

THE JEWISH LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

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INTRODUCTION

Jewish labor on the North American continent is now so intimate and integral a part of the general American labor community that it is not possible to trace its outlines with precision and determine where its borderlines begin and end. Ethnic factors, the accidents of geographic and industrial grouping, but more than anything else, the traditions and conceptions of social, political and economic morality give Jewish labor its distinguishing characteristics.

The trade unions, established by Jewish workers, are the basic component of the somewhat shapeless but very lively entity termed the Jewish Labor Movement. These unions have not only been fully accepted but given places of distinction in the general labor movement of America. They are also highly regarded by both the community and government as instruments for the advancement of public welfare.

This was not the case when Jewish immigrants made their imprint on American labor and the American economy. There was a time when Jewish workers were considered "impossible" to organize and hostile to the aims and aspirations of trade unionism. Locals of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, the Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators, the Journeymen Tailors' Union, the Hat Finishers' Association and other unions refused to admit Jews, not because of an invidious hostility toward them, but because of an erroneous impression that Jews disliked unions, did not want to accept the discipline that went with them, were used to a lower standard of living and, therefore, willing to work below the established wage scales, thus undermining the conditions for which the unions had fought so arduously. With similar error, some Jewish trade unionists at one time held that it was impossible to organize women workers, Italian workers, or workers of native American stock—prejudices which only the course of experience has managed to overcome.

When, finally, Jewish workers did succeed in downing the prejudice against them and even managed to build unions of their own, they were confronted with a double handicap: they were both Jews and trade unionists. A celebrated case in point was the dictum of a magistrate in New York who sentenced a picket to jail in the shirtwaist strike of 1909. In proclaiming the sentence Magistrate Olmstead stated: "You are on strike against God and Nature, whose firm law is that man shall earn his bread in the sweat of his brow. You are on strike against God."

I. THE SWEATSHOP

The sweatshop was the industrial locale in which Jewish workers in the needle trades in the eighties, nineties and 1900's earned their bread by the sweat of their brow. The sweatshop was generally not a shop at all or, at least, not a plant designed and equipped for industrial production. Often, it was no more than the tenement residence of the entrepreneur, himself only one stage removed from the poverty and misery prevailing among his employees. The New York State factory inspector, in his Annual Report for 1893, stated that "the cloak trade, which is a distinct branch of manufacture, relies almost solely upon tenement and sweatshop workers." A typical shop as he described it was that "of a cloakmaker, who used one room for his shop while the other three were supposed to be used for domestic purposes only, his family consisting of his wife and seven children. In the room adjoining the shop, used as a kitchen, there were a red-hot stove, two tables, a clothes rack, and several piles of goods. A woman was making bread on a table upon which there was a baby's stocking, scraps of cloth, several old tin cans, and a small pile of unfinished garments. In the next room there was an old woman . . . walking the floor with a crying child in her arms."

A shop in which women's dainty undergarments were made could be found in the back yard of a livery stable on the East side of New York. Girls arriving at work had to make their way to the shop over piles of manure, the stench of which in summer was hard to endure.

Many of the tenement shops were the residences not only of the contractor but also of some of his employees, for rarely was there a family among the immigrant population that could afford to pay its rent without the aid of one or more boarders. Those in a position to maintain a residence out of their own incomes still frequently accepted lodgers, feeling a moral compulsion to give at least temporary asylum to a rela-

tive or *landsmen* newly arrived from the old country. The folding cot and upholstered couch which at night served as beds were standard equipment in many a shop, even more so than the sewing machine. It is a revealing commentary on the state of the needle trades in the eighties and nineties that sewing machines were supplied not by the employer but by the workers. An employee changing jobs would have to trundle his machine from shop to shop. When electricity replaced foot power, workers were generally charged the cost of the current. They also had to supply their own needles and thread, and so widely accepted was this custom that when one of the early unions of Jewish workers, the Capmakers' Union, demanded that employers supply machines and findings, there were workers who objected to the demand. "What will we do if the boss gives us bad machines and poor thread?" they asked. "We won't be able to produce as much as we do with our own materials, and our wages will suffer."

Hours and wages were on a par with other conditions of work in the sweatshops. In New York City the hours in "inside" shops were generally sixty per week. In the "outside" shops, in the tenement residences of the contractors, they were whatever the human system could endure. During the busy season, there was no limit whatever to the number of hours, and men would frequently snatch a few hours of uneasy sleep on the bundles of cloth and unfinished garments in the work room in order to set to work before dawn the following day. Five o'clock was the commonly-accepted starting time, and nine in the evening found the shop still busy.

The wages were those established by an intensely competitive labor market. Skilled craftsmen earned as much as twelve dollars a week in the cloak trade in 1885, but learners and apprentices usually had to be satisfied with nothing or next to nothing until they were "broken in." Among the great tides of Jewish immigration that reached the shores of the United States,

there were many apprentices eager for the opportunity of acquiring a trade, so that the wages of the previous arrivals were constantly in danger of being lowered. "In explaining these conditions," a historian of the needle trades relates, "investigators generally took the view that the sweatshop was the result of the inferior standards introduced by the immigrants. Some even declared the sweatshop to be a special Jewish institution explicable by the racial and national characteristics of the Jewish workers . . ."

However, the sweatshop was neither a Jewish nor an immigrant invention. It already existed in the British textile mills—not only for native Englishmen or adult workers, but even for children. In the United States, too, the steel industry was one huge sweatshop, grinding the workers with exhausting toil twelve hours a day, seven days a week.

Moreover, for correct appraisal, it must be noted that the sweatshop in the "Jewish" trades was not a place of unrelieved misery. Social contacts and concern for one another's personal problems eased the toilsome day. Hours were long, and yet workers found time to attend night school, preparatory schools and even institutions for higher education. Many of the men who later gained eminence in the professions were graduates of shirt factories, cap shops and cigarette factories. Wages were low, and yet Jewish workers managed to save enough money to make at least a down payment on a *shifskarte*, a steerage ticket to bring their families into the country. The boarders slept on folding cots, two and three to a room; they breakfasted on stale rolls and cups of coffee, and sustained themselves on the free lunch of the beer saloon or the hash of a ten-cent meal; they walked miles from their homes to the shops and back in order to save carfare; they scrimped on clothing and shoes. But gradually they accumulated the few dollars necessary to establish homes of their own for their newly-arrived families.

The poverty, the long hours, the sweat-

shop were landmarks of this period. No less significant, however, were the social and cultural strivings of the Jewish immigrant workers. It is impossible to give an adequate account of the economic history of the Jews in the United States, or of the Jewish labor movement, unless the story of the great social and cultural stirrings is told together with that of the trade unions. For among Jewish immigrants in the United States, the limited and fairly personalized interests of trade unionism walked hand in hand with the selfless idealism of the political and social movements seeking the betterment of human existence.

II. EARLY SOCIAL STRIVINGS

An appraisal of the Jewish labor movement in the United States must take into account first, the Socialist and radical ideologies and emotional attitudes which grasped the imagination of the immigrants who thronged to the new land; second, the cultural strivings which produced the Yiddish press, theater and literature, and third, the organizations out of which grew the powerful trade unions that eventually formed the backbone of the Jewish labor movement. Chronologically, one element may at one time or another have been ahead of the others, but in historical perspective it can be said that Jewish labor developed thus: first, there were the politico-economic philosophies; second, the cultural ascent and third, the development of the trade unions. Institutions such as the Workmen's Circle, the Jewish National Workers' Alliance, the People's Relief, the Jewish Labor Committee, and many other temporary and permanent organizations arose together out of the same milieu, each contributing its share of thought, activity or confusion to the movement, all of them making Jewish immigrant life in the United States richer and more colorful.

Jewish mass immigration into the United States came in two tides. The first reached its peak in the eighties and nineties; the second, in the decade between 1904 and the beginning of World War I. Each brought

different sections of the Jewish population. Amongst the first group a large number came from the depressed areas of Romania, Hungary and Austrian Galicia, where they had suffered not only from discriminatory laws but also from economic deprivation. In their new homeland the immigrants sought bread even more than freedom. However little there was, it was still more than they would have had if they had stayed in the communities from which they now fled. The sweatshop provided work and some kind of livelihood. If one worked hard enough, was alert and took advantage of the opportunities the Golden Land offered, one could prosper and then send for one's family and relatives. Slack seasons and economic crises were disastrous, but they were, after all, visitations of an accidental nature against which the individual could do little. There were Socialists and Anarchists who preached strangely about uniting against the capitalist exploiters and oppressors, but their theories were difficult to apply to immediate experience. There were, of course, some unions, but few Jews belonged to them. The Jewish cloakmakers, shirtmakers, capmakers, cigar and cigarette workers felt, finally, that it would be a good thing to have a union in their own shops, and occasionally an entire shop spontaneously quit work or refused to show up in the tenement workroom. The employer, however, knew where to find the absentees. He would seek them out, haggle with them about new piece-rates for the season and come to an agreement. The shop would return to work. Soon the newly-formed "union" would disintegrate, and no trace of it be left by the end of the season.

Interspersed among the half-a-million Jews who came to the United States at the end of the last century, was a small number of intellectuals, most of them deeply aroused by the pogroms and outbreaks of virulent anti-Semitism in Russia. Among them were the founders of the *Am Olam* (Eternal People) group, who undertook to establish co-operative communities on the pattern of

Robert Owen's utopias. Difficulties caused by lack of experience led to internal frictions and broke up these colonies among the Jews just as among non-Jews, and the idealistic colonists returned to New York and other big cities to take up work in the sweatshops and to find fields for their social and cultural activities. It was these idealists who aroused in their immigrant neighbors the first impulse toward cultural and social advancement, and who provided both teachers and leaders for the labor movement that was to develop. Amongst the men who were to become outstanding in the Jewish community, there were such names as Alexander Harkavy, Abraham Cahan, Dr. Abraham Caspe, Bernard Weinstein, M. Zametkin, David Edelstadt, Dr. H. Solotaroff and N. Aleinikov. It was this group who, in the summer of 1882, formed the first Jewish Socialist organization in this country, the so-called Propaganda Society, whose aim was the propagation of the ideal of socialism among the Jewish masses.

The Propaganda Society, which functioned for about a year as a debating club, was in 1885 replaced by other organizations of the same character: first, by the Russian-Jewish Workers' Society, and then by the Jewish Workers' Society (April 1885). The latter, which came into being as a result of the merger of the Russian-Jewish Workers' Society with the Romanian-Galician Jewish Union, had the definite objective of forming trade unions of Jewish workers. This organization achieved considerable success, and by the end of the year it had founded 14 Jewish unions with a membership of 3,000. This was not an inconsiderable number in the days when the Knights of Labor, one of the first union organizations on a national scale, had passed its zenith, and the American Federation of Labor (its rival) had already begun its activities.

In 1886 the Jewish unions joined with the Socialist Labor Party and the general trade unions in support of Henry George who was running for Mayor of New York on the ticket of the United Labor Party. But since most of the immigrants were still

not naturalized, their support could merely be moral. In the same year, the Jewish Worker's Society organized the Anti-Sweating League to combat the sweatshop evil, and succeeded in enlisting the active help of a number of social reformers and liberal legislators.

This promising beginning remained static, and a year later the Jewish Workers' Society and its affiliated trade unions disintegrated as an economic crisis descended upon the land and factional strife among the Jewish radicals sundered their forces.

