The Yiddish-Language Communist Press

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The history of Yiddish socialist newspapers and other periodicals, and especially their cultural politics and linguistic peculiarities, represents a field of study that continues to attract scholars working in various countries.[1] The origins of the Yiddish socialist press can be traced back to the early 1880s. However, it emerged in its Bolshevik variant only after 1917, simply because the party of Lenin never bothered to produce Yiddish periodicals in its pre-October period.[2] Similarly, "Yiddish Communism" emerged as a distinct phenomenon only in early Soviet Russia, where it was controlled by Byzantine bureaucracies that were divided into institutions with "newspeak"-abbreviated names. The "Jewish sections" of the Communist party were the best known and most lasting of these institutions, and their abridged name in Russian, *Evsektsii* (or *Evsektsiia*, in the singular form), became a byword for Communist activities related to Jews.[3]

The very establishment of the *Evsektsiia* was something of an anomaly for a political movement whose leaders had always argued that the Jews did not constitute a nation. According to Stalin, the Bolsheviks' main authority on nationalities problems, the Jews could not claim national status because, inter alia, they lacked a common territory and a common language. After the October revolution, however, the Bolsheviks changed course, accepting as "a historical fact" that the Jews formed a constituency with its own specific linguistic, cultural, and social characteristics.[4] In the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP), 1921–1927, the party adopted nation-building as a key component in its policy of "socialist construction." In consequence, it designated appropriate regions for the Soviet Jewish nation-in-the-making in the European part of the country. This policy in its more extreme form even took on something of a "territorialist" dimension, most notably in the southeastern part of Ukraine and in the Crimea.[5] Ultimately, however, in the post-NEP years, the Soviet government selected for this purpose an underpopulated territory in the easternmost section of the country, which from the late 1920s began to be called Birobidzhan.

Assimilated Russian-speaking intellectuals and semi-intellectuals predominated among the Jewish Bolsheviks prior to 1917. They usually could not be involved in Yiddish propagandist activities (nor did they wish to be), and the Soviet Jewish institutions therefore had no choice but to recruit people of many different back-

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grounds, including recent political opponents. After all, in hunger-stricken Petrograd and Moscow, Yiddish literati could be "bought for a few pounds of millet and *vobla*."[6] Yiddishism, the elevation of Yiddish to the status of *the* (or at least *a*) Jewish national language, was the elixir that facilitated the apostates' transfer of allegiance from various other kinds of socialism to Communism. By adjusting their ideological outlook and absorbing the Communist idiom, they could preserve much of their pre-Communist (that is, Bundist, socialist Zionist, or Territorialist) Yiddishist outlook. Many of them jumped on the bandwagon of the Communist movement because of the hope that it held out for the development of Yiddish culture. Contemporaries even noted who among the new Bolshevik recruits was motivated by such Yiddishist considerations.[7]

The first Yiddish-language Communist newspaper, the daily *Di varhayt* (Truth), emerged in Petrograd on March 8, 1918 as the organ of the People's Commissariat for Jewish Affairs in Lenin's government, and was sporadically published until May 1918. Its name reflected that of the flagship Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda* (Truth) and at the same time mirrored the penchant of the Jewish socialists for German sound-alike names. (Hence, for instance, the name of the famous New York socialist daily, *Forverts* [Forward], which copied the German *Vorwärts*.) Following its premature closure due to both the lack of pro-Communist Yiddish journalists at the time and the Commissariat's move from Petrograd to the new Soviet capital, Moscow, the paper was resuscitated in August 1918 under the synonymous but more idiomatic name *Der emes*. The head of the Jewish Commissariat, a veteran Bolshevik named Shimon Dimanshtein, succeeded in recruiting a few non-Communist journalists, who (in all but name) edited *Der emes* until February 1919. At the close of 1918, however, Dimanshtein was transferred to Vilna, where he served as a commissar in the short-lived Lithuanian-Belarusian republic. As a result, *Der emes* found itself deprived of its ideological head and was once again phased out. Not until November 7, 1920 (the third anniversary of the revolution) was it relaunched; this time, it remained in print until 1938, becoming the trend-setting Yiddish Communist daily.[8]

During the Civil War (1918–1920), local Yiddish Communist publications would appear and soon disappear, depending on the fortunes of the Red Army and the availability of printing facilities, paper, and journalists. The editors did not show interest in finding original names for their ephemeral publications, calling them *Der komunist* (The Communist), *Der yidisher komunist* (The Jewish Communist), *Der komunistisher veg* (The Communist way), or *Di komunistishe shtim* (The Communist voice).[9] A spartan look prevailed: the Kharkov-based *Komunist* was printed on blue wrapping paper previously used for packing sugar; the Gomel *Komunistisher veg* made use of grey wrapping paper; and the Odessa *Komunist shtim* utilized old postal wrappers.

The story of *Der shtern* (The star), which would develop into one of the most significant Yiddish-language Soviet newspapers, is representative of the Yiddish Communist press in the early years. *Der shtern*'s first issue appeared in Smolensk on November 7, 1918. Zalman Khaykin, the paper's editor, publisher, writer, and proofreader, was killed fighting in Vilna a few months later. In December 1918, when Minsk came under Soviet control, *Der shtern* reemerged there, only to be

moved to Vilna in March 1919. Two months later, following Vilna's occupation by the Polish army, the newspaper returned to Minsk. Not long afterwards, however, that city was also seized by the Poles, and *Der shtern* was evacuated to Vitebsk, where it was published until the end of July 1920. At that time it again returned to Minsk, which was once more in the hands of the Red Army. In April 1921, *Der shtern* merged with another Yiddish paper in Minsk, *Der veker* (The tocsin), after the latter—hitherto a Bundist newspaper—had reinvented itself as the central organ of the Jewish Communist movement in Belarus. Finally, in 1924, *Der shtern* was renamed *Oktyabr* (October) and remained publishing under this name until June 1941.[10]

The most important Communist newspaper in Ukraine was also established on the basis of journals that were previously published by the various Jewish socialist parties. *Komunistishe fon* (The Communist banner) which appeared from 1919–1924, was a product of the merger of two Bolshevized Kiev papers—the Fareynikte's[11] *Naye tsayt* (New time) and the Bund's *Folks-tsaytung* (People's paper). Under its new name, it became the main organ of the Ukrainian Communist party's Jewish section.

Since the Yiddish-language press was a central link in the so-called *yidarbet* (*yidishe arbet*, or Jewish work/activities) of the Communist party, it is not surprising that the Moscow School of Yiddish Printers, opened in 1922, was one of the earliest educational institutions to be founded under the aegis of the Evsektsiia. The younger generation of Yiddish journalists was trained for the most part in Yiddish-speaking university departments, teacher training colleges, and party schools opened in Moscow, Minsk, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, Vitebsk, Gomel, and a few other towns. Yet Soviet Yiddish periodicals targeted primarily the less assimilated cohorts of the Jewish population that could not, or would not, consume propaganda in Russian, Ukrainian, or Belarusian. Significantly, *yidarbet* shunned non-Yiddish-speaking Jews. Moyshe Kamenshteyn, an apparatchik of the *yidarbet*, argued that if Soviet Jewish institutions were to organize any activities in Russian, Ukrainian, or other non-Jewish languages, they would essentially be disseminating a "culture national in form and in content alike"—in other words, a "nationalist culture."[12]

There were two schools of thought in the Soviet Yiddish press regarding the task of the *yidarbet*. The "internationalists," many of whom came from the Bund, regarded Yiddish primarily as a means for conducting Communist propaganda, and were therefore inclined to use the most understandable, colloquial forms of the language rather than to employ sophisticated neologisms. In contrast, the "nation-builders," led by former members of the other Jewish socialist parties (Territorialists, Folkists, and Zionists) believed that a more literary form of Yiddish should be promoted, setting a standard to which the readership would gradually rise. Moyshe Litvakov, editor of *Der emes* and formerly a Territorialist, was a central figure among this latter group. The editors of many other papers disagreed with Litvakov's purist approach, arguing that their readers simply could not understand the high-brow language of *Der emes*. In the end, however, the purist approach (albeit falling somewhat short of Litvakov's degree of stringency) prevailed.

