

East European Jewish Affairs

Vol. 30 No. 2 Winter 2000

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

SEP 12 2001

A FRANK CASS JOURNAL

East European Jewish Affairs (formerly Soviet Jewish Affairs) is a journal of interdisciplinary studies relevant to an understanding of the position and prospects of Jews in the former USSR and the countries of East-Central Europe in historical depth and within the context of general, social, economic, political and cultural developments in the region.

It is published by **Frank Cass Publishers Ltd.**, Newbury House, 900 Eastern Avenue, Ilford Essex IG 7HH, UK and appears under the auspices of **University College London Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies** and the **Oxford Institute for Yiddish Studies**.

© 2000 Frank Cass Publishers.
Published twice a year.

This journal and articles appearing in it are abstracted and indexed in *Bulletin signalétique* (Paris), *Historical Abstracts* (Santa Barbara), *Index of Articles on Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem), *International Bibliography of Periodical Literature* (Osnabrück), *International Political Science Abstracts* (Paris), *Kiryat Sefer* (Jerusalem), *Religion Index One: Periodicals* (Chicago), *Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory* (New York) and *Index to Jewish Periodicals* (Cleveland Heights, Ohio). The journal is also listed online by Bowker International Serials Database (New York) and is available in microform from University Microfilms International (Ann Arbor).

2000 subscription rates

	Individuals annual subscription	Institutions annual subscription
UK and Europe (postage included)	£35.00	£50.00
USA, Canada and overseas (postage included)	\$60.00	\$85.00

Single issue and back issue prices available from the publisher.

Special rates are available for joint subscriptions with other Frank Cass journals and publications.

Printed in Great Britain by Antony Rowe Ltd, Chippenham, Wilts.

ISSN 1350-1674

International Editorial Board

Chairman

Dr Harry Shukman (UK)

Prof Chimen Abramsky
(UK) (*Chairman*
1984-93)

Prof Robert Brym
(Canada)

Mr Martin Dewhirst (UK)

Prof Jonathan Frankel
(Israel)

Prof Zvi Gitelman (USA)

Prof Marshall I. Goldman
(USA)

Dr Rashid Kaplanov
(Russia)

Dr Viktor Karady
(France)

Prof Samuel Kassow
(USA)

Prof Hillel Kieval (USA)

Dr András Kovács
(Hungary)

Prof Hans-Dietrich Löwe
(Germany)

Prof Mark Mazower (UK)

Prof Jerzy Musil (Czech
Republic)

Prof Antony Polonsky
(USA)

Prof Peter Reddaway
(USA)

Dr Andrei Rogatchevski
(UK)

Dr Michael Shafir (Czech
Republic)

Dr Shaul Stampfer
(Israel)

Prof Robert Wistrich
(Israel)

Prof Steven Zipperstein
(USA)

Editors

Dr Gennady Estraiikh

Prof John D. Klier

Dr Mikhail Krutikov

Dr Howard Spier

(*Managing Editor*)

Contents

ARTICLES

The Soviet Klezmer Orchestra

Jeffrey Wollock 1

Expedition to Azerbaijan

Valery Dymshitz 37

The Struggle of Belorussian Jews for the Restitution of Possessions and Housing in the First Postwar Decade

Leonid Smilovitsky 53

The Fate of Belarusian and Yiddish in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods

Avraham Greenbaum 71

Making Yiddish Modern: The Creation of a Yiddish-Language Establishment in the Soviet Union

David Shneer 77

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Materials Relating to East European Jewish History and Culture in the Archives of the Former Soviet Union:

The Central State Archive of Photodocuments of Ukraine 99

A Unique Birobidzhan Collection

Nikolai Borodulin 116

CONFERENCE NOTE

FSU Students Making Contact and Establishing Links:

London 2000 Postgraduate Student Conference in Jewish Studies

John D. Klier 121

REVIEW ARTICLE

Hungarians and Jews: Narrowed Perspectives and Threatened Sensibilities

George Schöpflin

123

REVIEWS

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee Revisited

Alexander M. Borschtschagowski, *Orden für einen Mord:*

Die Judenverfolgung unter Stalin;

and Arno Lustiger, *Rotbuch: Stalin und die Juden.*

Die tragische Geschichte des Jüdischen Antifaschistischen Komitees und der sowjetischen Juden

– Andreas Umland

132

A Chicken-and-Egg Situation

Charles King and Neil J. Melvin (eds.), *Nations Abroad:*

Diaspora Politics and International Relations in the Former Soviet Union

– Gennady Estraikh

134

A Greek Tragedy

Gennady Estraikh, *Soviet Yiddish: Language Planning and Linguistic Development*

– David Shneer

136

Freeze-Frame Picture

Susanne Marten-Finnis and Heather Valencia, *Sprachinseln.*

Jiddische Publizistik in London, Wilna und Berlin, 1880-1930

– César Merchán-Hamann

138

BOOKS RECEIVED

140

CONTRIBUTORS

147

For details of past and future contents of this and our other journals please visit our website at www.frankcass.com/jnls

The Soviet Klezmer Orchestra

Soviet recordings of traditional Jewish music

Is it meaningful to speak of traditional Jewish music in the Soviet Union of the late 1930s? Considering the hostility to religion, suspicion of Jewish 'nationalism' bordering on antisemitism (not yet overt, however) and the project, well under way, of creating a homogenized Soviet culture, it might be assumed that such a thing as traditional Jewish folk music could no longer exist, at least not openly. Such an assumption, however, is mistaken. For specific doctrinal and political reasons Jewish folk music, including instrumental music, not only survived but, within the restrictive limits of Soviet policy, actually flourished in that period.

In a previous article about recordings of Jewish instrumental (klezmer) music that were made in Russia and Poland in the years before the First World War, I referred in passing to a number of klezmer recordings produced during the Soviet period 'under very different conditions'.¹ In the present article I would like to focus on these Soviet recordings and explain what these 'very different conditions' were.

The recordings in question were made in 1937 in Kiev, Ukrainian SSR, by the State Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music under the direction of the violinist M. I. Rabinovich. They are typical old-time klezmer numbers from the Ukrainian Jewish wedding repertoire, performed in a traditional style. In addition, both sides of one disc feature a traditional wedding ritual – the 'seating of the bride' (*kale bazetsns*), featuring a *badkhn* (wedding jester) and a weeping bride, along with the type of highly expressive violin obligato that represents the high point of the art of the klezmer.

Rita Ottens and Joel Rubin lay great emphasis on these recordings in two recent publications. The first 37 pages of their general handbook *Klezmer-Musik* are built around them.² Further details appear in their notes to the companion CD, which is entitled *Oytsres*.³

While their presentation is dramatic, however, it turns out to be both misleading and incomplete. The authors obtained the information, they say, from an eyewitness to the recording session. While they do not identify this person, specific factual details such as time, place and the general

circumstances of the recording session lend support to this claim. Unfortunately, there is not enough of this kind of factual data, and the anonymity of the source as well as the complete lack of reference citations (though a bibliography is provided at the end) make it impossible to ascertain which elements of the interpretation came from the witness and which from the authors or other sources.⁴

In the same publications Ottens and Rubin discuss a larger Soviet musical group directed by the composer Solomon Fayntukh, the State Jewish Ensemble of Music and Song of the Ukrainian SSR,⁵ which also made recordings (all known examples dating from 1939). Although this was a much larger ensemble and certainly sounds quite different, it was in fact a re-organized version of the earlier ensemble and was based not in Kharkov, as Ottens and Rubin state, but in Kiev. As I will show, the re-organized group was still popularly known as 'the klezmer orchestra' and still performed traditional klezmer numbers in addition to the newly composed and arranged repertoire. Its personnel were nearly all 'sons of small-town klezmers' and M. I. Rabinovich was still the violin soloist. This orchestra, as Ottens and Rubin note, still existed as late as 1940.

All these recordings are of historical interest, but the earlier ones have a special ethnographic significance. Recordings in such a traditional style would have been unusual in 1937 had they been made in Poland, Palestine or the United States – one would have to go back to the 1920s or earlier to find anything even remotely comparable. That they were made in Stalin's USSR, where everything originating from traditional religious cultures – *a fortiori* from traditional Jewish culture – was harshly discouraged, seems at first sight almost impossible.

The paradox only appears to deepen when we consider two further points stressed by Ottens and Rubin. First, 1937 was not merely the Stalinist period – it was the height of Stalin's 'Terror', the show trials and purges of 1936–38. Second, according to the authors,⁶ the Terror had a major antisemitic thrust, as if to clear the way for the pact Stalin would sign with Hitler in 1939.⁷ It is a fair assumption that something as socially pervasive as the Terror, in which millions of people were killed or endured harsh prison-camp sentences essentially for fictional offences, must be relevant to anything that was done at that time. But exactly how is it relevant to the formation and recording of a klezmer orchestra?

Ottens and Rubin tell the story as follows. In May 1937, obeying an order of the Ukrainian Culture Commissariat, a klezmer violinist named M. I. Rabinovich re-assembled his old band, a dozen aged klezmers from one of the smaller cities south of Kiev (Bela Tserkov' or Uman') in the building of the Kiev Conservatory for the purpose of making a number of recordings. Since the Bolsheviks had come to power, a state-sponsored anti-religious campaign

had forced former klezmers to put away their instruments and work at other trades for a living. There were no longer any Jewish weddings; klezmer music had not been played at weddings for at least a decade. Now, for some inexplicable reason, these poor old men had been called together to make some recordings as the State Ensemble for Jewish Culture and Song of the Ukrainian SSR.⁸ The last surviving klezmers played at culture houses and workers' clubs to audiences who neither cried nor danced but were commanded to show up for the inspection of Jewish culture.⁹

Although this band seemed to embody all the old cultural values, that did not indicate any reversal of antisemitism or renaissance of traditional Jewish culture. On the contrary, one important motive was propaganda. The *apparatchiks* were no doubt thinking: if we show that things are going well for the Jews, then things must be going well for all our Soviet peoples. In particular, the *apparatchiks* will have wanted to distract foreign attention from the liquidation of the Jewish communist elite. Another motive was to help the commissariat counteract charges of Ukrainian nationalism, since several Ukrainian state ensembles were also formed and recorded at the same time as the Jewish one: in any case, this kind of music will not be heard much longer in Ukraine – so play klezmer, play, and all is well in the beautiful Soviet state!¹⁰

Moishe Beregovsky was the foremost Soviet authority on Jewish folk music. He seems to have had good relations with the party apparatus, and this latest command of the Ukrainian culture minister, according to Ottens and Rubin, fit in very well with his plans: Beregovsky was hoping to make his collection a building block of a new Soviet music. To this end, 'the most beautiful and the best of klezmer music' should be selected and adapted in order that it might serve as a component of the Soviet music of the future. In a tactic of this kind, Beregovsky probably saw a chance to correct this foolhardy 'Rabinovich affair' and to physically survive. In this crazy time of Siberian camps and secret police, it would seem more advisable to stay away from Jewish affairs. But this was an order – maybe even a personal order from Stalin.¹¹

What did Rabinovich and his musicians think of all this? Were they proud to be the only klezmers allowed to play before the Soviet public? According to Ottens and Rubin, 'The situation in the recording studio must in any case have been so politically explosive that even today, over 60 years later, the only known still living eyewitness of this recording wants to remain anonymous'.¹²

While this reconstruction is not without valid observations and insights, it is on the whole quite misleading. Ottens and Rubin misinterpret the nature and extent of antisemitism in the Soviet Union in the late 1930s.¹³ They pay insufficient attention to the dynamics of Soviet Jewish history of the period – particularly cultural policy and, specifically, Soviet Jewish music. Finally,

they ignore the fact that this klezmer orchestra remained in existence for nearly four years, during which it gave numerous concerts.

Stalin and the Jews

Something must be said at the outset about the effects of Stalin's antisemitism in the late 1930s or it will be difficult to understand how and why this state-supported klezmer orchestra was founded. Of course, only the most summary statement can be attempted here.

Stalin's chief motivation in instituting what came to be known as the Terror was to wipe out the Old Bolsheviks and their influence and to establish total political control through the institutionalization of domestic terror. In this sense, operating in all identifiable areas of public life, within the leaderships of all national republics, regions and districts, and even on random citizens, the Terror was not and could not have been directed primarily against Jews. Many millions of people were arrested and killed, the vast majority non-Jews. However, as a general purge of 'Trotskyites', 'militant nationalists', 'enemies of the people' and so on, the Terror incidentally served as a cover for some specifically anti-Jewish moves that did real damage to the Jewish community, especially that part of it that wished to maintain some form of Yiddish culture.

That Stalin himself greatly disliked Jews is indisputable. But he was well aware that this sentiment had to be disguised, for he had long aspired to be, and by 1937–38 actually was, the leader of world communism, a movement based on the theory of international class solidarity and doctrinally opposed to any kind of racism or national chauvinism, especially the antisemitic fascism of the Nazis. The Hitler–Stalin pact of 1939 only increased the need for any antisemitic moves to be carefully disguised.