The chief groups among the radicals at that time were the Socialists and the Anarchists. The latter were numerically stronger for a time, particularly after the Haymarket tragedy in Chicago in 1886, when the persecution of Anarchists set in. The glory of martyrdom attached itself to them, and they organized a Propaganda Society in New York called the "Pioneers of Freedom." In 1887 the Jewish Socialists in their turn organized Branch 8 of the Socialist Labor Party to halt the influence of the Anarchists upon the ranks of Jewish labor. The chief activity of Branch 8 consisted of arranging weekly programs of lectures, debates and literary recitations—functions which were always well-attended by a populace hungry for diversion and cultural growth.

The Socialists, particularly in Branch 8, realized the importance of trade unionism more than the Anarchists; they felt that Socialism would remain an abstraction unless they could find a firm foundation of trade unionism on which to build their social edifice. In 1888, therefore, the Socialists moved to organize a federation of Jewish unions despite the fact that no such unions of any substance as yet existed. At a conference called in October of that year, only two unions joined the federation, the Jewish printers and the Jewish choristers. Also participating in that conference were representatives of the Hebrew Actors' Union, the Russian Branch 17 of the Socialist Labor Party, the *Deutsche Gewerkschaften*, and the editor of the German

Socialist publication, W. Rosenberg. The German Socialists were helpful both morally and financially. They themselves already had substantial unions, all of them Socialist in character, and were eager to help their Jewish comrades. The Jewish Socialists borrowed the name for their labor federation from the Germans, and the newly-formed organization came to be called *Di Fareinigte Yidische Geveerkshafte*, known to this day by that name and by its English version, *The United Hebrew Trades*.

It is a commentary on the times that the founding fathers of the United Hebrew Trades were Socialist Party spokesmen rather than trade unionists in the strict sense of the word. It is significant also that the trade union elements in the *Geveerkshafte* at their formation were not needleworkers who would have been representative of the greater number of Jewish immigrants, but printers and, of all professions, chorus men of the Jewish theater.

The officers elected at the founding conference of the *Geveerkshafte* were Bernard Weinstein, Recording Secretary, and Morris Hillquit (Hilkowitch), Corresponding Secretary. The former was to become the tireless organizer of Jewish workers in trade unions, and the latter, the outstanding Socialist thinker of the United States, a brilliant labor lawyer, and a man of unequalled acumen in the councils of the Jewish labor movement.

It was natural that the Socialists took the lead in organizing the unions that followed the first two into the fold of the *Geveerkshafte*. Among the early ones there were the shirtmakers. This union contained the very élite of the New York East Side intellectuals. Most of them drifted into this trade because it was simple to learn and easy to combine with their schooling and political activity. A shirtmaker worked by the piece or the dozen pieces, and so could stop work whenever he pleased. Quite a number of physicians, dentists, lawyers, poets and writers came from the ranks of the shirtmakers. Among the first members of

the Shirtmakers' Union were Morris Hillquit, M. Zametkin, Louis Miller, R. Lewis, I. Magidow, Dr. Liubitch, and others who were later to make their mark in the arts and professions.

The unions that quickly followed were the knee-pants makers, the pants makers, the actors, bakers and capmakers. The capmakers joined the *Geverkshaften* in 1889 after several rebuffs to the Hebrew Trades. They had already had a fairly well-knit union, but a disastrous strike that year had reduced their membership to no more than 30. These 30 were assembled at a meeting one evening, discussing the dissolution of their union. It was proposed that the small sum of money remaining in the treasury be donated to a hospital, but before a decision was taken a committee of the *Geverkshaften* entered and asked to be heard. Joseph Barondess, a man of persuasive oratory, was a member of this committee and at the conclusion of the deliberations, the capmakers decided to make one more try. A novel means was proposed to attract their fellow craftsmen to a gathering—a banquet. It was addressed by Abraham Cahan and other leading Socialists and was a huge success. The capmakers union was saved, and despite its limited size, it finally became one of the key organizations in the Jewish labor movement.

Simultaneously with this trade union activity the yeast of radical propaganda was fermenting among the immigrants. By a quirk of fate, those who sought to unite labor were themselves divided on matters of ideology. The Socialists stressed the value of political action. The Anarchists believed in a syndicalist state, a society consisting of economic rather than political units. Long and numerous debates showed that, on the whole, the sympathies of the majority of the immigrants tended toward the Socialists.

Both factions knew the value and felt the need of a press to propagate their views and to promote mass organization. Both lacked the funds, however, for anything more than

the sporadic appearance of their organs. In 1889 the Anarchists and Socialists permitted the logic of their common need to overcome their ideological differences and called a joint conference for the creation of an "impartial" labor newspaper. The conference lasted six days. On the last day the sessions ended in a bitter division and the Socialists left to hold a convention of their own. The existing unions joined them, and together they decided to raise a fund for a weekly publication. This was entitled *Di Arbeter Tsaitung* (The Workers' Paper) and made its first appearance in March 1890. The Anarchists, at their convention, made a similar decision, and their paper, *Di Freie Arbeter Shtime* (The Free Workers' Voice) began publication in July 1890. Philip Krantz was brought from London to edit the Socialist weekly. The Anarchists, in a bow to the idea of "impartiality," had two editors, R. Lewis for the Anarchist, and Isaac A. Hourwich for the Socialist editorial contents. A year later, the Socialists established a monthly journal in addition to their weekly, and in January 1892, *Di Zukunft* (The Future) made its appearance as a magazine of serious literary and theoretical discussion.

Meanwhile, unions of needleworkers became progressively stronger and a need was felt for an organ of expression and daily communication. At the same time, the immigration of Jews into the United States was on the increase, and as the newcomers crowded into the tenements and sweatshops they also created a demand for a newspaper that would speak their language and give expression to their trials and difficulties. In 1893, therefore, the Socialists founded a Yiddish daily, funds for which were raised from contributions by devoted party members and the then existing unions, among them also the German Socialist unions. October 14, 1894, saw the first issue of the *Abendblatt* (The Evening Journal), the first Socialist Yiddish daily in the United States. Its editor was Philip Krantz, and among its contributors in the days that followed were Abraham Cahan, Dr. Abra-



LEADERS OF THE JEWISH LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

1. Ab. Cahan (B. 1860, 2. B. Feigenbaum (1860-1932), 3. S. Yanofsky (1864-1939), 4. B. Weinstein (1866-1946), 5. M. London (1871-1926), 6. B. Schlesinger (1876-1932), 7. A. Shiplacoff (1878-1934), 8. B. C. Vladeck (1886-1938).

ham Caspe, Morris Vinchevsky, B. Feigenbaum, M. Baranov, and many others.

The *Abendblatt* enjoyed a moderate success, and nothing less than the tempests that shook the entire Socialist movement could precipitate the end which finally came three years later. The break came when the majority of Jewish Socialists and trade unionists found the domineering tactics of Daniel DeLeon, head of the Socialist Labor Party, intolerable. DeLeon, a Columbia University professor and fanatical Socialist, a man of considerable personal magnetism and a talent for factional politics, had quickly won a dominant position in the Socialist Labor Party, but his extreme intolerance gradually drove his adherents from him. He installed his own men in positions of leadership in the dying Knights of Labor. At the same time he conducted a violent campaign against the American Federation of Labor and its President, Samuel Gompers.

The Knights of Labor, with its ceremonials, passwords and symbols, eventually degenerated into a body practising common scabbing and corruption. When grafting officials of the Knights refused to abide by DeLeon's directives, he organized the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance against both the Knights of Labor and the A. F. of L. The Alliance made considerable headway in New York City and might have achieved stability had it not been for the intolerance of its leader. DeLeon's Alliance organized opposition unions which it did not hesitate to use even for outright strike-breaking. It was on this final violation of labor morals that the majority of Jewish Socialists broke with DeLeon. The opposition to him took formal shape when in January 1897, at an annual meeting of the publishing society in charge of the *Abendblatt*, 52 members walked out and established their own publishing association. It took them several months to raise the funds necessary for an independent labor organ, but on April 22, 1897, the paper was on the streets. It was called the *Forverts* (Jewish Daily Forward), and is

published to this day. Its editor was, and still is Abraham Cahan, a man who has left an indelible mark on the Jewish labor movement in the United States. The *Forverts* might also have succumbed in those early days, had it not been for the tenacity and self-sacrificing devotion of its founders and adherents. It served as an instrument of propaganda and enlightenment, both in labor and cultural affairs, among the Jewish immigrants. Socialist in its political and economic concepts, it did not limit its interests to purely labor or party dogmas, but extended its horizon to include every aspect of Jewish and American life.

With the sweatshop as the goad, the Socialists and Anarchists supplying the leadership and the *Forverts* acting as their mouthpiece, the unions of the Jewish immigrants began to take shape and to expand in form and influence. One other thing was needed to give impetus to the movement, the influx of a new wave of migration.

III. THE NEW MIGRATION

The new migration was different from the previous one in origin, numbers, and what may be termed quality. It began in 1903, reached a high peak in 1906 and 1907 and continued with floodlike impetus until World War I checked it. During those 12 years, over 1,270,000 East-European immigrants came to the United States. After the war, restrictive legislation, with its discriminatory quotas against East-European immigrants, reduced further additions to the Jewish immigrant population in the United States to a minimum, and by that process alone Jewish life and the Jewish labor movement were given a new direction.

The mass immigration of Jews which began in 1903 stemmed from Russia. It was a spontaneous reaction against the Kishinev pogrom, inspired and sponsored by the Tsarist Government, and against the whole system of discrimination and persecution in Russia. Among the new immigrants to the United States, there were thousands who

were imbued with revolutionary sentiments and Socialist ideals. In Russia and Poland they had belonged to the *Bund* (the Jewish Socialist Union), the *Poale Zion* (Labor Zionists), or to various other Socialist and anti-Tsarist groups, and they found an outlet for their spiritual and emotional energies in the Socialist and trade union movements in this country. Had the indigenous radical movement been large enough to absorb and acclimatize them to American conditions, their contribution to American labor and society could have been organic and immediate. But because the Socialist movement was both weak and itself dominated by groups of German and other foreign stock, the activities of the Jewish immigrants from Russia served only to strengthen the foreign tinge of the movement. Hostility to the conservative A. F. of L. was a matter of course with these new arrivals. They took the political and social liberties prevalent in the new country for granted and considered them hardly an adequate compensation for the economic hardships they suffered. They felt, therefore, that their ideologies provided the only answer to the problems that beset the laborer in the capitalist world.

It was natural then for Jewish immigrants to gravitate to groupings speaking the same language and having the same ideologies. Those with strong nationalistic aspirations formed a Socialist-Zionist Organization in 1903, and after the cleavage in 1905 they separated into Socialist-Territorialists, whose tenet was that any available territory would be suitable for the creation of a Jewish homeland, and the *Poale Zion*, who maintained that only Palestine could be the country for such a Jewish state. The Bundist elements formed their own group, maintained contact with the underground organization in Russia and Poland, and brought over from abroad a number of their party leaders. They also played a dominant role in the Jewish Socialist Federation which was formed in 1912, several years after the Socialist Party permitted the crea-

tion of autonomous "foreign" federations in its midst.

