



MUSAR AND MODERNITY: THE CASE OF NOVAREDOK

I

The pietistic current in Lithuanian Jewry known as the Musar movement has recently begun to attract the serious attention of Jewish historians. The work of Immanuel Etkes on Rabbi Israel Salanter, the founding father of Musarism, and of Shaul Stampfer on the Lithuanian yeshivas of the nineteenth century are two important scholarly contributions which have appeared of late in this area.¹ The revival of scholarly interest in Musarism, after many years of neglect, is richly deserved. Musarism shares with Hasidism the distinction of being an original pietistic movement which was unique to the East European Jewish milieu. Like the latter, it produced in the course of one or two generations an impressive array of original religious personalities, each with his own distinct school of thought. And like Hasidism, Musarism grew and flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; that is, at the very time when secularizing cultural and political movements exerted increasing influence in Jewish society. But whereas modern scholarship has lavished a good deal of attention on Hasidism—its doctrines, history, and confrontations with modernity—the analogous work on Musarism has only just begun.

One focal point of the recent scholarship has been the relationship between Musarism and modernity; specifically, its relationship to the complex of social and cultural changes which overtook European Jewry in the nineteenth century. Etkes has suggested that, to no small extent, Salanter's religious ideology was born out of a sense of crisis and alarm at the decline in religious sensitivity and punctilious halakhic observance among Lithuanian Jews. For Salanter, the growth of Haskalah circles in Vilna and Kovna which he witnessed during the 1840's was an ominous symptom of a greater spiritual crisis facing Jewry. As an antidote to the growing process of spiritual decay he proposed the institutionalized study of *musar* (moralistic) literature; not as an intellectual discipline, but as an emotional experience of spiritual regeneration. The study of *musar* in a dark shadowy room, with a melancholy melody, and passionate repetition of key phrases and verses, would cultivate one's religious self-awareness,

self-scrutiny and self-discipline. The student would thereby develop a personality which could withstand the pervasive trend in society toward declining observance of religious and moral norms. Viewed in historical perspective, it may be said that Salanter sought to counteract the loosening of social and communal controls in 19th century Lithuanian Jewry by fostering spiritual fortitude and self-control in the individual. He thus emerges from Etkes' study as the apostle of Lithuanian Jewish orthodoxy, who developed a creative traditionalist response to the challenges of his time.²

Stampfer, on the other hand, has drawn attention to the fact that some of Salanter's disciples took a conciliatory stance toward certain modern educational and cultural reforms. The Musar yeshivas which they founded in the 1880's were innovative not only by virtue of the fact that they integrated the Salanterian study of *musar* into the daily regimen, but in this somewhat surprising respect as well. In Kelm, Rabbi Simcha Zisl Braude included secular disciplines such as Russian and mathematics in his school's curriculum; and in Telz, Rabbi Eliezer Gordon introduced modern educational procedures and structures, such as an entrance exam, a graded hierarchy of classes, and the periodic testing of the students' knowledge of material. These reforms constituted tacit concessions to the criticism of traditional Jewish education enunciated by the Haskalah. I would take Stampfer's observations a step further and contend that the Slobodka yeshiva of Rabbi Nosn Tzvi Finkel (generally referred to as the "mother" of the Musar yeshivas,) also incorporated ideas of the Haskalah and of European modernity, albeit in a much subtler form. Slobodkaite Musar internalized the modern bourgeois values of orderliness, personal hygiene, dignity, and restraint, and magnified their importance above and beyond any position they may have held in the traditional Jewish scale of values. In all three schools, Kelm, Telz, and Slobodka, the great majority of students were clean-shaven (i.e., beardless) and dressed according to European style (i.e. short jackets, fedora hats, neck-ties)—themselves noteworthy accommodations to westernization. Thus, an abiding feature of the Musar yeshivas considered in Stampfer's study is their combination of musarist pietism and accommodation to modernity.³

Following upon the lead of these two studies, I would like to examine in this paper the relationship between Musar and modernity in Novaredok, chronologically the last school of Musarism to arise in Eastern Europe. My argument, if I may anticipate, will be that Novaredok's Musarist practices and world-view, which took form in the first decade of the twentieth century, were products of the age of radicalism and revolution in Russian Jewish society. In addition, I will contend that the organizational structure which Novaredok assumed beginning in 1917 was indicative of the over-all process of political and cultural mobilization in East European Jewry at that time. In short, I will claim that Novaredok's

basic forms, postures, and structures were inextricably linked to those of the modern, secular currents which surrounded it.

II

The name Novaredok survives in popular memory thanks to its reverberations in folklore and literature. Anecdotes about Novaredok students are still retold in Orthodox circles; the most famous being about their practice of entering a pharmacy and asking the druggist for nails, in order to set themselves up for public ridicule. Chaim Grade's monumental novel *Tsemakh Atlas/Di Yeshiva* (in English, *The Yeshiva*) provides a vivid portrait of life in a Novaredok yeshiva in interior Poland and probes the personality of Reb Tsemakh Atlas, a Musarist whose unrelenting self-scrutiny and self-criticism lead to his psychic self-destruction.⁴ Valuable as these artifacts may be, legend and art cannot take the place of history. Hence a few general remarks are in order about the real-life yeshiva which existed in the town of Novaredok (Russian: Novogrodek, Minsk Gubernia) between 1896 and 1915.

This yeshiva was perhaps unique in that it attracted the vociferous anger and indignation of traditional Lithuanian rabbis on the one hand, and modern Jewish intellectuals on the other. For both, Novaredok was the symbol of Musarism taken to a ludicrous extreme.⁵ While the controversies surrounding the yeshiva cannot concern us here, their objective basis in fact should be noted. This yeshiva was different from all others in two crucial respects.

First, Novaredok unambiguously relegated the study of the Talmud to a position of secondary importance. Rabbi Yosef Yoizl Hurwitz, the yeshiva's founder and leader, did not present any *shiurim* or halakhic discourses to his students, and there was no bonafide master or mentor of talmudic studies on the premises. Instead, Hurwitz devoted his energies exclusively to strengthening his students' moral and religious characters, through guiding their study of *musar*, meeting with them individually in private, and delivering rousing *musar shmuesn*. One former student estimated that Hurwitz's talmudic knowledge was equivalent to that of a mediocre rabbi, and added: "I say estimate, because he rarely spoke words of Torah and never stressed his scholarly side".⁶ When *shiurim* were introduced to the yeshiva's program in 1903 or 1904, they were delivered by students, rather than by an official *rosh yeshiva*.⁷ The students' weekly schedule was extremely flexible, even amorphous, with the formally scheduled events involving *musar*, not talmud. Never had a yeshiva deviated so far from the historical norm.⁸

The second subject of controversy about the Novaredok yeshiva was the students' behavior, which tended to be unusual, bizarre, even scan-

dalous. Their study of *musar* included nighttime sessions of primal screaming, and uncontrolled outbursts of tears, whines, and fist-pounding. And they seemed to actively pursue schemes by which to make themselves the objects of mockery and disgust. Students would enter a crowded grocery, push to the front, and begin reciting the afternoon *Amidah* at the top of their lungs; or wear filthy clothes on the Sabbath, which they had intentionally splattered with mud on Friday afternoon; or present words of Torah to their peers which were blatantly false, contradictory, or inane, etc. etc. We will consider the ideological basis for this sort of behavior below, as well as its social significance. At this point it is sufficient to point out that their eccentric life-style, which was sanctioned and indeed encouraged by Hurwitz, was viewed by society at large as deranged and offensive.⁹

At first glance, the affirmation of any positive relationship between Novaredok and modernity would seem to be just as ridiculous as the behavior described above. Was not Novaredok the antithesis of everything we would consider modern, rational, worldly or secular? One of Hurwitz's fundamental teachings was the uncompromising and all-embracing rejection of the modern world. He blamed the "cursed Haskalah" for wreaking unspeakable spiritual destruction on Jewry, and for leading Jewish society to "reject the word of God and its bearers". As a result of the Haskalah's ravages, all Jews living outside yeshiva walls were hopelessly immersed in sinfulness. Even the ostensibly pious had fallen prey to the spirit of the new era and were at the mercy of their evil impulses. It was incumbent upon the truly pious to seclude themselves inside yeshiva walls for the sake of their spiritual protection, and there pursue the study of *musar*. Total withdrawal from surrounding society was imperative.