Stalin was one of the most devious tyrants in history. One of his standard manoeuvres with regard to national minorities, especially after 1935, was the technique of 'squeezing' – the dismantling of the very cultural institutions that had been set up for them within the Soviet system. This was done gradually but with increasing tempo between 1935 and 1940. Every time he took something away, however, Stalin was careful to leave or create highly visible tokens. The use of this technique against Soviet Jewish institutions at that time was arguably no harsher than those against other nationalities, but for various demographic reasons it had a proportionately greater effect on the Jewish population. For example, most Yiddish schools in the Soviet Union were closed in 1938,¹⁴ Yiddish radio broadcasts virtually ceased in Ukraine in that year, and two of the three major Soviet Yiddish daily newspapers ceased publication after 1939.¹⁵

As for the tokens, Ottens and Rubin are correct in suggesting¹⁶ that such moves distracted attention from the liquidation of the Jewish communist elite

that was then going on and effectively misled foreigners. These moves also misled the vast majority of Soviet citizens, however, because what remained after the dismantling was still of some substance: the new 'tokens' were substantial and in most cases the purged Jewish elite was replaced by other Jews. As a result, in the late 1930s most Soviet Jews still had faith in the system. This was no longer true after 1948.

Having established complete control by 1938, Stalin was in a position to move against the Jews more openly, and there is evidence that he was preparing to do so.¹⁷ But two factors intervened to interrupt and indeed reverse the process for the next decade: the Soviet annexation of Polish and Baltic territories in 1939 which contained a very large number of traditional Jewish communities, and Hitler's sudden attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941.

The addition of millions of unsovietized Jews in 1939 meant that Stalin would still have use for Soviet Jewish culture for a while. It also brought Soviet Jews once again into contact with traditional Judaism, with galvanizing effect. The war itself brought hundreds of thousands of Jews into the Red Army and air force, where they fought heroically; and while the Nazis killed millions of Soviet Jewish civilians, a large saving remnant escaped to the east. The Jewish war effort was not only of crucial importance to the Soviet Union, it also reinvigorated the Jewish identity and religion. Under wartime and immediate postwar conditions, Stalin could not make any major moves against the Jews.

It is hardly surprising that Soviet Jews, having experienced the wholesale slaughter of their people and the defeat of the Nazi murderers at first hand, reacted triumphantly to the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948. This was, however, the high point of the process of Jewish renewal in the Soviet Union. In late 1948 Stalin instigated an openly antisemitic purge that continued to the end of his life.¹⁸ An incipient purge of Jewish medical doctors, the opening move of a secret plan to forcibly relocate the entire Jewish population to the Far East, was cut short only by the dictator's death in March 1953. Khrushchev, though he ended the worst abuses of Stalinism, made only token gestures to restore the Soviet Jewish national and cultural institutions destroyed by Stalin.

In short, though Stalin was already acting against the Soviet Jewish nationality and culture in the late 1930s, the situation in 1937 was very different from that of the specifically anti-Jewish purges of 1948-53, when Jewish culture was virtually shut down, antisemitism became blatant, and such terms as 'Zionist' and 'rootless cosmopolitan' were enthusiastically employed as code words to refer to nothing other than Jews.

With historical hindsight the late 1930s can be seen as the beginning of the process that resumed in earnest in 1948. Yet this was not how it appeared at the time, not even to Soviet Jews themselves. Despite serious losses, the situation

by 1939 as the purges ebbed was still incomparably better than it would be after 1948. Stalin was not yet in a position to move openly and monolithically against the Jews, and his antisemitism remained well concealed.

Despite everything, then, there was still a vigorous Jewish cultural life in the Soviet Union of the late 1930s, and the Terror, for all the damage that it did, was not the only major dynamic affecting Jewish life. Factors of equal importance were the upgrading of the Birobidzhan district to the status of Jewish Autonomous Region and attempts to solidify Soviet Jewish institutions.

Having reviewed these preliminary considerations, let us return to the story of the Soviet klezmer orchestra.

Harbingers of a new ensemble

Kiev, Tuesday, 6 April 1937. It is nearly 8 o'clock in the evening. Writers, journalists, cultural activists, anyone fortunate enough to obtain an invitation, are filing into the basement of the former Choral Synagogue at 13 Borokhov Street, the overcrowded home of the Vintshevsky State Central Jewish Library. Tonight's programme features Moishe Beregovsky, Director of the Folklore Section in the Cabinet of Jewish Proletarian Culture at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, who will lecture in Yiddish on 'Jewish Instrumental Folk Music'.¹⁹

After Beregovsky has finished his talk, the writers Chaim Gildin and Note Lurie, Z. Skuditski²⁰ and others speak of the great significance of musical folklore. The first portion of the programme closes with a special announcement by Chaim Gildin: On the initiative of Comrade Khvyliia, Chairman of the Commissariat for Artistic Affairs of the Soviet People's Commissariat of the Ukrainian SSR, a klezmer ensemble has been organized. The ensemble has already recorded 29 numbers of klezmer music on gramophone records, the government has assigned it the necessary means, and it is now able to expand its work further.

A gramophone is brought forward – probably an acoustic wind-up model, as electric machines were still rare then in the USSR – and the audience hears several of the new recordings of the klezmer ensemble: a *gasn-nign*, a *freylekhs*, a *kale bazetsns*, and others.

But who is the elderly comrade taking the violin out of the case? Some in the audience surely recognize M. I. Rabinovich, for he is a well-known leader of a restaurant orchestra in Kiev. Rabinovich, who seems to have been in his sixties, was a native of Brusilov, a *shtetl* about 40 miles west of Kiev and 20 miles north-west of Fastov. His klezmer lineage, though not long, is of great interest.

As a boy in Brusilov he learned the violin from his grandfather, Yisroel-Moishe Rabinovich (known as Yisroel-Moishe Rozhever, 1807–1900) and

played for many years in his grandfather's klezmer band. Yisroel-Moishe himself was originally from Rozhev, a *shtetl* in northern Ukraine now so small that it can be found only on the most detailed maps but one that occupies an interesting position in klezmer geography. Less than four miles to the north-east is Sitnyaki, the cradle of the Kholodenko family from which sprang the great Aron-Moishe Kholodenko (known as Pedutser, 1828–1902); Makarov, four miles further along the same road, boasted a celebrated klezmer band;²¹ and Radomishl, 18 miles north-east of Sitnyaki, was the birthplace of Pedutser and later home to the well-known klezmer band of Nune and Rakhmiel Vaynshteyn.²²

Though not from a klezmer family, Yisroel-Moishe had begun playing the violin by ear as a boy of six or seven. His father worked in a vodka distillery. One day a government excise official, who happened to be a good violinist, came to the factory, heard the boy play and took a great interest in him. A short time later he presented him with a better violin and gave him systematic lessons. Yisroel-Moishe's younger brother, also talented, taught himself to play cello.

Despite his talent, Yisroel-Moishe did not decide to become a professional klezmer until long after he was married with a family of his own in Fastov. His three sons played flute, clarinet and cello respectively. When they were grown Yisroel-Moishe formed a permanent family ensemble which soon began playing weddings.²³

M. I. Rabinovich, grandson and pupil of this Yisroel-Moishe Rozhever, developed into a very fine violinist. The one known recording of his playing reveals a musician of solid technique, rich tone and complete command of the idiomatic klezmer style. It is he who leads the new Soviet klezmer ensemble. Accompanied at the piano, Rabinovich concludes the evening by performing several klezmer pieces, including part of a long composition by Pedutser.²⁴

Keen-eyed newspaper readers might have caught wind of the klezmer ensemble a month earlier. On 9 March 1937 *Der Emes*, the Soviet Union's premier Yiddish daily, featured an interview with Comrade Dobranievsky, spokesman for Yeshua P. Sheynin, artistic director of the country's most famous Jewish choral ensemble, Yidvokans (also known by its Russian name, Yevokans). Dobranievsky ended the interview with an announcement that 'in accordance with the decree of the Ukrainian government, we are now organizing under the auspices of our ensemble an Ensemble of Jewish Music – a *klezmer kapelye* – the first in the Soviet Union. This *kapelye* too will work under the direction of Meritorious Artist Comrade Sheynin. The repertoire for the klezmer *kapelye* is now being worked out, men are being selected, and so on' (emphasis in original).

The klezmer *kapelye* officially 'began its musical work' at the end of February 1937. According to a news item, 'The best conditions for work have

been created for the ensemble'. It would share the building that housed the Yidvokans. The Ukrainian government had assigned the ensemble a budget of 100,000 rubles for the year 1937.²⁵ But what a time to start a new ensemble!

Navigating dangerous waters

A firestorm of repressions enveloped the society's upper and middle strata from March and April 1937 and did not finally subside until 1939 ... no major nation has ever suffered state terrorism of such ferocity as Russia did then ... For upper- and middle-level urban Russia this was the time of terrible travail.²⁶

Was Beregovsky worried? No doubt he was: the past year had already been a bad one for the Institute for Jewish Proletarian Culture, where he headed the Cabinet for Musical Folklore. As early as the first half of 1935 there were signs of trouble when the NKVD censors began without explanation confiscating all incoming foreign periodicals, allowing only communist and a few pro-Soviet ones; soon even these were stopped.²⁷ That same year the Ukrainian Academy changed its rules: it would accept as aspirants only students who already had aspirant status in universities. Because Jewish studies was not available at Soviet universities, this would make it more difficult for the Institute to obtain students.²⁸

But that was nothing compared to what was coming. On 15 April 1936 four leading figures in the Jewish Institute – Gershon Gorokhov, Mikhl Levitan, Yona Khintshin and Maks Erik – were arrested, disappearing without a trace,²⁹ and the entire Institute was 'closed for re-organization'.³⁰

Professor Iosif Liberberg, who had founded the Institute and personally overseen the collection of the quarter-million-item Judaica library and the All-Union Central Jewish Press Archive,³¹ was then thousands of miles away in Birobidzhan, where he had been chairman of the regional executive committee since Birobidzhan had been proclaimed the Jewish Autonomous Region (5 May 1934) by President Kalinin. Arrested in July 1936, Liberberg was executed a short time later.

Commenting on the closing of the Institute, Greenbaum writes: 'The reason, as far as we can tell, was the anti-Trotskyite wave of arrests which had been accompanied by increasing intolerance towards minorities; the Institute for Polish Proletarian Culture, accused of spying for Poland, had been closed even earlier.'³²

A more specific factor in the purge of the Institute for Jewish Proletarian Culture, however, was a power struggle over the Jewish Autonomous Region: how and when to transfer there the various Jewish cultural institutions and personnel, including the greatest of them all and Liberberg's own creation, the Institute. If Birobidzhan was really to become the homeland for most of the Soviet Union's Jews, then these institutions belonged there – at least some

day. But at a time when only a minuscule percentage of the Jewish population actually lived in the Jewish Autonomous Region, gathering all these cultural treasures in a place 5,000 miles east of Moscow seemed premature, to say the least.

Liberberg was purged because he wielded too much influence. Although there were as yet few Jews in Birobidzhan, the very existence of the Jewish Autonomous Region was a great stimulus to Jewish cultural workers. Liberberg was charged with 'leaderism' and militant nationalism:

The success of the first two years of the Autonomous Region – 1935 and 1936 ... brought to expression a new style of Soviet Jewishness, which had slowly arisen among parts of the Jewish intelligentsia especially in Ukraine and quite especially around the Kiev Institute for Jewish Proletarian Culture – a style which [its opponents] stamped as 'National-Bolshevism'.³³

Now, after Liberberg's fall,

The party organization began to persecute anyone who had the slightest connection with Liberberg: non-party members were dismissed from their jobs, party members were excluded from the party ... a portion were arrested. Quickly, feverishly, special mass meetings of workers, collective farm workers, party appointees and intelligentsia were called. Everywhere the order of the day was one and the same point: 'Strengthen communist vigilance and demand that the NKVD punish as strictly as possible all who were Liberberg's open and clandestine henchmen in wrecking the socialist construction of the Jewish Autonomous Region'.³⁴

Sloves continues:

At the end of every meeting a vote on an appropriate resolution was suggested. As is understandable, this resolution was always passed unanimously. Those for whom Liberberg was the greatest idealist, and his fellow Kievers, voted for it as well. If you find this remarkable, it only means that you do not understand the Soviet reality.³⁵

The purges hurt the development of Birobidzhan so severely that it never recovered. For a while, however, immigration and settlement continued and the *agitprop* around Birobidzhan continued with its previous momentum. KOMERD and GEZERD, the Soviet Jewish settlement agencies, still existed, and they both took a major part in the stimulation of Soviet Jewish culture. A short time after the liquidation of the Institute,

In place of the widely-branched scientific Institute for Jewish Culture (which had had a working staff of over 100), with its numerous sections, cabinets, laboratories, libraries, bibliographic centres, archives, etc., there would now be the miniature Cabinet for the Study of Soviet Jewish Literature, Language and Folklore, which would employ only a small number of people.³⁶

The well-known philologist Eliahu Spivak was named director of this re-organized cabinet.³⁷ Even after the liquidation of the Institute, however, the Birobidzhan Regional Party Committee's Aleksandr Bakhmutsky was still optimistic about moving the remnant Cabinet for Jewish Soviet Literature, Language and Folklore to Birobidzhan.³⁸

Under these circumstances it is difficult to imagine that anyone who had worked for the Institute was not worried. The worry would have been about one's connections with Liberberg, however, not about one's scientific work. As Greenbaum points out in his historical study of Jewish scholarly institutions in Soviet Russia, the purges mostly affected people who in one way or another played some political role: 'Jewish scholars as such were generally left alone'.³⁹ In any case, whatever his connections with Liberberg, Beregovsky resumed his position as chief of Jewish musical folklore in the re-organized Cabinet. The state still found him useful.