Apart from introducing numerous new coinages, the attempts to improve Yiddish in the Soviet spirit included respelling words of Hebrew origin and abolishing

word-final allographs.[13] But apart from radical innovations in spelling, Yiddish Communist journalism also came to be marked by extreme political correctness, as was de rigueur for Soviet journalism in general. This was especially the case once the "Great Break" (*velikii perelom*)—superaccelerated industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture—had been initiated in 1928. Thus, an article called "On a Slippery Road," published in 1930 in the Kharkov-based daily *Der shtern*, criticized the provincial newspaper *Der odeser arbeter* (The Odessa worker) for publishing 3,214 lines about the guest performances of the Moscow Jewish State Theatre, whereas *only* 2,967 lines had been allotted to materials concerning the congresses of the Communist parties of Ukraine and the Soviet Union.[14] The result of such political correctness was dull and derivative writing that drove away many readers. Yet the number of Yiddish periodicals, all of them state-sponsored, was considerable. Seventeen titles with a total circulation of almost 150,000 represented only the most important Soviet Yiddish newspapers published, for example, in 1931.

Various institutions, including factories and collective farms with large numbers of Yiddish-speaking workers, also published Yiddish newspapers. For instance, the factory newspaper *Shtolene nodl* (Steel needle) of the Tiniakov clothing factory in Kharkov had a readership of about 1,500. Smaller organizations, such as schools, produced "wall newspapers" that were usually single-copy, handwritten publications; in 1927, there were 319 Yiddish wall newspapers in Ukraine alone.[15]

In the 1920s, Kharkov, then the capital of Ukraine, became the hub of the Soviet Yiddish press. Thus, for example, in November 1923, the central Yiddish newspaper of the Ukrainian Komsomol, *Der yunger arbeter* (The young worker), was launched there (in 1924, its name was changed to *Yunge gvardye* [Young guard], presumably because the previous name was reserved for a Minsk-based sister publication). In that same year, Kharkov also became the home of the daily newspaper published by the Jewish Communists of Ukraine; named *Der shtern*, it replaced the *Kommunistishe fon*, which, as noted, had been published in Kiev. Over the next few years, several other Yiddish newspapers came out in Kharkov: *Der yidisher poyer* (The Jewish peasant), in 1926; *Der kustar* (The artisan), in 1927; the children's paper *Zay greyt* (Be ready), in 1928; and the pedagogical monthly *Ratnbildung* (Soviet education) in that same year. By 1930, Kharkov had nine Yiddish periodicals and two literary journals, *Di royte velt* (The red world) and *Prolit* (Pro[letarian] lit[erature]).[16]

All Yiddish newspapers took part in the "worker-correspondent" movement, which, as initiated by the Communist party, was aimed at drawing newspapers closer to their readership. The *Komunistishe fon* organized the first group of such correspondents writing in Yiddish in 1922. This campaign (in which the Yiddish component was actually very minor) would eventually recruit millions of people and would also serve as a model for the Communist press outside the Soviet Union. In 1934, during the Seventeenth Communist Party Congress, Stalin mentioned the three million worker and peasant correspondents as comprising the third most important leadership sector in the Soviet Union (following the party and Komsomol memberships).[17] Among the huge numbers thus brought into the literary profession, there were, of course, many of little talent. Litvakov was one of the first who

was alarmed by this phenomenon. He regarded the way in which the worker-correspondent movement had developed as a perversion of the original idea: instead of trained reporters, it tended to produce graphomaniac literary hopefuls. And, indeed, the promotion of vigilante third-raters, whose careers had originated in the worker-correspondent movement, increasingly became part and parcel of Soviet journalistic and literary life.[18]

Some of the Soviet Yiddish periodicals were discontinued in the late 1930s. *Der emes*, as noted, was closed in 1938; its editor, Litvakov, as well as several other Yiddish journalists stationed in Moscow and in the provinces, were then executed or, in some cases, banished to the gulag. Yet, on the whole, the Soviet Yiddish press survived until the German invasion of June 1941. Moreover, on the eve of the war, a few new periodicals were launched on the territories occupied by the Red Army following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939: in Vilnius, Kaunas, Riga, Bialystok, and Lviv. However, during and after the war, *Eynikeyt* (Unity, 1942–1948) remained the only significant Yiddish newspaper published in the Soviet Union. As the organ of the Jewish Antifascist Committee, its main function as envisaged by the authorities was to publish articles that could be used, or even reproduced, by the foreign press—in particular, by the Jewish Communist journals.

Yiddish Communist Periodicals and the Comintern

In the 1920s and 1930s, millions of people, including a considerable number of Jews outside Russia, revered Moscow as the future capital of a just and democratic civilization. Yiddish Communism formed a distinct subculture in the international Communist movement, being overseen, in one way or another, by the apparatus of the Comintern, the Communist International. However, Yiddish-speaking Communists abroad did not constitute a separate constituent body, but were rather scattered as members of various national parties, most notably those in the United States, Canada, Argentina, France, Poland, Palestine, Belgium, Austria, Uruguay, and Romania. Yet regardless of their country of domicile, the Communists of East European Jewish vintage represented a relatively homogeneous group of people who were devoted to the Soviet Union—that faraway proletarian fatherland, which also held nostalgic significance as the *alte heym* (old home). Through the blur of distance, time, and utopian expectations, the Soviet Union became a dreamland of freedom and equality. Many Jewish Communists went so far as to regard themselves as "Soviet foreigners," to borrow a term provided by Hirsh Bloshtein, an Argentinian and later Soviet Yiddish poet.[19]

Ironically, although Yiddishism had been condemned by the Bolsheviks as a mainstay of Jewish nationalism, it was in the Soviet Union of the 1920s and 1930s that many a Yiddishist dream seemed to be coming true, particularly when the Soviet government initiated Jewish territorial projects. Despite its less than modest achievements, Birobidzhan became the alluring symbol, during the 1930s, of a successful solution to the Jewish question. In various countries—in addition to those previously mentioned, one can add Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Latvia, Lithuania, South Africa, and Sweden—the Com-

munists created organizations that were meant to supply a Soviet answer to the Zionist colonization of Palestine.[20] In some instances, such bodies even had the same name as the Soviet mother organization, the Association for the Settlement of Jewish Toilers on the Land (*Gezerd,* in its Yiddish abbreviation).[21] Thus, the Gezerd in South Africa, founded by a group of pro-Soviet Yiddishists, published the monthly journal *Gezerdvort* (The word of the Gezerd), appealing to its readers "to shake off the harmful and illusory dream of establishing a 'National Home' in Palestine through an alliance with British imperialism."[22] Birobidzhan, together with other aspects of Soviet Jewish life, was among the central topics discussed in the Communist Jewish press.

