In September 1959, Lin Jaldati (1912–1988, born Rebekka Brilleslijper), jointly with her husband and accompanist Eberhard Rebling, gave a concert of Yiddish songs to a sell-out crowd in London’s theatre district (Figure 1). She dazzled the audience, not with her pristine voice, which was husky after years of smoking. She captivated people with her body’s ability to bring to life the stories described in eastern European Jewish music through her gestures, dances, and facial expressions. A Yiddish concert in London was not, in and of itself, particularly noteworthy, as the press made clear when they compared her to local Yiddish singers. What makes this part of the story of Jaldati unusual was the fact that she was in London to perform Yiddish music as an informal diplomat of the East German state.¹

Six years later, separated by thousands of miles and a metaphysical barrier known as the Iron Curtain, she once again played the role of diplomat for the German Democratic Republic (GDR), this time in a more obvious place for Communist East German diplomacy—North Korea. What made this trip unusual was the simple fact that she quite possibly became the first person in history to sing Yiddish songs in Pyongyang.

East Germany had no diplomatic relations with England, or with any other NATO country for that matter, until the early 1970s. In place of formal relations, East Germany sent its best and brightest cultural and intellectual talents to create positive relations from the bottom up, rather than the top down. As historian Jessica Gienow-Hecht has argued, “cultural life and cultural institutions moved from the sidelines to the center of the political confrontation” that we call the Cold War.² The GDR’s most visible cultural export was classical music. East Germany, along with most Communist countries, was quite adept at propagating an image of

¹ Thanks to Sungyun Kim, Fredy Gonzalez, Jalda Rebling, Werner Grünzweig, the staff at the Akademie der Künste, and the anonymous readers of the *LBI Year Book* for assisting me with this article. Thanks also to the Hadassah Brandeis Institute and the CU Boulder Center for Humanities and the Arts for supporting my research on Yiddish music in East Germany more generally.

itself as a bastion of high culture, especially in contrast to America’s crass popular culture, most viscerally defined by jazz or, even worse, rock and roll. Classical music streamed out of its radio station, Deutschlandsender, to citizens of both East and West Germany, and its orchestras travelled the world with the goal of creating a positive image of the GDR. But Yiddish music is hardly part of the European high cultural canon and was certainly not considered German Kultur.

Yiddish music became a part of GDR diplomacy for two reasons. First, although scholars focus on the great classical music traditions of Russia and Germany and their roles in Communist diplomacy, Communist countries also fostered folk music culture. In doing so, these countries contrasted the Communist celebration of racial diversity with the racism found in “capitalist” societies. The Soviet Union did this by fostering folk ensembles, producing records, and broadcasting music of its many ethnic minorities. In a country lacking a large number of ethnic minorities, the GDR did this by supporting the development of its Sorbian population, a protected national minority as early as 1948. Yiddish was not considered a

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3 Ibid., pp. 398–419. On jazz and youth culture, see Uta Poiger, Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany, Berkeley 2000.


national minority language of the GDR, but was considered a folk language of the Jewish people.

Second, supporting the “folk language of the Jewish people” was a politically effective way to defend against charges of state-sponsored antisemitism. In the years shortly after the GDR’s establishment in 1949, the East German leadership accused many Jewish Communists and leaders of East Germany’s official Jewish Community of antisocialist activity in the form of Zionism, forcing many of them to flee to West Berlin. This was part of a broader anticosmopolitan campaign across Communist countries in late Stalinism. The image of the GDR as antisemitic weighed on its leaders. Therefore, the SED leadership made Yiddish a part of its Cold War diplomacy both out of its commitment to folk music as a defining feature of East German society and as a way to deflect accusations of antisemitism away from itself and onto its arch nemesis—“fascist” West Germany.

If in England Jaldati’s Yiddish music was a way of showing British, often Jewish, audiences the human side of East Germany in lieu of bilateral diplomacy, North Korea and the GDR were different in that they had formal diplomatic relations. Moreover, North Korea had no particular relationship to Jews, antisemitism, or to a fascist past. Jaldati’s Yiddish music resonated differently, as it did in other Asian nations in which she performed. There, she was an ambassador of diverse European folk music traditions and represented the idea of the “friendship of peoples”. Both were core concepts of the East German state’s ideology of antifascism. To Asian audiences, Jaldati sang antifascist music, which included Yiddish music of the “downtrodden” Jewish people, as the GDR aimed to increase cultural relations with other Communist countries worldwide.

These two concerts demonstrate the ways the state utilized Jaldati as a cultural diplomat and the state’s most visible Jew. At the same time, they also reflect Jaldati’s agency and power to have Yiddish music included in East German culture. In this way, she helped define state-sponsored antifascism that mined a progressive, multilingual past to imagine a Communist, multilingual future with an important place for what once was the eastern European Jewish vernacular.

Yiddish’s connection with global leftist politics went back to the late nineteenth century. At that time, Jewish socialist parties like the Jewish Workers’ Bund began using Yiddish to reach the “Jewish working masses”. For these organizations, the use of Yiddish in their activist work was initially a means to reach Jewish workers in their native tongue, even if it meant that Jewish organizers, whose native languages were often Russian, Polish, or German, learned Yiddish in order to spread their ideas. Eventually, Yiddish became a language, not just for Jewish leftists, but also for non-Jewish socialists and anarchists, most famously Rudolf Rocker, a German

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6 See, among others, Andreas Lilienthal, _Antisemitismus und Antizionismus in der DDR_, Berlin 2013.
Catholic who became the editor of Yiddish anarchist newspapers and translator of anarchist and other philosophical-political literature into Yiddish.\(^8\)

By the 1930s the connections between Yiddish and leftist politics reached a climax in state-sponsored Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union and in the flowering of leftist Jewish culture in major cities in Europe and the Americas.\(^9\) It was in this cauldron of Jewish culture and leftist politics responding to Hitler’s rise to power in the 1930s, not to mention the invention of the radio that broadcast sound to wide audiences, that Yiddish’s association with the broader political left became a mass phenomenon.\(^10\) It was also at this time that the struggling Dutch Jewish dancer and singer Rebekka Brilleslijper, whose stage name was Lin Jaldati, first performed in Yiddish.

Yiddish was not Jaldati’s native language. She learned the language as a way to connect with the immigrant Yiddish-speaking community through its organization—the Ansky Club—in her native Holland. Jaldati joined the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN) in 1936. Her early public performances of Yiddish culture occurred in Jewish communal contexts.\(^11\) Her programmes of Jewish dances and songs were a peripheral part of her career until 1938. Her eventual partner and later husband, the German leftist Eberhard Rebling, himself an accomplished pianist and music critic who left Nazi Germany in 1936, convinced Jaldati to strike out on her own and start a show of eastern European Jewish culture with him accompanying her. From that point on, her Yiddish art shows became popular throughout Holland.

