

“Our Editorial Team at Work (Reportage)” *Landsberger Lager-Cajtung* (January 18, 1946)

Abstract

From 1945 to 1952, about 250,000 Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs) lived in camps administered by the United Nations and the Allied authorities. The Landsberg DP Camp was established on former German military grounds near Munich in the American occupation zone. Like other DP camps, Landsberg offered residents opportunities for cultural and educational enrichment; it was home to political, religious, and social organizations and had its own resident-run newspaper. The camp's newspaper, the *Landsberger Lager-Cajtung*, was founded by the Lithuanian Rudolf Valsonok. A lack of access to Hebrew type meant that Valsonok and his associates had to use Roman type for this Yiddish-language newspaper. The newspaper included a range of featured topics and articles, e.g., political commentary, reports from the foreign press, and appeals for information on missing friends and relatives.

Titled “Our Editorial Team at Work (Reportage),” this 1946 article from the *Lager-Cajtung* introduces readers to the newspaper's diverse staff. The article consists of a series of vignettes that describe not only the work but also the tastes, habits, and personal backgrounds of various staff members. Written in a jaunty, colloquial style, the article is infused with wry humor. The writer's references to reporting in the Hebrew- and Yiddish-language international press (and to the foreign press in general) make clear that staff journalists were interested in breaking news worldwide.

Source

Our Editorial Team at Work (Reportage)

A Report by H. Borokhovits

Now it is time to take a closer look at the members of our profession, with whom I spend day and night. Everyone has a weakness; every living person has a peculiarity that one can make fun of, something one can laugh at. To some we ascribe a certain nervous, restless nature; another seems prone to cold hands and feet; another is sensitive in yet another way^[1]...The one difference between my previous reportages and today's is that the previous ones reported about photos whereas today's will be beautified and embellished with photos, in the American style. When you read about this or that “pictured” colleague, you will certainly see his portrait, his little face, crooked or straight, the sweet or bitter smile with which he posed for the photographer.

And there's something else you'll learn: In today's report I will tell you in words and pictures how an issue of our highly respected newspaper is born, how many reincarnations it goes through until it reaches the hands of the readers; how many people – and which people – work on it until it sees the light of day. Many of you, dear readers, even believe that we have a machine where paper is inserted into one side and a finished newspaper comes out of the other. Unfortunately, I have to report today that this is far from the case. A dozen and a half people rack their brains until a new edition of the newspaper comes out. It is not uncommon for the labor pains of a newspaper's birth to last just as long as those for an actual birth ... In the end, Kiryat Yam^[2] becomes a reality.

This person is certainly well known to you. You know him from the government committee administration, you know him from the courtroom, you know him from the newsroom. One of the hardest things is finding him, this president/judge/journalist. So you see him sitting at his desk. Ask yourself: where is this desk? At the C.K. in Munich? At the Feldafing Committee? In Frankfurt with General Smith? In the new Yiddish center in Leipheim? Or even in the editorial office of the "Landsberger Lager-Cajtung"? Yes, he's basically everywhere, but in truth you'll find him nowhere. Not only can you not find him, our editor, Mr. Hermanowitz, can't find him either. "Hello, Committee?," the editor calls, "May I speak to Dr. Greenhouse or Dr. Gringauz, please?" – "Ha, Ha," he answers. "You're looking for Dr. Gringauz? We've been looking for him all over Bavaria for two months and can't find him!" ... "Hello, C.K. Munich?," the editor doesn't give up, "Can you tell us where our long lost president is?" – "Yes, with pleasure," comes the answer, "He just went to Feldafing to give a lecture. And if you don't find him there, please excuse the inconvenience, then call the Leipheim camp or Frankfurt; maybe St. Ottilien – or all of those places at once – and surely you will catch him."

Surely you want to know where we caught him? The story goes like this: We sent out two cars from our editorial office, plus 17 other cars, and they went out on all the roads and streets. And with the help of an M.P. officer, we stopped every taxi until we caught him, took back him to our editorial office, sat him at a desk, and the photographer, who had been wandering around for three days and three nights, took this picture of him.

[Photo 1: Dr. S. Gringauz at "his" desk. He is lost in thought. First and foremost, he is thinking about how to come up with an article for the next issue of the newspaper; and about where to get a quarter of a million certificates (of emigration) for the Jews in Germany].

