

# History in Making

By Nathan Ziprin

David Schwartz, who for many years has been regaling the readers of the English-Jewish press with indigenous Jewish almonds and raisins, has just published a revised edition of his *Yankees Yes* (Tova Press, New York City) an anecdotal history of the United States which made students of the American scene sit up and take notice when it was first published in 1966.

What is history? Scholars say it is the sum total of man's experiences, his legends and foibles, his accomplishments and failures, his methods of arriving at decisions, his fixing of horizons and of boundaries, his striving for advancement and his sliding backward, his wrestling with the world around him and with himself, his vision and his viciousness, his struggle for survival and his toying with weapons of destruction, his creativity, his hankering for order and his revolt against accepted norms. Schwartz too knows the meaning of history but in a wider dimension. History to him is not alone the fact but the canvas. To David Schwartz the meaning of history is in the telling. A colorful iconoclast and a maverick possessed by deep humor, Schwartz is interested not alone in the fact but in the very spice of history.

Walt Whitman once said that when histories are properly written there will be no need to write novels, a view shared by David Schwartz, whose *Yankee Yes* reads like a novel though it bears the title history. In fact the 285-page book reads like a novel. Its pages project not only the greats and near-greats whomarched along the path of our history but exposes their human frailties and traits to a remarkably marked degree. In closing the last page of the volume, one has the feeling that he has rediscovered both the meaning of American history and of the men who contributed to its making.

Schwartz observes that "if history were made more palatable, if more of the spice of human interest and the raisins of anecdotes were mixed with the drier crust, more would sit down at its table." As felicitous as this formulation is, it is even more gratifying that the author has been able to give an admirable demonstration how it can be done. By eliminating the arid semantics of the pundits and professionals in the field, David Schwartz has succeeded in taking the chill out of history and making it palatable to all tongues and tastes.

One of Schwartz' outstanding virtues is his paucity to grasp at the very essence of people and situations with a paucity of words. For instance, of Benjamin Franklin he says he "was the kind of man who just couldn't mind his own business. Perhaps a better way to put it would be to say that he made other peoples' his own

business." Elsewhere he remarks that Franklin reputedly "was not assigned the job of draeing up the Declaration of Independence for fear that he could not resist the impulse to put a joke into it." Schwartz too is never averse to inserting a joke in the chronicling of history, but it is always with a purpose and never as a mere frivolity. At times however it is satire that is his best weapon, as when he remarks with subtly irony that "Polk on being elected President said the country wanted peace and sent an army into Mexico," an observation that is tragically relevant to the events of our own days. And, in connection with the War of 1812, when the now-familiar phrase "war hawk" was first used, Schwartz observes: "We call it the War of 1812 because apparently we are not entirely sure what it was all about - as is perhaps true of all wars."

For all of its anecdotes and wit, *Yankees Yes* is a serious book, for Schwartz is a student of history who knows its agonies. Like all true artists, Schwartz is no moralist. He is more interested in telling the tale than in projecting its lessons, yet he does not write in a vacuum - and that is the great virtue of *Yankee Yes*, an anecdotal recounting of American History that is as original in conception as it is authentic.

**JERUSALEM (WSN)** -- Many things have been bought and then brought to Jerusalem. But perhaps nothing was as unusual as the item Mayor Teddy Kollek last month carried to the city as hand luggage -- a tombstone.

The stone plaque, about the size of a large atlas, was the head stone which marked a 2,000-year-old grave of King Uzziah of Judah. A descendent of King David, King Uzziah ruled over the kingdom of Judah 2,700 years ago. He was reburied under the tombstone 700 years after his death.

Mayor Kollek called the stone "a marvelous find." He said "we bought it from the Russian Church with the help of some friends who made the first payment."

The plaque is to be exhibited at the Israel Museum where officials called it the most striking archeological acquisition since the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Archaeologists said the head stone is the only known inscription relating directly to a king of the house of David. The inscription reads:

"Hither were brought the remains of the bones of Uzziah, King of Judah.  
Do Not Open."

**NEW YORK (WSN)** -- The Jewish National Fund plans to plant a Memorial Forest for Iraqi Martyrs in Israel to memorialize the nine Iraqi Jews recently executed by the Baghdad Government as Israeli spies and to serve as an "act of solidarity" with the remaining 2,500 Jews in Iraq.

**LONDON (WSN)** -- Israel has asked Britain to sell it Centurian tanks, spare parts and ammunition to replace tanks lost during the Six-Day War.

**WASHINGTON** -- B'nai B'rith has appealed to the United Nations for "urgent consideration and action" to prevent further mass executions by the Iraqi government.

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