We must abandon the path of compromises and realize that there are only two paths open to us—either forsake the Torah altogether and choose the world, or strenthen ourselves even further by creating our own separate compartment.¹⁰

In keeping with this outlook, the Novaredok yeshiva, and its successors during World War I and the inter-war period, assumed a vehemently rejectionist stance toward European dress, manners, culture and education. Novaredok students (unlike those in Telz and Slobodka) wore beards, traditional long black coats, and proverbially long *tsitsis*, which hung down to their knees or ankles. They flaunted their disregard for personal hygiene and orderliness by wearing garments which were worn, soiled and tattered. To the eyes of moderns, their external appearance was a throwback to the "Middle Ages" and the embodiment of "darkness".¹¹

Least of all was their any room for compromise with regard to secular learning or literature. When Hurwitz became aware that one of his satel-

lite yeshivas during World War I had introduced secular studies, he responded by personally travelling to it, and proceeded to demolish the yeshiva's interior, to disperse its students, and to close the school down. The reading of secular books and newspapers was strictly prohibited in Novaredok yeshivas, and a first time offense was sufficient grounds for expulsion.¹² In other Lithuanian yeshivas, the attitude toward such matters was much more relaxed, especially during the inter-war years. Students were allowed to look at Hebrew or Yiddish newspapers in their spare time, and the administrations came to accept the fact that some students would also pursue a general education. When Mark Wischnitzer toured East European yeshivas in 1931, as an official of the Hilfsverein des Deutschen Juden, he encountered numerous students who had completed general secondary schools, several who had attended universities, and a number of university graduates. "I met such students in Telz, Slobodka, Radin, Mir, and elsewhere. The old contradictions were almost erased; the 'kultur-kampf' was over."¹³ Novaredok was conspicuously absent from Wischnitzer's list. He did not encounter such students in Novaredok yeshivas (e.g. in Bialystok, Mezritsh) because *there* the 'Kultur-kampf' was *not* over.

One can thus speak of accommodationist and rejectionist wings within the Musar movement with respect to modernity, with Telz and Slobodka making up the former, and Novaredok the latter. This would seem to put the entire topic of Novaredok and modernity to rest.

III

If, however, one goes beyond Novaredok's professed ideological stance toward modernity, to examine the origins of its Musarist practices and the tenor of its world-view, the picture becomes more complex and surprising.

Let us begin with something small but central. Perhaps the most famous institutionalized *musar* practice associated with Novaredok was the *birzhe*. This was an hour of the day set aside for the peripatetic exchange of *musar* insights among students. Moshe Silberg, who studied in a Novaredok yeshiva in 1917, described his first encounter with the *birzhe* as follows.

The yeshiva actually looked like a stock-market at that hour.¹⁴ . . . The students strolled in pairs across the length and width of the hall, full of enthusiasm and lively gesticulations . . . When I first entered the yeshiva, in the midst of this noise and excitement, a *bokhur* about 14-15 years old came up to me, greeted me, and without waiting for a response, grabbed my arm and asked: "Nu, what news can you tell me about your spiritual affairs?" I was stunned by his question and didn't know what to answer

. . . I tried to get rid of this nudnik, and when I finally succeeded, I bumped into a second person who greeted me, grabbed my arm, and once again asked about my spiritual affairs. How, he asked, did I intend to improve my character?¹⁵

What are the origins of this practice? Nowhere is it to be found in the writings of or about Israel Salanter. Indeed it does not even date back to the inception of the Novaredok yeshiva. Yehoshua Ovsay, who studied there in 1900, does not even mention it in his memoirs. The answer is provided in an obscure Musarist source. According to Rabbi Ben Tzion Bruk, the late Novaredok *rosh yeshiva* in Jerusalem, Hurwitz introduced the *birzhe* into the yeshiva's program in 1905. It was not, however, the product of his own imagination, but rather something he borrowed from the practices of Jewish revolutionaries. "Our master said that if oral propaganda can be of such utility for their ideas and nonsense, then why should we not use it for Torah and the fear of God?"¹⁶

Bruk's memory serves him well. A key vehicle for communication and agitation in the early Jewish labor movement was the *birzhe*, a street designated for the outdoor peripatetic exchange of information and ideas at a set time. According to Ezra Mendelsohn's study *Class Struggle in the Pale*,

Birzhes . . . became focal points of activity . . . Here workers and agitators met to discuss the problems of the day, and confer with the "representatives". This was the place too where . . . illegal literature was distributed and where important meetings were arranged . . . *Workers would often walk arm in arm* [emphasis added, D.E.F.] . . . as they denounced the members of the "bourgeoisie" who . . . might just happen to be walking on the other side of the street . . . In a country where freedom of assembly and speech was denied, *birzhes* were vitally important. Without them it is doubtful whether the mass movement would have survived.¹⁷

The recollection of Leyb Berman, an activist in the labor movement and the Bund, concerning his first *birzhe* bears an uncanny resemblance to that of Silberg.

I was startled and stunned by the very fact that Yoshke the agitator took me by the arm, and began speaking to me. He led me up and down the narrow boulevard and then handed me over to a second agitator, the second to a third.¹⁸

During the Russian revolution of 1905, when strikes and protest activities proliferated, the *birzhes* grew by leaps and bounds. Hundreds and even thousands of Jewish workers flocked to them to learn about the unfolding tumultuous events. The local leadership of the Jewish Labor Bund used the *birzhes* to conduct "flying meetings", and pass on instructions to their followers concerning revolutionary activity of all kinds. Non-proletarian and non-radical elements of Jewish society also attended

the *birzhes*; some came out of solidarity with the revolutionary cause, while others were motivated by pure curiosity. In cities where the revolutionary forces were in control, people came to the *birzhe* to consult the leaders of the Bund as if the latter were the ruling authorities. "People used to come [to the *birzhes*] for every different reason: questions of divorce, dowry, business partners who had fallen out . . . a speculator who had himself been outwitted . . . All used to come, and one could hardly escape them by telling them that they should rather go to the rabbi." It was not unusual to find Yeshiva students amidst the crowd.¹⁹

With the onset of Czarist reaction in 1906, workers' *birzhes* were disrupted by the police with ever increasing severity and brutality. The institution soon faded from the scene. But its Musarist imitation remained a mainstay of Novaredok yeshivas for many years to come. The connection between the Musar *birzhe* and its labor-movement antecedent was, on the other hand, quickly forgotten.²⁰

Our surprising discovery concerning the origins of the Novaredok *birzhe* suggests that we might be well-advised to examine the pedigree of its other *musar* practices as well. And indeed, a fresh look at them yields some rather provocative results.

