

HIGH WINDOWS



an autobiography

by

LOUISA A. FALK

\$3.50

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Dr. Samuel Margoshes in his introduction to this book states "Louis A. Falk has painted a full length picture of the American Jew, with his beauty spots and blemishes equally showing. That this is his auto-portrait only heightens its authenticity as an American and a human document. The student of American civilization and of Jewish life in the mid-twentieth century will find much for which to be grateful to Louis Falk just as the American Jewish Community has ample reason to be thankful for his constant ardor and life-long service."

Two major chords sound ringingly through the pages of this autobiography. Aspiration and realization are the dominant notes that speak eloquently to the reader with intensity and faith in universal brotherhood.

Here is a welcome addition to your home library.

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LOUIS A. FALK

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The account I have spread on the pages of this book is based on memory and documents. I've tried to use both to establish the truth and to avoid error. I can only hope that my memory has not betrayed me into exaggeration or omission. As to the documents, they consist mainly of correspondence I exchanged with many people on many matters in the course of a busy career. Pieced together in their respective contexts, they tell their own story, which I have permitted to stand without embellishments or erasure.

My profound thanks are due to my dear friend Dr. Samuel Margoshes, whose guidance in compiling this record was of invaluable aid to me and without whose encouragement and active help this book would have not been possible.

LOUIS A. FALK

Dedicated to my wife Bessie and our beloved daughters,
Lucille Hope and Doris Evelyn

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FOREWORD

BY

DR. S. MARGOSHES

To me *High Windows* is, first and last, an American document. It traces the development of an American personality against the shifting scenes of the last half century and more. Born abroad and brought to the United States as a child, the author soon discovers in himself what we are wont to call the distinctive American character. This character becomes evident when, as a young boy and pupil of a Public School on the East Side, he uses his fists to fight off some of the neighborhood's worst rowdies to whom he is a downtrodden Jew and never anything else. He exhibits the peculiar American traits when, as a young man, he ventures out to make his own fortune by dint of hard labor, enterprise and imagination. The way he gets his first job, establishes the first business enterprise of his own, sets off a flyer in Wall Street, is truly in the American tradition and would make an excellent chapter in the long-expected and yet to be written American novel. The same may be said about his later experience—his short but thrill-packed war career, his hanging out with his buddies after the war to better protect their common interests against a world grown callous to the erstwhile heroes, and, finally, his return to the Jewish fold for comfort and solace. Such is the saga of America between the First and Second World Wars, and Louis Falk, who shared in it, all the while retaining his self-respect along with his humor, mirrors it all in the tale of his own individual life, even as the whole ocean is mirrored in a drop of salt water.

What strikes one most forcibly in this absorbing tale is its soberness and the complete absence of sentimentality. Beginning

as an immigrant boy's Odyssey, Louis Falk's book differs from the literature of adaptation and Americanization, of which Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* and Anja Yezerska's *Hungry Hearts* are perhaps the best examples, in the essential respect that it is the life story of an American, who somehow skipped the many heartbreaking and emotion-laden stages between Castle Garden and the Cayuga Club. He took to America as a duck takes to water; the process was as easy as it was natural.

The closer we come to the Second World War, the more rapid is Louis Falk's progress as a Jew and a Zionist leader. This is no accident nor an exceptional development. What distinguishes Falk's transformation from that of the general run of Hitler-made Jewish converts is the fact that, rendered conscious by events as he was of his ties with as well as obligations to his own people, he never separated his Jewishness from his Americanism; to him they were one and the same thing. Never once in his tumultuous career as a Jewish and civic leader, did he consider himself a split personality, half-Jew, half-American. Not for him the problem of divided allegiance. He knew deep down in his heart that the American Jew was indivisible, his Judaism being the obverse side of his Americanism. If he had to climb *High Windows* in order to better serve both his Americanism and Judaism, he climbed them, so to speak, in one piece, as Louis Falk, American Jew, without personality-split and without apology.

Louis Falk has painted a full length picture of the American Jew, with his beauty spots and blemishes equally showing. That this is his auto-portrait only heightens its authenticity as an American and a human document. The student of American civilization and of Jewish life in the mid-twentieth century will find much for which to be grateful to Louis Falk, just as the American Jewish Community has ample reason to be thankful for his constant ardor and life-long service.

HIGH WINDOWS

CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS

My first recollection of America is bound up with a fight.

America is the land of opportunity, but you have to fight for that opportunity, you have to fight to profit from it, you have to fight all the way. But I was never afraid of a good fight, least of all when I was a young boy and had just arrived in this country, in the teeming, brawling streets of New York City's lower East Side in the year 1906. Teddy Roosevelt was the President of the United States then, and a great hero to the youth of the country, especially to the immigrant youth of the East Side, and most especially to me. Like him, we were all determined to fight our way through, despite all obstacles, to fight our way to the top of the heap. One of my earliest memories, still more vivid to my mind's eye than many events of more recent years, is that of my first fight, a real old-fashioned set-to with fists flying and no holds barred.

It started one day as I was leaving school with the usual group of friends. Even then the school was a grimy old building of worn brick and gray stone, Public School #2 on Henry Street, in the heart of the East Side, every classroom overcrowded with Jewish and a smattering of Italian and Irish pupils, and surrounded on all sides by block after block of overcrowded, dilapidated old tenements. Every day I walked home with the same seven or eight boys—all of us Jewish. But, though we stuck together, we were not organized—not yet.

That was a lesson we had to learn from the Irish, who were firmly knit into an efficiently functioning gang that always went after what it wanted and never failed to get results.

Madison Street was a street like any other on the East Side, lined with dingy apartment houses, pulsing with hordes of pushing, jabbering, gesticulating humanity, but about it hung the mystery and taboo that is always associated with a borderline. To the north lived our own people, the Jews. But to the south were the strange, unpredictable Italians and, even worse, the terrible Irish. For the Irish, in particular, were our hated enemies. Their gang raids threw terror into our hearts. And on the Fourth of July they staged savage pogroms, sometimes even using real guns and actually killing people. We had no use for them whatever. We were convinced that they were a mean, tough, heartless race, to be shunned at all costs, and, when this was not possible, greatly to be feared.

On this particular day—I remember that the weather was fine and the sun was shining brilliantly on the crowded streets—we walked down near the East River, past Cherry Street Park. At the edge of the sidewalks were the omnipresent pushcarts, piled high with miscellaneous merchandise of every conceivable variety, from eggs to pants to books to billiard balls, not to mention cabbages and sealing wax. At the other side of the pavement, a scant few feet away from the pushcarts, were stores selling dry goods, old clothes and foods of all kinds. Everyone seemed to do good business. The pushcart peddlers were always involved in interminable wrangles with bargaining housewives, and the stores seemed to be always as crowded as Macy's is nowadays during a special sale. Nevertheless the merchants and peddlers constantly complained, and, to be sure, there were never any visible signs that they grew any richer. But even those who made out well were forced to complain, not so much by the prevailing mores, as by the universal environment of grinding poverty and cut-throat competition.

We had no intention of entering Cherry Street Park because it was the privileged preserve of the Irish, who kept out all trespassers with their doughty fists. But it was a fine spring day and the Irish were in a good mood, in high spirits—and therefore, if not exactly looking for a fight, ready, willing, and even eager for one, should opportunity offer. And, obviously, we were the opportunity.

They walked over to us slowly, deliberately, carefully creating a dime novel atmosphere of ominous suspense. Suddenly the unnatural silence was broken by a cry that seemed to come hoarsely and irresistibly from all their throats at once:

“Yids! Yids! Yids! Here come the Yids!”

These were words that in themselves meant nothing. After all, that was our own name for ourselves. But the faces and the voices of our enemies who yelled these words were full of hate, a hate born of empty, blighted lives, a hate made even uglier by the edge of mockery, of sarcasm with which the boys shouted.

“The Yids! The Yids!”

They made good words sound sick.

We were surrounded and were afraid. A paralysis of inaction, of indecision, of aimless hesitation came over us as they closed in, ready for the thousandth time to beat us up, to assert their dominion over the park, to convince themselves for a few delirious moments that their lives were not empty, worthless and utterly sordid. But in the midst of this indecision, of this binding paralysis spreading among us, I felt a strange surge of feeling, something new and alien to me. It was the birth of rage.

Without thinking, really without consciousness of what I was doing, I singled out the meanest, toughest looking Irishman and tore into him like a mad bull, arms and legs flailing about me like the arms of a windmill. I literally “saw red,” as though my eyes were misted over with hot blood. My friends followed

me, and for the first time we met fists with flying fists, kicks with vicious kicks, and in the exultation of the discovery that Jews could fight too, we fought hard and fought well. Soon the Irish, taken by surprise, were driven from the field, completely routed. Later, when they knew we would fight back, they were better prepared and often beat us, or if we beat them it was never this triumphantly. This was our first victory, and it was glorious!

My friends gathered around me, shaking my hand and slapping my back. I was the hero of the hour. Until now no one had paid any attention to me. I was a shy, quiet boy with nothing much to say. But from now on, I was a somebody; I was the boy who—wonder of wonders!—had stood up to the Irishers. It was this incident that converted our amorphous group into a gang after the model of the Irish—an organized body, ready to meet the Irish or anyone else on their own terms.

Only a week or two later, one of my father's friends, the peddler, Mr. Teitelbaum, repeated my feat on a more adult and more significant scale, at the very same place. Just as the junior Irish gang kept us boys out of the park, the older gang of boys and young men from seventeen to twenty-five terrorized the entire adult Jewish community, so that, in effect, the park was barred to Jews. This was a real privation on hot summer nights, when the Jewish population poured out of its airless, overcrowded tenement apartments in search of fresh air and cool breezes from the river. Perhaps inspired by the deeds of the younger Jewish boys, perhaps not, Mr. Teitelbaum decided that this persecution must be brought to an end.

A tall, burly man, he determinedly fastened his pack on his back and walked straight into Cherry Street Park, prepared to beard the Gaelic lions in their den. He did not have long to wait. A group of four or five young Irish toughs stopped him and told him to leave. Gently but firmly, he told them

he was staying. They said if he was going to stay he would have to fight. "All right," he said, without changing his firm, gentle tone, "if I have to fight, I'll fight." The Irishmen took him on one by one—or rather *he* took *them* on. Teitelbaum had never taken a lesson in pugilism in his life; indeed, he had never fought before, but he had a stout frame and a stout heart, and, apparently, even though he had never suspected it, a sound instinct as a fighter. Inside of an hour he had more than taken care of three of the Irishmen, and the others conceded by default.

From now on Cherry Street Park belonged to the Jews. More and more, as the years went by, the whole East Side came to belong to the Jews—but they had to fight for it.

* * *

At school I fell in love with my teacher. And in falling in love with her, I fell in love with America.

At first I felt lost among the hundreds of boys milling about me on the sidewalk outside the old gray school building. But friendships were quickly made, and soon I was a member of an embryo gang, a group of boys, all of them Jewish, all of them as lost as myself, who came together and found themselves. As members of the group, we "belonged."

Of course, when we were assigned to our various classrooms, all the little groups that had formed along racial lines were broken up. To my amazement—and consternation—I found myself seated among Irish and Italians indiscriminately, as though there were no differences of importance among us, as though the bonds that tied us together—bonds of whose very existence I had been ignorant—were much, much more important. Needless to say, this was precisely the idea that the teachers wanted to get across—that now, besides our ethnic and cultural groups, we all belonged to a single nationality, that we all shared a common heritage; in a word, that we were Americans.

To most of us, this was a new idea, a startling idea, running counter to many of the realities of everyday life as we saw them, and subversive of some of the most cherished prejudices we learned at home. But the teachers made it real, they made the root idea of democracy come alive, and they made it stick. We might engage in frequent and violent gang fights after school hours, but we knew in our bones that the divisive principle involved in these fights was wrong, evil. And within the four walls of the school building, there was peace not only between individuals but between races.

Our teachers were almost all women, some of them young, but most of them old maids, and most of them of old American, Anglo-Saxon stock. As a group they were frail-bodied and sweet-tempered, but somehow they managed to create and maintain a discipline iron in its force, though tenuous and almost imperceptible in the softness of its methods. In those days, juvenile delinquency was strictly an outside-the-school phenomenon.

A great event for me was our first assignment in American history, the writing of a two-page composition on "What America Means to Me." Like the rest of the pupils, I took my homework very seriously, and I pondered this subject many hours before putting pen to paper. Did America mean an almost unlimited opportunity for the acquisition of material wealth? Well, among other things, it certainly *did* mean that. This was the era when Rockefeller and Morgan were still popular heroes and not yet the villainous "robber barons" of post-war disillusionment. This was the gilded age of Horatio Alger. But even then, and even at my tender years, I knew that such was not the inner meaning of the American Dream. Did America mean an opportunity at last, for freedom and equality for me and my people as Jews? I knew that this was a great boon, a new thing in history, but I also knew that to me America meant even more than that. To me America

meant the opportunity for me—and for all others—for everyone—for self-fulfillment, for the realization of the forces within us, for the full flowering of our individual gifts.

That's what I wrote, and I wrote it to the best of my ability. But I was sure then—as I am sure now—that it was heavy-handed, haltingly phrased, clumsily articulated. I had learned English quickly and well, but on the streets. Therefore it was street English that I wrote, still totally unmodified and untamed by school English, so that I expected disapproval from the teacher, or amused or condescending toleration.

Instead, she enthusiastically read it aloud to the class as an example of good thinking and forceful style! When she returned the paper to me I saw that in her written notations she had of course corrected the misspelling and the numerous and inevitable mistakes in grammar; but the impression that remained with me was the warmth and excitement of her reading my effort to the class.

I was not the one to hide my light under a bushel, and I lost no time in boasting of the authorship of the now celebrated composition. But my expectations of being congratulated by my fellows were confounded in the worst way. They laughed and jeered and sneered. They taunted me with my alleged statement that I had a lofty disregard for money. Somehow it seemed stupid and futile to try to tell them that I had not said any such thing, but merely that I did not consider money the highest goal of the American way of life.

I could take the taunts and the insults directed at me, especially since they so obviously came from envy and thus were a kind of inverted tribute. But when they shifted the attack from me to the teacher, then I was really and truly insulted—and that I would *not* take. They could, and they did, call me "teacher's pet," which only mildly angered me. But when they started to call the teacher names, that was an entirely different matter! *That* was serious.

And this was how my first fight over a lady started. It was a brief engagement but a decisive one, and I emerged the winner. Then it was, in the glory of triumph after battle, that I had fallen in love. I was in love with my teacher. To others she might appear to be a quite ordinary, middle-aged, old-maid school teacher. To me she was beautiful.

My feelings toward my Hebrew teacher, Mr. Rabinowitz, were altogether different. I had attended *cheder* in Europe and learned a little Hebrew. My father, being a good orthodox Jew, naturally wanted me to continue my Hebrew studies and he enrolled me in one of the local *Talmud Torahs*. Every week he gave me twenty-five cents which I was to hand to the teacher as my father's contribution toward my fee.

But I liked neither the teacher nor the school. Mr. Rabinowitz was an unprepossessing man who made out of the majestic sounds of the Hebrew language a dead and dreary thing, like himself. The schoolroom, an unplastered cubicle on the first floor of a tenement too seedy to rent for living purposes, was cold, gloomy and generally uninviting. Meanwhile, my friends were roaming the streets in freedom, joyously in search of adventure. After two or three days, I decided it would be much more profitable for me to spend my time with them than at the *Talmud Torah*—a decision which I must say, in all honesty, I have never regretted. It still seems to me that the lessons I learned on the streets were irreplaceable, and more valuable in the long run than the lessons I left unlearned by quitting school.

For two years I played hookey from Hebrew School every single day. The quarter fee was spent on candy—enough to treat the whole gang. I had a completely clear conscience about it, and never gave it a moment's thought. I doubt if my father would ever have been the wiser, save that one day he met Mr. Rabinowitz on the street and asked him—out of politeness rather than real interest—how I was coming along

in my studies. "Studies! What studies?" asked the old teacher with a resigned shrug. "Louis hasn't shown his face in my school, not once in the last two years!"

My father said little to me, realizing that in the New World things were different and the younger generation went its own way. But the loss of the weekly quarter, which to him was certainly no great gain, was a bitter blow to me.

CHAPTER II

MY EDUCATION FOR LIVING

The period between the time I graduated from P.S. 62 in June, 1910, and the year of the outbreak of World War I was a period of drifting for me. I was fourteen years old when, one evening, my father called me into our parlor for a private "shmoos."

He lighted the gas mantle, seated himself on the well-worn red armchair beside the small table in one of the corners of the room, and, smoothing out the embroidered doily under the green vase, motioned me to the green plush chair, which I remember made me feel uncomfortable because it was somewhat wobbly.

"Nu!" he said.

"Nu what?" I asked.

"So you're graduated from school already. It's time for you to help your sister and me support the family." He was referring to my oldest sister, and there was still another sister as well as my mother to support.

"I'm going out tomorrow morning to look for a job," I answered. And I really meant business. I wanted desperately to earn money and in fact I knew that I was going to be rich. Look how all those boys in the Horatio Alger stories got rich! What was the matter with me? Wasn't I as good as they were?

"O.K.," said my father. "It's time to get busy. Our ostrich feather business isn't doing so good. Your sister gave up

her job to come into the business, and so did her boy friend. But it isn't paying. I'm afraid we'll soon have to close up. It's the middle of the month, and we haven't paid our \$15 rent yet."

"All right! All right!" I answered. "Don't worry. I'll soon be bringing the money in."

And then we went into the kitchen to have supper with the rest of the family, the boy friend and the boarder included.

My father was a bit of a drifter. Now he was in the ostrich feather business, using up my oldest sister's savings, and those of her boy friend. Before that he had been a jewelry peddler, and had borrowed for that. And I remember the time when he had been a small-time pants manufacturer in a little, dowdy shop on Chatham Square. He was going to get rich; but he never did. And now, like most of the families on the East Side, he expected his children to look out for the family. He was a tall, spare man, dark, with stooped shoulders. He was not the least bit practical but in short was a Yeshiva *bocher*. And he just did not like work. Talk, discussion, argumentation—these were his meat.

It wasn't long before I landed my first job. I became a delivery boy for S. Benedict and Sons, wholesale stationers and printers, located downtown on Worcester Street. I often delivered stationery to firms on Wall Street, and this gave me my chance to see high finance in operation. I spent much time dawdling around in the back offices, listening to financial gossip and getting in on the ground floor, so to speak. I learned to read the financial pages; I became a wild gambler on Wall Street, vicariously. Delivering parcels had become merely a necessary evil.

In those days during my flights of financial fancy, I was making and losing fortunes; but in real life I was earning a mere four dollars a week, from which I received from my parents an allowance of twenty-five cents a day for food. This

was quite a hardship for a growing boy with an appetite like mine. Besides this, I walked to my job from home, and frequently between Worcester Street and Wall Street as well, in order to save carfare. What is more, I had to climb five floors every day in order to get to our apartment. The inevitable result of this strenuous life was that early in 1911 I was laid up with pleurisy in Mt. Sinai Hospital for eleven long weeks. Not being in any condition to go back to work when I came out of the hospital, I was sent to Otisville Sanitarium, in Orange County for convalescence. Here I found that I was the only Jew in the place, for most of the youngsters recuperating were Catholics. They made it quite plain to me that they did not particularly care for my presence because I was a Jew. Finally, here too, I had to fight it out in order to be let alone. And I returned to my home from the sanitarium, having regained not only my good health, but also filled with information on High Mass.

In the fall of 1911 I went to work at my second job as a stock clerk for G. Bamberger & Co., manufacturers of children's and infants' wear, a firm located on Fourth Avenue in New York City. In May, 1913, I drifted on to a job with the firm of May, Gordon & May, as a travelling salesman of the same type of goods. For the first time I left my home to go out on the road, fully equipped with sample cases and unlimited ambition. But it was no go. A business depression was coming on. Workers were laid off right and left. I covered the state of Pennsylvania from east to west, but succeeded in writing very few orders. It became so bad that I had to wire the firm for additional funds in order to keep going. Since they refused to advance any more money, I sold the samples in order to live. I realized then I had to turn to other pursuits.

Then the Jewish boy from the East Side joined up with a carnival, travelling to the state fairs of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Michigan! I also travelled with a carnival cele-

brating the Erie Centennial at Lake Erie. Then, in the fall of 1913, at the end of the fair season, I found myself in Grand Rapids, Michigan, absolutely broke. Very soon, however, I secured a job as salesman with the Newman Clothing Store of that city at a salary of eight dollars a week. This was a great comedown from the seventy-five dollar salary I had been drawing, even for so brief a time as a travelling salesman. I saw that this was no future for me, so I tried Detroit. Finding thousands of unemployed and trouble with the I.W.W. in Detroit, I drifted further, travelling through Canada, where I found nothing worthwhile to do.

In February, 1914, I arrived home in New York to find that the family had moved to new quarters at 145 East Broadway. The prodigal son had returned and, although he had brought no fortune home with him, he nevertheless had, by the same token, never written home for money, no matter how great the urgency. Neither my father nor my mother were what might be called demonstrative parents, but when I entered their new apartment I received a very warm welcome from them. My father wiped away a few furtive tears and my mother wept openly. For was I not their only son, their *Kaddish*?

* * *

I was never a lazy person, and the need to bring money into the house was on my conscience. What is more, there was already a slight upturn in business, for World War I was in the making. I applied for a job with the Majestic Cloak Company and was hired immediately by Edward Hochstadter, the sole owner. The boss was a sixty-year-old bachelor, who owned the Majestic Hotel. He did no manufacturing in connection with his cloak and suit firm. Instead, he had about four hundred manufacturers send him samples of their goods. From these he selected garments he believed would sell. He paid cash for the merchandise he ordered, with a five per cent

discount for the orders. He then received the money right away, and the whole operation was like a bank.

After being with the firm for six months, I worked out a method through which my boss could increase his income substantially. This I outlined in a three-page letter which I mailed to his hotel, feeling the need to keep the matter confidential. Apparently the plan was approved of, for that same week I received an increase of twelve dollars a week, which means that at the time in 1915 my salary came to twenty dollars—a good salary for a young man in my position. Soon thereafter I was made a buyer for the firm. I thought I was on easy street but little did I know I was due for a fall. My boss, a Dutch Jew and an extremely upright businessman, accused me of raising our prices without consulting him and, what is perhaps just as bad, of flirting with his competitors, and so once again I found myself without employment.

Was I disheartened? During my time with the Majestic Cloak Company, I made it my business to become fully acquainted with merchandising and advertising in the cloak and suit field. And it was this knowledge and experience that served me well when I undertook my next venture in partnership with my friend Samuel Unger, a photographer. Together we organized an advertising business with a modest investment of \$250 between us. We organized a book of thirty-six pages, each with a different line in the clothing business—dresses on one page, coats on another, and so on. It looked very good indeed on the surface. But very soon we found ourselves in financial difficulties. Were we dismayed? Not at all. The two of us simply walked out of the business. This was in 1916. I was twenty years old, and my friend just a little older.

A new idea struck us both. The picture of a broadcloth coat on one of the pages of our fashion book seemed particularly attractive. So we went to the manufacturer, Sam Meyer, and asked him to turn this coat out for us. He obtained the broad-

cloth from the woolen mills on credit, and we began to manufacture. The orders poured in, and in six months we had made \$25,000. America was indeed a land of unlimited possibilities!

Now, how could two young men, such as we were, let \$25,000 lie idle in the bank? I had already been severely bitten by the Wall Street bug in my early youth. I had to become a millionaire. I had to try my luck still more. My friend Samuel Meyer and I went to Jones and Baker, a firm of stock brokers at 25 Broad Street, and deposited our whole \$25,000 with them. The idea was that since we both expected to go into the Army, we wanted to leave our parents a nest egg for them to use in our absence. We started to play the market by buying 10,000 shares of Big Ledge Copper, which opened up at a dollar a share. It soon rose to a dollar and a quarter a share. We had made from \$50,000 to \$75,000. We then bought shares of Peerless Auto, Houston Oil, etc., and by that time we had \$250,000 on the books of the firm of Jones and Baker. We were in the big money. Our ship had come in. The trouble was that, smart boys that we were, we did not realize we had been taken for a ride. We did not know that we had been dealing with a "bucket shop."

I shall never forget it. It was Yom Kippur and, like all pious Jews, we were in *Shul* that day, my father and I. Suddenly my little sister came running, breathless, into the synagogue.

"Louis, Louis," she panted. "The stockbroker just telephoned. He said if you won't put up the margin at once, he'll sell." We went to see our broker, pleaded with him, but it was to no avail. Of all the money we had invested, a balance of only \$975 remained. The cashier who handed me the check said, "You were done wrong." And so I was. But a fat lot of good it did me; it was all over. Thus ended the story of my flier in Wall Street. The late Louis G. Bernstein, who was

to have sued the firm for me, couldn't do it, for he and I were called into the Army.

* * *

Though money was one of the ruling drives of my life, it was not the only one. I had a taste for learning and took advantage of every opportunity to better myself intellectually. Such opportunities were many on the East Side for the kind of lad I was in the years immediately preceding the first World War.