Jaldati and Rebling were horrified with the German invasion of Poland in September 1939. Eight months later, the German invasion of Holland on 10 May 1940 put to rest any doubt they may have had about whether Germany would invade the conflict-averse Netherlands.\(^12\) The occupation and subsequent antisemitic legislation ended Jaldati’s public performances. As a non-Jew, Rebling continued teaching piano and publishing music reviews into early 1942 until he received a draft notice ordering him to serve in the Wehrmacht. This sent him into the Underground. Jaldati scraped together a living teaching privately in her own dance studio. In May 1942, all Dutch Jews were ordered to start wearing the yellow


\(^12\) The Netherlands remained neutral during the First World War and attempted to remain on good terms with both National Socialist Germany and Britain in 1939. See, for example, Maartje Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914–1918*, Amsterdam 2006.
star, and later that summer, Jaldati and her family received deportation orders. Ignoring them, they fled Amsterdam and went into hiding.

In the Underground, Jaldati and Rebling gave Yiddish house concerts and helped hide those in the Resistance until 10 July 1944 when their safe house was betrayed, and they were arrested. During their transport, Rebling escaped from a police wagon. Lin and her sister, Janny, were sent to Westerbork—the Dutch transit camp originally established to house Jewish refugees from Germany—for possible deportation. There, she gained a reputation for her Yiddish performances and met a family of German-Jewish refugees living in Holland named the Franks. On 3 September, they were all put on the last train out of Westerbork for Auschwitz. Lin’s parents, grandparents, and brother perished there, but she and Janny survived Auschwitz, and then a brutal transport to Bergen-Belsen. They suffered with hunger and bouts with typhus before the British liberated the camp on 15 April 1945. They came to know and become close to the two Frank sisters, Anne and Margot, who were also transported to Bergen-Belsen, so much so that they took care of the two girls until their deaths. Lin and Janny, two broken camp survivors, made their way back to a decimated Holland, itself only liberated on 5 May and still reeling from the German occupation policy that led to mass starvation known as the Hunger Winter. In late May, Lin reunited with Eberhard.

After her body had recovered, Jaldati, the numbered tattoo on her arm identifying her as an Auschwitz survivor, performed for Holland’s Jewish Coordinating Committee, which oversaw relief efforts. She also began collecting certain cultural ruins of eastern European Jewry when she and Rebling went on their first European tour to Scandinavia in late 1946.\(^{13}\) While in Stockholm, the local Jewish Workers’ Committee organized a tour of several other Swedish cities, where she met Leo Rosenblüth, a musician and survivor, who presented Jaldati with a book of Yiddish songs from the camps.\(^{14}\) Much of this music made its way into her repertoire, including her signature piece, Mordechai Gebirtig’s 1938 lamentation \(S\)’\(b\)re\(nt\) (\(I\)t’s \(B\)urning), with its minor-key melody that added memorial weight to the song’s fiery lyrics of resistance. She had first heard the song in Auschwitz, and it became popular after the war; but only after meeting Rosenblüth did she obtain the music.

In April 1947 and 1948, Jaldati brought her music to occupied Germany. She performed first at Schlachtensee, the main displaced persons (DP) camp in Berlin. There, she sang as one Jewish survivor to another and built community with her audience that had suffered similar fates during the Second World War. In 1948 she also performed for the Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin. At the same time, Jaldati was

\(^{13}\) Although Rakhmiel Briks, who reviewed her Stockholm concert for the Warsaw-based \textit{Shtime}, lamented that her Hasidic songs were not perfectly executed, he celebrated her contemporary Yiddish music, especially songs by Mordechai Gebirtig and Hirsch Glik. Rakhmiel Briks, ‘\textit{Ayidisher kunst ovent in Stokholm},’ in \textit{Shtime}, 11 December 1946. File 70, Lin Jaldati Papers, Akademie der Kunste (AdK), Berlin.

\(^{14}\) Leo Rosenblüth, \textit{Mir lebn egib. 13 jidische lider was men hot gesungen in di konzentrazionsläger}, Stockholm, date unknown.
also a Communist. Although she may not have seen a contradiction in these two identities, by 1948, Europe was becoming an ideologically divided continent, shaped by Soviet and American occupation forces. By the late 1940s, Communists were considered a suspicious element, even a potential fifth column, in many European countries under western Allied occupation, especially what would become West Germany. Many eastern European countries under Soviet occupation became Communist, including the future East Germany, a site for returning German leftists wanting to build a new Germany.

Although there were many Jews among them building an East German culture, they were marked as Communists first. When their Jewishness was referenced, it was done so for political reasons. During the violent anti-Zionist campaign of 1952–1953, which pushed much of the East German Jewish communal leadership to West Germany, East German Communist Jews did their best to avoid getting caught up in that campaign and instead emphasized their political credentials and commitment to resurrecting a new Germany based on the universal ideology of antifascism. But in June 1967, during the war in the Middle East between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the Jewishness of many leading East German Communist figures became public and political. Given East Germany’s harsh anti-Israel politics during and after the Six-Day War, the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) leadership asked highly visible East German Communists who were Jewish to sign a petition denouncing Israel’s actions. They were asked to do so as Jews. From this point until the dissolution of the GDR in 1990, Jewishness became a highly salient and deeply politicized category of identity for Communists and non-Communists alike.15

Jaldati, however, had not yet moved to the German Democratic Republic, which only came into being in October 1949. Her big musical break in the Communist world came on 11 June 1949 when she performed with the well-known African-American singer Paul Robeson at Prague’s E.F. Burian Theatre, home of the city’s radical, avant-garde music and drama scene. From Prague, Jaldati went back to Berlin, her third trip there in three years. By 1949, Berlin’s DP camps had all been de-activated. With no internationally administered Yiddish-speaking communities left, for this trip she relied on an invitation from a German institution, namely the Jüdische Gemeinde. On the same trip, Jaldati also took one step further into Berlin’s Communist community when she gave a concert for the Kulturbund in the Soviet Sector.

As for Rebling, he was a highly visible member of the CPN, even leading a Dutch delegation to Moscow in 1950, and an active performer in the Jewish community

15 On the antisemitic purges and simultaneous de-Judaization of GDR war memory, see Jeffrey Herf, Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys, Cambridge, MA 1999; Annette Leo and Peter Reif-Spirek (eds), Helden, Täter und Verräter. Studien zum DDR-Antifaschismus, Berlin 1999. The declaration of Jewish East German citizens denouncing Israel’s actions was published in both Neues Deutschland, the SED’s daily newspaper, and Berliner Zeitung. See ‘Erklärung jüdischer Bürger der DDR,’ in Neues Deutschland, 9 June 1967, p. 2. It was signed by such illustrious figures in East Germany as the artist Lea Grundig and the state’s chief prosecutor, Friedrich Kaul.
until the boundaries between these two communities started collapsing in on him. According to Rebling, he lost his job as a piano teacher in the Jewish community for being a Communist, and then, due to Party infighting, was fired as music editor of the Communist De Waarheid.

By this point, Jaldati and Rebling had two daughters and more financial responsibilities. Now with her family’s resultant bleak financial situation in Holland and Rebling’s political relationship with CPN leadership looking tenuous, they considered moving to Berlin, Rebling’s hometown. The situation, at least in the eastern half, looked promising. By the autumn of 1951, East and West Germany had both been established, and in the Communist East, the new Verband Deutscher Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler laid the groundwork for musical culture and launched its journal Musik und Gesellschaft. The association’s leaders offered the editorship to Rebling. After much discussion, Rebling accepted, and the family moved in February 1952.

