

# Personal and Political: Prison Recollections

By MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

**T**HIS past year, you probably know, has been for me and my associates of 40 years ago, a year in which, while we looked at the reality around us, and looked ahead to see how we could change and improve that reality, we also had been compelled to look back upon that old struggle because of the unexpected but not unfought for development that led the institution that had fired over 40 of us 40 years ago to apologize to us formally and publicly for the injustice done to us and for the violation of our academic freedom and constitutional rights. Of the 40 or so I was singled out for preferential treatment as a perjurer in the first degree because I refused to be an informer. I therefore served 13½ months in jail in The Tombs and in New York State's prisons, Sing Sing, Dannemora and Walkill. Now about my jail experiences there is the little book, *Letters from The Tombs*, published by the Schappes Defense Committee, with an introduction by Richard Wright, in 1941, while I was out on bail pending appeals to the higher state courts. But about my prison experiences I have never written — and there is a reason for that.

Some of you here knew or will remember that outstanding lawyer, Carol Weiss King (1895-1952), whose many successful arguments of immigration cases before the U.S. Supreme Court helped shape immigration law and practise and made the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born an outstanding progressive defense agency. Well, shortly after I was released on parole from Walkill Prison in Dec., 1944, Carol Weiss King invited Sonya and me to her home for dinner. Carol King had been part of that battery of radical lawyers that counseled us in our struggles in and out of court against the Rapp-Coudert Committee witch-hunt — and Sonya and I were delighted to have this invitation. Carol King was a lovely hostess, served a splendid dinner — of which I have not the slightest recollection. But one thing Carol King said to me that evening I have never forgotten. "Morris," she said, "don't make a career of your prison experiences." Perhaps she thought that, having written *Letters from The Tombs*, I was about to follow it up with another book of prison life. I had no such intention because I had already, while in prison, begun my studies in American Jewish history. But her injunction has ever since inhibited me, not from

talking about my prison experiences privately to friends (and that not too often), but from writing about them.

Now, however, 40 years have passed. In these past 18 months I have had to recall the events of 1940 to 1944 in such a way that — well, today I am ready to go public with a few of these experiences, those that seem to have a social significance.

Now it so happened that I received my order to surrender to serve my sentence of 1½ to two years in state prison on Dec. 19, 1943 at about the same time that I received the galley proofs of my book, *Selections from the Prose and Poetry of Emma Lazarus*, which was being published by the Cooperative Book League of the Jewish-American Section of the International Workers Order. So Sonya and I spent the evening and part of the night before I surrendered romantically proof-reading my book, which came out during my imprisonment. Next day I was transported to the first stop on what was to turn out to be a prison-tour of duty that encompassed the best and the worst in New York State.

At Sing Sing, after my official induction as No. 102-800, I found another reception awaiting me. Some here will remember the trade union leader of the Laundry Workers of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Alex Hoffman. Well, he had just been released from Sing Sing, where he had been incarcerated for actions arising out of a laundry workers strike, by a pre-Christmas pardon from Gov. Charles Poletti. Learning from the press that I was about to be checked into Sing Sing, Hoffman had arranged with two men serving life terms to “take care” of this radical “professor” who had refused to be an informer. So Mischa, a first violinist in a famous orchestra who had killed a girl in what the French call a “crime of passion,” and Louis, whose crime I no longer remember, took me in tow, had me eat at their table, and lent me books from the clandestine circulating library the prisoners had managed to found. The first book lent me was Maxim Gorky’s vivid and inspiring account of how, in the USSR, the White Sea-Baltic Canal had been built by prison labor as a project for building socialism. The Sing Sing Jewish chaplain, Rabbi Jacob Katz, lent me Mordecai Kaplan’s *Judaism as a Civilization*. Both opened my eyes, but in different directions.

