



A Note of Reminiscence

by ISIDOR KADIS

A FORMER CINCINNATIAN RECALLS EVENTFUL PERIOD IN OUR COMMUNITY

THOUGH I HAVE LIVED away from Cincinnati since 1916, my memories of Jewish life and events in my former home town have left an indelible impression upon my life.

A remarkable group of Jewish men and women activated the community life and institutions of the decade ending in 1916. They constituted a unique leadership which set a pattern for Jewish Social Service, religious life, and the early idealism of modern Zionism. This was a period of contrast and conflict in philosophies of Judaism.

My father, of blessed memory, was the pattern of the period. He had emigrated to Cincinnati in 1904, and my mother and brothers and sister arrived the following year. From the very first months of my arrival, I came in contact with the Jewish Settlement House and the personality of Dr. Boris Bogen, the guide and the friend of the new arrival. I remember him now, not as a "charity official", a Federation executive, but as a teacher and counselor to young and older immigrants. Dr. Bogen had a great appreciation of Jewish Culture, as expressed in music, in Yiddish literature, in the Yiddish theatre, the Hebraic renaissance, and Zionism. He gave every encouragement to those groups concerned with the survival of Jewish Cultural values in the new American environment, he fostered a unique program in the Jewish Settlement House on Clinton St., aiding the newcomers in the process of Americanization, but giving them, at the same time a sense of value of the Jewish Heritage on a cultural basis. This was not the pattern of the majority of Jewish social workers, and surely not of the Jewish philanthropists of the day. In most cities, the Jewish Charities and their officials were operating on the philosophy that the immigrant's "Jewish assets" were "Foreign baggage" to be unloaded as quickly as possible in the process of Americanization.

The Jewish Settlement volunteer workers—men and women I can remember—were dedicated personalities; serving as club leaders, or directing programs of rich cultural content in music and drama as well as in civic services and social reform. They pioneered in educational activities and vocational training, long before these were adapted as standard norms of public education. Unforgettable leaders associated with Dr. Bogen in that era were men and women like Max Senior, Sidney Pritz, Nathan Ransohoff, Belle Lowenstein, and Mrs. Frankel among scores of others.

The youthful group of my circle organized the Sons and Daughters of Zion among whose leaders were Julius Samuels and the writer. We produced a Zionist play, "The Promised Land" under direction of Jennie Manheimer. We were the first workers for the Jewish National Fund—collecting coins in the Blue Boxes—aiding the

late A. Friedman who set up the J.N.F. Council.

Other great "firsts" were the visits of Nathan Sokolow, who headed the World Zionist movement, following the death of Theodore Herzl; the Bezalel Art Exhibit with Prof. Boris Schatz, the noted sculptor. This exhibit, with a most representative committee of sponsors, organized and headed by Dr. R. W. Miller, brought an appreciation of Jewish Art, manifested in the sale of many art objects.

In 1913, the Federation of American Zionists held its convention in Cincinnati. The pioneers of American Zionism, Prof. Harry Friedenwald of Baltimore, the president; Henrietta Szold, who had just established Hadassah; Louis Lipsky, Abe Goldberg, Jacob DeHaas, Prof. Horace Kallen, were among the participants who made a great impact on the Jewish Community and of course on the active Zionists. 1914 was made memorable for me by the late Louis D. Brandeis' first visit to Cincinnati to meet with a Zionist Committee.

A new committee was formed under Dr. R. W. Miller and a great meeting was held with Dr. Shmaryahu Levin, Jacob DeHaas, and others who came to Cincinnati. Relief funds for beleaguered Palestine Jewry were raised. Zionism and its ultimate aims were proclaimed, and the Zionist cause in Cincinnati gained in the few years that followed, leading up to the Balfour Declaration. Men like S. Marcus Fechheimer, Jacob Mack, Oscar Berman, and Max Hirsch (still most active on behalf of Israel) assumed leadership in support of Brandeis and the growing Zionist movement in the United States.

With these eventful experiences, and the benefit of the personal stimulation of working with such unforgettable and dedicated Jews, I was prepared for Jewish work. In the early part of 1915, I assumed my first post in Savannah, Ga., but my heart was in Cincinnati, and so I came back in 1916 to marry Jean Price, whose family too has served and participated in making Cincinnati Jewish Community life what it is today.

(Ed. Note: Isidor Kadis, now a resident of N. Y., served as director of Jewish Federations in Toledo and Milwaukee; National Director of B'nai B'rith Wider Scope Commission; National Assoc. Sec'y of Keren Haysod (Now U.J.A.). At present Nat'l Representative of the Jew. Nat. Fund.)