

Marc Chagall on the Dreyfus case

July 15th 1935

Text in Russian

Marc and Ida Chagall Archive, Paris

A new perspective on the Dreyfus affair in the face of Jewish misfortunes during the 1930s.

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The Dreyfus affair

[...]

In my imagination, the Jewish captain Dreyfus, with all his medals and badges, shimmered with all the colors of the rainbow, among which red stood out for its intensity. The child I was at the time wanted to swap places with him: that he were in Vitebsk and I in Paris. At night, however, as it grew darker, the houses and fences were no longer distinguishable. Against the dying sky one, two lamps flickered. The Jews left their shops and returned to their houses; tired, hunched over, looking at the ground. Their faces were barely visible in contrast with the ground. How their pointy noses and beards made me suffer... I felt like God and all the angels cried together for our fate. Dreyfus, so distant, seemed to me like another of our many misfortunes.

And I pulled my curly hair and despised my blue eyes as a boy, because there were people who humiliated us, poets and painters like us, a people like ours, misunderstood by all...

Chagall, July 15th 1935.

Marc Chagall on the Zionist Congress in Prague

1933 [?]

Text in Russian

Marc and Ida Chagall Archive, Paris

Regarding the need for Jews to defend themselves at a time of persecution.

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Any movement by the Jews to defend their rights, their aspirations, and their ideals is of obvious benefit, especially at a time when the persecution of Jews is well regarded.

Nevertheless, a meeting of a few people is not the same as a conference, and what to say of a congress.

Currently, only something whose result possesses a feature or a form is considered valuable and useful.

A painting can have different dimensions, but, aside from this, it will always be a painting, as long as its features and its form are those of a painting. This is also the case with a congress, an exhibition, or any other initiative undertaken by Jews: it must be made with the aforementioned features. In this sense, I wish you the best of luck.

[In Yiddish:] Marc Chagall

**“Les Juifs” [“The Jews”],
*Échos de Notre Temps***

September 1933

Press article in French

Marc and Ida Chagall Archive, Paris

**“Polémique. L’affaire Chagall”
[“Controversy. The Chagall Case”],
Les Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles**

1938

Press article in French

Marc and Ida Chagall Archive, Paris

Regarding the Brussels Musée des Beaux-Arts’ refusal to purchase works by the “Russian Jew” Marc Chagall.

Abraham Liessin, *Lider un poemen* [*Poems and Long Poems*]

New York, Forverts Association, 1938

Book in Yiddish

Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris

Focusing on the persecution suffered by Jews, these poems by Abraham Liessin were published in the Forverts Association magazine *Di Tsukunft* in 1939 with illustrations by Marc Chagall. The thirty-four drawings express nostalgia for the traditional Jewish world and the devotion to heroic biblical figures.