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Razumny, Mark

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(1896–1988), Yiddish writer. Born in the shtetl of Zhager, Mark Razumny grew up in Riga, where, in addition to receiving a traditional Jewish education, he studied art and architecture. As a young boy, he began to write poems in Yiddish, Russian, and Hebrew. In 1917–1918, he affiliated with the Labor Zionists. Mobilized to the Red Army in 1919, Razumny soon moved to Germany and lived in Hamburg, where he published his first story, in German, in the local *Israelitisches Familienblatt* (Israelite Family Journal). He worked as a clerk at a Hamburg-based bank and studied philosophy, aesthetics, and literature at the university.

Razumny returned to Riga in 1921 and worked for short-lived Yiddish satirical journals such as *Purim-satirikon* and *Homen-mamzer,* which were edited by his cousin Moyshe-Mikhl Kitay, an experienced journalist and political activist. The following year, Razumny became secretary of the democratic Yiddish newspaper *Dos folk* (The People), for which he published stories, articles, translations, and reviews. However, when that newspaper became an organ of Agudas Yisroel, Razumny, with the majority of *Dos folk*'s journalists, left to work for other Riga newspapers. He was a correspondent for the New York *Forverts* (Forward) from 1924 and briefly edited the newspaper *Riger moment* (Riga Moment; January–March 1925). Subsequently, from 1926 to 1934, he worked as a journalist at another democratic newspaper, *Frimorgn* (Morning), whose cofounder and secretary was Kitay.

Ya'akov Ze'ev (Wolf) Latzky-Bertholdi wrote the preface to Razumny's collection of stories, *Hintergeslekh* (Back Streets; 1929), welcoming the writer's realism, but expressing disapproval of his naturalism and flowery language. Razumny made numerous trips to America and Europe, writing about his travels for *Frimorgn.* Some of his articles were collected in *Dos land fun toyznt geshtaltn: A rayze in Norvegye* (The Country of a Thousand Images: A Trip to Norway; 1929) and *Eyner tsvishn milyonen: Fun an amerikaner nesie* (Alone among Millions: From an American Trip; 1931). He remained unemployed for several years after *Frimorgn* was closed by the right-wing government of Kārlis Ulmanis.

Razumny was a prolific translator from German (including works of Leon Feuchtwanger) and Russian (writings of Nikolai Garin-Mikhailovskii). He edited the illustrated magazine *Yidishe bilder* (Jewish Pictures) from 1937 until its closing at the beginning of World War II. The events described in his novel *Yidishe melukhe* (Jewish Land; 1939) take place in Italy and Turkey in the sixteenth century, when a group of rich Marranos, notably Joseph Nasi, attempted to establish a Jewish community in Tiberias. When Riga became the capital of Soviet Latvia, Razumny worked as secretary of the Jewish Cultural Society and as a journalist at the newspaper *Kamf* (Struggle) and the journal *Ufboy* (Construction).

After World War II, Razumny continued to write, publishing short stories and fables in the Warsaw-based Yiddish periodicals *Yidishe shriftn* (Yiddish Writings) and *Folks-shtime* (Voice of the People), and, from 1961, in the Moscow journal *Sovetish heymland* (Soviet Homeland). Jürgen Rennert, an East German poet and translator, made Razumny known to German readers after publishing two volumes of his works: *Auch im Herbst blühen die Bäume* (The Trees Bloom Also in Autumn; 1979), based on the Yiddish book *Breyter di trit* (Wider Steps; 1975), and *Eine Welt voller Wunder* (A World of Wonder; 1985), the original Yiddish version of which, *A velt mit vunder,* appeared in Moscow in 1986.

Suggested Reading

Mark Razumny, *Auch im Herbst blühen die Bäume* (Berlin, 1979); Mark Razumny, *Eine Welt voller Wunder* (Leipzig, 1985).

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Gennady Estraikh

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