

The book was a nominee for the National Book Award in the Arts and Letters category.

NORA B. BEESON
New York City

LE THÉÂTRE JUIF SOVIÉTIQUE PENDANT LES ANNÉES VINGT. By *Béatrice Picon-Vallin*. Théâtre Années Vingt series. Lausanne: La Cité-L'Age d'Homme, 1973. 203 pp. \$8.25, paper. Distributed by International Scholarly Book Services, Portland, Oregon.

The Jews are a multilingual people, not only in the sense of employing languages of different nations among whom they live, but also of communicating (in all but the strictly religious context) in different *Jewish* vernaculars. In this century alone, these languages have included Yiddish, Ladino, the Judeo-Tadzhik dialect of Bukhara and Samarkand, the Tat of the Mountain Jews in the Caucasus, as well as Hebrew which has reemerged from pages of the sacred scripture as a living language. Of the five, only Ladino is not represented in the USSR. Written literature and journalism were created in the Soviet Union in the other four languages, particularly in the early years of the regime. Subsequently, Hebrew was to be suppressed as organically linked to Judaism as a religion and to Zionism as a hostile political creed. The remaining three—Yiddish, Tat and Judeo-Tadzhik—continue to lead precarious existences.

Béatrice Picon-Vallin's monograph about the Soviet "Jewish" theater in the 1920s actually deals with two such theaters, the Yiddish and the Hebrew, and particularly with the best of each, the Yiddish GOSET (The State Jewish Theater) and the Hebrew Habima (The Stage). Formally, both were "born" in the USSR, although the original impetus in both cases antedated the advent of the Soviet regime. The roots of the Yiddish theater were nourished by the secularist and often socialist Yiddish literature that developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Hebrew theater was a cultural dimension of the Zionist renaissance of Jewish nationalism. Both theaters benefited from the atmosphere of innovation and reform in Russia's theater at the turn of the century.

Under the Soviet regime, Habima was viewed with considerable suspicion as elitist (Hebrew was not spoken by the masses), while the Yiddish theater was encouraged. Yet it is the Hebrew Habima that now survives as the national theater of Israel—the entire theater "defected" in 1926 while on tour in the West. The other theater, GOSET, the central subject of Picon-Vallin's book, was destroyed by Stalin in the late 1940s, and its director, Solomon Mikhoels, was murdered in an automobile "accident." As a study of the Yiddish theater in the USSR, Picon-Vallin's book has no equals. Yiddish theater is presented against a rich background of the country's vibrant cultural life in the twenties, and its links with the Russian theater (particularly that of Meyerhold) impart a sense of perspective to the narrative. The artistic stature and the range of interests of the Moscow Yiddish theater were impressive. Suffice it to mention that its stage was decorated by artists like Chagall and Falk and that King Lear was Mikhoels's most memorable creation. Picon-Vallin's discussion of acting techniques, costumes, sets and the like is most informative, and there are some twenty pages of illustrations. A minor annoying feature is that Russian and Yiddish titles are given in French translation rather than transliteration in the footnotes. All in all, the book is a major contribution to the history of the Yiddish theater and a significant addition to the history of the Soviet theater.

As do most researchers, Picon-Vallin readily acknowledges the great debt of the Yiddish and Hebrew theater to the Russian stage. Few scholars remember, however, that in a sense it was repayment of an old debt. When Russia's own theater came into being three centuries ago, the first plays to be performed were adaptations of the biblical story of Judith and of the Book of Esther.

MAURICE FRIEDBERG

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

SYMPOSIA

EAST-WEST TRADE. Edited by *Kazimierz Grzybowski*. Library of Law and Contemporary Problems. Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. and Leiden: Oceana Publications and A. W. Sijthoff, 1974. x, 307 pp. \$16.50.

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ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF E. H. CARR. Edited by *C. Abramsky* and *Beryl J. Williams*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, Shoe String Press; and London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1974. viii, 387 pp. \$15.00.

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