

# Thief River Falls Caters to Canadian Tastes

Located at the junction of the Thief and Red Lake Rivers in Central Pennington County, Thief River Falls is the closest American city to Winnipeg and is accessible by superb, first class highways. The city boasts a nine-hole golf course, a good airport, a fine bathing beach, and several parks and playgrounds. The surrounding countryside abounds in deer, upland birds, and waterfowl, much to the delight of hunters and fishermen. Excellent picnic and camping facilities with running water and electricity are available at a nominal fee.

The perfect mecca for the weekend vacationer, Thief River Falls offers appeal to every member of the family.

On the shelves of the many shops and department stores are to be found an unlimited choice of the latest styles in men's, women's and children's apparel. Also available is a wide selection of modern up-to-

the-minute household appliances and fixtures in the hardware and appliance stores. Many items unavailable in Canada will be found here.

When visiting Thief River Falls, Canadians will find that numerous parks provide facilities for swimming, tennis, archery, horseshoe pitching and croquet.

Hotel and cabin rates are very reasonable and Canadian guests are always more than welcome. Courtesy cards are available which will admit Canadians to any of the fraternal clubs.

## CHAIM LENSKI

(Cont. from page XIII)

(1926). None of them had lasting literary significance, but they were characteristic of the tendency of young Hebrew writers and poets to make an attempt to adjust to the new environment. Very soon they were given to understand in unmistakable terms that they were unwanted, and that the language to which they had chosen to remain true was officially considered a 'dead one' and branded as 'reactionary'. The isolation of the few Hebrew-speaking and writing youths was so great that they did not even know about each other's existence. In a letter to a friend in Palestine Lenski said that the editor of Gilyonot, Itzhak Lamdan, sent him in Leningrad the title page of Gilyonot #1, and in the table of contents he found the name of another Hebrew poet, Elisha Rudin. And Lenski said: "Do you know this poet? He lives in Moscow, and wrote in Yiddish at one time."

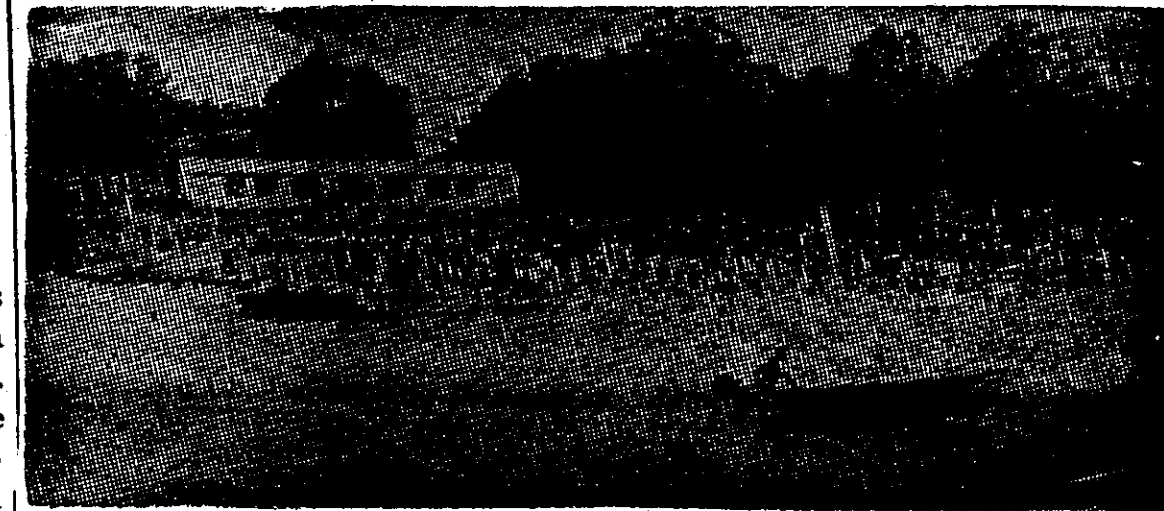
When the arrests of the Hehalutz members began Lenski was among the suspects. At the GPU headquarters in Leningrad, he succeeded in convincing his investigators that he was an anarchist. "And when will you establish a Zionist anarchist organization?" "As soon as I come around to it, I will let you know," Lenski answered nonchalantly. He impressed them as an innocuous crank and was released forthwith.

Lenski's humor never left him in the most difficult situations, but more and more he yearned to leave for Palestine. He wrote to his editors and friends, "Please take me

out of here. If my poems are not good, I am prepared to work with my ten fingers." He had a premonition that very soon he would be arrested and sent to Siberia.

Chaim Nachman Bialik became interested in Lenski's fate and made an effort to obtain the necessary papers. Meanwhile, Lenski was arrested. After months in prison Lenski was sent, together with many other political prisoners, to Marinsk in Siberia. This was at the beginning of 1935. Lenski's only crime was — being a Hebrew poet.