He is a fine chap, this president of the local Landsberg government and board member of this newspaper of ours. He approaches this local chronicle with the same authorial seriousness and diligence that he would give to a weighty, kilometer-long treatise. Regardless of what occupies him at any given moment, he goes to sleep with the newspaper and gets up in the morning with it. It is not unusual to find him in a good mood – then you can do anything you want with him...

Editor Jojsef Gar is the only one we have not "pictured". (You will find his photograph on another page.) You hardly know him. But a large part of the newspaper is edited by him. His favorite subjects include literature (prose and poetry) and the Yiddish language. He also writes about anything you want: about the Kovno (Kaunas) Ghetto, the Nuremberg Trials, about Sholem Asche's "famous" new novel, the "Landsberger Lager-Cajtung" etc. From the foreign press, he enjoys the Paris newspaper *Naye Presse*, which always sends him a weekly literary supplement... From the famous poets, he likes H. Leivik and Pesa Manyevska from the Leipzig Kibbutz *Hanoved*.

His sense of humor is as scarce as salt on the lunch table of the local canteen...

May we introduce...?! This is our editor Baruch Hermanowitz. Take a good look at him: his wrinkled, worn-out face, his half-lowered head, his desk cluttered with papers from the whole of the world press. I'll say this much: don't feel sorry for him! Every day he has the pleasure of looking through 181 manuscripts written in scribbled handwriting, of which – don't say it out loud – no fewer than 180 end up in the wastepaper basket or serve as fuel for the smoky stoves along with wet wood (who else should the Economic Office send the wet wood to?). The editorial staff are very grateful to him for the fuel. Even the "authors" of the manuscripts condemned to fire are grateful to him - you will understand that ... Perhaps you would like to write something yourself, then remember what you have said and – your appetite will disappear...

His favorite subjects are the Land of Israel, Zionism and the Chelouche movement[3]. His approach to the *Sonej-*

Zion w'Israel[4] is razor sharp, so to speak. That means: He cuts sharp or pointed articles out of foreign newspapers and reprints them in our newspaper.... Humor aside, the opponents of Zion are very afraid of him. We were told that the English Foreign Minister Beving - after reading our editor's response to his article about the Declaration of the Land of Israel - was so surprised and shocked that he immediately banned the hunting of "illegals," which is quite common in... the English zone in Germany. Furthermore, he ordered that the "Landsberger Lager-Cajtung" was no longer allowed in the English imperial realm, except in ... Bergen-Belsen...

[Photo 2: Editor Hermanowitz at his desk. His face reflects the worries of the whole world. And no wonder: neither in the *Forverts*, nor in the *Tog*, nor in the *Morgn Zhurnal*, nor in the *Davar* could he find any good Yiddish news. And would you think he has a few nice words left over for us, his employees ...?]

You know this tall and sturdily built man well. You see him at the cultural office, at the technical schools, in the hospital, in Greifenberg, in Holzhausen, in Schongau and everywhere else?

[Photo 3: Agr. Yakov Alevsky at his desk. The picture shows him deep in thought: what else could one write about the Kovno ghetto and about the technical schools?]

He's a good man, our employee. He can write about all Yiddish topics for you, but he prefers to write about the Kovno Ghetto and the Landsberg technical schools (and also about all the technical schools throughout Bavaria). Many authors who wanted to write about the Kovno Ghetto – after Mr. [Jacob] Olejski published his sensational materials about Kovno – packed their texts away. And whereas our newspaper goes to the farthest corners of the world – even to Munich, despite the fact that they try to justify themselves in good time – not a single man was left who did not know about the various "actions" in the Kovno Ghetto and the Bavarian technical schools.

Now he is sitting at his desk, racking his brains: What else could one say about Kovno and the technical schools? Maybe there are more technical schools on the moon...?

[Photo 4: Everyone at work. Our friend L. Diller is looking for material for his political column and Mr. Fridenson (right) is compiling the local chronicle. Due to a shortage of desks, they share one.]

Zapoznajcie się![5] The man sitting on the left is our new colleague. His name is **Mr. Lazar Diller**. His specialty is politics. Here's what they say about him: He's on the editorial staff of the "Landsberger Lager-Cajtung," in Block X, and he covers politics for the whole world. It is also said that "The Big Three" or "The Big Five" think very highly of the opinions of our colleague when it comes to making first-class decisions. His favorite subjects are the atomic bomb and breaking news from the Middle East.