Of course, the Ukrainian Commissar of Artistic Affairs would have had reasons of his own for wanting a klezmer ensemble. Ottens and Rubin write:

At precisely this time a number of Ukrainian state ensembles for folk music were put together ... It is therefore possible ... that the Ukrainian authorities sought through the formation of a Jewish ensemble to counteract accusations of 'Ukrainian nationalism' which might be expected from the Moscow regime.⁴⁰

This is correct as far as it goes. Many new folk ensembles were formed throughout the Soviet Union in response to Stalin's new emphasis on socialist realism. Zinovy Kompaneyets, in a reminiscence, makes the same point:

In the 1930s ... there arose ensembles of national music and dance, not to mention the various magazines and newspapers around which groups of poets, playwrights, actors, directors, artists and composers clustered. In those years the now-famous Moiseyev Dance Ensemble, the Osipov Russian Folk Orchestra, and well-known artistic collectives in Georgia, Armenia and Uzbekistan were created. So it was natural that the orchestra of Jewish music began its work in Kiev.⁴¹

At the same time, such ensembles had to avoid the suspicion of nationalism, a particularly sensitive issue in the Ukrainian SSR. The commissar in question, Andrij Khvyliia, though himself Ukrainian, was a well-known opponent of what was then considered Ukrainian chauvinism. A party member since 1918, Khvyliia had previously headed the Central Committee's Press Section (1926–28) and Cultural Propaganda Section (1928–33). With the appointment of Pavel Postyshev as head of the Ukrainian Communist Party in 1933, Volodymyr Zatonsky became Commissar of Education and Khvyliia, his deputy, became Commissar of Artistic Affairs in his own right. Though 'Russophile' in comparison with its immediate

predecessors, the new administration was really something of a compromise.⁴² A delicate balancing act was required.

But there must be more to this. In formal announcements, of course, it was proper to state, as we have seen, that the klezmer ensemble was formed 'on the initiative of the Commissar of Artistic Affairs'. But the issuing of a decree is simply a juridical formality signifying official approval. Such approval is forthcoming when its object is convenient to the needs of the issuing bureaucracy, but that in no way implies that the idea originated with the official who issued it, any more than it would in a Western country today.

Rather, the idea must have been developed by Beregovsky himself, once he understood that the authorities had an interest in such things. As a scholar, Beregovsky played a very important role in the Soviet Jewish musical community. He was well-known and widely respected. And here we come to the crux of the matter. Ottens and Rubin write:

When Beregovsky, who appears to have had good relations with the party apparatus, received the command from the Ukrainian culture commissariat ... it fit in very well with his plans: he hoped to use the Jewish music assembled in his Kiev research centre as a building block for the creation of a new Soviet music. For this 'the best and most beautiful of klezmer music' is selected and adapted to serve as a component part of the art of the future Soviet people ... In a highly secure ideological move of this kind the tactician Beregovsky very probably saw a chance to correct this foolhardy 'Rabinovich affair' – and to survive physically himself.⁴³

Jewish folk music and the 'nationalities question'

That Beregovsky hoped to make his collection of traditional (and protest) Jewish folk music (both klezmer and vocal music) a building block of a future Soviet music is true. But this was not really 'his' plan, nor does it by any means adequately reflect the full range of his interest in the collection. Indeed, the usefulness of folklore for the 'building of Soviet culture' was the sole premise on which such work could be ideologically justified.

According to Marxist-Leninist principles, every activity must have a revolutionary praxis, must help to 'build socialism'. There were a number of ways that collecting traditional folklore could do this. First, a folkloric record of class struggle and the progress of the socialist society would put both 'reactionary' and 'progressive' elements of the traditional culture in proper historical perspective. It would also comprise a fund of material for building the new Soviet Jewish music. As a scholar, Beregovsky saw it as his job to collect everything, not to select what in his opinion would be valuable for the composer. He could, however, help composers find suitable material in the collection.⁴⁴

Though loath to admit it, the Cabinet was in this respect continuing what the St Petersburg Jewish Folk Music Society (1908–18) had explicitly begun. For

both the historical and aesthetic goals were merely Soviet adaptations of goals central to the field of folklore in its pre-Soviet and non-Soviet phases, which had already had a great influence on the development of history as a discipline and of national schools of music in various nations.⁴⁵

The Soviet view of national folklores relates to what was termed the 'nationalities question' in culture. The recognized expert on this question was none other than Stalin himself, author of the canonic *Marxism and the National Question* (1913).⁴⁶ Stalin's famous axiom was that art of the Soviet nationalities should be 'national in form, socialist in content'. Before the new Soviet music as such could be constructed, a Soviet music of each nationality would have to be created. According to the theory, under conditions of Soviet social progress the multitude of Soviet national musics would eventually blend into a single Soviet music, just as the multitude of Soviet nationalities would eventually blend into a single Soviet nationality.⁴⁷

That was still in the future, however. The project at hand for Soviet Jewish composers and for performers of specifically Jewish music was to build a Soviet *Jewish* music in order to Sovietize the national Jewish culture. Many ethnic performers made a gesture towards the long-term goal by including a considerable amount of music of other nationalities in their programmes and by performing their own music for audiences of other nationalities.

In the late 1930s, however, Stalin's doctrine of socialist realism in art gave new emphasis to the 'national in content' side. In his recapitulation speech on 17 January 1936 at the Joint Conference of Soviet Composers, Musicologists and Opera Producers of the USSR, Stalin, outlining the requirements of the new Soviet opera, defined its chief characteristics as socialist subject matter and realistic musical language: music, like all the arts, should be based on the idiom of its native country.⁴⁸ In addition, a new type of hero was required because the socialist era had created a new type of human psychology.⁴⁹

Throughout their book, Ottens and Rubin emphasize that klezmer music was a product of traditional, religious Jewish society. Granted, this is an important point and one not sufficiently appreciated by many of those interested in the music today. But the matter is more complicated. In traditional religious society the klezmer, no matter how much their music may have been appreciated by the religious leadership, had a low social status, but they were regarded with affection by the *amkho* (common people), and among them might take on a kind of legendary aura. In *Stempenyu* (1880) the novelist Sholem Aleichem, drawing on these folk-legends, consciously transformed the figure of the klezmer into a key symbol of the new Yiddish literature, the folk-artist as cultural hero.

In his emphasis on the importance of the common people and his social critique of traditional Jewish society, Sholem Aleichem no doubt exaggerated the marginality of the klezmer. But because of this, *Stempenyu* remained the

Jewish folk-hero *par excellence* in the Soviet Union, where, incidentally, the works of Sholem Aleichem were translated into many languages and remained available even during the worst periods of antisemitism. Now further retooled to fit the requirements of socialist realism, the klezmer was portrayed as an outstanding Jewish representative of the oppressed working class, a proto-revolutionary folk artist exploited by the Jewish and non-Jewish bourgeoisie, a down-to-earth Jew more exposed to non-Jewish cultural influences.

Moreover, within the traditional klezmer repertoire and style could be found much material for building the new, officially-approved Soviet Jewish music. This was all the more true in the case of songs, where the *socialist content* would be supplied by the text, but the *national form* would be supplied by the melodies.⁵⁰

Such were the conditions under which Beregovsky and everyone else involved in Soviet Jewish music had to work. Clearly the idea of forming an ensemble of genuine klezmer musicians to play traditional klezmer music was in line with this. Responding to the new emphasis on socialist realism, the Soviet Jewish musical community discovered a number of 'problems' to work on: the meagre choice of repertoire for Jewish folk-singers, resulting in songs that were 'inappropriate' i.e. 'sentimental', 'mystical' etc, in text, or 'foreign' in musical form; the need to create Soviet Jewish 'mass songs' (i.e. popular propaganda songs);⁵¹ and, of course, the need to build a new Soviet Jewish symphonic music, including theatre, opera and ballet music. For all these goals, access to traditional musical folklore was necessary.

That the creation of a state klezmer ensemble fit in so well with Beregovsky's plans, then, was not just a lucky coincidence: it was exactly the sort of thing he and the entire community of Soviet Jewish musical activists needed at the time. The idea must have been under consideration for a while before the band was formed. It is not only consonant with socialist realism as proclaimed in January 1936, but probably also reflects the optimism of the first two years of the Jewish Autonomous Region, an optimism which, though shaken, did not immediately dissipate after Liberberg's fall. Up to the Nazi invasion, the Region was still the official rallying point for the creation of Soviet Jewish culture and thus, covertly, for the preservation of some degree of traditional Jewish culture.

Though the klezmer ensemble also fit in with Khvyliia's needs, it is highly unlikely that the commissar could have arrived at specifics without the involvement of the Soviet Jewish musical world, above all Beregovsky. Khvyliia, an intellectual with a great interest in language issues, had enjoyed good relations with the former Institute for Jewish Proletarian Culture. In a speech (delivered in Ukrainian) to the All-Ukrainian Yiddish Language Conference on 7 May 1934, Khvyliia made some interesting observations on

the semantics of Hebraisms in Yiddish, citing the contemporary non-Soviet Yiddish authorities Shmuel Niger and Chaim Zhitlovsky. It seems unlikely that on his own he would have had such an intimate and current knowledge of Yiddish language and literature. Rather, as Estraiikh suggests, these comments were no doubt prepared for him by people at the Institute.⁵²

Khvylya was no expert on traditional Jewish instrumental music. The klezmer ensemble was a performing organization that did not have, and (fortunately, as it turned out) could not have, any official connection with the Institute for Jewish Proletarian Culture, but it certainly would have been in keeping for Khvylya, in developing the plan for a Jewish folk-orchestra, to defer to the Institute's outstanding expert on Jewish instrumental music rather than simply spring it on him as a *fait accompli*.

The official designation – State Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Song – and the group's nominal affiliation with Yidvokans implied that it would be involved in the development of Soviet Jewish song. Significantly, Yidvokans, the most successful Jewish performing group in the USSR, was under the artistic direction of Beregovsky's close friend Sheynin. That it was an exciting idea for the entire Soviet Jewish musical community – indeed could be a sort of flagship for their various goals – also reveals concerns that would not have come from Khvylya.

Launching the ensemble, recruiting personnel

When were the personnel selected for the ensemble, on what basis, and how large was it? In an interview published in *Der Emes*, when the band had only just received official approval, Dobranievsky of Yidvokans stated that 'The repertoire for the klezmer *kapelye* is now being worked out, *men are being selected*, and so on' (emphasis added).⁵³

The questions of when and how many are intertwined. Ottens and Rubin date the sessions to May 1937. I have found independent confirmation that 'a brigade from the Aprelevsky Zavod near Moscow [i.e. the main Soviet record-production plant] came to Kiev in May 1937 to record not only the Jewish ensemble but also many Ukrainian artists and ensembles'.⁵⁴

The matrix numbers of the known recordings under Rabinovich indicate that they were all made at the same session and that there were multiple takes. Officially, the ensemble had been in existence for over two months. Unofficially, who knows? I tend to agree with Ottens and Rubin that the ensemble appears to have had about 12 instruments. These recordings certainly capture the raw energy of a traditional klezmer band, a trait noted by a number of knowledgeable critics.⁵⁵

It seems that after this the ensemble continued to grow. In an article dating from about six months later (August 1937), the reviewer N. Levin describes the group as 'a strongly-built, organized band with tens of instruments ... playing, a real, large *kapelye*'.

From an ethnographic point of view, Beregovsky would surely have wanted to capture the ensemble's performances before they had been 'refined' too much. The equipment on which he made hundreds of ethnographic field recordings for the Cabinet for Jewish Folk Music was a rather primitive acoustic cylinder apparatus not suitable for ensembles, nor is he ever known to have used it for that purpose. As of 1937, however, Beregovsky was also director of the Cabinet for Ethnography and Sound Recording at the Kiev Conservatory,⁵⁶ and it is likely that he had suitable equipment there to make such recordings.⁵⁷ That the May recordings were also made in the Kiev Conservatory⁵⁸ is therefore quite plausible.

