

SHIMON MARKISH

## **Russian Jewish Literature after the Second World War and before *Perestroika***

Russian Jewish literature—I use the word literature broadly to cover the whole spectrum from journalism and historiography to poetry and fiction—began in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is unanimously agreed that its ‘founding father’ was Osip Rabinovich (1817–1869), editor and publisher of the first Russian Jewish periodical, the weekly *Rassvet* [Dawn], published in 1860–61. Let me emphasize that the first Jewish periodical published in Russia appeared neither in Hebrew nor in Yiddish, but in Russian. Rabinovich was the first Jewish prose writer to attract the attention of both the Jewish and the Russian reading public. He used themes and devices which anticipated those found in the classical Yiddish literature of Sholem Aleichem.

The appearance and development of Jewish literature written in Russian is closely related to the ideas of the *Haskalah*. It paralleled the appearance and development of Jewish literature in German in Prussia, the homeland of the *Haskalah*, and also in Austria. Like the latter, it, too, aimed at the amalgamation of Jews with the majority indigenous population in all things except religion. But at the beginning of the 1880s, Russian Jewish literature had taken the first steps on its own particular path, a path which was later adopted by Jewish literature in other European languages. The great pogroms in the Russian Empire in 1881–82 made most, if not all, of the *Maskilim* who believed in assimilation rethink their position and become nationalistic, advocating a homeland in Palestine. In the cultural context, this meant a repudiation of their previous hostility to traditional forms of Jewish life and Jewish thought and a new interest in these matters. The great publicist Lev Levanda (1835–1888) is an example of this phenomenon. This new sympathetic interest is clearly reflected even in those Russian Jewish writers of the last quarter of the nineteenth century who remained alien to the ideas of national revival. By the beginning of the First World War, of the four languages—Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, and Polish—in which Russian Jewry wrote, Russian was second in importance only to Yiddish. By that time in the history of Russian Jewish periodicals almost forty different publications had appeared. They varied both from a political point of view (the most popular was the Zionist *Rassvet*) and in type, from general magazines which included fiction, history, and politics, to specialized journals such as *Evreiskii meditsinskii golos* [Jewish medical voice], *Evreiskaya shkola* [Jewish school], and even a children’s magazine. The literary works were particularly interesting and they attracted the attention not only of Jewish readers, but also of Russian readers in general. One need only to recall the poet Simon Frug (1860–1916) and prose writers Simon Yushkevich (1868–1927) and David Aizman (1869–1922). A school of Jewish historiography was formed under Simon Dubnov (1860–1941) which was perhaps the best in the world at that time. Research was done in all fields of the humanities, from sociology and demography to musical folklore. Russian was the working language of many Jewish organizations and societies, and the number of such organizations increased greatly after the 1905 revolution. Again, I shall mention as examples the famous Society for the Promotion of Culture among the Jews of Russia, founded in 1863, and the Jewish Historical–Ethnographic Society, founded in 1908. Although Russian language and culture remained ‘foreign’ to the overwhelming majority of Jews in the Russian Empire, the educated part of Russian Jewry began to formulate the program which, much later on—in 1932—was proposed to American Jewry by the Reconstructionist Mordechai Menahem Kaplan in his *opus maius*, *Judaism as a Civilization*: the essence of the program was that Jews could belong to two cultures (worlds, civilizations) simultaneously. The best,

the most perfect example of this harmonious double belonging—with its corollary, keen binocular vision—was Isaac Babel (1894–1940).

The First World War and all the calamities that followed it—the Bolshevik revolution, the civil war, the communist dictatorship, the Second World War, the Shoah, the ‘black years’ of the late Stalin era—devastated Russian Jewry to its very foundations. It is enough to state that a catastrophic break in tradition occurred and that, after this terrible series of events—too well known to be elaborated here—nothing could be considered as a continuation of the past. Everything grows anew on new soil.

Even the most assimilated Jews could not remain indifferent to the death of six million Jews. The feelings of nationalism aroused by the Holocaust are best expressed by Yulian Tuvim in his article ‘My żydzi polscy . . .’ (We Polish Jews, 1944) which many consider to be the manifesto of the assimilated Jews of Europe.

There are two kinds of blood, that which flows in the veins and that which flows from the veins . . . The study of the first kind of blood is the business of physiologists . . . The second kind is the innocent blood of the victims. Never before has the world seen such streams of martyrs’ blood . . . The blood of the Jews flowed in the widest, deepest torrents . . .