Of course, I had to go to work after graduating from Public School 62, but I still had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, so I very soon enrolled in the Manhattan Preparatory School on Second Avenue to prepare myself for the Regents Examination. Wasn't everybody I knew studying to be a lawyer or a dentist or a doctor or something? Though after a while I had to give up this idea for it conflicted with the duties involved with my job in the Majestic Cloak Company, my education did not stop. My taste for reading sent me scurrying for books everywhere I could find them. As soon as supper was over after a day's work, I would rush down into the street and head for the nearest public library. My favorite hang-out was the branch on East Broadway between Market and Catherine Streets. The attraction?—The librarian happened to be the young sister of my former history and geography teacher, Gabriel Mason, later to become Dr. Mason, a popular high school principal of Brooklyn.

Miss Mason would greet me warmly with her kind smile. "Well! What will it be today?"

"Please, let me see some good history book, or some biography."

She would lead me to the shelves where these books were to be found, and I would sit in the reading room as if dreaming, completely absorbed in the new world the books conjured up, oblivious of my surroundings until the time the library

closed. Many a time the librarian would touch me gently on the shoulder: "All right, Louis, time to close up!"

And then I would drift out to the almost darkened streets, dimly lighted by gas lamps placed at long intervals. On my arrival home my mother would be sure to ask, "Where have you been all this time?"

"In the library."

"What good will it do you to be in the library all the time? You'll spoil your eyesight. So much time in the library to spend!"

"Leave him be! He's a smart boy! He takes after his father. Leave him read if he wants to," my father would sometimes say. He was probably recalling his own Yeshiva days, wishing he did not have to bother with the tough job of earning a living for a family.

Some of my readings I remember till this very day. I remember how deeply I was impressed by Theodore Roosevelt's autobiography. These words of his have always remained with me: "I have grown to feel with deep intensity of conviction that governmental agencies must find their justification largely in the way in which they are used for the practical betterment of living and working conditions among the mass of the people." It seems that these words of Teddy Roosevelt must have inspired me to take part in some of the settlement activities of the East Side, to which many of our New Yorkers who now play a prominent role in the life of the community, owe no small debt of gratitude. At any rate, I threw myself with great zeal into club work, first as a member and then as an organizer of young boys' clubs at the Educational Alliance on East Broadway, at the University Settlement, Christodora House, and at Clark House.

In leaving school I had joined in many of the club activities of the Educational Alliance. Dr. Blaustein had been Executive Director at the time. And I shall never forget the exciting

occasion when Mark Twain spoke to our club of boys and girls at the Educational Alliance. His white suit and shock of white hair will always remain in my memory.

During that entire period I not only increased my reading of history, but I read philosophy, and even began buying my own books. I gradually became acquainted with the Greek and Latin classics, and also acquired a smattering of foreign languages. My adolescent education really began after I had passed the only Regents' examination I ever took, that in History, which I passed with honors.

I soon gained a good deal of confidence in myself. I acquired a knack for argumentation, a quality which I possess to a considerable degree even to this day. Very soon I found that I could outshine in knowledge, erudition, and logic all of my friends who were completing high school and were about to enter college. In fact I almost adopted the slogan created by my favorite author of that time, Elbert Hubbard: "College is a place where they polish pebbles and dim diamonds." My inclination towards argumentation stood me in good stead, when, as a member of my Amicitia Circle in the University Settlement, I found myself top debater of the club, and for the finals faced two professors from City College. I'm positive that the boys voted the professors the victors more out of jealousy toward me than out of conviction that the profs were doing a better job. To this day I am convinced that my partner, Joel Ritz, and I had the best of the arguments and had been better prepared.

From general debating to political debates is only one step. It was Teddy Roosevelt, the hero of my adolescent days, who inspired me to throw myself, body and soul, into politics, even before I came of age. This was at the time when our family was residing at 345 East 20th Street, in the Twelfth Assembly District, the home district of Charlie Murphy. It was around 1912, and my sympathies were with Teddy's party, the Pro-

gressive Party, the Bull Moose. For wasn't this the party which stood for the new doctrine of social responsibility? It was pledged to "sweep away old abuses," and to "build a new and nobler commonwealth." It was my party.

I spent evenings working for the election of Teddy, the candidate on the Bull Moose ticket. In the Twelfth Assembly District I was tangling with Charlie Murphy and his cohorts. Evening after evening found me haranguing the crowd from a soap box on street corners in the Gas House District. No one before had dared to face a jeering, snarling crowd as I did. There was plenty of heckling, and cries of "Skidoo! G'wan home! Git where ye belong!" I stood my ground, and I think it was only my extreme youth which saved me from any worse treatment than being pelted with a few bags of water thrown from roof tops and very ripe vegetables and rather aged eggs. When the elections were over, I found myself a terribly disappointed young man. Wilson and Tammany—I classed them together in those days—received 435 electoral votes, Roosevelt 88, and Taft 8.

I had not been alone among my friends in my campaign for the Progressive Party. I had organized the boys of my Amicitia Circle to deliver street-corner speeches at Rutgers Square, at Eldridge and Houston Streets, and at other crowded spots on the lower East Side. We didn't elect a President, but we did claim the credit for having elected one lone Assemblyman, Charles Solomon, from the Second Assembly District, as a result of our combined activities.

All this activity embroiled me with Jews, but it provided me with very little essential contact with Jewish life. Club activities, not to speak of political meetings, bore no relation at all to Jewishness. Settlements were doing their best to alienate the children of the immigrants from their old world heritage. Americanization meant first of all turning one's back on the ideas, ideals, and mores of one's forebears, in a word, on the

culture of the group to which one belonged. Yet, in spite of the new influences there came a time when I became the captive of my Jewishness.

I was a willing captive, since my captivity—if I am to call it that—was highly pleasing to me. Strangely enough, it came to me not through the Synagogue or Hebrew School, but through the Yiddish Theatre down on the East Side.

Every once in a while, when I could save up a half dollar or so, I would go to the Thalia Theatre on Grand Street where Jacob P. Adler was king of the Yiddish stage, and buy myself a gallery ticket, or I would go further up to the Bowery, and spend my money to watch the histrionic art of David Kessler or Madame Bertha Kalisch. Boris Thomashevsky was playing down to the low brows and was packing them in nightly as he strutted the stage in tights in Goldfaden's *Shulamith* or *Bar Kochba*. Jacob Gordin's plays still attracted audiences, and such dramas as *Gott, Mensch, un Teivel* and *Warheit* were the delight of the Jewish intelligentsia; but already Max Gabel and Jennie Goldstein were coining money giving thrilling melodramas.

I sat high up in the second balcony and with deep intensity lived through the trials and tribulations, the joys and sorrows portrayed by the great Yiddish actors of the day. And believe me, they could be compared favorably with the best actors of the English stage of that time. When David Kessler came out on the stage singing *Gam ki elech b'gal tzal movas* (Even when I walk through the valley of death), in Jacob Gordin's *Gott, Mensch, un Teivel*, I felt my heart strings vibrate with the tragedy of the hero, lured by wealth to the exclusion of human ideals, only in the end to lose his health and peace of mind. Then, when I left the theatre at the end of the play, I would go home humming tunes I had just heard, absolutely unconscious of the passersby. For many years later on in my life, I would often hum to myself favorite arias from the

Goldfaden operettas, sung long ago by Regina Zuckerberg and holding such a great fascination for me.

The Yiddish theatre gave me much more than pleasure and recreation. It satisfied in me more than a love for music. It gave me not only an insight into human character in general, but particularly into Jewish character and Jewish folkways. It familiarized me with the old world of which I had only a faint memory, of my childhood days in the old country. The Yiddish theatre was indeed my Alma Mater.

CHAPTER III

FRANCE, 1918

In 1917, when I was twenty-one years old, I was drafted into the army. My mother brought the letter up from the mail box. It was an official-looking envelope, and she paled as she asked me whom the letter was for, since she couldn't read the name. My mother had never learned to read English, for there had been no time to go to night school. There had been too much to do at home—marketing, cooking, cleaning, washing. A whole family had to be taken care of. As a result, she had had no opportunity or time for an education.

"Who is it for and what is it?" she asked, as if she already guessed what she feared.

"Is it . . . ?"

"Yes, it is," I answered, as I took my 1A card out of the envelope. "I'm drafted."

My mother sat down on a kitchen chair and wept. "One son, only one son, and they want to take him away from me," she wailed. I tried to tell her that every American had to fight for his country, and weren't we good Americans? We had to lick the Germans to make the world safe for democracy. But none of this sort of reasoning had any effect on my mother, and within a very few days her hair had grown gray with grief.

I am no hero, and at the age of twenty-one I had other things to do than fight the Kaiser. To tell the truth, I wasn't so terribly anxious to go overseas. I hoped I wouldn't be called

too soon, so I tried to get a job in a defense outfit. It wasn't very long before I was able to secure work in a shipyard with the American Shipbuilding Company of Loraine Ohio—a firm which was engaged in building liberty ships. For two weeks, though only twenty-one, I earned one hundred twenty-five dollars a week. I was young, strong, and full of energy. I didn't mind hard work a bit; but here I was putting in four screws a morning (which was what the others were doing also) and I didn't like it. I wanted to earn my money, and I couldn't bear to see the others wasting precious time either. An idea struck me. Why not send a letter to the management and suggest plans for greater efficiency? In the letter, I volunteered to issue a newspaper for the firm, with the idea of raising the morale of the workers. I felt I was doing my patriotic duty and expected to be rewarded. But things took a different turn. My boss called me into his office a few days later and asked me what my draft status was. I soon lost the job. What I didn't know at the time was that the firm was being paid by the government on a cost plus basis. I was trying to be too efficient for the firm's comfort.

In the spring of 1918 I was stationed at Camp Mills with a group of men being trained under Major General Leonard Woods. I had never handled a gun before in my life, nor had I ever been very close to a horse before; but I was given both a gun and a horse and assigned to a mounted company, Troop B, 314 Military Police. It was the first glimpse I got of the inefficiency and wastefulness of a war machine.

It was in June of the same year that I went overseas with the 89th Division. We set sail on the *S. S. Saxon*, an English South African ship. There had been no tearful goodbyes exchanged with my family, or my pals, or my girl friends, for most of us did not know in advance when we would be leaving the country. The Atlantic Ocean was alive with German submarines, and silence was the order of the day. The boat

was packed with soldiers. Most of us were put into what must have been the third class section. Twelve men slept in bunks arranged in tiers in a space which was barely enough for four men. On that memorable trip, the main articles of diet were cheese and tea, both of which I still cannot bear to look at, let alone consume. Most of the men were Mid-westerners, some were of Indian origin, and some of Mexican ancestry. A comparative few, like myself, were from the East. It didn't take very long before the motley crowd became a homogeneous mass. On the whole we were pretty friendly. Most of the time was taken up with lounging around and staring out over the Atlantic Ocean, or gambling, or telling tall tales to a group of amused or jeering soldiers. What tales of sexual prowess were told on that ship!

The only really exciting experiences we had were when our ship was being chased by German submarines. Fortunately we weren't hit but it made our trip across take longer than we had expected. It took us eleven days to get to Ireland; from there we went to Scotland, arriving at Glasgow in the middle of the night. The next morning we traveled by train to Liverpool, and then to Southampton. From there we were shipped by cattle-boat across the English Channel to Le Havre. I arrived on French soil in June 1918, one of a bunch of very bored soldiers. It was like an inferno at Le Havre that day, and each mother's son of us carried a pack weighing fifty-five pounds and a rifle. At last we were in Europe on our mission to fight the war to make the world safe for democracy.

After our arrival our outfit was taken to Menil la Tour, which was headquarters for the 89th Division. There we were trained for service in the front lines. General Pershing had made up his mind to create an American Army in Europe, and this was the first time that an American Army was being organized to fight as a separate unit. Now my Company B became the

89th Military Police Company and I was armed with a 45 automatic, though I had never used one before in my life.

We were quartered in barns and in haylofts in a quaint village near St. Mehiel, which consisted of a church, a couple of inns, and one main street. Only the women and children of the village were to be seen. Their men had all gone to the front. The largest house in the village, the home of the richest man there, had been taken over by the Major General and some of his officers. The other officers were quartered in homes in the village. I was housed in a hayloft. Altogether there were two hundred fifty MP's, mostly drawn from Kansas and Missouri. There were two other Jewish fellows besides myself in the group, Al Jacobson and another New Yorker. We did guard duty, though until then we had had no fighting instruction. We ate rather well in that village, but most of us shared our American bacon with the French children. The bacon was washed down with *vin rouge*. This wine seemed to be plentiful enough and we could buy it for twenty-five francs a bottle. For a while we had nothing to do, so instead of chasing the Germans, we chased after the women.

Our outfit watched the war at a distance of twenty-five kilometers. The American Army was building up to make an attack on St. Mehiel, and we were sending up military balloons for observation. It was the job of the Military Police to regulate traffic at this spot, and we were ordered to permit no traffic during the day. At night we moved railroad guns and tanks. I remember that once I was obliged to stop a whole caravan of French trucks from passing through. This so angered the French lieutenant in charge that he pulled a gun on me, whereupon I swiftly drew my gun. There we were, on the same side of the fence, allies, yet ready to go for each other. We both came to our senses very soon, laughed, put away our

guns, and decided to arbitrate the matter at headquarters. The French trucks did not move along the road until nightfall.

* * *

September 12, 1918, was a red-letter day in my life. This was General Pershing's birthday—the day when the American Army commenced operations as an independent unit under his command. The Military Police went over after the third wave, and our job was to take in prisoners and to round up our own stragglers. It was night. Lieutenant Runyon and I were alone in the field. After feeling our way cautiously for some time, we came upon some concrete pillboxes and we knew that we had hit the Von Hindenburg line. We had no map with us, and since we were in danger of running into our own fire we decided to stay put for the night. Lieutenant Runyon, upon my advice, jumped into a beautiful concrete dugout. My advice was generally followed, and because of the success of my tactics, military and otherwise, I earned the nickname of "General Falk."

"Hey, General Falk," he whispered. "Get down here. It's great!" Well, I didn't feel particularly great as I tumbled into the dugout. Telling Lieutenant Runyon to keep his voice down, I made myself comfortable in the dugout, and we stayed underground until the next morning.

The sun was shining as we left. After a five minute walk we suddenly ran into a group of German soldiers. They were no less bewildered than were we. The moment they saw us they held up their hands and yelled, *Kamerad!* With revolvers drawn and looking carefully around us, we approached the enemy and discovered that they were Germans around forty to forty-five years old. They were waiting for the Americans to capture them, for they knew that then they would get food and proper treatment. I took charge of eight of the prisoners and began taking them behind the lines. On the way back

I became separated from my buddy and proceeded along the road, back to our headquarters. Evening came and, believe me, I was scared. The German prisoners were eight to our one, and all I had to protect myself was my revolver. They most certainly could have attacked me, but they didn't. They were probably sick and tired of the war by then and glad to be taken prisoner. I confess I confiscated their metal buttons and buckles, fair booty by my standards, to take home as mementos of the World War. Then I turned my prisoners over to G2 Intelligence.

But the war was not just beer and skittles, even for me. The First Sergeant, boss of the company, a chap by the name of Collins, took a thorough dislike to me. Maybe it was because I was a businessman, and he didn't like businessmen. Whatever the reason, he wanted to get rid of me, and so one day he assigned me to go to Xanimes, which happened to be the most forward position of the American Army. He sent me to report to Colonel Babcock of the 354th Infantry.

On my way forward I found that the road was being shelled constantly and so I hid in the trenches. Nobody tried to stop me for I was wearing my red arm band, the insignia of the Military Police. Toward evening I came into a most eerie-looking village where, of all things, I met a mule with a gas mask over his head. Riding the mule was a fellow also wearing a gas mask. I began to laugh at first and then I asked what was what. I was advised to put one on myself and did so as a precaution. I was about to enter one of the buildings nearby, but before I reached it an enemy shell knocked it over. My luck still held.

It still took two days of traveling before I pulled into Xanimes. Not much remained of what had once been an attractive and prosperous village. I approached the only building in the vicinity that still was in respectable condition, assuming that it housed Infantry Headquarters. At the entrance I

was stopped by an orderly who refused me admittance until I had shown him my orders and explained my mission. Well, I had at least come to the right place. After what seemed to me an interminable wait, I was ushered into the office of Colonel Babcock, a good-looking man in his fifties with graying hair and an impressive mustache.

"What are you doing in Xammes?" he asked.

I told him of my mission, noticing that he looked at me rather quizzically.

"I don't need any additional men here. I never asked Sergeant Collins to send anyone," the Colonel declared.

Thoroughly bewildered and understandably annoyed and embarrassed, I turned to leave.

"Wait a moment," Colonel Babcock called after me. "As long as you're here, you may as well stay. I'll find something for you to do." The Colonel scratched his head, got up from his seat and paced up and down for a few minutes. I remained standing at attention, quite ill at ease, and contemplating the prospect of having to return to my old company in case it turned out finally that there was really nothing for me to do in Xammes. Thinking all kinds of venomous thoughts about Sergeant Collins and the goose chase on which he had sent me, I waited impatiently for Colonel Babcock to say something—anything. Finally he sat down again.

"We've got to keep everyone except Army personnel off the streets," he said. "Your assignment will be to see to it that only authorized people appear out-of-doors. Is that clear?"

"Yes," I replied, relieved.

My luck was tested again but, as before, it held.

At one point during my stay at Xammes, I happened to be in the barn and Chaplain Diamond and a few other men were in the main building. A shell hit the building and Chaplain Diamond was killed. The position soon became untenable and thirty-four of us, including Signal Corpsmen with pigeons,

were told to evacuate the position immediately. As we began running away from the place, we all threw off our masks, which seemed to be difficult to wear. The result was that all the men were gassed. To this day I still don't know why I was not affected. Lady Luck had been with me once more.

When we moved over to the Argonne, the 89th and 90th Divisions became one of the shock troops of the drafted army. There were nine or ten days of fighting in the woods and in the deep, heavy mud. It was rough. For three days I had to hold the road and see to it that no traffic moved, and I helped to direct the troops. Every night I went out on duty, and every night someone else was knocked off by shells. I felt terrible that people were being killed all around me and that there was no food. I was dog tired.

The German dugout in which I lived was being shelled continuously. I kept up a wood fire in the place to keep it dry and thus to keep the gas out. An extraordinary thing happened to me there. One day I discovered a book in the dugout toilet. On opening it, I found it to be a German-Hebrew prayer book. I shouted: "*She'mai Yisrael!*" I felt this to be a good omen. Not only Lady Luck, but the Lord God of Israel was with me! I tore the front page from the book and put it into my pocket, for I couldn't possibly take the whole book with me.

It was miserable weather. It rained every day and it was always cold. When the coffee came around to me, it too was always cold. Whenever I left the dugout and wandered around in the woods, I would find a leg here and an arm there, and I would feel sick at heart and afraid.

The tides of war surged around me and all I could think of was warmth, a warm meal and a bed.

There were a number of social welfare services to aid the soldiers. At the time however, it was the Cross and not the *Mogen David* that came to our assistance in the hour of need.

In going over in my mind all the misery which I endured, I remember the wonderful, healing work of the Salvation Army overseas during World War I. Every time we needed help the Salvation Army man was there. He seemed to grow from under the ground. He appeared suddenly at the very front. Bullets had no meaning for him. He lived—and also died—with the man in the field. The Jewish Welfare Board entered the picture late in the war, though it did fine war work subsequently.

There was a race between the 89th and the 90th Divisions to see who would capture Stenay, the town that lodged the headquarters of the Crown Prince. It was November 11, 1918 at Stenay when we first heard that there would be an armistice. Our hearts leaped. Was there ever an army that did not welcome the end of shooting?

All of a sudden the shooting stopped. Everything seemed to stop. All day nobody believed it to be true. It was just a rotten German trick! So skeptical were we that the armistice was genuine, that it took at least twenty-four hours before we actually started to believe it. At first the soldiers were very quiet when they heard of peace. After the constant bombardment and popping of small fire-arms, the quietness was shattering. There was no jubilation. And nobody there was religious enough to pray. We were too tired to be happy.

CHAPTER IV

HOME, BUSINESS, COMMUNITY

The war was over, and as the boat carrying us returning soldiers neared New York Harbor, and came within sight of the Statue of Liberty, most of us felt that same lump in our throats that most Americans experience on returning to the United States after a stay in Europe. For a time we were all quiet; our faces were turned in the direction of home. Then as we neared the shore, shouts and cheers rang out from all of us. "It's a long, long way to Tipperary," "East Side, West Side, All Around the Town," we yelled. Finally the boat docked and unloaded at Hoboken on a hot day in July, 1919.

And there was my mother waiting for me on the dock, tears coming thick and fast, and smiling a happy welcome at the same time.

"Look Rubin," she said to my father, "our son has come home."

And then I had to bend down to kiss her, for she was a little mother. "I'm home, Mamma! Good, isn't it?" She nodded and tried to wipe her eyes at the same time.

My father embraced me warmly. "Thank God you are back," he said.

I broke away from his arms and looked at him closely. He had aged much in my short absence; he seemed to have grown smaller.

"Look who's here!" my mother said, pointing to a young woman who had retreated into the background. "Bessie! You know Bessie Fineberg. She came especially to meet you."

And it was Bessie Fineberg, standing there in her trim, green suit, wearing a green, saucy hat with a long green feather. Her outfit set off her lovely auburn hair, her rich brown eyes, and her slim, little figure. I shook hands with her formally, and murmured something about how decent it was of her to take the trouble to meet me; but as she greeted me with her charming smile, I thought to myself that she was a sight for sore eyes. And I promised myself that I would see much of her in the near future.

I had first met her at her older sister's wedding a few months before I had gone overseas, when she was twenty, and I twenty-one. We had taken to each other, and gone out on dates occasionally, but there had been no serious understanding or definite promise between us. We just plain liked each other and that was all there was to it at the time. I remember having been a trifle surprised when I received her first letter to me while I was in France. After that we wrote to each other frequently, but the fact of the matter was that most of the time I described to her the scenery of the places I happened to be stationed in. There wasn't any semblance of lovemaking in our letters, but apparently she was not discouraged, for she kept on writing, love or no love.

Meeting her on the dock that day in Hoboken did something to me. I began to view her in an entirely new light, and very soon I was dating her with great persistence and frequency. I was falling in love with Bessie Fineberg. She was not only attractive, but she was clever and a good businesswoman as well. In fact she was taking an active and important part in her father's business and was considered to be the brains of the outfit.

On October 20, 1920, at the Bedford Avenue Synagogue, I married Bessie, the younger daughter of Davis Fineberg, the richest man in Jersey City. It was quite a fancy affair: a high noon wedding, something new in Jewish circles. And even if I say it myself, I cut quite a gallant figure in my frock coat, striped trousers and ascot tie. Here I was, a boy who had grown up on the East Side of New York, marrying into the richest Jewish family in Jersey City. It was considered quite a catch I had made, for my father-in-law was the owner of the Eagle Grocery Company, a chain of four hundred grocery stores in New Jersey. He was the creator of the first grocery chain store company in the city. Not only was he a good businessman, but both he and my mother-in-law were descended from one of the well-known Polish Rabbinical families.

It wasn't easy for me to maintain a position of dignity and independence, and to be accepted by my wife's family. They were rich and I was not; I was absolutely broke when I returned from the army and had lost touch with my previous connections. I had to borrow money from my father with which to buy my wife's wedding ring. He was making a comfortable living in his modest ostrich feather business. There was no future for me there, and my father-in-law's four sons, besides cousins and other relatives who were in the business with him, showed no desire to have me share their business or prosperity.

Of course when we were first married we were generously supplied with wedding gifts. My father-in-law spent fifteen thousand dollars on the furniture for our first home, which was an upper flat in a two-family house in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn. Naturally, my wife was delighted with her parents' gift, but worried about my lack of business prospects. For one whole year after my marriage, I achieved nothing, and in addition, this was 1921, the year of depression after the war. It wasn't so easy to get a footing in business under such conditions, and what made it worse, I had no capital. At first

I tried millinery jobbing in a small way, but this did not succeed because again I lacked the necessary financial backing.

Finally, one day as I was scanning the pages of *The New York Times*, looking for some opening or other, I spotted an advertisement to the effect that Strauss and Company wanted to sell a store in Connersville, Indiana. This sounded exciting to me, and after some correspondence with the company and hopeful good-byes to my wife and parents, I set out by train for the Middle West. I found that Connersville was a large industrial city with a population of about ten thousand. The Strauss Company had founded three specialty shops in Indiana, of which they were planning to sell the one in Connersville. It appeared that it was being mismanaged by a nephew of Strauss, who was anxious to get rid of it, since it wasn't paying its way. On visiting the store it seemed to me that it had great possibilities and that with some enterprise, imagination and adventure, it could be made to pay. The selling price was twenty-five thousand dollars. I agreed to buy it, and made a down payment for that store of five thousand dollars, which was not actually my own money, but which had been given to me by my father-in-law. He loved his younger daughter, who was now even dearer to him than before, for his older daughter had recently died. It was for his Bessie's sake that I was given money with which to buy the business. And there I was, a penniless young ex-soldier, buying a twenty-five thousand dollar business with five thousand down which wasn't mine and undertaking to pay the remaining twenty thousand dollars in thirty days. It took a great deal of courage and confidence to swing such a proposition, but with the same high spirit of adventure in which I had made my youthful excursion into Wall Street, I set out on the Connersville project in the Fall of 1921.