In contrast to the predominantly anti-Soviet stance of the Russian émigré intelligentsia, pro-Soviet Yiddish writers and journalists represented a sizable part of the international world of Yiddish letters, and Communist Yiddish periodicals became centers of gravitation for pro-Soviet intellectuals. Argentina was a prime example. In 1919, a group of left-wing Jewish Argentinians had accepted the Comintern program, and on November 7, 1923—the sixth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution—the Jewish Communists launched their own newspaper, *Der royter shtern* (The red star). Another Yiddish-language Communist journal in Argentina, *Der yidisher poyer,* focused specifically on Jewish agricultural projects in the Soviet Union.[23] Similar trends could be observed in other Latin American countries. Thus, for example, in Uruguay, the newspaper *Undzer fraynd* (Our friend) was provided with support by the Soviet embassy and edited by Ber Halpern, later a Soviet writer.[24]

Poland, for its part, attracted many writers and journalists who were previously active in revolutionary Russia. Particularly conspicuous was the poet Perets Markish, who lived in Poland in the first half of the 1920s and embodied the iconoclasm of Russia's Jewish literary world. Significantly, he did not leave Russia as a counterrevolutionary, but merely argued that the revolution had liberated only select strata within Soviet society. As a contributor to *Albatros*, the Warsaw "journal for new poetic and artistic expression," Markish adhered to the group's manifesto, which stated that its sponsors had departed the land of the revolution temporarily, in expectation of the day when the entire population would enjoy freedom.[25] In the meantime, Markish exerted a clear influence on the pro-Soviet writers who later formed the Linke shrayber-grupe (The Left writers' group) and published the *Literarishe tribune* (The literary tribune) from 1931 to 1935. (Markish himself chose to return to the Soviet Union in 1926.)

With many Communist parties outlawed in interwar East-Central Europe, it was not unusual to find Yiddish periodicals being published illegally. In Lithuania, the underground monthly *Undzer emes* (Our truth) had a circulation of 3,000. The Communists of Western Belarus (that is, in Poland) printed 2,000 copies of *Yunger komunist* (Young Communist) and a few thousand copies of *Bolshevik.* Illegal small-circulation papers in Yiddish were likewise published by the young Communists in Latvia.[26]

In 1934, a legally published pro-Soviet newspaper, *Fraynd*, began to appear in Warsaw. Published by Boris Kletzkin, one of the best-known and most respected members of the Yiddish publishing world, *Fraynd* was actually sponsored by the

underground Polish Communist party. Dovid Sfard served as the party's representative on the paper, empowered to prescribe what *Frayd* could and could not publish. Alter Katsizne served as editor, and among the contributors were notable writers such as Kadie Molodowsky and Dovid Mitsmakher. In addition, Khaim Grade and Elkhonen Vogler, who belonged to the literary group Yung Vilne (Young Vilna)—which included both Communists and fellow travelers among its members—published some of their first works in *Fraynd*. The newspaper also began to put together a network of worker-correspondents. After a mere 11 months of existence, however, *Fraynd* was banned, the police having uncovered its Communist links.[27] The contemporary Israeli Yiddish writer Musia Landau recalls how her father, a typesetter at Kletzkin's Vilna publishing house, was involved in the production of a similar Communist-sponsored newspaper, *Zibn teg* (Seven days), in the spring of 1936.[28]

The strongest and most numerous circle of pro-Soviet Yiddish writers emerged in the United States. At the Comintern headquarters in Moscow, it was understood that the American Jewish Left could provide fertile soil for pro-Communist recruitment. In consequence, a number of agents, selected from among the revolutionaries who had returned to Russia after the February revolution of 1917, were sent back to the United States to work in this field. A conspicuous example was the former Bundist Shakhne Epstein, who had served briefly as the editor of *Der emes* in Moscow when it was relaunched in 1920. In the summer of 1921, he arrived in New York to set up *Der emes*, the precursor of the longest-running Yiddish Communist newspaper, *Frayheyt* (later *Morgn-frayheyt*), founded in April 1922.[29] Epstein edited *Frayheyt* together with Moyshe Olgin, who turned from Bundism to Communism in the wake of his journey to Moscow in 1920.[30] Both men were established Marxist literary critics, and they envisaged their paper as a forum for the most trenchant Yiddish writing of their time, thereby continuing the tradition of earlier Jewish socialist organs with strong belletristic sections. With his doctorate in Russian literature from Columbia University, Olgin was a rare phenomenon within the Yiddish critical guild, dominated as it was by autodidacts.

Morris Winchevsky, the legendary Yiddish journalist and sweatshop poet, was also among the founders of *Frayheyt*. As early as 1884, he had edited in London *Der poylisher yidl* (The humble Polish Jew), arguably the first socialist journal in Yiddish. His contribution to the international (pro-Communist) labor movement won him a Soviet state pension and a red carpet reception during his visit to the Soviet Union in May 1925. In the left-wing mythology, he was regarded as the "grandfather" of Yiddish worker poetry, his reputation parallel to that of Mendele Moykher Sforim in modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature.[31]

Frayheyt also recruited such popular writers as Avrom Reisen, H. Leivick, Isaac Raboy, Lamed Shapiro, Menakhem Boreisha, Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, Moyshe Nadir, and Dovid Bergelson. Nadir later recollected how he and Halpern moved toward Communism:

> "Look," we tried to convince each other, "a new newspaper, a poor one, with no money. It will perhaps attract the most original writers. In that case," we decided, "it is our duty to join the paper."
>
> M.-L. Halpern hesitated a while. I immediately became a *Frayheyt* staff member.[32]

Some of "the most original writers" did indeed join the *Frayheyt*, but, for the most part, only a few years later. Avrom Reisen, for instance, did not become a *Frayheyt* writer until 1926, following the celebration of his 50th birthday by the paper and the successful negotiation of several financial issues.[33]

With such a galaxy of literary lions, the *Frayheyt* editors did not pay much attention to young aspirants, mainly recent immigrants, who combined toil in the sweatshops with literary efforts. Desperate to find an outlet for their writings, the latter eventually founded their own publication, called *Yung kuznye* (The young smithy), which was initiated by Alexander Pomerantz, Shloyme Davidman, and Khaim Pet. The first number of this "literary almanac" (*literarishe zamlbukh*) was published in August 1924, and its 1,500 copies were almost immediately sold out. Four issues followed soon thereafter and established *Yung kuznye* as the first notable Communist literary periodical in the world.

From the third issue, the editors naturalized the spelling used in the journal, applying the same phonetic and morphological rules to all words, most notably those of Hebrew origin. This spelling had earlier been introduced both by a group of American avant-garde poets known as the Introspectivists and by Soviet Yiddish reformers. While the Introspectivists' respelling was essentially a poetic *jeu d'esprit*, the Soviet reform pursued ideological and practical ends. The "young smiths" were apparently likewise motivated by ideological considerations, similar to those summarized by Yekhiel Shraibman, a Romanian-based left-wing writer who made his debut in the 1930s in the New York journal *Signal*, a successor to *Yung kuznye*:

> the word *khaver* [comrade/friend] written with a "khof," an "alef" and a doubled "vov" [i.e. phonetically] set my fancy in flight. . . . From this erroneous unusual *khaver* came the breath of unlikeness and renewal. . . . In a sense, this new *khaver* epitomized both justice and romantic visions.[34]

Naturalized spelling was never implemented in the large-circulation *Frayheyt* nor in the books published under its imprint. Rather, it would remain the trademark of proletarian publications aimed at a specific, well-defined audience—notably the very low-budget publications put out by proletarian youth, who felt that they could not jostle their way in among the established writers.