Comes Christmas, a particularly miserable time in any prison here because the separation from family is most acute, and of course the prison authorities not merely allow Christmas cards freely to come in but also offer the inmates a Christmas dinner. I am on the chow line; my plate is already full — with turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes, gravy, all commingling on one metal plate, but I still have to get dessert. The

man dishing out ice cream digs into his can routinely, comes up, sees me, calls out, "Why, Mr. Schappes! Wow, I was a student at City!" And down he lunges into the ice cream can for a second scoop, both of which, *far groyis gedila* (for great joy), he slaps on top of — my turkey and gravy. This City College alumnus was not the only one who, during the depression, had responded to Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia's call to college graduates who could not find professional work or any jobs to join the city and state police on correctional forces.

That same Christmas, I was to learn later, Christmas vacationers at the nearby Fred Briehl's farm also had me on their minds. Fred Briehl, the farmer, was a member of the State Committee of the New York Communist Party, and supplemented his small income by taking in vacationing boarders at comradely prices. Mindful of my presence at nearby Sing Sing, they all signed a statement of encouragement and solidarity, and sent it to me. If the Warden was impressed, it was not in the way my well-wishers had intended. So on Jan. 22, as I was at work in the prison print-shop (printing, in the Russian revolutionary tradition, was a highly desirable craft to learn), I was suddenly taken by two guards, returned to my cell, and told I was being "boated out," that is, transferred to another prison.

I was scared, and I was frantic, because Sonya, who had visited me every week, was due to come that afternoon and I could imagine her reaction when she was told I was not there. Soon my lifer friends turned up at my cell to explain that I was to be on a "boat" to Dannemora, a maximum security prison in Plattsburg, near the Canadian border, a place dreaded as the Siberia of United States, or at least of N.Y. State, prisons. I had to pack all my belongings into one duffle bag, including books that had been sent me and passed by the prison censor. Carl Sandburg's six-volume life of Lincoln was a particular problem, and I gladly accepted Mischa's offer to send it to me at Dannemora — which he did.

At 11. P.M. that night, all of us on the transport to Dannemora were lined up. My right hand was handcuffed to the left hand of a Black prisoner. Heavy leg-irons on my right ankle were attached to heavy leg-irons on the Black man's left ankle. Unless we kept in step we would chafe each other raw. Our line hobbled up an incline to the Ossining railroad station, where we waited for a midnight train for an all-night journey. The January wind from the Hudson was mean. I was cold, cold and scared, wondering what had happened to Sonya. Suddenly behind me, a low voice, "You're the professor?" I turn my body without moving my legs. He adds, whispering, "My name is Scalise. Don't worry, Mischa said I'm to take care of you, professor. Don't worry." And he vanished. George Scalise was a notorious mobster, who

had been at Sing Sing for a few years and, like me, was being “boated” out.

In the train my Black companion and I shared one of the cross-seats, with a guard opposite us. The Black man had already been at Dannemora. Knowing what awaited him, he was scared of particulars; I was just generally frightened. The ride was long; conversation was short. After a few hours, I noticed my companion was squirming in his seat. He was sweating in the cold. “What’s wrong, man?” No answer. “Anything I can do?” No answer, just squirms and squirms and pain writ large on his face. Finally, he let it out: He had to go to the toilet; he was afraid of me; what would I do if he, Black, had to sit and shit while I, handcuffed to him and with leg-irons binding us, had to stand there? I hurried him painfully to the narrow train toilet and hovered over him perforce while he relieved himself. His gratitude was embarrassing, but the incident was infinitely and permanently illuminating.

For I had studied the “Negro Question,” as it was then called, intensively. In fact it was through my study of the Negro question that I became interested in the Jewish question as a Marxist, and was thus rescued from the cosmopolitanism into which I had lapsed as a student at the City College, with its pervasive atmosphere of deracination, deculturation and “melting-pot” pressures. So I knew about the “special character” of the Negro question; I knew that equality of opportunity was not enough for a people that had been enslaved and then Jim-Crowed into a position of inferiority out of which it would emerge only by special consideration; I knew all this theoretically and intellectually. But the experience with this Black prisoner stripped away totally the idea that we were equal in fact even when we were shackled to one another; he had a fear of forcing me to take him to the toilet that I should not have had in the reverse situation. So, if in JEWISH CURRENTS my advocacy of affirmative action and even of preferential treatment seem to you to have a special fervor it is because my political and moral conviction is continually reinforced by the memory of this experience: that handcuffs and leg-irons did not make us equal.