The first thing I did after the completion of the transaction was to rent a furnished apartment in the McFarlan Hotel at

Connersville, and to send for my wife. We were lonesome for each other and she was both willing and desirous of giving me the benefit of her business experience and acumen. Bessie was delighted with the little hotel apartment and on the very next day after her arrival went with me to look at the store and to take stock of the situation. The store sold chiefly ladies' ready to wear garments, and apparently catered to a high class trade in Fayette County. It seemed to have great possibilities, and we were both excited about it. We walked back to the hotel that evening talking and planning a great deal. We were going to be in big business. After supper was over—we called it "supper" in those days—we decided to close the store for a few days, and to arrange for a sale, the like of which had never yet been seen in Connersville, Indiana.

We widely advertised a huge sale. We sought two hundred salespeople and had fifty saleswomen on the floor. There were flowers in the windows and we gave each customer a corsage. We hired a band to play outside the store for the opening days. The *Connersville Times* carried tremendous advertisements of our wonderful sale and we offered the people real bargains. Long before opening time that first morning, lines of women shoppers formed around the block in which the store was situated. The local police were called upon to keep order and a huge mob rushed in when the store opened at nine o'clock. People bought anything and everything. So much money came in that all of the cash registers broke down, and there was no time or space to repair them. Farmers' wives, businessmen's wives, young girls in their teens joined in the mad scramble for bargains. They told me later that Mrs. Wendell Wilkie had bought a dress in my store that day. I didn't see her, but that was the story. With the cash registers out of repair, there was only one way we could see to handle the money that came in thick and fast. It was my wife's idea. We set a barrel down in the center of the store and

threw the money in as we made the sales. For ten days the sale continued, and at the end of that time we had taken in over thirty thousand dollars. It was in this fashion that we were able to pay the Strauss Company what we owed them on the purchase price of the business.

But when we finally resumed the course of selling our merchandise at regular prices, we met our Waterloo. We had accustomed the people of Connersville and Fayette County to sales and bargains, and it was sales and bargains they were waiting for. They bought comparatively little merchandise otherwise.

During the time we lived at Connersville we made the acquaintance of the eight Jewish families who lived in the town. They were not of our type, for they had become more or less assimilated with the people of the city. We played cards together, talked business, but found no active Jewish interests among them. Therefore conversation with them was on the dull side.

I must say that I met absolutely no anti-Semitism during my stay in Connersville. Who knows? Perhaps we Jews were too few to become an economic threat to our neighbors. Be that as it may, we were treated with friendly and neighborly courtesy. My wife and I were on visiting terms with the Methodist Minister, who knew almost as much Hebrew as I did. He even did me the honor of inviting me to teach in his Sunday School, which I duly appreciated, but of course declined.

Connersville was so hospitable that one day I was asked to join the newly organized Ku Klux Klan group! Since they knew that I was a Jew and it was apparent that I was white, I came to the conclusion that their quarry was composed of Catholics and Negroes. The Ku Klux Klan was no place for me, and using lack of time as an excuse, I politely declined the dubious honor of joining the outfit.

Meanwhile my wife had grown weary of the business, which no longer prospered, became tired of the assimilated Jewish families, and yearned for her own family and her own home. She finally made up her mind to return to Jersey City. I was obliged to stay on in Connersville to look after the business, and after six long, lonesome months I returned to Jersey City, leaving a manager in charge of the store. The manager mismanaged the store to such an extent that I was forced to return to Connersville and to make an intensive effort to liquidate the business. Finally I managed to sell my white elephant to a Mr. A. Leiter for ten thousand dollars, every penny of which I used in paying off bills and debts. As soon as the deal was concluded I left for home. It took me two whole years to pay for the Middle West experience. I must give credit to my wife for the fact that she never blamed me for the failure of the store at Connersville. She was that kind of a sport. But I cannot say the same for my father-in-law, nor for my brothers-in-law. Every now and then they could not resist the temptation to make sly references to the big business in the Middle West.

* * *

When I returned to Jersey City after having sold the store at Connersville at the end of 1922, my economic plight was exceedingly grave. I had absolutely no money left. By that time my reputation as a successful businessman was not very great. This was a situation that galled me particularly, since I had always considered myself something of a business wizard. "Where have you been all this time?"—I was asked this time and time again when I tried to make business connections of one kind or another. And I was beginning to get desperate, for my wife was pregnant and was soon to give birth. I was ashamed of the prospect of my first child being born and the father not able to support it.

Luckily for me, however, I very soon met Joseph Gross, who was running three meat markets in Jersey City in partnership with two other men. The three of them had started the enterprise with very little previous experience in dealing in meat or knowledge of business in general. After a number of conferences it was decided that I go in with them. I assured them that I would do my best to put the business on a sound basis. My investment was to be two thousand dollars. We organized the Bergen Market Company with great hopes and much fanfare.

It was about this time, on September 29th, that our first child, a lovely daughter, whom we named Lucille Hope, was born at Sloane's Pavilion in New York City. We called her Hope, for we seemed to have great hopes for our newly organized venture, and I am positive that my father-in-law had loaned us that two thousand dollar investment money for the sake of the child. Of course, I constantly maintained that our Lucille Hope looked like my family, and my wife lovingly conceded that it was so. Nevertheless, my father-in-law stoutly insisted that the baby was every inch "a Fineberg," and loved her for it.

We ran the meat business with great precision, as though we were running a bank. A manager was placed in each store, and at the end of the week on Saturday night each manager took inventory and left the record for the partners to check over. On Sundays we examined the inventory records, did the figuring based on the reports and on every Monday morning we knew whether we had done good or poor business the previous week. It was uphill work, for there was much competition in the meat line in Jersey City, and our women customers were sometimes most unreasonable and difficult to deal with.

Not many months had passed before I became restless and dissatisfied with the slow progress we were making with the

three stores. How in the world could we make a comfortable living and a little extra at the pace we were going? The person to go to for help and advice was, of course, my wife. We sat in our homey living room one evening after she had put the baby to bed, and together we reviewed the situation.

"Lou," she said, "if my father was able to make such a wonderful success with a chain of grocery stores in Jersey City, why can't you do the same with a chain of butcher stores? You've just as good a business head as he has, and certainly as good as my brothers have."

"It's a fine idea," I replied, "but such an undertaking will require far more capital than I can get together. I'll tell you what, I'll talk it over with Gross, and if he likes the idea, I'll go and see the president of my bank. Now let's go in and see the baby, and our Hope will surely bring us good luck!"

The next day I managed to convince my partner, Joseph Gross, that a chain of butcher stores was in the cards for us, and the argument that clinched the matter was the example of my father-in-law and his grocery chain. We lost no time in arranging a conference with my banker, and after he had been told the details of our plans for the butcher store chain, he agreed to lend us seventeen thousand dollars for the venture. In the course of a few months we opened up twenty-four butcher stores in Hudson and Bergen Counties of New Jersey. I would scout the neighborhood, talk to business people in various localities, study the flow of traffic, and then make up my mind where to locate our stores. Often I went into local butcher stores and casually talked about the weather, about business in general, about the butcher business, and sometimes unwittingly awakened the suspicion of the butchers that somehow in some way I was a threat to their livelihood. Gradually I learned to be more careful and more tactful.

Only young people can take the chances we took with our set-up, based almost entirely on borrowed money. On the surface it seemed that we had a going concern, but in actuality we skated on thin ice. There was nothing lazy about us, for we attended strictly to business, and watched it as carefully as my wife looked after our little girl. We were ahead of any bookkeeper in our knowledge of the actual state of our business.

As time went on my partner and I began to feel more confident as to the stability of our chain of stores, and we began to desire more profit, coming to us more quickly than heretofore. Everybody was buying real estate; people were making fortunes on houses. Why couldn't we? After we decided that we could, we took a flyer in the real estate business. It ended in a calamity; we lost forty thousand dollars in the attempt.

The idea had been a good one, but the timing had been bad. My partner was almost floored by the loss, but never did he allow himself the privilege of blaming me as the one who had urged him to make the investment. My wife who had counseled against the deal from the first, uttered not a single word of reproach. Occasionally when we were at home in the evening, an involuntary sigh would escape her, but she would hasten to hide her real feelings of disappointment with a smile or a joke. At such times I felt bad, but said nothing about what I sensed she was going through, and I made up my mind to be more careful, more conservative about my efforts to get rich, and to live like the best of them, like my father-in-law, for instance.

It took a long time for us to stage a comeback, but finally we did it. The time came when our meat business was established on a firm footing. From it we were able to draw a very decent livelihood, with servants and governesses, with automobiles, with all the good things of life, as we saw them. Our luck had definitely turned.

I began to take more time out from the business for pleasure and a good deal of reading, a pastime which I had lately neglected. I resumed my studies in philosophy and history. I was still reading the Yiddish publications, *The Warheit*, *The Tog*, *The Tageblatt*, *The American*, *The Morning Journal*—publications which came regularly into our home. In addition I read the general press. When I was particularly moved or incensed about a particular issue I wrote letters to the editor, outlining my position, and the letters were invariably published. As early as January 1928, *The Jersey Journal* finds me saying in a letter to the editor, "Let's forget politics, let us strive after culture." *The Jersey Journal* of February 1928 quotes me in a letter signed Louis A. Falk, Commander, Albert L. Quinn Post No. 52, American Legion, as saying: "We of the American Legion are for a Navy second to none."

I was never much of a poetry reader; prose was more in my line. My bookshelves proudly presented volumes of such Yiddish writers as Yitzhak Leibush Peretz, Sholem Aleichem and Mendele Mocher Sforim. All these books I read avidly, finding in them an echo of my early youth in the Old World, which I but faintly remembered. It is noteworthy that, though I left the little town in Europe when I was a young child, I have never quite obliterated it from my consciousness. Perhaps this is due to the vividness of my perception as a child, and perhaps because our mode of life on New York's East Side was merely an extension, with certain modifications, of our existence in the Old Country. At any rate, I felt a sense of at-homeness while reading the Yiddish prose writers, who so beautifully and truly depicted Jewish life in the *shtetl*. I had the feeling that I had permitted myself to soak in the lush spirit of the ghetto, which was the more resplendent because it existed in memory only. At the same time I could not but admire the profound humanity of the classic Yiddish writers—the warm beauty of the Chassidic Tales by Peretz,

the gentle humor of Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye the Milkman* and the fine irony of Mendele's *Kliatche*. Comparing these figures with some of the famous characters in English literature, I found that what they had lost in artistry, they had gained in sheer humanity.

One of my favorite authors was Chaim Zhitlovsky. He was a modern of the moderns, and I loved to read his Yiddish because, though using the old idiom, he molded it to his own modern purposes, rendering it expressive of the most advanced and complicated modern thought. Zhitlovsky's appearance on the East Side of New York had the impact of a bombshell on the intelligentsia of East Broadway. In his lectures and writings, which attracted great popular attention, he promulgated the novel idea that socialism and nationalism, far from being incompatible, really supplement each other. This was in complete contrast to the doctrine of the *genosen*, which prevailed for half a century and which called for an eternal war by socialism against Jewish nationalism as the bulwark of reaction. I was never much taken up with socialist theory, but was fascinated by Zhitlovsky who, having come out of Russia with a solid reputation as a revolutionist and a socialist thinker, showed the East Side socialists the error of their ways. The bitter feud that ensued between *The Forward*, the citadel of cosmopolitan socialism, and Zhitlovsky, the prophet of national socialism--a term which at that time did not have the connotation it has today--kept me spellbound from day to day as breathlessly I pored over the Yiddish newspapers and magazines that recounted every shift in the famous battle with a vividness of description generally reserved for the great prize-fights, the proverbial "battles of the century," which then as now are for the delectation of the great American public.

I must not leave the impression that my reading was limited to Yiddish, for it was not. I read voraciously all I could find of English fiction. I fairly threw myself on Rudyard Kipling's

stories of adventure and on Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Rider tales. Stephen Crane thrilled me no end, and so did the more serious volumes of H. G. Wells and Will Durant. It was the epoch of high adventure in literary and historical writing, and I did my best to share in it, albeit vicariously.

* * *

When the main body of the American Legion was organized in Paris, I immediately joined up. This was in 1919 and I was among the thousands of American soldiers overseas who were wildly enthusiastic over the idea. We were going to remain buddies forever. It was wonderful. We were going to make the stay-at-homes sit up and take notice. They were going to appreciate what we soldiers had done for our country and we were going to run things our way when we got home. Thus it was quite natural that almost as soon as I was released from the army at Camp Upton my thoughts should turn to the idea of forming a Legion Post in Brooklyn. At this time my family had just moved to Fortieth Street in Boro Park. They occupied a two-family house and rented out the top flat to help meet expenses.

I invited a number of my buddies to my house one evening during the Fall of 1919 for the purpose of organizing a Post of the Legion. We sat there drinking beer, eating potato chips and pretzels, singing, and reminiscing. My family had been asked to go to the movies for the occasion and so we had the place to ourselves. We decided to join Kings County Post No. 1 which had already received its charter. We proudly became members of this Post. Later, in 1924, after I had married and moved to Jersey City, I joined the Albert L. Quinn Post No. 52 which had been organized by the priest in St. Patrick's Parish. I was the only active Jewish member of the Post, but that did not prevent me from becoming its Commander in 1928.

We were quite an active, civic-minded group, and we debated freely the pros and cons of important legislation pending in the United States Congress. The Naval Bill calling for an adequate United States Navy was very much our concern, and we lost no time in letting our Congressmen know what we felt about the issue. In a letter dated March 10, 1928, Representative O. L. Auf Der Heide, from the 11th District of New Jersey, wrote to us:

Mr. Louis A. Falk
Commander, Albert L. Quinn Post 52
The American Legion, Jersey City, N. J.

My dear Sir:

I am in receipt of your telegram also copy of a resolution adopted by your post relative to the Navy building program. I thank you for sending me the views of your organization concerning this question, and I desire to assure you I am heartily in favor of our country having and maintaining a Navy adequate to its needs and commensurate with its dignity and importance.

Very sincerely yours,
O. L. Auf Der Heide

We received similar communications from Senator Walter E. Edge of New Jersey and Representative Paul J. Moore from the 8th District of New Jersey.

During the period between 1924 and 1928 very little interest was shown in actual Jewish affairs on the part of the Jewish population of Jersey City. It seemed that everyone in the city and in Hudson County found that in order to make good it was necessary to join the Hague administration, and somehow to get on its payroll. They were anxious to secure sinecures

with the Hague outfit. It was a period when the go-getting young people found it attractive to serve Moloch.

I do not know whether my wish was due to my revulsion against the prevailing atmosphere, or to the influence of my uncle, A. J. Goldstein who was an ardent Zionist. It may have sprung from the fact that my daughter Lucille Hope was now about seven years old and I felt it my duty to provide her with a Jewish environment. In any case, I had a strong compulsion to become an active, positive Jew and a deep need to be a part of the Jewish Community. Accordingly, in 1929, I joined the Jewish Community Center of Bergen Avenue in Jersey City.

At the Center it was my privilege to develop lasting friendships with a number of fine Jewish families with whom we often met on a social and cultural basis. As time went on we of the younger element found that we could no longer accept the atmosphere of the Orthodox Synagogue. We felt that it had failed to adapt itself to the country and to the times in which we were living. It belonged to the past. We held special meetings in the Center to discuss the idea of building a new synagogue. It couldn't be a Temple, for we were too far in spirit from the Temple and Reform Judaism. After much soul searching we decided that we were going to found a Conservative Synagogue in Jersey City. With all our heart and with all our might we set about the task at once.

The first thing we did was to rent a place in the Community Center where our group could meet. In 1929 we had Congregation Emanuel going strong, with Benjamin Plotkin as the Rabbi. There were Dutch suppers, card parties, theatre benefits, raffles, and drives for contributions—all the usual activities that go with the building of such a project. For the next High Holidays we were able to welcome over six hundred people for services, which took place in the Auditorium. I took part in the activities, and became the President of Congregation

Emanuel. It was not very long before I became a member and an officer of the State Organization of the United Synagogue. In the meantime, my wife had become an active member of the Sisterhood, and proved herself a loving and ideal helpmate.

I cannot help but attribute my success in helping to found the Conservative Synagogue in Jersey City in a great measure to my previous experience as member of the Bull Moose Party in the 12th Assembly District of New York, to my club activities in the Educational Alliance, and to my experience while working for HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. From being a member of the Young People's League of HIAS, I graduated to the office of President of the Young People's League of HIAS in 1920. At the time, that worthy and historical organization was housed in a very old building on East Broadway. During the year of my activity with HIAS, I had the privilege of meeting and becoming friendly with such fine men as Abram Fish and Louis G. Bernstein, who later on made their mark as brilliant lawyers in New York City.

We decided that it was a shame to house immigrant Jews who just arrived in our country in such a dilapidated old structure. Coming to a new country they deserved something better—a new building. The Astor Library on Lafayette Street was for sale; the deposit price was ten thousand dollars and we wanted to buy that building. In order to raise part of the necessary funds, we did what most young people do in such circumstances. We arranged a Sunday afternoon dance at the Pennsylvania Hotel and made a city-wide campaign to sell the tickets to the Jewish youth of New York City. We who collected tickets at the door were completely overwhelmed as the young people from all over the city entered the hall for the dance. From that dance we raised part of the necessary ten thousand dollars. For the part I played in the affair I was presented with a silver cup by the Young People's League

of the HIAS. It stands on a shelf in my living room, one of the many cups presented to me by organizations, and I treasure it to this day.

It was in 1922 while I was at Connersville that I decided to enter the law profession. It looked like something to fall back on in case my business career proved to be unsuccessful. My wife was encouraging.

"Go on up to Chicago, Louis," she said. "What can you lose? Maybe we'll feel like school kids again."

So I went to Chicago to find out whether I could get a law degree there. The answer was that I could, provided I took an examination and wrote a thesis. After a great deal of intensive plugging and help in the business and at home from Bessie, I managed to secure a law degree in that same year, and to write a thesis on Constitutional Law at Hamilton College of Law in Chicago. Judge Raymond S. Springer of Connersville, Indiana, was ready to admit me to the practice of law, but it was my luck not to join the legal profession. By that time my wife had decided that we should move back to Jersey City, and this we did.

AN AMERICAN LEGIONNAIRE IN EUROPE

One warm evening toward the end of July, 1927, I asked my wife in what I thought to be a casual, offhand manner, "Say, Bessie, how would you like to take a trip to Europe—you and Lucille and me?"

"What's that?" she asked. "Stop fooling around. What do you mean, a trip to Europe?"

"That's what I said, and that's what I mean—a trip to Europe, a grand tour of Europe."

"How can we do that? How can we afford it?" she asked in a doubting voice, but perceptibly excited and hopeful.

"Well," I replied, "this is the situation. The American Legion will hold its convention in Paris this year. You see before you a delegate representing the Albert Quinn Post." And I bowed low before her.

"Pleased to meet you, I'm sure," she replied, bowing low also, quickly entering the role. And then she gave me a more than wifely hug.

"Tell me more about it. I'm terribly excited," she said.

"Put Lucille to bed, and then we'll talk," I answered.

With the dinner dishes washed and with Lucille safely in bed, we sat down for a long talk. The Legion convention was to be held in Paris from September 19 to September 23. About six thousand legionnaires were expected to go to the convention and to make a pilgrimage to the battlefields of France.

"We're going to that convention, but we're leaving much earlier than most of the others, because we're going to England first. For a long time I've dreamed of visiting all those famous places mentioned in the history books I read when I was a youngster: places like the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, the British Museum, London Bridge, and the Houses of Parliament. I want to hear Big Ben ring out, and see the Beefeaters, and I want to eat fish 'n chips with vinegar on them, and to see the cockneys with their velveteen suits covered with pearl buttons."

"And so do I," said my wife, "but as I asked you before, can we afford it?"

"Sure we can," I answered. "We haven't had a real vacation for a long while, and the business can stand it. It's time we started living in real earnest. What do you think, old girl?"

"Suits me if it suits you," she replied, and laughed gaily.

I saluted. "Commander Albert Quinn, Post Number 52 at your service, madam!"

She returned the salute. "Now go on with the story, sir."

"Well," I said, "from England we take the boat to Belgium, and then we go on to Paris for the convention. We'll go to Italy and maybe we'll be received by the Pope. I've got most of the trip mapped out in my mind already."

My wife was impressed. "Clever man!" she remarked.

We sat talking and planning far into the night.

There was great activity in our house in preparation for the trip. Passports had to be secured for the three of us; clothes had to be bought, although I admonished my wife to buy some of her dresses in Paris. I told her that I wanted her to get some really spiffy clothes in Paris, clothes which would impress our friends, neighbors and my business associates with the fact that we were successful folk, people to be reckoned with in the community!

Finally, on August 10th at midnight, we sailed on the President Harding bound for good old England, and landed at Plymouth after an uneventful but pleasant journey. The three of us felt well and looked healthy after the trip. Our main objective in England was London, and after a train trip through the beautiful, mild English countryside, we arrived at Charing-Cross Station, in the heart of the great city.

"Where shall I place your portmanteaus, sir?" asked the porter at the hotel in the West End, after we have come up on the "lift" to the spacious room we were to occupy.

"Portmanteaus?" I queried.

"Certainly, sir," he said, "suitcases."

I indicated the spot where I wanted my bags placed, and thought to myself that I still had much English to learn.

Our first bit of sight-seeing was at the British Museum which was not far from our hotel. My wife wanted to see the Mummy Room immediately, and we were directed there most politely by the custodian. I believe that our little Lucille enjoyed the Mummy Room even more than her parents did. She hopped around from show-case to show-case, pointing and asking, "Daddy, what is this? What is that? Why is he so quiet? Why is his head bandaged so much? Does it hurt?" It required some invention to satisfy her curiosity.

My particular interest was the British Museum Library, which I had heard so much about, and of which I had read in the Public Library on East Broadway back in New York City during my youth. I was greatly impressed by the stacks of books lining the walls of the rooms from floor to ceiling. The reference rooms filled me with a sense of awe, for they were so quiet, and so many scholars were seated at the tables, poring over heavy tomes. Here in this library were age-old manuscripts, including the original copy of the Magna Charta, the original of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and other precious manuscripts.

Here were the living sources of Britain's literary wealth, and I was deeply moved by it all.

I had to look up the origin of the title "Beef-eaters" which was given to the keepers of the Tower of London. I was in the meat business, and I simply had to get the connection and reference! I discovered what I should have known long before: that these men were called "Beef-eaters" because in years gone by they were paid partially in beef. This reminded us that we had planned to visit the Tower, and we "did" the Tower very much in the same way that others have done, generation after generation. We saw the "Beef-eaters" in their colorful costumes, the Crown Jewels, the room where the little princes had been murdered, and the great moat surrounding the Tower. Indeed, history was coming to life for me!

Of course we visited the Houses of Parliament, the National Art Gallery, Trafalgar Square, and Westminster Abbey, though rather hurriedly it must be admitted. In the Abbey we were impressed by the Stone of Scone, which lately had been stolen and returned to its usual place. I could not resist the temptation, when the custodian had wandered away from the spot, to seat my young daughter on one of the two thrones on which the sovereigns of England had been crowned for centuries. I said to our little one, "You remember this day, that you sat on the coronation chair when you were young."

"Yes, Daddy," she answered, "Coronation chair. What is 'coronation?'"

That required some answering, but I patiently tried it. Apparently appreciating my effort, she nodded and seemed satisfied, for kings and queens had become familiar personages from the stories of Andersen's *Fairy Tales* which my wife had been reading to the child.

A few days after our arrival in London, after we had seen the buildings one is supposed to visit when one comes to the city, I decided that now we should concentrate on seeing

people rather than buildings. And so we travelled to the Soho district, which was mainly populated by Jews, and ate a Jewish dinner in a Jewish restaurant on Poland Street. We attended Sabbath services at the Great Portland Street Synagogue, an orthodox place of worship where the men sat downstairs and the women upstairs. I noted that the sermon was delivered in English, but the services were conducted in Hebrew—Sephardic Hebrew—and the congregation joined the choir in singing *Ein Keloheinu* and *Adon Olum*. My American Legion uniform attracted much attention during the services and when they were over I was greeted by the Rabbi and some of the officers of the Synagogue.

Petticoat Lane! We just had to see Petticoat Lane! After a long bus journey we came to the Whitechapel district in the East End of London to see famous Petticoat Lane and found it to be something of a replica of Delancey Street, Hester Street and the East Broadway of my early youth. Stalls lined both sides of the narrow street, where pushcarts, called "barrows" by the Londoners, carried an exotic variety of wares. There were shawls and shoes, coats and cucumbers, pants and pretzels, talcisin and tumblers, and many other odd combinations.

My wife was delighted with it all and the three of us bought and ate our way through Petticoat Lane. During this time my ears were keenly alert to the language in which the selling and bargaining were conducted. It was a delightful combination of Polish Yiddish and cockney English, something I shall never forget.