At the end of 1926, a number of young Yiddish writers began to publish a new journal, *Yugnt* (Youth). At about this time, the American Communist party reformed its organizational structure in accordance with new Comintern directives: all of the ethnic federations (English, Jewish, Russian, German, Finnish, and others), which had hitherto enjoyed a dominant position within the party, were replaced by factory and district cells. Each of these numbered 15 to 20 party members of various nationalities, and they conducted their activities in English. This move, billed as the "Bolshevization of the party," clearly threatened to overthrow many of the Communist-affiliated cultural programs. A way out was found in "workers clubs"—Communist front organizations—which included a number of Yiddish-speaking organizations. *Yugnt* represented an attempt to recruit readers from among the workers clubs. However, after publishing only four issues, the journal was phased out because of insoluble financial problems. In the meantime, Pomerantz and his fellow

writers were given an assignment by the party to organize a U.S.-based worker-correspondent movement; as Pomerantz later had to admit, he and his colleagues failed signally to replicate the success achieved by the Soviet precedent.[35]

The climate in Yiddish literature had ominously changed by the late 1920s, the years of the "Great Break." In its wake, Soviet Jewish functionaries significantly raised the barriers between the Soviet and non-Communist Western literary milieus. Relations with the more moderate wing of the Jewish Left in the West were rendered even more confrontational following the Arab riots in Palestine in the summer of 1929, when the Soviet Union sided with the Arabs and blamed the Zionists—a political stance that led a number of writers, including Avrom Reisen and H. Leivik, to cut their ties with the *Frayheyt*.

In fact, the party's relations with its fellow travelers had begun to deteriorate from the very start of 1929, when Olgin, carrying out an order from the party, called a meeting of the fully committed Communist writers and journalists of the *Frayheyt* without inviting the fellow travelers. (Ironically, in his pre-First World War publications, Olgin—himself a minor prose writer—had categorically rejected the notion of a narrowly proletarian literature containing "only battle songs, military marches, and the popularization of economic and social issues."[36] By the mid-1920s, however, he had converted himself into an advocate of proletarian literature and even published his own proletarian novel.[37]) At the meeting, Olgin argued that the Communist paper could no longer rely on petty-bourgeois writers such as Reisen but rather needed contributors who would write "with swords in their hands." Accordingly, participants were instructed to form the Frayheyt Writers Association, which in September 1929 became known as Proletpen, in contradistinction to the Yiddish PEN club, which advocated nonpartisanship in Yiddish literature.[38] Proletpen went on to become the largest Yiddish Communist writers' organization outside the Soviet Union. Its effective center was in Moscow, at the headquarters of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (IURW), the literary arm of the Comintern.[39]

On September 14, 1929, Moyshe Nadir published an open letter to the "runaways"—those, like Reisen and Leivik, who had left the *Frayheyt*—in which he took up the cudgels against them, announcing that he himself intended to become a card-carrying member of the party. Although some of those castigated by Nadir eventually returned to the paper, the Communist Yiddish literary world in America was generally populated, from 1929 on, by its own cohort of writers who were entirely cut off from non-Communist literary circles. The stratum of Jewry associated with the movement was rather narrow, numbering about 40,000 in 1934, with only a few thousand card-carrying Communists among them. The others were "sympathizers," members of front organizations such as the International Workers Order or the Workers Musical Alliance. These sympathizers generously supported the *Frayheyt*; in 1934, for instance, they collected some $60,000 for the paper. However, party leaders were worried that many workers who donated money did not actually read the *Frayheyt*.[40]

The mission of the Communist writers and journalists was declared to be the production of high-quality reading material. In April 1934, Béla Kun, a Comintern leader, instructed Communist editors to publish "full newspapers" that would satisfy

all of their readers' interests, diverting them from any temptation to read the bourgeois press.[41] For their part, members of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers were required to support all the policies and programs of the Soviet regime.[42] In 1935, during the (pro-Soviet) American Writers' Congress, Nadir spoke as the representative of Yiddish writers, arguing that American proletarian writers "love[d] America as one of the most beautiful flowers in the bouquet of the world Soviets of tomorrow."[43] Four years later, after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Nadir, together with a few other writers, left the *Frayheyt* in protest. At that point, Leivick, too, broke off relations with the Communist movement, with which he had again chosen to collaborate in the framework of the World Alliance of Jewish Culture (a product of the World Yiddish Cultural Congress held in Paris in September 1937).[44] However, the Comintern was powerful enough to force its more loyal Jewish groups to praise the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

Although the Kremlin pressure demoralized some Jewish Communists to the extent that they left the party, the vast majority remained, and new members continued to join them. During the Spanish Civil War, about 15 percent of the soldiers in the International Brigades were Jewish, many of them Communists. In December 1937, a Jewish company named "Botwin" after the young Polish Jewish Communist Naftali Botwin, executed in Poland in 1925, was formed within the 13th Polish Dombrowski Brigade. The company produced a few issues of a Yiddish *front-tsaytung* (front-line newspaper), *Botvin*.[45]

The Progressive Camp

Despite losing millions of speakers in the Holocaust, Yiddish continued to be a living language in all Ashkenazic Jewish communities even after the Second World War. In the mid-1950s, almost a quarter of all Jewish periodicals published outside Israel were in Yiddish, including all of the 12 Jewish dailies, whereas all the efforts to publish a Jewish daily in English (in London), in Spanish (in Buenos Aires) or German (in Vienna) had ended in failure.[46] The sacrificial role of the Red Army (and the Soviet Union as a whole) during the course of the Nazi invasion had served to enhance the Communist movement's image in the postwar world generally, and in several Western countries—in particular, the United States, Canada, France, Argentina, and Israel. Yiddish Communist periodicals still boasted a readership of many thousands. On the one hand, these journals cultivated in their readers an aversion to the capitalist system; on the other, they promoted an outlook that combined pro-Sovietism with adherence to secular Yiddish culture.

The largest among the Communist dailies remained the New York *Morgn-frayheyt* (Morning freedom); the *Frayheyt* had assumed this double-barreled name in June 1927, when it began to appear in the morning rather than in the afternoon. In 1947, the circulation of *Morgn-frayheyt* was 21,000, roughly the same as the circulation of the American Communist English-language daily, *Daily Worker*.[47] (The most popular Yiddish daily in the United States was, of course, the *Forverts*, but this paper was politically objectionable in the eyes of *Frayheyt* readers. Not only did the *Forverts* symbolize an attenuated, "reformist" socialism, but it also

held to a cultural program of Americanization and popular mass culture that the *Frayheyt* rejected.) Other Communist Yiddish dailies with significant readerships included the *Naye prese* (New press), in Paris; *Kanader vokhnblat* (Canadian weekly), in Toronto; and *Undzer lebn* (Our life), in Buenos Aires. In Tel Aviv, the Israeli Communists published a weekly called *Fray yisroel* (Free Israel). Elsewhere, a few publications, such as the Johannesburg journal *Dorem afrike* (South Africa), which came out during the years 1947–1989, were strongly influenced by Communist sympathizers, some of whom—ironically—were wealthy businessmen.[48]

The Yiddish press in the Soviet bloc, apart from Poland, entered a near-comatose state in the wake of the anti-Jewish policies initiated by Stalin in the period 1948–1953. In Warsaw, though, the *Folks-shtime* (People's voice), launched in 1945, was published four times a week, while the monthly journal *Yidishe shriftn* (Jewish writings), published there between 1946 and 1968, became a forum for literary publications. In marked contrast, only one Yiddish periodical remained in the Soviet Union in the wake of the anti-Jewish policies that had swept away virtually all the remaining Jewish cultural institutions: the *Birobidzhaner shtern* (Birobidzhan star), a newspaper published for local distribution only.