These rather narrowly-limited and partisan activities reflected the emotional attitude of only a small number of the hundreds of thousands who were arriving here with every incoming transatlantic boat. For every immigrant who was formally a member of the Socialist Party, there were scores who were sympathetic and responsive to its message. The *Forverts* made this message simple and effective. The enemy was the capitalist class. The union and the party were the weapons the working class needed to combat and defeat the enemy. The union and the party, the union and the ballot were labor's prime necessities, and whereas the ballot could be obtained only by a lengthy process of naturalization, the union was an objective that could be achieved immediately. The first decade of this century was, therefore, the period of the great upsurge of both unionism and Socialism among the Jewish masses of the United States.

IV. THE INTERNATIONAL LADIES' GARMENT WORKERS' UNION

Since most of the Jewish immigrants found employment in the apparel industry, it was natural that the Jewish unions should grow out of the needle trades. Already at the turn of the century, there was a nucleus of leadership, trained in the ways of trade unionism and the conducting of strikes. However, this leadership was frequently divided because of ideological and personal differences. Thus, in the case of the cloak-makers, while industrial developments favored the establishment of a strong union, the division between the adherents of Joseph Barondess, an organizer of the cloak-makers in 1890, and his opponents militated against it.

Disagreements among the Barondess adherents, the DeLeonists, the Socialists, the "Kangaroos" (Socialists who had broken away from DeLeon, but who had not joined the *Forverts* partisans), and the Anarchists held these labor-conscious groups within

the grip of wasted effort. That any union at all survived despite these differences is testimony to the innate need for organization as dictated by the logic of economics and the self-interest of the cloakmakers. By 1889 the cloakmakers possessed a union with a substantial but not yet commanding influence in the trade. It was called the United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers, Number 1 of New York and Vicinity. Its call for a national convention was heeded by cloak and skirt locals in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Newark and New York (including Brownsville, a section of Brooklyn, N. Y., to which Jewish immigrants thronged as they later did to the Borough of the Bronx). The convention assembled in New York in June 1900, selected the name of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (I.L.G.W.U.), adopted a union label, elected officers, and decided to affiliate with the A. F. of L.

The first officers of the I.L.G.W.U. were Herman Grossman, President, and Bernard Braff, Secretary. Great importance was attached to the union label which the men's clothing workers in the United Garment Workers of America had found to be an effective instrument of labor. In the field of women's apparel, however, the label proved disappointing.

Together with this union activity profound changes were taking place in the apparel trades. There was an expansion of the industry which affected every element in it, including the laboring masses. This was a prosperous period in the national economy, a boom that was to collapse with the crisis of 1907. Meanwhile, new and aggressive elements were forcing their way into the manufacturing end of the needle industry. They were not of great importance at first, these impecunious Jewish immigrants from Russia and Poland, small businessmen who, with courage, ambition and tireless application, started contracting shops and branched out into cloak and dress manufacturing of their own. They dispensed with every luxury, all the show and front that

the German-Jewish manufacturers used, and instituted a mass production system which, for the first time, gave American women attractive garments at a low cost. Little has been told about this facet of Jewish immigrant achievement, but it was to have a profound effect on both employers and employees in the needle trades.

The immediate result of the changes in the organization of the apparel industry was that they created a demand for labor and provided employment for the Jewish immigrants. By and large, these immigrants remained in New York, and the unceasing influx of learners and semi-skilled workers served to depress the wages and working conditions of those already in the shops. It is for this reason that at the beginning New York, the center of the garment industry, was weakest in union organization, whereas locals of the I.L.G.W.U. in San Francisco, Chicago, Cleveland and other cities were sufficiently strong to enforce a 9-hour day and maintain a stable dues-paying membership. In Cleveland, in 1903, two emissaries of the I.L.G.W.U., Benjamin Schlesinger and Joseph Barondess, even succeeded in making an agreement with one of the largest cloak firms in the country, Printz-Biederman and Co. Schlesinger, an ardent Socialist and *Forverts* adherent, came from Chicago and was elected President of the I.L.G.W.U. at its 1903 convention. The following year, however, when the western locals had been weakened by a series of lockouts and strikes, he was displaced by James McCauley, a cutters' delegate. John Dyche, who was later to become a powerful leader in the union, was elected Secretary at the same convention. In 1905 the presidency reverted to Grossman, and both he and Dyche were the chief officers of the I.L.G.W.U. until 1907, when Mortimer Julian, a favorite son of the cutters, was elected President, Dyche remaining Secretary. The following year differences between the cutters and the other crafts came to such a pass that the former walked out of the 1908 convention. Rosenberg was elected

President by a gathering that was despondent over the state of its union.

The story of the Jewish unions in the various trades now became one of strikes, uprisings and revolts, with their accompanying lockouts, blacklists and anti-union discrimination. A concerted drive against all unionism by the National Association of Manufacturers, the Anti-Boycott League and similar employer-groups reduced membership in the A.F. of L. and had its effect on the I.L.G.W.U., particularly on its locals outside New York; for employers in the needle trades interpreted the union shop as nothing else than a disguised form of closed shop, against which they were adamant.

V. INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD (I.W.W.)—DUALISM

At this time of general confusion a new labor group arose which diverted the attention and dissipated the forces of the newly-organized Jewish labor movement. This was the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) which had come from the West with a syndicalist ideology. It had inherited the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance with the traditions of DeLeonism, and set about organizing opposition unions in the Jewish trades. The I.W.W. did not hesitate to condemn even the idealistic cloak and shirt-waist unions as "reactionary" merely because they owed allegiance to the A.F. of L. The fact that their allegiance was no more than formal and that within the A.F. of L. the needle trade unions formed an intransigent bloc did not cleanse these unions of their "reactionary" taint in the eyes of the I.W.W.

This dualism reached a suicidal point in the case of the capmakers. This union emerged from a disastrous 13-week lockout strike in 1904 with its membership intact. Despite the fact that it was dominated by DeLeon adherents, it was formally affiliated with the A.F. of L. and received substantial aid from it as well as from the *Forverts* during the strike. Herman Hinder was the head of the capmakers at this time. When

the call came to send delegates to the founding convention of the I.W.W. in 1905, Hinder sent the editor of the capmakers' journal, William Edlin, as representative. The latter brought back a negative report, and the union decided against affiliation with the new group. A number of dissident capmakers thereupon joined the I.W.W. and established a local of their own. The opposition became progressively more virulent and, in 1907, a year of financial panic and depression, when the capmakers' union was fighting for its life and engaged in a number of desperate strikes, the I.W.W. dual union sent its members past the picket lines into strike-bound shops to capture the jobs of the strikers. This outraged not only the capmakers, but the entire Socialist movement.

Max Zuckerman, a man of unimpeachable integrity, who had replaced Hinder as Secretary, wrote a pamphlet exposing I.W.W. tactics and calling on the radical labor movement to rid itself of "a scab agency with a radical label." The sympathies of the Jewish workers, for whom the revolutionary vocabulary and extremist program of the I.W.W. had had a special appeal, thereafter drifted away from this organization. The Socialist Party to which the I.W.W. had allied itself invoked its own discipline against the organization and stated that it would bear no official or moral responsibility for any group preaching or practising violence as a form of social or industrial policy. The decline of the I.W.W. among Jewish workers dates back to this episode. Although it eventually disappeared from the scene of Jewish labor, it left behind a number of men and women who were to be of great service to the movement. Among them were Morris Sigman, later to become President of the I.L.G.W.U., and Joseph Schlossberg, who became Secretary-Treasurer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

The industrial depression of 1907-1908 was a crushing blow to the apparel trades and to the unions which were arising in the needle industry. The Boston cloakmakers'

local, which only one year previously had claimed that every worker in the craft was a member, disappeared from the scene of organized labor in 1908. The Philadelphia local of shirtwaistmakers dwindled to no more than a handful of members. The cloakmakers local in the same city, blaming its troubles on lack of support from the national office, seceded from the International. At the same time the differences between the Jewish cloakmakers and the cutters, who were largely of German and Irish stock, came to a head in the expulsion of the cutters' Local 10 from the International and the resignation of Mortimer Julian, a Local 10 leader, from the presidency of the I.L.G.W.U. The fortunes of the International then reached their lowest ebb, and despairing voices counselled that it join with the United Garment Workers or liquidate itself. Only 38 delegates answered the roll call at the I.L.G.W.U. convention of 1908 in Philadelphia, most of them from New York and the convention city. Chicago, Baltimore and Cleveland were not represented because the skeleton organizations that existed there could not finance the journeys of their delegates. Some of the New York delegates made the trip partly by interurban trolley cars, partly on foot.

Upon their return from the convention in the summer of 1908, the delegates found neither their spirits nor their fortunes improved by developments in the trade. The financial panic that had descended on the nation in 1907 was reaching its nadir. Abroad, in Russia, reaction followed the failure of the 1905 revolution. Immigrants swarmed from politically oppressed Russia into the United States where an economic crisis was rapidly spreading. Thus they found neither economic nor spiritual relief in their new homeland. Again voices were heard in the New York locals of the cloakmakers demanding that the ship be abandoned, for it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep her afloat. There was no money to pay for the rent of the headquarters of the I.L.G.W.U.. The salaries of the

officers were months in arrears with no prospect of ever being paid.

But the union survived to provide the machinery for the great developments which were to be set in motion the following year.

VI. THE GREAT STRIKES (1909-1910)

A realization of their own power that was finally to bring stability and permanence to the Jewish unions came to the needle trade workers during the extraordinary labor upheavals in 1909 and 1910. Until then the unionization of Jewish workers had proceeded by sporadic, and sometimes explosive, stages. Now it was to enter the stage of systematic, though no less explosive, development. Heralding the new period were several general strikes, which challenged the traditional relationship between employer and employee and established the right of workers to a voice and vote in regard to their wages and working conditions.

The first of these strikes was that of the ladies' shirtwaistmakers in 1909. In union nomenclature it has come to be known as the "Uprising of the 20,000," and, indeed, an uprising it was, even though the number of workers involved was nearer 15,000 than 20,000. It began with two localized shop strikes, one of them against an employer named Leiserson, the other against the Triangle Waist Company, a firm destined to enter into the folklore of Jewish immigrant life because of the tragic fire that occurred there in 1911. In October 1909, when the strikes were going badly because the firms involved were able to obtain their wares from other plants, the officers of the Waistmaker's Local 25 and the United Hebrew Trades began to toy with the idea of calling a "general" strike, one that is, embracing the entire industry. The local possessed neither membership nor funds at the time, and it was perhaps because it had so little to lose that its leadership was prepared to stake its all on what seemed to the International to be no more than a wild gamble. What the cautious leadership of the I.L.G.W.U. failed to take into account

was the spirit of restlessness that prevailed among the Jewish workers and the influence of Socialist thought, as disseminated by the *Forverts*, the newly-arrived Russian immigrants and the radical community of New York's East Side.