Only that relationship, those bonds unite, Tuvim says, which are based on the second kind of blood, the blood of martyrs, spilled by criminals. Many Russian writers of Jewish origin suffered from the ‘Tuvim syndrome’ at the end of the war and immediately afterwards. However, it is clear that a cry—or even cries—of despair is no reason for categorizing Russian Jewish writers as solely concerned with lamenting the past. Moreover, in the vast majority of cases the ‘syndrome’ disappeared quickly and without trace under the sobering influence of the anti-Semitism which became one of the main buttresses of Soviet party-state ideology at that time. Any form or manifestation of Jewish consciousness became a state crime, and was cruelly and violently repressed. Naturally, the feeling of Jewish solidarity, which had just been revived, abated or at best was pushed to the furthest reaches of the mind.

The ‘thaw’ which followed Stalin’s death defrosted, among other things, the ‘Tuvim syndrome’. The syndrome had by now been made more acute by the ‘black years’ of Stalin’s persecution—the period from 1949 to 1953 when Yiddish culture was crushed and its leaders physically exterminated. These were the years of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign and mass anti-Semitic purges, the doctors’ plot, and the preparations for the deportation of Jews to Siberia. I will take two typical cases, in some respects very similar to one another, in others very different—that of Vasilii Grossman (1905–1964) and Boris Slutskii (1919–1986)—to map out the boundaries of the concept of Russian Jewish literature in the postwar years.

Vasilii Grossman created a literary name for himself before the war. He spent the four years of the war at the front, as a correspondent of the central military paper. Only Ehrenburg was more famous than he. His mother was killed in the Berdichev ghetto. He was the first writer in the world to describe the extermination camps in detail. Together with Ehrenburg, he compiled and edited the *Black Book* about the death of Soviet Jewry which has still not seen the light of day in Russia.

He wrote a large novel about the Battle of Stalingrad, which was first extolled by the official critics—there were no others in the Soviet Union—and then besmirched, undoubtedly because of Grossman’s Jewish name and origins. It is possible that only Stalin’s death saved Grossman from arrest. In 1960 he finished a new novel, the first completely and consistently anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary novel in Soviet literature. It was also the first and last of such books which the author himself took to a Soviet journal and offered for publication. All copies of the manuscript were confiscated by the KGB. The novel was published in Switzerland in 1980. The Jewish theme, destructive state anti-Semitism in its Hitlerian and Stalinist variants, plays a prominent role in the book. The episodes in the death camp rank, in

my opinion, among the best and the strongest that have ever been written on this theme in any language. All the same, there are two reasons why I would not call Grossman a Russian Jewish writer. For all its importance, the Jewish theme is not the main theme of the novel. It is subordinated to a larger, more general concept. In other words, the author's position, his point of view, his 'commitment' is not Jewish, but Russian, or perhaps it would be better to call it 'Great Russian'. Secondly, to Grossman Judaism is not a civilization. It is a wound, something painful, a complex. In other words, it is not a constructive, positive factor in his work but rather something negative and provocative. A biographical fact—membership of the Jewish people, consciously accepted and asserted—becomes a literary fact, the fate of the writer, a Russian writer. Here we have a *Russian writer with a Jewish fate*. I put forward this description in the belief that Grossman is by no means the only case. Moreover, there are many variants of the Jewish fate and it is by no means necessarily always as elevated and heroic as Grossman's fate was.

Boris Slutskii comes from the literary generation which succeeded Grossman. He is a very well-known Russian poet who should be called "plebeian", to use George Lukács's classification, because of his closeness to and deep sympathy for the common people, the crowd, the masses. Slutskii also spent the war at the front, but I am certain that his 'Tuvim syndrome' was mostly if not entirely engendered by Soviet anti-Semitism. His 'Jewish Poems', forming a compact cycle, began to be circulated widely in samizdat in the mid-1950s and some of them have been published in the West. The theme of these poems is the Jewish tragedy, the denial of rights to Jews, their impossible position in Stalinist and post-Stalinist Russia. Let me cite one of these poems. It was written at the beginning of the 1960s and to the best of my knowledge, has never been published.

Yuriel Acosta

I become mature or grow old  
I see the light—I am a Jew.

But I thought I had struggled through,  
But I thought I had broken through.  
I had not struggled through, I had broken myself up,  
I had not broken through, I had gone too far.