The Jews of Romania found themselves deprived of any official Jewish organ when the three Jewish periodicals (in Yiddish, Romanian, and Hungarian, respectively) were discontinued in 1953. Three years later, however, a trilingual journal—in Romanian, Yiddish, and Hebrew—called *Revista Cultului Mozaic din R. P. R.* (Journal of the Mosaic religion in the Romanian People's Republic), began to appear in Bucharest as a monthly and, later, as a biweekly. Interestingly, while the earlier journal in Yiddish, the *IKUF-Bleter* (1946–1953) had been a secular, Stalinist periodical, employing a Soviet-style orthography, the new journal's Yiddish section reverted to traditional spelling. The journal was edited by Romania's controversial chief rabbi, Moses Rosen, who somehow succeeded in paying dues to both God and Caesar.[49]

Despite such highly disturbing signs as the disappearance both of the Moscow Yiddish newspaper *Eynikeyt* and of the organization that published it, the Jewish Antifascist Committee, Communists in the West showed a remarkable capacity for ignoring the various signs indicating anti-Jewish policies in the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the Soviet propaganda machine kept feeding the West with news of Jewish life in the country, denying all rumors concerning the arrests of Yiddish writers and activists. The propagandist smokescreen was finally dispersed in April 1956, when the Warsaw *Folks-shtime* published a sensational article titled "Our Pain and Our Consolation," written by its editor, Hersh Smolyar. This article confirmed the information, leaked earlier to the *Forverts*, about the execution of a group of prominent Soviet Yiddish writers and other Jewish public figures in August 1952.[50]

The news that Stalin's secret police had imprisoned and later executed such writers as Dovid Bergelson, Perets Markish, and Itsik Fefer, who were very well known outside the Soviet Union, dealt a heavy blow to the Yiddish Communist circles abroad, especially as Nikita Krushchev's revelations about the Stalinist regime had already provoked a general crisis in the international Communist movement. Only a minority of Jewish Communists succeeded in clinging to their faith,

whereas many thousands left the movement. Those who remained tended to become more open-minded in their assessment of Soviet policy, especially as the realities of life in the U.S.S.R. were increasingly revealed as being at odds with their personal Communist beliefs.

Ideologically they often evolved from a Communism subordinated to the Kremlin to a kind of "back-to-basics" Marxism-Leninism, eventually creating a peculiar hybrid of Left *yidishkeyt* and Euro-Communism.[51] Some of them were ultimately forced to leave their respective parties, which in many cases continued to follow the Kremlin's lead. For instance, Paul (Peysekh) Novick, the editor of the *Morgn-frayheyt,* was expelled in 1972, charged with "opportunistic capitulation to the pressures of Jewish nationalism and Zionism,"[52] whereas Joshua Gershman, who edited the *Kanader vokhnblat*, was given the opportunity to resign rather than be expelled.[53]

The circles of Novick, Gershman, and other such drop-outs from the Communist party tended to define themselves as constituting part of the "progressive movement." The idea of a "progressive" secular Yiddish culture was originally formulated by Moyshe Olgin in 1937, during the World Yiddish Cultural Congress in Paris.[54] A decade later, in November 1947, the American Yiddish Cultural Conference, paraphrasing Olgin's definition, declared that such a culture consisted of "all those aspects of the collective Jewish life that express the positive, forward-looking aspirations of the Jewish people," and that it should serve the people "in the struggle to achieve for itself the full rights and opportunities that should be accorded all Americans." The conference, with its openly pro-Soviet orientation, attracted 1,200 delegates, representing numerous front organizations. Among those in the conference's organizing committee were the artist Marc Chagall and the best-selling Yiddish novelist Sholem Asch.[55] While Chagall was a veteran of the Left, Asch's collaboration with Communists was probably to be seen as more of a marriage of convenience: in 1943, *Morgn-frayheyt* had serialized his controversial novel *The Nazarene*, which came out in book form later that year under the imprint of the Communist daily.[56]

The rather loose notion of progressive culture became the main tenet of the Yiddish ex-Communist (and heterodox Communist) movement. The progressives asserted their autonomy from the Communist parties and protected it jealously. It is illuminating, for instance, that Khaim Suler, who wrote for the *Morgn-frayheyt*, chose to protest in 1970 against a Bundist publication that had written in contemporary terms about Communist Jewish sections and their journals. According to Suler, there were no longer any Jewish Communist "sections."[57] In reality, though, some of the progressives did remain card-carrying members of the party, and both the party and the progressive leaderships accepted such a dual loyalty. Following the line of "critical Sovietism," the progressives basically supported the Soviet Union, the great country of Lenin, where Jews enjoyed unique opportunities for social and cultural advancement. Thus, Paul Novick rejected "the wrong, harmful slogan of 'Soviet anti-semitism' [as] a slogan of reaction." Although he was ready to admit some "manifestations of anti-Semitism" in the Soviet Union, he ascribed them, at least partly, to the legacy of the war, when the hostility toward Jews had been inflamed by the racial theories of Nazi Germany.[58] Regarding the Soviet

Union, Novick and other progressives reserved their criticism for Stalinism (or anything they regarded as Stalinism) and other "deviations from Leninism."

In the years following 1956, the Jewish Communists and progressives in the West brought constant pressure to bear on the Soviet leadership, insisting that the ban on Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union be lifted. Representatives of several Western Communist parties, then visiting Moscow, tried to convince the Soviet authorities that Yiddish cultural and educational activities should be revived on a significant scale, at least comparable to the level maintained in postwar Poland. For Jewish Communists, Poland came to be seen as a praiseworthy model (*nusekh Poyln*) of self-governing socialist Jewish life, with its Yiddish cultural, educational, publishing, and even economic institutions (specifically, co-operatives). Optimists saw all this as a framework conducive to Jewish national survival. Khrushchev and his fellow leaders, however, remained suspicious of all forms of nonterritorial Jewish activity, insisting that only in Birobidzhan could the Jewish population be regarded as a national community within the Soviet Union. Elsewhere in the country, he argued, Jews should be treated "like all other Soviet citizens." Members of the state and party apparatus during both the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras dogmatically followed this Stalinist territorial principle, despite the fact that the Birobidzhan Jews represented less than 1 percent of all Soviet Jews.[59]