Dannemora was a fearsome place. It had been built during the Civil War to house Confederate prisoners-of-war. I was put into a small, dim cell with only a bucket for a toilet and with half-inch-thick vertical bars on the door. Both The Tombs and Sing Sing were palatial and modern in comparison. Within a half hour after I got into my cell, however, a figure appeared at the door. “You’re the professor?” “Yes.” “Scalise sent this.” And he slips through the narrow aperture between the thick bars a large, round, metal container designed to slip through just this aperture — a can of soup! And then he pushed through the bars another object — a copy of the *N.Y. Herald Tribune!* That’s how

Scalise took care of the professor! That's organization, I thought to myself admiringly — I, who thought I knew something about organization. Let me add at once that I met Scalise only once more at Dannemora (or anywhere else): in the infirmary one morning we were accidentally seated side by side, waiting for the doctor. There Scalise lamented to me that his being in prison was less hard on him than on his poor, old mother...

At Dannemora, even when, after a week of processing as No. 28-305, I was placed in the new building, with a large cell and inside toilet, the atmosphere was one of total intimidation. You never walked 10 steps alone. You were marched to the shower (once a week), marched to the movie theater, marched to the dining room, marched — and always on the double, with guards always at your elbow. The guards wore high-necked uniforms, hats with visors, and carried guns on their hips and sticks in their hands. In the dining-room, you sat at narrow metal tables, ate on the double (no talking allowed), while at strategic places on a mezzanine there were guards with machine guns trained on us below. In the movie-theater, too, on either side of the projection booth, there were machine guns pointed at our backs.

But Sonya came to visit me every week, an all-day train ride to Plattsburg, an overnight stay in the home of Rabbi and Rebbitzin Shoenfeld, and then an hour opposite me with a glass barrier between us and a speaking-tube for intimate communication. On her first such visit, between bravely restrained tears, she told me that the lawyer Joseph Brodsky (1889-1947) had accompanied her to Albany to demand my transfer out of Dannemora. The prison officials told them about, and showed them, a *post-card* addressed to me, signed Earl Browder (obviously a forgery), in which Browder instructed me to organize the guards into a union and strike the joint at Sing Sing as soon as possible. Brodsky roared with laughter and indignation.

After four weeks — tough weeks — at Dannemora; I was transferred by two guards in an automobile to Walkill State Prison at New Paltz, a minimum security prison, where I did the remainder of my time.

Prison-wise convicts spoke with contemptuous envy of Walkill as a "country club" — which it wasn't. But the Warden at Walkill had a Ph.D. from Teachers College and had been Commissioner of Education in Puerto Rico. On his staff, there was a professional social worker. Your room was small and the windows were small but unbarred, and your door was wooden, and unlocked. You could shower whenever you wished. You ate from china, not metalware, and your cutlery included knives. The tables were wide and wooden — and you could talk to the man opposite you. The guards wore open-collared uniforms and carried neither guns nor

sticks. The chapel was a pleasant room that guards did not enter; if they wanted you, they knocked on the door and called you out. There was a basketball court, and as soon as the other inmates saw me perform there, I became a human being as well as “the professor.”

After two weeks on the road-gang in the February cold as No. 3249, I was assigned to work as the inmate clerk to the Kitchen-Keeper, a Sergeant with an Irish name. When Sonya came to visit me every week, we were allowed to embrace at greeting and parting; we sat side by side and could hold hands. The one guard for the several couples in the visiting room was not intrusive.