The spirit of revolt was abroad and the leadership of the United Hebrew Trades, imaginative as it was rash, used it to promote a total stoppage in all the shops of the industry. There followed a series of picket demonstrations around the Triangle shop, and the usual brutality on the part of the police and hired strikebreakers focused public attention on the waistmakers and gained thousands of members for their union. The tension rose and reached its climax with a meeting in Cooper Union which was filled to capacity and overflowed into the neighboring Beethoven Hall, Manhattan Lyceum and other auditoriums. The meeting took place on November 22, 1909, and the list of speakers was significant. B. Feigenbaum, Socialist theoretician and feature writer of the *Forverts*, was named Chairman, and his instructions were to keep the audience within moderate limits, for no one wished to assume the responsibility for so drastic a step as a general strike. But when a girl called Clara Lemlich, on strike at the Leiserson shop, rose to speak, the Chairman lost control of the meeting. Addressing the audience in Yiddish, she said: "I'm tired of these general speeches. What we are here for is to decide whether to strike or not. I move a resolution that a general strike be declared right now!"

Instantly the hall was filled with an uproar of approval. When it subsided, the chairman asked whether someone would second the resolution. Once again the entire audience leaped to their feet. At this point, in words as dramatic as they were characteristic of the emotional content of Jewish trade unionism in general, and of the waist and dressmakers in particular, the chairman cried: "Do you mean it with all your hearts and souls? Will you take the ancient Jewish vow with me?" Two thousand people raised their hands to recite the

oath: "If I turn traitor to the cause I now pledge, may this hand wither from the arm I now raise."

The next day the general strike was in full swing, the magnitude of the response overwhelming the union's tiny office on the fifth floor of Clinton Hall.

Amongst the leadership of the union there now appeared the names of men and women who were to play important roles in the movement: Abraham Baroff, Samuel Shindler, Sigmund Heiman, Benjamin Frishwasser, B. Witashkin, Elias Lieberman, Mollie Lifshitz, Morris Sigman, and many more. To aid them in the strike, volunteers came from the Socialist Party, the *Geverkshaften* and the Women's Trade Union League; among them were B. C. Vladeck, Louis Miller, Max Danish, I. Sackin, Salvatore Ninfo, Rose Pastor Stokes, Rose Schneiderman and Theresa Malkiel, as well as liberals who were friendly to labor, such as Professor E. R. A. Seligman, Lillian D. Wald, Ida M. Tarbell, Mary K. Simkhovitch, and others.

After the first few days of pandemonium, a measure of order was brought into the conduct of the strike. Public sympathy was with the strikers, but the police and blindly partisan magistrate courts sided with the employers. Moreover, the strength of the strikers waned on account of the severity of the winter and the return of the fainthearted to the shops as the strike dragged on from November through December and into the new year. A protest parade to City Hall on December 3 forced Mayor McClellan to take at least official notice of the harshness of the police. A mass meeting in the Hippodrome on December 5, arranged by Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, stirred the fervor of the women strikers anew. Despite defections and bitter privation, the strikers held their ranks fairly intact, but the leadership knew that, unless a settlement were reached quickly, a season's work would be lost and with it the chance of victory. Feelers for a settlement were, therefore, put out.

The first parley took place on December 10, with Morris Hillquit representing the union and I. B. Hyman, President of the manufacturers' association, representing the employers. It broke up without any result on the issue of the open shop. Two weeks later new conferences produced a written agreement in which a 52-hour week was stipulated; free needles, thread, power and appliances were conceded; equal division of work in slack times and four paid holidays were also granted. The union shop was not accepted, but specifications were agreed to by the employers preventing discrimination against union members and promising the rehiring of workers "at the earliest possible moment."

These were substantial gains in view of the poor strategic position the strikers now held, but when they were presented to the membership for ratification they were rejected.

During the course of the entire strike, separate settlements had been made with a number of small firms. But it was discovered that some of this "settled" work was finding its way to strike-bound firms. On January 11, 1910, the union offered to submit all differences to arbitration, but the manufacturers' association rejected the offer. The strike gradually broke up because of separate settlements with a number of large firms—all of them compromises that did not grant the union shop. Several important establishments rejected even a negative recognition of the union. One of these was the Triangle Waist Company in which 146 workers perished in the fire of March 25, 1911. It was charged that the doors had been locked because the employers feared the penetration of union organizers and committees.

The strike was officially declared ended on February 15, 1910. Viewed in the light of later developments, it was a historic event, for it marked the beginning of stable trade unionism and collective bargaining in the needle trades. It demonstrated the capacity of Jewish workers for organization, their

stamina during a prolonged struggle, and their readiness for self-sacrifice in the name of the common good.

Although the strike was a disappointment with regard to immediate recognition of the union, it brought 10,000 new members into Local 25 which, at the beginning of the campaign, had had no more than 100. It aroused the Jewish workers to a consciousness of their power and potentialities, and laid the foundations for the next step in the development of the union of Jewish workers, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

While the "Uprising of the 20,000" in the shirtwaist trade had been spontaneous, the "Great Revolt" of the cloakmakers that was to follow was premeditated and carefully planned. The industry had gone through substantial technological changes in the first decade of the new century. Legislation had outlawed most of the tenement "bed-room" shops, but the lofts to which the factories moved were small improvements in matters of light, air and sanitation. Hours were still long and, during the busy season, still limited only by human endurance. New machinery was introduced, but much of the burden and little of the benefit of the improved machinery accrued to the workers. In the cloak trade a heavy, factory-style sewing machine replaced the lighter household type; but it was still the practice for the worker to supply his own machine, an expensive and cumbersome fixture, especially when a worker was discharged and had to seek new employment. Earnings, despite the improved state of the industry, had gone down for the bulk of the workers, and only a few favorites in each shop prospered. These were the "inside" contractors who would undertake to sew or press a certain quantity of everything produced in one shop and then would hire a number of "helpers" to do the work. These inside contractors earned as much as \$30 or \$40 per week, while the majority of the workers still made no more than \$10 or \$12. In order to supplement their earnings, many cloakmakers took work home where their

families helped them turn out garments during evenings and Sundays.

The spectacular events in the shirtwaist trade encouraged the cloakmakers to renewed efforts at unionizing their own craft. In December 1909, the members of the New York Joint Board locals taxed themselves \$2 each in order to create a strike fund. Committees from each local were sent into the market to talk to the workers and to create the desire among them for a "general" strike. The *Forverts*, meanwhile, continued its daily barrage of union exhortations.

This agitation brought many new members into the union, and the younger workers who joined during this period themselves became volunteer agitators and recruiting agents for the organization. By the middle of 1910, over 10,000 workers were members and impatiently waiting for the "great event." In June of that year, the convention of the I.L.G.W.U. authorized its General Executive Board to make all necessary arrangements for a general strike in the cloak trade and to call it at whatever moment it would seem most opportune. A decision involving both moral and financial risk was to call a meeting in New York's Madison Square Garden. Never before had a labor organization held an indoor meeting on so large a scale. It took place on June 28, 1910, and its success exceeded every expectation. Thousands who could not get in were addressed at improvised meetings outside the Garden. The huge throng was unanimously in favor of a general strike. A secret poll, taken on the Saturday and Sunday of that week, resulted in a return of 18,771 for the strike and 615 opposed. On July 7, at 2 p.m., the strike was called. It brought an enormous turnout of workers. The trade was completely shut down.

The "Great Revolt" made history and gained several points for the cloakmakers. First, it was the most skillfully conducted strike in the experience of American labor. New techniques of supervision, of picketing and relief distribution were developed, which were to serve workers well in many

succeeding struggles. Furthermore, it gave new impetus to the influence of public-spirited citizens in the mediation of industrial conflicts. And, most important, it brought in its wake the innovation of the Protocol, the conduct of industrial relations by a machinery of self-regulation, new not only to the Jewish needle trades but also to all American industry.

As in the case of the waistmaker's strike, the employers in the cloak strike were adamant in their opposition to the closed union shop. The efforts of New York State mediators to bring the contending parties to a conference broke down when the employers formed an association and demanded a written stipulation in advance of the conference that the union would not insist on the union shop. More successful in mediation was A. Lincoln Filene, a public-spirited merchant from Boston, at whose suggestion Louis D. Brandeis, already a famous attorney, instituted several moves toward a compromise.

But the very idea of a conference with the employers at this stage was opposed by the more radical and militant elements in the union. Thus, when Brandeis, late in July, finally induced both sides to come to the first of several conferences, the union's negotiating committee, in order to appease its militants, included a Socialist who was not directly connected with the trade but who was most intimately bound up with the striking immigrant group. He was Benjamin Schlesinger, at that time manager of the *Forverts*. Another member of the negotiating committee of ten was the chairman of the picketing committee, Morris Sigman. Both men were later to become Presidents of the I.L.G.W.U. and leading figures in the Jewish labor movement in general.

These parleys, like the previous abortive attempts, were about to break up on the issue of the union shop when Brandeis skillfully introduced the idea of the "preferential union shop," by which employers undertook to engage union members in preference to non-union workers. The manner of enforcing this was left to the lawyers

of the two parties to work out—Julius Henry Cohen for the employers and Meyer London for the union. They arrived at a compromise, but it was rejected by the union's delegation, and the strike entered a stage of bitter and protracted struggle with all its usual features of police brutality and even an injunction against picketing. This was answered with yet more intensified picketing.

As the strike continued, the privation of the workers and their families increased. The *Forverts* and the New York Socialist *Call* opened up their columns to appeals for money, and the *Forverts* alone raised more than \$62,000 for the strikers. At special relief conferences, called by the Workmen's Circle and the United Hebrew Trades, additional funds were collected. Merchants in workers' districts extended credit in a number of cases, and restaurant keepers gave free meals to many strikers. Most curious of all, a few bankers advanced several thousand dollars to the union for strike expenses. Finally, a substantial revenue came from shops where, the issues having been settled, returned workers taxed themselves 15 percent of their earnings to support the strike.

Nevertheless, the resources of the union were insufficient to cope with the mounting needs of the tens of thousands of families left destitute by the enforced idleness of their breadwinners. The city's business and industrial life was also disrupted by the strike. It was at this point that Jacob H. Schiff, financier, philanthropist and a leader in the Jewish community took a hand in the situation. At his suggestion, Louis Marshall, lawyer and Jewish communal leader, arranged a conference between Meyer London and Julius Henry Cohen, attorneys for the two sides, at which new concessions were granted by the employers, including a 52-hour week, the preferential shop and the submission of the wage dispute to arbitration. When the proposal was submitted to the strikers on August 27 it was overwhelmingly rejected, the workers in settled shops urging the strikers to continue the struggle

and promising them as much as 50 percent of their earnings for the purpose.

The constructive leaders of the union realized, however, that the strike could not long continue with the shops half settled and half struck, and Meyer London was, therefore, instructed to continue negotiations with Louis Marshall and Julius Henry Cohen. On September 2, a new agreement was formulated; it was hurriedly submitted to a meeting of shop chairmen who, after long debate, authorized the strike committee to accept it. The new agreement had a curious label. It was called "The Protocol of Peace." The word protocol was purposely chosen because it was little understood by either side. It mollified those employers who objected to a formal agreement that would give recognition to the union, and took the edge off the word "peace" for the radicals who held that there could never be peace between the working class and the exploiting capitalist class. Nevertheless, whatever may have been the reservations of the dogmatic on either side, the "Protocol" was a formal contract, the first fully formulated collective agreement in the industry.

With all its compromises, the new agreement was a great victory for the strikers and was received by them with unrestrained joy. When word of the settlement reached New York's East Side, the entire community rejoiced. Thousands upon thousands of cloakmakers and other workers thronged to the square before the *Forverts* and danced and embraced each other to celebrate the victory. Even on the next day the celebration continued with music bands and trucks decorated with flags and banners carrying the victorious cloakmakers through the workers' districts.

