

IN MEMORIAM
DR. CHARLES D. SPIVAK
BY DR. BORIS D. BOGEN



December 25, 1861—October 17, 1927

SPIVAK, CHARLES D.: Physician, author; b. Dec. 25, 1861, Krementschug, Russia; s. Samuel David and Deborah Adel (Dorfman) Spivak; ed. Jefferson Med. Coll., M.D., 1890; Univ. of Berlin, 1891-92; m. Jennie Charsky, 1893. Chief of clinic, gastro-intestinal diseases, Phila. Polyclinic, 1894-95; lecturer on diseases of the gastro-intestinal tract, 1896-1900; prof. anatomy, 1897-8; prof. clinical medicine, Denver School of Medicine, 1900-07; secy. and gastro-enterologist to Sanatorium, Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society, 1904-27. Editor: Medical Libraries, 1898-1902; Denver Jewish News, 1915-18. The Sanatorium, 1907. Past pres. and secy., Colo. Med. Library Assn. Librarian, Denver Academy of Medicine, 1905. Special commnr. of J. D. C. to

study health and sanitation among the Jews of Europe, 1920; secy. of com. of Sanatorium Assn. to study the mortality of tuberculosis in Colo., 1921. Co-author (with Yehoash): Yiddish Dictionary. Contributor of numerous articles on gastro-enterology and history of medicine to Jewish Encyclopedia and Annals of Medical History. Compiler and editor, Medical Coloradoane, and a number of bibliographies on Jewish medicine. Editor, Longevity Almanac (Yiddish), 1921. Contributor of series in the Jewish Daily Forward on hygiene and longevity from Jewish standpoint. Member: Amer. Med. Assn., Amer. Gastro-Enterological Assn., Amer. Jewish Com., Denver Anti-Tuberculosis Assn., Denver Philosophical Society.

DR. CHARLES D. SPIVAK is dead. We have lost an outstanding personality in Jewish communal endeavor. This modest, unassuming man did not crave loud recognition during his lifetime. He did not care to pose in the limelight.

Not only as a matter of tribute to his memory, but also as an inspiration and guidance to those who follow the thorny path of service to mankind, the story of the life of this remarkable man should be told.

Dr. Charles D. Spivak was born in Krementschug, Russia, in 1861. In his early youth he joined the revolutionary groups, participated in their underground activities, shared with them the dreams and hopes for a better day for their native land. This was a period of intensive social consciousness, when men and women scarcely out of their adolescence dedicated themselves to the cause of freedom, ready to suffer the consequences in the form of ruthless persecution by the Russian police, ready to give up their lives, if necessary, for their ideal.

At the age of twenty-one Dr. Spivak escaped being exiled to Siberia by emigrating to America. Now he came face to face with a new problem—the struggle for existence. He worked as a day laborer, as a farmer, as a mill hand. He discovered the new world. Here revolutions were not needed. Opportunities for advancement were open. It was only a question of ability and application. Dr. Spivak did not lack in either. He prepared himself for a university career and in 1890 obtained his medical degree from the Jefferson Medical College

in Philadelphia. Five years later he was the chief of the clinic of Gastro-Intestinal Diseases at the Philadelphia Polyclinic. Devoting himself to scientific research and medical practice, Dr. Spivak still found time to take a heartfelt interest in the life of the immigrant colony. He was a popular leader among the intellectuals and an energetic worker in the various undertakings of the group.

It was during this period that I had the privilege of meeting him for the first time. I remember that he struck me then as an unusual character, bubbling with enthusiasm, energetic and earnest, and lovable of disposition. He was radical in his views, and so were the rest. But he had a distinct personality and his own way of thinking and doing things. In 1896 Dr. Spivak moved to Denver and spent ten successive years on the faculty of the Denver School of Medicine. He ardently pursued his scientific studies and was a prolific writer for medical journals. Dr. Spivak entered the field of Jewish Social Service in connection with the establishment of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society at Denver.

Denver was gaining the reputation of possessing a climate conducive to the cure of tuberculosis. A large number of victims of the White Plague were attracted there. In 1899 an institution was founded in Denver known as the National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives. It was generously supported by American Jewry. The National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives took care of incipient cases only. There was no provision for patients in ad-

vanced stages and the plight of the latter was appalling. The strict adherence to rules and regulations, the emphasis laid upon disciplinary measures and the purely formal attitude of the management toward the patients created a good deal of dissatisfaction and led to public criticism of the institution. Dr. Spivak endeavored to exert an influence upon the management in the direction of required changes, but it was of no avail. It was then that Dr. Spivak mustered forces and initiated a movement for the establishment of a new sanatorium—the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society.