The next day it appeared there had been no untoward results of the previous day's digestive excursion through Petticoat Lane. Therefore we decided, that is, I decided, that we should visit the cockney section of London, which is within hearing of the Bow Bells. Here again we found barrows lining both sides of the streets, but the clothes worn by the vendors

and those for sale were quite different from those in Petticoat Lane, and the food that was sold was somewhat different. The men at the stalls, the "coster-mongers," wore black velveteen suits, literally covered with pearl buttons, and the women wore shawls just as they did in Petticoat Lane. Purple and mauve were the predominating colors, and many of the shoppers wore very large hats trimmed with ostrich feathers. It was quite gay. We had to taste some of the cockney fare, but we did not partake of the shrimps or winkles which customers ate at the stalls, using pins to pry the shellfish loose from the shell. We gave vent to the long delayed desire to eat "fish and chips," seasoned with salt and vinegar and served to us on several folds of daily newspaper. With great pleasure the three of us licked our toffee apples, held by a stick. Through all of this I listened with an attentive ear to the brand of English spoken here, and found it very difficult to understand. Again, my American Legion uniform attracted much attention and the people asked me questions about America, and were exceedingly friendly.

Time was passing very quickly and very soon we found ourselves on the boat for Belgium and thence by train to Paris, where we were scheduled to meet the rest of the gang.

* * *

The three of us arrived in Paris at the Gare du Nord, and before long we were comfortably settled at the Hotel Scribe near the Opera. The fact that we knew practically no French did not prevent us from finding our way around the city, for most of the hotel people, the taxi drivers and the restaurant staffs could converse with us most adequately in English.

"Let us go to the Cafe de la Paix," said my wife the day after we arrived in Paris. "Let us go there for lunch," she suggested. "I've heard so much about the sidewalk cafes of Paris, and I'd love to eat in one of them."

"All right with me!" I answered and we walked the block and a half to the Grand Hotel where we were served a tasty lunch in the open at the Cafe de la Paix. It seemed that the whole of Paris was out to parade before us while we were having our meal. My wife was particularly enthusiastic about the women's dresses, but was a bit shocked at the low cut of some of them. Lucille was full of questions: "Why don't we eat inside? Why do they speak so funny? Oh, French! What is French? And what is that big house over there?"

The "big house over there" was the Opera, an impressive building, darkish, topped by a green dome. Beautiful trees lined the broad boulevard between the Opera House and the Cafe de la Paix. Paris was a charming place.

"They told me at the hotel that the American Express office is not far away. Let's go and see if there is any mail from home. And besides we'll surely meet some of the gang there."

We did indeed meet many of the New Jersey gang there, members of the State Legion, some of whom had travelled overseas with us on the President Harding. There was much hand-shaking, much back-slapping and much introducing of wives and children to other wives and children.

"How d'ye like gay Parce? See any of the sights? When's the big parade?"

We registered our names in the American Express guest book and the name of our hotel in order to inform our buddies of our whereabouts in case they wished to reach us.

Of course we had to visit the Arc de Triomphe at the end of the Champs Elysée and were delighted with what was the widest avenue we had ever seen. Why, it was even wider than Park Avenue in New York City!

While my wife went shopping for dresses in the stores near the Opera, and for perfume in the little specialty shops, I took myself off with some of my Legion buddies for a tour of the Left Bank.

One day we dined in Flambaum's, a well-known Jewish restaurant of the Kosher type. What a wonderful meal that was—good wine with gefilte fish, and what a roast and what strudel! The taste still lingers.

We then visited the Jewish quarter, the so-called *Pletzl*, the Rue de Temple and the Rue de Rossier, with Jewish signs in the store windows, *Bossor Kosher*. We visited the Jewish book shops and newspaper stands in the dirty, narrow, winding streets of buildings which seemed ready to crumble into dust before our eyes. My wife and I told each other that it was worse than the East Side of New York City. We heard Yiddish in many dialects: Galician, Polish, Lithuanian, mixed in many proportions with Parisian French. Here we saw the old European ghetto, but we failed to find signs of the spirituality which we had often been told the ghetto possessed.

One Saturday in response to a special invitation, the Jewish members of the American Legion took part in services conducted in the Rothschild Synagogue where the Chief Rabbi officiated. As spokesman of the Legion delegation I was called up to the Torah—a very special honor. After the services were over I had the opportunity to meet real French Jews for the first time. These were Jews who had lived in France for many generations, in a manner and culture more French than Jewish and further away from my own Jewish origins than was the ghetto of the *Pletzl*. I was soon destined to see the ghetto whence I had come, with its shadows and lights, the Polish ghetto, the birth-place of my wife's people.

One fine day in the middle of September, the American Legion gathered together in Paris to form a parade and marched along a route that was four miles long. The street was lined with people as far as the eye could reach. The entire city turned out to give us a great ovation, the French people shouting "Vive l'Amerique" and showering flowers and kisses on

us. No conquering hero was ever received so happily, and the French really meant it.

On September 21st we made the official Legion tour to the battlefields, a party of thirty going out to St. Mihiel and Verdun. From Paris we disembarked at Point-a-Musson, which was the first town the American soldiers had contacted on this particular field. This was my front when I served with the 89th Division. I found that the French had put up a beautiful monument at Thiaccourt commemorating the brave deeds of the 2nd and the 89th, which had delivered the French from the enemy.

At Point-a-Musson we were greeted by the mayor and the director-general of the Usine Woods, the largest dynamo manufacturers in France. Then we were taken in cars to the Usine Woods and were feted with excellent champagne, while a band played in the background. I was filled with great pride and appreciation at seeing the Stars and Stripes flying above the French flag all through the section we had come. The General of the 42nd said to us, "As long as any one of us will live we will always remember America, and you need have no fears as to the care of your dead here; they will be taken care of by us." This brought tears to my eyes, for I remembered many a fine lad who had fought in my outfit. It was good to be alive, good to be an American Legionnaire revisiting France.

At Verdun we were received officially at the railroad depot, where I had the honor of delivering a speech in the name of the American Legion. My wife was very proud of me and my New Jersey buddies showed special appreciation. It was a great day for all of us.

We returned to Paris and the next day checked out of the Hotel Scribe, but only after having tipped the whole staff, which was lined up in the lobby for the occasion. I thought to myself that we in America are a bit more subtle about tips, but each to his own—live and let live.

The next destination for the Legion delegation was Rome. It was comparatively quiet in the train that carried us to Italy. Maybe we were somewhat tired after the excitement of Paris, maybe somewhat sober at the thought of American soldiers buried in France, maybe the expectation of being received by the Pope made us feel that this was a time to behave with suitable dignity.

I took my family to the Quirinal, a quiet hotel in Rome, and we spent the rest of the day in our rooms. Since we had to be officially received by the Pope, we had had special instructions as to behavior and dress. I wore my Legion uniform and my wife wore the dark dress she had bought especially for this solemn occasion. We had our audience with Pope Pius, two hundred fifty Legionnaires and their wives. It was a stiff, cold affair. Speaking for the American Legion, I thanked the Pope for having been so kind as to receive us.

The Legionnaires spent the next days in visiting churches, art galleries and seeing how the Italians live in Rome and in the surrounding country. We were abashed at the poverty of the people and at the same time touched by their friendliness and hospitality.

I had promised my wife before we had set out on our trip to Europe, that we would visit the place from which her parents came in Poland. And so the day came when we were on a train headed for Warsaw.

* * *

We travelled through Germany and Czechoslovakia toward the Polish frontier. It hardly needed the harsh word of the Polish customs officials to remind us that we had crossed the border into Poland. Everything on the Polish side was so different! The fields which all through Germany and Czechoslovakia had formed a trim, neat checkerboard, criss-crossed by dark forests, here stretched away in long, endless rows of ugly untilled patches as our train rolled deeper and deeper into the

Polish flatlands. The redroofed houses with their tall, white solos, which we had noticed everywhere as we looked through our train windows, disappeared. Instead, we now beheld straw-thatched, chimneyless peasant huts with the smoke curling out from their windows. Barefooted peasant women in tatters, and ragamuffins surrounded the train at every stop. It was at one of these railway stations that I first noticed a group of Polish Jews wearing the traditional garb, the long cloak and headgear, and the *peos*—earlocks so characteristic of Polish Jewry. This type had disappeared long ago from New York's East Side. Here on this Polish station platform we encountered them busily exchanging information and trading articles with passengers leaving the train, or with townspeople accompanying friends and acquaintances about to board the train for the capital. The sight of these petty merchants did not fill me with pride, but my heart went out to them, the more so as I observed the glances of hostility which my Polish fellow-travellers, standing in the train corridors and looking through the windows, directed toward the motley crowd of merchants assembled on the station platform. Little did I know then that what I had seen was but a drop in that ocean of hatred in which Polish Jewry was engulfed.

Late that night we arrived in Warsaw, dead tired from our trip which had taken more than twenty-four hours. A horse-drawn *drozhke* took us to Hotel Polski where we found two good rooms with bath. If the hotel officials had any animosity toward Jews, they disguised the fact. At any rate, we were too tired to notice. Or could it have been that my American Legionnaire uniform covered up my Jewish shortcomings?

The next morning we went sight seeing through Warsaw. The Polish capital has been called the Little Paris on the Vistula, and there is a great deal of justice in the appellation. The city is a combination of medieval splendor and modern opulence. We walked on Nowy Swiat admiring the beautiful, modern

five and six story buildings, their fine shops, artistically displaying the finest and costliest wares. We craned our necks on Aleje Jerozolimskie where the wealthy families have their residences. We visited the Teatr Wielki, the Great Theater, where the finest of the Polish and world stage was offered nightly at reasonable rates. Enchanted, we paced up and down the Lazienki, the beautiful park that stretches right through the middle of Warsaw, we walked across the bridge that spans the Vistula to Praga, a Warsaw suburb. We feasted our eyes on the medieval churches and on the Zamek, the old castle of the Polish kings, then the palace of the Polish dictator, Josef Pilsudski.

As a Legionnaire, I was out to enjoy the beautiful sights of this great country which the might of American arms, in concert with the Allies, had freed from the German invasion and occupation. But my heart craved the association of Jews, and so it happened that forsaking Polish splendor, I sought out the Jewish section with its squalor. The Nalewki, with its business hustle and bustle reminded us strongly of Grand Street, and Ogrodowa and Chlodna seemed a replica of East Houston and Rivington Streets, while the pushcarts of Zelazna Brama called up the image of Hester and Norfolk Streets. I would have bet that we were back in old New York, save that the Jews in Warsaw wore a distinctive garb and looked so different from the Poles, while in New York the Jewish peddlers dressed like Americans and did everything in their power to become Americans in every respect.

As mere visitors we had little occasion to penetrate into the peculiar cultural world which characterized the denizens of the Warsaw Ghetto. Friends pointed out a beautiful synagogue with a big Menorah at its entrance, where the celebrated Rabbi Schor, the historian, was rabbi. They pointed out the club at Tlumatzka 13, where the great ones of the Yiddish press and literature congregated of an evening.

We grew accustomed to having dinner at Bar Angielski, a fine Jewish restaurant on Senatorska near the American Embassy. Here we met not only American tourists but the elite of the Jewish intelligentsia. The directors of the American Joint Distribution Committee dined here, bringing with them the aroma and nostalgia of home. Warsaw was beginning to captivate us. A Jewish city, it had its charms that we could not and did not wish to resist. A voracious newspaper reader, I visited the offices of *Hajnt* and the *Moment*, and thought I was back on New York's East Side with its *Day* and *Warheit* and *Tageblatt* and *Morgen Journal* and *Forverts*. The Jewish world was one, and we were at home in it.

But this feeling was not to last very long. Soon we discovered that Warsaw was not New York. As Legionnaires we were entitled to special courtesies from the Polish Government. Our American Ambassador saw to it that these courtesies were forthcoming. We were received in the Pilsudski Palace. A big crowd assembled at the palace gate as, in our full uniforms, we were escorted inside. I watched the populace, and it seemed to me that I observed two feelings surging within every one of the bystanders, feelings so distinctly etched into facial expressions as to be unmistakable: impatience with the Polish regime, and hatred and contempt for the Jews. I passed through the gate hurriedly, as if driven by a scourge. The next day we left Warsaw for the town where I was born.

* * *

From Vilna to Devinishok is a distance of about twenty-five miles, which is usually traversed in one hour, but to me the trip seemed to drag endlessly. I was traveling in a hired automobile to visit my native town, and I was troubled and impatient. What will I see? How will the people regard me? Has anything been left of the old town? The questions welled up in me, but there was no one to answer them. I had left

my family in Vilna where we had spent the night. I was approaching my birthplace—alone.

Soon the town came into view. The church steeple stood out above a heap of low houses that centered around an oblong market place. As the car ground to a stop in the middle of the square I was surrounded by a motley crowd of women and children, with the men standing on the porches, watching. The whole town turned out to gape at the uncommon sight.

There was no one in the crowd whom I recognized. I was nine years old when I left my native town with my parents, and the new generation that had grown up here was strange to me. I took a good look at the well in the middle of the market place, the landmark which I still remembered, and wondered where I would put up for the day in this town of my birth that had become such a strange place for me. Spying a nearby tavern, I decided to make my headquarters there.

I hardly had a chance to look around when the crowd began trooping after me to the tavern. A report had spread with lightning speed through the town that an *Amerikaner* had arrived, and an assortment of people came to badger me with all kinds of requests. Fathers wished to know whether I had run into their offspring in New York.

"He had a clothing store on Stanton Street and everybody knows him," said one man.

An old woman wondered whether I could think of a way of finding her cousin for her.

"He promised to write and send me money, but now it is more than ten years that I haven't heard from him; and I don't even know his address."

But most of them did not ask for information or advice, but for money. Without begging for alms directly, some poured their hard luck stories into my ears, hinting rather strongly that if I was the man they thought I was, I'd come to their assistance without much delay. Others unashamedly stretched

out their hands the moment they could get near me. What could I do? I did my best, but I realized I'd have to be a Croesus to be able to help them all. I remember that I was particularly generous to the rabbi who approached me for a donation both for the repair of the *shul* and a fund for *hach-nosas kalah*. He was the son-in-law of the old rabbi who had known my father and mother since their infancy. The rabbi had such a woebegone look that there was no refusing his request.

Rather fatigued by the overly warm reception I had from the inhabitants, I left them hurriedly and went out to see the village itself. My first reaction to the sights that greeted me was that the place had shrunk somewhat. Could it be that the houses had always been so tiny? And what had happened to the Beth Hamidrash, which as a child I had always thought to be so big and spacious? Could it be that this wasn't really my hometown, or had I, along with my world and its dimensions undergone such a complete transformation?

I wandered through the town, followed by another crowd that soon began to form. Here and there someone stepped forward to tell me that he had known my father and mother. As I looked about me I beheld a crowd of old men and women with but a small sprinkling of young people. The young had either fallen in the war or had migrated to America, leaving the old and the helpless behind. Unwittingly I found myself on the way to the cemetery. I thought to myself that the town was gravitating to the cemetery now. I walked in the city of the dead, where everything was part of the past, and where there was no hope, and no future.

I found the rabbi cagey when I spoke to him about my misgivings regarding the future of the town.

"God will help," he kept on reiterating, as if he were repeating a refrain. Then I realized that he could not talk freely on politics without fear for his personal safety, and so I did

not press him for any further comment. The others I met were too steeped in their own misery to volunteer an opinion on the decay of the town. They concentrated exclusively upon their own immediate, personal needs. Everybody seemed to want steamship tickets for America—and gratis. I could have done a land office business, supplying tickets to all those people wishing to go to America.

By nightfall I had seen all the sights of the town, and had listened to all the people I wanted to see and hear. There was nothing more I desired to do there. I had come to spend a few, happy days in my native town, lured by the rosy pictures I had conjured through the years when as a youth in America I longed for the day when I could revisit the haunts of my early boyhood. Now with fulfillment at hand I felt surfeited, and longed to be away, as far away as possible, and speedily too.

Before long I found myself moving along the road back to Vilna with a heart heavy with sorrow. What in the world had possessed me to come here? I could have preserved so many illusions and spared myself so much disappointment and heart-break, simply by staying away from my native place. As the town receded from view the burden seemed to lift, and I experienced a sense of deep relief as I thought of America. What a bit of sheer luck it was that took me out of this place, and transported me to the good old USA! Had it not been for that turn of fortune, today I would be one of them, one of the crowd that had surged toward the automobile as it made its way to the center of the market place of Devenishok; or worse still, save for the grace of God, I would have been one of the unfortunate ones, who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of the Tsar during the World War, a sacrifice to the war to make the world safe for democracy, so to speak. Very sad, tired, but hopeful, I returned to Vilna to meet my family.

A POSITIVE JEW

Our grand tour of Europe had cost a tidy sum of money, and before I departed for the United States I had to wire my partner for additional funds. But all in all it was worth it. My wife and I had seen the world together, so to speak, and our little girl had not only had an enjoyable time, but most certainly had had rich experiences. She had become so accustomed to meeting new people that she found no difficulty in finding her place on entering Bergen School for Girls after our return home.

I found my meat business in a healthy state, due not only to my careful planning, but also to the honesty and good management of my partner. Everybody was gambling on the stock market it seemed, but my partner and I stayed out of it. We were not affected by the crash, but my father-in-law's grocery chain appeared to have suffered. My wife was worried about it. "It would be a wonderful thing if you were to combine both the grocery and meat stores," she suggested. This seemed a good thought to me, and therefore I approached my father-in-law with the proposition, having previously secured the consent of my partner.

"Let's unite the Union Packing Company and the Eagle Grocery Company," I said to my father-in-law, Davis Fineberg. "Let's unite the businesses as well as the families." I suggested this in order to please my wife, for one thing. On the other

hand, I really believed that my business was in a position to pull his out of the doldrums. But my brothers-in-law followed their usual pattern of antagonism toward having any business dealings with me, and before long the Eagle Grocery Company went bankrupt.

"You can't blame me," I said to my wife, "I tried my best."

After the crash of 1929 there was a tightening of belts and pocketbooks. Married sons and daughters moved in with their parents; department stores were almost empty; people weren't shopping because there was just no money to shop with. We had been used to getting good prices for our meat, but now our customers just weren't able to pay us the prices they had been accustomed to pay. There was widespread unemployment, and those who managed to earn a livelihood earned much less now than they did before the crash. Prices generally took a slump, but a great many merchants who were stocked up with goods were hard put to it, since they could not keep pace with the lowering of prices. The situation was not an easy one. After a good deal of thinking on my own part, and much consultation with my partner and my wife, I finally saw my way clear to save our business, and even to make money, by giving merchandise at pre-crash quality and post-crash prices.

We changed our policy and we changed our name. We had been the Bergen Market Company, and now we were the Union Packing Company, selling meat to the people of New Jersey at prices they could afford to pay. The slogan of the new company became, "Direct from the packing house to the consumer." In the year 1932, at the height of the depression, we were selling meat at three pounds for fifty cents. No other meat firm was able to compete with us in either Bergen or Hudson County. From morning till night our stores were packed with customers, with long lines waiting outside. Men as well as women came to buy our meat, and people wondered how we managed to do what we did. The secret was that

we bought cheaper, and were willing to take smaller profits. The increased volume of trade resulted in soaring profits. The new price policy kept us in business at a time when most firms were being snowed under. So this depression year turned out to be one of the best years we had experienced in the business.

Our second daughter, Doris Evelyn, was about four years old at this time. She, as well as our older daughter, seemed to have brought good luck to our little family. She was a gay, charming child and a wonderfully happy addition to our home.

By the time the year 1935 rolled around, our firm had on its payroll about two hundred employees, hard-working and loyal men and women, with whom we maintained very friendly relations. It was "Hullo Louie," and "How are the wife and kids, Joe?" We were really concerned for the welfare of our employees; we went to their weddings and *Bar Mitzvahs* and invited them to occasional social events arranged by our firm. As employers go, we were considered by our workers to be good guys. For our part, being prosperous ourselves, we wished to see our people contented and prosperous.

While playing pinochle one Saturday evening at our home an idea struck me, and I put down the cards.

"You know, Gross," I said. "Our working people have been a pretty decent bunch. We've made out rather well, with their help. What do you say to our sharing with them the profits they helped us to make?"

He looked startled at first, smiled then nodded and said: "Let's finish the game first."

And so when the game came to an end, we sat there for a long time discussing our success, and the plan that was growing in my mind.

"We've put an extra heavy load on our workers lately. We've paid them the same wages. It's time we showed them

our appreciation. We can well afford to share our profits with them."

Gross uttered the word "Socialism!" and laughed.

"Nonsense!" I answered. "We don't call such a plan "Socialism." We call it "Paternalism," for that's what it really is."

"So let it be "Paternalism," he said. "What's your plan?"

After much talking back and forth we finally decided to split the sum of twenty-two thousand dollars with our help, and to distribute it on the basis of length of service and the salary they had been earning up to that time.

We became the sensation of the town. The newspapers of Bergen and Hudson Counties carried long stories, describing our "Share the Profits Plan." At that time, as far as we knew, it was a brand new idea, and coming as it did during the depression, it caught the imagination of the public. It was only years later that Henry Ford's company adopted a modified form of our "Share the Profits Plan." Our idea received so much publicity that the Associated Press carried the story which was later on read into the Congressional Record by Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg. We had come into national prominence as pioneers of new relations between capital and labor.

* * *

During all this time since I had left the Army in July 1919, I held national membership in the Zionist Organization of America, but had not yet felt impelled to become active in Zionist work. My immediate interests were my Jewish buddies. When one goes through hell with people, shares the same dangers, hardships and satisfactions, one somehow feels closer to them than one does to most people. I wanted to help Jewish soldiers, and it was this desire which was expressed in my deep patriotism and my adherence to the people from whom I originated.

Together with Louis Richman and a few other Jewish buddies, I organized a Jewish Soldier's and Sailor's Club in the Jewish Welfare Board Hut in Seward Park in New York City. This club met almost nightly. An interesting young man who joined us was Abe Krotoshinsky, who regaled us with many stories of his experiences with the Lost Battalion. Before going into the Army he had been a clothing presser by trade, and now that he had returned, he could not get himself a job. We tried to use all our connections to help him, but somehow we were not successful. At that time he was a tall, gaunt, blond man in his early thirties, the son of a Bronx tailor. His was a most striking career. Abe had enlisted during First World War, a few years after his arrival in this country as an immigrant from Poland. Who could have predicted that he would receive the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry!

This is how he described his adventure to us: "Again a request was made for volunteers. I stepped forward . . . I started out at daybreak, but it did not take me long to become aware that I was a target for the Germans . . . I remember crawling, lying under bushes, digging myself into holes . . . I don't know how, but at night I found myself in German trenches . . . I crawled some more until I reached our own front. Then I delivered the message I had been entrusted with. I still don't know why they made all this fuss about me."

For five days and nights the soldiers of the Lost Battalion, having been cut off from the main body of troops, were without food or water, and their ammunition had run dangerously low. It was absolutely essential to re-establish contact. It was Abe Krotoshinsky who finally managed to reach American headquarters in the Argonne under heavy fire, and brought the message asking for needed food and medical assistance for the members of his besieged battalion. It was he who was sent back to them with the relief squad bringing the sorely needed assistance.

Now Abe was ready for another adventure, of a different sort. One evening while sitting around the hut at Seward Park, we began talking about Palestine, the Balfour Declaration and the wonderful idea of a Jewish Homeland.

"Do you think we'll ever succeed in getting a Jewish State?" I asked the other fellows.

"I don't see why not," remarked Abe. "That's if enough people believe in it strongly enough, and are willing to work for it—even to sacrifice for it."

"Would you be willing to work for it, and even to sacrifice for it?" asked Louis Richman.

"I sure would," replied Abe. What have I got to lose? I've served my country, and now I can't even get a job here. In Palestine at least I could do my share to build up the land. Believe me, I'd like to go to Palestine, but I don't know how to go about it."

"You know what," I said, "let's ask some of the other guys who come in here whether they'd like to settle in the Holy Land. Let's make a survey."

Then for several weeks afterwards, having formed a committee of three, we sought information concerning a prospective *Aliyah*—only we didn't yet know it by that name. Much to our surprise we found that there was a substantial number of returned Jewish soldiers who would be willing to emigrate to Palestine, if only someone would aid them in getting there. Finally, the three of us got together at the hut and wrote a letter to Louis Lipsky, the acknowledged Zionist leader. Reminding him of the fact that two hundred and fifty thousand Jewish boys had served in the armed forces of the United States in the late war, we said, "Surely there are around fifty thousand of them who would want to go and settle in Palestine, if only given the chance." We asked for advice and guidance.

A few days later we received a reply from Louis Lipsky, addressed to me personally, in which he suggested that I meet

with Charlie Cowen and Commander Mosensohn at the headquarters of the Zionist Organization of America, which at the time was located at 111 Fifth Avenue. I phoned for an appointment and one afternoon soon afterwards, was interviewed by the two men. I carefully outlined my idea of an Aliyah of soldiers and sailors. They listened patiently and willingly, and finally promised to think the plan over, and give me a reply. To this day I am still waiting for a reply from them!

It was during this period in 1919 that pogroms broke out in Poland. We heard the news while we were together in the Jewish Welfare Board Hut.

"The Polish bastards! the lousy anti-Semites! the Polish murderers! There ought to be a law against them!" we heard on all sides.

We tried to figure out what could be done to help the Jews of Poland, and finally decided to raise funds for their relief. Someone suggested that a letter be sent to Jacob Schiff asking for a contribution to this fund. To our surprise we received his check for one thousand dollars. However, there was a string attached to the gift. The money was to go directly to the Jews in Poland, or the check was to be returned. We were greatly excited and proud of this check, and showed it to our buddies and to our relatives. But our joy and pride were short lived. It didn't take very long for us to discover that there was no way of getting the money directly to Poland. Crestfallen and dismayed we returned the check to the generous donor.