The Protocol granted the workers the following important concessions: A 50-hour week, double payment for overtime, increases in the minimum scales for week-workers, price committees to fix rates in the shops for piece-workers, a variant of the preferential shop which strengthened the position of the union by giving employers a choice only between one union man and

another, and the abolition of all nuisance charges for machines, needles, thread and power. It also established a joint board of sanitary control to improve the conditions of work and—this was new and most important—it provided for the settlement of disputes by a grievance committee and a board of arbitration.

The strikes in the industries producing women's apparel were duplicated in various forms also in the men's clothing trade, in the cap (and later in the millinery) trade, in the fur trade and other crafts in which Jewish workers predominated.

The majority of these workers were socialistically-minded. Socialism was not merely a political or economic theory to them, but also a faith, a *Weltanschauung*. The ideal of the co-operative commonwealth and the brotherhood of man captured the imagination of the Jewish multitude in America. It was destined to be both a great binding force in Jewish labor and a source of disruptive conflict.

The rising influence of the Socialist and radical elements in contrast to the proponents of trade unionism "pure and simple" was reflected in the election of the chief officers of the I.L.G.W.U. at its convention in 1914. Benjamin Schlesinger was elected President and Morris Sigman, Secretary-Treasurer. Meanwhile, the New York manufacturers urged the International to bring the competing markets of other cities under union control. Strikes called for that purpose in Cleveland, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis and elsewhere ended badly or with indifferent results for the union. In many instances spies and agents provocateurs were hired by employers to instigate violence and thus help to break the strikes.

The Schlesinger administration in the I.L.G.W.U. was notable for the skill with which public opinion in favor of the union was aroused, among both the workers and the general community. Carefully prepared strikes in Philadelphia and other cities established the union on a firm basis outside New York. In the chief center a lock-out-strike in 1916, involving 60,000 cloak-

makers, ended victoriously for the union. The Protocol of Peace was abolished as a result of this lockout and was replaced by the standard agreement now prevailing in the industry. In the dress trade, a brief stoppage was sufficient to put into operation a collective agreement negotiated in advance of the strike. In the auxiliary trades like bonnaz embroidery, white goods and corset making, strikes of serious proportions put the unions on a permanent basis. The I.L.G.W.U. thus grew and prospered in spite of internal frictions until the division between "rights" and "lefts" and the conflict with the Communists sapped it of its strength and brought it to the brink of destruction.

VII. FACTIONAL STRIFE

In view of the origin and ideological concepts of most of the Jewish workers in the needle trades, it was inevitable that they should be deeply stirred by the events that brought about the collapse of Tsarist despotism in Russia. When, after a confused struggle which was little understood in the United States, there came into power a regime that proclaimed itself to be Socialist in character, the sympathies of many in the needle trades naturally swung to its side. Almost three years passed before the character of the Bolshevik Revolution assumed definite shape and doubts began to arise regarding the beneficence of its rule or its allegiance to true Socialist and libertarian principles. The factions that formed around this issue brought their struggle into the unions, striving for control and power. In the fall of 1919, a shibboleth of division between "lefts" and "rights" was the so-called shop steward system which was supposed to extend or implement the power of the "rank and file" against "officialdom". In 1920 the Trade Union Educational League, headed by William Z. Foster, appeared on the scene to "reform" the unions in the needle trades along the lines of "industrial unionism". In 1921 the Trade Union Educational League became a definite arm of the Communist Party of the United States.

At that time, the party still enjoyed an existence independent of any arbitrary direction from abroad. When the strictures of party direction and the "party line" became too binding, there was a split within Communist circles and the "shop steward" adherents formed a faction separate from the followers of the Trade Union Educational League. The issue of joining or not joining the *Profintern*, the Communist trade union internationale, kept the needle trade unions in a welter of bitter debate for a long time. Charges of "class collaboration" hurled against the leadership of the unions started a chain of vilification and personal abuse against all those holding office in the unions.

In the I.L.G.W.U. these disputes and divisions took forms which kept the union in a state of continuous eruption and undermined its power and prestige in industry. In general, the industrial situation was not a favorable one for the union. It had come out of the boom period of the First World War with a number of important gains, the most significant being security of job tenure (an employer being forbidden to fire a worker after a brief trial period) and the introduction of the week-work system; and the employers balked against both restrictions. When attempts to abolish union regulations by a frontal attack failed, many employers sought to evade union control by resorting to erection of out-of-town shops. Then the depression of 1920-1921 further aggravated both the industrial and organizational position of unions.

The Communist-led faction took advantage of this situation to extend its influence and grasp control of the administration of a number of the most important locals. All the blame for the deterioration of industrial relations was laid at the doors of the conservative leadership, and Schlesinger, as head of the International, became the target of violent personal abuse. He finally resigned his office and was succeeded by Morris Sigman in the spring of 1923. Many felt that Sigman's integrity and earthy bluntness would make him proof against

the attacks that were being engineered by the Communists in the name of the rank and file. Three months more of conflict in the union ended with a compromise settlement which registered, in effect, a substantial victory for the Communist faction. It left them in control of the major locals in New York and at the special convention which followed they nearly gained control of the International office as well. Only a switch in party line and orders from party headquarters prevented the Communists from going through with a split in the International which they were already in the process of achieving.

This split took place three years later when the *Profintern*, in another switch in the Communist Party line, ordered its adherents to cease boring from within, and to form opposition unions of their own. In December 1928, the Communists launched the Needle Trades Industrial Union. It was not an effective instrument, however, for it was formed after the disastrous cloak strike in 1926 in which the Communist-led faction had spent \$3,500,000, thus bringing the union to the brink of total collapse, and had discredited itself with the membership by disregarding those very moral practices and procedures which they had so vehemently demanded when they were in the opposition. Furthermore, among the Communists themselves there was a sharp cleavage because of the policies imposed by the party on the trade union elements within its ranks. The faction headed by Jay Lovestone sent a delegation to Moscow to appeal against the party functionaries and the decision to form dual unions, but the appeal was rejected. Leaders of the Communist opposition split with them on this and other issues of the party line and later, men like Charles Zimmerman and Louis Hyman rejoined the International and became valuable administrators in it.

Sigman resigned his presidency of the I.L.G.W.U. in October 1928, and Schlesinger was recalled to office. With characteristic resourcefulness he proceeded to rebuild the union which was on the verge of col-

lapse as a result of the lost strike and the strife with the Communists. His health soon failed, however, and David Dubinsky, then manager of the Cutters' Local 10, was called in as assistant to the president. The 1929 convention of the I.L.G.W.U. elected Dubinsky to the office of Secretary-Treasurer and *de facto* President during Schlesinger's recurrent illnesses.

Dubinsky rose to this office after showing his ability both as administrator and negotiator in his own local and in the conduct of the strife with the Communist faction. He was elected President of the I.L.G.W.U. upon Schlesinger's death in 1933, and his administration saw the union expand to unequalled size, power and prestige. Today it has a membership of nearly 400,000 workers, the majority non-Jews, in every branch and craft of the women's fabric apparel industry.

VIII. THE AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS OF AMERICA

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, despite points of dissimilarity to other unions in the needle trade, is of the same flesh and blood as the other organizations which comprise the Jewish labor movement of America. Its field is the men's clothing industry in the United States and Canada, as well as related—though sometimes distantly related—trades and crafts. Its founding as an organization in its present form, has a definite date—December 26, 1914—but its origins go considerably beyond that time, to the sweatshops, the toilsome, long hours, the meager pay and all the other industrial evils that afflicted the Jewish immigrant workers. In addition to the sweatshop and its drawbacks, Jewish workers in the men's clothing field suffered from the so-called task work system.

Unlike women's apparel, which was constantly subject to changes in style, men's clothing could be standardized, divided into sectional operations and adapted to the demands of assembly-line production. The management calculated in advance how long it should take to perform a number of

tailoring operations. It therefore set minimum quotas to be completed for a day's pay, and only when these goals were reached was the pay credited to the worker's account. This system easily lent itself to abuse and in an economy with an overabundance of labor that was as yet badly organized, timid and subject to the unquestioned authority of owner and foreman, the abuses were quick to develop. The daily quota of coats or jackets to be completed was always increasing, and soon a week's work of seventy or eighty gruelling hours produced only four or five days' pay. Competition between contractors made them increasingly severe taskmasters, and their demands on the workers became more and more intolerable. Long before the formal organization of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, therefore, there were already spontaneous uprisings in men's clothing factories. They resulted in the establishment of sporadic unions and an improvement in the wage rates or the quotas set. Like the unions in the other needle trades, however, these organizations of the men's clothing workers had a "seasonal" character and disintegrated as soon as the immediate cause of the outbreak was removed.

The tendency of Jewish immigrant workers to rebel against the wrongs committed against them and to forget their unions as soon as their grievances were settled evoked a sense of frustration and no little disdain among the chief officers of the United Garment Workers, the A.F. of L. organization which was already fairly well established. The President, Thomas A. Rickert, and the Secretary, B. A. Larger, men of integrity, but lacking in understanding of the mentality of the immigrants, were impatient with the mercurial temperament of the Jewish tailors, their tendency to tempestuous eruptions on points of ideology without direct bearing on trade union affairs.

This was the heyday of the union label and in certain fields and enterprises it was a powerful factor favoring the unions. The United Garment Workers used it as a lever

against the encroachments of prison-made goods, and also to wrest improved wages and working conditions from employers who needed the label for the overalls and other working clothes they produced. Not only the conservative leaders of the United Garment Workers but even the radical leaders of the I.L.G.W.U. for a time placed great confidence in the importance of the union label as an instrument to build the union. It took three years to prove to the cloakmakers that the label was by no means a "cure-all", and that only by organizing the workers in the shops could they build their union. The United Garment Workers, whose main strength was at that time centered in the overall shops, had had surprising and substantial successes because of the union label. The leadership of the union had therefore no reason to doubt its equal value in the unionization of the men's streetwear industry, which was expanding by prodigious strides in New York, Chicago and other cities.

However, the Jewish workers in the men's clothing industry, as well as the Italian and other immigrant workers, were gradually reaching the same consciousness of their rights and powers as their fellow workers in the cloak, waist, dress and cap-making trades.

The accident of industrial concentration forced the spark of permanent unionism in men's clothing shops to catch first in Chicago, and in New York a short while later. A strike that was to involve more than 40,000 workers in Chicago began on the issue of a quarter-of-a-cent. A foreman in one of the shops of Hart Schaffner and Marx reduced the rate for sewing certain seams from four to three-and-three-quarters cents. Such arbitrary reductions had been made before without protest from the workers. This time—September 22, 1910—the shop remonstrated with the management to revoke the cut. When the workers were refused, a strike spread rapidly with the District Council of the United Garment Workers in charge of it. But it was more than a month before the officers of the union ac-

ceded to the demand of the workers for a "general" strike. It was called on October 26, 1910, against all non-union shops in Chicago. The response was overwhelming and the entire industry became paralyzed. But Rickert, President of the national union, still remained skeptical regarding the immigrants' ability to maintain their strike-born unity for any length of time, and on November 5 he concluded an agreement with Hart Schaffner and Marx which provided for the rehiring of all strikers, and the submission of all grievances to a board of arbitration. Recognition of the union, however, was specifically denied in the agreement. When the settlement was submitted to the strikers at a number of meetings, it was overwhelmingly rejected. The strikers also decided to take further negotiations out of the hands of their national officers and to create a Joint Strike Conference Board. Outstanding in this newly-constituted strike committee was John Fitzpatrick, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, who helped to organize a system of commissaries to supply food to the strikers and their families. The local A.F. of L. also brought political pressure to bear on the city's administration to check the hostility of the police against the strikers and to induce intervention for a settlement. Police brutality was but little reduced; a meeting in the office of the Mayor, however, brought forth a new settlement proposal from Hart Schaffner and Marx. But the Wholesale Clothiers' Association did not join in this settlement and when it was offered for ratification to the strikers, it was overwhelmingly rejected.