Incidentally, have you perhaps wondered why I have been repeating that in each of these prisons, even in distant Dannemora, Sonya exercised her *right* to visit me every week? It is not only because her visits were infinitely supportive for my morale and wellbeing; of course they were that — and frankly I do not know how I would have fared without them. There is another reason. In our April issue, on p. 47, in my monthly half page on Jewish life in the Soviet Union, I included this little item: “Jan. 4 the mother of Anatoly B. Shcharansky was allowed to see her imprisoned son for two hours behind a glass partition for the first time in 16 months.” I raged inside when I typed that item. There is no humanism of any kind, much less a socialist humanism, in a regime that prevents a prisoner from having any visit at all for 16 months, and in which there is no channel for the family of the prisoner publicly to protest such inhumanity. From an Argentinian tyranny I can expect such treatment as a Jacobo Timerman got from his sadistic, anti-Semitic jailers. From Soviet prison authorities I have a right to expect the humanism that pervaded Maxim Gorky’s account of the building of the White Sea-Baltic Canal with prison labor. I do not expect, and I cry out against, the treatment being dealt out to Shcharansky and others like him.

But to return to life at Walkill State Prison in New York. There was a library into which you could go. (At Sing Sing and Dannemora, the library was the place from which books were brought to you.) So I enter the library. The civil-service librarian sees me and blurts out, “Schappes!” It was my City College classmate, H.R. Rudolf of the Class of ’28. He was more embarrassed than I was. This “in” of mine with the Librarian, however, made it possible for me to get a Yiddish newspaper. Since the *Morgen Freiheit* was not allowed in and the *Forverts* I did not want, Rudolf ordered the *Tog* for my reading pleasure, and approved my importation of Nathaniel Buchwald’s book, *Teater*, and Itzik Feffer’s *Haimland*, published by the YKUF. I guess it was fortunate I was too poor to go to Harvard or Columbia, whose alumni were not likely to turn up as guards at Sing Sing or librarians at Walkill...

My clerical work for the Kitchen-Keeper was easy, and I spent much time reading my *Herald-Tribune*, which I preferred at the time because Walter Lippmann's columns on foreign affairs were more to my taste. At one end of the huge kitchen, which had an employee as chief cook and inmates working with him, there was this large metal-meshed cage, which served as storehouse for supplies and office for the Kitchen-Keeper. Each meal was tasted by the Major before being served (and it did not take me long to notice that the Major, instead of being served the food we inmates ate, was handed what he personally had ordered.) After each meal, the Sergeant, the Major and the Cook would gather in the cage. The Cook would bring a pitcher of coffee and there was always a cruller or piece of cake around. After my first breakfast as clerk to the Kitchen-Keeper, I was at my work-place in the cage, reading my *Herald-Tribune* when the Cook walked in with his pitcher of coffee and — . The Sergeant called out to me — “Hey, Schappes! Want coffee? Help yourself.” They seemed surprised when I replied, “No, thank you,” and returned to my *Herald-Tribune*. After lunch and after the last meal, at 4. P.M., this dialogue was repeated. When the Cook and Major left, the Sergeant came over to me, mad. “Who do you think you are? Too stuck up to have coffee with us? You're here doing time, and don't you forget it.”

My answer, when I could break in, was: “No, Sarge. That's not the point. You expect me to have coffee with you with the inmates out there in the kitchen looking on, wishing they could have coffee too. What would it take for the Cook to make a pitcher of coffee for his crew out there as well as for you and the Major?” The Sergeant said nothing. Next morning, the Cook put out a pitcher for his crew before he brought one in to our cage. And when the Sergeant called out, “Coffee, Schappes?” Schappes had coffee.

Well, word got around among the inmates that Schappes was a good guy, a right guy, even though a professor. But they missed the point too. For I was acting out what I had been taught, what I had learned from my studies of Marxism and Leninism by the book: that communists were to have special responsibilities, not special privileges, under socialism, and here I was simply trying to pattern my life under capitalism on such a vision — a vision worth going to prison for if necessary, a vision that did not envision that in a state run by a communist party there would be, among other privileges, special stores for the party and state bureaucracy.