I am legible not from left to right,  
But in the Jewish way—from right to left.  
I dreamed of great fame  
And ended up in great rage.

Having taken one step  
Into nationality or citizenship,  
I return to my rootlessness,  
I return from the point to space.

It seems to me that even in these very few lines, above and beyond the resentment of rejection—that is, the negative factor which Slutskii shares with Grossman—there is a sense of a certain "joy of recognition" (I borrow this wonderful phrase from Osip Mandelstam, the great Russian poet in whom, despite his origins, there is no trace of Jewishness), the joy of returning. Slutskii experiences a nostalgia for the Jewish past, for Jewish civilization, but only *for his own*, for the domestic world of his childhood and youth in Kharkov, the first capital of the Soviet Ukraine. It is nostalgia for a world which is very far from age-old Jewish traditions, an almost completely assimilated world, but nonetheless a special, unmistakably Jewish world

which has not merged with the Russian or Ukrainian world.

I note, by the way, that this nostalgia for a 'minor' Jewish civilization, a mixed, diluted, assimilated civilization, limited in time and space, is not only a Russian phenomenon. A similar nostalgia is felt by Hungarian Jews, for example. However in Hungary, the Jewish tragedy was not a taboo, as it was in the USSR. Hungarian Jewish nostalgia was not hidden away in samizdat but openly filled the pages of magazines and books.

Slutskii is a Jewish poet because he applies his Jewish sense of commitment to the cause of Jewish civilization—an impoverished, squalid civilization, but what could he do, he knew no other. But Slutskii the Russian Jewish poet never or, to be more cautious, almost never merges with or coincides with Slutskii the Russian poet, the populist and plebeian who not only existed openly in print, but also in samizdat with his famous anti-Stalinist poetry of the 1950s and 1960s. Babel's binocular vision has been replaced by a dichotomy. In Slutskii it is not pathological, Jewishness and Russianness run parallel, they do not interfere with one another. In others this kind of dichotomy often leads to hatred and self-hatred or to an excessive display of Russian patriotism.

I have discussed Boris Slutskii in so much detail because since the late 1970s, in spite of terrible anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union (or perhaps because of it, so as to retain some decency and some sense of proportion), works have begun to appear in print which I have no hesitation in categorizing as Russian Jewish. Let me mention just one of them, *Tyazhyolyi pesok* [Heavy Sands] by Anatolii Rybakov (1911–1999).

It is apparent that, like Slutskii, Rybakov looks at his material with Jewish eyes and longs for the Jewish world which has disappeared and which, like Slutskii, he knew only slightly and superficially. And even more than Slutskii, the Jewish Rybakov is divorced from the Russian Rybakov, author of many works which have nothing Jewish about them.

And what is the situation with Russian Jewish culture in emigration in the same pre-*Perestroika* years, in the 1970s and 1980s? The Russian emigrant leaves Russia for political, economic, or personal reasons, but not because he has decided to stop being Russian. Even when he is abroad, his cultural creativity belongs to Russia and, in favorable circumstances, it returns to Russia. This is true of any emigration—the 'Great Polish' emigration of the nineteenth century or the German emigration of the Nazi era. However, the massive Jewish emigration, called the *aliyah*, which began in 1971 took place under the banner of national revival and the return to the homeland. Russian Jews left because they no longer wanted to be Russian, they wanted to become only Jews. In other words, to recall Mordechai Kaplan once more, in leaving Russia, Russian Jews moved from two civilizations into a single one. I will be reminded that this is utopian—that the so-called 'repatriates' were dispersed throughout the Diaspora, and that the genuine repatriates who settled in Israel, created a vast Russian literature and were in no hurry to tear themselves away from their previous roots. I have two objections to this point of view. A general objection is that emigration does not deprive a Russian of the right to Russia (Solzhenitsyn, however, doubted this and I think that there was some truth in his doubt). If a Jew—that is, someone with a Jewish consciousness—left Russia, he had no moral right to claim any participation in Russian affairs—and Russian Jewish culture is as much a Russian affair as it is a Jewish one. He was entitled to fight for the rights of Soviet Jews, but only on an equal basis with people from elsewhere who fight for these rights. He was not entitled to sit in Tel Aviv, New York, or West Berlin and direct the cultural movement of Soviet Jews.

My second objection is more concrete. Let us see what the Russian literature of the Jewish national revival was both within and outside Russia. First, it is significant that the language of this literature is Russian. Linguistic assimilation has gone beyond the point of no return. Russian has become the language of culture for all Soviet Jewry (with the exception, perhaps, of the Georgian, Bukharian communities and the mountain Jews from the Caucasus).