The strike now entered its most bitter and desperate stage. Strikers on the picket line were assaulted by hired thugs and harassed by the police, who made hundreds of arrests. The longer the strike continued the worse became the economic plight of the strikers. The Illinois State Senate intervened, but efforts of a Senate committee to bring about a settlement were rebuffed by the employers' association. A break came in January 1911, when the firm of Sturm and

Mayer first settled with the union, and then Hart Schaffner and Marx followed. The agreement with the latter was submitted not to the entire body of strikers but only to the employees of that firm, and they accepted it as the best to be obtained under the circumstances. It was not an unfavorable settlement for, in addition to its provision for arbitration of grievances and the rehiring of all strikers, it also guaranteed that there would be no discrimination against members of the United Garment Workers. Furthermore, inasmuch as the shop of Hart Schaffner and Marx was the biggest of its kind, it gave the union a firm position in the industry which was not easily to be shaken.

The strike against the other Chicago clothing manufacturers continued until February 3 when Rickert, judging the struggle to be hopeless, declared the strike ended without consulting any of the strike's leaders, and ordered the tailors back to work without a settlement and without any guarantees whatsoever. This arbitrary action put an end to what was fast becoming a desperate situation but it created a feeling of distrust and hostility toward the national officers of the United Garment Workers that was to cost them their last vestige of influence over the immigrant workers in the huge clothing industry.

The real leader of the Chicago strike was a young man called Sidney Hillman who worked in the Hart Schaffner and Marx plant. He showed great ability as organizer, administrator and negotiator. When the cloakmakers of New York needed an able man to administer their union under the Protocol, they transferred him from Chicago. Before he could begin his new job, however, he was called back to Chicago by the men's clothing workers to head the dissidents in the United Garment Workers.

While the Chicago strike was approaching its inconclusive end, the men's clothing workers of New York were also in a fever of organizational activity. The leadership of the United Garment Workers understood the spirit that moved the New York workers

as little as had the leaders in Chicago, and friction mounted between the national office and the New York locals of Jewish tailors. In 1911 the latter held a conference in Philadelphia to formulate demands against their national officers, the chief of these being that control over the organizers in the men's clothing field be vested in the locals. The national officers were bitterly resentful of this demand and considered it an impudent usurpation of authority. They were furthermore embarrassed by several shop strikes called by the locals in union label shops, and the flouting of contracts signed by the United Garment Workers.

Thus, since the attitude of the official heads of the union toward the locals was negative if not even hostile, the driving force for the general strike that was in process of preparation had to come from other sources. The socialists now moved to the fore, mobilizing the tailors for the forthcoming strike. The offices of the *Forverts* were converted into strike headquarters and the editor and staff members became (to all intents and purposes) union functionaries for "the duration". The United Hebrew Trades and recruits from other unions supplied the technical skills essential for the drive to organize the workers and, finally, in December 1912, the question of a general strike was submitted to a referendum of the membership. It resulted in a vote of more than 35,000 for, and less than 3,000 against such a strike. The returns were flashed on a screen in front of the *Forverts* building before a throng numbering 40,000 and were received with loud enthusiasm.

The general strike was called for December 30, 1912, on the following demands as presented to the employers: the abolition of sub-contracting, of the use of foot power and of home work; a 48-hour week with time-and-a-half for overtime and double time for Sundays and holidays; a wage increase of 20 percent.

The response to the strike call exceeded the most optimistic expectations. Within a week 110,000 clothing workers had left their shops and had instituted vigorous picket-

ing. Clashes with strikebreakers, hired guards and police occurred daily, and the employers obtained an injunction to restrain picketing, an injunction that was demonstratively ignored when 20,000 strikers marched through the garment district and clashed with the police.

A number of leaders rose to the forefront in this strike; they were to become key-men in the building of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and among them there were Joseph Schlossberg, Louis Hollander, Abraham Miller, Joseph Gold and S. Blumenreich. The strike was effective, yet was in danger of crumbling as it dragged on through January and into February without an appreciable weakening among the employers. The break came on February 28 when Thomas Rickert, again without consulting the local leaders, accepted a compromise offer from the employers to settle the strike. The chief feature of the offer was the establishment of a commission to determine the question of hours. So far as wages were concerned, there was to be an increase of \$1 a week in addition to the differential which the shortening of hours might bring. The employers also undertook not to reduce wage rates during the slack seasons nor to discriminate against union members in rehiring workers.

Whatever the practical merits of the settlement offer, it had the shortcoming that it was secretly arrived at by officers who were hostile to the strike and contemptuous of both the local leadership and membership. It was immediately denounced by the strike leaders as treacherous, and so violent was the reaction against it that, when the tailors gathered before the *Forverts* building for a hearing of the plan, they booed its proponents and hurled stones against the doors and windows of their favorite newspaper. The editor of the *Forverts* then addressed the enraged strikers, agreed with them that they were right in their opposition and urged them to continue the strike.

Three days later representatives of the "movement", including spokesmen of more than 300,000 organized Jewish workers, met

to formulate plans and supply the means to continue the strike. The city administration under Mayor Gaynor, influenced no doubt by Rickert and his A.F. of L. supporters, ordered the suppression of all picketing. However, the parleys that brought about the compromise were now continued with the local strike leaders, and on March 12 they produced the settlement that ended the strike. The new compromise differed only slightly from the one Rickert had effected.

The settlement of the strike did not improve but aggravated relations between the Jewish tailors and the United Garment Workers. A convention was being planned and both sides began to jockey for position. Nashville, Tennessee, had been designated as the convention city and the New York tailors made efforts to change the meeting place to a more accessible clothing center. Local 2 of New York obtained a sufficient number of seconds for its motion to transfer the convention to Rochester, N. Y., but the Secretary of the United Garment Workers declared the endorsements invalid on the ground that the seconding locals were in arrears with their dues. Thereupon the General Office also notified a number of locals that unless they paid their bills immediately their delegates would not be seated at the convention.

When the convention was called to order on October 12, 1914, the Credentials Committee, appointed by Rickert, recommended the seating of 198 delegates, most of them from small work-garment locals. One hundred and five delegates, representing an unquestioned majority of the membership, were refused seats and told to report to the Credentials Committee for validation of their certificates. Police and plainclothesmen were present to maintain order and to divert the non-seated delegates into the visitors' gallery.

The following morning the non-seated delegates were still barred from the floor, and Frank Rosenblum of Chicago, one of the few tailors' delegates to be seated, stated on a point of order that the report of the

Credentials Committee should be made first business. Rickert ruled against the point of order and disclosed his strategy when he declared that it might be several days before the Credentials Committee would be ready with its final report. Rosenblum then moved that the names of the unseated delegates be added to the roll, and when Rickert refused to entertain the motion, the Chicago delegate himself called for a vote and, with the unseated delegates participating, declared the motion carried. A fellow-delegate from Chicago, Sam Rissman, immediately followed with another motion to remove the Chairman because of his allegedly illegitimate conduct of the session. A third Chicago delegate, S. Pass, then moved that, since a delegation representing a minority of the membership had captured the hall, the session be adjourned, to reconvene at the Duncan Hotel, headquarters of the oppositional clothing delegates. One hundred and thirteen delegates then left the hall, met in the Duncan Hotel and declared themselves to be the legally constituted convention of the United Garment Workers. A new set of officers was elected. Sidney Hillman, then only 28 years of age, was elected President and Joseph Schlossberg, Secretary-Treasurer.

Such tactics could not, of course, intimidate the officials of the United Garment Workers. The American Federation of Labor considered the dissident tailors a secession group and refused to seat their delegates at its own convention a few weeks later.

The clothing workers proceeded to establish officially what already existed *de facto*, a union independent from the union of overall and work-garment-makers. On December 26, 1914, the insurgents met in special convention in New York and launched the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the word "Amalgamated" serving to include the Tailors' Industrial Union, which had decided to merge with the new organization. Sidney Hillman was elected President and Joseph Schlossberg, Secretary, and a constitution with a pre-

amble avowing Socialist aspirations was adopted.

But the United Garment Workers did not give up its jurisdiction over the men's clothing industry to the new organization without a fight. It prevailed on the American Federation of Labor to try to isolate the Amalgamated from the rest of the labor movement. Thereupon the A.F. of L. instructed the United Hebrew Trades (*Geverkshaf-ten*) to expel the Amalgamated local from its midst. When the *Geverkshaf-ten* refused to do so, the A.F. of L. ordered all its own affiliated international unions to withdraw from them. In order to spare the Jewish union any further embarrassment, the Amalgamated then voluntarily withdrew from the Hebrew Trades.

On the industrial front, the Garment Workers officials found a number of employers who were tempted to deal with them instead of with the more exacting Amalgamated spokesmen. In January 1915, a group of New York's East Side manufacturers locked their workers out and refused to employ them unless they became members of the United Garment Workers. The maneuver failed and within a month these employers had to plead for peace and grant the Amalgamated complete recognition. In addition to the prestige gained by this victory, the Amalgamated also won the affiliation of the cutters who, until then, had still remained members of the United Garment Workers.

Conflicts of this kind between the Amalgamated and the United Garment Workers continued for several years in a number of clothing centers, and while the new organization suffered frequent reversals, the net result of the struggle for power was a consolidation of the Amalgamated's hold on the clothing industry and of a relegation of the United Garment Workers to the subsidiary branch of overallmaking. During the first year of its existence the Amalgamated did suffer one defection—that of the Tailors' Industrial Union which had amalgamated with the insurgents at the special convention in New York and had then left to re-

turn to the A.F. of L. fold in 1915. Originally, the Tailors' Industrial Union had itself been a dissident group, known as the Journeymen Tailors' Union. And many years later it once again returned to the side of the Amalgamated. (For final outcome of the conflict between the Amalgamated and the United Garment Workers see end of this chapter).

The years of World War I brought a wave of prosperity to all the apparel trades and gave the Amalgamated the opportunity it needed to expand and strengthen its hold on the industry. When the war was over it was able to meet both the onslaught of Communist factions and of employer opposition with a thoroughly integrated and well-established union machinery. So far as the Communists were concerned, Sidney Hillman avoided a head-on conflict with them as long as their efforts did not menace his control of the organization. In 1922 he returned from a visit to Soviet Russia and, at his behest, the Amalgamated convention of that year moved to form a million-dollar corporation to send machinery and other aid to the Russian clothing industry. At a subsequent convention a Slovenian local in Chicago made a token donation of money to the *Freiheit*, the official Communist Yiddish daily published in New York, and critics charged the sudden affection of the Slovenians for the Jewish Communists to Hillman's subtle influence. During the same year, however, Amalgamated delegates refused to insist that Communist delegates be seated at the convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action which nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette for the Presidency of the country. The Communists charged Hillman with playing both ends against the middle and started open hostilities against him.