It was around the year 1930, when the Brown Shirts and the Black Shirts began to grow uncomfortably active in this country that a large number of us Jewish soldiers and sailors, felt that it was high time to join a Jewish organization that would fight effectively against these Fascist, anti-Semitic groups. It was then that we discovered the Jewish War Veterans. We heard that ten charters had already been issued by the organization. We joined Jersey City Post Number 10 of the Jewish

War Veterans, and re-organized it on a sound basis. With this accomplished, a number of us went out on a vigorous campaign to organize Jewish War Veterans' Posts all over the county.

Our enthusiasm ran high. Here was something that was worth working for—a movement against Nazism and Fascism—a patriotic movement for democracy and in defense of Jews! In 1932 we elected J. George Fredman as National Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States. Under Fredman we undertook to organize a national movement to fight all Nazi and Fascist outfits in America. We were on the march in a great cause.

J. George Fredman has remained a dear friend through the years. We worked together in complete harmony. We stood together through thick and thin, in many a fight for freedom and justice.

When, in October of 1932, I became President of the Congregation Emanuel in Jersey City, I received many letters of congratulation from my friends. Among those I value most is the one I received from Fredman. The officiating Rabbi of the Temple was Rabbi Plotkin, who was also President of our Zionist District. Rabbi Plotkin was very active at that time in the communal life of Jersey City. He tried to involve me in his Zionist activities, but to no avail. I was paying my dues to the national organization, and regularly received the *New Palestine*, but still I did not feel the call to become particularly active in the Zionist movement. My sphere of activities was still the Jewish War Veterans.

I remember the time when Rabbi Plotkin was instrumental in arranging for a large Zionist meeting with Dr. Stephen S. Wise as the guest speaker. Of course I attended that meeting for I had great admiration for the dynamic Rabbi. The affair was a great triumph both for Rabbi Plotkin and for Temple Emanuel.

FIGHTING THE NAZIS

In January, 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power as Chancellor of the German Reich. For years he had been the leader and spokesman for a vicious anti-Semitic campaign, blaming the Jews for all the ills that had befallen Germany. No wonder that Jews in Germany and in other countries were filled with apprehension and foreboding! This feeling of uneasiness became more acute when Hitler's Nazi regime announced that it would begin a boycott against all Jewish business on a given weekend.

In the United States, Jews were divided as to the policies to be pursued in face of the new menace to Jews in Germany. There were those who counselled a policy of watchful waiting coupled with complete inactivity, in the hope that the trouble would blow over and that the fire-eating Hitler would ultimately become sobered by the responsibilities of his new office. These were encouraged in their attitude by the more prosperous elements among the German Jews themselves who were convinced that their Germany would not tolerate indefinitely any uncivilized behavior toward anybody, including the Jews.

On the other hand, there were sections of American Jewry deeply concerned for the welfare of German Jewry, and fearful that the plague of Nazi anti-Semitism would spread throughout the world. Reflecting this view was the American Jewish Congress. On March 19, 1933, it called a meeting at the Astor Hotel in New York City, at which representatives of the American Jewish Committee, the Zionists and other national

organizations were present. The immediate purpose of this meeting was to organize New York Jews for a mass meeting in protest against Hitlerism, to take place March 27, 1933. I remember that meeting very well.

The call for a boycott of German goods and services was heard for the first time, and was made by J. George Fredman, then Commander-in-Chief of the Jewish War Veterans. Fredman also called for a protest march through the streets of New York City. Writing years later about the meeting in *A History of the Boycott*, issued by the Jewish War Veterans, I said, "His advocacy of the boycott met with instant applause from the large audience, but with the frigid opposition of the leaders on the dais." Thumbs were turned down on the boycott idea.

I recall another scene at that meeting. Suddenly a tall, distinguished looking gentleman asked for the floor. It was Joseph Proskauer, subsequently President of the American Jewish Committee. In an impassioned speech he inveighed against the idea of a protest demonstration. He stated that it would cause more anti-Semitism in this country as well as in Germany. He pulled a letter from his breast pocket, and waved it for all to see.

Speaking with great awe, he continued, "This letter is from Supreme Court Justice Irving Lehman. I'll read it to you!"

The letter cautioned the Jews of New York City against public demonstrations at this time. As soon as Proskauer finished a fiery young man arose and asked for the floor. This was Samuel Margoshes, the Editor of *The Jewish Day*. In violent terms he castigated Mr. Proskauer for trying to put a damper on the ardor of those who would speak out for their brethren in Germany. Turning to Proskauer he said, "You want to frighten us with letters from judges who use their judicial robes to turn us away from our Jewish responsibilities. Let the judges take heed! It is we who made them!" The

warning was greeted with thunderous applause. A vote was taken. It was in favor of a mass meeting.

However this did not satisfy the just demands of J. George Fredman and the Jewish War Veterans, who had called for the boycott. Convinced that the leaders of American Jewry were pussyfooting on the Nazi problem, George Fredman strode from the Astor Hotel, determined to press for more drastic action. On March 20, 1933, he called a meeting of his Executive Council in the presence of the press. There it was decided to hold a mass protest parade in the streets of New York City on March 23rd. Hectic days followed. Some of the leaders of the American Jewish Congress tried to prevent the parade from taking place. Ex-Congressman W. W. Cohen, who was to act as Marshal of the parade was appealed to, but he remained loyal to the cause of the Jewish War Veterans. Mayor O'Brien was urged not to receive us at City Hall, the reception being part of our plans. Pressure was used on our comrades Mendelsohn, Kraditor and others, but to no avail. George Fredman stuck to his guns.

"The parade will go on," he said, "even if I am the only one to march."

The parade did take place, with George Fredman marching at the head. It was an impressive protest of Jews who had fought for their country, and were ready to defend the rights of their fellow Jews in Germany. Millions of people lined the streets of New York City to witness the unprecedented spectacle. I took my place in the line of march as Commander of the Jewish War Veterans Post No. 10. It was a great day, though public opinion was still divided on the Nazi menace, with many refusing to believe the stories emanating from Germany, preferring to characterize them as atrocity stories.

It was then that Samuel Untermeyer, the famous attorney, entered the picture. In order to get an authentic story of what was actually happening to the Jews in Nazi Germany, Samuel

Untermeyer asked our government to send him to Germany as an official United States' observer. The Administration turned him down. Not to be dissuaded, Mr. Untermeyer nevertheless did go to Europe, accompanied by Commander Fredman. Both made an on-the-spot survey, which resulted in making the boycott of Nazi Germany a real world cause, a world-wide movement.

Before he left, George Fredman worked to get the American Legion to adopt a resolution calling for an investigation of the situation of the Jews in Germany. The resolution was adopted by my own Legion Post, Albert Quinn No. 52, but failed of adoption in Hudson County, New Jersey, which had a large German population. The argument advanced was that the Legion was not an international body, and therefore could not take a stand on international questions. The failure to pass the resolution, and also the fact that three Jewish members of the County Committee failed to support me, strengthened my determination to work for Jewish causes through a Jewish organization.

Very soon after this, the American League for the Defense of Jewish Rights was organized. Out of it later grew the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League, with Samuel Untermeyer at the head, and with J. George Fredman in close association with him as Director. The Jewish War Veterans gave the organization full measure of support and cooperation. Post after Post adopted boycott resolutions.

It was not until August, 1933 that the American Jewish Congress finally declared itself officially in support of the anti-Nazi boycott. This was five months after the boycott had been advocated by the Jewish War Veterans. In this connection I have often thought that had the world instituted a real boycott of Germany when the Nazi Reich was still weak, Hitler might not have had time to finance and consolidate his position, and

world history might have been different. And six million Jews might have been spared annihilation.

* * *

As I have already said, the Jewish War Veterans worked very closely with the Anti-Nazi League. We organized spotters to check on all outstanding Nazi speakers. In Fredman's office we had detailed dossiers on the important Nazis operating in the states of New York and New Jersey. We even had the license numbers of their cars. I remember that one time in 1933 a group of Nazi Storm Troopers planned to hold a full dress parade at Weehawken. We tried to secure an injunction against the parade, but were not successful. Our argument was that such an affair would create bitter feeling among the citizens of New Jersey, and might possibly lead to rioting. However, there was too much German influence for us to overcome in Weehawken, and the parade took place, much to our consternation.

At that time we were frequently engaged in the exciting activity of picketing business concerns which insisted on selling German-made goods, in spite of the fact that the boycott idea was becoming increasingly popular throughout the country. When the firm of R. H. Macy Company of New York City, after several appeals on our part, refused to cease selling German goods, we picketed them for several days, carrying signs with such slogans as, "This store sells German-made goods!" We made it so uncomfortable for Macy's that finally the store had to give in. We had hit where it hurt most—in their pocketbook. Our success brought us many friends. It was reported that New York's Mayor Fiorella LaGuardia had said at that time, in connection with our picketing activities, "If I were a member of the Jewish War Veterans, I would do the same thing."

In the February, 1933 issue of our magazine, *The Shofar*, my own Jersey City Post No. 10 carried an editorial of mine

which read in part, "Jersey City should be fertile ground to spread the boycott. But it's up to YOU to do it. Speak to your Catholic and Protestant friends; go to your nearest library and learn whether or not your librarian ever heard of the boycott. Let's make Jersey City a 100% Boycott practicing community!"

I was always interested in journalism; here was an opportunity to practice the craft. My journalistic career took a spurt when in September, 1933, I was appointed Editor-in-Chief of *The Jewish Veteran*, the monthly official publication of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States. I undertook this assignment because I had hoped to be able to use the publication as a means of promoting the boycott, and fighting the anti-Semitism in the United States, which reflected the rise of Nazism in Germany, and which was growing to alarming proportions in our country. At the same time I realized that the position of editor of this periodical was far from an enviable one because a great deal of personal gossip and small-talk had to be given space in it. Writing on September 18, 1936 to Harry H. Schaffer, Commander-in-Chief of the Jewish War Veterans, in acknowledging my appointment, I said, "I am compelled to admit that we in the magazine are faced with a great problem. It seems that after four years of publication, the magazine has adopted a policy of printing Post gossip, which tendency we find hard to kill. In fact, I have before me a pile of the most asinine bunk I ever beheld, with a request that it be published. I am informed that this stuff addressed to the editor is the most important part of the entire organization. You know how I stand on this matter."

Yet I went at my task with a great deal of vim and vigor. I had few co-workers, and for the most part the entire burden fell on Fredman and myself. I had to correct the articles of other writers and to fill out the magazine with my own writing. Nevertheless I believe we did a good job, and we were con-

gratulated by many members of the War Veterans, from the Chief down. Great interest was aroused by an article of mine titled "They Shall Not Pass," which appeared in the December, 1936 issue, in which I prophesied the destruction of East European Jewry:

"One of the enigmas of the present Jewish existence—a situation not peculiar to our history—has been the stubborn refusal by our brethren to look at the rapidly approaching cataclysm threatening to wipe out Jewry in its entirety. With the advent of the Adventurer who surrounds himself with a horde of fanatics and desperadoes, and who by sheer violence makes himself ruler of the people, the fate of the Jew is to be sealed, unless he recognizes the signs and he himself takes proper precautions to prevent his annihilation." At that time few in the world would have believed that before the decade was over, six million Jews of Eastern Europe would be in their graves, victims of Nazi insanity.

Another feature in *The Jewish Veteran* under my editorship which attracted wide attention was a double spread montage of newspaper headlines from all parts of the country, entitled *Cross or Swastika? Nazism vs. Christianity*, describing the barbarities of the Nazi regime. As the center piece, I placed a statement of my own which subsequently was very widely quoted:

The world today is witnessing a supreme effort on the part of the Nazis to destroy Christianity by political action. The totalitarian idea of the state as embodied in Nazism cannot endure if Christianity or any religious belief is given freedom of expression. Nazism is a contradiction of all the tenets upon which Christianity is built. Nazism means the glorification of force and brutality. It teaches group hatred and the suppression of individual liberty. It means the subjugation of individual liberty. It means the subjugation of an entire people for the immediate benefits of a privileged few.

For these reasons the Nazis have been attempting to reduce the church to a state of servility to the Nazi state. Christianity teaches the supremacy of God. Under Nazism, however, there can be only one supreme being: Herr Hitler, der Fuehrer. Christianity teaches peace, charity and brotherly love. Nazism is in exact opposition to these beliefs. It reached power by terror. That is why Nazism opposes Christianity; and that is why it will continue to oppose Christianity until one or the other is ultimately destroyed.

My ambition was to make an impact on American public opinion, as well as to place the magazine in the home of every Jewish War Veteran. Perhaps both of these objectives would have been realized if conditions had allowed me to continue with the magazine for a longer period. But this was not to be. As soon as the December issue was off the press, I found myself constrained to resign my post as editor. To Commander-in-Chief, Harry A. Schaffer, I wrote December 1st, 1936, "The forms are closed—plates are washed—. The December issue of *The Jewish Veteran* is on the press and will be in the hands of the comrades on or about December 10th.

"As in previous numbers the publication is the result of the toil and sweat of J. George Fredman and myself. We hope that our efforts have not been in vain. We have tried to make a niche for our magazine among the Anglo-Jewish publications.

"However, we find it impossible to continue any further. The editing of this magazine requires the services of a professional writer, a title to which I never had claim. George and I have tried our best to show the J.W.V. the road and what can be done. Now a paid editor must be appointed. We haven't the time nor the ability to continue."

Thus ended my venture as editor of the magazine of my organization to which I had given so much of my devotion.

But my fight against Nazism, far from being ended, had only just begun.

* * *

When in August, 1933, the American Jewish Congress decided to join the anti-Nazi boycott movement, I felt drawn closer to the organization. I had fought it when it opposed the boycott, but with Dr. Stephen S. Wise as the great spokesman, both of the American Jewish Congress and the boycott movement, I found myself propelled into the orbit of the Congress, whose double aim was to defend Jewish rights in America and throughout the world, and to democratize Jewish life in the United States. The American Jewish Congress, having taken the lead rather early in the anti-Nazi protest movement with its demonstration in Madison Square Garden on March 27, 1933—four days after the Jewish War Veterans had held their march through the streets of New York City—went all out on the anti-Nazi campaign.

One of the great achievements of the Congress in this fight against Nazism was the staging of *The Case of Civilization Against Hitlerism*, at Madison Square Garden on March 7, 1934. Scoffers called it a mock trial, but it was infinitely more than a mock trial. It was the dramatization of a whole regime that was hailed before the bar of public opinion with some of the most outstanding Americans appearing as accusers and witnesses, and with more than twenty-two thousand men and women, stirred to their depths, seated in the vast auditorium, participating as the jury. I lived most intensely through every moment of that trial. To me it was indeed an unforgettable experience.

I doubt whether in all of the history of the Jewish Community in the United States there were so many notables gathered together on the same platform at the same time—united in the resolve to protest the grievous injury done the Jewish people. Leading in the presentation of *The Case of Civilization Against*

Hitlerism was Samuel Seabury, who had made a name for himself as a fearless investigator of city corruption. Presiding over the vast assembly was Bainbridge Colby, former Secretary of State of the United States, and sharing the platform with him was a galaxy of prominent church leaders, statesmen, editors and writers, seldom equalled in any assemblage.

Madison Square Garden never presented a more colorful picture than on that evening. The huge auditorium with its rising tiers and galleries was packed with people who had come to hear the case against Hitler. When the white-haired, dignified Bainbridge Colby arose to make his opening remarks as presiding judge, there was a hush of expectancy in the great hall. The public was not disappointed. One after the other, outstanding men appeared on the rostrum to indict the Third Reich. There was Bernard S. Deutsch, short, stocky President of the Board of Aldermen of New York City, with his thunderous voice; Arthur R. Brown, the tall, thin Chairman of the American Committee on the Rights of Religious Minorities; rotund Michael Williams, Editor of the Catholic organ, *Commonweal*; the white-thatched, mustached Abraham Cahan, Editor of *The Jewish Daily Forward*; broad-shouldered, massive Alfred E. Smith, former Governor of New York State; Fiorello H. LaGuardia, the diminutive, dynamic Mayor of New York City, and many other worthy dignitaries.

It was Stephen S. Wise, towering above the rest in appearance and eloquence, who was the hero of the evening. As I write, I still can hear his voice vibrate through the vastness of Madison Square Garden in bitter indictment of the bloody regime that had been foisted upon the German people. It was the year 1934, and the mood of the time was to draw a line of distinction between the Nazi government and the German people. The mass participation of the Germans in the vicious acts of the greatest genocide in all history still lay in the future. Stephen Wise, always sensitive to the political and cultural climate around

him, caught that mood and articulated it as only a master could articulate it.

"Nothing in Germany is so free," he thundered, "but that it is enslaved and enchained; nothing so precious but that it is devastated and destroyed, nothing so sacred, but that it is violated and polluted." And then, in a crescendo that was heard in every part of the hall, and by thousands outside, he exclaimed, "Despite the oceanic tragedy which has befallen us, we Jews tonight, joining the chorus of civilization indict Hitlerism, as human beings, as members of civilized society, before the high court of human judgment. We protest, not for our own sake alone; for we have always been watchmen at the gate, who, at the cost of life itself, safeguarded the ineffably precious values of threatened civilization." Thunderous applause rang out when Dr. Wise had finished his speech.

I remember the tremendous ovation accorded LaGuardia, as he stepped forward to speak. "The Little Flower will give it to Hitler," I said to myself. And so he did. Now, after the passing of so many years, I can still hear his voice, defiant, indignant. How prophetic he was then, when he said that Hitler was not fit to have placed in his hands the peace of Europe, of the whole world! Calling upon the American government to take steps to stop Hitler while there was still time, he pointed out that the outrages that took place under the Romanoff dynasty were as nothing when compared with the atrocities of Nazi Germany; and yet at that time the United States abrogated its treaty of friendship with the imperial government of Russia.

When the speeches were over, there was no doubt as to the verdict. It was read slowly and solemnly by the gaunt John J. Holmes, revered minister of the Community Church of New York City. It condemned the Nazi regime for its barbarous despotism which menaced the progress of mankind; and it

branded that system as a threat to the welfare of the German people and the peace and freedom of civilized mankind.

A silence fell upon the great crowd as the last words of the verdict faded away, and then suddenly the audience stood up as one man, and broke into thunderous applause. I could not keep back my tears, and many others around me were weeping. At that time Hitlerism had not yet done its worst, but already there were many victims. Little did we know that the shadows of mass murder and of the Second World War with their unspeakable horrors hung over us. We went home that night hoping that our demonstration against Nazism would arouse world opinion, and world conscience in time to stop Hitler in his tracks.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HIGH WINDOWS

When East European Jews wish to indicate that a person is getting up in the world, or rising in the social scale, we say that he has reached the *Hoiche Fenster*, the "High Windows." I too got into the "high windows." My many activities with the War Veterans, the Jewish War Veterans, and in various charitable and political organizations, gradually brought me to the attention of Harold Hoffman, Governor of New Jersey. For about three years, from 1935 until 1938, I was part of the inner circle around the Governor, part of what came to be called his "Kitchen Cabinet." We gathered ever so often at the Little White House at Sea Girt, New Jersey. In addition, George Fredman and I were frequently guests of the Governor and his family at his home.

The letter I received on July 11, 1935 from Governor Hoffman definitely set me up in the "high windows" class:

"Dear Lou:

The Legislature has created by joint resolution a New Jersey-United States Constitution Day Commission to prepare for an appropriate celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution, in September, 1937.

"I do not anticipate that the duties will be very exacting, but in these days when the Constitution is being attacked

by those whose duties and obligations it is to protect and observe it, it seems to me that it has taken on a new and livelier interest. If you can see your way clear to serve on this Commission, I shall be glad to announce your appointment. Please accept."

I was then president of the Union Packing Company. Of course I was flattered by the honor offered me, a boy from the East Side, by the Governor of the State of New Jersey, and that's the plain truth. However, I was also eager to do my bit in so patriotic an undertaking as the preparation of a New Jersey-United States celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution.

Two days after receiving the letter I wrote to the Governor accepting the assignment, saying among other things, "The Constitution of the United States is a priceless heritage left to us by our fathers and founders of this great republic. Under it we have prospered and become a great people. We will yet prosper and gain greatness if we stay loyal to this great document of equal rights." I meant every word of it.

Little did I know that I was to join illustrious company. In addition to myself the Governor selected as Commissioners George de Benneville Keim of Edgewater Park, Mrs. Miriam E. Lippincott of Camden, Mrs. Helen D'Olier of Morristown, Ogden Hewitt of Mahwah, and Callahan J. McCarthy of Elizabeth. Speaker Clee selected Assemblyman Hart S. VanFleet of Roselle Park and Mrs. Shelton of Bergen County. Senator Prall selected Cliff Powell and John Toolan. The Governor, the President of the Senate (Prall) and the Speaker of the House (Clee) were ex-officio members of the Commission. Indeed, I was in high society!

Early in October I received a letter from the Hon. George DeB. Keim, Commissioner of the Port of New York Authority, inviting me, at the suggestion of Governor Hoffman, to the

first meeting of the New Jersey Constitution Day Commission. It was to be held at his home, "Gable Hall," in Edgewater Park, New Jersey, and luncheon was to be served.

I drove down to Edgewater Park that fine Fall morning, taking with me Callahan J. McCarthy at the suggestion of our host, Commissioner Keim. Cal McCarthy turned out to be an imposing man in the fifties, about five feet ten inches in height, portly, blond and blue-eyed, and florid. He was an extremely likable fellow, interesting, lively, full of humorous anecdotes; later he turned out to be a writer and poet into the bargain. He was steeped in New Jersey lore, was a leading member of the Union County Historical Society and of the American-Irish Historical Society. We became friends even before we arrived at Edgewater Park.

Mr. Keim's home, "Gable Hall," was situated on a very large estate in Burlington County, on the Delaware River. As we drove up the wide, tree-lined road that led to the mansion, I became impressed with what I saw. The house had the appearance of an old castle, surrounded by spacious grounds, with the land sloping gently down towards the river. I must confess that I had never been invited to such an imposing place before.

We were met at the door by an equally imposing butler, who first took Cal McCarthy's hat and overcoat, which I noted were of the finest quality. For this grand occasion I had bought myself a new top-coat, which had cost me all of \$22.50! When I handed it to the butler, I thought I detected a slight smile on his lips. I was a bit abashed for a moment, but soon braced my shoulders, pulled my tie straight and said to myself, "To hell with him! Who does he think he is?"

We were ushered into an extremely large entrance hall containing an enormous organ with pipes reaching almost to the high ceiling. After having been shown into the dining room, we were greeted with a great deal of dignity by Commissioner

Keim, who introduced us to the other Commissioners who were present on that occasion.

To my great satisfaction I found Congressman Sol Bloom of New York at the meeting. His presence gave me a feeling of confidence, for wasn't he one of my own people? Before long I got to know that the Governor had appointed George Keim to be Chairman of the Commission, Louis A. Falk to be Secretary, and Cal McCarthy was to be Chairman of Program.

During the luncheon the conversation veered to family trees, which of course was quite natural for such a group. It appeared that Mr. Keim had come from a very old, wealthy family of New Jersey society. So did the others, particularly the few D.A.R.'s present. I was the only plebeian and was aware of it. To add to my discomfort, Mrs. Lippincott, a thin tight-lipped lady in her mid-fifties, informed us gently, in a deprecating sort of way, that her ancestors had come over on the Mayflower. What was I to do? I had to save my family pride or *yichas*, as we call it, so I remarked that my great, great grandparents had come over on the very next boat.

Mrs. Lippincott froze visibly. Raising her lorgnette she stared at me for a long moment, and then said icily and deliberately, "Isn't that nice!"

"Serves you right, Louis!" I said to myself. "You deserved it."

Others at the table took it differently. Sol Bloom frowned furiously, our host looked pained and Cal McCarthy had a frivolous twinkle in his eyes. After lunch, the business of the day over, Sol Bloom managed to get me into a corner where he laced it into me for my remarks on the means of transportation used by our own ancestors and those of Mrs. Lippincott.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself for treating that lady as you did! We Jews have got to be careful how we behave ourselves, and I'd advise you to be more respectful next time," he bellowed.

I might have retorted, had he been a younger man. However, we needed him for the job we had set for ourselves to do, for he was a member of the United States Congress, as well as the Director General of the United States Constitution Sesquicentennial Commission. So I kept my tongue and let him speak, while in my heart I was happy at the way I had cut the lady down to size.

* * *

I was so fired with enthusiasm about the idea of my State of New Jersey celebrating the adoption of the United States Constitution that I put a great deal of soul and time into the project. About two months after the Governor had appointed me a Commissioner, I wrote a lengthy article on the Constitution, titled *Hebraic Mortar in the American Constitution*, which was printed in a number of Anglo-Jewish publications in various parts of the country. I wrote in part:

"The love of liberty, opposition to monarchy and the passion for free government were ingrained in the people of Colonial America by the sermons of the pastors who drew freely on the Old Testament. Lecky, the British historian, pointed out that 'in the majority of instances the early Protestant defenders of civil liberty derived their political principles chiefly from the Old Testament. The rebellions that were so frequent in Jewish history formed the favorite topic! In other words, the Hebraic tradition was one of the direct sources of the republican sentiment that led eventually to the American Revolution . . .

