

**“Brothers and Sisters of Work and Need”:
The Bundist Newspaper *Unzer Tsayt* and its Role in
New York City, 1941-1944**

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INTRODUCTION

“Brothers and sisters of work and need
All who are scattered and dispersed
Come together, the flag is ready
It flutters from anger, it is red with blood
An oath, an oath on life and death.”

The title of this thesis comes from the stanza above, the first in the anthem “*Di Shvue*” [“The Oath”]. I deemed it an appropriate appellation for two reasons. First, the actors of the pages to follow would surely have known it, and almost certainly sang it to begin their meetings.¹ Second, and more importantly, it effectively captures the ethos of those agents as they engaged in the work with which this thesis is concerned.

The story within which my work falls is one that spans - chronologically - the entire Second World War and - geographically - nations across the Earth. The story begins in Poland with the Nazi invasion of September 1939. Before then, the Polish arm of the *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln, un Rusland* [“General Jewish Workers’ Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia,” or the “Bund,” for short,] was the largest Jewish political party of the Second Polish Republic. The Bund was a socialist party, advocating Jewish solidarity with their Gentile fellow Socialists in pursuit of common revolutionary goals as well as a secular Yiddish culture. In September 1939, several leaders of the Bund fled east from the invading *Wehrmacht* and then north from the invading Red Army. Many, however, remained behind to defend the cities of Poland alongside their brother Socialists and see to the needs of their Jewish constituencies under

¹ “Der Yiddish-Vinkl April 22, 2005: A Weekly Briefing on the Mother Tongue,” The Jewish Daily Forward, April 22, 2005, <http://forward.com/articles/3356/der-yiddish-vinkl-april--/> (accessed September 3, 2012).

occupation as best as they could. Those who did flee went first to Vilnius, and from there they diverged. Some went west, first to France and then to London. Others went east by way of Japan or Shanghai to California and finally to New York City.

It is these refugees in New York City who have been the subject of my research. They did not remain idle in their safety. Though “scattered and dispersed,” they proclaimed themselves to be the American Representation of the Bund in Poland (“Representation”) and began a campaign to raise awareness and support--both material and financial--for their comrades in the occupied Poland. One vehicle for this undertaking was the newspaper *Unzer Tsayt [Our Time]*, which the Representation established in 1941 to be its main organ. This publication was the focus of my research and features most prominently of all my sources in this thesis.

In this thesis I defend a twofold claim. First, I argue that the Representation attempted to take advantage of a preexisting tradition of solidarity between Jewish Socialists in New York City and in Eastern Europe, which had already manifested itself in the form of a flow of aid from the former to the latter. Second, I contend that the Representation, while engaged in its raising of awareness and aid, simultaneously sought to sway readers to their cause and *away* from that of their Zionist contemporaries, whose numbers and influence had grown before the war and who remained active during it.

I believe this thesis starts to fill a gap that I perceive in the existing scholarship. By analyzing the Representation’s communication with its public, we can conclude from the subjects addressed and the manner in which they are presented how the Representation leaders understood their Yiddish public and reacted to wartime

developments. This contributes to a more complete understanding of the Representation's work than does merely studying the actions of its members.

The newspaper *Unzer Tsayt* is the primary source that I predominantly use in this thesis, but it was not the Representation's only publication in New York City. The group also published an English-language newspaper called *The Ghetto Speaks*, and a 1944 essay collection called *Geto in flamm [Ghetto in Flames]*, which chronicled events in occupied Poland. I chose to focus on *Unzer Tsayt* because it was the Representation's primary newspaper and--as a Yiddish-language newspaper--it explicitly targeted a Jewish audience, and is therefore the most useful source to use in evaluating the Representation's interaction with the Jews of New York City. All translations from *Unzer Tsayt* and other Yiddish sources are my own. Where English spellings of Yiddish names were available in the secondary sources, I deferred to those spellings. Where I encountered Yiddish names in *Unzer Tsayt* that were not present in the secondary literature, I transliterated according to the YIVO standard.²

My most important secondary sources in this thesis were as follows: *For Our Freedom and Yours*, by Daniel Blatman, was my main source for the flight of Bundists to New York City at the onset of World War II and their activities there. Tony Michels's *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* charts the genesis and growth of Jewish Socialism in New York City until the early 1920s, and Jonathan Frankel's *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* describes the early years of the Bund in Eastern Europe. Those three sources are most

² YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, "Yiddish Alphabet/Alef-Beys," *What is Yiddish?*, <http://www.yivo.org/index.php?tid=57&aid=275> (accessed April 1, 2013).

prominently featured in the first chapter of this thesis. For the chapter on Zionism, I relied on Mark Raider's *The Emergence of American Zionism*.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter One serves as something of a prologue to the argumentative components of the thesis. It contains the necessary background history of the people, places, and ideologies that will pervade the thesis, and offers far more detail than the summary in this Introduction. The first section of Chapter One is about Jewish Socialism in New York City prior to World War II, which began in the 1880s when Jewish revolutionaries fleeing violence in the Russian Empire arrived in New York City and sought to continue their campaign in the United States. In order to operate among the Jews of New York City, the first Jewish Socialist leaders were forced to switch from their preferred Russian to the Yiddish vernacular. Jewish Socialism consisted of many competing parties and movements, including the Bund-affiliated Jewish Socialist Federation (JSF) and Jewish mutual aid societies such as the *Arbeter Ring* [Workmen's Circle] and the *Landsmanshaftn* [literally, "countrymen societies"]. Some of these parties, such as the JSF, attempted to unite all Jewish Socialists, but were never successful. However, the different parties shared common traits such as the use of Yiddish and a commitment to community service with projects such as educational efforts and cultural activities.

The second section of Chapter One tells of the Bund's history in Eastern Europe. The Bund was founded in 1897 at a conference in present-day Vilnius, and the following year took part in founding the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDWP), from which the Bolsheviks later split. In Eastern Europe, the Bund attempted to balance its role as a member of the internationally oriented RSDWP with its assumed role as the

party that represented Jewish national and cultural interests and campaigned for what it called Jewish “national-cultural autonomy.” This autonomy was opposed by Vladimir Lenin and his circle. During World War I, Bundists operating in different regions of the Russian Empire lost contact with one another, and after the war they continued to operate as independent entities in the newly separated states of Eastern Europe. The Polish Bund became the largest Jewish party in the Second Polish Republic and also engaged in educational and cultural work. This section also demonstrates the pattern of Jewish Socialists in the United States temporarily unifying for fundraising efforts in the face of turmoil among Jews in Eastern Europe.