Beregovsky (contrary to Ottens and Rubin) must have been very pleased with the formation of the klezmer ensemble. In his collecting (as Ottens and Rubin themselves remarked in an earlier publication),⁵⁹ he never recorded klezmer ensembles, only individuals. In his publications, he refers to klezmer ensembles as existing only in the past.⁶⁰ Now he could observe one that was approved by the state.

Already prior to the May recordings, however, at a time when the ensemble had been in official existence little more than a month, that is at Beregovsky's 6 April lecture, Chaim Gildin announced that *29 numbers had been recorded*. These recordings are presently unknown, but when I mentioned them to Moishe Loyev he suggested that they had probably been made by Beregovsky himself and that they could have been used as demonstrations ('demos'), which would have been brought to the attention of the recording firm. Depending on how much earlier they were made, they may even have helped in the process of winning official approval of the group in the first place.

Indeed, the question of recording Jewish folk songs and folk motifs had surfaced in the Yiddish press at just about this time. At a 'public inspection' of the pressing plant of the Soviet recording firm Gramplastrest [i.e. the Aprelevsky Zavod] that took place in Moscow on 25 February 1937, the Trust's assistant director, Comrade Pakun, noted that among the more than 3,000 records released by Gramplastrest over the past three years, including 'speeches of our great leaders', folk songs, opera excerpts, and declamations, were songs and instrumental motifs of 46 nationalities, including about 30 records with Jewish songs recorded by the Yidvokans of Kiev, the Belorussian Jewish Ensemble and others. He noted that the firm was shortly to record performances of the best artists of the Moscow State Yiddish Theatre.

At this inspection the 'best records of various nationalities' were demonstrated – but no Jewish records. When questioned about this by a reporter from *Emes*, Pakun stated that in a very short time the Trust would arrange a special inspection of Jewish records, to which Jewish writers, musicians, artists, artistic activists and social activists would be invited. The

better records would be selected and there would be a discussion of the further principles according to which Jewish records should be recorded. Pakun also indicated that a large demand for records with Jewish motifs and songs had recently been noted.⁶¹

It is not clear whether by this time the Gramplasttrest official already knew that the firm was planning to record a new Jewish instrumental ensemble in Kiev. Beregovsky would publicly demonstrate some of his 'demos' in Kiev only five weeks later. In any case, we can be sure that these earliest and as yet unknown recordings were made immediately after the official formation of the group, if not prior to it. At a time when Gramplasttrest had released no more than 30 Jewish records, presumably only of the most popular singers, it is remarkable to find the firm recording a Jewish instrumental group in Kiev before the public had barely even heard of it.

After the ensemble had been approved and provided with resources the core group was considerably enlarged. A comment in *Der Shtern*, 28 July 1937 that 'a brigade from Gramplasttrest recently recorded the 12 best numbers from the ensemble's repertoire on discs' no doubt refers to the May recording session, by which time the ensemble was more seasoned, was already known for a definite repertoire and, as noted above, was probably a good deal larger than when first recorded by Beregovsky.

As to how the members were selected, no doubt the band was put together by Rabinovich. In the same August 1937 review, Levin describes the ensemble as 'a group of talented, gifted musical performers, former klezmers, who have for the last few years been performing in restaurants, cinemas and the like'. Ottens and Rubin note that Rabinovich had come to Kiev after the Revolution and eventually ended up as the leader of a light orchestra.⁶² Though Beregovsky gives very little biographical data on Rabinovich himself, he notes elsewhere that a clarinetist named M. Slobodsky, who was 49 years old in 1935 when Beregovsky recorded a few of his tunes in Kiev,⁶³ had 'played in a klezmer *kapelye* in the *shtetl* of Brusilov [Kiev *guberniia*]', but came to Kiev in the early 1920s, where he 'continued to play in small orchestras at weddings and evening parties'. In all probability this Slobodsky had been a member of Rabinovich's klezmer band in Brusilov, and his career seems to have followed a parallel course. Perhaps Slobodsky was a member of the new ensemble.

This raises an important question, however. Ottens and Rubin say that none of these men had played klezmer music in a very long time, basing this on the assumption that the anti-religious policies of the Bolsheviks had completely destroyed the traditional Jewish wedding.⁶⁴ This is simply not true. In Kiev, ensembles officially designated as entertainment or restaurant bands were no doubt available 'unofficially' to play klezmer music at Jewish wedding parties held in connection with either civil marriages or clandestine

religious marriages. Such parties might even be held at restaurants.⁶⁵ In centres of high Jewish population, klezmer ensembles continued to play at Jewish weddings up to, and in some areas even after, the Second World War. I know of bands that were playing a form of klezmer repertoire at Jewish weddings in Ukraine as late as the 1980s. These were not 'official' organizations, but in the Jewish community everyone knew who could play this music. This topic requires separate treatment.

The extant recordings

The known recordings of the original klezmer ensemble, made in May 1937, are:

State Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music:

mx 5182: *A Gasn-Nign*

mx 5185: *Freilakhs*

Rumanian–Bulgarish (matrix number not available)

Russian Sher (matrix number not available)

Jewish Folk Music Ensemble conducted by M. Rabinovich:⁶⁶

mx 5190: *Bazetsn di Kale* (Part 1)

mx 5191: *Bazetsn di Kale* (Part 2)

The *Kale Bazetsns* is the most important as well as the most puzzling of these. What we hear on this record is a traditional wedding ritual with genuine liturgical references, no Soviet content,⁶⁷ and no hint of parody. Indeed, in comparison with a number of other *badkhones* recordings made in Poland and the United States, one must agree with Ottens and Rubin⁶⁸ that this, if not the only one, is certainly one of the very few that are not parodies.⁶⁹

Azoy zogt a badkhn, oy, koydem a khupe:

Oy kale-lebn, vos iz dos far a minig vos der badkhn redt mit mesholim?

Zog ikh ir, az 'Hayoyim haze niftekho hasforim.'

Oy shrayt un veynt a kale mit trern hamorim,

Men darf zogn 'Ma neymar lifonekho ma neydaber yishemorim' (=shem hamorim).

Oy kale-lebn, itst veynen iz far dir zeyer keday,

Ay, vayl veynen muztu itst say vi say.

Reyshis verstu fun dayne aveyres fray,

Un dos tsveyte darfstu gedenken az dayn tate iz nishto derbay.

Ay, ay, ay ... sha sha sha ... ay ay ay ...

Un vider, kale-lebn, zog ikh dir az du muzt haynt zorn,

Ay, vayl dayn tate iz in dem tog geshtorbn

Der malekh tut itst baym reboyne-shel-oylem onklapn

Un er tut im fregn, far vos bistu geblibn on a tatn.

Ay, ay, ay ... *mutshet zikh vegn vos?*

*Az der man vet fardinen mit arbet fun zayne hent
Zolt ir zikh banugenen mit dem vos ir kent.
Ist endik ikh mayn muser do
Un gey mit dem khosn tsu der khupe in a mazldiker sho.*

*Mazltov! Mazltov! Mazltov! Klezmer! Klezmer! A vivat, a vivat! Dem khosn! A
vivat dem khosn! A vivat! Mazltov! Mazltov! Mazltov!*

The mystery of the *Kale Bazetsns*

The *badkhn*'s performance is entirely in traditional style. As for Rabinovich's playing, it is one of the finest examples of klezmer art on recording. The 'national form' here seems to go far beyond what would be suitable even for socialist realism. How is it to be explained?

The answer turns out to be surprisingly simple. Soviet criticism was always much more tolerant of 'classics', especially when they could be interpreted as foreshadowing Bolshevik goals. It is often said of this or that classic author in the Soviet canon that one of his outstanding accomplishments was to have died before the October Revolution.

The '*badkhn*' on the recording, Lazar Kalmanovich, and the weeping 'bride', Nadya Vinyar, were both actors in the Kiev State Yiddish Theatre. It happens that around the time this recording was made, the Kiev theatre put on not one, but two productions featuring a *badkhn* and a *khevre klezmer* (klezmer band) as characters. The first of these, which ran in January 1937, was Moishe Kulbak's *Boytre* (known in the Kiev production as *Khaim Boytre*). Although Kalmanovich was a member of this cast, he played not the *badkhn* but the chief villain, Aron-Wolf; the role of the *badkhn* was played by the actor Kheyfets.

The other play, which ran in March and April 1937, was *Stempenyu*, an adaptation (original title: *Stempenyus Libe*) by Ephroim Loiter and Yehezkel Dobrushin of Sholem Aleichem's famous novella about a klezmer, with music by Shteynberg. I have not been able to find the name of the actor who played the *badkhn* in the Kiev production, but it was definitely not Kalmanovich.

In February and March 1937 *Stempenyus Libe* was also performed in Leningrad by the Odessa State Yiddish Theatre (with music by the young Shmuel Senderer) as part of their highly successful run in that city. It was said to have been the most successful piece of the tour.⁷⁰

The text for the *badkhones* recorded by Kalmanovich has no connection with *Boytre*. In that play the *badkhn* recites some *gramen* (rhymes), but they are quite different in both form and content, and there is no *kale bazetsns*.⁷¹ *Stempenyus Libe*, on the other hand, does have a *kale bazetsns* (as does the

original novella – see Chapter 4, ‘Stempenyus Fidele’ (Stempenyu’s Violin), where, however, the *badkhn*’s rhymes are not given and only Stempenyu’s playing and the women’s crying are described).

The reviewer of the Kiev production describes the direction as being ‘on a realistic plane’ and ‘without stylization. This was shown to best advantage in the treatment of the klezmer ensemble. Here the trite convention of presenting the klezmer band as symbolic spectres has been avoided. In *Stempenyu* the klezmerim are portrayed as earthy, real, with straight backs, like healthy, lusty men of the people’.⁷² In the Odessa Yiddish Theatre production of *Stempenyus Libe*, the *badkhn* was played by Brandesco, ‘the old Jewish actor who still remembers the bitter times of the old Yiddish theatre – Brandesco feels completely free in the role of the *badkhn*, as if the role had been made for him’.⁷³ Indeed, it probably was, since one of the adapters of the play, Ephroim Loiter, was the artistic director of this same Odessa Yiddish Theatre. In a later production in Kiev by the Odessa Yiddish Theatre, still directed by E. Loiter,⁷⁴ the reviewer notes:

The wedding at the house of Bentsion Glok is portrayed as a wedding with all the attributes of the old familiar way of life, with the tempos as if intentionally slow ... the appearance of the *badkhn* and the klezmer ensemble ... lacks the necessary and appropriate major key of a merry folk-ensemble.

The *Kale Bazetsns* as recorded by Kalmanovich with a real klezmer band is notable for its traditionalism, realistic style and slow tempo. It was indeed modelled on a scene from the highly approved play *Stempenyus Libe*, adapted from the highly approved classic by Sholem Aleichem⁷⁵ and perhaps based on the interpretation of the veteran Yiddish actor Brandesco.⁷⁶

Beregovsky the tactician

So ‘der Taktiker Beregowski’ had no need to ‘correct’ any ‘foolhardy Rabinovich affair’. He did, however, prove his tactical skills in a number of other details of the story that suggest how he and his colleagues tried to give the ensemble a firm foundation. That Sheynin was the ‘official’ director of record was no doubt a device to start the klezmer band on as strong a footing as possible. However, as leader of Yidvokans, which was frequently on tour, Sheynin could not have had either the time or the inclination to fulfil this function. So a new director was being sought. A report in *Der Shtern*, 28 July 1937 notes that the commissariat had invited Professor Grigorii Kompaneyets to fill the post. But, like the Yidvokans connection, this too is probably window-dressing. The fact is that for nearly its first year of existence, the klezmer ensemble had no functioning ‘artistic director’ and Khvyliya would not press them on this point. With Rabinovich as *de facto* director, however, and the personnel ‘former klezmerners’, the ensemble, while

designated for the development of Soviet Jewish song, would at the same time be able to perform *traditional klezmer music* in authentic style.

The designation of the group, in publicity material, as 'the first [such ensemble] in the Soviet Union', noted in at least three published articles,⁷⁷ is another interesting tactical detail. It suggests the idea that more such ensembles should be formed. Considering the climate of the time, the first thought was most likely to be for the Jewish Autonomous Region in Birobidzhan. This never materialized but, had it ever become possible, Beregovsky's good friend I. S. Rabinovich, piano docent at the Moscow Conservatory and artistic director of the Moscow State Jewish Vocal Quartet, would have been ready to play a key role, as he was actively involved in organizing the music infrastructure in Birobidzhan.

On the evening of Sunday 11 April 1937, just five days after Beregovsky's first lecture, he lectured again at the same address but upstairs in what had been the sanctuary of the synagogue and was now the premises of the Jewish Culture House. Beregovsky and Skuditsky gave talks on 'The Sources of Jewish Folk Creation' and 'Jewish Folk Music' and spoke about 'the richness of Jewish folklore and the tasks of collecting and publishing Jewish folk songs, folk tales, and the like'.