"Thus it is no exaggeration to say that although there were no Jews at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, the cement with which the builders of the American Constitution constructed that charter of American liberties was heavily mixed with Hebraic mortar."

Returning to my activities as Commissioner, I recall that at the preliminary meeting of the Commission held at Mr. Keim's home, Representative Sol Bloom explained that the name of the Commission was incorrect. Assembly Joint Resolution No. 2, introduced Jan. 21, 1935, and passed by the State of New Jersey had erred in providing for a "N.J.-U.S. Constitution Day Commission" to prepare for the celebration on September 17th. He stated that that date marks the framing of the Constitution and not its adoption. From that time on, the word "Day" was dropped from the title of the Commission. The official name was "N.J.-U.S. Constitution Commission."

The Assembly Joint Resolution provided that "Said commission shall cooperate in the effort to have this momentous event celebrated in the cities, villages, hamlets, public and private schools of this State, and by all patriotic societies." Therefore our job was to arrange for such celebrations throughout the State, and we went at it with a good deal of patriotic fervor.

The Commission decided that in order to carry out the terms of the Resolution, it would be advisable to enlarge the Commission by a Supplemental Committee of leading persons in the State of New Jersey. A list was drawn up and submitted to the Governor for approval. Heading the list of the Supplemental Committee was Dr. Chare H. Elliott, Chairman of the New Jersey State Department of Education, who laid out plans for cooperation of his department with the work of the Commission. Governor Hoffman suggested that the Supplemental Committee be composed of a Chairman (a man), and a Vice-Chairman (a woman), appointed in each of the counties of the State of New Jersey. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each county would in turn organize their own committees which would be representative of every sub-division of the county. He recommended also that the Supplemental Committee be chosen from patriotic, civic, educational and church organizations.

The Governor was interested in making sure that all church denominations were represented on the Supplemental Committee, and so, in a special communication to the Chairman of the Commission, he ordered that a list be made of all the leaders of church groups, and that none be omitted or overlooked. He had his own political future to think of.

The Commission, however, was not satisfied with merely adding to itself the gentlemen of the cloth. It sought the historians of twenty-one counties in the State, and, after much conferring and consultation of documents, managed to obtain monographs on the roles of the various sections of the State in the drafting of the U.S. Constitution. It developed that residents of New Jersey had played a very important part in the formulation of the historic document.

We were very eager to lend the celebration of the Constitution in New Jersey the popular character it deserved. To achieve this purpose we asked Dr. Elliott to arrange observances of Constitution Day in every school of the State. This he did with much thoroughness. Parents as well as children were invited to special school assemblies that were addressed by school principals as well as by distinguished guests. The press took note of these gatherings, and so the observance of the U.S. Constitution in the State of New Jersey came in for more publicity than did most other observances in other states.

The work of the Commission, however, was not all beer and skittles. There were resignations caused by misunderstandings and personal rivalries. Our chief difficulty was the budget. For a long time we operated entirely without a budget. We rolled up bills for printing, stenographic services, postage, and so on, hoping that an appropriation from the Legislature would enable us to pay our debts. But the money was not forthcoming. Instead, we received advice from the politicians that the members of the Commission had better make up their minds that theirs was a labor of love, and that expenses, if any, were to be

kept at a minimum. Finally, after much persuasion, we succeeded in having the Governor sit in with the Commission when the matter of the budget was raised. The Governor informed us that he originally had estimated the budget of the Commission at fifteen thousand dollars, but was now convinced that he could not obtain from the Legislature more than an appropriation of ten thousand dollars. The result was that within this narrow budget we had to carry on our operations throughout the whole State, and even this sum was not forthcoming without a great deal of effort. A special resolution had to be introduced, and much wire pulling resorted to before the Legislature finally consented to make the appropriation.

Another matter that presented considerable difficulty was the extension of the time of the celebration. Under the A.S.J. Resolution No. 2, approved March 8, 1935, the N.J. Commission would have to dissolve and disappear on the day after September 7, 1937. This was entirely at variance with the intent and purposes of the celebration as formulated by the United States Commission under Representative Sol Bloom, which envisaged a celebration of two years. Therefore another resolution had to be introduced in the N.J. State Legislature prolonging the life of the State Commission up to December 1st, 1937, to coincide with the date set for the U.S. Commission. All this took a great deal of time and trouble.

The total effect of all celebrations through the State, featuring the celebration in Princeton which was the largest, since Princeton had once, for a short time, been the Capital of the State—was to arouse a great deal of popular interest in the Constitution of the United States and of the State of New Jersey, and their framers. Governor Hoffman, who was headlined at most of these celebrations, saw his political fortune greatly enhanced, and so did many members of the Commission who had political ambitions. Since I had none, I felt satisfied and amply repaid with an Ode, addressed to me by the poet of the Commission,

Cal J. McCarthy. I do not know how many of his poems will reach posterity, but if I can help this one on its way to immortality, I shall feel content, though I think that the portrait it paints of me is a trifle overdone in my favor:

Ode to Louis Falk

Secretary, U.S.-New Jersey Constitution Commission

By Cal J. McCarthy

In New Jersey there's a man I know, his name is
Louis Falk,

He's full of wit and humor and pleasant Jersey talk,

He lives in Jersey City, erudite and precise,

A man of many talents, a man of sound advice,

He's kind and persevering and knows just when to act,

His life and mode of living is based on candid fact.

He writes for the Commission and the sesqui-celebration,

He holds the Constitution up for due deliberation,

He travels through each county and lets each chairman
know

New Jersey must be always first in patriotic show,

Now when he has some leisure time he studiously
defines

By writing for New Jersey's sons about colonial times,

He writes this data into prose with never one omission,

For it's all done with zest and zeal for the Constitution
Commission.

And when the celebration starts on the seventeenth
of September

We'll all know Louis Falk has lived and his works
we will remember.

CHAPTER IX

GOOD NEIGHBORS

Whatever else may be said about Mayor Frank Hague, one thing cannot be gainsaid, and that is that he tried his very best to keep anti-Semitism out of Jersey City. This much I can attest from my personal experience. Consider that eighty-five percent of the population were Catholic, the majority born in countries with an anti-Semitic tradition; consider also that the city had a substantial number of Nazis. Yet any time I approached the Mayor on the subject of anti-Semitism or, more specifically, of stopping a Nazi meeting, I received his full cooperation. Rarely was a German Bund meeting permitted by Hague. Invariably the Jewish War Veterans, in their anti-Nazi campaigns, received the whole-hearted aid of Mr. Beggans', Jersey City's and Mr. Hague's Commissioner of Public Safety.

As far as I was concerned, I felt that a more affirmative approach was called for in dealing with anti-Semitism. In this spirit I called together a number of leading citizens of Jersey City in order to secure some united action on the part of Jewish organizations. The response was instantaneous. Representatives of my own Jewish War Veterans Post Number Ten attended, also members of the Men's Council of Jersey City, Jewish Community Center and representatives from B'nai B'rith. I was the main speaker, and I struck the keynote:

"Gentlemen, there is no reason in the world for people of different religious faiths to hate each other. We are all citizens of this great American Republic, and should learn to know

each other better and to respect each other. There are good people, as you of course know, in every religious faith, and it is our business to see to it that their influence predominates in this city. We ought to learn and to teach others that it is good citizenship to be good neighbors. What do you think?"

"Sure," said Harold Login, Commander of the Jewish War Veterans. "What specifically do you have in mind?"

"Well," I replied, "I'm thinking of the idea of awarding a gold medal to a member of the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish faiths who has made an outstanding contribution to the welfare of the people of Jersey City."

"A good idea!" said George Clott, President of B'nai B'rith. "Let us hear more of your plan. So far it sounds good to me."

"We ought to encourage our citizens to be good neighbors, no matter what country they or their forebears come from, and regardless of their religion. We ought to give what I would call a 'Good Neighbor Dinner,' invite prominent people of the three faiths, and present the three medals at that time. It would be wonderful publicity for this Good Neighbor idea of ours."

"You can count me in on this deal," announced Louis P. Brenner, President of the Men's Council.

It didn't take very long before the idea was officially approved by the three organizations and a working committee was elected to plan and carry out the project. To me fell the honor of being designated the General Chairman. I was assisted by David Granoff and Norman Kirsch, as co-Chairmen, Louis Kagan as Secretary, Frank Fineberg, Treasurer, Hirsch Schpoont, Chairman of Arrangements, J. George Fredman, Chairman of Publicity, Hon. Victor H. Berman, Chairman of Medal Committee, and David M. Klausner, Chairman of the Reception Committee. Later on a general committee of about fifty-seven men was organized to help carry out the Good Neighbor Dinner.

On May 3rd, 1939, Jersey City became host, at the Hotel Plaza, to what, as far as I know, was the first function of its kind in the United States—a Good Neighbor Dinner at which medals were awarded to a Catholic, a Protestant and a Jew, as a means of promoting good interfaith relations. It was a tremendous success. Every room in the Plaza Hotel was taken that night. It was a night of great speeches and was a great demonstration of the fraternity of all Americans.

Msgr. John J. Murphy of Newark, in making the presentation of the medal to Hudson County Supervisor, John F. O'Neill expressed the hope that "all nations might sit down in friendship, love and neighborly feeling, just as we are doing tonight." The Catholic recipient of the award had just attended the coronation of Pope Pius XII as a representative of the Knights of Columbus. In accepting the medal John O'Neill said, "I believe I am carrying this medal for the thousands of others of my faith in this community who carry within them the very spirit of this meeting tonight." Referring specifically to Ireland, he stated that while the country is ninety-nine percent Catholic, it elected a Protestant President, and has a Jew in the Legislature, representing thousands of Catholics. Supervisor O'Neill had been chosen because of his work in charitable and fraternal drives for funds to aid those of all religions, and because of his influence in making Jersey City the friendly home city it is.

The Protestant to receive the award was the Reverend F. Raymond Clee, Pastor of the Old Bergen Church, Reformed Church in America, of Jersey City. He was particularly praised for his leadership of the Everyman's Bible Class, which grew to a membership of over one thousand five hundred Protestants, Catholics and Jews. Judge Robert Carey in presenting the award to Mr. Clee, spoke of his activities in the Kiwanis Club, and in many other charitable organizations. In his presentation address he spoke of the close kinship between those of different faiths as being "a fundamental concept of America, since it was

founded." He added, "This wonderful combination of Jewish Organizations has blazed the way for us a way of life."

In reply, the Rev. Clee declared, "This gathering tonight is not to honor any man, but a group of men gathered to dedicate themselves to the idea of man and the ideal of good will." He stressed the theme of the dinner, which in his opinion was, "love thy neighbor as thyself."

Judge Morris E. Barison of the Juvenile Court presented the award to Dr. Berthold S. Pollak, chosen as the outstanding Jew in Jersey City who should receive the Good Neighbor Award. Judge Barison made special reference to the splendid work Dr. Pollak had done as a leading specialist in tuberculosis, connected with the Hudson County Tuberculosis Sanitarium and as a leader in charitable undertakings: "No one knows how many lives he has saved—how many men, women and children he has restored to loved ones. He is a leader in almost every organization for the fighting of tuberculosis, and represents America at world conferences on 'the great white plague.'" In reply Dr. Pollak declared, "This dinner shows that the people of Jersey City uphold the concept that we are serving one God and one mankind."

Ben Schlossberg, who had acted as toastmaster at this first dinner, wrote to me the next day, "The dinner, with all its ballyhoo is over! Kindly accept my congratulations in writing—and my thanks for your sincere friendship. Your introductory remarks as Chairman are more than appreciated. It was a pleasure to work under a Chairman who has the courage of his convictions."

On May 17, 1939, John O'Neill wrote: "I am attaching hereto a marked copy of the Knights of Columbus NEWS dated May 15th, wherein you will note that your fine 'Good Neighbor Dinner' received considerable publicity, as this weekly is sent to readers all over this and other countries."

F. Raymond Clee wrote me on May 4th, "I do appreciate the medal, but as I stated last night, I think to have had fellowship with a body of men like those assembled was in itself a great honor."

In my keynote speech at the first Good Neighbor Dinner, I stated, "We hope that this may become an annual affair, not only in Jersey but throughout the country. Americans in every city, town and village should be good neighbors." The dinner, in fact, did set a precedent. The following year it was held at the Hotel Plaza with more than four hundred people attending, and with the awards going to Judge Robert V. Kinkaid of the Circuit Court, the Rev. Harry L. Everett, Pastor of the First Congregational Church, and Harry Goldowsky, leader in Jewish charitable organizations. It was repeated for many, many years and it drew the attention not only of our local community but of the entire country.

* * *

Early in 1932 I received a call from my good friend, Harry Goldowsky, informing me that the situation of the Hebrew Home for Orphans and the Aged of Hudson County, New Jersey, was so desperate that there was no more food left for the inmates of the institution. This cut me to the quick, and I decided to respond promptly.

"Come around to the Home," Harry urged. "Look the place over and see what you can do for us."

I knew that another of my good friends, David Klausner, was very much concerned with the Home; it was one of his pet projects. I also thought of my partner, Joe Gross.

"I'll come over tomorrow," I said, "and I'll bring my partner with me."

I appeared at the Home accompanied by Gross. After viewing the general situation at the institution, we both decided that the first thing we would undertake would be to supply the Home regularly with all the meat it needed. Since we were

in the meat business, this obviously was the most logical offer for us to make. Nat Krupnick and Ben Grunstein joined with us in this, our first undertaking in support of the Home for Orphans and the Aged. Dave Klausner then proposed that from now on I should be in close cooperation with him in securing financial support of the institution, and I felt it to be my duty as a good Jew and good citizen of the Jersey City community to respond to his appeal. I am happy to say that never again did a situation arise where the Home was short of food.

To put the Home solidly on a financial foundation, we decided to reorganize the Board of Directors. Dave Klausner was elected President of the Home, M. J. Goodman, Mrs. Arthur Gold and I were elected Vice-Presidents. In addition, I was appointed Chairman of the Finance Committee. This was a good beginning, but our financial troubles were far from being ended. I felt that a group of devotees pledged to the support of the institution was needed. This was not an easy task in a community such as ours. Still I felt that without such a dependable base of financial support, our institution could not long endure. Accordingly, I set for myself as a goal the enrolling of a minimum of one hundred members, each pledged to give or get three hundred dollars annually for the maintenance of the Home. It took a great deal of work, correspondence, plus personal coaxing to achieve this result, but it was achieved.

After a few months, we actually had one hundred people paying three hundred dollars each, each of them serving as a financial pillar of the institution. With this the groundwork for the continued existence of the Home had been laid.

It was necessary to think of other methods of obtaining revenue for our project. We decided to launch a campaign with seventy-five thousand dollars as our goal. David M. Klausner as President, was in charge of that campaign, and I, as Vice-President, was co-Chairman. The first big affair of the drive

was a dinner, held on April 28, 1935 at the Jewish Community Center, at which thirteen thousand dollars in contributions was assured. The true situation of the Home at the beginning of the campaign was revealed by President Klausner at the dinner. The Home had a reported balance in the bank of sixty-seven dollars, with an indebtedness of sixteen thousand dollars. About forty to fifty thousand dollars each year were needed to maintain the Home.

Another effort to raise the required funds for the Home was the Annual Charity Ball, the first program of which carried advertisements placed by friends of the Home. In one of these issues, I, as Chairman of the function, inserted a full-page personal advertisement with a message which I deeply felt, and which read in part as follows:

"The kindest charity is that which does not look, feel or smell of charity. For a sensitive human being nothing is so hard to digest as charity. From his very infancy, the Jew, particularly rebels against the flavor of the '*n'dovoh*.'

"It is by no chance alone that everything about the Hebrew Home breathes of a large family in a pleasant Jewish home. As far as is humanly possible every symbol of professional charity is conspicuous by its absence. As far as is humanly possible, every effort is made to encourage the atmosphere of mutual affection, respect and happiness. That we have succeeded in a large measure may be glimpsed any day by a casual tour through the Home itself.

"Man does not live by bread alone. To be alive, a man must eat and have shelter, but almost as important, he must have his self-respect. It is this opportunity for self-respect, which we humbly believe you will find more unanimously present among our guests at the Home than almost any similar institution elsewhere. And, believe me, there is as much gratitude for this as for the daily food and shelter you are helping to assure them."

An outstanding event in the history of the Hebrew Home for Orphans and the Aged was the burning of the mortgage of the institution. This took place on Sunday, January 7th, 1940, marking the clearing of debt on the institution. The newspapers carried leading stories about the affair, featuring the photographs of Dave Klausner as President, Joseph Gross, as Chairman of the Admission Committee and of myself as Chairman of the Finance Committee, participating in the ceremonies.

Key figures in the Bonds for Israel campaign tonight were guests of Professor Albert Einstein at his home in Princeton, N. J., to map plans for the current drive. Left to right are: Leo Bernstein, national director of field operations for the Bonds for Israel program; Professor Einstein; and Louis A. Falk of Jersey City.

Good Neighbors



The high point in the life of the Home was reached when on October 24th, 1943, in the midst of the Second World War, a plaque was unveiled bearing the names of thirty-six former orphan inmates of the Home who had joined the armed forces of the United States. As part of the ceremonies Mrs. Rebecca Halberstadter, the Executive Director of the Home, was presented with thirty-six scrolls of honor in the names of the young men, to be held by her as foster mother until their return home.

The ceremonies were arranged by the Jersey City Post of Jewish War Veterans. As past Commander of the Post, I was given the honor of presiding. I still recall the lump which arose in my throat as the names of the young men were read, the boys whom I had seen grow up in the Home and who now were defending our liberties somewhere in the islands of the Pacific or in the foxholes of North Africa and Italy. My own experiences as a young soldier in the First World War flashed across my mind, bringing with them painful and nostalgic emotions. Dr. George H. Rawson, Post Commander, made the address of presentation, and the speech of acceptance was delivered by Joseph Gross, my partner.

The Hebrew Home for Orphans and the Aged is still my beloved institution. I believe it is one of the best-run homes of its kind in the country. Now that its value is better appreciated by the community, the institution is long past its financial crisis. With its income well assured both from annual contributions and well-placed investments, it now rests on a firm foundation. I can say that of all my activities for the public good, the Home has given me a maximum amount of pride and satisfaction, both in the results achieved and in the associations formed over the years.

* * *

I suppose that my success with the Home of Orphans and Aged went somewhat to my head, for soon I was ready to

attempt one of the most ambitious programs in our community. This was nothing less than the organization of a Federation of Jewish Charitable Institutions of the whole area of Hudson County.

The idea of a Federation was not a new idea with me. Already there were quite a number of Federations in existence in many parts of the country. Moreover, they were joined in a National Council of Federations and Welfare Funds. But as far as the Jewish Community of Jersey City and of Hudson County generally was concerned, we were still deep in institutional chaos. Organizations and institutions were duplicating work and incurring expenses which could be saved by concentration and coordination of effort. We were like a frontier town that had grown up overnight without a plan or directing hand.

I knew that by making an attempt to bring order out of chaos I was taking upon myself a most difficult chore, but so convinced was I of the need that I decided to undertake the task. In this decision I was encouraged by the National Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, and such great national Jewish organizations as the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Welfare Board. These two last-named organizations went so far as to offer me their active assistance through members of their own staff.

As the first step, early in February, 1936, I called a meeting of seven of what I would call "hand-picked men," that is of my own close friends, for the purpose of discussing the organizational and other technical problems involved in my ambitious program. This meeting took place in my home. I decided to call a larger meeting later with an aim to organizing what I then called the United Jewish Committee of Jersey City. In the letter I sent to a large number of contributors to Jewish institutions in Jersey City, inviting them to attend the meeting on February 7th, 1936 at the Jewish Center, I said: "For your information, during the past few weeks several meetings

were held by a considerable number of representative and substantial businessmen of this community which strongly endorsed and actually laid the groundwork of a United Jewish Committee. Those present signed pledges not to contribute to any charity or communal organization in Jersey City unless it is affiliated with the United Jewish Committee. The pledge is to take effect when the actual drive begins on April 11, 1936.

"The intention of this type of organization is to centralize the fund-raising for our Jewish community needs in one annual appeal. Organizations that will receive allotments are: The Jewish Relief Societies, the Hebrew Home for Orphans and the Aged, the Jewish Community Center, the Talmud Torahs, and non-local relief and reconstruction causes. The organization also contemplates dealing adequately with other Jewish problems as they arise, such as German-Jewish Relief, Palestine, etc.

"Will you please take up at the next meeting of your organization, or at a special meeting called for this purpose, the proposition of your organization endorsing and committing itself to the United Jewish Committee."

Simultaneously I addressed a letter to twenty leaders in the community asking them point blank to advise me what sum they would contribute to the proposed Federation and also to refuse to make any contribution to any single charitable organization except through the Federation. The result of all these endeavors was a series of meetings culminating in a well-attended conference held on April 8th, 1936, at the Jewish Center at which time I was elected President of the Jersey City Federation of Jewish Charities. Elected along with me were David Lerner, A. J. Goldstein, A. D. Hirsch, Rose Heilbrunn and Harry Goldowsky as Vice-Presidents; Jeanette Boyer was elected Secretary; Davis Fineberg, Treasurer, and Nat Arlook, Comptroller; designated as Honorary Presidents were Judge Morris Barison of Jewish Community Center, David Klausner

of the Hebrew Home for Orphans and the Aged, Louis Schmierer of Five Corners Talmud Torah, Meyer Harris of Rutgers Avenue Talmud Torah, Julius Rosman of Gergen Avenue Talmud Torah and Meyer Gross of Third Avenue Talmud Torah.

It was a representative assembly and spirits ran high. We adopted a quota of ninety thousand dollars for the newly organized Federation in which were to share, in addition to the local institutions and organizations, such national agencies as the Joint Distribution Committee, the United Jewish Appeal and the American Friends of the Hebrew University. In my acceptance speech I issued a call for workers to go to the community and serve as "salesmen for Federation." I was sure we could find salesmen and consummate the sales. I have always had a leaning in the direction of literary effort, so I supplemented my organization activities with my literary attempts in an endeavor to put over the idea of a Jewish Federation of Charities. Thus in a well featured article in *The Jewish Standard* I tried to make a reasoned argument on behalf of the Federation idea:

"This is the time not only for passing resolutions, but for action! During the past two years Jewry in Palestine, by its courage and action, has set us a pattern for achievement. In this country there was a handful of leaders with vision and courage who also acted, but the vast majority of us held meetings and did a lot of talking and resolving.

"The inventor, the pioneer, the suggestor of a new idea, has generally been considered a 'crackpot or fool.' I intend to suggest here an idea (it's true, not a new one, except here) which I know will bring me criticism from several sources. However, if the idea will bring forth some discussion and even the start of action, I am willing to accept such a fate.

"My readers will admit that business with an annual turnover of some three million dollars is an important business.

Also any project which comes in contact with sixty or seventy thousand persons, is an important project. Not to keep you in suspense any longer, I am referring to Jewish philanthropy or charity in Hudson County. Our sixty to seventy thousand Jews in Hudson County contribute annually from three to four million dollars for varied Jewish causes.

"Philanthropy—the collection and distribution of funds for worthwhile and needy causes—has become a profession. Every important philanthropy and fund is operated by a Board of *Baalabatim* through professionals with training and experience. In this age of specialization, when most businesses employ accountants, public relations men, market and other consultants, there should be no argument against the organization of a central community chest employing professionals.

"Let's take a brief look at the situation in Hudson County today. There are eight municipalities. Jersey City, Bayonne, Hoboken, North Hudson conduct separate UJA drives. The drives are run at different times of the year, and some overlap. Each city's drive requires separate publicity, large committees, many meetings, different allocations, etc. In addition there are drives for the County Hebrew Home for Orphans and the Aged, for the Yeshiva of Hudson County, the local drives for Community Centers, for Talmud Torahs, Synagogues and Temples, civic defense, fraternal and other organizations and groups. What is the result? Some drives are going on the year round. There is frequent duplication, waste in money and manpower, confusion and a resistance by the contributor. Certainly, the present situation is not a healthy one. Jewry of Hudson County is to be congratulated on its generosity and patience up to this time.

"What is the solution? A businesslike administration of our philanthropy. I challenge any large businessman in Hudson County who would make a profit of his business. The time has come for us to organize and coordinate our fund-raising for

Jewish institutions in Hudson County, in a single drive. It would be simple to form a County Council, democratically elected and representing the memberships of the various institutions, which will comprise the Council. Practically every other large city (many with a much smaller Jewish population than we have in our County) operates on this basis.

"We must always bear in mind the objective of our fund-raising, whether it be UJA, the Aged Home, the Center or JDA. It is to get as much out of each dollar as is humanly possible. To do otherwise is evil. We can do this only by eliminating duplication and the waste of expensive paraphernalia essential to build up drives.

"This Council will also require a professional executive, who will be a trained and experienced year-round employee, whose duty it will be to check and watch the funds raised as well as the expenditures of the institutions, thereby eliminating many wastes and useless exploitation of efforts and services."

Little did I know then of the disappointments that awaited me in the course of my labors for the realization of my dream of Federation, which beckoned to me after I had been elected President of Jersey City Federation of Jewish Charities.