The tactics pursued by the Communists in the Amalgamated were in no way different from those that they had found effective in the I.L.G.W.U. and Fur Workers Union. They heaped personal abuse on Hillman and the other officers of the union,

called unauthorized stoppages in several New York shops which they controlled, agitated against the payment of dues which had just been increased, as well as against the payment of an assessment which was levied on members to conduct the strike of 1925 against the International Tailoring Company and its close affiliate, the J. L. Taylor Company. Hillman bided his time, and when the strike was won moved in against the Communists. At his suggestion the General Executive Board suspended the Executive Board of Coat Operators Local 5 in New York, stronghold of the Communist opposition, and ousted the Communist ring-leaders both from the union and their jobs. The Communists retaliated by forming an Amalgamated Joint Action Committee which staged several riotous demonstrations in front of the union's general office and even invaded its headquarters. The violence proved pointless, however, for control of the shops slipped from the Communists' hands when the joint boards in the men's and children's clothing industries of New York were merged and a representative of the cutters, Abraham Beckerman, became manager of the combined board. Protest meetings called by the Communists failed because the administration succeeded in filling the halls with its followers who turned the meetings into loyalty demonstrations for the union.

The attempts of the Communists to stir up conflict were even less successful outside New York than those in the city. Indeed, the fact that the New York market was no longer dominant in the clothing industry became one of the factors most advantageous to the administration in its conflict with the Communists. For the disruption in New York City could no longer tie up the men's clothing industry as a whole as it did the shops producing women's cloaks or fur garments. The internal struggle could therefore be resolved on straight organizational lines without reference to the industrial pressure which distracted the administration in other unions. Moreover, Hillman

held the administration lines intact and did not permit internal frictions to disperse his forces as long as the struggle with the Communists continued. Whatever reforms he felt were needed in the New York organization he instituted after the conflict with the Communists was won, and not before or during the fight. So far as the membership was concerned, he convinced them that the struggle against the Communists was not ideological but concerned strictly with matters of organizational responsibility and discipline. The clothing workers of New York felt that in order to maintain their union and safeguard what was left of the market in their city they could not afford the luxury of Communist factionalism, and so they supported their union administration.

By the time of the convention of the Amalgamated in May 1926, the Communists admitted defeat by proposing that an amnesty be accorded to those who had been suspended or expelled in the conflict. It was not granted, however, and thereafter no one questioned the administration's complete control of the organization.

This authority was tested five years later when the administration moved in against racketeering elements that had infiltrated into the industry in New York and had infested the cutters' local. It occurred during the era of Louis (Lepke) Buchhalter and other underworld characters who, with the support of corrupt city officials, extorted huge sums from employers by means of terrorism and promises of "protection" from the union. Indications showed that officers of the key cutters' local had been too complacent about the inroads made by these gangster elements. With a promise of support from the police department, the union in 1931 called a general strike in the New York area, settled with the legitimate association immediately and held out against the gangster-protected shops until the employers were convinced that such protection was of no avail to them. At the same time the General Office brought charges of financial irregularities against the chief officers

of the cutters' local. When the latter insisted that these charges be aired before the cutters' Executive Board instead of the General Executive Board, the Amalgamated suspended them from office and reorganized the local. Soon thereafter the administration's hold over the New York industry became complete, and it has since then never been challenged.

Hillman's sudden death in 1946 brought about a change of officers but no appreciable change in policies or in the relations between contending forces in the union and the industry. The President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers is today Jacob S. Potofsky. Frank Rosenblum has taken Potofsky's place as general Secretary-Treasurer.

As a footnote to the history of the Amalgamated it should be added that in 1933 it settled its jurisdictional differences with the United Garment Workers and was thereupon admitted to the American Federation of Labor. Its stay in the A.F. of L. was of short duration, however, for in 1936 it was suspended and subsequently expelled together with other unions which had formed the C.I.O. Although other founders of the C.I.O. later returned to the A.F. of L. fold, the Amalgamated has not done so. At present it is a pillar of right-wing strength in the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

IX. THE UNITED HATTERS, CAP AND MILLINERY WORKERS

The capmakers and millinery workers, always an active branch of the Jewish labor movement, in the main followed and even anticipated the pattern of the other needle trade unions. The limited size of the industry in which the capmakers operated was both an advantage and a disadvantage. On the one hand, the relatively small number involved created an atmosphere of intimacy among the membership and their leaders. On the other, when the union set out to organize scattered shops in various cities and towns, the financial and physical burden weighed heavily on its members.

Long before the waistmakers, cloakmakers and men's clothing tailors established their organizations, the capmakers already had a strong, thoroughly experienced union. A convention held in New York on December 27, 1901, established the United Cloth Hat and Capmakers of North America. Six months later, on June 17, 1902, the American Federation of Labor issued a charter to this international union. Strikes and energetic organizing campaigns which followed brought the membership up to a total of 3,000 and an income of more than \$12,000 for the year of 1904.

The exceedingly strong spirit of cohesion and devotion to the union that existed among the capmakers had been forged during a number of difficult strikes and lockouts. The union represented both a cause and a faith to its members and also served them as a gathering place for social activities. The chief officer of the Cloth Hat and Capmakers international union was, until 1911, the Secretary-Treasurer. There was no president, for the radical capmakers considered that office too authoritarian. In 1911 Max Zuckerman, the General Secretary, brought a new recruit into the union office. He was Max Zaritsky, a young man whose ability had impressed Zuckerman when he met him in the Boston local of the capmakers. Zaritsky was given the post of Assistant Secretary and immediately plunged into the work of expanding the union in New York and the scattered centers around it.

A new industry began to develop in those years, the millinery industry. Hats for women had, of course, been made over the centuries, but until then their manufacture in the United States had been a home craft in the hands of seamstresses or private milliners who made headwear to order. Early in the twenties hat-making moved into factories. Enterprising Jewish businessmen discovered that it was possible to produce attractive hats for women in wholesale quantities. This was particularly true of straw hats, the braids of which were sewn by machines similar to those used in the

cap trade. Wire and buckram frames also lent themselves to finishing and trimming by factory methods, and the production of millinery naturally drifted into cap shops. Capmakers frequently shifted from one craft to the other and worked at either as the seasonal demands required. Zaritsky sensed the possibilities of this new development in the trade and concentrated his efforts on the millinery workers.

The union grew and prospered. An organization drive in the millinery trade brought increasing numbers into the union. A special local was assigned to the milliners, Local 24. Later another local (Local 42) was formed for the millinery blockers. Heading the drive in the millinery branch of the trade was Nathaniel Spector who preached the message of unionism to the milliners wherever they happened to congregate. By 1915 the union had grown large and influential enough to assert itself and gain a collective agreement from an association of employers organized as the Ladies Hat Manufacturers' Protective Association. The size of the union now seemed to require a president. Over the objections of his associates, Zuckerman had the constitution amended in 1917 to create the office of President and at the convention two years later he insisted that Zaritsky take the top office.

The boom of World War I brought prosperity to the capmakers as it had done to all the other apparel trades, and the union used this opportunity to the full to consolidate new gains for its membership. One of these was the introduction of the week-work system to replace piecework. The victory was costly for, although the week-work system was finally discarded, it was only after it had driven a number of important firms out of the cap trade and hastened the decline that was already in motion as a result of a change in fashion and in the wearing habits of men.

A general strike in the millinery trade in 1919 proved disastrous to the union, and it was six years before the organization regained the strength it had possessed in

that year. After that the union used caution and proceeded by easy stages and individual shops to obtain substantial control in the New York market. Its control was endangered, however, by a number of hostile forces. First, the union had to carry on a jurisdictional struggle with the United Hatters. Then the administration of the Blockers' Local turned isolationist and refused to cooperate with the rest of the union on matters of policy and strategy. In addition, the Communists gained control of the women's Local 43, and adopted a policy of harassing and disruptive tactics against the other locals. Worst of all, gangsters entered the scene and tried to drive the union out of their "protected" shops. At one time all four elements worked in coordination against the legitimate organization, and it required all the resources of the union and much physical courage on the part of the milliner's leaders (amongst them Zaritsky, A. Mendelowitz, Alex Rose and Lucy Oppenheim) to stand up to their opponents. The fight finally ended in the union's victory in 1931.

The jurisdictional dispute with the United Hatters was in some respects similar to the one in which the Amalgamated Clothing Workers became involved with the United Garment Workers. The Hatters claimed that the Cloth Hat and Capmakers had infringed on their jurisdiction by accepting milliners into their membership. The Hatters was a cherished organization in the American Federation of Labor. Its desperate struggle, culminating in the celebrated Danbury Hatters Case, had won it the sympathy of the entire labor movement. In its composition of officers and membership it was much like the Garment Workers. Samuel Gompers, who understood the industrial and social difficulties in the way, tried to effect a compromise between the two organizations. He succeeded in establishing a truce for a time, but in 1931 the dispute flared up again, and the Hatters attempted to sign up millinery shops in opposition to the cap and millinery union.

During the entire period, Zaritsky had

been offering a solution to this jurisdictional dispute. He proposed the amalgamation of both organizations with one set of international officers but with autonomous departments for the two crafts. This proposal was finally adopted in 1934. The amalgamation turned into a happy union for both sides. Soon even the separate departments were abolished, and now men's hatters, capmakers and millinery workers live and work peacefully side by side. The combined union has made great strides in all three branches of its jurisdiction. The Hatter's representatives in the combined union are Michael F. Greene, the General Secretary and Martin Lawlor, the Label Secretary, both of them originally hailing from Ireland. Members of Irish, Russian, Italian, German and English descents, and Jews, Catholics and Protestants work side by side in all the crafts and participate in the activities of the union.

The Communist bid for dominance in the union was beaten off by resort to the common sense, loyalty and combined will of the members themselves. The Communist faction was thrown off balance by the amalgamation of the women's Local 43, where the Communists had entrenched themselves with the men's Local 24. In the combined local their influence ceased to be dominating, when the non-Communists formed an organization committee of more than 700 volunteers which came to meetings regularly and thus shook off the Communists' parliamentary obstructionism which was the Communists' chief weapon in sorties against the needle trade unions.

The gangsters were routed by a mass attack on their citadels, the "protected" shops. With the aid of Governor Lehman, Judge Samuel Seabury and decent elements in the New York police department, the union called all its workers out on strike, settled with the dominant association of employers and placed its force of 700 volunteers on a picket line around the gangster-held shops. The lines of besieging pickets were held intact day after day until all the former "protected" shops capitulated

and their owners signed the union agreement. The United Hatters had won its war against the underworld.

For a while, open and covert assistance had been given to the Communists and the racketeers by the isolationist administration of the Blockers' Local 42. To overcome this, the General Executive Board of the union reorganized the local, ousted the officers who were obstructing the smooth functioning of the millinery union and, soon thereafter (in April 1932), had a well-organized, well-articulated organization in the field. The authority of the millinery union in New York has never been questioned since then.

The cap trade has in recent years been on the road of industrial decline, but the idealism and devotion to the United Hatters which have become ingrained in the predominantly Jewish working force have not diminished.