The student body of a Novaredok yeshiva was divided into small groups of about ten, called *va'adim*, which met periodically to review the problems they faced in improving their religious and moral characters. At *va'ad* meetings, the members might confess their sins to each other, report on their efforts to eradicate a certain evil trait of theirs, or engage in mutual or self-criticism. The proceedings were usually dominated by an older student, called the *rosh ha-va'ad*, who was charged with guiding and supervising the group. He might present theoretical discourses on the obstacles and pit-falls involved in transforming one's character, or, alternately, deliver pointed jabs and digs at the shortcomings of the *va'ad* members.²¹

Although the format and personal dynamics of *va'adim* varied, and depended largely upon their leadership, their essential quality was everywhere the same. They served as the primary social units inside a Novaredok yeshiva, and helped forge a strong sense of collective identity among students. The atmosphere at *va'ad* meetings was highly charged and intimate, since they involved the sharing and raw exposure of one's flaws and sins. The proceedings were closed to non-members and bore a conspiratorial aura about them. In the privacy of these small, closed circles, the students engaged in the task of "working on themselves" with intensity and vigor.

There were antecedents to the institution of the *va'ad*; Salanter had established groups for the study of Musar beginning in the 1850s and was a staunch supporter of efforts by his followers to create *havurot musar* for laymen and scholars.²² But the *va'ad*'s unique features and atmosphere

made it much more than a study group. And since it was apparently introduced in Novaredok at the same time as the *birzhe*, that is in 1905,²³ one should seriously consider the possibility that it too was modeled after an institution of the Jewish labor and revolutionary movement—the underground circle or cell.

The small, intimate and secret circle of workers was the primary organizational unit of the Jewish labor movement. In the *kassy*, as they were called, members met to share their grievances, discuss labor actions, and study the doctrine of socialism. In striking similarity to the *va'ad*, they were led by an accomplished “agitator”, who presented socialist discourses and provided practical guidance on the tactics of economic struggle. The secret circle was the arena where the worker became self-conscious, (a term which could be applied with equal validity to the Musarist in his *va'ad*) and imbibed the ideals of his cause.²⁴

The Jewish Labor Bund consisted, structurally speaking, of a complex network of underground workers' circles. At the apex of each locality there stood the city-wide “committee” (*komitet*) of the Bund, a term reminiscent of the Novaredok *va'ad*. These underground “committees” acquired great prominence and prestige on the Jewish street in 1905, when they were perceived as the mysterious and powerful force behind the unfolding events.²⁵

Although there is no firm evidence connecting the Novaredok *va'ad* to the underground worker's circle (as there is with the *birzhe*), the similarities between them and the historical setting in which the *va'ad* was introduced (Lithuania, 1905) strongly suggest such a connection. One former Novaredok student, the Yiddish writer Mordkhe Shtrigler, has characterized the *va'adim* as “cells” and drawn a parallel between them and the underground revolutionary cells of Tsarist Russia.²⁶

I am also inclined to attribute a third *musar* institution in Novaredok, the *peule* or *prat*, to the influence of the Jewish labor movement. A *peule* was an exercise or operation undertaken by the individual student to improve his character. It was designed to uproot a specific moral defect of which the student was aware and involved the repeated performance of acts which embodied the opposite virtue in the extreme. Since pride, arrogance, and the quest for social esteem, were considered the ubiquitous vices of yeshiva-students, they were the object of most *peules*. Asking a druggist for nails (or for butter), or walking down the street dressed in a repulsive, ridiculous manner, were *peules* for uprooting pride and the drive for social prestige and instilling in their place humility and an indifference toward honor (*hishtavut*). Denying oneself food was a common *peule* for uprooting hedonistic tendencies; lending one's dearest possessions to a friend was a *peule* against selfishness, in order to instill charity.²⁷

The performance of these acts constituted the core of Novaredok's program of character development. *Peules* were carefully planned, con-

scientifically repeated, and scrutinized after the fact for their personal impact. *Va'ad* meetings frequently reviewed the *peules* performed by members, and debated their efficacy and/or harmful "side effects". At the *birzhe*, a student might share his insights on the performance of a certain *peule*.²⁸

Novaredok's focus on *peules* as the prime vehicle for bringing about spiritual/moral change was in itself an important innovation in Musarist thought. Salanter and his major disciples conceived of spiritual/moral transformation as a process involving study of *musar* and personal introspection. For them, character was changed through sedentary activity of the mind. In Novaredok Musar, character development required a vigorous program of action. To quote Hurwitz, "only actions can undo [earlier evil] actions. You can think for all the years of Methuselah; without *peules* you will only be dreaming and accomplishing nothing".²⁹

This activist orientation, so incongruous with traditional rabbinic intellectualism (even as modified by Salanterian Musar) may have drawn its inspiration from the Jewish labor movement. The labor movement was nothing if not activist. The strike, the demonstration, the rally, and under extraordinary circumstances (as in 1905) the act of violence—these were the vehicles for bringing about changes in the workers' condition. The *birzhes* and underground circles fulfilled many roles—they were social clubs, mutual aid societies, and educational forums—but their primary function was to prepare and organize workers for concerted action. The circle, *birzhe* and strik were linked to each other in a logical progression which proceeded from consciousness-raising, to mobilization, to action. This system seems to have been adopted by Novaredok, with the Musar *peule* replacing the labor action as the instrument of change.

What the *peule* and labor action held most deeply in common was their boldness and selfless heroism. Just as it took a great deal of devotion to the ideals of socialism to risk dismissal, beatings, arrest or worse for participating in a strike or revolutionary act, so did the performance of a *peule* which would arouse public ridicule and hostility (or worse) require considerable dedication to the ideals of Musarism. In both, young people were performing daring and courageous acts for the sake of their "cause", and the most daring activists of all were viewed by their peers as heroes.

Our discovery that Novaredok's unique institutions—the *birzhe*, the *va'ad* and perhaps the *peule*—were adapted from the practices of the Jewish labor movement serves to illuminate and complicate the personality of R. Yosef Yoizl Hurwitz. Hurwitz was evidently not the myopic rejector of modernity some have imagined. While preaching total withdrawal from "the world", he was himself quite attuned to the "goings on" in society at large. Not only was he aware of the growing labor and radical movement among Lithuanian Jews, but he was familiar with its internal

structures and institutions. And, most remarkably of all, he was willing to borrow those institutions from the most self-consciously secular and anti-rabbinic movement in Jewish society and transform them into Musarist ones. This reveals a degree of flexibility and creativity we would hardly have imagined.

IV

What led Hurwitz to appropriate the *birzhe*, the secret circle, and the ethic of activism from the Jewish radicals? Without a doubt he considered them to be useful vehicles for strengthening the Musarist spirit of his yeshiva. He was willing to learn from his adversaries, and borrow their tools. The reasoning reported by Rabbi Bruk is undeniable—if such things “are of utility to their ideas and nonsense, then why should we not use [them] for Torah and fear of God”? But this reasoning, true as it is, constitutes only a partial explanation. Other sources indicate that Hurwitz introduced these borrowings in response to an acute crisis in his yeshiva during the revolution of 1905.

Radical ideas gained entry into the Novaredok yeshiva no later than 1902. In that year, an underground “committee” of the Bund was established in town, and one of its two founding leaders was a student from R. Yoisef Yoizl’s yeshiva named Avrohom Kaplan. Few people knew at the time that this “diligent Musarist” was secretly a “self-conscious Bundist”.³⁰ Little is known about the mysterious Kaplan, but it is not unlikely that he attempted to spread his ideas among his peers in the yeshiva. If Kaplan was an exceptional case in 1902, students like him became numerous in Novaredok between January and October of 1905. Revolutionary fervor engulfed the town (“demonstrations were a daily occurrence” writes one memoirist³¹), and the yeshiva was not immune to its influence. A substantial number of students left its walls to embrace the exciting cause of political activism. This large-scale defection of students left Hurwitz “greatly shattered”.³² Dov Katz, whose work on Novaredok relies in part upon conversations with former students, describes the state of the yeshiva as follows.