ISRAEL

My Zionism goes way back to the end of the first World War, specifically to the letter I wrote to Louis Lipsky, then President of the Zionist Organization of America, offering my services to organize a group of American Jewish soldiers, just demobilized, to settle in, and, if necessary, to fight for the Jewish National Home in Palestine.

For close to twenty years I was a Zionist sympathizer. I paid my membership dues in the ZOA district in my home town, together with my *shekel*, and occasionally attended a Zionist meeting, but that was all. In other words, I was like so many other adherents of the Zionist Movement in America—a passive observer of the Zionist scene and an occasional contributor to Zionist funds. In essence, I was paying lip-service to the Zionist cause, while my real interests lay elsewhere.

The change came in the crucial months of 1939 and 1940. For years I had been actively engaged in what I thought was promoting the cause of American Jewry, first through the Jewish War Veterans and then through the American Legion, a non-sectarian Veterans organization. I had hoped in this way to rally the full strength of my army buddies to the defense of my fellow Jews in America and throughout the world, wherever and whenever those rights were jeopardized. It was a profound shock to me to suddenly discover that my efforts were all in vain. The refusal of the American Legion to be involved in the anti-Nazi fight which I considered essential, not only to

the protection of Jewish interests but to the preservation of American principles and ideals as well, induced in me a sense of deep disillusionment and even chagrin. I felt I had trod the wrong road and it was time for me to retrace my steps and find another. Instead of relying on others, henceforth I was to place my best hope on our own strength. Dependence on others became abhorrent, just as self-reliance grew most attractive in my eyes. As the Zionist Movement seemed to me most possessed of those qualities of self-reliance and pride in our own strength, I determined to place my services and energies at its command.

It was early in 1940 when I agreed to help re-organize the Jersey City District of the Zionist Organization of America. At that time, as the record shows, it had on its lists twenty-six members, of which only three were in good standing. I called a meeting at my home to which I invited all my friends and acquaintances; forty-five men showed up. Right there and then we re-organized the Jersey City Zionist District. I was elected president, and for months I spent all my time rounding up all my friends and acquaintances, urging them to become members of my organization. Success came slowly, but then the pace quickened, and after three years we attained a paid-up membership of nine hundred, an unprecedented figure for any Zionist district in the State of New Jersey. The phenomenal growth of my district attracted the attention of the National Headquarters of the Zionist Organization of America. I was urged to travel through my State in the interests of Zionism and I could hardly refuse, so strong was the pressure upon me. In 1947, I became the president of the New Jersey State Region, just then organized. By that time we had fifty-four districts in this Region.

In 1945, under the presidency of Israel Goldstein, I was elected a member of the National Executive of the ZOA. I had landed on the Zionist National stage, which seemed to

me so attractive from the distance of my home State across the river. But it was not before 1947 that I was catapulted into what I might call a near-stellar role on that scene. I was appointed co-chairman with Jacques Torczyner of the *Shekel* Campaign, one of the hottest Zionist campaigns we had had in years. I was to prove my mettle, if I was ever to forge ahead to the front ranks of the movement.

I took my duties seriously. Daily I commuted from my home to the ZOA Headquarters in New York to attend meetings, see people, lay my plans and make sure of their implementation. The task was as onerous as it was engrossing. We were in competition with all other groups in American Zionism. They all made most strenuous efforts to sell a maximum of *shkolim* so that they might have the greatest number of votes for their slate of delegates to the World Zionist Congress. I knew how important the outcome of that campaign was, since I had been a delegate to the World Zionist Congress in 1946 at Basle. Perhaps the whole future of the World Zionist Movement and of the Jewish State, which was then in the offing, depended on the outcome of the *Shekel* campaign.

I spared myself not at all. Early morning saw me at my desk and it was late at night when I returned home, after a day's hard work in promoting the *Shekel* campaign. Moreover, New York alone could not give us the votes we required. We needed the support of the Zionists in all Jewish communities throughout the United States. To obtain that support I had to take to the road. I travelled through the Middle West as far as Kansas City. Here and there I found some Zionist districts sick unto death. I did my best to revive them. This was not always an easy task to accomplish. It took time and a great deal of energy, and I had both for the Zionist Organization of America. When the *Shekel* campaign was over I not only heaved a sigh of relief but gave a great shout of victory. The campaign had been a huge success.

After all the work I had put in during the *Shekel* campaign the voting for delegates to the Zionist Congress did not take place. Instead, the various Zionist parties in the United States, as represented in the Central *Shekel* Board agreed on a united slate of American Zionist delegates on the basis of representation of the previous Zionist Congress. This action, though giving the ZOA a leading role in the American Zionist delegation, deprived the rank and file of American Zionists of their rights to cast a vote for the delegates to the Zionist Congress.

I was not at all satisfied with this procedure. I voiced my dissatisfaction in a letter to my co-chairman, Jacques Torczyner, dated Feb. 12, 1948, in which, referring to the agreement on a united American Zionist delegate slate on the basis of the Congress of 1946, I said, "I am fully aware of our polling results in 1946, and I also have my fears and qualms about dragging our people to the polls. Yet I cannot conceal my chagrin at our failure to afford our electorate the opportunity to elect delegates to the World Zionist Congress. Time and conditions have changed since 1946, and greatly in our favor. This was one year we should have gambled, and had we done so, I am almost certain that we would have scored an overwhelming victory. Hadassah, likewise, was too hasty in following our lead. Yes, they too feared the ballot box. I think we approached the situation with fear in our hearts—a sure way to lose. It is my considered opinion that if we ever wanted to test our strength—this was the year."

I do not know what the ZOA president, Dr. Emanuel Neuman, thought of the agreement on the united Zionist slate. He thought well enough of my efforts to write to me: "The forthright quality of your work in our Movement, and the militancy and devotion you bring with it, have always been a matter of sincere appreciation for me. I do want to express to you the gratitude of the Zionist Organization of America

for your devoted labors." This was high praise, and I would be less than candid not to admit that I enjoyed it.

Meanwhile grave events affecting the very realization of the aims and aspirations of the Zionist movement began to transpire. First the United Nations Commission in Palestine and later the United Nations Assembly was debating a plan for establishing a Jewish State in a partitioned Palestine. The Zionist Organization of America became the fulcrum of feverish activity on behalf of Jewish Statehood. Every Zionist with any connection with the political, financial and other circles in this country had a role to play. I played mine.

* * *

The battle for Jewish Statehood continued for a long time without reaching a decision. UNSCOP had recommended the partition of Palestine as a way out of the impasse, but the United Nations Assembly, meeting in Flushing, Long Island, could not so easily make up its mind on the merits of the recommendation to split Palestine into two states—one Arab and one Jewish. Perhaps the long delay was due to the unfamiliarity of many UN delegates with the complicated Palestine problem. Surely a great deal of the procrastination is ascribable to the bewilderment caused in the Assembly by the contending parties, Arabs and Jews, each endeavoring to draw as many delegates as possible to its side. Here was the World Zionist Movement, most ably represented by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Emanuel Neuman, with the occasional support of Dr. Chaim Weitzman, who already frail and ill, flew in from London to help the cause with his great wisdom and magnificent charm. And on the other side stood the Arabs, who not to be outdone, were led by such personalities as Dr. Charles Malik of Lebanon, Prof. Philip Hitti of Princeton, not to speak of the Ambassadors of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. What complicated the situation still more was the constant maneuvering of the Big

Powers—the United States remaining benevolent, yet unsteady, Great Britain bitterly opposed, but still ready to make concessions, and France, eager to help but vacillating because of the Arab segment in North Africa. It seemed as if the only staunch supporter of the Partition Plan was the Soviet Union. So eager were the Soviets to pry Britain loose from one part of the Middle East, that they were even prepared to aid the Jews to secure a State of their own.

Under these circumstances, there was no telling how the vote in the Assembly would go. A two-third vote was required for the passage of the Partition Resolution. A few votes could make the difference between acceptance and rejection of the resolution, on which the very future of the Jewish State depended.

Dr. Silver, in charge of the Zionist forces, did a magnificent job in rounding up delegates to the UN Assembly. He used all his influence in Washington, and got others to use theirs. He went so far as to personally button-hole UN delegates. Every Zionist with any political connection was pressed into service and urged to do his duty. I was no exception.

For years I had good political connections in Jersey City and in the State of New Jersey. Back in 1943 the City Commissioners of Jersey City, under the leadership of Mayor Hague, issued a proclamation protesting the British White Paper, which, issued shortly before the outbreak of the World War, made Jewish immigration to Palestine impossible. My connection with Governor Hoffman of New Jersey was still strong enough to cause some of Jersey's statesmen to move in the desired direction. I also had good contacts with the United States Senator from New Jersey, H. Alexander Smith, and I decided to use them. As a result, Senator Smith became a co-signer with other Senators of a telegram sent on Nov. 24, 1947 to the permanent UN delegations of Haiti, Greece, Luxembourg, Argentina, Colombia, China, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Mexico, Phillipines and Paraguay—all countries whose delegates

needed persuasion to vote in favor for the Partition Resolution. The text of the historic telegram, together with the names of the signers is reproduced here for the first time:

"We solemnly call your attention to gravest consequences if the Palestine Partition Resolution is not adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Palestine will be left to anarchy and Arab-Jewish conflict. United Nations prestige and efficacy will suffer a mortal blow. The efforts of the United States in concert with all Europe, British Dominions, and most of the Western Hemisphere to authorize settlement under United Nations authority, will be frustrated. Power of the United States to exercise influence in the United Nations on behalf of small nations will be undermined. Seldom can action of your government so contribute to the cause of international order and peace as by facilitating this partition settlement. United States public opinion is profoundly stirred by this issue and would react with deep appreciation to your favorable action in support of Palestine partition. World opinion now stands behind partition of Palestine as behind no other solution. We are convinced your nation belongs appropriately to the cause of constructive action. May a deep sense of international responsibility influence you in this vital hour. An overwhelming majority of United States Senators endorse the position set forth in this wire and would have added their signatures if they had been in Washington today. A supplemental list of signatures to this wire will follow." Signed: Arthur Capper, H. Alexander Smith, Homer Ferguson, Theodore F. Green, Edwin C. Johnson, J. Howard McGrath, Brian McMahon, Burnet R. Maybank, Wayne Morse, James E. Murray, Joseph C. O'Mahoney, Claude Pepper, Elbert D. Thomas, Robert F. Wagner, Glen Taylor, Charles Tobey, Scott W. Lucas, Francis J. Myers, Irving M. Ives, Edwin Martin, Kenneth S. Wherry, Warren G. Magnuson, Raymond E. Baldwin, Carl A. Hatch, Alben W. Barkley, Harley M. Kilgore

A few days later, Senator Smith in a letter to me, enclosing the text of the telegram, wrote: "I sincerely believe the telegram was very helpful in encouraging sufficient delegates to vote in favor of Partition. Needless to say, I rejoice with you that this long fight has been brought to a successful conclusion. There undoubtedly will be some chaos and confusion in Palestine for the time being. But I feel quite sure that it will be of a temporary nature. Please rest assured of my continued interest in this great humanitarian problem. If you feel that I can be of help in the future, do not hesitate to call on me."

That Senator Smith was completely right in believing that the telegram was helpful there can be no doubt. Only a few days before the passage of the resolution I received this telegram from the Zionist Emergency Council:

"Gratified to inform you that American-Russian Compromise Formula reached today in private discussions providing for appointment of Neutral Commission by General Assembly and responsible to Security Council marks crucial turning point towards speedy UN decision on UNSCOP report. Compromise Formula originally proposed by Emanuel Neuman and following its adoption by Agency Executive accepted by two great Powers. Although new turning point paves way for necessary two-thirds majority vote, there may yet be disappointing developments which require continued vigilance of our leadership and requiring your wholehearted support to strengthen their hands through mobilization forces. Please pass this information to all key people within your region.

Rabbi Jerome Unger, Acting Executive Director."

With the decision of the United Nations Assembly in favor of Partition an accomplished historical fact, the battle moved to the forum of American public opinion. The Arabs had started a war against the Jewish community of Palestine. There were

divided councils in Washington. Only an American public opinion, strongly in favor of bringing peace to the Middle East on the basis of Jewish Statehood, could save the day. I contributed my share toward this end by placing an article in the New Jersey papers, which was widely reprinted and which read as follows:

"On Saturday, November 29th, the General Assembly of the United Nations did, in fact, take that action, which we all hope and feel will lead to a permanent solution of this Palestine Problem. As you know, it voted 33 in favor, 13 against and 10 abstentions, to divide Palestine into two States—one a Jewish State and the other an Arab State. The City of Jerusalem is to be ruled by a special commission appointed by the United Nations, in order that the places which are holy to the three great religions may be properly protected for the benefit of all of them.

"During the last few days there have been report of violence in Palestine and in the surrounding Arab countries. That is to be expected—it is a natural consequence of the United Nations' vote in favor of partition. It is inspired primarily by the Arab leaders and Arab hotheads. The threats and surliness on the part of the Arab delegates to the United Nations immediately after the vote was taken for partition is the best evidence of the narrow-mindedness and undemocratic thinking on the part of Arab leadership. They performed on that occasion as Arab leaders always have performed in the past. Yet in spite of all that, if the six Arab countries are to continue as members of the United Nations and to sit in the Family of Nations, they must learn to graciously accept the decisions of the constituted authority in accordance with international procedures. The United Nations have spoken. The Arab leadership must and will fall in line eventually. The sooner the better for the Arabs themselves. What is now happening in

Palestine coincides with the trouble in Greece and in Korea and any other trouble spots of the world. These sporadic explosions will soon die out.

"The Jewish people can only be grateful, meek and humble. They cannot be unrestrained in their rejoicing. The Jewish State is far from an accomplished fact. There is so much more that has to be done, both by the Jews as well as by the United Nations. The eyes of the world will continue to be fixed on Palestine for a long time to come. The Jews, after 2,000 years in exile, have finally been given an opportunity to re-establish their homeland. They will make good. As for the future attitude of the United Nations, I contend that one of our great errors in thinking through our problems has been to relegate the tragedy of the Jewish people to the realm of special pleading. It is not separate. It is a part of the struggle of democratic forces everywhere to make real the freedom to which our victory over Nazism and over the Fascist forces entitles us. The settlement of the Palestine question is basic to the settlement of the problem of the Middle East, which, being one of the under-developed areas of the world, invites intervention and power conflicts.

"The United States, therefore, had no choice: it could neither stand aside and say it had no formulated policy for Palestine nor say that Palestine is a special case for which it has a special policy. It had to treat Palestine, as it treats Greece, Turkey, China or India or Latin America, by the dictates of a foreign policy based on the twin concept of freedom and progress on which the United States itself was built. In Palestine the issue was sharply drawn and the necessity for a solution was urgent.

"I think it clear that the history of our foreign policy proves that every time we failed to stand for freedom, we met with disaster, as in the shipment of scrap iron to Japan, and as in our failure to stop Mussolini in Ethiopia. What our American

forebears fought for in the eighteenth century, the Jewish pioneers are fighting for today. That they are prepared to die for their freedom is significant. That they intend to live and to fight for their lives and their children's lives is even more significant.

"What we here must know is that we cannot stop the fight. We can delay, but we cannot prevent a democratic Middle East and a free Jewish Palestine. The failure to help work out a democratic solution, the continued evasion and delay, the failure to place world morality above expediency, all these in the past have set a grim and strangling pattern for the world.

"If we who stand for freedom win, I am convinced that neither Palestinian Jewry, nor the surviving fragment of European Jewry, nor the greater interests of the Arabs will lose. I am convinced that democratic forces ultimately will triumph in the Middle East and bring freedom for millions of the oppressed. When that happens, the world will see a new and broadened concept of justice in actual operation.

"Palestine is the proving ground. It will test our intelligence, our courage, and our good will. It will prove whether our civilization can survive."

* * *

Ask any Tel Avivian for a landmark or a showplace and he will point to the Daniel Frisch ZOA House. It is an important, if not the most important, center of cultural activities in the largest and most populous city in Israel. In addition, it serves as the focal point for the dissemination of American ideas and culture throughout Israel. Its library, its out-of-door assembly hall as well as its restaurant, are the favorite meeting grounds of Americans who have come either as tourists or as settlers. One U.S. Ambassador after another has taken the opportunity to express American's appreciation of the significant role played by the Daniel Frisch ZOA House in the war for men's minds

and hearts now raging throughout the whole world, particularly in the countries of the Middle East, where the battle between democracy and totalitarianism is swaying dangerously. More recently the Government of the United States has given tangible proof of the high value it places on the work of the ZOA House by allotting to it a substantial part of the countervailing funds, accumulated in Israel chiefly from the sale of American books. As to the Zionist Organization of America, which built and is maintaining the Daniel Frisch ZOA House in Tel Aviv, it proudly claims the House as its shining contribution and principal achievement in the Land of Israel.

I would be less than human, were I not to take pride in my share in the planning and in the building of the ZOA House.

It was in the year 1947, at a meeting of the National Executive Committee of the Zionist Organization of America, that I first broached the idea of a ZOA House in Tel Aviv. At that time, I conceived of the House as a replica of a Young Men's Hebrew Association institution, serving the cultural and social interests of the community as well as the need of a hostelry for tourists. It would be an overstatement on my part if I were to say that the idea met with anything resembling an enthusiastic reception. The only person I seemed to have impressed was Daniel Frisch, a long-time Zionist leader who then had moved from Indianapolis to New York with a firm determination to play a still greater role in the affairs of American Zionism.

To Daniel Frisch's credit it must be said that if others forgot my suggestion regarding the ZOA House, he did not. In 1949, at the very ZOA Convention at the Hotel Statler in New York City, which elected him president, Frisch called a special breakfast meeting for the express purpose of discussing the idea of the ZOA House, which he termed a bridge between American and Israeli Jewry. This time the idea caught fire and \$65,000 was pledged at that first meeting. Not to be outdone, the

convention went on record voting the sum of \$350,000 for the building of the ZOA House in Tel Aviv.

The necessary sum still had to be raised, and so, immediately following the convention, President Frisch appointed a Fund-Raising Committee of the House, which had the important task of mobilizing the cash for the building. I was made the Chairman of the Fund, while Fred Monosson became Chairman of the Building Committee. At the same time, Mr. Frisch announced that a Special Commission with the ZOA president at its head, would proceed to Israel to negotiate with the Government authorities about the site and the building of the ZOA House.

Together with Daniel Frisch, I went to Israel where we looked around for a suitable site for the ZOA House. After succeeding in obtaining two *dunams* of land in the city of Tel Aviv centrally located near the Hakiriah, or Government City, we soon discovered, upon consulting the engineers and the architects, that we really required eight *dunams*. These we obtained after some negotiations with the K.K.L., the Jewish National Fund, on its usual terms, that is, free of charge.

The actual building of the house was quite a different kettle of fish, however. There was the shortage of building materials to overcome; some of the steel and the wood had to be imported from abroad. We ran into labor troubles as well as difficulties with some of the government departments. Party strife played havoc with us. Time schedules simply could not be kept. Delay followed delay until we wondered if the house was ever going to be completed. But here too it was faith that saved us. We placed our trust in both the benevolence of the Israeli Government and the generosity of the American Jewish community, and they did not disappoint us in the end. At the cornerstone laying ceremony of January 13, 1949, the high dignitaries of the State of Israel, the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet and leaders of the *Knesset* had been present, and every

time we appealed to the American Jewish community for funds we had been answered. So we knew we would come through successfully, no matter what the obstacles. And we did have success, for on May 13th, 1952, the ZOA House was officially opened.

As the Chairman of the Fund Raising Committee of the House, both under Daniel Frisch and Benjamin G. Browdy, who succeeded to the presidency after Mr. Frisch's tragic and untimely death, I had my hands full attempting to keep the income close behind the expenses incurred in the erection of the ZOA House in Tel Aviv. From January 13, 1949, when the cornerstone ceremony took place, to May 13th, 1952, when the dedication exercises of the ZOA House finally were celebrated, the costs of building materials and labor in the Jewish State more than trebled. The result was that the House that was to cost \$350,000 was finished at an expense in excess of one million dollars. But it was well worth it! It is a magnificent structure, perhaps one of the most beautiful modern buildings in the whole of the Near East and an enduring monument to the devotion and the achievement of the ZOA, one of the leading Zionist organizations in the largest Jewish community on earth.

I shall never forget the dedication exercises. More than 3,000 people crowded into the open space before the ZOA House on Daniel Frisch Street. It was a glorious May afternoon and the skies over Tel Aviv were bluer and more glorious than ever. The eyes of all Israel were on the ZOA House, for the highest officials of the Jewish State had assembled to lend the dignity of their office and of their personalities to the great occasion. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion delivered an address in which he praised the role of the Zionist organization in building the House which he hoped would be the focus of attraction for tens of thousands of pioneers from America. The speaker of the *Knesset*, Joseph Springack, spoke, as did the leaders of all Zionist parties. It was a great day for Benjamin

G. Browdy, who as ZOA president, was the host of the gathering, and it was a great day for me. As I recall Daniel Frisch, who should have lived to see this building dedicated, my spirits sank, but as I looked out upon the vast sea of faces before me, I took heart and thrilled to the glory of the occasion. Turning to the dignitaries on the platform I said,

"Mr. Chairman, Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Ambassador, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends of Israel:

"This is an historic day, which will long linger in the minds of all of us, and I believe, of those who will come after us. For here we are forging a link not only between two great countries, but we are opening a channel through which will flow ideas and ideals that adhere in and are characteristic of two great civilizations.

"It was the immortal Lecky who, speaking of the Hebraic influence upon the life of the West, said that Hebraic mortar served to cement Anglo-Saxon civilization. Oscar Strauss, our American Ambassador to Turkey during the First World War, in a little-known volume of his, demonstrated beyond the cavil of a doubt that the American Republic was built on Hebrew foundations originating in the Bible. However, it is the historic significance of both the United States and the State of Israel that since their establishment as sovereign political entities, they have developed and branched away from their original starting point, so that today we have two distinct, though closely related, civilizations.

"America and Israel have much to learn from each other. It is on this holy soil that some of the greatest visions that ever took hold of man had their beginnings. It was from Zion that the Law went forth, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. This, we trust will occur again. Never has the spirit of prophecy departed from this land, and we all hope that with the establishment of the State, this spirit will be revived, astounding the world with its richness and vitality. America, using the Hebraic

mortar, has built on a vast continent, from material brought from all the ends of the earth, a structure of civilization which for sheer strength and magnificence has no equal in the history of mankind. When the prophetic vision of this land merges with the American Dream, when the spirit of Isaiah is fused with that of Jefferson, Emerson, Bell, Burbank and Dewey, we may look forward to a new life upon this earth, which for richness and splendor and human justice, will transcend everything that preceded this age.

"This will be an American House. In it will meet not only Americans and Israelis but two ways of life. Out of this meeting of mind and ideas and ideals there will arise a new synthesis which we hope will fructify and beautify the world, making it a better and more fit place to live for us, our children and children's children. Humanity today is waiting for just such a new start which will open new horizons, while leaving behind us the darkness and the danger and the heartbreak of the age through which we have just passed. At the time when the world is menaced by totalitarianism and the threat of regimentation, we need the freshness and the vigor that arise out of the peaceful meeting and embrace of two cultures, proving that not by might but by the spirit, by the small voice of reason and understanding, the world can yet be saved and lead toward a new life of happiness.

"In this world, amid the clash of conflicting interests, America and Israel stand together in a brotherhood which is stronger and more enduring, just because it is not founded on blood but is cemented by ideas and ideals. This House is dedicated to this brotherhood. May God grant that the spirit of this brotherhood reign in every corner of this House, and that from here it go forth to fill the hearts of men everywhere throughout the world."

* * *

The years 1948-49 were crucial years for Israel, not only militarily but economically as well. The fledgling state needed food to sustain its fast-growing population; it needed financial aid for the rapid upbuilding of the country. It was the function of the Zionist movement in America to supply both. As the ZOA was the largest of the Zionist organizations, it fell to its lot to provide a great deal of the food and the financial aid which Israel needed during its critical hour. It was my privilege as a national officer of the ZOA to help in the gathering of both food supplies and financial resources for the Jewish State. As it soon turned out, I became Israel's and the ZOA's chief salesman in the United States.

During the years 1948-49, I was co-chairman with William Sylk of Philadelphia, Pa., of the Food For Israel Campaign. Manuel Posy was our director. The campaign was conducted at the direct request of the Supply Mission of the Government of Israel in America, so important was the project of food supply for Israel.

It would be easy for me to set down all the details of the campaign that reflected credit on the ZOA, which, at that juncture in the life of the State of Israel, was Israel's mainstay in the United States. If I refrain from recording all the statistics it is because of fear lest I appear too boastful of my accomplishments. It will suffice to say that among the many critically needed food staples dispatched by shiploads from Philadelphia, New Orleans and Los Angeles to the Jewish State, there were 400,000 lbs. of milk powder, 80,000 lbs. of egg powder, 200,000 lbs. of cheese, 100,000 lbs. of fish, and 500,000 U.S. Army special energy concentrated nut and fruit rations.

These food supplies we received in response to our appeal to the members of the ZOA and to American Jews generally on behalf of the undernourished immigrants to Israel. So great was the success of our campaign that we were virtually overwhelmed with donations. It is noteworthy in this connection

that although we did not appeal for cash contributions for food purchases, over a million dollars was sent either to the ZOA or to the Israel Supply Mission for the purpose of purchasing food for Israel.