The man sitting on the right is our colleague who compiles the local chronicle. Despite the fact that he shares a desk with his friend Diller, there are many other attractions for him. As we mentioned, whereas the former follows breaking news from the Middle East, the latter is interested in breaking news from the Landsberg canteens: what's missing from the soup...? He likes his newspaper work a lot. He loves to cover lectures, concerts, court trials, but most of all he "works" on banquets; reports on who still talks about the fact that there are tables set just for show...

I hardly need to introduce our most revered head of administration, **Mrs. Rabinowitz**. There is no *Litwak*[6] or Pole (she is fluent in both languages) in Landsberg who does not know this highly esteemed and likeable woman.

[Photo 5: An important emissary. Our honorable and popular head of administration, Mrs. Rosa Rabinowitz, on her way to collect the additional assignments for all staff members. This is an important moment in the lives of all editorial staff members, and it means so much to everyone that even the always absent editor Hermanowitz (on

the right) takes time to bless her journey and wish her luck. Left: her husband, P. Rabinowitz, who is delegated to serve as her personal assistant.] The Lithuanians say she is “personable,” and the Poles say the opposite. Her main task is to go from one government agency to the next and, with great luck, track down our editorial staff. Early in the morning, you can find her at UNRAA, at 10 a.m. at the military government, at noon in Mr. Walach’s *Malbish Arumim*^[7] Institute [clothing bank for the needy], and in the evening at the *Lechem-le’echol*^[8] apartments with Mr. Blum. If you find our friend, the editor, dressed in his *Big-Day-Malches*^[9] and provisioned with all sorts of good things in his room, you should know that you have her to thank for this.

The above picture was taken around 8 a.m. when Mrs. Rabinowitz usually prepares for her expeditionary visits to the agencies. Our editor (on the right) wishes her good luck and a long life on behalf of the entire staff. At the wheel of the automobile is her husband, Mr. Rabinowitz, who boasts that he must be the only married man allowed to drive...

At this table extraordinary work is being carried out. Here the newspaper copy is corrected, errors made by the linotypist and typesetter are marked up, so that they can be corrected later. [Photo 6: Fridenson and Pomerantz correct the newspaper.] And if after all this you still discover up to three errors per column in the newspaper, you have these two people to “thank.” You already know the one on the right from another picture. But he also helps to correct the newspaper. When the editor asks him: “Friend proofreader, why did you miss about 47 mistakes in Olejski’s article on technical schools,” he replies coolly, calmly and in a contemptuous tone: “Anyway, there is not a person alive who does not make a mistake ...”

But the main person responsible for the mistakes is the second from the left, our friend Pomerantz, a quiet, calm young man who works faithfully and subserviently for the newspaper. He is very punctual (at noon he sleeps exactly two hours and 15 minutes) and is very careful to make sure that even more mistakes are corrected. He is not exactly on good terms with the typesetters. He, as he complains, corrects all the mistakes, and the typesetters (what nice friends) reject the corrections, and then they all meet again in front of the local Jewish court.

This is where the newspaper is “Latinized,” where it is given its *goyishe*^[10] appearance so that all Wladeks and Heles who cannot read Yiddish are able to read it. (And we want the local mayor to be able to read Marjan Zyd’s article on Nuremberg and Bialostocki’s “burning” poetry, too.) [Picture 6: Yiddish manuscripts being Latinized.] Slowly and clearly, our friend Pomeranz, whom we already know, dictates, and Miss S. Goldschmid takes notes as fast as an arrow and well. After the editor, they are the first two people to read the articles. For Fräulein Goldschmid, writing on the machine is not just a technical job, she also likes the content very much. But what she loves most is typing the content-rich material from the local chronicle of her friend Fridenson.

[Photo 7: We are looking for our relative ... we would like ... Ms. Ruth Karek at work.] You want to be on good terms with Miss Ruth Korek, our administrative secretary and machine operator. If you want to find a relative in Feldafing or Kaufering, if you are planning a wedding or a *Brit Milah*^[11] – there is no way around her. She is not an obstetrician – she takes all the wanted ads and congratulations, puts them together and “Latinizes” them. If she wants to, she will put your wedding announcement in a prestigious place (she gets on well with the typesetters, especially the main typesetter); but if she wants to, she will put your wedding congratulation between... the obituaries. After that you can scream as much as you want – it won’t do you any good.