R. Yoizl found it necessary to strengthen the spirit of the yeshiva after the rebellion which occurred in Russia in 1905, into which many of the yeshiva’s students were drawn. When R. Yoizl spoke of the causes which led him to [do so], he mentioned several of his most outstanding students who were drawn into the currents of the time. He recalled in particular the case of a student from Semiatitz, who was extremely diligent, whose thirst for Torah dominated all his senses, and who had no desire in life but to study Torah. But suddenly, after going home to his family for the holidays [probably Passover, April 1905 D.E.F.], he became a heretic, and set out on an evil path . . . It was then that R. Yoizl added reforms, to repair the edifice of the yeshiva.³³

The anonymous reforms referred to by Katz are in all probability the Musarist practices reviewed above—the *birzhe*, *va'ad* and *peule*.

An awareness of the historical context in which Hurwitz introduced these practices enables us to appreciate just what he was doing. His appropriation and adaptation of the institutions of the Jewish radical movement was a calculated attempt on his part to stem the tide of defections from the yeshiva to the revolutionary movement, and perhaps even to turn the tide back the other way. He undertook to create the trappings of the revolutionary movement inside his yeshiva; to create a yeshiva with its very own *birzhes*, secret cells, and acts of heroism. These features were designed to infuse the yeshiva with the special atmosphere of the radical movement, which was so attractive to the youth—an atmosphere of intimacy, secrecy, idealism, and adventure.

Seen from this perspective, the Novaredok yeshiva emerges as a historical phenomenon of some import. Here was a yeshiva which actively competed with the labor and radical movement for the hearts and souls of young Jewish men. Instead of assuming a defensive posture of “hunkering down” and hoping that the stampede of the youth to the Godless socialists would soon end, Novaredok transformed itself institutionally in an effort to make itself an attractive alternative to the Godless socialists. This boldly creative step reflects a realization on Hurwitz's part that the traditional model of yeshiva education simply could not sustain the commitment and loyalty of students under the newly created circumstances. Political activism had tapped into some very powerful drives and energies among the youth, and unless his yeshiva would somehow do the same, it was doomed to fail.

v

It is tempting to dismiss Novaredok's appropriations/borrowings from the Jewish labor movement as nothing more than “window dressing”; changes in form, but not in substance. The 1905 reforms did not effect the yeshiva's values and ideals, which remained exclusively religious and pietistic, i.e. fear of God and the proper observance of his commandments. Novaredok remained, even with its *birzhes*, cells and activism, as unworldly as ever—a school of sectarian ascetics, recoiling from all involvement in general culture or politics.

This point is well taken, and there is a good measure of truth to it. But one should not draw from it the blanket conclusion that Novaredok Musarism as a religious system was effectively uninfluenced by modern radicalism. Religious systems may eschew the *values* of modern cultural and social movements and still internalize their style, rhetoric, and worldview in subtler ways. Novaredok Musarism is a case in point. It bears the unmistakable imprint of the radical ethos—extremist in outlook, com-

mitted to the use of unconventional and violent means, and self-consciously defiant of traditional conceptions of propriety and piety. It is, in my opinion, a form of religious radicalism and rebellion.³⁴

Three of the central tenets of Novaredok Musar may be stated, in brief, as follows:

1. *The human soul in our time is almost totally under the control and governance of evil passions and inclinations.* The power of the *yetzer hara* over most people is so great that they are unaware of their enslavement to it. Only an elect few, who have become self-conscious through the study of Musar, are aware of this fact, and are engaged in a never-ending struggle against their *yetzer hara*.

2. *The struggle against one's evil passions/inclinations is a total war.* There can be no concessions or compromises with the *yetzer hara*, because concessions, no matter how small or temporary, will merely serve to strengthen its power. The *yetzer hara* cannot be harnessed or transformed; it can only be defeated.

3. *Defeat of one's evil passions/inclinations requires the use of extraordinary and extreme measures;* conventional means are inadequate and ineffectual for the enormous task of defeating the *yetzer hara*.

This is a radical diagnosis of man's moral and spiritual condition; it is strikingly similar, in tone, to the political radical's analysis of society and its ills. In the mind of the political radical, the forces of evil (Tsarist tyranny, capitalism, or what have you) are in total control of society; there can be no accommodation or compromise with these ruling forces—compromise solutions merely play into the hand of the oppressors, and constitute “collaboration” with them; only extreme, violent action, i.e. revolution, can topple them from power.

The radicalism of Novaredok's vision is vividly conveyed in the term *sheviras ha-midos*, the shattering or crushing of one's character traits, which expresses one of the highest ideals of Novaredok Musar. The term, which is so central to the Novaredok lexicon, is nowhere to be found in the classical rabbinic sources,³⁵ and thus represents something of a conceptual breakthrough. Its underlying assumption is that man's character traits are in and of themselves full of evil; hence the word *ra'os* (the shattering of *evil* traits) is superfluous. The doctrine of *sheviras ha-midos* contends that moral self-transformation is achieved by crushing and shattering one's character traits, rather than by cultivating or adjusting them. (The latter, more positive conception is expressed by the better known term *tikkun ha-midos*, ‘the perfection of one's character traits’.) Only on the ruins of one's previous evil character can a new character be built. The act of violent destruction is essential to attaining the desired goal.³⁶

Hurwitz was adamant that one's old, evil traits could not form the

basis for a gradual process of self-improvement. The break with the old trait must be total and uncompromising. He drove home this point with a telling parable.

If someone has a *treyf* kitchen and wants to repent and make it kosher, he might say 'how can I repent all at once and break all my dishes? It will cost a great deal of money! I'll do it gradually. I'll break one dish, and replace it with a kosher one; later I'll replace a second dish, later a third, and later a fourth, until it is completed'. Such a person would be considered a fool. For as soon as the [first] kosher dish mixes with the rest, it is all *treyf*. He can live as long as Methuselah—breaking one dish and replacing it, breaking one dish and replacing it—they will be *treyf* forever. If he wants to repent he must break all the dishes at once, and buy entirely new ones.³⁷

The line of thinking expressed by the doctrine of *sheviras ha-midos* is radicalism transposed from the realm of politics to that of ethics. The object of aggression has been transferred from society to the ego. The goal is to bring down the *ancien régime* not of the state, but of the soul.

In Novaredok Musar, as in any radical ideology, attainment of the goal necessitates extreme measures. Hence, the *peules* occupy a position of central importance, since they are the tools through which *sheviras ha-midos* is to be achieved. One must "perform extreme *peules* aimed against one's weakness in a specific matter, which correspond to it fully and are its very opposite".³⁸ The traits of pride and arrogance are to be crushed by performing repeated acts of public self-humiliation; the vices of avarice and greed are to be uprooted by performing repeated acts of extreme self-denial; quiescence and servility (sins in the Novaredok ledger) are to be eradicated by performing repeated acts of extraordinary initiative, assertiveness, and independence.

The outsider, non-Musarist, may consider the *peules* involved to be ludicrous, disruptive, even harmful to the well-being of the performer and those around him. But conventional standards of propriety and morality simply cannot apply when the objective is so difficult and urgent a goal as *sheviras ha-midos*. The Musarist must take whatever action is necessary to stamp out his evil traits, even if it arouses vociferous objections in society at large. This includes resorting to "improper" and "immoral" means. Hurwitz did not mince words:

Wherever you may feel [inner, moral] weakness you must strengthen yourself, occasionally also employing means which deviate externally from what is just. Only the Knower of hidden things [i.e. God] will understand such *peules*.³⁹

You must go to the very extreme, and occasionally, the extreme will break a bit of the Torah—according to the external perception of the unknowing . . . Others, and perhaps you yourself, will have arguments

against this path . . . [It] will also require you to depart from the truth somewhat.⁴⁰

The deeds of both the evil man and the righteous man arouse arguments and objections. The one violates the Torah for the sake of [indulging] his [evil] traits; the other violates the Torah because of [his struggle against] his [evil] traits.⁴¹

One cannot effect a spiritual revolution in oneself if one is squeamish about performing acts which run counter to “what is just”, “truth”, and “the Torah”. These principles may have to be suspended in order to attain the higher goal of *sheviras ha-midos*. In Novaredok Musar, ends justify means.