The third and final section of Chapter One begins with the German invasion of Poland that began World War II in Europe. Many Bundist leaders fled from Warsaw to Vilnius, and Bundists already in New York City coordinated and funded the emigration of these refugees from Vilnius to New York City. The section concludes by detailing the founding of the American Representation of the Bund in Poland--which spoke on behalf of the Bundists who remained under occupation and began efforts to amass aid for them--and the creation of the Representation’s newspaper *Unzer Tsayt*. The Representation, I contend, was hoping to once again use Yiddish among the Jews of New York City in order to inspire their participation *en masse* in fundraising for beleaguered Jews overseas.

Chapter Two contains the arguments for my first claim, i.e., the Representation’s attempted insertion of itself into the tradition of transatlantic Jewish Socialist solidarity using *Unzer Tsayt*. Drawing upon Bundist and Jewish history in Eastern Europe and in the United States, the Representation sought to strengthen its right to receive the aid of Jews in contemporary New York City in order to send that aid to the Bund in Poland.

The first two sections of Chapter Two focus on two of the most important *Unzer Tsayt* articles used to convince readers that the Bund, and thus the Representation, was the group most deserving of assistance from the Jews of New York City. The first section is concerned with the article “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*” [“The Principle of Bundism”], which is actually a reprint of a 1934 speech given by Bundist leader Henryk Erlich. In this article, “Erlich” explains that the Polish Bund is the only party in Eastern Europe that can legitimately claim to be the heir of the original Bund, which was the greatest champion of Jewish interests in the future Marxist world utopia because it fused Socialism with a Yiddish culture. The article identifies both Poland and the United States as countries wherein Jewish Socialists undertook this dual agenda. The article with which the second section of Chapter Two is concerned, “*Bund un Bundizm*” [“Bund and Bundism”], further advances the Bund’s claim to the good will of American Jewry by arguing that Jewish Socialism anywhere, including New York City, is merely Bundism adapted to that environment. Taken together, these two articles encapsulate the Representation’s bid for the hearts and minds of the Jews of New York City: the articles describe the Bund’s positive role in the history of Jews in Eastern Europe and in New York City in order to demonstrate its present right to receive aid in return from readers of *Unzer Tsayt*. The third and final section of Chapter Two describes how the Representation not only reported on the Holocaust in *Unzer Tsayt* and *Geto in flamn*, but inserted the Bund into those reports in the role of representative and benefactor of the Polish Jews, better able to help those Polish Jews (and thus better deserving of support from American Jews) than the Allied governments.

Chapter Three contains the arguments for my second claim, concerning the Representation's need to address their ascendant Zionist rivals. The first section is a condensed history of Zionism's growth in popularity and influence within the United States. The second section describes the attacks against Zionism that the Representation leveled in *Unzer Tsayt*, which I divide into theoretical and practical criticisms. The theoretical grievances of the Representation against Zionism included Zionism's advocacy of Hebrew over Yiddish, its perceived dismissal of Yiddish and Diaspora culture as a whole, and the blow that Jews' status as citizens in the Diaspora would suffer if a Jewish State were created in Palestine. The practical issues that the Representation identified in the Zionist enterprise was the inability of Palestine to house all the world's Jews and the continued reliance that a Jewish State would inevitably have on the Diaspora for economic support. Identifying these undesirable Zionist traits allowed the Representation to better define Bundism as the ideology that respected Yiddish language and culture and would build a wonderful Socialist world for the Jews in the lands where they already lived, a world in which they would peacefully coexist with their Gentile fellow Socialists.

In its newspaper *Unzer Tsayt*, the American Representation of the Bund in Poland blended reports on news from around the world with ideological polemics lauding Bundism and decrying opponents of Bundism such as Communists and Zionists. *Unzer Tsayt* was a medium wherein the Representation sought not only to raise funds to send back to Poland, but in the process win over readers to the Bundist way of thinking. It combined the urgent needs of the present with a long running ideological battle from the

past and the vision of a Bundist future. It is precisely that complexity that drove the research and writing of this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE: Jewish Socialism in New York City and in Eastern Europe, 1880-1941

The first article in the first issue of *Unzer Tsayt* (February 1941) was entitled simply “*Tsu di Lezer!*” [“To the Readers!”]. The article describes a hellish Nazi occupation, where “[t]he Jewish working masses of Eastern Europe, who have fought for three generations under the glorious flag of the Bund for a better life, for their human and national dignity and for a world of freedom and equality, fight now for their mere physical existence.” It concludes by appealing to the “[t]housands of Jewish workers, who in the old home stood in the ranks of the ‘Bund’” and who are now dispersed throughout the Americas.¹ This article hints at a much larger history of Jewish Socialist work in Eastern Europe and in the United States, with which a reader of this thesis must become familiar before engaging with the arguments of the second and third chapters. That history, presented in this chapter, consists primarily of two great narratives. The first section of this chapter will be a much-abridged history of Jewish Socialism in New York City beginning in the 1880s, and the second will be a likewise condensed account of the Bund in Eastern Europe from its genesis in 1897. Both of these narratives will end in 1939, the year Germany invaded Poland to open World War II’s European theater. The third and final section of this chapter will chronicle the meeting of the Eastern Europe and New York City histories, beginning with the German invasion, continuing with the flight of Bundist leaders to New York City, and concluding with the founding of the American Representation of the Bund in Poland and of the newspaper *Unzer Tsayt*. Reading this chapter, a reader will become familiarized with the two worlds that the

¹ “*Tsu di Lezer,*” *Unzer Tsayt*, February 1941, 2.

Representation sought to bridge: the struggle for the rights of Jewish labor in Eastern Europe and the altogether different realm of American Jewish Socialism into which the Representation entered. The second and third chapters, in a sense, chronicle the Representation's attempt in *Unzer Tsayt* to forge a unity out of this evident disparity. Another article in the first issue of *Unzer Tsayt* implored readers not to forget that the fates of Jews the world over were connected, and that the only party whose fate was "completely tied" with the fate of Jews in the Diaspora was the Bund.²

Jewish Socialists in New York City, 1882-1939

The history of Jewish Socialism in Eastern Europe (dominated in the late 19th century by the Russian Empire) begins in New York City. As Jonathan Frankel demonstrates in his book *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*, the success of Jewish Socialist movements in New York City would inspire the creation of similar movements in the Russian Empire. However, the most authoritative scholarship of Jewish Socialism in New York City is Tony Michels's 2005 book *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York*. Michels's book will serve as the principal source for this chapter's treatment of Jewish Socialism in New York City.