Even the very first tendrils of Jewish samizdat which appeared in the least russified part of the Soviet Union, the Baltic Republics, were written in Russian. The Jewish samizdat was undoubtedly one of the most important, most convincing signs of the regeneration of Russian Jewish culture. It began in 1970 and, in spite of repression, existed to the end of the period under discussion. Its center was Moscow, but samizdat anthologies also came out in towns like Riga and Odessa. The main publication was the magazine *Evrei v SSSR* [Jews in the USSR], of which there were more than 20 issues, and its supplement, *Kul'tura* [Culture], of which 12 issues came out. There were also specialized 'publications' such as *Vyezd v Izrael: pravo i praktika* [Leaving for Israel: the Law and Practice]; *Nash Ivrit* [Our Hebrew]; *Vestnik iskhoda* [Exodus Herald] (collections of documents relating to emigration), *Evrei v sovremennom mire* [Jews in the Modern World], a survey of materials from the foreign press, and others. *Evreiskii samizdat* [Jewish Samizdat], published by the Center for Research and Documentation of East European Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, made almost all these underground periodicals accessible. A large part of them, perhaps the largest part, is devoted to various aspects of emigration to Israel. This is natural, since the 'Jewish Renaissance' itself was a product of the emigration movement which began after the Six-Day War. This is important: the search for national identity arose as a result of a political or, if one prefers, a practical, utilitarian decision. By definition this search must take place in the sphere of a heroic and romanticized past—Israel of biblical times, martyrdom for the sake of belief in the Middle Ages, the *Halutz* movement, and so on—and in the heroic present (modern Israel—not the real Israel, which they did not know, but an Israel created by their own dreams). Russian Jewish culture of the past was left aside as part of the burden of the Diaspora from which they must be delivered as soon as possible. The Russian Jewish present is useful only as a 'counter theme'—let us get away from this infamous mire in which there is nothing and can be nothing other than beastly anti-Semitism. Hebrew is the most important, often the only, center of interest; the key to the living Israeli reality. (Later this interest in Hebrew could broaden to an interest in the language of the Bible and the Talmud and to religious tradition. Religious revival is not my theme, but I just want to note that one of the roads to it was this 'Hebrocentrism'.) The point is that this samizdat literature has little to do with Russian Jewish culture.

A particular form of Zionism arose which was rather like that of the 1920s, with its impatience and its exaggerated aversion to the Diaspora and, in particular, to Yiddish culture. In 1980, one of the former leaders of the underground Moscow *ulpanim* said in London that the main [sic] enemy of the national revival of Russian Jewry was the Soviet Yiddish journal, not because it was Soviet and published communist and anti-Zionist propaganda, but simply because it was in Yiddish. In the context of the end of the 1970s, this not very intelligent view is, nonetheless, not complete nonsense. Zionism and its samizdat press of the beginning of the 1970s did, indeed, play a great part in the history of Russian Jews. It aroused them not so much from sleep, as from a mortal torpor. Implacable rigidity—the repudiation of everything that was not pure and simple Zionism—was both inevitable and essential at first. But very soon the universal desire of our times to return to one's own specific past, to traditions which had been broken and forgotten, was aroused. In essence, this longing was no different from the attraction to Yiddish, curiosity about the *shtetl*, about the "world of our fathers", which young American and French Jews feel, and to whom this is no closer than it is to the Jewish youth of Russia. And this desire, I believe, is more like the nostalgia of Slutskii or Rybakov than any "love of the distant" (and, inevitably, hatred of the close) of the ideologues and propagandists of the Exodus. However, Slutskii and Rybakov were bound by the fact that their memories of what was left of the Jewish civilization which they still saw with their own eyes, were limited. Rybakov was additionally limited by the fact that he wrote not for himself, but for the Soviet printing press. The young American and French Jews who search for their

roots are completely free. This is their priceless advantage.

Summing up, one could say that a united front—legal in official publications and illegal in samizdat (for ideological reasons)—arose within Russian Jewish literature and this front was turned towards Russian Jewish civilization in *all* its linguistic forms which, understandably, breaks the monopoly of Hebrew. Thus the anxiety expressed in London has some foundation.