Ironically, in 1973, Brezhnev and other members of the Politburo were apparently surprised to learn that a Yiddish journal, edited by a certain Aron Vergelis, actually existed in Moscow. This "illogical" publication, *Sovetish heymland* (Soviet homeland), had been established as an organ of the Soviet Writers' Union in August 1961 in order to fulfill two main functions: first, to serve as a sop to those vociferous foreign activists, most notably Jewish Communists and fellow travelers, who were lobbying for a Jewish cultural revival in post-Stalinist Russia; and second, to disseminate Soviet propaganda, not only at home but, more particularly, among Yiddish-speaking left-wingers abroad. Thus, the journal immediately occupied the hitherto neglected Soviet Yiddish sector of the Cold War front, and its editor soon became a seasoned "cold warrior."[60]

The Yiddish Cold War

Although Soviet leaders later seemed to have forgotten about it, the initial appearance of *Sovetish heymland* was reported around the world. On August 26, 1961, the *New York Times* remarked that "the Yiddish language [has] won a round in the struggle with the Kremlin." Such coverage for the launch of a Yiddish periodical was in all probability without precedent. Vergelis, for his part, became more widely known at the end of 1963, when he visited the United States as a member of a delegation of Soviet intellectuals. The British historian Max Beloff (prompted, it can be surmised, by Israeli officials) "welcomed" Vergelis to the West with a letter in the London *Jewish Chronicle* warning American Jews that Vergelis' name was "associated in a circumstantial way with the purge of the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia between 1948 and 1953" and that "Vergelis himself opposed the revival of Jewish literature after the end of the purge."[61] Furthermore, according to Israeli Communist

sources, a special representative of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs went to the United States in order to organize a boycott against Vergelis.[62]

In 1964, Vergelis and *Sovetish heymland* again became newsworthy, this time in association with Bertrand Russell, whose letter to Vergelis voiced his concern about the Jews' "right to a full cultural life in the Soviet Union." In his reply, Vergelis pounced on the sad state of Yiddish culture in England and argued that the eminent philosopher was being exploited by enemies of the Soviet Union.[63] That Russell was advised to address his letter to Vergelis demonstrates that the Moscow editor was regarded abroad as an influential personality. In the West there was a tradition of singling out a Yiddish editor who ostensibly voiced the general line of the Soviet leadership toward Jews and Jewish culture. In the 1920s and 1930s, the role of the panjandrum of the Soviet cultural world was ascribed to Moyshe Litvakov, editor of the Moscow Yiddish daily *Der emes*. Similarly, during the Brezhnev period, Vergelis was often mistaken for a powerful Jewish commissar who hobnobbed with high-ranking Soviet functionaries. No doubt, Vergelis himself skillfully overemphasized his importance, especially during his relatively frequent foreign tours.

The Six-Day War was followed by the intensification of Jewish consciousness and support for Israel among a large number of Soviet Jews. Opposition to Jewish emigration from the U.S.S.R. thus became a significant issue for the Yiddish journal in Moscow, as for the "agitprop" sectors of the Soviet regime generally. During the years 1967–1969, *Sovetish heymland* did not involve itself in any sharp political confrontations. Its declaration concerning the Six-Day War was milder than that published in the Warsaw *Folks-shtime,* whose editors tried to protect themselves from censure by the state apparatus.[64]

In the late 1960s, the Yiddish press in the West, including its "progressive" wing, was focused on the events in Poland where, in the wake of the Six-Day War, the government unleashed an anti-Jewish campaign, forcing the vast majority of the remaining Jews to leave the country. The Polish Communists' antisemitism was a huge disappointment for the Jewish Communist and progressive circles. Characteristically, the Parisian *Naye prese* included in its 1970 manifesto a section "Against the Anti-Jewish Course in Poland," counterbalancing it with another section titled "Against the Anti-Soviet and Anti-Communist Hysteria."[65]

Toward the end of 1970, the death sentence initially imposed on a number of Jews who tried to hijack a Soviet plane in Leningrad in order to reach Israel aroused widespread support for the Soviet Jews. The reaction of the Soviet propaganda machine and its Yiddish auxiliary, *Sovetish heymland*, was not long in coming. On March 4, 1970, Vergelis took part in a highly publicized press conference concerning "problems associated with the situation in the Middle East." The September issue of *Sovetish heymland* featured a statement authored by 59 Soviet Yiddish writers who sharply criticized Israel, appealing to their colleagues around the world to help establish peace between the Arab countries and the Jewish state. The progressive press abroad tended to share Vergelis' (that is, the Soviet) position, "unmasking the dangerous anti-Soviet hysteria" around the Leningrad trial.[66] To Novick, Soviet Jewish emigration was a devastating disappointment, "a tragic development for socialism." He naively predicted that many of the emigrants would soon flee Israel, "where the worker face[d] a difficult struggle," and return to the

Soviet Union.[67] At the same time, he from time to time criticized Soviet policy toward Yiddish culture.

In 1971, the first split emerged between the progressives and *Sovetish heymland* when Vergelis criticized *Morgn-frayheyt* for its policy of conciliation with non-Communist Yiddish journalists.[68] Thereafter, year after year, the schism between progressivism and Soviet Communism widened. For Vergelis, the "progressives" were now renegades, the detritus of the Communist movement, and he never reached a reconciliation with the recalcitrant *Morgn-frayheyt* editors (the paper existed until September 1988). However, his relations with the circles of the *Naye prese, Undzer lebn,* and the Israeli Communist *Der veg* were much warmer. The Israeli journal was the only foreign Yiddish periodical distributed in the Soviet Union.

At the same time, Vergelis kept a jealous eye on the Soviet Jewish writers who published (or sought to publish) their output in foreign periodicals. He had a strong dislike for the Warsaw *Folks-shtime*, which had a considerable number of Soviet readers who had managed to establish direct contact with its editorial staff, for example, by having Polish friends pay for their subscriptions. This Communist publication had a nonconformist reputation among Soviet Jews. A former Soviet Yiddish poet recalled that being published in the Paris-based *Naye prese* represented something of a "purification" from the "sin" of having published a piece in the *Morgn-frayheyt* or the *Folks-shtime*.[69] After all, the *Naye prese* remained in the orbit of the French Communist movement; those who had left the movement in France subscribed to other publications.[70]

In February 1971, the first international conference in defense of Soviet Jews was held in Brussels. The conference was a reaction to Soviet restrictions and persecutions, most notably the Leningrad trial. Yiddishist groups played a minor role in this essentially Zionist forum, with the Bundists, for instance, criticizing the conference for its slogan of "Let my people go!" They argued that the Zionist campaign pursued evacuation rather than emigration, ignoring the right of Soviet Jews to go wherever they wanted (rather than to Israel alone) and rejecting any attempt to restore organized Jewish life in the Soviet Union.[71]

Vergelis was dispatched to Brussels to take part in a counter-propaganda press conference; simultaneously, the conference received a telegram of greeting from a number of "refuseniks" in the Soviet Union, including the Yiddish poet Yosef Kerler. In this way, Vergelis and Kerler became symbolic figures on the Yiddish front of the Cold War. Kerler, who was soon allowed to emigrate to Israel, was treated as a Jewish national hero, whereas Vergelis was vilified in the Western media. In 1971, the journal *Midstream* published a vitriolic article alleging that Vergelis had long served as an agent of the Soviet secret police.[72]

One of the charges raised against Vergelis was the fact that he continued to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of the Jewish writers put to death on Stalin's orders. The "progressive" camp, too, could never forget the pain of August 1952. Among the executed writers were the former American Communists Leon Talmi, Ilya Vatenberg, and Chayka Vatenberg-Ostrovskaya. Novick knew that he himself was implicated in their interrogations as an alleged American spy and Jewish nationalist.[73]