In the Walkill kitchen there was another incident worth mentioning. I always ate with the other prisoners in the dining room (except for that coffee in the Cage). I was always first on the chow line, since I could take my place there from the Cage as the doors to the dining room were

being opened to let the others in. One day at noon at lunch, the big meal of the day, the main dish was liver, beef liver. I took my tray with a big slab of liver and vegetables to a seat, and started cutting the liver; then I started sawing the liver. No go; I think only a power saw could have cut that liver. I took my plate and walked clear across the length of the dining room to the Major, who was in the rear. Men at the tables already and men on the chow line stopped to look at me. To the Major, who was also amazed, I held out my plate, with the words, "Major, I cannot cut this liver."

Taking my knife, he tried it himself. Then, trembling with fury, he hurried to the chow line and ordered the serving stopped. The inmates were ordered back to their rooms; the Cook was ordered to prepare another meal. And 45 minutes later, the men were called back to the dining room and served something edible. Meantime, in the Cage, the Major was giving me the bawling out of my life...

Now what about Jewish life at Walkill State Prison? The Jewish chaplain was Rabbi Herbert I. Bloom (1899-1966) of Kingston, N.Y., a sweet man, a historian who had written a first-rate book on the Jews of Amsterdam in the 17th century (which I later used in my work on New Amsterdam Jews). I joined the congregation of about 25, but with the stipulation that while I would attend Sabbath services I would not pray. The services, by the way, were not conducted by Rabbi Bloom, a Reform rabbi. There was an inmate named Friedman, who had been ordained (obtained *smiha*) at the famous Slobodka Yeshiva in Poland. I think he was a swindler and a bigamist, but he was an orthodox Jew and would not attend a service conducted by a Reform rabbi. So Rabbi Bloom agreed to have Friedman conduct the service, after which Rabbi Bloom gave a short sermon, and then held private conferences with each inmate to see what he could do to help him. The rabbi was particularly friendly to me. In fact, after I got out and we opened the School of Jewish Studies, I persuaded Rabbi Bloom to teach a course for us in post-Talmudic literature.

One day I asked Friedman whether he would teach me Hebrew. All I knew of Hebrew was the little I remembered from my *bar mitzva* instruction — almost nothing. Friedman agreed and Sonya sent me the two-volume text book then used in the New York high schools, *Elements of Hebrew*, by Simha Rubinstein, published in 1936 by the N.Y. Bureau of Jewish Education. In prison Friedman worked in the tailor shop. But every day I would walk into his room, which adjoined mine, for a Hebrew lesson. We stipulated that he would use his Ashkenazic pronunciation, but I the Sephardic pronunciation indicated in the text.

Of course the authorities knew I was studying Hebrew with Friedman, and so did the Episcopalian chaplain. One day, Friedman tells me that that chaplain had called him into his office, to tell him that, in order to rise in the Episcopalian ministry, it would be well for him to study Hebrew. Would Friedman therefore teach him Hebrew? Friedman's answer was that he was doing time, and if the chaplain would get the Principal Keeper to assign Friedman to teach the chaplain Hebrew, Friedman would be glad to do so. But the chaplain knew he could not get the P.K. to make such an assignment, so he appealed to Friedman with "But Friedman, you are teaching Schappes Hebrew, why not me?" To which Friedman replied, "Ah, sir, but Schappes is an inmate!" So now I had status (*yihus*), I was an inmate!

