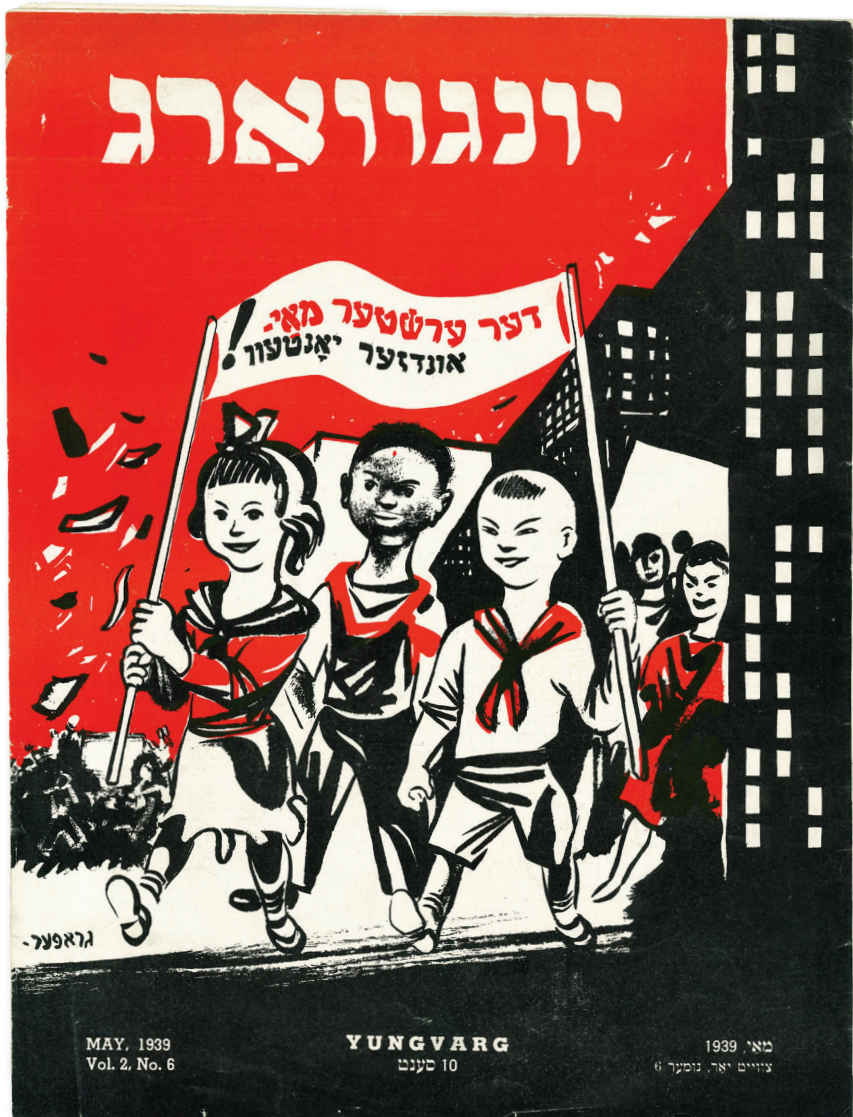


THE YIDDISHISTS

OUR SERIES DELVES INTO THE TREASURES OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST YIDDISH ARCHIVE AT YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH



Left: Cover of Yungvarg, a Yiddish children's magazine put out by the IWO, 1930

THE YIDDISHISTS

joins him at movement meetings. Inspired, Hymie decides to join the Pioneers.

One day he returns home wearing a red 'Vote Communist' pin. His father, a staunch Democrat, is angered by Hymie's new affiliation and when the father receives an eviction notice for his dreary apartment, he appeals to his local Democratic Club for help. With a big belly and a cigar between his lips, the leader of the Democratic Club makes what even Hymie's father knows in his heart is an empty promise to help.

Hymie's parents wait patiently, but no aid is ever delivered and the family is evicted. Standing forlornly on the street, Hymie's parents are surprised to see their son and his comrades marching towards them, carrying signs that read 'No Eviction!'. Regardless of threats from the police, the marchers carry furniture back inside and a representative of the movement approaches Hymie's father and offers him some money to help. With election day right around the corner, Hymie's father denounces the Democratic party. He is now a Communist supporter.

This message echoes some of the Communist Party USA's messages during the 1934 midterm elections, when it declared itself, in an issue of *The Daily Worker*, the only path forward to addressing the "immediate needs and the emancipation" of the "impoverished middle class from the miseries of a bankrupt capitalist system".

Although the IWO had 200,000 members in the immediate postwar years, the Communist Party USA never managed to get a candidate elected into a State or Federal position. In 1947, as Cold War concerns over communist infiltration of US government institutions developed, the IWO was placed on the US Attorney General's List of Subversive Organisations. In 1954, with McCarthyism gripping the nation, it was legally disbanded, the same year that Congress outlawed the Communist Party USA and made any support for the party and affiliated organisations a crime.

Since then, some US court rulings have declared laws against communism unconstitutional; however, anti-communist laws remain on the books throughout the country and the 1954 Communism Control Act has never been repealed. ■

Stefanie Halpern is director of YIVO's archives. Visit yivo.org to find out more.

REDS TO THE RESCUE!

As Americans go to the polls, **Stefanie Halpern** reflects on an earlier election, in which the benefits of voting communist were extolled in an upbeat Yiddish fable

In November 1933, the International Workers Order (IWO), a communist-affiliated organisation, published an eight-page Yiddish pamphlet titled *Who Will Hymie's Father Vote For?* The IWO was established in 1930 and its various divisions represented different ethnic minorities in the United States. The largest of these was the Jewish People's Fraternal Order, boasting 50,000 members at its height.

The IWO's main function was as a mutual aid organisation, providing health, life and medical insurance to its members. It also saw itself as part of the revolutionary working-class movement and took an active

part in trying to advance the communist cause during the election season.

The pamphlet, which was aimed at those attending one of the IWO's Yiddish secular schools and other affiliated youth, espouses the merits of the Communist Party USA through the story of Hymie, the son of a poor New York sweatshop worker. While his father toils day and night, Hymie finds adventure on the streets with his gang of friends, who pass the time by listening to speakers lecturing in support of their favourite political candidates. He befriends Morry, a young man who is part of the Communist Pioneer youth movement, and