LIN JALDATI, HANNS EISLER, AND 1950S EAST GERMAN ANTIFASCIST MUSIC

Rebling played a central role in East German classical music. He quickly established himself as one of the five musicologists responsible for building official East German musical culture. Not only was he responsible for publishing musicological research informed by a Marxist outlook, he also helped resurrect important German composers from the past, most notably in his research on Ludwig van Beethoven and his performance of Beethoven’s piano works.16 Jaldati had a harder time. She needed to improve her German; she was raising her daughters and lived with her in-laws, one of whom was a former, and unrepentant, Nazi. She pitched concerts to music producers and Jewish culture organizations at home and abroad, but received repeated rejections.17 Jaldati struggled to navigate a leftist German musical atmosphere that did not know what to do with Yiddish music.

Yiddish did not have deep roots in modern German Jewish culture. While it is true that in the Weimar period Yiddish music and literature were widespread, it was so primarily among Yiddish-speaking immigrants.18 In many ways, German Jewish culture had historically defined itself in opposition to “lowly” eastern European Jewish culture.19 After the Second World War, however, no longer could Yiddish be dismissed as a language of uneducated eastern European Jews, whose presence in

19 Perhaps ironically, much work done to institutionalize zhargon as a national language of the Jewish folk took place in Berlin, including the initial founding of the YIVO institute. See Cecile Kuznitz, YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture, New York 2014.
major European capitals had often challenged native-born Jews before the war. Those Jews and most German-born Jews were gone, either because they had fled or were dead.

Jaldati had already brought Yiddish back to Germany, and her 1949 Yiddish concert for the Gemeinde began the process of bringing Yiddish song to a German Jewish community that had absorbed the few remaining Yiddish-speaking refugees. Given the establishment’s lack of familiarity with eastern European Jewish culture, it is no surprise that after she permanently relocated there, Jaldati again turned to the Gemeinde to continue building the relationship between it and Yiddish music, which now had haunting connotations after the war. On the morning of 9 November 1952, at the Haus Vaterland, the city’s annual Kristallnacht commemoration began with Jaldati giving her debut performance following her relocation.20 It was the first time she had performed in the context of state-sponsored antifascism, which her more politically savvy husband helped her navigate.21

One month later, on 14 December 1952, a packed audience came to the House of Culture of the Soviet Union to hear jiddische Kampf- und Partisanenlieder (Yiddish battle and partisan songs) by Jaldati, who had overnight become the city’s newest musical sensation. Berliner Zeitung featured her show as one of the best “concerts of the week”, with Yiddish songs that were “a testament to a rich folk culture and sound a protest, which rises to the point of becoming an indictment against racial hatred”.22

Jaldati had never before performed a programme of what were called Kampflieder. Then again, she had also never given a concert in a country whose national self-definition was antifascism. The idea of a Kampflied was coined before the war, in 1935, as a key component of antifascist music. Hanns Eisler, the Jewish Communist composer whose leftist politics and racial identity brought about his exile from Nazi Germany and then whose Communism got him expelled from Cold War America, coined the term “Kampflied”. Inspired by a Marxist interpretation of history, Eisler considered a Kampflied a close cousin of a Volkslied, which as defined by musicologists, ethnographers, and folklorists reflected the essence of a people (Volk). According to Eisler, the concept of the Volkslied failed to capture a new music, based in folk music of the past, that reflected the new class consciousness of the industrial age. If folk music conjured up images of authenticity and rural rootedness, then, in contrast, in the 1930s Eisler defined a “Kampflied” as the “folk song of the proletariat”—urban, industrial, and oppositional.23

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In the postwar period, Communists, socialists, and other leftists who came together in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany charged people to collect workers’ and battle songs, which would form the basis of the new East German musical culture.\textsuperscript{24} Given how central music would become to the national identity of the GDR, after its founding in 1949, the project took on a new urgency.

Despite her modest success with Yiddish songs in East Germany, Jaldati recognised that she needed to learn the language of antifascism and broaden her repertoire to reach new audiences. If before the war, she had sung almost exclusively in Yiddish and Hebrew, she was now operating in a political and cultural environment demanding the resurrection of a leftist German music. So she expanded her repertoire to include workers’ songs, in German as well as other languages.

She also befriended Eisler, who had settled in East Berlin after his exile from the United States and written the East German national anthem. There was something ironic about a man who had laid the foundation of antifascist music with fiery songs meant to stoke class conflict against fascism now writing the national anthem of a worker’s state. As Jaldati recalled at a 1974 symposium in his honour, after her move to the GDR, Rebling organized a visit for her to meet Eisler in 1955, the same year that the first volume of Eisler’s work was published. This initial encounter led to a relationship among the three of them until Eisler’s death in 1962.\textsuperscript{25} In 1955 Jaldati began performing his work, along with that of Louis Fünfberg, neighbours of the Jaldati-Reblings, as well as Paul Dessau and Bertolt Brecht, each a central figure in leftist German music.

The East German state, likely thanks to Rebling’s importance in the music establishment, began to recognise the potential of giving Jaldati a bigger platform, especially in the wake of the anti-Zionism campaign that had decimated the East German Jewish community and left a stain on its reputation in the West. State leaders also saw value making Yiddish an official “antifascist” language both to recreate prewar antifascist musical culture which included Yiddish, but also, and more importantly, as a means of countering charges of state antisemitism.

In 1955 Eterna—the largest label of the recently created VEB Deutsche Schallplatten Berlin (German Records Berlin)—invited Jaldati to record several 78 records as part of its series, “Peace Music from Around the World”. This record series was a joint project between Eterna and the newly created Arbeiterlied-Archiv (Workers’ Music Archive, ALA) at the Academy of Arts in Berlin. Founded in 1954 by music critic Inge Lammel, the ALA served as a repository for the collecting project begun several years earlier under Soviet rule. As the only Communist state built on the ashes of Nazism, the GDR played a special role in developing international antifascist music both for other Communist countries as well as for leftist communities around the world. The ALA was both a symbol, as

\textsuperscript{24} Lammel, \textit{Arbeiterlied}, p. 22.
well as a resource, of a future-oriented international, multilingual, antifascist music built on a pre-National Socialist past of leftist German musical culture.26

Included among records with titles like *Lied der deutschen Arbeiterjugend* (Song of the German Worker Youth), *La paz, la paix, der Frieden* (Peace, Peace, Peace), and *Bulgarisches Jugendlied* (Bulgarian Youth Song) was a Yiddish album, which Eterna commissioned Jaldati to perform. Three minutes on each side, the record includes the two most important Yiddish songs in her ever-growing, multilingual antifascist repertoire, *S'brent* and the *Partisanenlied*, the Jewish partisan song known in Yiddish as *Zog nisht keynmol* (Sag nie, or Never Say).27

*Zog nisht keynmol* was a wildly popular song in the postwar period and had become a kind of European Jewish national anthem. It was also one of the most important Yiddish songs to make it into the global antifascist musical pantheon, thanks in no small part to Robeson’s rendition of it on stage at Moscow’s Tchaikovsky Hall in June 1949.28 Written in 1943 by Hirsh Glik in the Vilna ghetto after hearing of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, *Zog nisht keynmol* was meant to inspire listeners to persevere especially in light of the opening phrase, “Never say you are walking down your last road”. With a strong march beat coming from Rebling’s left-hand chords, Jaldati hits a high note with the phrase “our anticipated hour is coming”, and settles back down on the powerful, simple refrain, “We are here” (in Yiddish, *mir zaynen do*). The two songs, together less than five minutes of music, made a perfect debut album to launch Jaldati’s singing career and an ideal pairing of music, each in its own way incorporating Yiddish into state-sponsored, antifascist East German musical culture. Eterna wanted her to produce a second album for their world peace music series, so she sang songs from Dessau and Fürnberg, further cementing her reputation as a rising star of East German’s antifascist music.29

