

tige from his name. He was given an elaborate funeral, many thousands of people marching in the procession. Thirty days later, at a memorial in Madison Square Garden, Olgin was canonized. His picture was placed on the masthead of the *Freiheit* as a symbol, and all fund-raising campaigns were conducted "to keep alive Olgin's heritage." His picture is still on the paper's masthead.

SHACHNO EPSTEIN, FROM A WRITER TO A SPY

Shachno Epstein, who had a considerable part in the Socialist and Communist movement here and in Russia—no relation whatsoever to the author—was born in 1883 near Vilno. His father was a businessman. Shachno studied the Talmud as well as secular subjects. His ambition was to be a painter, but his sister dissuaded him, arguing that there was no *takhlis* in it. In 1903, he joined the Bund, was arrested in Warsaw and exiled to the Far East; he escaped after three months and continued his activity in the Bund. He came to America at the end of 1909, and was one of the founders of the Socialist Federation.

Shachno was not satisfied with political writing; he felt a calling for literary criticism. The pulsating Jewish labor movement in the second decade needed intellectuals—writers, editors, educational directors. Shachno Epstein became the editor of the weekly *Die Gleichheit*, of the large Dressmakers' Union, Local 25. He also wrote for the Socialist magazines.

Epstein joined the Russian-born radicals in their trek to Russia in 1917, hoping for more elbow room in the new Russia. He re-joined the Bund, and was active in the struggle against Lenin. And, like the majority of his fellow Socialists, he went over to the Bolsheviks during the Civil War.

Early in 1921, Shachno Epstein returned to America as an "instructor" to the Jewish Communists (the reason for his choice is given in Note 22). He was co-editor with A. Bittelman of the weekly *Emes*, writing under the name of Yosef Berson. When the *Freiheit* was published, he was co-editor for the Communist group.

Shachno Epstein's ambition exceeded by far his limited talent. Neither by ability nor by aptitude did he fit the part of a leader in a Communist Party, however much he wanted to be one. But he

was extraordinarily industrious, and would spend a whole night working on an article. His experience in the revolutionary movement in Russia did little to harden his character. Dr. Iser Ginsberg, reviewing Epstein's two-volume *Memoirs of the Civil War in the Ukraine*, ironically observed that the only impression the book left with a thoughtful reader was the agonizing fear felt by the author during moments of danger.

ESSAY ON STALIN BRINGS HIM TROUBLE

The hard knocks of the factional struggle were too much for him. And, deeply hurt by losing his co-editorship—he was a member of the Foster faction—he took his wife and American-born boy back to Russia in the late 20's, counting on his connections there.*⁴¹⁹

Epstein was made editor of a new monthly magazine, *Der Shtern*, in Kharkov, capital of the Ukraine. Though the magazine never appeared on time, the editor's chair combined with the chance to write literary essays gratified his vanity. He introduced American advertising methods, to the consternation of other editors.

The precarious existence of a Soviet editor under Stalin soon caught up with him. On the occasion of Stalin's 50th birthday, in 1930, Epstein wrote a lengthy essay on Stalin. It was a painstaking job, and it took a couple of months. He bestowed on Stalin the leadership of the October Revolution, the building of the Soviet state and the greatest wisdom of the ages. Epstein was certain that it was fool-proof. And it would have been. But comradely relations among the Jewish Communist top were fast disappearing after Bukharin's ouster; he had been their protector. It was now dog-eat-dog among the little groups and cliques. Litvakov, in his *Emes*, harnessed a couple of students from the Jewish Section of the Communist Western University for the attack—that was his method. Examining the essay through a magnifying glass, the two students uncovered some flaws in Shachno's fulsome praise of Stalin as the father of Soviet nationalities.*⁴²⁰

Even a speck in the picture of Stalin's greatness could have been a source of much trouble, and Epstein was badly frightened. He wrote to Lavrenti Beria, then head of the GPU in Georgia. He had become friendly with Beria during the days of the Civil War, and the latter had protected him on several occasions. It seems that

Beria suggested that, to extricate himself, Shachno should offer to do intelligence work abroad. Because of his stay in America, his offer was accepted. In the opinion of the author, Shachno took the dangerous assignment also to prove to his critics that he was a better Communist than they.