Needless to say, Hurwitz did not produce his teachings out of whole cloth. *Madregat Ha-Adam* is full of citations from the Talmud, Midrash, Bahya's *Hovot Ha-Levavot*, Maimonides' *Shemone Perakim* and *Mishne Torah*, and the Vilna Gaon's *Commentary on Proverbs*, to bolster his points. But this should not obscure the fact that he used his sources selectively, in order to articulate an original moral philosophy of his own. The fact that this philosophy was radical in tenor, and employed the rhetoric of extremism, destruction, and “direct action”, was not indebted to any one of his literary sources, and cannot be attributed to pure coincidence. One must conclude that Hurwitz intentionally cast his Musarim in radical terms, in order to make it challenging and exciting to Lithuanian Jewish youth. The Musarist vision of *sheviras ha-midos* and *peules* could speak to their reservoir of discontent vis-à-vis the “status quo” and their idealistic desire to “create a new world”. These emotions, which were usually expressed via revolutionary political activity, would now be sublimated into a vision of individual, moral revolution.

Silberg, for one, was sensitive to the affinities between Novaredok and radicalism.

It would be a great error for us not to recognize the sign of the times in this movement . . . This was a yeshiva with a revolutionary ideology; with the special tempo and enthusiasm of such an ideology . . . The difference was in the content; in the *object* of revolution. The one sought a new social and economic order; the other—a new individual spiritual order. Their common denominator was the desire to turn everything upside down, to uproot accepted notions by radical means, which stood in complete contradiction to the idea of evolutionary development.⁴²

Hurwitz's ingenious project of adapting revolutionary practices and theories for his own purposes proved to be a tremendous success. In the years following 1905, the Novaredok yeshiva grew considerably, and Hurwitz was compelled to expand its faculty/spiritual leadership to include his sons-in-law and two other colleagues. On the eve of World War I, nine years after the crisis which had shaken it, Novaredok was one of the three largest yeshivas in Russia, with an enrollment of over 300 students.⁴³

This figure is remarkably high, given the fact that Hurwitz was held in low regard in rabbinic circles, including Musarist ones. He was no great talmudist, and his public reputation was that of a fanatic—at best misguided, at worst dangerously deranged. The students who flocked to Novaredok did so despite the fact that their studies under Hurwitz would *not* bestow upon them high social prestige or launch their successful rabbinic careers. If anything, their association with the man and his institution might hinder their efforts to obtain a good *shiddukh* or rabbinic *shtete*. One must therefore attribute the yeshiva's attractiveness to young men to factors of a very different order. Novaredok's way of life appealed to them in its own right as challenging and exciting.

One of the attractions must have been the rebelliousness inherent in the Novaredok life-style and its defiance of traditional norms, mores and values. Performing shocking and offensive *peules* was only one of the ways in which students violated the norms of socially acceptable behavior. The utter neglect of talmudic study in an institution which claimed to be a yeshiva was another. But there was more. The students disavowed all material possessions and celebrated a life of indigence. They wore filthy, worn clothes, and slept on synagogue benches with pride, claiming that a concern for material belongings distracted one's concentration away from the task of spiritual self-transformation. They rejected the idea of pursuing a livelihood in principle, because this indicated a lack of *bitokhn* (trust in God) on one's part. The Novaredokers even denigrated families, including marriage, as harmful to the Musarist quest. Students who minimized contact with their parents (e.g. who did *not* go home for the holidays) were praised as models of devotion to Musar. Hurwitz himself set a startling example, by leaving his wife and children behind in Slobodka and sending them no financial support while he led the yeshiva. "The concepts of father and mother, wife and child, relative and family were foreign to them", Silberg reported. They championed the ideal of *hefkerut*—total personal independence and freedom.⁴⁴

Silberg characterized the Novaredokers as religious bohemians, who embraced a philosophy of vagabondism and renounced "bourgeois" life, its pleasures and aspirations.⁴⁵ Whether the terms "bohemians" and "vagabondism" are apt or not, they do convey the unconventionality and irregularity of the Novaredok life-style. Parents, rabbis, and elders must have been deeply troubled by the rejection on the part of these young men of traditional Jewish values in the spheres of community, religion, work, and family. They had renounced the ideal of a *sheyner yid* (learned scholar, prosperous merchant, head of family, communal leader) lock, stock, and barrel. For many teenage youths, becoming a Novaredoker constituted an act of rebellion against one's parents and their values—every bit as much as was joining the Bund.

The Novaredokers viewed traditional orthodox Jews with hostility and contempt. The roots of this hostility were ideological. Traditional Jews were religious conservatives whose only desire was to sustain and

protect the stable and familiar religious life-style of the past. The Novaredoks, on the other hand, were religious radicals, who set forth the ideal of spiritual revolution and upheaval. Their outlook was encapsulated in one of Hurwitz's most famous adages, that "the worst thing that can happen to a person is to stay the same."⁴⁶ They despised the complacent piety of the rabbis and *balebatim*; a "piety" which was uncritical, unreflective, and thoroughly infected with the vices of greed, power, pride, and hypocrisy. In Novaredok, there was no greater term of derision than "balebos", the bourgeois Jew who was self-satisfied and comfortable.⁴⁷ (The term carried just as great a stigma among Bundists, for different but analogous reasons.) The students conceived of themselves (much as did Bundists) as a heroic, idealistic *avant-garde*, living in accordance with a new and more truthful morality.

In sum, Novaredok Musarism, as constructed by Hurwitz, was a radical religious counter-culture. It appealed to drives and emotions similar to those which led other young men to leave traditional orthodoxy and join the Bund. Unlike Bundism, however, it was a rebellion from within. Employing categories drawn from the religious tradition, it subverted many traditional Jewish values and mores.

VI

Novaredok Musar underwent a second process of transformation more than a decade later, during World War I, the Russian revolution and their aftermath. Once again, the yeshiva faced a crisis which threatened its survival, and Hurwitz responded in a similar vein. By borrowing select ideas and practices from the modern Jewish political movements, he was able to revitalize the institution and energize its students. The steps he took were taken to their logical conclusion by his disciples in the years immediately after his death.

The second institutional crisis began in 1914, with the outburst of the first World War, when a sizeable number of students fled the town, and Hurwitz was left "like a shepherd without his flock". In 1915, Hurwitz decided that he and his remaining students should leave Novaredok, the town they had helped make famous, in order to avoid falling under the occupation of the advancing German troops. After several months of wandering, the yeshiva settled in the Belorussian city of Gomel. In the following year, it divided itself into four parts, with three contingents of students proceeding southward to Kiev, Kharkov, and Rostov. These groups were supervised by Hurwitz's sons-in-law and leading disciples. Smaller groups of students subsequently left the four "central yeshivas", as they were called, for innocuous towns and villages in the surrounding areas. By late 1916, the students of the former Novaredok yeshiva were

scattered throughout Belorussia and the Ukraine. And for good reason. Many of them were subject to the Russian military draft, and a large assembly of young men would have attracted the attention of the authorities, and led to searches, forced military inductions, and arrests.⁴⁸

Throughout this period of war, exile and dispersion (1914-1917), the yeshiva continued to lose students. As they confronted the war-time hardships of dislocation, hunger, and epidemics, most of the young men joined the general stream of Jewish refugees, or returned home to their families. According to one estimate, only 80 students reached Gomel along with Hurwitz. Many left the yeshiva after having been separated from their mentor and master. And many of those who remained Novaredokers throughout these travails felt that the struggle for a piece of bread and a place to sleep was draining their energy, and overwhelming their effort to pursue spiritual goals.⁴⁹ The threat of Novaredok's general demoralization and even disintegration loomed large.