The men and women who would found the first Jewish Socialist organization in New York City began to arrive in the city in 1882. In 1881, after the assassination of Czar Alexander II, agitators claimed that Jews were behind the killing and that the new czar, Alexander III, had sanctioned retribution.³ The wave of pogroms that followed and

² A. Menes, "Di Natsyonale Shlikhes fun Bund," *Unzer Tsayt*, February 1941, 6, 9.

³ *Encyclopedia Judaica* (online edition, through the Gale Virtual Reference Library), s.v. "Pogroms," by Hehudah Slutsky, accessed January 14, 2013, <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587515895&v=2.1&u>

the oppressive anti-Jewish May Laws passed by Alexander III in 1882 prompted mass emigration. One group of immigrants lived in an insular Lower East Side community that was nicknamed the “Russian Colony.” Michels offers a compelling psychological profile of these newcomers. In their youth, as students in the Russian Empire, they had been constantly exposed to Russian radicalism. “Many of them,” Michels writes, “had believed that education and revolution would lead to a better future for themselves and the Russian people.” However, the anti-Jewish hysteria in Russia after Alexander II’s assassination shattered this illusion with the realization that they were not a part of the *narod* (the Russian nation). For the first time, the disenchanting revolutionaries sought out the masses of Russian Jews who lived without secular education or revolutionary ideals, viewing them now as a people in danger and hoping to rally them and find a solution to the glaring peril before them. For many communities, that solution was emigration to the United States.⁴

In New York City, the denizens of the Russian Colony found that their status as enlightened and educated Russian radicals meant little in the scramble for work and survival. With a poor grasp of English, they were compelled to find work in workshops and factories alongside other Jews of New York City. Once again, albeit unwillingly, the Russian-Jewish intellectuals were mingling with the people. Again, Michels offers a glimpse at their inner anguish. Gilded Age New York City had nothing in common with imperial Russia. While it offered respite from pogroms, it seemed to the Russian Colonists that the city lacked an intellectual or revolutionary culture. New Yorkers, it

umuser&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w.

⁴ Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 27, 32.

seemed, were materialistic and “soulless” in their pursuit of profit.⁵ Feeling isolated and nostalgic, the Colonists began mingling with another Lower East Side community called *Kleindeutschland* [Little Germany]. Little Germany was home to a thriving Socialist movement that harkened to the Marxism of Germany itself, a movement that the Russian-Jewish radicals had long admired. Furthermore, it was no great challenge for those with some command of Yiddish to learn the German language. The Colonists went to German Socialist meetings and read their publications. By the early 1890s, Yiddish-speaking Jews had become the “principal constituency” of one local Socialist leader in Little Germany.⁶ Several years of fraternization with the German socialists of the Lower East Side inspired a few of the Russian-Jewish revolutionaries to create Socialist groups and publications in order to bring their legacy of Russian radicalism to their own constituency, the Jews of New York City. They decided that this would be best accomplished by using the Yiddish language rather than their preferred Russian.

Jewish Socialism in New York City was not a monolithic movement. As it expanded beginning in the 1890s, it became an ideology that encompassed a multitude of parties, newspapers, and figures. The first Yiddish-speaking Socialist group was the *Yidisher Arbeter Fareyn* [Jewish Workers’ Association, or JWA], which activists in the Russian Colony founded in 1885. The organization broke ground in several ventures that later Jewish Socialists would also undertake. Despite their unfamiliarity with the inner workings of labor life, intellectual leaders of the JWA organized 14 Jewish labor unions, including typographers, bakers, garment makers, and peddlers, and led them in efforts of collective bargaining. Perhaps more befitting of their lofty background, JWA leaders

⁵ Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 36-37, 39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 41-42, 46, 52.

also sponsored lectures and founded the first two Socialist Yiddish newspapers (though the first folded after four issues because of printing costs). Despite these early successes, the JWA's clout diminished following the Great Upheaval of 1886, a widespread but ultimately unsuccessful series of strikes in New York City among many professions. All 14 of the JWA-created unions disbanded, the group's newspaper ceased publication, and the JWA itself disbanded in 1887.⁷ More lasting entities that emerged in the following years included United Hebrew Trades and the Yiddish daily newspaper *Forverts* [Forward].⁸ The myriad Jewish Socialist groups that emerged in New York City prior to the First World War shared traits such as embrace of Socialism in some form, use of the Yiddish language, and educational efforts such as newspapers, journals, and lecturers. Points of contention between the different groups included stances on Zionism and the insistence by some groups that strict Marxism was the only legitimate Socialism.

In *A Fire in Their Hearts*, Tony Michels also recounts the genesis of the Bundist movement in particular in America. Thousands of Bundists immigrated to the United States at the turn of the 20th century--particularly after the Revolution of 1905--and for the next decade and a half, they carried out a campaign almost identical to that of their comrades in the Russian Empire, championing Jewish Socialist autonomy within a broader Socialist movement and some incarnation of secular Jewish cultural identity. They achieved the former aim through the proxy of the Jewish Socialist Agitation Bureau, whose leaders were Bundists almost to a man. In 1912, "the [American] Socialist Party began allowing foreign-language federations to join the party as autonomous subsections." The Agitation Bureau--renamed the Jewish Socialist

⁷ Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 27, 48-49, 52-54, 60.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

Federation (JSF)--functioned as the American Bundist movement and enrolled as the Jewish subsection of the Socialist Party.⁹ However, the Bund, the Agitation Bureau, and the JSF were unsuccessful in advancing their cultural agenda. To begin with, they never produced a concrete definition of their proposed *yidische kultur* [Yiddish culture], a “national” program that they contrasted with “nationalism.” Opponents failed to make the same distinction, reminded advocates that elements of *yidische kultur* (such as Yiddish newspapers and literature) were already present, and pointed out that in America, unlike in Russia, no Jewish cultural program was really necessary because Jews were not constrained as they were in Russia. Furthermore, they concluded, the program was incompatible with orthodox Marxism.¹⁰