He arrived here in the winter of 1932–1933, under the name of Sam Stone. But he committed an indiscretion. After a couple of drinks with a casual acquaintance in Greenwich Village, he boasted to her of his mysterious mission (he could never keep his liquor). The girl told it to a reporter friend, and a front page story forced him to flee. How he succeeded in avoiding punishment in Moscow is not known.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JULIET STUART POYNTZ

In the winter of 1933–1934, a letter from Shachno in Paris was brought to the author, whom Shachno had avoided on his first visit. In it he hinted that he was doing anti-Nazi work, and needed a credential from a non-Communist paper as a correspondent, which he thought only the author could obtain for him. Believing this story, Melech Epstein secured for him such a credential from the managing editor of *The Day*. And Shachno's articles from abroad were printed in that paper under an assumed name. Later the author found out that his "anti-Nazi" activity consisted of snooping around the correspondents accredited to the League of Nations in Geneva.

Shachno Epstein came here again in 1937, and the author met him several times. In their conversations, it trickled out that he was here for Soviet Intelligence. Of course, the particulars of his work were never mentioned. And the author was amazed that such a boastful weakling should be selected for espionage.

The name of Juliet Stuart Poyntz was never brought up. Nor did the author know that she was back in New York. She had disappeared from the scene here several years previously. And in the Communist Party one does not ask embarrassing questions on the whereabouts of a known comrade. If that person has not been denounced publicly it is assumed that he has been sent somewhere for confidential work.

Shachno suddenly left New York in the middle of summer of

the same year. About two months later, Carlo Tresca accused him in the *New York Times* of luring Juliet Stuart Poyntz to her death. The author began making discreet inquiries into the matter. He found that Epstein had often met Miss Poyntz in New York, and had taken her several times for weekend trips to the Catskill Mountains. He knew that the two had been very friendly as yet in 1916–1917; Miss Poyntz, a pretty and vivacious young Irish woman from Wisconsin, was educational director of the same union where Shachno was editor. Their friendship had been renewed when both were leading members of the Workers (Communist) Party.

As the story later unfolded, Miss Poyntz, a Lovestonite, found herself footloose after the party was turned over to the Fosterites in 1929. She was kicked upstairs, sent to Moscow attached to the Comintern. There her personality and academic background—she was a graduate of Barnard College—brought her to the attention of the GPU. And, probably for similar reasons to those of Shachno, she accepted their offer to mingle among German professors in an effort to gain recruits for Soviet espionage. Her previous marriage to a German, Glazer, would facilitate her mission.

After working in Germany a couple of years, Miss Poyntz became disillusioned with Communism and returned to this country early in 1937 without permission from her “organization,” a deadly crime. Moreover, she told her friends that she was planning to write a book exposing the espionage net.

Poyntz’ disappearance was discovered at the end of August. Her friend, Mary MacDonald, telephoned Elias Lieberman, the noted labor lawyer and Miss Poyntz’ counsel—Lieberman had been chief officer of Local 25 during the time Epstein and Poyntz were there—that she had not seen her friend for a long time, and feared for her safety. Both went to the American Women’s Hotel, on West 57th Street. When the manager opened Poyntz’ door, they found the room in good order. There were crumbs of bread on the table and a sales slip from Macy’s, dated June 6th. The hotel management had not seen her since then, nor had they looked into the room. And the telephone operator recalled that on that day, in the afternoon, someone with a foreign accent and a guttural voice had called her.

Apparently, Shachno Epstein, because of his old friendship with Miss Poyntz, had been sent here to regain her confidence by pre-

tending to be a disillusioned Communist, and thus lure her to her death.