In Israel, Russian underground journalism left the underground. Journals and newspapers appeared and disappeared in such numbers that it was difficult to keep up with them. It was difficult and not worth the effort. A considerable number of them bore no relation to Russian Jewish culture in spite of the language in which they were written and the place they were published. Ex-Soviet citizens who did not know any other language apart from Russian could not remain without any source of information and they were also eager to get what they had been deprived of in their old country. They got it. Some got an ersatz *Time* magazine, others a *Penthouse*, and still others a magazine devoted to the cinema, and so on. These periodicals certainly fulfilled a function, but it was almost the opposite function from that which had once been fulfilled by the Russian Jewish press in Russia. In Russia, the Russian Jewish press united two civilizations. In Israel, a Jewish country with a single civilization, the Russian press distanced the readers—and the writers—from this one ‘legitimate’ civilization and reinforced their roots in another, foreign civilization, alien to Israel. In practice, this Russian émigré press did not differ markedly *in principle* from Russian papers and journals in Paris, New York, or Buenos Aires. Here I discuss only those publications which were aware of this fact and which produced arguments to justify their existence as Russian Jewish publications.

First of all, I must mention religious publications. Their *raison d’être* is quite clear. They make it easier for those who are seeking to return to Jewish traditions—that is, they have a stable readership for whom Russian language and culture is not an aim but a means, the means, if you like, of moving from a spiritual foreign land to the spiritual homeland. It is not for me to judge how extensive or limited this readership is but there is absolutely no doubt that there is no difference between the reader in Israel and the reader in the Soviet Union. While there are still Russian Jews searching for the Jewish God, this particular branch of literature will retain its *universal* Russian Jewish character.

In 1973, the Society for Research on Jewish Communities began to bring out a series of books called *Biblioteka Aliyah* [The Library of the *Aliyah*]. More than 100 volumes have appeared, many of them translations first and foremost from Hebrew. The *Library* introduced immigrants to the multilingual Jewish civilization (but mostly to the modern Israeli one from which they were completely cut off in the Soviet Union. Clearly, if these books could reach Russia, they would play the same educational role there. But they were not only educational, they were also stimulating, and the stimulus was different. In Israel, they had to promote cultural integration and encourage people to move in this direction. In Russia, their purpose was to awaken and strengthen their sense of belonging to the Jewish people and—as has always happened in the history of Russian Jewish literature—to encourage original creative work in Russian.

Russian Jewish literature in the real sense of the term was offered by three magazines: *Sion* [Zion], *Vremya i my* [Us and Our Times], and *22*. *Sion* was the oldest of the three. It began in 1972 as the mouthpiece of the most ardent Zionists, the first repatriates of the new wave. For them, Jewish culture in all its linguistic variants in the USSR was a thing of the past. Needless to say, they saw no future for Russian Jewish culture in Israel. With time their position became less rigid. But *Sion* has continued to see itself as some kind of one-way bridge, over which all the traffic is from Russian to Hebrew.

At its inception in 1975 the monthly journal *Vremya i my* announced itself as “an

international journal of literature and social problems”, that is, it did not set itself any special Zionist or other Jewish tasks. Less than five years later, when the journal moved from Tel Aviv to New York, on summing up the first fifty issues, the editorial board openly allied itself to the Russian emigration and perceived its role as “the continuation of the traditions of Russian democratic literature and journalism” from Pushkin and Nekrasov to Tvardovsky.

22 began to come out in 1978. Its somewhat exotic name is quite accidental, but its subtitle and the way it defined itself was well thought out: “Moscow–Jerusalem. A socio-political and literary journal of the Jewish intelligentsia from the USSR in Israel”. The journal wanted to be not Russian Jewish (or not simply or only Russian Jewish?), but Russian Israeli. And this meant creating in Israel that ideal Russia about which the Russian intelligentsia of Jewish origin living in Moscow, Leningrad, or Kharkov had dreamed in vain.

These three periodicals could—and actually did—collect and preserve what was created *there*; they allowed intentions conceived *there*, to be realized. 22, *Vremya i my*, and even *Sion* (although to a much lesser extent) published many interesting things which were not only read there but which were secretly returned to Russia.