Her records circulated across East Germany, and her voice could be heard on GDR radio with some regularity. But none of that could compare to seeing her in person. She performed live throughout the country, including nearly every November when she appeared at *Kristallnacht* commemorations.30 As a sign of having made it in the East German musical elite, from which she was quite distant when she first arrived, in 1957 she had a solo show of Yiddish songs, or as *Die


27 The AdK archives hold an original 1955 Eterna shellac record of her most often performed songs, *S'brent*, dated 1942, and *Partisanenlied* by Hirsh Glik, also dated 1942. The record appeared as part of an Eterna music series of peace songs from different nations. Arbeiterlied Archiv (ALA) 51 59.30, AdK, Berlin.

28 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIDADRBlkB0, minute 51:25.

29 ALA51 59.30, AdK, Berlin.

30 *Kristallnacht* commemorations were often mentioned in the general East German press, and occasionally appeared on the front page. On her appearance on the radio, see ‘Aus den Funkprogrammen’, *Neues Deutschland*, vol. 9, no. 216 (15 September 1954), p. 6. On her appearances at *Kristallnacht* commemorations, see for example ‘Kundgebung anlässlich des 18. Jahrestages der Kristallnacht am Sonntag, dem 11 November, 10 Uhr, im Friedrich-Palast’, in *Neue Zeit*, vol. 12, no. 263 (9 November 1956), p. 1.
Yiddish Music and East German Antifascism

Although East Germany had declared its independence in 1949, only in 1955 did the Soviet Union formally end its occupation and recognize the German Democratic Republic (GDR). That same year, West Germany established the Hallstein Doctrine, which stated that the West German government would not have diplomatic relations with any country that recognized the GDR, further isolating the GDR. Following the United States’ lead, West Germany also banned the Communist Party in 1956. East Germany, which had been maintaining ongoing anti-West German politics through the 1950s, increased its “anti-Bonn” efforts as a response.

As part of its anti-West German campaign, the GDR’s state film company, the Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA), produced several documentaries with the express aim of exposing West German leaders as unrepentant fascists. The goal of screening these pseudo-documentaries abroad was to generate negative public opinion about West Germany and turn viewers towards East Germany. The GDR considered a DEFA film showing a success if the local media, especially in a country that did not recognize the GDR, covered it, ideally with a positive review, and most importantly if the words “Deutsche Demokratische Republik” featured prominently.

One particularly accusatory DEFA film, Unternehmen Teutonenschwert (Operation Teutonic Sword, 1958), led to a threatened libel lawsuit after the British Plato Films tried to distribute it in England. The film accused Hans Speidel, who had recently been named commander-in-chief of NATO ground forces, of being the National Socialist mastermind behind two political assassinations in the mid-1930s.

The GDR intended for audiences in England to see its ally West Germany negatively and project a positive image of the GDR, a place doubly damned in English public opinion as the perpetrator of war crimes, in the past, and now a Cold War puppet of the Soviet Union. But Stanley Forman, the founder and head of Plato Films and a die-hard Communist, panicked over the threatened lawsuit, which would have bankrupted his small film company. The East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, MfAA) panicked too, as it assumed that Speidel’s lawsuit was part of a coordinated anti-GDR campaign by West Germany. The MfAA successfully convinced Forman to pull the film from circulation.

In December 1958, DEFA premiered Ein Tagebuch für Anne Frank (A Diary for Anne Frank). It was the first film version of Anne's story in the world, appearing several months before George Stevens’s Hollywood release of the Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett’s play-turned-film, The Diary of Anne Frank. Three months later, in February 1959, at the Berlin launch of the film, Jaldati performed on stage with some of the most visible culture makers in East Germany: Arnold Zweig, the famous socialist German-Jewish writer; Kati Szekely, who played Anne, a sixteen-year-old Hungarian-American, whose family fled the United States during the Cold War and eventually settled in East Germany; and the Michailow-Quartett, which performed chamber music by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, another favourite of East Germany’s so-called progressive German classical music tradition.

Jaldati had a particular interest in Anne Frank’s story, given their shared experience in Westerbork, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen over Anne’s last seven months. In the summer of 1945, after their broken, tattooed bodies made their ways back to Amsterdam, Lin and Janny were the ones who first told Otto Frank of the fate of his daughters. This kind of information, especially from an eyewitness, built deep bonds of gratitude and led Otto to thank Jaldati with a gift of Anne’s diary, Het Achterhuis, published in a small print run in 1947—a testament to her life, in exchange for Jaldati’s testament of her death.

The film Ein Tagebuch für Anne Frank has little to do with Anne’s diary. Instead, the film focuses on the relationship between Nazi atrocities during the war (including Jewish slave labour) and West German industry of the 1950s, specifically large
companies, like Krupp, Siemens, and, most notoriously, the behemoth I.G. Farben. Like other DEFA documentaries of the period, the film names, and even clandestinely films, several high-ranking officials in the current West German government who had served in the National Socialist regime.39

To maximize the effect of the film’s screenings abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent Jaldati on tour with the film.40 The screenings along with Jaldati’s personal story of survival with Anne as well as Jaldati’s Yiddish music would help the GDR deflect accusations in western countries of Communist antisemitism given the very real purges earlier in the decade.41 Who better to become a spokesperson for East Germany’s anti-West German campaign than a Yiddish-singing Holocaust survivor? As for Jaldati, although she carried out her role with a certain amount of ambivalence, this was her opportunity to go on an international tour with her Yiddish music and therefore make the most of a platform from which to animate memories of the war and inspire redemptive hope for the future in her audiences.

The film tour was the first time Jaldati had travelled as a Besuchsdiplomatin, who were usually important cultural figures representing the GDR in those countries lacking formal diplomatic relations. Jaldati brought her cultural diplomacy to places with politically active, Yiddish speaking, often leftist Jewish communities. On 12 April 1959, she performed in Paris as part of the Jewish community’s annual commemoration of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The poster for the event, in French and Yiddish, emphasized both the communal commemoration of loss but also its celebration of heroism in the Uprising.42 The DEFA film did not successfully receive permission for a public screening from French censors, so the evening lacked the film. Instead, Jaldati read excerpts from Anne Frank’s diary and performed Yiddish music to a huge gathering, with “3000 Jews at the Mutualité to honour the memory of the Ghetto Heroes”, according to Paris’s Yiddish daily newspaper, Naye prese.43 Like Jaldati herself, Paris’s Jewish community, at least the Ashkenazi Yiddish-speaking one, still comfortably rested at the crossroads of leftist politics and global Jewish culture.44

With her success in Paris, the GDR sent Jaldati on a second tour in September 1959 to England, which as the Speidel film demonstrated, was not a particularly welcome