Lieberman, who made a thorough investigation of her disappearance, could find no evidence linking Shachno to the crime. Nor did he find among her notes any sign that she intended to write an exposé of Soviet spying. But he knew that she was apprehensive. She came to him several weeks before June 6th and told him that she needed money urgently to leave New York, and asked him to speed up her case against the estate of her former husband in Germany.^{*421}

A couple of months after Carlo Tresca’s story appeared, a young man in his early 20’s presented himself at Lieberman’s office, saying that he was Arnold, son of Shachno Epstein. “I have a message for you from my father,” he said. “He wants you to know that Carlo Tresca’s story was not true, that he had nothing to do with that affair.”

Lieberman, thinking in terms of evidence and being a scrupulously fair man, was inclined to accept Shachno’s denial. But the few former Communists interested in that case, piecing together the bits of information available to them, were convinced—though they lacked clearcut facts—that Shachno was the decoy. They knew that the weaklings were often more reliable than the strong in the hands of Stalin’s security police.

Shachno Epstein found time to get married here without divorcing his wife in Russia. Upon his return to Russia, his jealous wife, an old Bolshevik, had him jailed. But he was released. He was doing obscure jobs, occasionally sending articles to the *Freiheit*.

Shachno’s star rose after the outbreak of the Soviet-German war in 1941. The Kremlin then created the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, an agency to speak to the Jews abroad, particularly in the United States, in the name of Soviet Jewry, to gain their support for Stalin’s purposes. All prominent Jewish intellectuals were placed on the committee. But the actual leadership was in the hands of two Communist commissars, Shachno Epstein and the poet Itzik Feffer. The former was secretary. The committee published a bi-weekly, *Einigkeit*, to symbolize the unity of Jews the world over. It had at its disposal the Soviet radio, and even a special Jewish news agency. The committee issued flaming appeals to American Jews to support

the Red Army fighting the common enemy. Ilya Ehrenburg, who discovered his Jewishness during the war—or, rather, someone in authority told him of it—was on the committee.

In June 1943, the committee sent over a delegation of two, the well-known director of the Moscow Jewish State Theater, Solomon Michoels (Wofsi) and Itzik Feffer.⁺¹⁰⁰ Their task was to counteract the indignation aroused here by the executions of the two eminent leaders of the Polish Bund, Henryk Ehrlich and Viktor Alter. Their tour was highly beneficial for Moscow. They issued statements and gave interviews assuring public opinion here of the Soviet's genuine cooperation in the war and, later, in the making of peace. To the Jews they spoke of the unbroken bond with Soviet Jewry and of the common aim of reconstructing shattered Jewish life in Europe after the victory over Hitler. This was also the theme of the *Einigkeit*.

Shachno Epstein died a natural death in the summer of 1945. He was given a state funeral. Had he lived a few years longer, he would certainly have followed Itzik Feffer and dozens of other Jewish men of letters to their degrading death.

KALMEN MARMOR, HIS COMMUNISM WAS A PUZZLE

Kalmen Marmor had neither Olgin's craving for leadership nor Shachno Epstein's all-consuming aspiration for literary criticism. Marmor would have shrunk in fear had he been offered a seat among policy-makers, and would have politely declined any suggestion of writing essays on contemporary literature. His corner was bibliography; it was his avocation.

Marmor was well acquainted with the classical Hebrew literature and had a deep regard for the Jewish heritage. At heart a non-Marxist, he was an admirer of Henri Bergson, a serious "deviation" which he kept to himself. This small, quiet, and timid man had a rather checkered ideological career, shifting with notable speed from one political position to another. He was a Socialist, a religious Orthodox, a Labor Zionist, and again a Socialist, ending as a Communist.

Marmor was born in 1879 in a little town near Vilno. His father was a *Maskil* (Enlightener), and Kalmen was given a Jewish and