He was sentenced to five years in a labor camp, and while in Marinsk he was convinced that sooner or later they would free him. He even wrote a letter to the famous novelist Maxim Gorki, asking him to intervene with the authorities on his behalf. He wrote to Gorki, "As a poet who admires your writings and the humanistic spirit with which they are permeated, I appeal to you to intervene. I am a poet, and my only crime for which I was sentenced to five years in a prison camp is that I write in the Hebrew



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# ITS THAT SEASON FOR THE HOME OWNER - - -

language, the language of the Bible and the language of Bialik whom you defined in your speech at the first Writers' Convention in Moscow (1934) as 'a poet, almost a genius'. You may ask me, Alexei Maximovich, why I signed certain documents admitting having committed certain imaginary crimes as formulated by my investigators. True, I signed them because I am a poet and cannot live without expressing my feeling and ideas. They denied me any possibility of writing; they isolated me, and I could not overcome the stream of poetry which was overwhelming me. I desperately needed a pencil and paper. They promised me pencil and paper if I would sign the protocol. First I declined, then I could not withstand the temptation. This is the secret of my admission, which is untrue, nil and void, as can be easily proven if my case is reconsidered. As a Hebrew poet and an innocent human being, I therefore ask you, Alexei Maximovich, to intervene on my behalf and to recommend that the Attorney General reconsider my case." An inmate of the camp, who memorized the contents of this letter, marvelled at Lenski's naivete in believing that his letter would even reach the celebrated Maxim Gorki,

and at the elemental force of poetic vision and inspiration which could have prompted a man as brave and stubborn as Lenski to sign an admission of guilt in order to obtain from his torturers one thing — the momentary 'freedom' to write down his Hebrew poems.

This inmate lived to tell the story, and reached Israel years later. He heard that Lenski was transferred in the spring of 1936 to another camp near the Soviet-Mongolian border where the camp inmates worked on building a strategic railroad. Lenski stayed there until his five year term was completed.

In 1939 Lenski obtained a permit to settle in Leningrad. He became deeply religious, and when World War II broke out he volunteered in the army to fight against the Nazis, but he was rejected as physically unfit.

From that moment on news of Lenski was very scant. It seems that during 1940-41 Lenski was exiled from Leningrad to the Malaya Vishera camp as a Zionist suspect or a disloyal citizen. Malaya Vishera is in the mountainous region on the border of Kazakhstan, and conditions in camps in that area were especially severe. The last person known to have seen him alive was the above-mentioned Polish-Jewish refugee who met Lenski in the Kanst forced labor camp in Siberia in the summer of

1942, where the daily ration of food was 600 grams of bread and three portions of watery soup. The inmates died by the score, mostly from malnutrition and hunger. Thus ended in Siberia fifteen years of a tortured life of the last Lithuanian-Hebrew poet, death coming at the age of 37.

More than twenty years later a small bundle of manuscripts reached Israel from the USSR. It contained Chaim Lenski's poetic legacy. An anonymous friend or relative kept this treasure through all the bitter years of World War II and the Nazi holocaust, and when the right time came he sent it to the country where the language of Lenski's muse was alive and free.

The date October 4, 1940, was marked on the manuscripts, apparently by the anonymous trustee. Evidently Lenski used his short stay in Leningrad to make sure that his

poems would be kept in a safe place. In school-children's copybooks Lenski wrote down 196 poems, of which 131 were never published. There were several variations and new rhymes in the 65 poems which were previously published. All the poems were written in Soviet Russia between 1925 and 1940.

The last of the poems in this manuscript is devoted to his greatest love, the Hebrew language, and is named "Ancient Tongue." It reads, in free translation:

Ancient tongue, tongue of Heman and Halevi,  
Miracle-like you have reached me, you tender one . . .

From the shores of Jordan and Euphrates you moved your legions,  
You appointed me commander and to you, Queen, an adjutant.  
Your letters stood in a row at attention  
Like Assyrian heroes with beards square.

Queen! I led your armies as general  
Across the Dan Neva and Nieman,  
river of my land of birth,  
So may you carry my name beyond  
the Lethe River  
As the names of the ancients Heman and Halevi.

The first collection of Lenski's poems appeared in Eretz Israel in 1939. It was published by Davar. In 1954 Mossad Bialik published a volume of poetry, letters and essays by the two Soviet poets, Chaim Lenski and Elisha Rudin. It was called "The Truncated Branch," alluding to the Russian branch which was severed from the Hebrew tree of the Jewish people. In 1960 the Histadruth Publishing House, Am Oved, issued a complete collection of Chaim Lenski's verse, entitled "Beyond the Lethe River," com-

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