39 Ein Tagebuch für Anne Frank (dir. Günther Deicke, 1958). The DEFA Archive at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, has a copy of the film’s screenplay. Thanks to Hiltrud Schulz for having produced a screenplay based on the actual film and for her research support. Thank you to Ralf Schenk, film historian and head of the DEFA Foundation in Germany, for information about the clandestine film footage.
43 ‘Dray toyznt yidn hobsn in mitialite baert ondenk fun geto-heldn’, Naye prese, 21 April 1959, front page. The article has a description of her appearance at the event.
environment for any German-language film, let alone a DEFA film.\textsuperscript{45} Plato Films, and Forman, who had been working with DEFA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other East German agencies dealing with foreign relations, hosted the couple, organized their three-city tour, and generated publicity.\textsuperscript{46} In light of the recent threat of a libel suit, Forman knew that DEFA's Anne Frank film in Britain would be controversial. As a way to respond to the ongoing censorship campaign, Plato hosted a press conference for Jaldati with a private film showing at the National Film Theatre. Forman's original press release pitched her as the "famous folk singer, Dutch-born Lin Jaldati. Fame has come to her in two ways—her recitals on the Continent since the war and because of her kindness to a 13 year old girl".\textsuperscript{47} No mention was made of the fact that she had been a Communist since 1936.

Forman also relied on the British public's interest in the Anne Frank story as the hook to land Jaldati coveted television spots, including splashing Frank's visage on the cover of the press release. On September 15, ITV British Television broadcast a two-minute interview with the last witness to Anne Frank's life. The spot was meant to entice the media and diplomatic corps to come to Jaldati's press conference, which would take place the next day, and the wider London public to attend the film showing and concert on September 20.

Forman opened the press conference with documentary footage of the aerial bombing of London and Coventry. It was a brilliant way of connecting the assembled audience of journalists and diplomats with their own war experiences and to remind them of their negative feelings towards Nazism. Then, he showed the twenty-minute DEFA film and had Jaldati perform several Yiddish songs. After this one-hour performance, there was a reception at which "Miss Jaldati will be pleased to meet members of the Diplomatic Corps and the Press in the Lounge" of the National Film Theatre.\textsuperscript{48}

The \textit{Daily Worker}, the British Communist Party newspaper, also focused on the thirteen-year old girl, Anne Frank, asking,"How many know the friend, the warm-eyed, dark-haired Amsterdam girl, who watched over [Margot and Anne] that last Christmas and for the few remaining months of their life?"\textsuperscript{49} It's hard to imagine a more compelling draw for audiences, who might not know who Lin Jaldati was. The advertisement in the \textit{Jewish Chronicle}, Britain's establishment Jewish newspaper, did not mention the film screening, and instead advertised an evening of "Yiddish Folk Music".

\textsuperscript{45} The Society for Cultural Connections with Foreign Countries worried about England's antipathy to German film in general, let alone German films produced in East Germany. MfAA B3322, pp. 38–39.
\textsuperscript{46} "Letter from Stanley Forman to the Television Booking Department, BBC, 2 October 1959, BBC Archives.
\textsuperscript{47} The press release can be found in both the BBC Archives and in File 72, Lin Jaldati Papers, AdK, Berlin.
As it turned out the Chronicle was wise not to advertise the film. Because the film might be considered defamatory to living people, the British Board of Film Censors banned its showing in London, a decision with which the Jewish Chronicle surprisingly disagreed. As the Times of London reported, “The film, with the aid of captured archive material, tells the story of Anne Frank’s deportation to Belsen and describes the present-day activities of some of those concerned with the running of the camp. The censor, however, said, ‘The Board decided to maintain its policy of being unwilling to pass for exhibition sequences which appear to be in any way defamatory to living persons’.” The News Chronicle was more opinionated than the Times with its article titled, ‘Censor’s ban helps shield killers of Anne Frank’, as it named the Germans mentioned in the film. Censorship of the film showing in London led to the cancellation of one of Jaldati’s events at London’s Unity Theatre and a revision of Jaldati’s most important performance, the one in the city’s famed theatre district. But final censorship decisions were made on a city-by-city basis, and the film, although also banned in Manchester, was publicly screened in Leeds. The very fact that the mainstream British press was debating the merits of the Censorship Board’s activities was already a media coup for East Germany, before Jaldati gave her first performance.

Jaldati’s live London performance, her first in England, was a grand affair; she packed the 1,400-seat Princes Theatre in the West End. Although she had been performing on stage for more than twenty-five years, that night she publicly presented her own story of surviving Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen and caring for the dying Anne and Margot Frank. In other words, she gave her Holocaust testimony on stage. Rebling was also on stage behind his enormous Steinway piano accompanying her musically and supporting her emotionally as she testified about Anne Frank’s last days and her own survival. She could not know how the audience would respond given the censorship campaign against the movie and the references in the press to her being from East Germany, which was after all the primary reason the GDR sent her. The Jewish Chronicle’s review lamented that Jaldati’s voice was not as good as some Yiddish singers but that “she made up for it in dramatic gesture and delivery. With excellent enunciation to support her characterizations, she turned each song into a musical monologue.”

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54 ‘A Diary for Anne’, Advertisement for Unity Theatre Film Showing. File 72, Lin Jaldati Papers, AdK, Berlin.
55 On how it was shown in Leeds, see ‘Censor’s ban helps shield killers of Anne Frank’, in News Chronicle, 19 September 1959, or ‘Leeds OKays “Anne” Film’, in Daily Worker, 24 September 1959, both found in File 72, Lin Jaldati Papers, AdK. For more on the larger context of GDR-British relations, see Berger and LaPorte, Friendly Enemies.
Figure 2. Poster for Anne Frank Concert. A Programme of Yiddish Folk Songs, London, 20 September 1959 (Lin Jaldati Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 378.5).
On September 23, while she was in the north of England performing in Manchester and Leeds, Jaldati appeared on the BBC’s *Wednesday Magazine*, a television program targeted at and produced by women.57 She opened with songs from her Yiddish repertoire and then her interviewer, David Jacobs, asked her about the Holocaust. But Jacobs, a relatively new television broadcaster, suddenly interrogated her, the survivor: “How is it possible for a Dutch Jew to live in Germany?” The question was a perfect set up for her to play *Besuchsdiplomatin*: “The people in my government, the GDR, suffered the same things that I suffered, or they had emigrated or were in concentration camps”58.

Whether she made this latter point out of personal belief in the ideological power of East German antifascism or as a calculated strategy to impress GDR state functionaries, a professional diplomat could not have said it better. So in the end, although the words “GDR” did not appear on the Manchester concert poster, with her two television spots, the public defence of her adopted home, and extensive press coverage, the East German state got what it wanted out of Jaldati, so much so that *Neues Deutschland* covered her England visit extensively.59

Rebling, who in the same year was named rector of East Berlin’s conservatory, also served as an important *Besuchsdiplomat* and not just by accompanying his wife. The GDR’s Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries had coordinated an exhibition celebrating the tenth anniversary of the founding of the GDR titled “Das Leben in der DDR [Life in the GDR]” with the film showing and concert tour. At the exhibition’s opening press conference on 28 September, which coincided with the end of Jaldati’s concert tour, Rebling gave a speech about life in East Germany and then deftly fielded questions from the gathered crowd.60 One month later, they received a glowing thank you note from the society expressing its gratitude for their work in England and its hope to work together in the future.61 From England, she and Rebling travelled to Belgium for a series of concerts.
including shows in Brussels advertised as “Evenings of Jewish Solidarity.” After almost two months abroad, the couple returned home.