Hurwitz addressed the crisis creatively. First, he announced an important ideological shift intended to bolster his students' morale. He instructed them to abandon their social isolation and aloofness, to aggressively seek out Jewish youngsters wherever they may be and convert them to Novaredok Musarism. His new slogan was *lezakos es ha-rabim*, to turn the many unto righteousness. He composed a lengthy letter to his students in which he elucidated this new idea and called upon them to implement it.⁵⁰ "We must create . . . yeshivas and *kibbutzim* [study collectives] everywhere—in cities, towns and villages, so as to bring the entire younger generation under the banner of Torah and fear of God".⁵¹

In part, Hurwitz was making a virtue out of necessity. Novaredok's dispersion was to be viewed from now on as a doctrinal imperative rather than a lamentable fact. By providing the students with an important reason for remaining far away from each other and from their master, he eased their sense of demoralization. Moreover, by vigorously propagating the ideal of "turning the many unto righteousness" Hurwitz imbued the students with a sense of mission and a new élan. They were charged with a mission of spiritual rescue; the future of Torah, Musar, and Jewry at large lay on their shoulders.

This about-face in Novaredok's social posture, from introverted isolation to aggressive expansion, was a crucial development in transforming Novaredok from a yeshiva into a movement. Its horizons were no longer limited to the souls of individual yeshiva students, but now extended to the entire Jewish people, or at least to the entire younger generation of Russian Jews. Novaredok was no longer indifferent to the fate of Jewry at large. The students began to engage in public propaganda and outreach, establishing new "branch" yeshivas in numerous towns. This shift in orientation occurred at an important juncture in Jewish history—when Zionists, Diaspora Nationalists, and liberal "assimilation-

ists" were engaged in open and aggressive competition to control the newly established educational institutions for the children of war-time refugees.⁵² Hurwitz in a sense threw Novaredok into the fray, as a religious educational movement which would compete with the secular currents for the education of refugee children.

Hurwitz took a further step in transforming Novaredok into a movement in December 1917, at which time he gathered the students from the four corners of the Ukraine to Gomel for a Novaredok convention. Not a *kinus*, a gathering, or an *asife*, a meeting, but a *ve'idah*, a convention, which followed parliamentary order. In attendance were official delegates representing their respective yeshivas; a chairman presided over the proceedings and followed a set agenda; reports were presented on the state of various yeshivas; and the deliberations concluded with the passage of resolutions by majority vote. The convention adopted by-laws for the Novaredok movement, which established an internal organizational structure and set forth uniform guide-lines regarding the study of *musar* and the performance of *musar* activities.⁵³

It is not coincidental that Hurwitz called his convention in 1917, when there was a tremendous flourish of political and organizational activity in Russian Jewry. In the aftermath of the February revolution of that year, all the Jewish political movements held conventions—the Zionists, the Bund, the Socialist Territorialists/Autonomists etc. These were the very first party conventions held under conditions of total legality, and attracted widespread public attention. New political, religious, and cultural organizations sprang up that year like mushrooms after a storm, with each holding a conference or convention of its own.⁵⁴ Once again Hurwitz appropriated an institution of the modern Jewish movements and utilized it to strengthen the Musarist cause.

The consequences of these reforms were impressive. As Novaredok attracted new youths to its ranks, it grew in size, energy and dynamism. At its peak, in 1919, it encompassed some thirty yeshivas, including several on the east bank of the Volga. In 1921, 600 Novaredok students crossed the Soviet border into Independent Poland; twice as many as there had ever been in the original yeshiva.⁵⁵

Novaredok's transformation into a movement reached its culmination in inter-war Poland. After the border-crossing, each of the four "central yeshivas" settled in a different Polish city and continued to found branch yeshivas in outlying areas. The Novaredok system grew by leaps and bounds, eventually embracing 70 yeshivas and 3,000 students, and in the process, it made further recourse to the tools and institutions of the Jewish political movements. Conventions became a regular event and even appointed executive committees (*va'ad ha-poel*) to supervise the implementation of resolutions and *komisyas* to address specific issues. With Hurwitz no longer alive—he died in Kiev in 1919—the leader-

ship was assumed by a central council (*agudah merkazit*) consisting of the heads of the four central yeshivas. An elaborate system of councils was instituted, which permeated the Novaredok yeshiva network from the national level down to the individual local yeshiva. Internal communication was maintained by an official in-house journal, *Or Ha-Musar*, whose issues featured Musarist discourses and, notably, a section of Novaredok news. The news section included reports on the latest convention, on meetings of the central council, and the founding of new yeshivas.⁵⁶

In adopting these tools, Novaredok again exhibited its flexibility to accommodate contemporary trends. Polish Jewry was becoming the most mobilized and organized Jewry in history, and Polish Jews were increasingly defining themselves in terms of the movement to which they belonged. Novaredok, a small religious sect of a few thousand, likewise assumed all the trappings of a modern movement. In doing so, it was a path-breaker. With the possible exception of Lubavitch (which was not as prominent or as large as today), no Hasidic group in inter-war Poland made recourse to such modern tools as parliamentary conventions, a hierarchy of officers, and an in-house journal. The old methods of organization and communication prevailed, no matter how numerous or scattered the group of Hasidim. In Ger, Aleksander and elsewhere, there were no conventions, only gatherings at the Rebbe's court for special Sabbaths and holidays; no officers—excepting, of course, the Rebbe himself and his “gabaim”; and internal communication was conducted by letter and emissary, not via an official movement journal.

Novaredok's use of modern organizational tools and mechanisms is reminiscent of *Agudas Yisroel*, the powerful orthodox political party in Poland which did much the same. But this similarity should not obscure the deeper difference between them. Novaredok remained, as before, a pietistic sect, which avoided all involvement in the affairs of society at large. Novaredokers viewed political activity as a dangerous seduction of the *vetzer hara* and a diversion from one's chief task in life, *sheviras hamidos*. For this reason, none of Novaredok's *rosh yeshivas* was active in *Agudas Yisroel*. The *Agudah's* participation in Polish politics and its diplomatic efforts on behalf of the safety and well-being of Polish Jewry made it much too worldly for the Novaredokers. The *Agudah's* internal political contests between individuals and factions, motivated by ambition and the drive for power and prominence, were viewed by them as a form of moral and spiritual degeneracy.⁵⁷ Novaredok adopted the trappings of a political movement, but rejected the materialistic world-view upon which all political activity is predicated. Once again it had adopted the tools and terms of the moderns, while sustaining an adamant rejection of their values.

NOTES

1. Immanuel Etkes, *Rabi Yisrael Salanter Ve-Reshita Shel Tenuat Ha-Musar* (Jerusalem, 1982); Shaul Stampfer, *Shalosh Yeshivot Litaiyot Be-Me'ah Ha-Tesha Esre*, unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University, 1981.