The progressives were angry that *Sovetish heymland* suppressed information about these events, completely ignoring the fact that Vergelis could not even think about mentioning the executions of August 12, 1952 until the Soviet authorities officially admitted that they had taken place; and no such admission was made until 1988. Interestingly, the editor of the Tel Aviv mainstream Yiddish daily *Letste nayes* (Latest news), Mordechai Tsanin, took a sober view of Vergelis' role, arguing that no Soviet editor could have acted differently and that it was important to support *Sovetish heymland*, "the most debate-provoking literary journal in the history of Yiddish literature."[74]

The importance of the Yiddish press—and of the Yiddish milieu generally—for the Cold War gradually became appreciated in Israel, where Yiddish had long been tolerated only as an atavistic remnant of diaspora life. In the early 1970s, an experienced Labor Zionist functionary, Yitzhak Korn, emerged as an organizer of Yiddish activities. On April 12, 1972, the 20th anniversary of the day on which the leadership of the Jewish Antifascist Committee had been executed, a Yiddish Committee was founded in Israel by Korn, together with Dov Sadan, the head of the Yiddish department at the Hebrew University, and Avrom Sutzkever, the editor of the flagship literary journal *Di goldene keyt* (The golden chain), published in Tel Aviv.[75] (Sutzkever's literary career had started in the Yung Vilne group, and he later took part in the Vilna ghetto resistance movement, becoming a Communist writer in postwar Russia for a brief period.) Yiddish culture now began to be seen as a factor supporting Jewish national survival in the Soviet Union, which was regarded by many Yiddish activists as the last significant reservoir of Yiddish-speakers.

Sovetish heymland, with more than 100 contributors—on average younger than their Western counterparts in Yiddish journalism and literature[76]—played an important role in creating this misconception. Chone Shmeruk, who replaced Dov Sadan as the head of the Yiddish Department, wrote in 1972: "No one disputes the need to continue with the demands to allow every Jew who desires to emigrate to Israel to do so.... On the other hand, is this not also the right time to fuse this basic demand with increased pressure to recognize the cultural needs of Soviet Jews [in the U.S.S.R.]?"[77]

Vergelis and his journal could probably credit themselves with having contributed in some part to spreading the idea that emigration could not solve the Soviet Jewish problem, and that it was therefore of paramount importance to develop Jewish culture in the Soviet Union. Vergelis used his international exposure in order to expand *Sovetish heymland*: from January 1980, the journal began to appear with a booklet as a supplement, and in 1981, Vergelis organized a two-year course for Yiddish editors at the Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow. The year 1985 saw another expansion—an annual Russian-language digest called *God za godom* (Year after year). In the early 1980s, he even toyed with the idea of an academic center associated with the journal, but the Jewish Historical and Ethnographical Commission, formed on his initiative in 1981, attracted mostly dissidents and refuseniks, and he hastened to shelve this project.

In the mid-1980s, Vergelis began to lose his international standing, and during

the Gorbachev years, he no longer received invitations to visit abroad. The pro-Soviet Yiddish circles were becoming extinct. By 1989, *Sovetish heymland* sold only about 500 copies abroad, many of them to libraries.[78] Soviet Communism itself was declining, and the Cold War was drawing to a close. On the Yiddish front, that "war" came to an end in May 1991 during the Moscow convention of the World Council for Yiddish and Yiddish Literature. On the eve of this event, Vergelis faced a mutiny when almost all the members of his journal's editorial board along with several other authors issued a call to organize an international conference dedicated specifically to furthering the Yiddish language and culture in the Soviet Union. And at the convention of the World Council, the Soviet and non-Soviet writers suddenly found themselves fraternizing—without hindrance—on the premises of the Shalom Moscow Jewish Theatre.

Vergelis did not attend the meetings of the World Council, and Yitzhak Korn did not visit the editorial office of *Sovetish heymland*. However, many other delegates did visit Vergelis in his office and promised him their support, especially since he was ready to concede ideological defeat on practically all fronts, as long as it could save his journal. Ironically, one of the results of the World Council's Moscow convention was the reinforcement of Vergelis' shaky position. A few months later, when the journal lost its state sponsorship, the *Naye prese* could provide only a little emergency support. (The *Naye prese* itself closed in June 1993.) However, more substantial financial assistance came from non-Communists, most notably from a former archenemy—the New York *Forverts*, a stronghold of Bundist and other "reformist" veterans. With the name *Sovetish heymland* becoming anachronistic after 1991, the journal was able to enjoy a few years of afterlife under the name of *Di yidishe gas* (The Jewish street).[79]

Concurrently, the Warsaw *Folks-shtime* marked its break with Communism when it began to appear as a Polish-Yiddish biweekly called *Dos yidishe vort/Slowo żydowskie* (The Yiddish word). In 1995, the Bucharest *Revista Cultului Mozaic* changed its title to *Realitatea Evreiasca*. Initially a monthly with departments in Romanian, Yiddish, Hebrew, and English, it ultimately became a Romanian journal with a page in English and a page in Hebrew.[80]

The symbolic date of August 12, 1992, marking the 40th anniversary of the execution of the leading Soviet Jewish writers, became the culminating point in Vergelis' reconciliation with the West, when Mordechai Tsanin and Itzhak Warshawski, then co-presidents of the World Council, visited the editorial office of *Di yidishe gas*. On August 16, Vergelis hosted them at his dacha in Peredelkino, the elite colony of the Soviet writers near Moscow. There the three aged figures formulated the basic principle of their cooperation: "a single Yiddish literature for the single Jewish nation."[81] In other words, Vergelis agreed to abandon the Communist tenet of two national cultures, one "proletarian," the other "bourgeois."

But hardly anyone was interested in this armistice day. By that time, the Yiddish Communist periodicals and their editors were already playing a totally marginal role even within the marginal world of Yiddish letters. The era of the Yiddish Communist press came to its final end in December 1996, when its last relic, the Tel Aviv *Der veg*, was closed down.[82]

Notes

1. See, for instance, Steven Cassedy, *To the Other Shore: The Russian Jewish Intellectuals Who Came to America* (Princeton: 1997); Susanne Marten-Finnis and Heather Valencia, *Sprachinseln: Jiddische Publizistik in London, Wilna und Berlin, 1880–1930* (Cologne: 1999).

2. On the only pre-1917 Bolshevik pamphlet in Yiddish, see "Di ershte bolshevistishe broshur," *Sovetish heymland* 4 (1970), 108–113.

3. Zvi Y. Gitelman's *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917–1930* (Princeton: 1974) remains the most comprehensive monograph in English on the Evsektsii.

4. Hersh Smolyar, *Vu bistu khaver Sidorov?* (Tel Aviv: 1975), 78–79.

5. Francine Hirsch, "Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities," *The Russian Review* 2 (2000), 201–226.

6. Daniel Charney, "Tsu der geshikhte fun der yidisher komunistisher prese," *In shpan* 1 (1926), 132.

7. Abraham Golomb, *Tsu di tifn fun yidishn gedank* (Tel Aviv: 1974), 328.

8. Gennady Estraikh, "Yiddish Literary Life in Soviet Moscow, 1918–1924," *Jews in Eastern Europe* 42, no. 2 (2000), 25–55; David Shneer, "The History of 'The Truth': Soviet Jewish Activists and the Moscow Yiddish Daily Newspaper," in *Yiddish and the Left*, ed. Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov (Oxford: 2001), 129–143.