Historians Jonathan Frankel and Yaacov Goldstein cite two historical events from the year 1917 as catalysts for great upheaval in the Jewish Socialist ranks worldwide: the Bolshevik revolution and the Balfour Declaration, in which British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour announced the support of the British government for a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. The Bolshevik revolution brought Communism much greater attention from the world, Jews included, and the Balfour Declaration accomplished the same for Zionism. Suddenly the Jewish masses worldwide, including in New York City, were confronted with options that appeared equally viable to Bundism. Frankel claims that the division was most apparent in the United States, as evidenced by the eventual schism of the Jewish Socialist Federation. In 1921, the JSF voted to break from the American Socialist Party and embraced Communism; in 1922 it was absorbed by the United States’ nascent Communist Party. Members of the JSF who

⁹ Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 172-173.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 168-170.

opposed the decision because of their avowed Bundist loyalty to orthodox Marxism simply left. The largest faction to break away from the JSF was the Jewish Socialist Farband, which most closely resembled the Bund in ideology and action and acted to prevent the spread of Communism among Jews.¹¹ Smaller elements of the former JSF, also anti-Communist, aligned themselves with labor Zionism.¹² With the JSF effectively gone, much of its work fell to Jewish labor aid organizations such as the *landsmanshaftn* [literally, “countryman societies”] and the *Arbeter Ring* [Workman’s Circle], an American Jewish fraternal order of workers whose primary aim was to provide its members with health benefits, financial assistance, and death services.

The existence of *landsmanshaftn* in the United States long predated the immigration of Russian Jewish Socialists at the turn of the century, while the *Arbeter Ring* was founded roughly contemporaneously with that influx (1892). The relationship between the Bund and these groups was complex; Bundists arriving in New York City after the 1905 revolution integrated themselves into the preexisting Jewish labor movement there, founding or joining *landsmanshaftn* and chapters of the *Arbeter Ring*. However, while they valued the efforts of these groups and sought to assist them, Bundists also regarded the presence of “innumerable organizations” as symptomatic of

¹¹ The Jewish Socialist Farband published its own newspaper and continued to oppose the influence of Communism and Zionism among American Jewish workers throughout the 1920s and 1930s, though its membership aged and declined. It was a member of the Jewish Labor Committee and worked to prevent any funds being used for Zionist causes.

Jonathan Frankel, “The Bundists in America and the ‘Zionist Problem,’” in *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews*, by Jonathan Frankel, ed. Edith Frankel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 232.

¹² Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 559-560; Yaavoc Goldstein, *Jewish Socialists in the United States: The Cahan Debate 1925-1926* (Brighton, England: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 4-5; *Encyclopedia Judaica* (online edition through Gale Virtual Reference Library), s.v. “Jewish Socialist Verband,” by Charles Bezalel Sherman, accessed October 25, 2012, <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587510150&v=2.1&u=umuser&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w>; Frankel, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews*, 232.

American Jewish labor's lack of a "single satisfactory Jewish Socialist structure."¹³

Entities like the Jewish Socialist Agitation Bureau and the Jewish Socialist Federation were meant to provide this single structure, but they never succeeded in uniting all wings of Jewish labor.

Despite the lamentations of the Bund at their supposedly disparate existence and operation, groups like the *landsmanshaftn* and *Arbeter Ring* engaged in the same sort of work as the Bund with remarkable results. Since these two groups were, at their most basic level, mutual aid societies, they engaged from their onset in projects like education, founding and running networks of Yiddish language schools in New York City and throughout the United States (many of which still exist today). One *Arbeter Ring* activist, Yankev Levin, wrote an article in October 1918 describing a burgeoning culture that was "purely secular" but "thoroughly Jewish." This included Yiddish mutual aid societies, literary circles, and chess clubs, and was comparable to the notion of *yidische kultur* that the Bund and its allies had advocated.¹⁴ However, when these societies truly shone is in the years following the effective end of the JSF in 1921. During the 1920s and 1930s, the *landsmanshaftn* in particular donated disproportionately large sums of money to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which sought to provide succor to East European Jewry following the hardships of World War I. As the years and then the decades passed, the *landsmanshaftn* flagged in their fundraising efforts not for lack of

¹³ Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 156, 167, 180.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

zeal, but because of declining membership and chapter count and competition from Zionist groups.¹⁵

This, then, was the state of Jewish Socialism in New York City on the eve of World War II. It was fractured and tumultuous, with disagreeing parties, newspapers, and leaders coming and going. However, Jewish Socialists shared commonalities such as use of the Yiddish language to reach their constituency and projects at building a secular Jewish community through education and culture. The aid efforts of societies such as the *landsmanshaftn* or *Arbeter Ring* embraced a broad population. As the next section will detail, Jewish labor in New York City also played a crucial role in the birth, growth, and survival of brother movements in Eastern Europe, most importantly the Bund.

The Bund in Eastern Europe, 1897-1939

Jewish Socialists in Eastern Europe were aware of the success of their New York peers from very early on. Jonathan Frankel reports that “newspapers journals, and pamphlets in Yiddish filtered into Russia” from New York City and London “from at least 1888.” By 1896, workers in Warsaw were reading ““the entire American Yiddish socialist [sic] literature,”” and even non-Jewish Socialists such as Józef Piłsudski imported such texts. The success of Socialists in New York City who used Yiddish as the language of their press and trade unions “proved that a Yiddish-speaking labor movement could succeed” and inspired attempts in Eastern Europe to copy the feat. One notable instance of this took place in Vilnius, where a young group of Jewish Socialists known simply as the “Vilna movement” were based. In 1893 the Vilna movement

¹⁵ Michael R. Weisser, *A Brotherhood of Memory: Jewish Landsmanshaftn in the New World* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985), 119, 191.

adopted a so-called “new program,” officially switching from the use of Russian to Yiddish. However, the Vilna movement did not adopt the internationalist ideology of Socialists in New York City, being concerned only with the plight of Jews in the Russian Empire, who were subject to discrimination in work, education, and residence.¹⁶

Leaders of the Vilna movement were instrumental in the formation of the Bund. In 1897 they called a congress in Vilnius of thirteen delegates, six of whom were from Vilnius and most of whom had at some point been members of the Vilna movement. After some debate, the party named itself the General Jewish Workers’ Union in Russia and Poland, and later amended this to the General Jewish Workers’ Union in Lithuania, Russia, and Poland. The delegates intended for this name to represent the unity among Jewish workers throughout the western Russian Empire, but among those workers it was known simply as the Bund.¹⁷ Throughout the Bund’s existence it would be plagued and torn by the conundrum that its obviously Jewish origin and constituency presented: was it a movement in line with the international doctrine of Marxism or the national needs and character of Russian Jewry? The Bund never definitively resolved this question. Factions advocating each answer bickered ceaselessly, and the Bund’s congresses also testified to this tension: the Third Congress (December 1899) adopted a resolution stating “the Bund [demands] only civil - not national - rights,” but less than two years later the Fourth Congress (April 1901) committed the party to Jewish national autonomy. Frankel points out that such quarrels over internationalism and nationalism took place within other parties at this time: the Polish movement split into the Polish Socialist Party and Polish Social Democrats, the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party split into

¹⁶ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 174-176, 193-194, 199.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 207-208.

Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, and the Zionist Poalei Zion [Workers of Zion] split into three parties.¹⁸ In the Bund's dealings with other groups, it nonetheless managed to present a fairly unified front advocating its national autonomy within the international Socialist movement.

The Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDWP), which was the chief Socialist party in Russia until its fracture into Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, began its first congress on March 1, 1898, mere months after the Bund's formation. The RSDWP was the outcome of a joint effort of the Bund and other Socialist groups. The First Congress passed a provisional constitution that contained a special clause concerning the Bund: "The [Bund] enters the party as an autonomous organization, independent only in questions which specifically concern the Jewish proletariat." In other words, the Bund had achieved its goal of national autonomy within an international party. However, this triumph was very short-lived. Vladimir Lenin, who had initially praised the Bund for its role in creating the Russian labor movement, now began his bid for control over the RSDWP in order to bring all of its elements in line with what he considered orthodox Marxism. Frankel identifies Lenin's launch of the newspaper *Iskra* on December 1, 1900 as the onset of this campaign. The newspaper only attacked the Bund's alleged separatism once, generally maintaining calculated silence. Nonetheless, Lenin planned a confrontation with the Bund for the RSDWP's upcoming Second Congress.¹⁹

The Bund's Fifth Congress convened in June 1903 and set about crafting a platform for the upcoming Second Congress of the RSDWP. As ever, delegates were divided on nationalism or the *Iskra*-advocated internationalism. Ultimately, though, they

¹⁸ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 181, 184, 220.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 208-209, 231, 238.

pieced together a program demanding that the RSDWP recognize the Bund as “the Social Democratic organization of the Jewish proletariat...[and] its sole representative [in the RSDWP].” The Second Congress of the RSDWP convened in July 1903, and the issue of the Bund was the first one of importance on the agenda. By now Lenin’s faction had an unbeatable majority among the delegates. The autonomy of the Bund guaranteed at the First Congress was revoked and the new Bundist proposals were resoundingly defeated. Bundist delegates withdrew from the Congress and, by extension, from the RSDWP. Two years later, the Bund’s Sixth Congress (October 1905) included “national-cultural autonomy” in its program, which meant that the Bund, not the larger party, would have authority over the “free cultural development” of the Jewish workers. The following year, the Fourth Congress of the RSDWP (April 1906) approved the readmission of the Bund into the party and agreed to its condition of national-cultural autonomy (the Bund’s Seventh Congress ratified reunification that August).²⁰

Jonathan Frankel writes that Lenin supported the Bund’s readmission because he had abandoned hopes of streamlining the party and judged from the Bund’s conduct since its departure from the RSDWP that it was more or less in line with his Bolshevik aims. However, the Bund’s victory was incomplete, as it had not repeated its claim to sole representation of the Jewish proletariat, nor even included it in its platform for the RSDWP congress. In order to be readmitted into the RSDWP’s ranks, the Bund had abandoned the tenets that had caused controversy and received only the minor concession of national-cultural autonomy. However, Frankel explains that the Bund was willing to accept this outcome because it realized that regardless of theoretical or ideological

²⁰ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 246-247.

decisions handed down by lofty party leaders, it would, in practicality, retain its supremacy among Jews on the “street” and continue to be their *de facto* sole representation.²¹

Accompanying the Bund’s hegemony on the Jewish street was dominance in the realm of finances. From its onset, the Bund was “increasingly financed from without” (primarily from supporters in the United States), which gave it a great measure of control over its affiliate groups. Frankel points out that a deterrent for any Bundists or Bundist factions harboring thoughts of breaking from the party was the realization that much of their financial resources would be cut off. Breakaway groups could not count on the same “enormous reserves of good will on the Lower East Side” that the Bund could. Frankel describes several noteworthy examples of aid sent from New York City to Eastern Europe in the early 1900s. After the horrific Kishinev pogrom of 1903, the New York City newspaper *Forverts* established its own relief fund for the victims. It raised and forwarded some \$8,000, but was unable to win over all Jewish Socialist factions in the city, who made their own (sometimes larger) contributions. More successful were the later efforts of the American Committee for the Relief of Russian Jews. The Committee was established at a joint meeting of representatives from “all the major sections of New York Jewry” on November 7, 1905, several months after the failed Russian revolution. The Committee raised roughly four million dollars worldwide (its original goal was one million dollars), with over half a million dollars coming from New York City. The outbreak of World War I and reports of Jewish hardship on the Eastern Front catalyzed more fundraising. In this campaign, collection was handled by many local organizations,

²¹ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 247-248, 251.

but all the funds were sent overseas by the newly established Joint Distribution Committee.²²

Like Tony Michels, writing years later, Jonathan Frankel concludes that movements for the political unity of American Jewish Socialists in the early 1900s were unsuccessful. However, his accounts of fundraising in the same period reveal a trend: when news of trouble in Eastern Europe reached the Jews of New York City and the United States, the nearest thing to unity among Jewish Socialist ranks was achieved, and the effectiveness of these efforts improved with time. Furthermore, these efforts inspired attempts at political unity. After the American Committee for the Relief of Russian Jews had concluded its 1905 campaign, “two separate attempts were made to establish unity...in [the sphere] of politics.”²³ Although concerted fundraising among New York City Jews flagged in the 1920s and 1930s,²⁴ the framework to do so remained in place thanks to the establishment of the Joint Distribution Committee, which along with the Jewish Labor Committee would be called upon again to handle large amounts of aid during the Second World War.

By 1905, the Bund had become the dominant Socialist movement in the Pale of Settlement, home to most Russian Jews. In the years before World War I it weathered competition with rival Jewish Socialist groups (which collapsed by 1906) and with Zionist groups active among Russian Jews. (The Bund’s rivalry with Zionism is covered in greater detail in Chapter Three.) The First World War and the Russian Revolution, however, proved to be traumatic events for the Bund. When the Pale of Settlement fell

²² Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 181, 213, 476-477, 483, 487, 510.