The representatives of the National Jewish Hospital were very much disturbed over the establishment of what they thought was a competitive agency. Great calamities were predicted—Denver would be swamped with indigent patients, Colorado would become a dumping place for incurable consumptives. Then, again, the management of the new institution would undoubtedly employ low standards and in this way discredit the reputation of Jewish philanthropy by irregularities and incompetency in dealing with an important problem such as the care of tuberculosis patients. An attempt was made to bring the issue before the National Conference of Jewish Charities (Conference of Jewish Social Service). Every means was employed to discourage and discredit the new undertaking. The appearance of Dr. Spivak in person at the conference, his sincere plea for tolerance, his devotion to his ideal, mitigated the opposition which threatened to hinder the

progress of the new venture in Jewish social service.

This was not only a matter of adding a new remedial agency. The founding of this sanatorium marked a new departure in Jewish social service in the United States. Up to that time—and this was the period of the great activity of various charitable endeavors especially directed to the amelioration of conditions among the immigrants—it was taken for granted that the newcomers, or speaking more specifically, the Jews from Russia, were not only unable to contribute to the support of the various institutions, but were incapable of managing and directing their own agencies. Dr. Charles D. Spivak, probably more than any one else, demonstrated the fallacy of this prejudice. Today his institution stands on a par with the most modern agencies of its kind.

As a sidelight, it may be interesting to mention that when I visited Denver in 1905 I was amazed at the time and energy Dr. Spivak devoted to the institution. I learned, moreover, that he was in addition engaged in another undertaking. He was collaborating with Yehoash on a Yiddish dictionary. Dr. Spivak was a great lover of Yiddish as a language. "This is our language, the language of the Jews in the Diaspora. It reflects our soul and the soul of our people," he said.

While primarily interested in the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society, Dr. Spivak participated in many of the other problems facing American Jewry. He followed with keen interest every movement of a national and international character. He was an active and enthusias-

tic member of the American-Jewish Congress.

In 1920 I had an opportunity to come into close contact with him. He served then as the first Medical Commissioner to Poland. It was during this period that for about a year Dr. Spivak was one of the family of overseas relief workers. Dr. Spivak was the oldest member of the staff. Most of the others were very young men, enthused not only by the desire to serve, but also attracted by the adventurous character of the service. It was a strictly military-like organization. Little attention could be paid to the usual comforts that an average American requires and considers a necessity. Dr. Spivak, from the very beginning and throughout the entire stay, chose to serve as a private and did not want any special consideration. He protested against any attention accorded him and not to the others. He strictly followed the discipline and obeyed orders without murmur. He was beloved by the boys. They looked to him for advice. He was always ready to console them, to help them in their difficulties—and the difficulties were many. He did not keep aloof from the boys and shared with them not only their tribulations, but participated in their social gatherings. I shall never forget the *Seder* given by the overseas boys in Warsaw, conducted by Dr. Spivak. He was the patriarch of the group.

One incident is worth recording. The Poles had taken Kiev and had driven the Bolsheviks out of a large part of Ukrainia. This was the territory that was causing a great deal of anxiety. It was of

great moment to penetrate this region and bring back some tidings about the conditions of the Jewish population there. But how could it be done? I discussed the problem with Dr. Spivak. "I wish," I said, "I could send Captain Voorsanger there. As a military man he probably would get through, but I wonder whether the authorities would permit it. Had I a doctor to send, the permission could be obtained." "Why can't I go?" asked Dr. Spivak. I explained to him that I did not want to impose upon him this dangerous mission, and besides it would mean a great deal of exertion and much hardship. He would not listen to me. He insisted on going.

This was what I considered the most remarkable piece of work performed by the unit. Over twenty thousand letters from individuals were brought to their relatives in the United States. Assistance was given and money was distributed in the territory that only yesterday was devastated by fighting forces. It was truly the work of a good Samaritan.