Very little had been accomplished on the front of collecting instrumental folk music, said Beregovsky, but what the klezmer-culture had created was now beginning to be collected. More than 600 klezmer-music numbers had already been gathered, and a collection of the best examples of this music was now being prepared. (This collection, with text, ready by 1938, would remain unpublished until 1987, 26 years after Beregovsky's death.)⁷⁸

Again it was announced that 'On the initiative of the Chairman of the Arts Committee of the Soviet People's Committee of the Ukrainian SSR, Comrade Khvyliia, a klezmer ensemble has been organized, which will soon begin giving concerts'.

The artistic part of the programme opened with a concert of Jewish folk music performed by a trio from the new Klezmer Ensemble consisting of Rabinovich, Ashman and Zilbert.⁷⁹ What instruments Ashman and Zilbert played is unfortunately not mentioned.

In Moscow two days later, the Culture Committee of the Central Soviet of GEZERD met to discuss a memorandum of I. S. Rabinovich on the organizing of musical activities in the Autonomous Region. Rabinovich, who at the end of January had returned to Moscow from a trip to the Region,⁸⁰ emphasized the need to organize the Jewish artistic forces in the Soviet Union to assist in the development of Jewish music, painting and sculpture. An entire group of Soviet Jewish composers, he noted, was ready to work in the area of Jewish music, needing only to be organized and assisted in their work.

The other participants not only agreed with his suggestions but stated them more broadly: it was necessary to organize the many Jewish artistic forces throughout the country and to address the work so as to help the blossoming of Jewish culture in Birobidzhan.

On 26 April the question of improving the organization of the composing, performing and publishing forces of Jewish music throughout the USSR was put before the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs in Moscow at a conference led by Vladimírsky, Inspector of the Music Directorate of the Soviet Union's Commissariat for Artistic Affairs, and Altshuler, representative of the Ukrainian Commissariat for Artistic Affairs.

Participating were Meritorious Artists I. S. Rabinovich and I. P. Sheynin, along with the entire activist cadre of Yidvokans; the Jewish composers Folk Artist of the Ukrainian SSR L. P. Shteynberg, Meritorious Artist Leib Pulver, as well as composers Veprik, Yampolsky and Shtreykher; the literary critic M. Litvakov, editor of the Moscow Yiddish daily *Der Emes*; Rashkes, member of the Presidium of the Central Soviet of GEZERD; the writers David Bergelson and Yekhezkel Dobrushin; Zavilevich, chairman of the Jewish Autonomous Region (who had replaced the purged Liberberg); and the Yiddish folk singers Sara Fibich and Zinovy Shulman.

The comments of Altshuler, representative of the Ukrainian commissariat that had authorized the new klezmer ensemble, are especially relevant. Noting that the Yidvokans (founded in 1929) had grown up in Ukraine, 'now', he added, 'we have organized the Klezmer *Kapelye*, which will have great significance for the further development of Jewish music'. His next comments hint at some of the rationale for the formation of the klezmer ensemble:

We have been discussing how one ought to approach Jewish folklore, how one should arrange and perform Jewish folk songs. In this regard we happened to carry on a controversy with Comrade Sheynin. The controversy consists of the fact that we think that even now there are very few Jewish folk songs in Yidvokans' repertoire. We are also in principle opposed to the line that Comrade Sheynin has taken with regard to the arrangement of the folk motifs. We are opposed to the fact that Comrade Sheynin often so 'arranges' the Jewish folk songs that after he is through with them they are hard to recognize; in some songs it is even impossible to find any trace of the *folkstimlekhkayt* which had been in them. It is also not acceptable that Comrade Sheynin has *de facto* become the only composer for the Yidvokans and that he has still not united the better Jewish composers and musicians around this outstanding ensemble.⁸¹

All these points, in which we catch an echo of the shift to socialist realism, will figure in subsequent comments about the klezmer band: its *folkstimlekhkayt*, its simplicity and directness, and the fact that a wide variety of Jewish composers (as well as composers of other nationalities) had been invited to compose for the group. Significant is the commissariat's criticism

of the Yidvokans – delivered in a mild and friendly tone – as too experimental and not Jewish enough, especially in the light of the formal association of the new klezmer band with this most popular of all Jewish musical ensembles, well-known not only throughout Ukraine but in many other parts of the country.

Two participants in the forum are particularly significant. Sheynin and I. S. Rabinovich had been close friends and colleagues of Beregovsky since the days of the Culture League in Kiev in the early 1920s, which Beregovsky always remembered as among the happiest times of his life.⁸²

Concerts – live and on the radio

The klezmer ensemble performed on Wednesday, 12 May 1937 in a ‘great mass evening’ at the Jewish Culture House sponsored by GEZERD and dedicated to the third anniversary of the Jewish Autonomous Region. In the foyer was ‘an exhibit dedicated to the socialist building of the Jewish Autonomous Region, organized by the Vintshevsky Central Jewish Library’.⁸³ A report in *Der Shtern* noted that:

Over the past few months the ensemble has already succeeded in putting together a considerable repertoire of Jewish folk music and song. They have already given 25 performances at various events in Kiev and at health resorts, including eight performances over the radio. The Ukrainian Radio Committee has received over 500 favourable responses to these radio appearances, including many letters from foreign radio listeners.⁸⁴

At the beginning of August 1937 the klezmer orchestra left Kiev on its first concert tour. The tour, which would extend through the entire month, took them to Odessa, where they were scheduled to play 15 concerts. In fact, they were held over for two additional concerts. From there they were scheduled to go on to Moldova and Crimea, including the Jewish collective farms (Crimea and Kherson area).⁸⁵ A very interesting review of the ensemble’s performances, written by N. Levin in Odessa, appeared in *Der Emes*:⁸⁶

Jewish musical life in the USSR is on the move. In particular, a definite revival is being felt in the area of collecting and popularizing the Jewish folk song, with arrangements based on the sources of the rich Jewish folk music.

The Jewish folk song, the folk motif, is having a striking success in the performances of a number of gifted singers of our outstanding choral groups, and in particular the performance of the Ukrainian Jewish Kapelye. The treasures of this music are bringing in their wake a colossal practical benefit to our modern composers, the creators of Soviet Jewish music – the new, the Soviet, Jewish song.

Now, however, the question must be raised about leading and giving direction to the work that has been begun, with all its ramifications, so that the best of the folk music

should be collected and popularized and so that no foreign current, no genteel banalities, no religious mysticism, should be smuggled in under the banner of folk music.

In one of the largest venues, the Grinet Theatre in Odessa, which seats many thousands of people, the newly-organized Jewish Music Kapelye of Ukraine, the so-called 'Klezmer-Kapelye', has been appearing for a fairly long time and with considerable success.

The idea of organizing this unique *kapelye* has evoked much support and very lively interest among the general public. There has been gathered together here a group of talented, gifted musical performers, former klezmers, who for the last few years have been performing in restaurants, cinemas and the like. These men have brought with them a great abundance of folk melodies and wedding motifs and have come with their special approach to the performance of this music. With the closest collaboration of a series of well-reputed music activists, under the direction of the gifted musician and violinist *Rabinovich* [emphasis in original], these scattered and talented musicians have been united into a *kapelye* of Jewish folk music, and the *kapelye* is already obtaining recognition.

In the performance of this *kapelye*, however, we heard two programmes – a good one and a bad, unacceptable one. The first part of the programme consists of Jewish wedding melodies – *freylekhs*, *bazetsns*, a *sher*, and the like. In the performance of the *kapelye*, this rare klezmer music brings real joy and pleasure. The figure of the hunched, spat-upon, dried-out klezmer-boy is gone forever. Instead, a strongly-built, organized band with tens of instruments is playing – a real, big *kapelye* which however preserves in itself a number of the specific qualities of klezmer-band-playing. This *kapelye* produces its sound simply, in its full melodiousness, from the heart, monolithic, full of drive, without refined artistic devices, without musical fractions. The temperamental performance, the simplicity, captivates the listener and holds him. This is real folk temperament. It is the foundation on which this unique band has been built, and this is good.

It turns out, however, that there is a desire on someone's part to conduct dubious experiments, to imitate – though without understanding whom to imitate or how. And now comes the second, the 'imitative' part of the programme, which takes the *kapelye* down the wrong path. Instead of the whole, tried-and-tested folk motif, what we hear is a bungled patchwork job of melodies, joined together in so-called musical 'fantasies'. These 'fantasies' of any *bal-tfile* are performed solo with the accompaniment of the whole band, with great seriousness and pomp. Instead of the sound of a violin, all of a sudden we hear a sound-parodying instrument. The violin scatters here a hiccup, there a moan, a feminine whine, a choked-back cry of delight. This evokes genuine repugnance. This musical joke, which is offered with deep meditation, is absolutely unsuited to this ordinary-folks' *kapelye*.⁸⁷ Also the attempt to foxtrot or foxtrotize this or that folk motif must be considered unsuccessful.⁸⁸

The Ukrainian Jewish Folk Music Kapelye was formed in order to give the listener, in an accessible form and with the whole temperament of Jewish folk music, what is best and genuine in Jewish national music. On this artistic path the *kapelye* has already received from the broadest masses the recognition it deserves. And this is its real path. The Jewish musical public must help the *kapelye* perfect itself and grow further.

About two weeks after returning to Kiev, the klezmer ensemble appeared in a programme organized by the Jewish Culture House and the Regional Industrial Council, now at the 'Summer Place of the Printers', 17 Sverdlov Street, at 7:30pm on Tuesday, 14 September – 'the second All-City Anti-Religious Evening' for the Jewish workers of the industrial cooperative.

The programme is worth noting: a talk on the 'class-exploitative essence of the Jewish religion and the origin of the autumn religious holidays', followed by the appearance of the Jewish Soviet writers D. Hofshetyn, H. Polianker, E. Shekhtman and others. This 'anti-religious evening' was obviously being held in connection with the High Holy Days.

The artistic part featured the State Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Song, with the participation of a vocal soloist, Tatyana Vayntraub.⁸⁹ Here, for the first time we know of, they justified their official title of State Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Song.

Paradox of the Terror

To all appearances the klezmer orchestra was doing very well, but this was at a time when the unexpected was only to be expected. And it did occur. Some time later in the year the ensemble was abruptly dissolved.

They were scheduled to leave Kiev for Belorussia on 22 September for their second concert tour and to return in time for the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution on 7 November.⁹⁰ It is not clear whether the tour actually took place or whether it was cancelled before it could begin or at any point during its run. In any case, the organization was dissolved. But this was not to be the end of the story for it would soon be revived, albeit in a somewhat different form.

The re-organization was first announced in *Der Shtern*, 4 February 1938. The exact wording is significant:

Announcement

On the base of the former Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music there has been formed under the auspices of the Committee for Artistic Affairs a new Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Song under the direction of the composer Sh. Ye. Fayntukh. The ensemble will perform both Jewish music and the best examples of the music of the peoples of the USSR.

The essentials of what had happened can be inferred. The key to it is that Ukrainian party boss Postyshev lost his position in 1937 and was subsequently condemned for 'lack of political alertness'.⁹¹ 'Khvyliya was arrested in 1937 and disappeared soon afterwards'.⁹² The dissolution of the klezmer ensemble some time after 12 September 1937 (when the announcement of its second tour appeared in the newspaper) and its re-organization by the new commissariat, announced on 4 February 1938, undoubtedly reflects this purge – of Ukrainians in this case, not Jews.

The moment Khvyliya was arrested, all his previous cooperation became a liability. In the dog-eat-dog atmosphere of Stalinist times, it was already a well-established custom to blame all 'problems' on whoever had been purged most recently; 'problems', the 'solutions' of which just happened to be what

the Jewish musicians wanted to do anyway, were 'blamed' on the most convenient newly unmasked 'enemies of the people' and 'wreckers of socialism'. The charges against Khvylya are almost irrelevant, as such charges were typically fictional and designed only to substantiate non-existent conspiracies. That they had nothing to do with the formation of the klezmer band is self-evident from the fact that the band was immediately reconstituted by his successor. But it had to be dissolved first.

As with the purge of the Institute for Jewish Proletarian Culture, we see how this purge of the Ukrainian Commissariat for Artistic Affairs affected the world of Jewish music, but only in a way that the evidence will clearly show was minor. Quite unlike 1948–53, when official antisemitism was rampant and Jewish culture was directly attacked, the world of Soviet Jewish music was not a target in the late 1930s.

The re-organization corresponds closely with what we have already seen in the case of the Institute.⁹³ When the Institute's founder and a few of its leading lights were arrested, it was 'closed for re-organization'. Greenbaum points out that after re-opening in greatly diminished size as the Cabinet, the Cabinet was referred to as if the Institute had never existed: 'The philological section continued the old collection *Afn Shprakhfront* ... but numbered it anew, as if no previous collection by that name had ever existed!'.⁹⁴ Similarly, the Ensemble for Jewish Folk Music and Song was referred to as if it had never existed before February 1938. For example, a press item of 30 January 1939 on a 'creative encounter' with the Ensemble in which Beregovsky was present, stated: 'Aside from the fact that the ensemble has been in existence scarcely a year in all, it has already matured quite creatively and has the full right to existence and support'.