²³ *Ibid.*, 487, 547

²⁴ Michael R. Weisser, *A Brotherhood of Memory: Jewish Landsmanshaftn in the New World* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985), 119, 191.

into German hands, Bundist leaders sensed that the war would result in an independent Poland, and in December 1917 they convened the inaugural congress of the Polish Bund in Lublin. Bundists within the Russian Empire participated actively in the February Revolution, but members were slowly becoming divided along Menshevik and Bolshevik lines. After the November Revolution the issue was settled for them: Bolshevik-leaning Bundists joined the Jewish section of the Communist Party by 1921, and any rump groups outside Lenin's fold were suppressed by 1928. The Bund had ceased to exist in Russia.²⁵ Decades later, the Representation wrote in *Unzer Tsayt* that because the Soviet Union, a state with avowed international interests, had not tolerated any groups with national (in this case, Jewish) loyalties, there was now no one to speak on behalf of the Soviet Jews when they were in desperate need of aid from the government.²⁶

The Bund was active in newly independent Romania and Latvia. However, its locus remained in the Second Polish Republic, whose borders encompassed such old Bundist territories as Lithuania and the Pale of Settlement. Here, its activities were varied and sweeping. As a legal political party, Bundist candidates stood in Polish local and national elections. Its showings in the Polish Sejm were considerably worse than in local elections because of its refusal to cooperate with larger Polish parties such as the Polish Socialist Party.²⁷ In international politics, the Bund opted not to join the Comintern, instead joining the Labor and Socialist International in 1930. In this group, it

²⁵ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 556-557, 559; *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (online edition), s.v. "Bund," by Daniel Blatman, accessed December 27, 2012, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bund>.

²⁶ Henryk Erlich, "Der Eyker fun Bundizm," *Unzer Tsayt*, October 1942, 9-10.

²⁷ A 1924 agreement between the Bund and the PPS for "coordinated action against fascism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism" fell through after a PPS deputy attacked Yiddish schools in a speech to the Sejm. Bernard K. Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility: The General Jewish Workers Bund of Poland, 1917-1943* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 141.

was recognized as the official representative of Polish Jewish workers. Among its constituency, the Bund activated the ideology of *dokayt* [“here-ness”], claiming that Jews were better off in the lands where they were than in Palestine. In service to Polish Jews, the Bund published several newspapers to communicate political, educational, and cultural topics. It was also the largest political party to support Poland’s Central Yiddish School Organization, whose schools offered a secular education in Yiddish. Additionally, its youth movements ran social outdoor activities to give Jewish children and teenagers a sense of community and training as leaders. By the mid-1930s, writes Daniel Blatman, the Bund had become “the dominant Jewish organization in the country,” and saw itself as the “champion of the national and social aspirations of the Jewish masses.”²⁸ All that the party did in the realms of politics, press, education, and youth activities, it did under the banner of *dokayt* and in the service of a Jewish population that it expected would remain in Poland. The services that the Polish Bund rendered to Polish Jews later provided Bundists in World War II-era New York City with grounds to seek help from Jews there for Bundists still in Poland.

The Flight to New York City and the Birth of *Unzer Tsayt*, 1939-1941

German forces invaded Poland by land and air on September 1, 1939. The Polish Sejm held its last session on September 2, and on September 5 representatives of the Polish government gave a press conference and announced the government’s intention to flee east from Warsaw. That night, Bundist leaders held the first of several meetings during the days of September 5-6 debating what course of action to take. Pinchas

²⁸ *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (online edition), s.v. “Bund,” by Daniel Blatman, accessed December 27, 2012, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bund>.

Schwartz--a journalist for the Bund's Yiddish newspaper *Folkstsaytung [People's Newspaper]*--who had attended the government's press conference, informed the group that the Polish government had several seats on their evacuation train reserved for Jewish leaders. Most of the assembly believed that the Bundist leaders should also flee eastward and continue the party's work there. A minority argued that the leaders ought to remain with the rank-and-file Bundists who were preparing to defend Warsaw along the Polish workers. Ultimately, the Bund's Central Committee decided to flee the capital and its lower-ranking leaders elected to remain in Warsaw.²⁹

Members of the Central Committee of the Bund fled in different directions to different cities with different specific aims. This study does not detail all their fates. Those interested in the Bund's fate in occupied Poland should consult Daniel Blatman's book *For Our Freedom and Yours*. By late October 1939 much of the Central Committee had gathered in Wilno (Vilnius). The Red Army had captured Wilno during its invasion of eastern Poland, and then turned control over to the Lithuanians. This was fortunate for the Central Committee, as the Red Army had been rounding up and arresting Bundist leaders. Under Lithuanian rule, Wilno served as a safe haven for them. At the end of 1939, Jewish leaders in New York City and London began efforts to extract Central Committee members from Wilno. The Bundist leaders delayed leaving for several months, instead using the money supplied to them by organizations such as the Joint Distribution Committee to set up institutions for the 16,000 Jewish refugees who had also arrived in Lithuania. But in June 1940 the Red Army reentered Lithuania, which entered the Soviet Union that August. A wide assembly of individuals and organizations

²⁹ Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 3-4.

operating out of multiple countries worked over the next year to get the Central Committee and others out of Lithuania by a combination of covert escape operations (such as the one that moved Bundist leader Shloime Mendelsohn to Stockholm), procuring of special visas, and simple overland travel out of the Soviet Union. In late 1939, 400 members of the Bund (including members of the Central Committee) had gathered in Wilno. By November 1941, 200 had reached the United States and Canada, mostly by going through the Soviet Union and Japan, and another 46 had taken up residence in Shanghai. Those who eventually reached New York City included almost all members of the Central Committee and a cadre of veteran cultural activists and journalists.³⁰

One instrumental group in the rescue of Bundists from Eastern Europe was a group of three Bundists who had arrived in New York city a year before the beginning of World War II: Emanuel Nowogrodzki (secretary of the Central Committee), Jacob Pat, and Benjamin Tabaczynski. Until the war, they had engaged in fundraising. Once the war broke out, Pat and Tabaczynski joined the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC), and Pat became its secretary-general. The JLC had been established in 1934 as an umbrella organization of Jewish labor groups to coordinate a response to the Nazi threat.³¹ During World War II the JLC, led by president Adolph Held, played the lead role in securing money and visas for Bundists still in Eastern Europe. Additionally, both the JLC and Nowogrodzki working independently sent money and food to the general Jewish refugee population in Lithuania and occupied Poland. In November 1939, the three Bundists

³⁰ Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 29.

