

Remarks by Daniel Mariaschin

As I thought about what I would like to say to you today, I pondered the miraculous survival of Yiddish, and looming large during any discussion on the subject is the question that I asked myself: why is that which should have disappeared now thriving? True enough, the mother tongue of untold generations is now celebrated by an exclusive coterie, but one committed to its re-generation, into a world where we all live. Young Jewish people worldwide actively desire to learn it, and often go on to study it in college. Integral to their sense of self, a growing number become accomplished speakers and writers of the language. Most significantly, they intend to ensure that their children will do the same.

I was fortunate; I associate Yiddish speaking with the memories of my own childhood. My parents used it only in our house, and this exotic language distinguished us. I remember their Yiddish papers arriving at our door from out of town. Hearing it or seeing it on the printed page invokes nostalgia for that time and place, and colors the feelings I have for my parents.

Treasured for its musicality, and its unparalleled emotional range, honored as a legacy of a precious, lost, world, Yiddish distills that world for us, a link to its milieu, its people, and the tragedy of their destruction. I am sure that many who have achieved a connection with Yiddish feel that they are doing their part to honor the past, and to perhaps experience an aspect of it. But speaking, reading and writing this language, interacting in it, is something that we do for the future as well. The more this happens, the more Yiddish will resonate in our modern consciousness. Defying its own history, Yiddish did not ossify; it continues to draw breathe from those who want to give it life, and to become an expressive reflection of our own experience.

Interesting factoid which you may want to insert:

Entering the word "Yiddish" in the Bing search engine to check the extent of interest in Yiddish presents some 37,300,000 million hits. This is tangible evidence that Yiddish is embedded in the real world and testifies to the widespread interest in Yiddish today