You should also be introduced to this quiet and modest young man, our main composer friend Dworkowitz. For him our newspaper is what dough is for a baker. If we didn’t have him, our newspaper would be published in Leipzig. As it is the way of every young typesetter, he himself does not read a newspaper. But he’s very interested in the strike... [Photo 8: A page of the newspaper is finished. Our main typesetter has finished the page of the

newspaper and is very satisfied that he is nearing the birth of the paper. Why does he look so serious in this picture?... Well, who among us does not have unpleasant thoughts from time to time?] What I can say about him is this: Since he can put out a sixteen-page newspaper edition like this one – like today's – he's worthy of an honorable bride... A Polish one, a Lithuanian one – it doesn't matter, as long as she's a fine one, a good one. Who wants to be the candidate?

[Photo 9: Soon we will see our product. Our friend Mr. Schik is preparing a print of a completed page.] He is the second hand of the above-mentioned colleague. **Mr. Herman Schik** is his name, though he is not a German. He likes everything in the world, especially lovely ladies. But he doesn't like to fix the highlighted errors in the proofs... So he makes himself a print of a finished page with the editor's articles, and one might think that all the mistakes have already been corrected. Turns out – *loj dubim weloj ja'ar*^[12]. It turns out that the editor is not made of steel, as his bile may overflow with agony.

[Photo 10: He is not sitting at a piano. Our 61-year-old German linotypist, **Mr. Raab**, "throws out" lead lines for our paper with linotypes.]

[Photo 11: The newspaper is finished! The most modern rotation machine prints 200 papers in a minute. Right: the owner of the **Karl Neumeyer** publishing house looks at the newly finished product. He is very pleased that his German machine is printing a Yiddish paper that includes anti-Hitler articles.]

[Photo 12: The newspaper is distributed by the publisher in all corners of the Landsberg Yiddish centers. The first from the right: head of distribution Mr. P. Rabinowitz. He stands with his hands in his pockets, drawing pride from abundant resources ...]

[Photo 13: Wouldn't it be better to typeset from right to left? Our friend **A. Silberberg** sets type for our newspaper and dreams of working at *Davar* in Tel Aviv one day.]

This young man, Alek Silberberg, is a good typesetter, a shining star in field of obituaries. His only regret is that the names and families in the obituaries are not German... His great wish is to leave our newspaper to become a typesetter for *Davar* in Tel Aviv. Who can blame him? Not I.

[Photo 14: How many copies shall we send to Munich? ...Ponders our energetic and pragmatic head of distribution, F. Rabinowitz. Will our newspaper reach our readership, which grows every day?]

[Photo 15: They grab the newspapers as if they were... extra rations. First from the right – head of the Provisions Office, Mr. B. Blum.]

[Photo 16: Our photo reporter Mr. G. Kadish with his "ghetto camera" in hand. The underground photographer of the "actions" in Kovno... The tireless documentarian of the exterminations in Poland and Hungary... The photojournalist of the new life of *Sharit Ha-Platah*^[13].]

(Continued on page 14)



NOTES

- [1] In the original: "[...] a farfor in der zibeter rip" translates roughly to: "[...] a jab in the seventh rib, to hit someone in the tenderest spot." The phrase refers to the seventh rib as the most sensitive part of the body. "It is often used to mean 'strike the heart,' [...] and the heart is indeed behind the seventh rib." Cf. Erika Timm, *Historische jiddische Semantik*. Tübingen 2005, p. 253.
- [2] Kiryat Yam (literally: city on the sea) is a city in Israel, which was founded around 1945 approximately 12 kilometers to the north of Haifa.
- [3] Yosef Eliyahu Cheloché (1870-1934) was an entrepreneur, businessman and industrialist and one of the founders of the city of Tel Aviv in Israel. He was a political advocate for a Jewish-Arab coexistence in Israel-Palestine.
- [4] Hebrew: *sin'a*, to hate, hate. Likely an anti-Zionist movement in Israel.
- [5] Polish: Allow us to introduce!
- [6] Yiddish designation for a Jew from Lithuania.
- [7] Hebrew for "clothe the poor," a Jewish charity that serves the poor.
- [8] Hebrew for "bread to eat," a Jewish charity that serves the poor.
- [9] Fancy clothes; compound from the English "big day" and the Yiddish for "festive or royal clothing."
- [10] Goy: Yiddish designation for a non-Jew.
- [11] Yiddish for circumcision. On the 8th day after birth, newborn sons in Judaism are circumcised. The custom has its origin in the Old Testament: "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised." (Gen. 17:10).
- [12] Hebrew saying: *lo dubbim ve-lo ya'ar*, roughly translates as "there ain't no such animal."
- [13] Hebrew for Holocaust survivor.

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