³¹ Jonathan Frankel, "The Bundists in America and the 'Zionist Problem,'" in *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews*, by Jonathan Frankel, ed. Edith Frankel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 232.

and eight colleagues founded the American Representation of the Bund in Poland and proclaimed that its purpose was organizing relief operations and fundraising. Initially, some tensions existed between the Representation and the Central Committee in Wilno regarding spheres of authority, but the arrival of Central Committee members in New York City in late 1941 settled the issue. The Central Committee continued to direct matters of ideology among the Bundist exiles, while the Representation's authority over more practical matters such as organization, politics, and fundraising was formalized. The Presidium of the Representation included Nowgrodzki, Shloime Mendelsohn, and Szmuel Zygielbojm, who had arrived in the United States via France in 1940 and who served for much of the war as the group's semi-official diplomat in London.³² As late as 1944, opponents of the Representation questioned its right to speak on behalf on anyone, and the Representation defended its claim to speak for the Bund in its newspaper by citing dispatches from the underground Bund in Poland.³³

For the first two years of the war, until the arrival of Central Committee members in 1941, the Representation raised small sums of money themselves to send Poland and Lithuania. These funds were mostly donated by a small group of relatives, friends, and sympathizers of the Representation, and never exceeded a few thousand dollars. They reached their intended recipients through various channels, passing through such cities as Zurich, Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Tangiers. The JLC was not yet prepared for the gathering and transfer of relief on a large scale. After the Central Committee's arrival, however the Representation's role changed drastically. The Polish-Soviet accord in the summer of 1941 now made it possible for the JLC to forward larger sums (\$100,000 over

³² Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 121-126.

³³ Shloime Mendelsohn, "Di 'Heylike' Milkhome Kegn 'Bund,'" *Unzer Tsayt*, April 1944, 26.

the next year and a half) to Nazi-occupied lands through the Soviet Union. The Representation's influence over the JLC had grown: in early 1942 the JLC assumed responsibility for raising relief money and forwarding it according to lists that the Representation prepared. At the same time, the Representation ceased its own fundraising efforts, redirecting the \$30,000 it had already accumulated that year to "information and propaganda activities" such as its party newspaper, *Unzer Tsayt* [*Our Time*].³⁴

Unzer Tsayt, the central organ of the Representation, was a monthly Yiddish newspaper that released its first issue in February 1941.³⁵ Its writers included some of the most prominent Representation leaders, such as Nowogrodzki, Pat, and Mendelsohn. To describe it as a "newspaper" is only partially accurate. It is certainly true that *Unzer Tsayt* reported on events of Jewish interest in the United States, Great Britain, Palestine, Poland, the Soviet Union, and other countries. But the Representation also used *Unzer Tsayt* as a platform from which to broadcast its ideology in the form of articles about topics such as Bundist history or the activities of its rivals. As the party's central organ, *Unzer Tsayt* was surely intended to play an important role in the Representation's propaganda campaign on behalf of the JLC's fundraising efforts. I defend this claim in the following two chapters.

³⁴ Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 123-124, 128.

³⁵ International Jewish Labor Bund, *Jewish Labor Bund, 1897-1957* (New York: International Jewish Labor Bund, 1958), 26-27.

CHAPTER TWO: The Bundist Past and Present: Historiography and Holocaust in *Unzer Tsayt*

As recounted in Chapter One, there was interaction in the first half of the 20th century between the Jewish Socialists of New York City and those of Eastern Europe. American Jews sent aid to Eastern Europe with some regularity, particularly when Jews there suffered hardship. It would therefore not have been difficult for the American Representation of the Bund in Poland to convince the Jews of New York City during the 1940s to continue participating in this tradition by sending money and other aid to Eastern Europe. The true task before the Representation was to instill in them the belief that the Polish Bund alone should receive such aid. They undertook this campaign in two ways: they fashioned a historiography that served to cast the Polish Bund as most deserving of aid by virtue of past friendship with American Jewry, services rendered, and need; and they placed Bundist leaders within the narrative of Jewish suffering and resistance in Poland. *Unzer Tsayt* was, as it was for all the Representation's news and ideology, the primary medium of conveyance.

Fashioning History I: “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*”

One foundational text for history as the Representation sought to teach it is an article from the October 1942 issue of *Unzer Tsayt* entitled “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*” [“The Principle of Bundism”]. The article is a reprinting of a speech given by Bundist leader Henryk Erlich eight years before at a “jubilee celebration” of the Bund, a speech that “[has] remained unusually valuable and real.”¹ “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*” offers a

¹ Henryk Erlich, “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, October 1942, 8.

comprehensive account of the Bund's history, concentrating on the period from its genesis in 1897 until the conclusion of the Russian Civil War around 1920.

The most important function of the article is to convince readers of the Representation's claim that the Polish Bund ought to be the sole recipient of relief from *Unzer Tsayt* readers. The first section of the article lays out in clear terms what the author means when he speaks of the "Bund." Readers, he says, must not automatically think of the Bund as it existed in its earliest days. The Bund was formed as an organization to express "the social and national aspirations of the Jewish working class," and it did so according to a unique set of principles. However, he points out that the monolithic Bund only existed until 1914 or 1915, when the First World War "tore it into separate parts." After the war, the Bund was thus sundered: one arm in Russia, one in Poland, and several lesser limbs scattered through lands such as Latvia and Rumania. Of these, the Russian arm was quashed by the Bolsheviks and no longer exists, and the diminutive branches in other lands have strayed from true Bundist ideology. Therefore, "[w]hen we speak today about the history of the 'Bund' ... we must have in view ... the 'Bund' in Poland, the actual heir of the former 'Bund.'"²

This bold claim achieves several ends. In the first place, it reassures readers that the support of American Jews for the Bund in its early days was no ill, for in those early days the Bund was possessed of noble principles and was the greatest advocate of the Jewish working class in Eastern Europe. It also identifies the Polish Bund in the strongest terms as the only legitimate successor to this fragmented movement by virtue of its preservation of those same principles. It concludes that the energies and finances of Jews in America are best spent aiding the Polish Bund, the only contingent that can still

² Henryk Erlich, "Der Eyker fun Bundizm," *Unzer Tsayt*, October 1942, 8.

claim such tenets and goals, precisely because it was these traits as much as the Bund's advocacy for Jews that made it the ideal vanguard from the start.