Soon thereafter, they received a letter from Albert Norden, the notorious Politburo member in charge of agitation and foreign information, who also happened to be Jewish. Norden lauded their artistic success, but unlike the thank you note from the society, he was concerned that in Belgium the couple did not properly emphasize that they were artistic representatives of the GDR. “On both the concert program and the posters, which are in French and Yiddish, one finds it challenging to find where [emphasis in original] Lin Jaldati and Eberhard Rebling come from,” Norden admonished the couple. He did not stop there: “After all, you are not rootless cosmopolitans, but are instead well known and esteemed artists of the German Democratic Republic. That fact must always be mentioned when you travel abroad, like you did, as far as I know, in England.”

Norden’s charged language of rootless cosmopolitans could not have been lost on Jaldati and Rebling, who understood very well that Norden was referring to the late 1940s–early 1950s purges and murders of high-ranking officials in Communist parties throughout eastern Europe, especially in the Soviet Union. By 1959, Stalin was dead and the current Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev’s 1956 Secret Speech laying the blame for Communism’s past violence on Stalin’s cult of personality was no longer secret. Nonetheless, at the height of the Cold War, there was a lingering suspicion that “real existing socialism” in Eastern Europe was antisemitic, an accusation that Jaldati’s presence was supposed to quash. Rebling replied that while Norden was correct about the Belgian posters and programmes, he was mistaken that audiences did not know that they were from the GDR. He was adamant that he and his wife repeated that fact in front of audiences and to their Belgian hosts, never mind Jaldati’s stunning performance on the BBC, which Rebling did not even bother to mention.

Perhaps Norden’s reprimand stung, especially Rebling, who prided himself on not making political mistakes. (On occasion, as editor of the music union’s journal, he accused others of making those mistakes.) Norden’s critique of their diplomatic skills was in the branding of the event, not in the fact that Jaldati and Rebling were celebrated in Jewish contexts. In fact, from the East German state’s perspective, the more the country was celebrated abroad for its Jewish life and culture, the better. Norden, as a proxy for the East German state, had no problem with an evening of Jewish solidarity. He just wanted to be sure everyone knew that the GDR promoted it.


64 Handwritten draft of a letter to Albert Norden from Comrades Lin Jaldati and Prof. Dr. Eberhard Rebling, undated but shortly after Norden’s 5 December 1959 letter, AdK, Lin Jaldati Papers, box of biographical information, 81.
JALDATI AND EAST GERMANY MEET
GLOBAL ANTIFASCIST MUSIC

At the height of Cold War tension—with Cuba “going Communist” and Khrushchev pounding on a podium at the United Nations in anger, as “refugees” by the hundreds of thousands flooded across the boundary between East and West Berlin, the “hole” in the Iron Curtain—the GDR nonetheless served as a refuge for a small number of “exiles” fleeing in the opposite direction from West to East. Beginning with the founders of the GDR, no one more famously than Eisler himself, who was expelled from the United States by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947, “remigrants” were the key builders of the new Communist state. Although Jaldati was not a remigrant, her husband was. Most remigrants, who had gained language and cultural knowledge during their exile, functioned as liaisons for visitors to East Germany from the places where they had been in exile. In the case of Jaldati, she served as a host for other musicians who came to East Germany, either fleeing Cold War oppression in the West or visiting East Germany out of curiosity and as a political statement of solidarity with the “other” Germany. One of those musicians was Perry Friedman.

Canadian folk singer Perry Friedman ended up in the GDR by happenstance; he wanted to make a living as a folk singer, something challenging in Canada. So he left for Europe in 1958. After a 1959 performance in England, at which a GDR representative was in the audience, Friedman received an invitation to visit East Germany from the League for the Friendship of Peoples (Liga der Völkerfreundschaft), which managed East Germany’s foreign cultural relations. He arrived on 28 April 1959, bleary eyed and curious about what a Communist country would look like, and just in time to perform at a large 1 May celebration in East Berlin. His first solo show bringing Western folk music to East German audiences, on 11 June 1959 at Die Möwe, was the night he met Jaldati. Friedman described her as “a real Jewish mother, and we liked each other at first sight.”

Jaldati and Friedman ended up working together as they produced shows across the GDR introducing the country to a non-hierarchical American folk music variety show with audience participation known as a hootenanny. In January 1960, shortly before the city’s first hootenanny, Berliner Zeitung explained to its readers...
that a hootenanny was “a gathering of out-of-work labourers who came together to sing”. The article then described what a visitor to a Berlin club should expect to experience at the upcoming hootenanny. Friedman would start singing for the audience, and then at just the right moment, "Lin Jaldati, the great singer of Jewish music, who will be in the audience, will stand up and start singing her songs. By doing this, she will be demonstrating the special character of this kind of musical event with each person feeling completely spontaneous [ungezwungen]."70 Friedman recalled this first hootenanny in the GDR as a raucous evening at the Klub der Jugend und Sportler, two hours of song in a tiny space where “the barrier between artist and audience fell”. On that evening, Friedman claims that Jaldati coined the official German word for hootenanny...Hootenanny (capital “H”), a term that stuck and ended up blossoming into a nonstate-sponsored, but state-tolerated musical movement among East German youth that expanded the concept of East German antifascist music.71 In 1962, recognizing Friedman's importance to antifascist musical culture, the East German publishing house Rütten and Loening put out Hör zu, Mister Bilbo (Listen, Mister Bilbo), his collection of American workers' songs, and Eterna produced a series of records by American and Canadian folk performers including a two-part Hootenanny album with Friedman and Jaldati.72

The most well-known Western folk singer in East Germany was Paul Robeson, who had already brought African-American folk music to the Soviet Union back in 1949. He was so popular that his concerts in the United States were covered in the East German press. Robeson visited East Berlin in 1960 for the Berliner Festtage, the major event on Berlin’s cultural calendar that took place every October. Jaldati and Rebling met him at the airport shortly before Rebling accompanied Robeson at an open-air concert, which was broadcast on radio and television. East Berlin was becoming a crossroads for global antifascist music during the Cold War, and none more than Jaldati and Rebling played host to that global leftist musical community.73

By 1960, Yiddish song was fully integrated into East Germany’s understanding of folk music from around the world, and Jaldati had proved to be an important member of that global leftist musical community. Now well trained in a variety of German folk music, including contemporary work by leading socialist composers

like Dessau, Fürnberg, and of course Eisler, Jaldati was prepared to bring her diverse repertoire anywhere the East German state might need her to go.