2. Etkes, *Rabi Yisrael Salanter*, pp. 147-164.

3. On Braude's institution, which was an elementary school (*Talmud Torah*) and not a yeshiva for mature students, see Stampfer, *Shalosh Yeshivot*, pp. 134-139. It was located in Kelm between 1873 and 1880, and in Grobin from 1880 to 1886. (Braude later returned to Kelm and taught Musar to groups of students there.) On Slobodka and Telz see Stampfer, pp. 152-169, 172-208. My suggestion regarding the internalization of European bourgeois values in Slobodka Musarism requires closer scrutiny; for now see Menes' characterization in "Patterns of Jewish Scholarship in Eastern Europe", in L. Finkelstein (ed.), *The Jews* (New York, 1960), pp. 417-419.

4. Chaim Grade, *Tsemakh Atlas (Di Yeshive)*, Vol. I (New York, 1967), Vol. II, (New York, 1968). See also his poem *Musernikes* and "essay" *Mayn Krig Mit Hersh Raseyner*, issued by the Department of Yiddish Literature, Hebrew University, 1969.

5. For a partial review of the polemics see Rabbi Dov Katz, *Pulmus Ha-Musar* (Jerusalem, 1972), index, "Novaredok." See also Katz's *Tenuat Ha-Musar*, Vol. IV (Tel Aviv, 1963), pp. 323-324, and the scathing "exposé" of the yeshiva by A. Litvin (pseud. for Shmuel Hurwitz) "In Vos Bashteyt Di Novgrudker Muser?", *Yidishe Neshomes*, Vol. III (New York, 1917).

6. Yehoshua Ovsay, "R. Yosef Yoizl 'Ba'al Ha-Khorim'", *Reshimot Ve-Mamerim* (New York, 1946), p. 123; Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 197-8, 329; Rabbi Ben Tzion Bruk and Rabbi Dovid Zaritsky (eds.) *Gevile Esh* (Jerusalem, 1973), p. 25.

7. Katz, *Tenuat*, p. 198.

8. A. Litvin, "In Vos Bashteyt . . .", p. 1. On the Musar activities inside the Novaredok yeshiva and its successors see below, and also David E. Fishman, "The Musar Movement in Inter-War Poland", in Jehuda Reinhartz, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Chone Shmeruk (eds.) *Polish Jewry Between the Two World Wars* (forthcoming, University Press of New England).

9. Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 257, 260, 274, passim; Moshe Silberg, "Kat Ha-Novardokaim", *Ha-Aretz*, December 26, 1932, p. 2; A. Litvin, "In Vos Bashteyt . . .", passim. See also Grade, *Musernikes*, pp. 9-11.

10. Yosef Yoizl Hurwitz, *Madregat Ha-Adam* (Jerusalem, 1970), pt. 1, "Ma'amar Be-Tkufot Ha-Olam," pp. 18-21 and passim. On Hurwitz's book *Madregat Ha-Adam* see below n. 34. Although the discourse quoted above was delivered in 1918, the idea of sectarian withdrawal from society was a mainstay of his thinking throughout. See Katz, p. 235.

11. Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 237, 257; Grade, *Musernikes*, pp. 15, 40-41 ("Di Musernikes Geyen"); for a contrast between European dress, manners and those of a Novaredok Musarist, see Grade, *Tsemakh Atlas*, Vol. I, p. 58.

12. R. Shmuel Weintraub, "Hesped Le-Yud Zayin Kislev", *Or Ha-Musar* (Bne Brak, 1965), Vol. I, p. 15; Mordkhe Shtrigler, "Farshverer" (an autobiographical novel on life in a Novaredok yeshiva in inter-war Poland), *Yiddisher Kemfer* (March 27, 1964), pp. 72-73; Grade, *Musernikes*, p. 32. One of the sub-plots in

Tsemakh Atlas, Vol. II involves Tsemakh's participation in a scheme to burn the books of a socialist youth group's library. See also Hurwitz, *Madregat Ha-Adam*, pt. 1, "Tikun Ha-Midot", pp. 29-30.

13. Mark Wischnitzer, "Di Banayung fun Di Yeshives in Mizrekh Eyrope Nokh der Ershter Velt Milkhome", *Yivo Bletter*, Vol. XXXI-XXXII (1948), p. 15.

14. The most common meaning of the Yiddish word 'birzhe' is stock-market.

15. Silberg, "Kat Ha-Novardokaim", *Ha-Aretz* (December 26, 1932), p. 2. See Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 292-295, and Litvin, "In Vos Bashteyt . . .", p. 2.

16. Rabbi Ben Tzion Bruk, "Petah Davar", *Gevile Esh* (Jerusalem, 1973), p. 15; also Katz, *Tenuat*, p. 292.

17. Ezra Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 69-70; see also Henry J. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia From Its Origins to 1905* (Stanford, 1971), p. 101.

18. Leon Berman, *In Loyf Fun Yorn* (New York, 1945), p. 107; similarly Leon Bernshiteyn, *Ershte Shprotsungen* (Buenos Aires, 1950), pp. 33-35.

19. Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia*, pp. 305-312; Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews 1862-1917* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 143-158 (Quotation cited from p. 148). See the accounts by A. Litvak, "Der Bund in Varshe, 1905" in *Geklibene Shriftn* (New York, 1945), pp. 178-179, and Grigori Aronson, "Di Homler 'Birzhe' un Di Homler Zelibst-shuts (Zikhroyens Vegn) 1905", in *Der Veker* (April 1, 1955), pp. 10-11. Aronson notes the presence of yeshiva students. "They joined the various revolutionary circles, and with the help of gymnasium students they studies the 'treyf' socialist literature."

20. The traditional explanation of the origins of the Musar *birzhe* was that it was modelled after the noisy hustle-bustle of the stock-market (see note 14 above). Just as the market-place is the arena for ascertaining and determining the rise and fall in the value of stocks and currencies, so the Musar *birzhe* is the place for ascertaining and determining the rise and fall of one's spiritual "stock"; Katz, *Tenuat*, p. 293.

21. Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 199-200, 286-291 (Katz uses the term *havurot musar* rather than *va'ad*); Silberg, *Ha-Aretz*, December 26, 1932, p. 2; Litvin, "In Vos Bashteyt . . .", p. 2. For a riveting literary depiction of a *va'ad*, see the section "A Toyte Hant" of Grade's poem *Musernikes*, pp. 16-22.

22. Etkes, *Rabi Yisrael Salanter*, pp. 196-205 and passim.

23. Uvsay does not mention the *va'ad* in his memoirs of his stay in Novaredok in 1900, whereas all later memoirists and historians pay considerable attention to it. This suggests that it was not yet in existence at the time, and that it was one of the "reforms" which Hurwitz introduced in the yeshiva in 1905; see below.

24. Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle*, chapter 4, "The New Organization", pp. 63-81; Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia*, chapter 9, "The Local Organizations", pp. 95-104.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 296-300; Sholem Levin, *Untererdishe Kemfer* (New York), 1946, pp. 100-101.

26. Shtrigler's Yiddish translation of Silberg's article with his own additional annotations, "Di Novardoker", *Yiddisher Kemfer*, Rosh Hashanah Almanach 5745, p. 32, note 15.

27. Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 255-257, 260; Silberg, *Ha-Aretz*, December 26, 1932, p. 2; Grade, *Musernikes*, pp. 20, 45-49. Another term for the *peules* was *protim*.

28. Grade, *Musernikes*, pp. 20-22.

29. Etkes, *Rabi Yisrael Salanter*, pp. 111-119, 311-325; quote from Hurwitz, *Madregat Ha-Adam*, pt. I, "Darke Ha-Teshuva", p. 170.