Comes Rosh Hashona, 1944, at which time I had been at Walkill about eight months, and it occurs to me to try something else with Friedman. I knew that prison authorities set a great deal of store by religion. They think it's good for the inmates and many prison-wise inmates to join several congregations, including Christian Science. Now about a half mile down the road from the main building at Walkill there was a pond, which we could see from our elevation. Remembering how, when I was a boy on East 10th Street, I used to see the Jews on Rosh Hashona go to the East River to *tashlich* (the ceremony of emptying your pockets of sins into the water), it occurred to me that it would be a wonderful thing for the Jewish congregation of Walkill to demand the right to observe this religious commandment. So I persuaded Friedman to ask the Principal Keeper for permission for the congregation to go down to the pond for this ritual, and to show the P.K. where in the good book *sh'tait geshribn* (it is written) that this is a necessary part of the Rosh Hashona observance. And if previous congregations had not asked for this observance, that was not Friedman's fault, and he, Friedman, was an orthodox Jew, not this Reform kind, and so on. Well, the Principal Keeper agreed!

I must admit that only about 14 of our congregation had the nerve to go through with it. But on that Rosh Hashona morning, the 14 of us lined up, with Friedman and me at the head (with the rest of the prisoners lined up at the unbarred borders of the institution, looking at us in amazement), and, with one guard in front and one in the rear, we marched down that road, breathing deeply, basking in the autumn sun, striding to the pond according to the Laws of Moses.

At the pond, Friedman, in all his glory, uncorked a prayer so fervid and so loud that it could have been heard in the next county, or maybe in Albany, or Washington, or in the heavenly realms to which Friedman had directed his chant. And then we marched back to Walkill State Prison — and I assure you modestly that, had we wanted to, we

could have had a mass conversion to Judaism of all the Christian denominations there. What, a religion that can get you out of prison for an hour to walk to a pond, etc., that's a religion for you! But Friedman did not believe in conversion — and we all had our hands full that day answering the questions of our fellow-inmates.

One day the Warden called me into his office, as he had done several times before, because he had had very few college teachers as his wards. On occasion he would even lament to me how frustrated he felt because the prison bureaucracy did not allow him to make the reforms in the prison regime that he had hoped to make. This time he showed me a book he had just received and asked me to read it. The book was by Nicholas S. Timasheff, assistant professor of sociology at Fordham University, and was entitled, *Religion in Soviet Russia 1917-1942*, published in 1942 by the Catholic house of Sheed & Ward. I said to myself, on the boss's time (that is, while I am doing time) I'll read the book, although I had immediately marked it as a book by a Russian White-Guard scholar of whom I'd be instinctively leery.

Well, the book was an eye-opener. Basing himself primarily on Soviet sources, Timasheff described a two-week conference called by the Soviet Academy of Historical Science so that the Bezbozhniki, Yemilian Yaroslavski's League of Militant Atheists, could be hauled over the coals as petty bourgeois atheists, as anarchist atheists and not Marxist atheists. At this conference early in 1939 the Marxists demonstrated that the Militant Atheists were ahistorical, condemned Christianity as a whole and in its entirety without regard to the historical fact that the introduction of Christianity into the Kiev Rus had historically marked an advance, and that therefore the work of the Militant Atheists was unsuccessful because it was non-Marxist. The spokesmen for the League of Militant Atheists accepted the criticism of the Marxist historians and promised to change their approach — but it was not long before the League was dissolved.

Now this whole ideological struggle was news to me. It had not been reported in the *Daily Worker*, or *The Communist*, or *Inprecorr* or any other Soviet or communist publication in English — all of which I read extensively. And I, a Marxist scholar, had to learn about it from a book by a White-Guard Russian pressed upon me in prison by a Warden. Perhaps here was born in my mind a certain caution in approaching Soviet and communist sources in English — a caution that possibly they were not revealing all that needed to be known about Soviet life and practices. From this caution grew, under changing circumstances, the critical posture I now have towards all such writings. For me the five-pointed Star of Socialism has not been dimmed by the blunders and crimes committed and still being committed in its name, what with anti-

Semitism being propagated by official communist and Soviet publications. But the Star of Socialism, in my vision, must include room for the Star of David — and the stars of all nationalities — too.

It was in prison that I began to do some of the secondary reading for work on my history of the Jews in the United States. Dr. Joshua Bloch (1890-1957), Chief of the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library, having noticed my scholarly work on Emma Lazarus, suggested to Rabbi Ben Goldstein (1902-1953), who from his pulpit in Alabama had dared support the Scottsboro Case (and therefore later had to change his name to Lowell), that he send me books on American Jewish history — which Rabbi Goldstein did, much to my delight.