9. See the compendium for Soviet Yiddish bibliography, Chone Shmeruk (ed.), *Pirsumim yehudiyim bivrit hamo'aẓot* (Jerusalem: 1961).

10. Charney, "Tsu der geshikhte fun der yidisher komunistisher prese," 132–134.

11. The Fareynikte was formed by the merger of the Zionist Socialist Workers' Party (the Territorialists) and the Jewish Socialist Workers' Party (the Seymists).

12. Moyshe Kamenshteyn, "Na fronte kul'turnoi revoliutsii," *Tribuna* (Moscow), no. 10 (1930), 6–7. The doctrinally correct Communist slogan was "national in form; socialist in content."

13. On various approaches (not just Soviet) regarding Yiddish orthography, see Kalman Weiser, "The 'Orthodox Orthography' of Solomon Birnbaum," in this volume, 275–295.

14. M. Shnitser, "Af a glitshikn veg," *Der shtern* (8 Aug. 1930).

15. Gennady Estraikh, *Soviet Yiddish: Language Planning and Linguistic Development* (Oxford: 1999), 45–48, 57, 64, 74.

16. Gennady Estraikh, "The Kharkiv Yiddish Literary World, 1920s-mid-1930s," *East European Jewish Affairs* 32, no 2 (2002), 72–73.

17. Iosif Stalin, *Voprosy leninizma* (Moscow: 1939), 477.

18. Moyshe Litvakov, "Arbkorn-shafung," *Der emes* (4 May 1924); Anna Shternshis, "From the Eradication of Illiteracy to Worker Correspondents: Yiddish-Language Mass Movements in the Soviet Union," *East European Jewish Affairs* 32, no. 1 (2002), 120–137.

19. Itsik Fefer, *Di yidishe literatur in di kapitalistishe lender* (Kharkov: 1933), 86.

20. Henry Srebrnik, "Diaspora, Ethnicity and Dreams of Nationhood: American Jewish Communists and the Birobidzhan Project," in Estraikh and Krutikov (eds.), *Yiddish and the Left*, 84.

21. Dovid Sfard, *Mit zikh un mit andere* (Jerusalem: 1984), 85.

22. Quoted in Joseph Sherman, "With Perfect Faith: The Life and Work of Leibl Feldman," in Leibl Feldman, *Oudtshoorn: Jerusalem of Africa* (Johannesburg: 1989), 16; cf. David Rechter, "The Gezerd Down Under," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 7, *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning*, ed. Jonathan Frankel (New York: 1991), 275–282.

23. *Albom lekoved dem yoyvl fun progresivn yidishn vort in Argentine* (Buenos Aires: 1973).

24. Sara Lapitskaia, "Publitsisticheskaia deiatel'nost' Bera Gal'perina v Parizhe," in *Evrei Rossii—immigranty Frantsii*, ed. Wolf Moskovich, Vladimir Khazan, and Sabine Breuillard

(Jerusalem: 2000), 144–151. *Undzer fraynd* still appeared in the 1970s, edited by Meir Tshizh and Fishl Tobiash—see Aron Vergelis, *Rayzes* (Moscow: 1976), 163–167.

25. *Albatros* 1 (1922), 16.

26. Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii (hereafter: RTKIDNI), 495/30/761, 43–44, 68–70, 107, 122.

27. Sfard, *Mit zikh un mit andere*, 52–69; presumably also written by Sfard: "Der virklekher zin fun der provokatsye kegn der progresiver yidisher tsaytung in Poyln *Fraynd*," *Folks-shtime* (4 Dec. 1958). On Yung Vilne, see Justin D. Cummy, "Tsevorfene bleter: The Emergence of Yung Vilne," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, ed. Antony Polonsky, vol. 14 (2001), 170–191.

28. Musia Landau, *Mit shraybers, bikher un mit . . . Vilne* (Tel Aviv: 2003), 98–101.

29. For the early history of *Frayheyt*, see Tony Michels, " 'Socialism with a Jewish Face': The Origins of the Yiddish-Speaking Communist Movement in the United States, 1907–1923," in Estraikh and Krutikov (eds.), *Yiddish and the Left*, 24–55.

30. Daniel Charney, *A yortsendlik aza* (New York: 1943), 291–293; Raphael Abramovitsh, *In tsvey revolutsyes* (New York: 1944), 398–399.

31. Ber Grin, *Fun dor tsu dor: literarishe eseyen* (New York: 1971), 148–149; William J. Fishman, "Morris Winchevsky's London Yiddish Newspaper: One Hundred Years in Retrospect," the second annual Avrom-Nokhem Stencl Lecture in Modern Yiddish Literature, delivered before the Oxford Summer Programme in Yiddish Language and Literature on 9 August 1984 (Oxford: 1985).

32. Moyshe Nadir, *Humor, kritik, lirik* (Buenos Aires: 1971), 258.

33. Alexander Pomerantz, *Proletpen: etyudn un materyaln tsu der geshikhte fun dem kamf far proletarisher literatur in amerike* (Kiev: 1935), 173.

34. Quoted in Gennady Estraikh, *Soviet Yiddish*, 139–140.

35. Pomerantz, *Proletpen*, 51. *Yugnt*, according to "D. Rozumovitsh," "tried to encourage club members to produce Yiddish wall papers." See his article, "Di rol fun a vant-tsaytung," *Yugnt* 2 (1927), 15, 24.

36. Moyshe Olgin, *In der velt fun gezang: a bukh vegn poezye un poetn* (New York: 1919).

37. Moyshe Olgin, *Havrile un Yoel* (New York: 1927).

38. On the Yiddish PEN Club see, for instance, Nakhman Meisel, *Geven amol a lebn* (Buenos Aires: 1951), 278–290.

39. Lawrence H. Schwartz, *Marxism and Culture: The CPUSA and Aesthetics in the 1930s* (Port Washington, NY: 1980), 41. In 1934, the IURW had about 15 sections, which published 30 periodicals. See RTKIDNI, 495/30/988, 2–3.

40. RTKIDNI, 495/30/3492, 2–3; ibid., 495/30/3993, 19.

41. Ibid., 495/30/1014a, 80.

42. Ibid., 495/30/988, 17.

43. Quoted in Henry Hart (ed.), *American Writers' Congress* (London: 1935), 153–156.

44. See Olgin's "farewell" to Leivick in Moyshe Olgin, *Folk un kultur* (New York: 1939), 75–80.

45. Gerben Zaagsma, " 'Red Devils': The Botwin Company in the Spanish Civil War," *East European Jewish Affairs* 33, no. 1 (2003), 101–117.

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48. Joseph Sherman, "Between Ideology and Indifference: The Destruction of Yiddish in South Africa," in *Memories, Realities and Dreams: Aspects of the South African Jewish Experience*, ed. Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn (Johannesburg: 2000), 42–45.

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78. For more on the journal's circulation, see Gennady Estraikh, "The Era of *Sovetish Heymland*: Readership of the Yiddish Press in the Former Soviet Union," *East European Jewish Affairs* 25, no. 1 (1995), 17–22.

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80. Grözinger, *Die jiddische Kultur im Schatten der Diktaturen*, 107.

81. *Di yidishe gas* 3 (1993), 137.

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