30. H. Kaplan and Y. Maslav, "Der Bund in Novaredok", in *Pinkas Novaredok*, (ed.) E. Yerushalmi (Tel Aviv, 1963), p. 52.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

32. Mordkhe Ginzburg, "Di Muser Bavegung", *Pinkas Novaredok*, p. 38.

33. Katz, *Tenuat*, p. 200.

34. Before developing this point, I should like to make the caveat that there is no systematic exposition of the tenets of Novaredok Musar in existence. Hurwitz wrote close to nothing during his lifetime, and the book bearing his name as author, *Madregat Ha-Adam*, is in reality a compilation of *musar-shmuesn* which he delivered between 1917 and 1919 (the year of his death) while residing in Gomel and Kiev. The *shmuesn* were transcribed and edited by a student, Isaac Waldschein, and were published as a series of pamphlets, which were distributed to Hurwitz's disciples, then scattered throughout the Ukraine. They were first brought together in book-form many years later [Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 219-220; Y.L. Nekritz, "Yeshivot Novaredok", in S.K. Mirsky (ed.), *Mosdot Torah Be-Eropah Be-Binyanam U-be-Hurbanam* (New York, 1956), pp. 258-259].

Although *Madregat Ha-Adam* acquired the status of holy scripture among Hurwitz's disciples, it is less than ideal as a repository of Novaredok's basic teachings. The *shmuesn* are excursive rather than systematic, and since they were delivered to a group of long-standing disciples, many fundamentals are taken for granted. To complicate matters even further, they reflect the unique historical conditions of the time of their presentation; conditions which differed considerably from the ones which prevailed in the formative period of Novaredok Musar. It was 1919, not 1905. Tsarist Russia had been toppled; the Jewish labor movement was more a part of history than of any immediate reality; Hurwitz and his disciples were refugees in the Ukraine, where Jews were engaged in an elemental struggle for survival against famine, epidemics, and pogroms. The force which threatened to draw Hurwitz's students away from the yeshiva was not the idealistic radical movement, but rather the harsh pressures of the "material struggle" for food, clothing and shelter. Many sections of the *shmuesn* contended with this new source of distraction and defection.

For all of these reasons, *Madregat Ha-Adam* does not reflect, at least on the surface level, the full extent to which radicalism permeated Novaredok's religious ideology. To recognize the latter, one must pull back from the immediacies of the text and extrapolate the basic ideas and attitudes which underlie much of its contents. This is, admittedly, a hazardous enterprise. It is, however, possible to do so thanks to the works of Chaim Grade, which probe the Novaredok mentality and mode of thinking extensively and with great insight. The characterization of Novaredok's basic tenets which follows relies heavily upon my reading of Grade.

35. The earliest usage of the term and its derivative forms known to me is in the Vilna Gaon's *Commentary on Proverbs*; see *Sefer Mishle Im Bi'ur Ha-Gra* (Petah Tikva, 1980), index, "sheviras ha-midos". In Novaredok Musar, it was developed into the corner-stone of a full-fledged doctrine. One of R. Elijah's statements became Novaredok's veritable slogan: "The main point of man's existence is to fortify himself through *sheviras ha-midos*; if not, then why should he live?" (*Com-*

mentary on Proverbs, 4:13; Even Sholomo 1:2). Hurwitz cited it in *Madregat Ha-Adam* (pt. I, pp. 42, 125), and students repeated it incessantly in *birzhes*, *va'adim*, and ecstatic outbursts during their study of Musar.

36. See Hurwitz, *Madregat Ha-Adam*, pt. I, "Darke Ha-Teshuva", pp. 165-173, and Grade, *Tsemakh Atlas*, passim.

37. Hurwitz, *Madregat Ha-Adam*, Pt. I, "Darke Ha-Teshuva", pp. 151-2.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-72.

42. Silberg, *Ha-Aretz*, December 28, 1932, p. 2.

43. Ginzburg, "Di Muser Bavegung", *Pinkas Novaredok*, p. 38.

44. Silberg, *Ha-Aretz*, December 28, 1932, p. 2; on the renunciation of material goods see Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 236-238, 241-251; on the denigration of family ties, see R. Avrohom Joffin, *Ha-Musar Ve-ha-Da'at*, Vol. II (New York, 1969), p. 1, which relates how Hurwitz praised a student for refraining to go home when one of his parents died, despite the protestation of relatives; also Grade, *Musernikes*, p. 22, where a student vows never to go home for the holidays, and pp. 38-39. On Hurwitz's lengthy separation from his family see Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 206-207.

45. Silberg, *Ha-Aretz*, December 28, 1932, p. 2.

46. Menes, "Patterns of Jewish Scholarship in Eastern Europe," in L. Finkelstein (ed.), *The Jews*, p. 523.

47. Shtrigler, note 5 to "Di Novardoker", *Yiddisher Kemfer*, Rosh Hashanah 5745, p. 30.

48. Ginzburg, "Di Muser Bavegung", p. 38; Katz, *Tenuat* pp. 209-212.

49. Katz, *Tenuat* p. 210.

50. "Ma'amar Mezake Et Ha-Rabim"; it was later incorporated as the final section of *Madregat Ha-Adam*.

51. Hurwitz, *Madregat Ha-Adam*, pt. II, p. 235.

52. See Zevi Scharfstein, *Toldot Ha-Hinukh Be-Yisrael Ba-Dorot Ha-Ahronim* (Jerusalem, 1960), Vol. II, pp. 35-48.

53. Silberg, *Ha-Aretz*, December 28, 1932, p. 2; Katz, *Tenuat*, pp. 215-219.

54. Y. Slutsky, "Yahadut Rusia Bi-Shnat Ha-Mahapeha 1917", *He-Avar*, Vol. XV (1968), pp. 32-56.

55. Y. Shayn, "Yeshivat Mezritsh Ha-Merkazit Ba-Tkufah Ben Shte Milhamot Ha-Olam", *Kol Yisrael* (Jerusalem, April 26, 1946), p. 2; Katz, *Tenuat*, p. 228. This heroic period in the history of Novaredok, during which they were persecuted by the Communist authorities, has been described by Katz, Nekritz and others.

56. On this period, see D. Fishman "The Musar Movement in Inter-War Poland", in Reinhartz, Mendelsohn, Shmeruk (eds.), *Polish Jewry Between The Two World Wars* (forthcoming).

57. Shtrigler puts the following thoughts in the mind of a Novaredok Rosh Yeshiva: "Underneath all its wide *taleysim*, 'Agudas Yisroel' is also part of 'the world', which carries an unseemly odor to it. The religious party has immersed itself in the nonsense of politics. Reb Yankev heard that their people killed each other behind closed doors for a bit of honor . . . Rabbis, who should sit and learn with the community, aspired for the opportunity to sit in Warsaw [in the parliament, D.E.F.]—along with the *goyim* and atheists—and play political tricks, while

wearing silk yarmulkes on their heads . . . The whole thing had the odor of pride, boastfulness, with the Polish language in their mouths, and their drawing near to the Gentile rulers.

If you'd ask Reb Yankev, He'd say that this was Satan's latest disguise—in the frock of a rabbi. The whole Agudah is a new way to snatch young men away from the house of study. Until now, only the heretics published newspapers and literature, and every religious young man knew that they was as *treyf* as pork . . . But the Agudah came along and began to publish its own papers with their own nonsense . . . Religious young men devour them without fear, and Satan rejoices that his work has been done for him by others. A God-fearing young man begins to read these things and his desire is aroused. From there, it is easier to go over to reading newspapers and books *without* a rabbinic stamp of approval as well . . . It's not good at all . . . They [the Agudah] don't realize that they are opening up all the doors to the world."—Shtrigler, "Farshverer", *Yiddisher Kemfer* (May 29, 1964), pp. 5-6. The subject of relations between Novaredok and the Agudah requires further study.