Then on March 14, 1944, I received in prison a copy of the printed volume of my Emma Lazarus selections. About that time I was also beginning to get the *Tog* — and there I came upon H. Leivick's Act II of his play, *Der Ness fun der Varshaver Getto*. (The Miracle of the Warsaw Ghetto). The *Tog* with Acts I and III never got to the Walkill prison library (and I must confess that to this day I have not read those missing acts). But I did translate Act II into English, as well as a few poems by Itzik Feffer (published later in the *Chicago Jewish Forum* and in our pages).

Therefore in the fall of 1944, as my parole release date was nearing, I arranged to have a Jewish Cultural Evening in the Chapel. With a couple of inmates, I rehearsed a reading of Leivick's Act II (with men reading the women's parts). Came the appointed evening, and most of the Jewish inmates gathered in the Chapel. First came a reading by four of us of Leivick's Act II. Then I read from the poetry and prose of Emma Lazarus. Then we adjourned not to *gedekte tishn* (tables with table cloths) but to a snack of a couple of cans of SPAM bought in the commissary! And a good Jewish cultural time was had by all — at least by me!

My first work reflecting my initial studies in American Jewish history as well as my prison experiences, was my long poem, *Time Done!* I think Rabbi Bloom unofficially got that to Sonya for me. It was published in the *New Masses*, Dec. 18, 1945, after I had safely completed my parole period.

I trust I have not conveyed the idea that I had a good time in prison. It is not that I have forgotten the dark aspects of that year, the loneliness, the separation from Sonya, family, friends and comrades, the crudeness all around, the longings and sometimes the anguish. But I was determined, as a way of fighting the system, to make the most of my time there, because if there is anything I hate it is to waste time — our most precious possession, It is not true that "walls do not a prison make," because they do. But it is what can be done behind those walls that is significant. I did what I could — facilitated by Sonya, family, and a movement continually concerned,

and in a society sufficiently democratic so that the concern could be made manifest.

I had valued democracy, democratic rights, before I was imprisoned. I was one of those who took almost literally Lenin's hyperbolic cry that "Socialist democracy is a thousand times more democratic than bourgeois democracy." I believed it as a True Believer. So not a thousand; let it be a hundred, or ten times. That it could turn out in practise to be *less* democratic than bourgeois democracy in countries calling themselves socialist and led by people calling themselves communist was an experience that came late and sadly. If my vision of socialism now stresses democratic rights, forms and institutions as the essence of socialism, my prison experience laid a basis for a perception that was slowly, slowly, to mature.

I realize that in this overlong discourse I have said very little about JEWISH CURRENTS itself, but I hope you will consider what I have said not irrelevant to it. This, however, is the character and these are some of the principles I brought to JEWISH CURRENTS. They may help explain some of the grievous errors we made — and they may also perhaps help explain our ability to recover from the mistakes after 1956 and their serious consequences of isolation from the Jewish community.

I know that your splendid out-pouring of solidarity here today is not only about me as a person; I see it as a symbol of my work with the magazine all these past 36 years. JEWISH CURRENTS is now the largest sector of the progressive Jewish movement. JEWISH CURRENTS can and must expand.

You have given freely today. We shall be coming back to you, again and again. The spirit, the enthusiasm displayed here must not evaporate. This is not a nostalgic binge, although I have talked about the past. As the old City College seal has it: *Respice, Adspice, Prospice*. We look back (for experience and wisdom); we look around us (for clarity and analysis); and we look forward — forward, past Reagan and Haig, past the new right, the old right, the all-right, past Podhoretz and his crowd, to a vision of what humankind can make of a world — of peace, of brotherhood and sisterhood, of amity and community of peoples, of the good life. Together, only together, can we go forward.

*September, 1982*