The re-organized ensemble in Soviet Jewish musical life

How did the re-organization change the ensemble? At the very least, it installed an artistic director, Solomon Evseevich Fayntukh (1899–1985); further increased the instrumental personnel; added a male and a female vocalist; and commissioned a new repertoire from Jewish composers as well as composers of other nationalities. No doubt there were some administrative and financial changes. The budget must have been increased.

That the band would now play a definite role in the development of Soviet Jewish music is hardly a surprise. We noted earlier that this was a precondition of its existence – that 'building socialism' had to be the rationale for any legitimate action in society. The band could help build a Soviet Jewish repertoire because at the moment it had none. One of the composers who wrote for it was Zinoviy (not to be confused with Grigoriy) Kompaneyets. Kompaneyets, who said he first learned of the ensemble from an enthusiastic

report by his friend Dmitri Kabalevskii, evidently knew it only in its re-organized form. Reminiscing nearly 50 years later he states:

At the beginning, the orchestra had no repertoire at all. No one anywhere had written music for the collective. There was not one note written down. Nor did they inherit any written repertoire.⁹⁵ The small-town klezmer were in the musical sense, as a rule, illiterate.⁹⁶ The only thing they had was a soul, and they put it into their performance. The ensemble was able, by the way, to make use of the folklore transcriptions which the Cabinet for Jewish Folklore had prepared under the direction of Moïshe Beregovsky. I pronounce this name with great respect: no one performed a greater service for Jewish music than this modest man.

Working to assemble a repertoire, the collective came to the idea that a folk concert could not be put together with the resources of a symphony orchestra alone, however good it may be. To avoid monotony in the programme, the orchestra began commissioning new works from composers. This was possible in Kiev, where a solid group of composers was gathered. Fayntukh convinced them to help the ensemble. The pieces, as a rule, were not large, e.g. a *freylekhs*, a *nigndl*, a *dobranitsh* ... a *volokhl*, fantasies, rhapsodies.⁹⁷

Kompaneyets notes one more detail that would come to be associated with Soviet folk ensembles: 'The members of the klezmer orchestra would appear not in the traditional rags and tatters, not with beard and sidelocks, but in frock coats. This was the orchestra's way of emphasizing the glorious vocation of folk music.'⁹⁸

Yet along with these new features, *the ensemble continued to perform traditional klezmer repertoire in traditional style*. And we know from Kompaneyets and other sources that the re-organized band was still popularly known as the 'klezmer orchestra' and that Rabinovich was still violin soloist. Z. Kompaneyets recalls:

It had in its repertoire both folkloric and professionally-composed works ... The klezmer-orchestra consisted of 25–30 musicians of the highest qualification, who were capable of masterfully performing both folkloric works and symphonic music. It must be said that many of these musicians were children of *shtetldike klezmer*. This is very important inasmuch as they knew exactly how to put on this manner and character of playing, which people were already beginning to forget.

Naturally, the primitive has its good points. But without means of enrichment we would not have had any high musical culture. I remember the reckless abandon with which the orchestra members performed the musical works that were the audience's favourites.⁹⁹

Two further events illustrate the paradoxical combination of pluses and minuses characteristic of the time. On the one hand, a Jewish section was formed within the Ukrainian Composers' Union in early 1938. One of the main problems that the Soviet Jewish musical community wanted to address was the lack of 'mass songs' in Yiddish.¹⁰⁰ Yet at just this time the Ukrainian Radio Committee virtually eliminated its Jewish programming, which had

been quite extensive in the previous year, when the klezmer ensemble, among many other performers, had appeared in radio broadcasts.

In an open letter to the Ukrainian Radio Committee printed in *Der Shtern*, Ch. A. Orlov, who identified himself as Party Appointee of the Grand Hotel in Kiev, specifically mentioned the klezmer ensemble:

I think I express the views of thousands of other working people when I demand that the Ukrainian Radio Committee resumes radio broadcasts in Yiddish, in a systematic way and as frequently as possible. There is every possibility to do this. In Kiev there is a large cultural base: a considerable number of Jewish Soviet writers, composers, a Jewish State Theatre, the Yidvokans ensemble, the Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Song, etc.¹⁰¹

A 'public inspection' of the re-organized klezmer ensemble was held on 12 May 1938 at 1 o'clock in the afternoon in the Great Hall of the Kiev State Conservatory. The ensemble was scheduled to perform instrumental works by Kreyn, Veprik and Shipovich as well as folk songs in arrangements by the composers Fayntukh, Sandler, Shkolnikov, Levin and Nakhabin.¹⁰²

In this, perhaps the first public appearance of the re-organized ensemble, we clearly see three of the main features that set them off from their previous form: they now had an active official musical director; they performed music by Soviet Jewish composers based on folk motifs, as opposed to pure instrumental folk music; and they included vocal numbers. The singer or singers are not named here, but may well be the Tatyana Vayntraub and a certain Bakov who are later known to have been the Ensemble's vocalists.

In May 1938 the ensemble gave a series of concerts in Kiev. One of these was held on 12 May at the Jewish Culture House as part of 'a big mass evening dedicated to the tenth anniversary of Birobidzhan and the fourth anniversary of the Jewish Autonomous Region'. After that the orchestra was to leave on a concert tour of various cities of Ukraine and Crimea.¹⁰³

On 8 July they appeared 'with great success on the stage of the First of May Garden in Kiev. The ensemble performed a rich programme of Jewish folk music'.¹⁰⁴

During the day on 16 July, shortly before leaving on their first concert tour since re-organization, in the building of the Kiev Jewish State Theatre a 'creative encounter' took place between the Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Song and the collective of artists from the Moscow Jewish State Theatre who were on tour in Kiev at the time. Also present at the encounter were writers, composers from Kiev and representatives of the press. According to the press report by A. Khontshin:

The ensemble demonstrated the best examples of their work for the guests. The artistic leader of the ensemble, the composer Comrade Fayntukh, told the GOSET members about the creative path of the newly-organized ensemble. Comrade Fayntukh called for assistance in the creative development of this orchestra of Jewish symphonic music.

The next to speak was Meritorious Artistic Activist, GOSET composer Lev Mikhailovich Pulver. He analyzed the musical numbers that the orchestra had performed, emphasizing the positive and negative sides of the ensemble. Only in our happy homeland, in the Soviet Union, concluded Comrade Pulver, could the dream of creating such an ensemble come true. We musicians and composers must take an effective part in its work.

People's Artist of the Republic Solomon Mikhailovich Mikhoels gave a talk rich in content: 'I have listened with great enjoyment to the ensemble's performance. The creation of this ensemble, which is not only the first in the Soviet Union but the only one [of its kind] in the world, should be warmly greeted. Around the ensemble must be grouped the best Jewish composers and it must include in its repertoire the best works of Jewish folk music and songs. It is also necessary to expand its roster of performing musicians.'

This encounter will without doubt have a great effect on the further creative work of the Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Song.¹⁰⁵

Further public appearances

On 21 July 1938 the ensemble set off on tour. It was announced that they would perform in Crimea (Simferopol, Sebastopol, Yalta, Yevpatoria and Kerch as well as at a number of health resorts). From there they would go to the Ukrainian cities and towns of Odessa, Nikolayev, Kherson, Kalinindorf, Berdichev, Zhitomir and Khorosten.¹⁰⁶

On 4 September 1938 a press report in *Der Shtern* noted their return to Kiev and gave this account of the tour:

In the course of five weeks the ensemble gave 25 concerts in Simferopol, Yevpatoria, Yalta, Simeiz, Kerch, Odessa, Kherson, Kirovo and Kalinindorf. The ensemble had a warm encounter with the Red Army and the command personnel of the Red Flag Crimean Division, which moved the latter to write a note of thanks to the group. The ensemble's concerts met with success everywhere. The ensemble serviced 40,000 concert-goers.

To the work of the ensemble have been attracted a series of new, highly reputed composers. The composer Z. Kompaneyets is writing for the ensemble a *filite* [apparently a misprint for *syuite* (suite)] 'The Jewish Wedding'; the composer Shekhter a suite on Jewish folk motifs; the composer Gnesin a quintet on old Jewish melodies; and others.

In the very near future the ensemble will leave for its second tour of Ukraine.¹⁰⁷

On the evening of Sunday, 11 December 1938 the ensemble performed at the Jewish Culture House as part of a 'big evening in connection with the pogroms against Jews in Fascist Germany'. On 15 December they left for a two-week tour of the Voroshilovgrad District to perform at 'events, clubs and mines'.¹⁰⁸ The report noted that: 'The ensemble's repertoire also included works of music and song in the languages of the peoples of the USSR: Ukrainian, Russian, Georgian, Armenian and others.'¹⁰⁹ An item in *Der Shtern* of 6 January 1939 noted their return to Kiev.¹¹⁰

In late January 1939 the ensemble participated in a 'creative encounter' with 'a number of writers and artistic activists' at the Writers' House in Kiev.¹¹¹

The evening was opened by the Ukrainian poet L. Pervomayskii. The ensemble performed a series of works by Soviet composers, such as Shipovich's Suite on Jewish Themes, Kompaneyets's Rhapsody, and Pulver's Suite from '200,000'. Accompanied by the orchestra, Tatyana Vayntraub, the ensemble's female singer, sang a number of vocal numbers.¹¹² She performed a number of Jewish folk songs in Fayntukh's musical accompaniment, as well as several Soviet Jewish songs. The Soviet lullaby made an especially good impression (text: Vaynerman; music: Fayntukh).

After the concert portion, a lively exchange of views took place. Comrades D. Hofshsteyn, M. Talalayevsky, Vilensky (composer), Beregovsky (Director of the Folklore Section of the Cabinet of Jewish Soviet Culture) and Kompaneyets (composer) spoke.

In their statements, they all emphasized that the existence of this ensemble was an important factor in the cultural life of our country and that only thanks to the correct Leninist-Stalinist nationalities policy could such a valuable creative collective come into being. The goal of the ensemble is to acquaint the working people with Jewish folk music, and the closer the ensemble stays to the source of Jewish folk music and song, the more valuable will it be for us.

Aside from the fact that the ensemble has been in existence scarcely a year in all, it has already matured creatively and has the full right to existence and support.

There has been much talk about how the ensemble ought to interpret the Jewish folk song. It has especially been emphasized that one ought not to agitate the folk song only in its primitive form. The composers must arrange the song for the ensemble, preserving its social and artistic essence and its folk atmosphere.

The ensemble must enrich its repertoire, more widely including the Jewish lyrical song and the song of everyday life [*shteyger-lid*]. Many present pointed to a weak spot in the ensemble's work: the proportion of various groups of instruments is not what it ought to be, and this makes itself felt at times in the musical performance. The string section of the orchestra must certainly be enlarged.

The ensemble seldom appears before the broader Soviet public. It ought to give public concerts as much as possible, to build up a closer creative contact with the concert-goer.

At the end the artistic director of the Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Song, the composer Fayntukh, appeared. He gave thanks for the warm reception and for the friendly criticism, which will help raise the creative work of the ensemble to a higher level.

Comrade Fayntukh rightly complained about the artistic directorship of the Soviet People's Commissariat of the Ukrainian SSR, which is not demonstrating proper attention to the ensemble. The ensemble does not have its own building, and this is very much making itself felt in all its work.

In June and July 1939 the ensemble played 22 concerts in the Dniepropetrovsk, Zaporozhia, Odessa and Nikolayev districts of Ukraine to a combined audience of 25,000.¹¹³ Their two concerts in the Nay-Zlatopol Jewish Autonomous District, an area of Jewish collective farms, were reviewed for *Der Shtern* by Chaim Malamud under the title 'A Valuable Ensemble':¹¹⁴

Not long ago the State Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Song under the artistic direction of composer S. Fayntukh visited the Nay-Zlatopol district.

The two concerts the ensemble gave were transformed into a great cultural festival.

At the second concert (the first took place on a rainy day) hundreds of people from the collective farms of the district came together in automobiles and wagons. The summer theatre was overfilled. From the other side of the fence a peculiar sort of loge seats were improvized on the trucks. The ensemble evoked great interest among the concert audience. The concerts were very successful.

The success of the ensemble comes from its accessibility, its *folkstimlekhkayt*. The merit of artistic director Comrade S. Fayntukh consists of the fact that he has not gone down the path of least resistance – to support the folklore in its raw, primitive visage – but has utilized the rich folk motifs to create musical works that, in truth, are highly artistic.

The Suite, brilliantly performed by the ensemble, the Rhapsody and other completely serious works overflow with folk motifs and tender lyricism and are very near and accessible to the audience. They sense in [these compositions] something that is their own, that belongs to them, but in a new, finer and nobler form. It goes without saying that when the orchestra plays its *Freylekhs* and *Dobrinotsh* it makes the audience want to sing and dance along.

It was a very right thing for the ensemble to have done, to bring vocal performances into its repertoire. The soloists Bakov and Vayntraub with their songs about Stalin and their various other folk songs are very well received by the audience.