But to what extent was it feasible to create an ideal Moscow in the real Jerusalem? The ‘Moscow’ which the assimilated Jewish intelligentsia had brought with them was, from a Jewish point of view, a wilderness which had only just begun to be civilized. And if there were some elementary conditions for continuing this work in the real Moscow, there were none in Jerusalem, even if only because there was no one for whom to continue it. The young people—and even more so, the children—forgot ‘Moscow’ rapidly and irrevocably. (Was this not the main difference between the Russian emigrants and Russian Jewish repatriates?) From those few crumbs left of the once lavish table of Jewish civilization in Russia which the editors and contributors of 22 had managed to glean and bring with them, nothing could be built. Consequently, the Jewish half of the sought-after dual culture was to be built entirely from Jerusalem stone. Irrespective of the abilities and the wishes of the ‘Muscovites’ from 22 to master the art of hewing Jerusalem stone, the secular part of Israeli civilization (and the journal has nothing in common with the religious tradition) moved further and further away from the civilization of the Diaspora and, of course, from that form which once existed in Russia.

Any emigration is accompanied by re-emigration. Those who are disappointed in their new country return to the old. People have returned from Palestine and still return from Israel—to England, Argentina, even to the countries of Eastern Europe. Only to the Soviet Jew was the way back forbidden forever, or at least this is the way it looked then. Longing for an inaccessible past sometimes takes the form of self-hatred, of fear of the new dwelling place and a loathing for it, or of general misanthropy. Social psychologists know about this and have described the condition. These torments appeared on the pages of 22 (and *Vremya i my*) and roused responses which verge on the scandalous not only from readers of Russian, but even in *Ma’ariv* and on television. It was an irrefutable sign of the break with the Jewish dream or, if one prefers, with the utopia which had awakened the Jew in the assimilated Soviet citizen—or to put it more simply, in the Russian—and had led him out of Russia. This break was also a return of sorts, a return from Russian Jewish literature to Russian—now Russian émigré—literature. There is a very accurate description of this in a review of the novel which caused the scandal: “This is the howl of our miserable emigrants who were pretending to come on *aliyah*. The author unwittingly conveys their confused and hysterical representation of the world as chaos.”<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me that authors of this type were a special category of Russian writer with a Jewish fate. This fate is quite unlike that of Vasilii Grossman. It is not at all heroic. It is aberrant, paradoxical, bitterly ironic but it is a Jewish fate and it is tragic. The main point for

---

<sup>1</sup> 22, No. 17, January/February 1981.

us, however, is that these were Russian writers.

To conclude, let me say a few words about Russian Jewish literature in Western Europe. As a matter of fact, as far as I can judge, there was none. This was in contrast to the situation between the two world wars. Western Europe was the main refuge for the Russian Jewish intelligentsia who had escaped from Russia. Various societies, clubs, and leagues of Russian Jews abroad of the most varied political coloring competed and cooperated with one another. There was, of course, no shortage of literary and journalistic undertakings. It is enough to remember that the Zionist journal *Rassvet* closed in Petrograd in 1918, came out in Berlin after 1922, and then in Paris from 1924, and that our great historian, Simon Dubnov, did not cease writing and publishing in Russian. This was a genuine cultural force commensurate, again *mutatis mutandis*, with the cultural force of the Russian emigration. However, even this could not support and continue the life of Russian Jewish culture in a foreign land. By the middle of the 1930s, the Russian Jewish emigration as a separate cultural phenomenon had begun to decay, becoming dissolved partly in the Russian emigration, and partly in a purely Jewish environment and activities (Zionist or local community activities of the Diaspora). Hitler did not kill it, he merely dealt the final blow.

It seems appropriate to finish with the words of Simon Dubnov, from the article (was it his last article in Russian?) published in the anthology *Evreiskii mir* [Jewish World] in Paris in 1939. This anthology was put out by the committee of the Association of the Russian Jewish Intelligentsia in Paris and was called *The Yearbook of 1939*. It was the first yearbook and it remained the last. I am afraid that it was the last Russian Jewish publication of any sort in Western Europe before the Holocaust. Dubnov wrote:

We must remember that involuntary linguistic assimilation in the Diaspora does not yet mean internal assimilation and leaving the national union. In all the epochs of our history many of the best representatives of our people spoke and wrote in foreign languages. Making these languages their own, they expressed ideas in them which formed the cornerstones of Judaism. From the ranks of the builders of Judaism one cannot exclude Philo, Maimonides, Mendelssohn, Graetz, Herman Cohen, and many other thinkers. The merits of the newest Russian Jewish intelligentsia, who created a national literature in that language side by side with the literatures in both languages of our people, will not be forgotten by future generations.<sup>2</sup>

Translated from Russian by Margot Light

---

<sup>2</sup> *Evreiskii mir* (Paris, 1939).