselves the "League for Yiddish"?

And so, at a meeting on February 3, 1979, the executive committee of the Freeland League adopted a resolution to change the name of the organization to the "League for Yiddish" and to carry out the necessary legal procedures to make this change official.

For the League for Yiddish, the Yiddish language will not be just a means (to disseminate socialism or secularism, or to fight *against* the hegemony of Zionism or *for* working Jews). We believe Yiddish is important enough to stand on its own two feet, to be a presence and an end in itself.

The League for Yiddish will continue to insist that *speaking Yiddish* is of primary importance, and not just one European-born Jew with another, but also one American- (or Argentinian- or Canadian- or Australian- or South African-) born Jew with another. If Yiddish is not spoken, it will not survive.

The League for Yiddish will demand respect for Yiddish, like the honor a child owes its father and mother, and as a matter of course, social prestige for the language and its speakers. Yiddish is, for us, not one iota less distinguished than French or any other powerful state language. Even if the individual Yiddish speaker still feels inferior, as an immigrant might, let him exhibit his inferiority complexes elsewhere, not at the expense of Yiddish and the Yiddish movement.

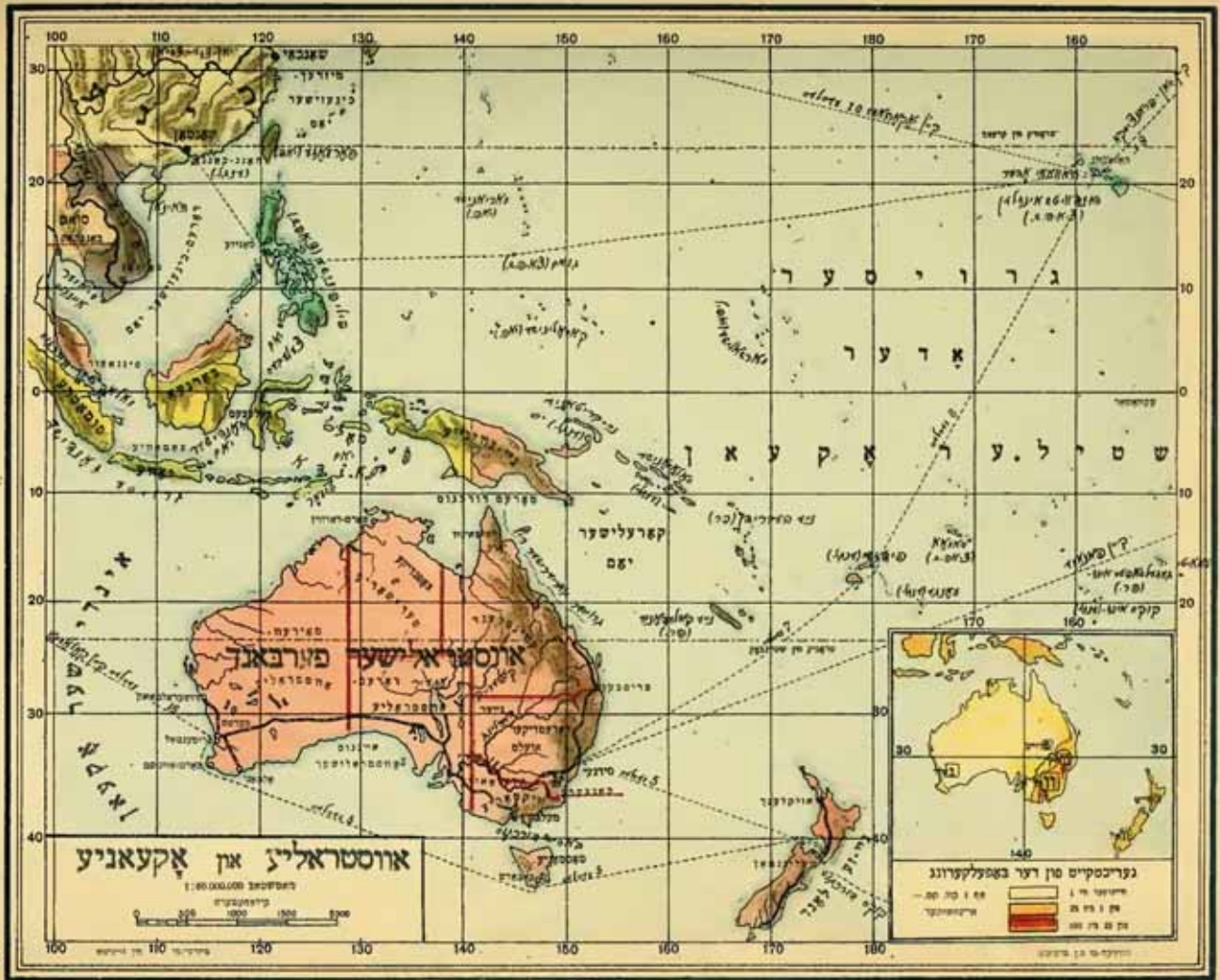
The League for Yiddish will call for vision and high standards: we should have great aspirations for Yiddish — contribute generously, have the courage to undertake wide-ranging projects. Yiddish organizations and institutions should stop living from hand to mouth and carry out far-reaching plans. We have to ask ourselves not just "What will we do next year?" but also — "What will we do in twenty, in twenty-five, and indeed, in fifty years' time?" We must enter the computer age.

We at *Afn Shvel* will also continue to be a free tribune, as the [anarchist publication] *Fraye arbeter-shtime* (The Free Voice of Labor) was for many years, and we will strive to increase our efforts in this respect. We, the supporters of the League for Yiddish and of *Afn Shvel*, are not cowards and have not the slightest respect for intolerant members of the Establishment. Where praise is due, we will give it generously; however, where it is not, we will also speak out. Where Yiddish is wronged, openly or covertly, intentionally or unintentionally, we will make our voice heard. Incompetence, ignorance, overbearing authority, cowardice, stinginess, hypocrisy — in connection with Yiddish and Yiddish organizations — will be exposed to public scorn. Just because Yiddish is, unfortunately, in decline, we do not want worthless scribblers and glory-seekers to push their way in supposedly for the sake of Yiddish. The place of honor should be for inspired individuals, Yiddish writers and activists, *idealists who do not seek it*.

We want to work on behalf of Yiddish by demanding vision, high standards, quality, ethical behavior. And yes, also warmth, closeness, family feeling. The Yiddish world has shrunk, it is small. Let us try to compensate for the terrible loss in quantity with quality and friendship. Yes, Yiddish is in decline, but we are not prepared to give up.

One more thing: the League for Yiddish wants to be truly non-partisan and to achieve the "impossible": anyone for whom Yiddish is not of secondary importance should be able to feel at home with us: Bundists and Zionists, Jewish Communists and territorialists, Labor Zionists, anarchists and Orthodox Jews. If Nixon was able to make peace with Mao Tse-tung and Sadat with Begin, why should this not be feasible in our Yiddish world.

The League for Yiddish is making its appearance on the Jewish street. Let us hope that its work will be valued.



Yiddish map showing Australia and Tasmania, places where the Freeland League was seeking a homeland for Jews

Front cover: Images of the editors and some of the contributors featured on the pages of *Afn Shvel* since 1941. Their names can be found online at www.leagueforyiddish.org by clicking on the *Afn Shvel* link to the left and then on the image of the front cover of this Special English Anniversary Issue.

Published by

League for Yiddish, Inc.
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