We wish here to point out the performance of the old musician Comrade Rabinovich, particularly his *Doina* and *A Freylekhs*.

In the days when the ensemble was in Nay-Zlatopol, the District Party Commissariat arranged an encounter of the District Party activist cadres with the ensemble.

In mid-July the ensemble returned to Kiev, where they gave two concerts at the First of May Garden on 17 and 18 July.¹¹⁵ Although this is the last definite notice of their activities that I have been able to find, the ensemble seems to have survived into 1940.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

In their reconstruction of the 1937 recording sessions, Ottens and Rubin¹¹⁷ try to look into the minds of Rabinovich and the other musicians, to imagine what they were thinking. These fictional reminiscences about the good old days of traditional weddings bear a striking resemblance to a sad piece written many years earlier by Israel Rabinovich (no relation) describing the musings of an old 'heymishe klezmer' who finds himself in 'Jazzland' (North America between the world wars).¹¹⁸ Israel Rabinovich knew whereof he wrote: although he would have a successful career as a Yiddish writer, he left Belorussia in 1911 as a 17-year-old *badkhn* and klezmer violinist. Opportunities for the traditional folk arts of the *badkhn* or the traditional klezmer in 'Jazzland' were not much better than in the Soviet Union. In the land of the free, of course, it was the market, whereas in the land of socialism it was the Communist Party, that was stifling klezmer music.

Yet to put such musings into the minds of the Soviet musicians is less convincing. The 'heymishe klezmer' was an old man sitting alone with his violin in a darkened room. The members of the Soviet Jewish ensemble,

however, were survivors – professionals. Such thoughts may have come to them at times, but they could not afford to brood about the past. Like their friends and relatives who emigrated to America, they were stuck in a vision of the future. But unlike the American image of the klezmer as an embarrassing relic, the Soviet image symbolized all that was deemed best in Jewish culture. He was not only a product of the oppressed working class but a folk artist and an instinctive internationalist.

Soviet ideology, however, was radically transformative – it had to control and re-shape everything. To this degree it was simply a particular variety of the same modernism that created 'Jazzland'. A folk artist was a great thing, but he was a symbol of the old, of oppression. Now he could – he must – become a *real* artist. And just as in North America, would not the 'former klezmer', remembering the poverty and oppression of the past, welcome the opportunity?

For the time being, for a few years at least, Soviet Jewish composers could hear genuine klezmer music and try to figure out how to 'develop' it. They could develop it, of course, but they could not improve on it – they could only turn it into something else. Is this not precisely the position that most of our contemporary klezmer musicians are in? Do they not feel some sort of ideological imperative, ill-defined though it may be, to be 'progressive'? Here, as in many other areas, the Soviets were ahead of their time. It is extraordinary to realize that I. M. Rabinovich, exponent of the old tradition in every fibre, lived long enough to become the leader of the first modern klezmer band – nearly 40 years before the start of the 'klezmer revival'.

NOTES

- 1 See Jeffrey Wollock, 'European Recordings of Jewish Instrumental Folk Music, 1911–1914', *ARSC Journal* (Association for Recorded Sound Collections), Vol. 28, No. 1, Spring 1997, 36–55.
- 2 Rita Ottens and Joel Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik* (Munich: Bärenreiter, 1999). See Prologue, 'Ein Klezmer-Orchester für Väterchen Stalin' (pp. 15–18), and the opening chapter, 'Jüdische Kultur im Stalinismus' (pp. 19–37).
- 3 Rita Ottens and Joel Rubin (comps.), *Oytsres – Treasures: Klezmer Music 1908–1996* (Wergo SM 1621–2, 1999), 24–27.
- 4 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*. References (p. 18) to 'culture houses', 'workers' clubs' and official 'public inspections', for example, smack of authenticity but also seem misinterpreted.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 38–39; *Oytsres*, 27–28.
- 6 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 26–27.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 26–27.
- 8 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 18–17.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 18, 27–28.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 28.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 30.

- 13 A point already touched on by Gennady Estraiikh in his review of the book in *Forverts*, 31 December 1999.
- 14 Secondary sources often state that all Yiddish schools were closed in 1938. Most were, but it appears that a significant number were still operating after that year, and in 1939 new ones were opened in the annexed territories of eastern Poland and the Baltic republics. See Elias Schulman, *A History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union* (1971), 155–60.
- 15 Pragmatic considerations, however, made it necessary to establish a new Yiddish newspaper, the *Byalistoker Shtern*, after the annexation of eastern Poland in late 1939.
- 16 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 28.
- 17 Arkady Vaksberg, *Stalin against the Jews*, transl. by Antonina W. Bouis (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 83–102.
- 18 This was not a sudden development. Recently discovered evidence traces the beginnings of official antisemitism to 1942. It increased gradually until 1948. See Vaksberg, 134–39.
- 19 Beregovsky's 29-page Yiddish monograph of the same title would appear in an edition of 1,000 copies at the very end of the year. Parts of the printed version, particularly the introduction, clearly preserve the style of a lecture.
- 20 Skuditski was a co-worker with Beregovsky in the Folklore Section of the Cabinet for Jewish Proletarian Culture.
- 21 There is a photograph of this band in Beregovsky, *Yidishe instrumentale folks-musik* (Jewish Instrumental Folk Music) (Kiev: Farlag fun der Visnshaft-Academie fun FSSR, 1937), 15. For an English translation of this essay, see Mark Slobin (ed. and transl.), *Old Jewish Folk Music: The Collections and Writings of Moshe Beregovski* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 530–48. Twenty numbers from their repertoire, noted by B. Sakhnovsky, an amateur violinist who studied with some of them, are in Beregovsky, *Evreiskaia narodnaia instrumental'naia muzyka* (Jewish Instrumental Folk Music) edited by Maks Goldin (Moscow: Sovetskii Kompozitor, 1987).
- 22 A photograph of this band appears in Beregovsky, *Yidishe instrumentale folks-musik*, 17. The klezmer violinist Avrom-Yoshie Makanovetsky (1872–?) played with them as a young man.
- 23 Beregovsky, *Evreiskaia narodnaia instrumental'naia muzyka*, 27–28.
- 24 *Der Shtern*, 12 April 1937, 4. Ottens and Rubin say (*Klezmer-Musik*, 28) that before the First World War the composer and folklorist Joel Engel (1868–1927) had sought out Rabinovich when looking for manuscripts of Pedutser's compositions.
- 25 *Der Shtern*, 28 July 1937.
- 26 Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928–1941* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 441–42.
- 27 Esther Rozental-Shnayderman, *Oyf vegn un umvegn* (On Highways and Byways), Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv), 89–90, quoted in Chaim Sloves, *Sovetishe yidishe melukhishkay* (Soviet Jewish Self-Government) (Paris: Société d'Imprimerie Périodiques et d'Édition, 1979).
- 28 Avraham Greenbaum, *Jewish Scholarship and Scholarly Institutions in Soviet Russia, 1918–1953* (Jerusalem, 1978), 68.
- 29 Their fates were not learned until many years later.
- 30 Greenbaum, 68–69.
- 31 Cf Sloves, 210–12.
- 32 Greenbaum, 68.
- 33 Sloves, 295.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 276.
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 Rozental-Shnayderman, cited by Sloves, 90.
- 37 See Greenbaum, 69, 72–73.
- 38 Sloves, 315.
- 39 Greenbaum, 74. See p. 69.
- 40 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 27–28.
- 41 Zinoviy Kompaneyets, 'Tsvey epizodn' (Two Episodes), *Sovetish Heymland*, No. 9, September 1987, 136.
- 42 Mordechai Altshuler, 'Ukrainian–Jewish Relations in the Soviet Milieu in the Interwar Period', in Peter J. Potichnyj and Howard Aster, *Ukrainian–Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective* (Edmonton, 1990), 291–92, 297–99.
- 43 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 28.
- 44 Cf Beregovsky, 'Jewish Folk Music', in Slobin (ed.), 26–36.
- 45 This point is well illustrated in Eleanor Gordon Mlotek, 'Soviet-Yiddish Folklore

- Scholarship', *Musica Judaica*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1977–78, 73–89.
- 46 Stalin wrote it at Lenin's request.
- 47 Russian ed., 1934, 195. The full quote is: 'The development of cultures national in form and socialist in content is necessary for the purpose of their ultimate fusion into one common culture, socialist as to form and content, and expressed in one common language.'
- 48 That same month Stalin attended a performance of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, a work which had been in the repertoire for two years. A review in *Pravda*, 28 January 1936 entitled 'Chaos Instead of Music', which denounced this opera, is usually regarded as the official launching of socialist realism in music.
- 49 Lazar Kaganovich initiated a propaganda campaign in 1937–38 to emphasize heroic values of the Jewish past. Paradoxically, this move was linked to Stalin's growing emphasis on heroic values in Russian history. Just as Stalin used this theme as propaganda to defend the Soviet borders, so he was concerned to change the sole focus of the portrayal of the Jewish past from one of exploitation and abuse, given his aim of attracting Jews to Birobidzhan to defend Soviet borders against the Japanese, who controlled neighbouring Manchuria. See Yozef Sheyn, 'Yidisher teater in sovetn-farband' (The Yiddish Theatre in the Soviet Union), in *Yidisher teater in eyrope tsivishn beyde velt-milkhomes* (The Yiddish Theatre in Europe between the Two World Wars) (New York: Alvetlekhler Yidisher Kultur-Kongres, 1971), 129–148; and Nahma Sandro, *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theatre* (New York, Harper & Row, 1977), 241–42.
- 50 This tendency to take the melodies of Soviet Yiddish 'folk songs' and 'mass songs' straight from traditional *nigunim* (religious melodies) familiar to the people is perceptively discussed by Israel Rabinovich in his review of two of Beregovsky's published folk song collections. See his 'Yidish-muzikalisher folklor in sovetish-yidisher folkloristik' (Jewish Musical Folklore in Soviet Yiddish Folklorics), *Tsukunft* (New York), No. 46, February 1942, 111–15. The same phenomenon is discussed from the standpoint of the texts by Anna Shternshis, 'Sovetskii evreiskii pesenniy fol'klor' (Soviet Jewish Folk Songs), Preprint 25 (Moscow: Jewish Heritage Society, 1996) and other publications. On this phenomenon in Russian, see Frank J. Miller, *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudo-Folklore of the Stalin Era* (New York, 1990).
- 51 On the 'mass song', see Andrey Olkhovsky, *Music under the Soviets: The Agony of An Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), 157–70, 234–35, n. 26 and passim; and James Bakst, *A History of Russian–Soviet Music* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1966), 363. The best known Jewish example of such a song is 'Hey Dzhankoye'.
- 52 Gennady Estraiikh, 'Pyrrhic Victories of Soviet Yiddish Language Planners', *East European Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1993, 32.
- 53 *Der Emes*, 9 March 1937.
- 54 Interview (in Yiddish), 30 July 2000 with Moishe Loyev, who at that time was a student in the Kiev Yiddish Theatre Training School. Loyev supplied the date May 1937 before I had even asked.
- 55 N. Levin, 'Di ukrainer kapele fun yidisher folks-muzik' (The Ukrainian Jewish Folks Ensemble), *Der Emes*, 22 August 1937, 2; Ch. Malamud, 'A vertfuler ansambl' (A Valuable Ensemble), *Der Shtern*, 5 July 1939, 4; Kompaneyets.
- 56 His friend Professor Yakov S. Magaziner, who was very interested in Beregovsky's work, headed the violin department there. We learn from Beregovsky, *Yidishe instrumentale folks-muzik*, 202 that Magaziner came from a klezmer family in the *shtetl* of Zvenigorodka. As a boy he played with his father in the local *kapelye*. Magaziner did not get out of Kiev in time and died there at the hands of the Nazis in 1941.
- 57 In addition to his post in the Cabinet for Jewish Proletarian Culture, Beregovsky was (1937–41 and 1944–48) director of the Cabinet for Ethnography and Sound Recording in the Kiev Conservatory and reader in musical folklore in the faculty of musical history (Maks Goldin, 'A kapital verk "vegn yidishn muzikaln folklor"' (A Great Work 'On Jewish Musical Folklore'), *Sovetish Heymland*, No. 1, 1983, 107, n. 1). See also Ernst Zaltsberg, 'Moysey Beregovsky, 'Encyclopaedist of Jewish Folk Music in Russia', *East European Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 29, Nos. 1–2, 1999, 141–45.
- 58 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 15.
- 59 Liner notes to Rita Ottens and Joel Rubin, *Yikhes. Frühe Klezmer-Aufnahmen von 1907–1939 aus der Sammlung von Prof. Martin Schwartz* (1992) (CD), Tricent US-0179, n. 125: 'Beregovsky, who was very exact in his transcriptions of Klezmer melodies, seems not to have been concerned with ensembles and ensemble-playing'.