JALDATI BRINGS YIDDISH MUSIC TO INDONESIA, NORTH KOREA, AND CHINA

In 1965, two years after he became a member of the Volkskammer, East Germany’s parliament, Rebling received a letter from a high-ranking Indonesian Communist and important poet named General Samandjaja, an alias of Oey Hay-Djoen. Samandjaja also served as the Secretary General of Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (LEKRA), the Indonesian Communist cultural organization founded in 1950. The letter did not come from out of the blue. Rebling had a long relationship with Indonesia. He had been there in 1937, when the country was still a Dutch colony, accompanying Dutch dancer Darja Collin, on her tour of the Dutch East Indies. He maintained his relationships with leftist activists and others involved in music and dance through the Second World War and Indonesian independence in 1945. LEKRA had invited the couple to come to its first cultural congress in 1959, but they were unable to attend.\footnote{Letter from Djato to Rebling, 12 February 1959, File 153, Eberhard Rebling Papers, AdK, Berlin.} Samandjaja therefore insisted that the couple participate in the Second National LEKRA Congress and give performances highlighting Jaldati and Rebling’s work in global antifascist music.\footnote{Lin Jaldati and Prof. Dr. Eberhard Rebling, ‘Bericht über unsere Reise nach Indonesien, die Koreanische Volksrepublik, und die Volksrepublik China’, File 183, Lin Jaldati Papers, AdK, Berlin.}

In consultation with the Ministry of Culture, and later with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the GDR used the invitation to Indonesia to build a three-country itinerary to East Asia for Rebling and Jaldati. In Indonesia, Rebling and the Ministry of Culture agreed that he and Jaldati would participate in the Second LEKRA National Congress and give several concerts. They would also serve as East Germany’s official representatives at the twentieth anniversary of Indonesia’s independence. Finally, Rebling wanted to create an official friendship agreement between the Jakarta conservatory and his East Berlin conservatory, now called the Eisler Conservatory, after the recently deceased composer, as well as collect material for a book on Indonesian dance.\footnote{Lin Jaldati and Prof. Dr. Eberhard Rebling, ‘Bericht über unsere Reise nach Indonesien, die Koreanische Volksrepublik, und die Volksrepublik China’, File 183, Lin Jaldati Papers, AdK, Berlin. He accomplished all five goals.

As for Jaldati, who had no connections to Indonesia, this was the farthest trip she had ever taken, a multistop journey on Soviet-made Ilyushins through the Communist and nonaligned world.\footnote{Reisetagebuch Lin Jaldati, Heft 1, File 1, Lin Jaldati Papers, AdK, Berlin. See also excerpts of the diary in Jaldati and Rebling, \textit{Sag Nie}, pp. 552–567.} After arriving in Jakarta and being greeted by local East German representatives, Jaldati and Rebling based themselves in the Jakarta offices of LEKRA.

Jaldati and Rebling travelled all over Sumatra, Java, and Bali giving “GDR-Indonesia Friendship” concerts, lecturing about working-class culture in East
Figure 3. Concert Program, Indonesia, September 1965 (Eberhard Rebling Papers, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, File 96).
Germany, performing for school children, and occasionally electrifying Indonesian audiences with their antifascist repertoire, which included Yiddish music. (Their audiences were especially enthusiastic when there was a translator present, which was not always the case.)

The sole surviving concert programme in Jaldati’s archive (Figure 3), handwritten and tattered, was for an antifascist concert in the Hotel Duta in Yogyakarta. Although the entire program is in Indonesian, Jaldati performed each song in its original language. This placed a lot of responsibility on the performer (or the translator) to render comprehensible the overall message of an individual song. Jaldati opened the concert with several Eisler songs including *Lagu Kaum Pekerja* (The Workers’ Song), and *Lagu Perdamaian* (A Song of Peace). She followed these with a Yiddish song by Gebirtig, *Hej zigelech* (Hey Little Goat), a Dutch folk
song *Het Kwezelke*, and then included several American folk songs. *Dona, Dona* is listed as a folk song of the Jews of Poland. She closed the first act with music by Dessau, Fürnberg, and the Russian-French protest singer Anna Marly. After the intermission, she brought out the classics of Yiddish antifascist music, including the second act’s opening song meant to rouse her audience, *Zog nisht keynmol*, the Partisan Song, here rendered as ‘Djangnlah kau pernah berkata’.

It is hard to imagine people in her audience understanding the German and English-language songs, let alone the Yiddish ones. But of course that was not the point. The point for Jaldati was to perform antifascist music, incorporate Jewish music into that global phenomenon, and to create deeper cultural relations between Indonesia and East Germany. As part of their GDR-Indonesian cultural exchange, Jaldati and Rebling attended gamelan concerts, saw Indonesian dance performances, and spent long hours of conversation with their colleagues in LEKRA.

After two months of hard work and semi-vacation in Indonesia, Jaldati and Rebling flew to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, or North Korea. Their time in Korea exceeded expectations, at least those of their East German minders in the MfAA, who had organized this trip as part of a series of exchanges with North Korea. (Shortly following their visit, on October 7, East Germany put on a special exhibition in North Korea called ‘Graphic Arts and Sculpture of the GDR.’

In their ten-day visit, Jaldati gave three public performances in the

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78 MfAA A7169, p. 2.
capital, Pyongyang, and one in Hamhung, the second largest city in the country and a place of particular interest to East Germany, which had helped develop the city immediately after the 1953 cessation of hostilities in the Korean War. In addition, two intimate, invitation-only shows took place in the GDR embassy in Pyongyang.

A crowd of more than one hundred packed the hall for their opening night performance, a multilingual folk music repertoire, which of course included Zog nisht keyn mol. The show was reviewed in all the major North Korean press. The reviewer for the Korean Writer’s Union newspaper Munhak Sinmun waxed poetic about the highlight of the evening when “Jaldati sang the ‘Song of the Republic’s Founding’ in Korean, which warmed the hearts of the listeners”. Their performance in Hamhung garnered “an unusually enthusiastic reception” from the audience, so much so that the North Korean Minister of Culture, Pak Un Gol, cleared his schedule to attend the largest Pyongyang concert, on their second-to-last night in the country. That show was broadcast on North Korean radio one night later. The night of the broadcast, their last in Korea, the GDR ambassador, Horst Brie, hosted a cocktail party for Jaldati and Rebling, and invited the who’s who of North Korea’s artistic elite.

In between their evening concerts, as was routine on cultural exchanges to Communist countries, Jaldati and Rebling visited conservatories, schools, and other institutions that showed off North Korea’s cultural development under Communism. Not surprisingly, the North Korean press focused on Rebling, and referred to Jaldati not as the “Grand Dame of Yiddish Song”, as she was called in Britain and France, but as “Rebling’s wife, the soloist”. It was his political connections, after all, that brought them to Asia in the first place. In North Korea, Yiddish was just one of many languages in her performance. More importantly, in Asia, the sounds of Yiddish did not conjure up memories of murdered Jewish communities as it did in Europe. The Second World War was less about how Hitlerite Germany murdered Jews and others as it was about global fascism murdering peace-loving people. In fact, there is no mention of the mass murder of European Jews anywhere in the Korean press, and the word “Jewish” only appears on the concert programme in the title of Hirsh Glik’s partisan song. In Korea, she sang in many languages, this time including Korean, to emphasize universal concepts more important to “real existing socialism” like brotherhood, peace, and unity. It was only in that context that her Korean audiences heard her Yiddish songs.