We hailed with joy and happiness the return of Dr. Spivak and his crew. To our great distress, Dr. Spivak returned a sick man. "It looks like typhus," said the physician in charge, "but it may be a nervous breakdown." In a few days his temperature subsided and the patient was permitted to converse. On one of my visits I remarked: "Perhaps the captain as a military man was a little too exacting and expected you to do more than you really should have?" "The captain was good to me," said Dr. Spivak, "but I do want to make one com-

plaint. Perhaps I shall do it when the captain is present." The captain was called in. "I want to complain," said Dr. Spivak, "that when we left Kief I pleaded with the captain to go to Jitomir, but he insisted on returning to Warsaw. He said that I was too tired to continue the trip. This was wrong, for Jitomir needed help and we could just as well have spent two more days on the road."

Conditions were appalling. Poland was infested with diseases and was in the throes of a typhus epidemic. The victims were numbered by the thousands and ten thousands. There was no food, no clothing. In many places the houses were in ruins and a large part of the population was living in dog houses. No sanitary facilities were available. The few hospitals of limited capacity were sadly lacking in equipment, instruments, medical supplies and linen. The epidemic threatened to spread throughout the entire country.

Dr. Spivak, in the capacity of medical commissioner, spent most of the time in the field, covering, besides Congress—Poland, also Galicia, Ukrainia and White Russia, visiting villages, towns and cities, investigating institutions, collecting data, and coming into close and intimate contact with the people. He knew the problems, and he knew their local setting.

Dr. Spivak in his final report emphasized the hopelessness of a private agency being able to cope with the situation. "This is a government function and must be done on a scale way beyond our resources." He laid stress, however, on the educational side of the problem. "No

matter what measures may be undertaken, no matter what means are used for the improvement of sanitation, without the co-operation of the people, little will be accomplished. What Poland needs most is not only a program of sanitary equipment, bathing facilities, etc., but a program of health education."

In this particular respect Dr. Spivak thought the Jews could be of inestimable service. Historically, the Jews met similar situations by adhering to definite sanitary and hygienic rules that have been incorporated in the tenets of their religion. It is deplorable that in the Diaspora the Jews lost this distinctive characteristic. It ought to be our problem to revive these old traditions of cleanliness and proper living and in this way, perhaps, reach better and quicker results than by building bath houses and hospitals and neglecting the good will of the people themselves.

It was only in later years that the truth of Dr. Spivak's conclusions was fully appreciated, when the development of the educational health program conducted by various private and government agencies demonstrated the wisdom of his recommendations.

Dr. Spivak was a scientist, a scholar and an idealist. He was a thinker and a dreamer at the same time. As a social worker he was unconventional. He was not afraid to stand alone and fight his battle to a finish. He never lost faith or enthusiasm. Above all, he was a conscientious Jew. On his deathbed he bequeathed his body to a medical college for scientific research. "The

body should be embalmed and shipped to the nearest medical college for an equal number of non-Jewish and Jewish students to carefully dissect. After my body has been dissected, the bones should be articulated by an expert and the skeleton shipped to the University of Jerusalem with a request that the same be used for demonstration purposes in the department of anatomy."

Dr. Charles D. Spivak lived and died a *real* man.

DR. FRANK F. ROSENBLATT ✓

BY SAMUEL A. GOLDSMITH



May 11, 1884—November 7, 1927

ROSENBLATT, FRANK F.: Publisher, sociologist, writer; born May 11, 1884, Russia; son of Benjamin and Bessie (Reichberg) Rosenblatt. Education: Studied Hebrew and Talmud, attended Russian Gymnasium; Columbia College, A.B., 1907; A.M., Ph.D., 1910; married Katherine Golding, Feb. 22, 1911, N. Y. C. Editor, *Die Zukunft*, 1906-7, and *JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICE QUARTERLY*, 1923-24. Economic expert, U. S. Tariff Board, 1910-12; economic expert, New York State Department of Labor, 1912-14. General Secretary Workmen's Circle, 1914-16; direc-

tor, Bureau of Philanthropic Research and Bureau of Information, N. Y. Kehillah, 1917-18; director of the Joint Distribution Committee for Russia and Siberia, 1919-20; executive director Joint Distribution Committee, 1921-22; member of the European Executive Council, J. D. C., 1923; associate director, Bureau of Jewish Social Research, 1924; president of the Frank-Maurice, Inc., publishers, since 1925. Author: *The Chartist Movement in its Social and Economic Aspects*. Member, American Ort; member, Jewish Social Service Assn.; member, Workmen's Circle. Club: Newspaper.