- 60 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 15–16, 25, take this at face value, assuming that klezmer ensembles no longer existed by the late 1920s. Certainly the context was very different, and no doubt they did not officially exist as klezmer ensembles, but it is certain that there existed ensembles that played klezmer music at Jewish weddings. It is significant that in his writings on Jewish instrumental music Beregovsky says far more about Rabinovich's grandfather than about Rabinovich himself, and that he does no more than mention the existence of the folk-ensemble. This reticence is explained by political reality, which at that time weighed more heavily on the urban intelligentsia committing themselves to writing than on musicians playing at private parties.
- 61 *Emes*, 1 March 1937, 4.
- 62 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 29.
- 63 Beregovsky, *Evreiskaia narodnaia instrumental'naia muzyka*, 202, no. 15.
- 64 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 15–16, 25.
- 65 Viktor Lenzon, 'A veteran fun der yidisher muzikalisher kultur' (A Veteran of Jewish Musical Culture), *Sovetish Heymland*, No. 4, 1986, 145–48, writes that in the days of the NEP (1921–28), many small privately-run restaurants, cafés and soup counters were opened. In the Jewish restaurants it was usual to find a small ensemble of four or five musicians playing, some of whom were quite talented. In Moscow in the early 1920s there was one such, a klezmer violinist named Barsky who, though he could not read music, delighted his audience by playing hundreds of Jewish melodies. The young composer Zinoviy Kompaneyets enjoyed accompanying him at the piano, supplying suitable harmonies and rhythms to the melodies on the spot. Lenzon notes that 'Barsky and other unique musicians, despite their lack of professional training, carried on the generations-old traditions of Jewish national music and planted the seeds of Jewish culture wherever they played'. When Stalin abolished the NEP, the only restaurants left were state-run and open only to foreigners with hard currency. But in 1934 the state revived restaurant life, and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University press, 1999), 93 mentions some of the more famous orchestras in Moscow such as Anton Ziegler's Czech group at the Metropole, the Muscovite jazzman Aleksandr Tsfasman and Odessa's Leonid Utesov at the National. At the London restaurant in Odessa in 1935 one could hear E. A. Baranovsky playing with a salon orchestra under the direction of Mitnik, or M. I. Dimitrenko with Grizotsky's Jazz Orchestra at the Red Restaurant. In Kiev in 1936 one could catch a guest performance of Osman Romansky's Gypsy Ensemble. In the later 1920s and 1930s the more expensive (first-run) cinemas in the larger cities often had orchestras performing in the foyers (L. M. Mikhailov and V. P. Budiak, *Adres moskovskogo kino* (The Address of the Moscow Cinema) (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1987), 245–47), including variety and jazz reviews.
- 66 In some issues this recording was credited to the 'State Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music of the Ukrainian SSR with Soloists Meritorious Artists of the Ukrainian SSR L. V. Kal'manovich and N. A. Vinyar'. It is re-issued on Ottens and Rubin's CD *Oytsres*.
- 67 True, the lines 'Since your husband will earn by the work of his hands, you should both be satisfied with what you can get' are vaguely reminiscent of the socialist maxim 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs'. But in any case it is perfectly consistent with the style and tone of a traditional *kale bazetsns*.
- 68 Ottens and Joel Rubin, *Oytsres*, 24.
- 69 With thanks to Anita Abraham Turteltaub, Michael Alpert and Kurt Bjorling. Translation: So says a *badkhn* before the wedding canopy: Oh, dear bride, what kind of custom is this, that the *badkhn* speaks with parables? I say to her that 'On this day the books are open.' Oh when a bride cries and weeps bitter tears, one ought to say, 'What shall we say and what shall we speak before the exalted name?' – Oh dear bride, now it's very worthwhile for you to weep, because you must weep now anyway. First of all, you are being freed from your sins, and second, you must remember that your father is not here with you. – And again, dear bride, I say to you that you must be sad today, because this is the day on which your father died; the angel is now knocking at the Master of the Universe's door and asking him why you have been left without a father. (Ay ay ay, suffering? about what?); Since your husband will earn by the work of his hands, you should both be satisfied with what you can get. Now I end my ethical precepts – go to the canopy with the bridegroom at this happy time. Congratulations! Musicians! A Vivat [a lively dance number] for the bridegroom! Congratulations!
- 70 *Der Emes*, 4 March 1937, 3 and 26 March 1937, 3.
- 71 The text of Boytre can be found in *Di goldene keyt*, No. 13, 1952, 5–43.

- 72 *Der Shtern*, 11 April 1937, 3.
- 73 *Der Emes*, 26 March 1937, 3.
- 74 *Der Shtern*, 22 July 1939, 4.
- 75 *Stempenyus Libe* was never printed (as noted in *Yidisher teater in eyrope tsvishn beyde velt-milkhomes*, Vol. 2, 378) nor is it listed under printed works of Loiter, Dobrushin or Sholem Aleichem. I have not yet located a manuscript or working script.
- 76 Moise Loyev (see n. 20, above) stated, without being asked, that the text used for the *kale bazetsns* came from the play *Stempenyu*. Loyev knew Kalmanovich personally. During the war the Kiev State Yiddish Theatre was evacuated to Tashkent. After the war the theatre returned to Kiev but in 1946 Khrushchev relocated it in Chernovits. There Loyev served as assistant director. He told me that Kalmanovich, who was ill during the last year of his life, died in Chernovits in 1946.
- 77 'On the initiative of the Committee for Artistic Affairs of the Soviet People's Committee of the Ukrainian SSR, the State Ensemble of Jewish Folk Music and Folk Song – the first in the Soviet Union – has been formed in Kiev' (*Der Shtern*, 28 July 1937); 'The working people of Odessa gave a very warm reception to the appearances of the first Jewish folk music ensemble in the Soviet Union' (*Der Shtern*, 4 September 1937); 'People's Artist of the Republic Solomon Mikhailovich Mikhoels [stated]: "The creation of this ensemble, which is not only the first in the Soviet Union but the only one [of its kind] in the world, should be warmly greeted"' (*Der Shtern*, 20 July 1938).
- 78 Beregovsky, *Evreiskaia narodnaia instrumental'naia muzika*.
- 79 *Der Shtern*, 17 April 1937, 4.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 3 February 1937, 4.
- 81 *Der Emes*, 9 May 1937.
- 82 Eda Beregovskaya, *Arfy na verbakh: Prizvanie i sud'ba Moiseia Beregovskogo* (Harps on Willow Branches: The Calling and Fate of Moysey Beregovsky) (Moscow and Jerusalem, 1994), 6–7.
- 83 *Der Shtern*, 12 May 1937, 4.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 28 July 1937, 4.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 3 August 1937, 4 and 4 September 1937, 4.
- 86 'The Ukrainian Jewish Folk Music Kapelye', *Der Emes*, 22 August 1937, 2.
- 87 The reviewer's meaning is not entirely clear. Literally, he is saying that the programme includes parodic medleys of liturgical-style meditative music ('fantasies of any *bal-tfile*') and that this is intended as a musical joke, which is negative and unsuitable. The use of specifically religious terminology (*bal-tfile* – a prayer-leader; *dveykes* – religious meditation) emphasizes the unsuitability of such material for this 'amkhodiker' ensemble (*amkho*, also a term used in liturgy, means 'ordinary Jew'). But it is possible that this is 'Aesopic' language, i.e. that the fantasies were termed parodies and criticized as a bad joke as a form of protection. I am inclined to think the answer lies somewhere in between – that they really were parodies but (like the old maskilic parodies of hasidic music) were seriously meant to provide something of the pleasure of genuine hasidic music (cf Yiddish, 'er geyt a khosid', i.e. 'he's playing the khosid'). This called for obligatory criticism, but the criticism really was 'Aesopic'.
- 88 This is also interesting. By 1937 the practice of playing Jewish music to the syncopated foxtrot rhythm was already common in the United States. Here we see that these 'former' klezmers, who had been playing for years in restaurant and cinema orchestras, were quite as capable of 'foxtrotizing' Jewish music as their American cousins.
- 89 *Der Shtern*, 12 September 1937, 4.
- 90 *Ibid.*
- 91 On Postyshev's last year in power and certain changes in his attitude, see Hryhorii Kostiuk, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine: A Study of the Decade of Mass Terror (1929–39)* (New York, 1960), 117–18. Expelled from the party and arrested in 1938, he died in prison or was shot on 10 December 1940 (Altshuler, 304, n. 72).
- 92 Volodymyr Kubijovyč (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* (Toronto, 1988), Vol. 2, 499.
- 93 Greenbaum, 68–69.
- 94 *Ibid.*, 73.
- 95 Note that Kompaneyets says virtually the same thing four times. I could easily have made a cut but I wanted the emphasis to come across. Kompaneyets knew perfectly well that they had a large folkloric repertoire in common.
- 96 A popular misconception. Beregovsky shows (1941, 429) that already in the nineteenth

century some klezmer could read and write music. However, they used written parts as an aide-memoire to acquire new repertoire, and for teaching purposes; in performance, if used at all, they served merely as cue sheets (Ivan Lipaev, 'Evreiskie orkesty (otcherk)' (A Survey of Jewish Orchestras), *Russkaia muzykal'naia gazeta*, No. 4, 1904, 103)).

- 97 Kompaneyets, 137.
- 98 When the Odessa State Yiddish Theatre brought *Stempenyus Libe* to Kiev in the summer of 1939, the reviewer criticized the actor Mansdorf for not being convincing in the role of Stempenyu, adding that it did not help that he was dressed as 'a klezmer-boy in the suit and tie of a touring concert musician' (*Der Shtern*, 22 July 1939).
- 99 Kompaneyets, 136, 137.
- 100 A conference of Jewish composers and poets was held in Kiev on 10 April 1938 by the editors of *Der Shtern* in conjunction with the new Jewish section of the Ukrainian Composers' Union. [present: Beregovsky; composers Kompaneyets, Fayntukh [of the UCU], Sheynin; Prof. Bilov, Spivak (literary critics); Fefer, Talalayevsky, Lipe Reznik, David Hofshetyn (poets). Reznik sharply criticized the Ukrainian Art Commissariat for its 'direction' of the amateur artistic activities in Yiddish ... Also participating in the debate were Comrades Tishlevich (Artistic Committee of the Soviet People's Commissariat of the Ukrainian SSR), Gontar, Hartsman, Perkovsky, Kozlovo and others ... Beregovsky stated: 'The situation with the Jewish Soviet mass song ... is very bad. Everybody knows it, but up to now no one has done anything to change it. We have more than once witnessed extremely talented singers (in the Kiev Jewish Culture House and elsewhere) appearing with cheap and even trashy songs. This is a shame and a scandal. We are aware of dozens of cases in cities and towns in which Jewish choirs are organized, operate for a while and then collapse because they are not given any good mass songs' (*Der Shtern*, 12 April 1938, 4).
- 101 Ibid., 15 August 1938.
- 102 Ibid., 10 May 1938, 4.
- 103 Ibid., 10 May, 4, 11 May, 4, 22 May 1938, 4.
- 104 Ibid., 11 July 1938, 4.
- 105 Ibid., 20 July 1938, 4.
- 106 Ibid., 17 July 1938, 4 Kalinindorf was a Jewish agricultural colony.
- 107 Ibid., 4 September 1938.
- 108 In keeping with Stalin's custom of naming places after those currently in favour (and renaming them when and if they were demoted or purged), the city of Luhansk, near the easternmost border of Ukraine, was then known as Voroshilovgrad.
- 109 *Der Shtern*, 16 December 1938, 4.
- 110 Ibid., 6 January 1939.
- 111 Ibid., 30 January 1939.
- 112 With the ensemble under Fayntukh in 1939 Tatyana Vayntraub recorded *A kleyntshiker vintele* (A Little Breeze, a Jewish folk song arranged by Yoel Engel), matrix No. 8630 and *A Gantse Vokh* (A Whole Week), 8631. The following instrumental numbers are also known from that year: *Sher* (*Evreiskii Narodnyi Tanets*) (Sher: A Jewish Folk Dance), 8590; *Dobranitsh i Freylekhs* (*Evr. Nar. Tantsi*), 8689; and 'Rhapsody on Jewish Folk Melodies' by Z. Kompaneyets, Parts 1 and 2, 8637–38. I give this last title in English because the recording is known from a wartime British Decca release (my thanks to Mike Aylward, from whom I learned of the existence of this recording). The *sher* has been re-issued as Band 16 on Ottens and Rubin, *Oytzres*.
- 113 *Der Shtern*, 18 July 1939, 4.
- 114 Ibid., 5 July 1939, 4.
- 115 Ibid., 18 July 1939, 4.
- 116 According to *Sovetskie kompozitory. Kratkii biograficheskii spravochnik* (Soviet Composers: A Short Biographical Handbook) (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1957), 591–92, Fayntukh was 'director and conductor of a symphonic ensemble in Kiev' from 1937 [sic] to 1940. Failure to specify that this was a symphonic ensemble of *Jewish folk music* is hardly surprising given the period of publication.
- 117 Ottens and Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik*, 17.
- 118 The resemblance may not be deliberate but the book in which Israel Rabinovich's piece appears is listed in their bibliography.