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81 MfAA A7123, p. 104. For more on formal visits to Communist countries and the standard tour visitors received, see Berger and LaPorte, Friendly Enemies, p. 141.
82 The Eberhard Rebling Collection, and not the Lin Jaldati Collection, at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin contains many clippings from the North Korean press, likely prepared by the MfAA for him. Thanks to Sungyun Kim for her assistance with the Korean-language publications.
Unlike Indonesia, whose people, weather, and “comrades” she raved about in her diary, North Korea did not occupy a large part of her personal reflections. In fact, she is virtually silent about the country. When she does reflect on North Korea, she describes conflicts with their North Korean minders over her repertoire. More problematic than the clash over her music, however, were the large statues of the Great Leader, which, in her opinion, reflected “gigantism ... everything here is huge and very nationalistic”. And if obnoxiously large statues glorifying the ruler weren’t enough, she thought that their purpose was to mask a grim reality: “I think that the population has things quite bad.” The couple never returned.

The final stop on their 1965 antifascist tour of Asia was to the People’s Republic of China for visits to Shanghai, Peking (Beijing), and Tianjin. Her recollections about China echoed her negative experience in North Korea. They played to huge formal halls, in one case to an audience of 1,500 people in Shanghai, but this time tension with their Chinese hosts over repertoire reached a boiling point. In planning their programme, Jaldati and Rebling had gone to special lengths to prepare a Chinese song, in this case an up-tempo Chinese partisan song, whose themes resembled those of the Jewish partisan song. The Chinese partisan song pleased their hosts and was wildly popular with the audience. However, Rebling also prepared a few Beethoven pieces, which a person from the Chinese Ministry of Culture asked to be removed to avoid having Rebling “play a revisionist”. Rebling ignored the advice and played Beethoven anyway.

Jaldati had prepared a variety of iconic music from the Communist world, several pieces of which irritated her Chinese hosts. Jaldati’s vision of an antifascist world united through peace songs clashed with the crude global politics of the Sino-Soviet split. One can only imagine her frustration when she was asked not to perform “Evening on the Moscow”. Like her stubborn husband, she performed it anyway. Most bizarrely, the Ministry of Culture worried about her totemic song, the one she sang at nearly every concert, *S’brent*. “It might,” as Jaldati recalled in her diary, “remind the audience of neutron bombs”, with its images of fires burning out of control. To be fair, the song, whose Yiddish title is translated in English as “It is Burning”, was instead translated in Korean and Chinese as “Fire is Blazing”, which likely changed the way an audience would understand it. She nonetheless sang it, and as with North Korea, the couple never returned, nor would they likely have been welcome. One year later, Mao Zedong began the Cultural Revolution when all things Western, including Yiddish music, were anathema.

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83 Jaldati and Rebling, *Sag Nie*, p. 570.
85 As with the Korean press material, I found the Chinese press clippings in the Eberhard Rebling Papers, but not in the Lin Jaldati Papers, at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. They were so carefully clipped and prepared that the MfAA likely prepared them for him. Thanks to Fredy Gonazlez for his assistance with the Chinese-language publications.
Jaldati was a *Besuchsdiplomatin* until her death in 1988. But after the couple’s grand tour of Communist Asia in 1965, East German diplomacy changed radically. Willy Brandt, former mayor of West Berlin who became chancellor of West Germany in 1969, ended the country’s Hallstein Doctrine in 1972, and with it, the diplomatic isolation of East Germany. As a result, a wave of new embassies opened in East Berlin including those of Britain, France, and eventually the United States.

At the same time, the Israeli-Arab Six-Day June War in 1967 officially ruptured any kind of relations with the State of Israel and ushered in deeper connections with those Arab nations committed to Israel’s destruction. In 1969 Iraq, Sudan, South Yemen, Syria, and, most importantly, Egypt established diplomatic relations with the GDR, and in August 1973, the Palestinian Liberation Organization opened a diplomatic office in East Berlin, the first of its kind in Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, Israel was viciously denounced as an imperialist puppet of the United States and became a pariah in East German politics and the media.86

For Jaldati, her role as a *Besuchsdiplomatin* also changed dramatically. Cultural diplomacy became less important as formal diplomatic relations replaced it. Therefore, although she continued to travel widely, the GDR Foreign Ministry was less frequently involved in her concert tours. More specifically for Jaldati, for about eight years—from the full rupture in relations with Israel until 1975—her Jewish music was no longer seen as an asset to GDR diplomacy or to East German culture itself. It could not have helped her or Yiddish music’s cause that she had refused to sign the declaration of highly visible East German Jews, like Lea Grundig and Friedrich Kaul, that appeared in *Neues Deutschland* on 9 June 1967, denouncing Israel’s “imperialistic” actions.87

That does not mean, however, that she did not give concerts regularly both domestically and abroad. She and Rebling performed in West Germany, France, and Holland, and she even served as a visiting artist-in-residence in her hometown of Amsterdam. The couple also went to India twice in the 1970s and Southeast Asia in 1982. At home, in 1970, at the nadir of GDR-Israeli relations, she and Perry Friedman helped launch the Festival des politischen Liedes (Festival of the Political Song). This annual musical event sponsored by the Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth) brought young performers from the global left, and in particular musicians from Communist countries, to East Berlin every year “to become acquainted with the meaning and function of the political song in class conflict”, according to *Neues Deutschland’s* coverage of the first festival in 1970. Jaldati was one of the featured “senior” performers at the inaugural event. However, in this period, Jaldati spent more time performing general antifascist music and less time singing

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in Yiddish and conjuring up memories of a Jewish past and embodying a Jewish present.88

After 1975, as East Germany softened its negative relationship to Jewish culture, her state-sponsored concerts once again incorporated the Yiddish music and her Holocaust survival stories that had made her famous, both domestically and abroad. Now, however, when she travelled, her leftist Jewish “comrades”, whom she had met through her earlier concert tours, Friedman, and the Festival des politischen Liedes, as well as foreign museums and other NGOs, not the GDR Foreign Ministry, organized her visits. An invitation from Israel’s Diaspora Museum brought her and the entire family to the country for the first time in 1984. She was the first person to sing German music in the hallowed halls of Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial museum. Her festival colleagues, New York-based Mordechai and Irma Bauman, who were American-Jewish socialists, organized a three-week tour of the eastern United States in 1986. Jaldati performed Yiddish music and told her tale of survival, but also defended the GDR to schoolchildren in Massachusetts.

In the end, when she performed on the other side of the Iron Curtain, Jaldati brought Yiddish music and her stories of surviving Westerbork, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen. Those performances and her warm personality allowed audiences to see and hear a Jewish Holocaust survivor from East Germany, of all places, a country that many in those audiences saw through the lens of Communist oppression and the state security agency, the Stasi. When she travelled to other Communist countries, she was a representative of a European antifascist state that had redeemed Germany from its violent past by bringing music and culture that represented the friendship of the peoples. In these ways, Jaldati was one of East Germany’s best assets.

And yet, the fact that a Communist state made Yiddish music a tool of Cold War diplomacy also demonstrates how Jaldati made East Germany work for her. She built a life-long career doing exactly what she loved, aside from eight challenging years when her adopted home could not countenance the Jewishness of her performances. She commemorated the Holocaust and the loss of her entire extended family in a way that made sense to her, and she inserted Yiddish song and eastern European Jewish culture into postwar antifascist music. Some in her audience heard the sounds of an antifascist future, while others quietly wept as she sang S’brent, and they saw the Auschwitz tattoo on her arm that reminded them of millions of European Jews murdered during the Holocaust in the past. For Jaldati, Yiddish music meant both commemorating the past and envisioning the future.