X. OTHER TRADES

Apart from the needle trades, including the fur trade, Jewish workers in the USA concentrated in appreciable numbers in the leather and shoe industry, metal trade, the building and decorating trades and the industry of food processing—bakeries, butcheries and the like. There were and still are scores of Jewish unions in the above mentioned trades not to speak of trades connected with the Jewish language or traditions—such as Hebrew typographical workers, waiters, chorus personnel for synagogues and Jewish theaters, actors, writers, etc.

All these unions followed, in general, the pattern established by the big needle trades unions. All of them had to go through hard initial struggles with the entrepreneurs, and enjoyed a period of rapid advance under the New Deal. All of them were and still are guided by a progressive idealistically minded leadership, all of them pioneered in their respective trades in modern technique of trade unionism, all had to experience more or less violent ideological and fac-

tional strifes, which, with a few exceptions, ended in a victory of the democratic wing.

The most notable of these exceptions is the fur workers union in New York. In 1925 the Communists succeeded in capturing control of the union machinery. In the New York fur strike of 1926, one of the most violent in the history of the needle trades, right-wing and centrist members were brutally assaulted by terrorist squads, and all opposition to the Communist direction of the strike was suppressed. Since then the Communists have been able to maintain their power in the union.

In the building trades the newly-arrived Jewish immigrants found unions already established. For a time these unions excluded Jews, considering them "unfit" for union organization. As the number of Jewish carpenters and painters increased, however, their competitive pressure in the labor market forced the unions to admit them. At first, they were given a second class status, but gradually they established locals of their own and, in the painters' union at least, the Jewish workers became the dominant group in the New York area. Factional strife has rent this union no less than those in the needle trades. The balance of power has been vacillating between Communists and non-Communists. In 1947 the anti-Communists won the elections in the New York District Council and have since then retained control.

XI. GENERAL ACTIVITIES OF JEWISH LABOR

In addition to the labor unions and the Socialist parties there have always been a number of workers' organizations in the United States that have been neither functional nor political yet contributed greatly to the social and general progress of the Jewish labor masses.

The most important among these "peripheral" organizations have been the "fraternal orders" of the workers. The oldest and strongest of these has been the *Arbeiter Ring*, the Workmen's Circle.

A. *The Workmen's Circle*: The Workmen's Circle was organized in New York in 1892. At that time many Jewish fraternal societies, or orders, were already in existence, but were usually dominated by businessmen and middle-class people, most of them of German origin. When the influx of emigrants from Eastern Europe brought large numbers of Russian, Galician and Romanian Jews to the United States, the new arrivals found it difficult to fit themselves into the existing organizations and soon formed a society of their own—the Workmen's Circle. The chief purpose of this new organization was, on the one hand, to serve as a club where people of common background might meet, and, on the other, to provide mutual aid especially in cases of sickness or death. Gradually, the scope of the Workmen's Circle's functions expanded. The spread of tuberculosis among Jewish workers, who often worked in small, dark shops and lived in unhygienic slum dwellings, prompted the Workmen's Circle to set up at Liberty, N. Y., its own sanatorium which in time became one of the best in the country.

However, from the very outset, the Workmen's Circle was built upon broader foundations than mere practical assistance to its members. Most members of the Workmen's Circle were people with a revolutionary and socialist background in the old country. Since its day of organization, the Workmen's Circle has included in its "Declaration of Principles" a point which makes it obligatory for each member to belong to a labor union and support the labor movement. Strike-breakers were barred from the Workmen's Circle. This resolution has been enforced in regard to individuals, as well as to the Workmen's Circle membership as a whole. It has actively participated in building trade unions, by giving them both moral and material support. In their turn, the growth of the trade union movement and the emergence of the Jewish Socialist press (*The Forverts*), greatly furthered the development of the Workmen's Circle. Thus permanent contacts and mutual inter-

action were established between the entire Jewish labor movement and the Workmen's Circle. The latter was to become an important factor in the Jewish and general American labor movement and gradually extended its influence to Jewish social life both in America and in Europe. At every convention of the Workmen's Circle, large sums have been appropriated (subject to approval by general membership referendum) for assistance to a great variety of institutions and causes in America and Europe. The aggregate sum of these contributions for the past 18 years exceeds a million dollars.

During the period following the First World War, the Workmen's Circle engaged in a new activity. The growing cultural estrangement between the immigrants and their American-born or American-educated children created the problem of building a bridge between parents and children. In order to give the young generation some understanding of both Jewishness and Socialism, the Workmen's Circle entered the broad educational field: it has built a network of special schools for the children of its members (cf pp. 144-150). Further expansion of Workmen's Circle activities resulted in the formation of women's branches and of young people's English-speaking branches.

For a time the split in the entire labor movement which was caused by the struggle between Communists and Socialists, strongly affected also the Workmen's Circle. However, the organization overcame the difficulties and emerged from the internal struggle almost unimpaired.

In the various cities and towns of the United States and Canada, the Workmen's Circle in 1948 had 713 branches with a total membership of some 70,000 men and women.

B. *The Jewish National Workers' Alliance*: As the Workmen's Circle has gradually become a rallying point mainly for Socialists of the Bundist trend, the Zionists were not excluded but they have often felt

lonesome and handicapped in the *Arbeiter Ring*. Looking for an organization of their own which would serve their specific political aims just as the Workmen's Circle in its majority served the Bundist cause, they formed The Jewish National Workers' Alliance (Yidish Natsionaler Arbeter Farband) in June, 1910, at a convention in Rochester, N. Y. Two years of preparatory work followed, and the new organization managed to obtain a charter and hold its first regular convention (December, 1912—January, 1913).

The purpose of the Alliance was to provide mutual help for its members, to give them and their children a "national" education, to support all efforts of national liberation and rebirth of the Jewish people. Newly-admitted members had to pledge allegiance to the ideal of a Jewish Palestine.

The new organization grew fast. In 1911 it had 1,000 members; in 1913, 2,000; in 1921, at its seventh convention in Toronto, Canada, the Jewish National Workers' Alliance reported 114 branches, with a total of 6,471 members, in existence.

In 1918 and again 1924 negotiations were conducted aiming at a possible merger between the Workmen's Circle and the Alliance. But all efforts along this line failed.

By 1928 the membership of the Alliance had risen to 8,000. In 1936 the number of members was over 10,000; in 1938, over 14,000; in 1943, 18,522; and in 1944, 22,873.

The activities of the Alliance have been manifold and in most ways similar to those of the Workmen's Circle. They cover mutual aid, sick benefits, funeral assistance, medical care, special schools for the national education of the members' children (See above, pp. 144-150), special English-speaking branches for the youth, political action on special occasions, and so on. A characteristic feature of this organization has been its activity in promoting Zionism, and particularly the Jewish labor movement in Palestine. In 1923-24 it organized the so-called *Geverkshaften-kampein* (National Labor Committee for Palestine), a committee of Jewish trade unions in this country

dedicated to raising funds for the Histadrut, the leading trade union organization, and its affiliated organizations in Palestine. This committee proved to be a highly successful fundraiser. In 1931, the League for the Working Palestine was founded by the Alliance.

C. *The Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order:* It was only logical that the Jewish Communists followed the example of the democratic Socialists, both the non-Zionist and the Zionist, and establish a fraternal order of their own. This took place in 1930, when the International Workers' Order was established under Communist leadership. This International Order had a Jewish section, which later assumed the name of the Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order of the International Workers Order. Duplicating in its activities the Workmen's Circle and the Jewish National Workers' Alliance, this organization claimed a membership of 57,000 in 1948.

D. *The Jewish Labor Committee:* The Jewish Labor Committee is of more recent origin. It came into being at a moment when Jewish Socialists in the United States were becoming conscious of the grave danger in which the rise of Hitlerism in Germany had placed the Jewish people and the labor movement as a whole.

At the end of 1933, a provisional committee was formed under the leadership of B. Charney Vladeck. On February 25, 1934, a conference was called in New York, with the participation of over 1,000 delegates, representing the Workmen's Circle, the United Hebrew Trades, the Jewish Socialist Farband, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the *Forverts* Association, the Poale Zion and the Jewish National Workers' Alliance. The conference decided to establish "The Jewish Labor Committee" and adopted a program of activities. One of its aims was to convey to the Jewish and American communities a concept of the menace of Nazism not only for the Jews but also for the general Social-

ist and liberal movement; to obtain the community's wholehearted support for the groups struggling against Hitlerism; and to give moral and material aid to all socialist, liberal and labor forces persecuted by the Nazis or combatting Hitlerism.

A motion was adopted providing that no group affiliated with the Jewish Labor Committee could at the same time be affiliated with any other general organization set up for the same purpose. As a result of this, the Rightist Poale Zionists who were affiliated with the American Jewish Congress withdrew from the Labor Committee.

As its first activity, the J.L.C. embarked on a campaign for the boycott of German goods. It further engaged in propaganda campaigns designed to arouse public opinion and bring to the Government's attention not only the atrocities being committed in Nazi Germany but also the pogroms in fascist Latvia and reactionary Poland. In 1934 it initiated drives for "Labor Chests"—general labor organizations, including both gentile and Jewish workers, to provide aid to labor abroad.

In 1936, at the initiative of the J.L.C., the American Federation of Labor organized a Committee for the Victims of Nazism and Fascism.

In 1937, the J.L.C. cooperated with the American Federation of Labor in setting up the Labor League for Human Rights.

In 1940, after the collapse of France in the war against Hitler, the entire emphasis of the J.L.C.'s work shifted to aid for those in Europe who found themselves imperiled by the Nazis. A rescue campaign was started and succeeded in saving a number of political refugees from Nazi occupied areas.

Upon the personal intervention of President of A.F. of L. William Green, the United States Government cooperated with the rescue campaign, by granting visitor visas to persons persecuted by the Nazis. The Jewish Labor Committee played a leading part in aiding the escape of these

persons to neutral or allied territory. In all, several thousand persons were saved by it during the war.

In cooperation with certain of the European leaders who had been saved from Hitler thanks to the Jewish Labor Committee a Council of Representatives of the Underground Labor Movement was established in New York, which provided liaison between the J.L.C., the American Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and the underground labor movements in Europe. It furnished ways and means for the transmission of aid—financial, material and military—to partisans, underground groups, and to the Jewish ghetto groups in Poland.

With the close of the war, the attention of the J.L.C. turned towards measures to aid child care, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and cultural activities of surviving European Jewish workers and other folk: the J.L.C. financed 80 producers' co-operatives, and shipped a million dollars' worth of clothing, food and medical supplies abroad. It has sponsored children's schools, adult education courses, libraries and Jewish cultural clubs in Western Europe and in the camps of Germany, Austria and Italy.

The Committee has stood for the free immigration of Jews into, and unrestricted land purchase in Palestine and in opposition to the "White Paper." In cooperation with the Workmen's Circle, it is building a medical center in the Negeb area of Israel and has also decided, in cooperation with the Histadrut, to erect the Abraham Liesin People's House in Tel Aviv.

This activity of the Jewish Labor Committee parallels the work of the above-mentioned National Labor Committee for Palestine. Thus Jewish labor leaders divided on many other issues and even on Zionism as a philosophy, have found a common ground and unity of purpose in their practical activity for Israel's labor.

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