No sooner did the food campaign end in March, 1950, than I was engaged in a new campaign for the collection of materials for Israel. From June 1950 to July 1952, I served as National Chairman of the ZOA Israel Projects. During that period I gathered a vast amount of equipment and machinery for Israel's Trade Schools, including a great number of tractors for the new agricultural settlements. I was also active in gathering materials and equipment for the *Vaad Lemaan Hachayal*, Israel's USO. The items shipped to Israeli soldiers for their comfort were greatly appreciated by the Israeli Army, and Fred Monoson, who headed this endeavor, received a great deal of deserved recognition.

I should add that most of these activities were begun under the ZOA presidency of Daniel Frisch. He was a colorful personality and a born leader, and his ability to kindle enthusiasm in his co-workers was most remarkable. People performed huge tasks, sometimes beyond their ordinary capacity, just because of the magic of his personality. Perhaps this was because he himself had given an unexcelled example of devotion to the Zionist cause. He died young, and one might say that he died in harness. His last thoughts were of Israel and the ZOA. Even on his hospital sick bed, from which he was never to rise, he sent letters to his friends and acquaintances, urging them to redouble their efforts on behalf of the ZOA. Such a letter reached me a few hours after he died on the operating table in New York's Presbyterian Hospital:

Dear Friend,

You might find it rather strange that one who, like myself, is facing an unavoidable major operation, should

dictate from his hospital bed a letter to his friends—but strange things happen in life.

I trust you will believe me when, standing at the cross-roads of life in more than one sense, I tell you that I am convinced that a strong ZOA and a vigorous General Zionism (not Zionism in general) are as indispensable today to the welfare and growth of Israel, both as a state and as a people, as they have ever been.

During the nine months of my presidency, I have given the ZOA and the Zionist Movement my very all. I have tried to manage the affairs of the ZOA without regard to past politics or any attempt to settle old accounts. I have tried to do my very best. I think I have earned the right to call on others to do theirs.

We are now facing the next convention. Believe me that, as I lie here, I have nothing on my mind concerning personalities that may compete for one position or another. All I am concerned about is that the dignity and the power and usefulness of the ZOA should be reflected in the next convention. We must come to the convention with a treasury capable of carrying us through the lean summer months and with a membership as large, if not larger, than that of a year ago. For the ZOA cannot maintain its influence and creativity without funds and a large membership.

May I appeal to you to help me and the ZOA by doing your very utmost within the next 60 days, from March 15 to May 15—our two mobilization months—so that we may exceed by far last year's membership and the proceeds of the American Zionist Fund, without which the ZOA cannot function.

I shall be thinking of you, looking forward to your help.
May life be kind to you always.

Cordially yours,

DANIEL FRISCH
President

I will skip the campaign I conducted all over the country for the General Zionist *Kupat Cholim*, to which we sent an X-Ray machine, ambulances, drugs, medicines, surgical instruments and supplies; I will also omit description of the campaign for the Farmers Federation, to which I dispatched whole refrigeration plants and a number of automobiles for use as taxicabs by wounded war veterans. However I will concentrate on the story of the ZOA drive for the sale of Israel Bonds.

In the winter of 1951, Israel's David Ben-Gurion, invited sixty American Jews to Jerusalem ostensibly for the purpose of discussion, but really for the purpose of obtaining their cooperation and support for the sale of Israeli Bonds in the United States. The Israel Government had been planning for the coming ten years and according to its calculations, it needed two billion dollars to carry out its Ten Year Plan for the up-building of the country. There were four sources from which this vast sum could be expected—Government loans and grants from the United States, German reparation, private investments and the United Jewish Appeal. It was estimated that all these sources accounted for one and a half billion; another half billion would be required, and it could come only from a fifth source, namely, the sale of Israel Bonds.

The first response of the sixty American invitees was anything but enthusiastic! Many felt that the additional funds simply could not be raised in the United States. Others argued that the sale of Israel Bonds would interfere with the contributions to the United Jewish Appeal. The general outlook for favorable

action on the Israel Bond Sale in the United States was far from bright.

It was then that ZOA president, Benjamin G. Browdy, one of the invitees, stepped into the breach. Perhaps it would be more correct to say he was trapped. Mr. Browdy had been lying ill in his room in the King David Hotel when Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, learning of the illness, came to visit him. The ZOA prexy, evidently touched by the visit of Israel's head of State, made a grand gesture. He pledged for the ZOA membership the purchase of one hundred million dollars worth of Israel Bonds! Ben-Gurion, never slow to exploit a psychological moment, asked Mr. Browdy to put it in writing and then rushing from the ZOA president's sick room to the meeting hall, where American Jewry's captains of industry, big donors and fund-raisers were assembled, he brandished Mr. Browdy's promissory note. The effect was electric. By acclamation, a resolution was adopted to float Israel Bonds in the United States.

The trouble started later for Benjamin Browdy. A promising man, he was not too good at implementation. He had given his pledge without consulting the ZOA National Executive Committee, let alone the membership. Now the idea had to be sold to the ZOA leadership and to both the ZOA members and the American Jewish public. Who was to do the selling? As in other such cases where a difficult job was involved, Browdy turned to me. It was difficult to refuse, now that the organization was committed. I accepted appointment as chairman of the ZOA Israel Bond Committee.

It was not an easy task to launch the Israel Bond campaign in the United States, and this is an understatement. The Israel Government, faced with the problem of selecting an American Jew to head up the Israel Bond Sales in the United States, had picked a controversial figure, one deemed by many to be least fitted for the momentous task. In many Jewish communities through the country there was open resistance to

the new fund-raising operation. The non-Zionists openly held back, while many Zionists were rather skeptical as to the chances of success of the new venture. It was up to the ZOA to turn the tide for Israel Bonds.

I worked as I have never worked before. I traveled throughout the country as far south as New Orleans and as far west as Los Angeles. Everywhere, in each community that I visited, I saw the Zionists, who invariably turned out to be leading members of the community, and urged them to take part in the local committee for the Bond Drive. After a few months of feverish activity, traveling from one end of the country to the other, I could state that the ZOA had become the spearhead of the Bond Drive throughout the land. As the books of the Bond Drive subsequently showed, the ZOA membership accounted for more than thirty-one million dollars of Israel Bonds in the years 1951-52. This was a substantial part of the funds raised for Israel. But the ZOA role far exceeded even the financial figures. It was the ZOA that got the Bond Drive off the ground in most of the American communities.

It took a number of years before the ZOA pledge for one hundred million dollars in Israel Bonds was redeemed. By that time, ironically enough, I was no longer a member of the ZOA. The only satisfaction that I still derive from the stupendous amount of work and energy I invested in the Israel Bond enterprise, is the thought that I helped to lay the foundation for Israel's popular loan in the United States. It was this loan which greatly aided the Jewish State to amass the spectacular achievements before which the whole world today stands in awe and admiration.

* * *

Following the establishment of the State of Israel in May, 1948, the problem arose as to its maintenance in face of hostile military campaigns and most distressing economic diffi-

culties. The fledgling State had to fight every inch of its way against two formidable foes—the combined armies of the surrounding Arab States that decided to upset by force of arms the United Nations Resolution of the Partition of Palestine, and the acute shortage of financial means with which to strike back at the invading forces while feeding its own population. Before the Jewish State was months old, it became evident that the inauguration of the State of Israel was only the first step in a long process, and that other and perhaps more difficult steps would have to be taken if the new nation was to survive at least its first year.

I was keenly aware of this grave situation and as early as May 29, 1948, exactly fifteen days after the proclamation of the State of Israel, I had this to say to the delegates to the convention of the ZOA New Jersey Region:

"Israel, the new nation, has been founded and organized. The hope and prayer of 2,000 years is now an established fact. We already see the obstacles that are in our path, obstacles that will have to be overcome with our blood, our lives and our money. But a people that has striven so long and suffered so much will not falter now.

"The events of the past few weeks are as only a minute in the life of Israel. Therefore, let us not become impatient. Patience is a solid virtue. We know that it takes Americans long to anger, but once aroused, as we have all seen in two World Wars, there is no stopping them. While some diplomats and politicians seem to have the upper hand now, this is only a temporary situation and when the American people do speak, the arms embargo will be lifted, the United States will grant a loan to Israel, the United Nations will be forced to act, and the new State of Israel will be accepted in the United Nations. Then we all shall be proud of our efforts toward the ultimate goal; for the first time in centuries we can lift our heads and feel proud to be called Jews.

"An infant cannot be brought into this world and left to shift for itself. And so it is with a new State. It needs material things, it needs aid, advice and guidance. We must not and dare not let the State of Israel down. Our task is only starting. The objective of the ZOA is not yet fulfilled. If Israel is to survive, grow and prosper, the ZOA must continue and intensify our efforts. As American citizens, we must function strictly as American citizens, helping with our hands, our material assets and our hearts. We must not interfere in the politics of Israel or the conduct of their State. But they are our brethren, and we will not let them down."

And in a special message, which I addressed to the Jews of my State, I added:

"The vote of the United Nations, approving the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, represents the combination of more than 2,000 years of hope and longing on the part of the Jewish People. At the same time, it constitutes the first great triumph—and the first test—for the United Nations itself. If the Arab minority is to be permitted to flout the decision of this international tribunal, then whatever hopes we may have for a just and peaceful world may yet be shattered. It therefore becomes the responsibility of every peace loving nation to see to it that the United Nations' decision is implemented fully and firmly.

"We Jews all have a grave responsibility. All eyes will now be turned upon us and upon the new State in Palestine. We must show the world that this State can be a model of justice and enlightenment and progress. It will not be an easy task. There are grave problems of political and economic nature which will confront the young government in its early years, and the diligent and sustained efforts of American Zionists which helped bring the Jewish State into existence, must be continued and intensified in the crucial months and years to

come. I am confident that there will be no let-down on the part of American Jewry."

However, I was never the man to be satisfied with mere exhortation, with calling upon others to act. The hour was too solemn and too critical for mere words. I decided to do whatever I could for the young Israel democracy, now engaged in a life and death struggle for its existence.

I wished then with all my heart that I was still of military age and could aid the State of Israel as a member of its gallant army, but alas, my army career had ended a generation before. I was in the financial game and had some connections with financial circles, and so my best services to the Jewish State lay in the field of financial operations. I knew Israel's application for a hundred million dollar loan from the Export and Import Bank was pending in Washington. I wondered how I could facilitate favorable action on the application for that loan, which as I realized, was of utmost importance to the State of Israel.

Before long I was in touch with Oscar Gass, an eminent consulting economist and Economic Advisor to the Provisional Government of Israel. From him I learned the utter necessity of the loan to the further maintenance of the State of Israel. I also got some valuable leads. I think I am betraying no secrets if, at this late date, I publish for the first time, the memorandum on Israel's application for credit of one hundred million dollars from the Export and Import Bank:

MEMORANDUM

Application of Israel for a Credit of \$100,000,000 from the Export-Import Bank

1. The funds requested in the present application should be utilized primarily to facilitate the accomplishment of Israel's Four-Year Plan of Resettlement and Development (1948-51).

The two basic purposes of this Plan are the productive employment of 4,000,000 immigrants in Israel during the next four years and the rapid raising of the standard of living of the Arab population of Israel to a level of equality with the Jewish standard. Some \$75,000,000, out of the total funds requested in this loan application, are required for investment in connection with the accomplishment of these purposes.

2. A basic feature of the Four-Year Plan was the setting of an immigration target of approximately 100,000 persons for the year 1948. Due to special difficulties which could not be foreseen, it has proven possible to bring in only about 30,000 persons in the first five months of the year. Since May 15 however, immigration has proceeded at a much higher rate. A target of 15,000 persons per month has been set for the next months. Given the resources to assure the productive employment of the immigrants, it may yet be possible to meet or even exceed the immigration target originally set for 1948.

3. A second—not entirely unrelated but in part independent objective of this loan application is to provide dollars needed to meet certain specific and extraordinary supply shortages. These are specifically shortages of basic foods and fodders, of petroleum products, and of ships. In part dollar expenditures are required for these commodities because of the unilateral exclusion of Palestine from the sterling area in February, in part because of the special needs growing out of the recent disturbances in Palestine.

(a) The most important of these special supply problems is that of basic foods and fodders. Palestine has annual import requirements of some 180,000 metric tons of wheat, 80,000 tons of fodder cereals, 21,000 tons of oil seeds (oil equivalent) as well as substantial quantities of meat, rice, sugar and several minor products. Normally Palestine has imported these com-

modities almost entirely against payment in sterling and largely from neighboring countries; these sources of funds and supplies are closed. Nevertheless it is *not* suggested that Israel should finance the bulk of her food and fodder imports by payment in dollars, still less from the credits advanced by the Export-Import Bank. It is requested merely that a credit of some \$15,000,000 be advanced to finance special and emergency food and fodder requirements. These will be only a minor fraction of the total requirements.

(b) A second problem of this kind arises in the case of petroleum products. Normally the Haifa refinery is an adequate source of supply and no other source would be considered. The flow of crude oil to the Haifa refinery has however now been stopped, for political reasons. Israel has offered to allow the refinery to supply the whole Middle East with refined products providing that the Arab states will desist from interfering with the flow of crude oil; it is hoped that this offer will be accepted. Meanwhile, however, Palestine's industry, transportation and domestic heating are all based on liquid fuels. An emergency may arise shortly, requiring extraordinary purchases of petroleum for dollars. It is not contemplated that, in any case, any substantial fraction of Palestine's annual consumption (approaching 6,000,000 metric tons) could be purchased with dollars, but relatively small emergency supplies may be required. For this purpose, a credit of \$5,000,000 is requested. It is hoped, however, that there will be no need to utilize dollars for this purpose.

(c) The third problem of this kind is that of maritime shipping services. Egypt and Syria have proclaimed an illegal blockade of the Palestine coast (promptly signified to be illegal by the United States Government). Egypt has seized cargoes destined for Israel and has attempted seizure and detained vessels bound for Israel utilizing the Suez Canal. Consequently many

vessels have been deterred from serving Palestine ports. Israel will have to compensate for this deficiency of normal service by purchasing some vessels. For the longer term development of the country, such ship acquisition—though compelled by an abnormal situation—may well turn out to be a most valuable investment. A credit of \$5,000,000 is required for this purpose.

4. It is proposed that the fund made available under this credit should be obligated within twelve months after the signature of the loan agreement. All purchases should be made through normal trade channels.

5. No special request is made with respect to the rate of interest. It is presumed that this loan would bear an interest rate comparable to the rates on other credits of similar maturity that have been granted by the Bank in recent years.

6. It is suggested that the credit might be repaid in twenty-four equal semi-annual installments, the first payment to be made two years after the signature of the loan agreement.

7. The question of ability to repay has been dealt with exhaustively in previous submission particularly in the memorandum prepared by Mr. S. Noofien, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Anglo-Palestine Bank, Ltd. In our judgment, there is no reasonable basis for doubt of the ability of Israel to repay very much larger sums than are here under discussion over an adequate period of time.

8. It is suggested, in view of the urgency of the underlying program, that should a favorable decision in principle be reached, it might be possible for the Bank to issue a letter of intent to the Minister of Finance of Israel. Such a letter would permit essential purchasing to begin immediately, while the final details of a loan agreement were being arranged.

9. A summary statement of the goods and services to be purchased under the proposed credit is given on the following

page. Fuller details for any categories have already been supplied. The Ministry of Finance of the Provisional Government of Israel is prepared to furnish any further information that may be required.

GOODS AND SERVICES TO BE PURCHASED UNDER
THE PROPOSED \$100,000,000 CREDIT

1. Agricultural tools, machinery and equipment	\$ 13 million
2. Dairy cattle	2 million
3. Industrial machinery and equipment (including power equipment)	10 million
4. Construction equipment	3 million
5. Plumbing and other building installation	2 million
6. Trucks and busses	3 million
7. Iron and Steel	
Pipe and other irrigation and water supply	\$7.5 million
Structurals	5.0 million
Other	2.5 million
	15 million
8. Non-ferrous metals and products	2 million
9. Timber	4 million
10. Chemicals and miscellaneous new materials	4 million
11. Foodstuffs and fodders	15 million
12. Petroleum products	5 million
13. Ship acquisition and repair	5 million
14. Shipping services carrying above mentioned commodities	15 million
15. Engineering, consulting and purchasing services	2 million
Total	\$100 million

I looked around for allies in the struggle for the hundred million dollar loan. The opposition was most formidable. From a letter to me, dated October 6, 1948, by one of my trusted men in Washington, I learned of the desperate battle waged by the oil interests in opposition to the extension of financial help to Israel. Simultaneously I learned the name of Lynn U. Stambaugh of the World Bank, one of the influential persons worth cultivating for the Export and Import Bank. I managed to meet Mr. Stambaugh in Miami and had a long talk with him on the Israel loan application. I then corresponded with him regarding the loan. Apparently all this had some effect. On October 25, 1948, I received this letter from Mr. Stambaugh:

"My dear Mr. Falk:

"I have your letter of October 22nd and recall our meeting in Miami. I would be very glad to talk with you at any time that you wish to make the trip to Washington.

"As you probably know, consideration of applications for credits to Israel has been held up for some time due to the disturbed conditions there. Upon representations from the State Department the Bank is now re-examining the situation in Israel with regard to peace and stability. The Bank is also prepared to examine any applications for credits to finance specific projects that may be presented. Mr. Epstein, representative of the State of Israel, is fully acquainted with this situation.

Sincerely yours,

Lynn U. Stambaugh"

Harry S. Truman was in the White House and the State Department was in his pocket, and not vice versa. The man, who within fifteen minutes of the proclamation of the State

of Israel recognized the Jewish State, was intent upon making sure that the young Republic would continue to exist. So the word went out to extend to Israel the hundred million dollar loan through the American Export and Import Bank. As late as October 29th, however, nobody was quite certain that the loan would come through. And on that date, Abba Hillel Silver, writing from Cleveland, had this to say:

"My dear Mr. Falk:

"Thank you for your thoughtfulness in sending me a copy of your letter to the Honorable Lynn U. Stambaugh, and his reply. I am hopeful that some positive results will soon follow the considerable effort which has been put in to get the loan.

"With all good wishes, I remain

Cordially yours,

Abba Hillel Silver"

Three months later the loan was a fact. The State of Israel had successfully negotiated its first large international loan. Excited over the development, I wrote to Mr. Stambaugh on Jan. 20th, 1949:

"Dear Mr. Stambaugh:

"The news that your bank granted the loan to Israel has electrified our people and all our friends. The good that your action will do will undoubtedly redound to the glory and honor of our great country.

"May I take this opportunity of conveying to you my personal thanks and the thanks of the millions of Jews and men of good-will who will always remember this gesture of high statesmanship and noble purpose.

Very sincerely yours,

Louis A. Falk"

I knew many factors went into the granting of this loan to Israel, yet I was deliriously happy at my own contribution to this wonderful event. At a great moment in the history of the Jewish people and the State of Israel I had played my part, and I was convinced I had played it well.

CHAPTER XI

LOOKING BACK

As I look back upon my life as I have lived it from those early days when I was a boy on the East Side, until today, when I am well in my sixth decade, I find that I would not change much of it, even if I could. Time lived is like a river that has flowed past; it cannot be reversed. One may look longingly at the days gone by, and, when one is wise, one may try to derive a lesson or two that will illumine the shorter stretch of the road still left to travel. But even this lesson will not always apply, since the road is so different and the contour of the country through which it runs varies so much from the lay of the land one had traversed before. It was a wise man who said, "One learns from history that one cannot learn from history."

All I can say honestly, is that I have few regrets, both for the things I have done and the things I have left undone. I tried to live my life according to my own lights. I could not and would not look at life through borrowed glasses, but I have used my own. For this I am not sorry. If I have made mistakes, and I have, they were the natural results of my make-up and my upbringing. If I had some successes during my lifetime, they too, were the natural consequences of my personality. I have nobody to blame for my failures except myself, yet I would be churlish were I not to acknowledge the aid I have received from a number of companions on my road—first of all from my immediate family, my wife and my children, and

a few friends with whom I shared much of my career. To these I owe much of whatever success I can claim.

I have spent the major part of my life since I was mustered out of the American Army at the end of the First World War, in the service of many Jewish causes and many Jewish organizations. Perhaps, if I had devoted all this time to money-making instead of fund-raising, I might be a millionaire today; my first flyers in Wall Street certainly seem to warrant such a conclusion. Yet I am not sorry that I have made my chief investments in Jewish causes, rather than in stocks. I have collected my dividends in profound satisfaction of work well and loyally performed and, I may add, in the recognition that came to me from Jewish men and women all over the country, and from Jewish community leaders.

Sometimes in a nostalgic mood, I revisit the East Side and the haunts of my early boyhood. As I pass through the neighborhood where I lived with my parents, attended school, made my initial steps in life, I cannot but realize that the old East Side is no more. Not only have the old houses crumbled, but the people and the culture they represent are no longer to be seen anywhere, and least of all on the East Side. It is in moments of recognition such as these, that I realize that I have come a long way since my early days on the East Side.

Generally speaking, I have no advice to offer to those who will come after me. I know only too well how little we can affect our own surroundings, let alone those beyond our ken in point of place and in time. There are however a few principles which in my lifetime have served me as the lode-stars in all my wandering, and which I have tried to instill in my children. These I would recommend to the children of others, and they can be summed up in a few words: Personal honesty and devotion—devotion to America and to the American Jewish community.

I have devoted much of my life to the Zionist movement. I can say that I have received much more in return than I have given to it. One of the greatest thrills of my life came to me when I heard of the passage of the resolution in the General Assembly of the United Nations, establishing the State of Israel, and when, a few months later, across the radio waves from Tel Aviv, the report was heard crackling that David Ben-Gurion had proclaimed the Independence of the State of Israel.

This was ample reward indeed for all the years of labor I invested in the service of the Zionist Movement.

As for the World Zionist Organization, now that the State has been established, many remedies have been suggested by way of curing its many illnesses. My own diagnosis has led me to some far-reaching conclusions. They are summed up in an address I delivered at the Zionist Actions Committee, the highest Zionist body between Zionist Congresses, in March 1958:

"I have followed with rapt attention the two great addresses delivered by two great men, President of Israel Ben-Zvi, and President of the World Zionist Movement, Dr. Nahum Goldmann, and to my mind they both advance one argument—the argument for a radical, thoroughgoing change in the workings of the Zionist Organization.

"The President of the State of Israel in reviewing the history of Zionism dwelt on the achievements of the movement made possible by the organization of the Zionist Congress, the Zionist parties and the Zionist fund-raising apparatus. And I rejoiced in the tribute which the President of Israel paid to 60 years of Zionism. Now we must be cautious not to confuse generous tribute paid us for the glorious past with a sober appraisal of our present.

"I go along with Dr. Goldmann in that the World Zionist Organization is over-due for a re-organization and I think with him that the Jews of the Diaspora must be granted a partner-

ship, even a junior partnership with Israel. And I also agree that the day of the 'party key' is over. All Zionist groups in the Diaspora must be freed from political parties in Israel, and set up as territorial units in all the Jewish communities. All these reforms, I repeat, are long past due, but my criticism is that they do not go far enough. *What is needed in Zionism is not mild reform, but thoroughgoing revolution.* For 60 years we have followed the same organizational patterns and we have succeeded in persuading ourselves that it is the only pattern for us. The time has come to scrap it, and the sooner we do it the sooner we will be on our way to renewed vigor and health.

"Needed now is cool, dispassionate and wholly non-partisan and thoroughly honest deliberation. This can be done best in a special commission, with the best minds available reviewing the past achievements and, thoroughly mindful of present shortcomings, evolving a plan for a new Zionist organizational machinery geared to the present-day needs of the Jewish people and the State of Israel. This commission must have sufficient time for thorough study and appraisal and the preparation of plans to be submitted for consideration and decision to a future meeting of the Actions Committee called solely for this purpose.

"Before such a Committee I should like to appear as a witness, bearing testimony deriving from Zionist experience through the years and I am sure there will be many similarly equipped to offer the benefit of their life-long leadership in the Zionist Movement." Thus my counsel to the Zionist Movement called for a complete change and overhauling.

Finally taking leave of the story of my life, I would like to conclude with this one sentence: *It could have been better; but it could have been much worse; I am grateful for what it has been!*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LEWIS A. FALK has been active in fraternal, civic and communal activities for the past half-century. He organized the Zionist Organization of America in New Jersey and made it into a state organization. He served overseas in World War I and was awarded two bronze stars. Lewis A. Falk has been vice-president of the Hudson County Hebrew Union for Orphans and Aged since 1936. He was appointed by the late Governor Harold C. Hoffman as a member and secretary of the N.J.-U.S. Constitution Day Celebration Committee, 1938-39. He is a past commander of the American Legion Post No. 52 and of the Jewish War Veteran Post No. 10, Jersey City. He was a member of the national executive committee of J.W.V., 1943-46. From president of the New Jersey ZOA, he became a national vice-president of the same body. In 1951, Lewis A. Falk became a member of the World Executive, World Zionist Movement. He served as editor-in-chief of "The Jewish Voice" and was co-author with J. George Friedman of "Jews in American Wars" which went into six printings.

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