The first principle that the Bund advanced, according to the article, is the “organizational principle,” the belief that each ethnicity in a state should be represented by an autonomous *organization* within a single statewide political party.³ It is not immediately obvious why this “organizational principle” should endear the Polish Bund to Jews in New York City and prompt them to offer it their support, especially since it existed as an independent political party in the Second Polish Republic. The article bridges this apparent dichotomy by juxtaposing the ideology and fate of the Polish Bund with those of Jewish socialists in New York.

“*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*” begins its advocacy of the organizational principle by a theoretical approach. It does not refer to Jews specifically, nor to any other ethnicity; the claim of the article is that the organizational principle benefits all nationalities. The organizational principle benefits all nationalities. The article explains that a statewide party needs autonomous ethnic components for two reasons: first, they allow the party to tailor its platforms and policies to the needs of its minority constituents, and second, only an organization that “awoke in the bosom of [its] given working class” can “penetrat[e] into the depths of the working people” of their respective group and rally them to Socialism.⁴ The benefit of the organizational principle is felt both ways: ethnic minorities within a state possess a conduit through which to shape policy relevant to them, and Socialism itself is able to extend its roots deeper into sources of support that might otherwise remain untapped.

³ Henryk Erlich, “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, October 1942, 8-9.

⁴ *Ibid.*

According to the article, Jewish Socialists in Poland (i.e., the Bund) and in America observed the organizational principle. It points out that the Bund was an active contributor to the founding of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDWP), and existed in its natural role as the Jewish organization within the party while striving to ease factional struggles. This account is accurate, though it does not mention that national-cultural autonomy was not initially part of the Bund's official platform, and that the RSDWP did not recognize the Bund as the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat.⁵ The Bund in the Second Polish Republic existed as a separate political party not by choice, but because the Polish proletariat was unwilling to "depart from its national limitation" and support a socialist party for all citizens of Poland. The article stresses that the Polish Bund did not embrace "separatism," nor did it abandon its organizational principle. Conditions in Poland were simply not "ripe."⁶ Again, despite the obvious bias, history is not misrepresented: in Poland, the Bund refused to place candidates on the election lists of other parties or even to seek alliances with them.⁷

This spin on history present in "*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*" is a necessary justification for the existence of the Polish Bund as a separate party in Poland, which would constitute a failure to realize the organizational principle. The Representation's historiography portrays a Bund eager to carry out the principle, but sabotaged by conditions that did not accommodate it. However, if the Polish Bund in the article (and in history) failed to integrate into the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) or some other national party, it did not fail in the other task of every national "organization": advocating for its ethnic constituency. The article demonstrates this by mentioning that the PPS recognizes

⁵ See Chapter One, pages 16-17.

⁶ Henryk Erlich, "*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*," *Unzer Tsayt*, October 1942, 9-10

⁷ See Chapter One, pages 20-21.

the right of Jews to use the Yiddish language in schools, courts, and administration. This Bund initiative and its success are corroborated by history: the Polish Bund established many secular Yiddish schools as part of its broader campaign for national-cultural autonomy, and these school systems thrived within the Second Polish Republic.⁸

“Der Eyker fun Bundizm” cites the Jewish labor movement in America as a “positive example” of the organizational principle in action,⁹ but does not offer further details. However, in order to advance the Representation’s claim that the Bund has historical importance to the Jews of New York City, the claim likely refers to the efforts of the Bund and several closely related groups in the New York City area, which were roughly contemporary with the aforementioned activities of the early Russian Bund and the Polish Bund and do appear to embody the organizational principle. Unfortunately, like their peers across the Atlantic, the American Bundists failed to fully realize the principle.

In *A Fire in Their Hearts*, Tony Michels notes the irony that in Russia the RSDWP refused to accept the Bund’s autonomy, while in America the Socialist Party itself proposed the JSF’s autonomy. The contrast of the Bund’s fates in the two lands goes even further: Bundists in imperial Russia and independent Poland could claim success in the realm of national cultural autonomy by virtue of the school systems and other social infrastructure they established. In New York City, by contrast, Michels concludes that the JSF’s Jewish national program went unrealized. However, for the historiographic purposes of the Representation, writing in 1942, the campaign could be

⁸ Bernard K. Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility: The General Jewish Workers Bund of Poland, 1917-1943* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 181; *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (online edition), s.v. “Language: Yiddish,” by Dovid Katz, accessed October 18, 2012, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Language/Yiddish>.

⁹ Henryk Erlich, “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, October 1942, 9.

considered a success: an autonomous Jewish Socialist organization existed within the American Socialist Party, and it conducted activities to benefit its constituency such as promoting women's suffrage and offering classes on "how to become a citizen" to recent immigrants.¹⁰ The work of the *landsmanshaftn* and the *Arbeter Ring* honored (albeit unwittingly) the Bund's organizational principle: the groups fostered Yiddish cultural life while assuming leadership roles in addressing the more practical socioeconomic problems of the Jewish people.

As a foil for the success stories of the early monolithic Bund, its successor the Polish Bund, and their peers in New York City--all of whom adhered to the organizational principle--the article offers the "negative demonstration" of the Soviet Union, which "cast away" the organizational principle of the Bund and forced it to "dissolve" into the general Communist Party. This was, by the article's own admission, not the result of a specifically anti-Jewish campaign by the Soviet regime, as Soviet Jews live no worse off than Gentile Soviet citizens, but unsurprisingly the article is most concerned with the effect of this sweeping policy on the Soviet Union's Jewish citizenry. Because there is no organization to advocate for Soviet Jews, they are faced with great sufferings that go unaddressed either because the government is responding poorly to all domestic issues or because the Jews' problems are not effectively communicated to it.¹¹ The article decries the Soviet practice as Communism of the "Prussian barracks" and reaffirms the Bund's loyalty to strict Marxism,¹² echoing the stance of the Bund in the United States.

¹⁰ Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 174.

¹¹ Henryk Erlich, "Der Eyker fun Bundizm," *Unzer Tsayt*, October 1942, 9-10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 11.

To summarize: the article “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*,” a reprint of a speech given by Henryk Erlich in 1934, is a cornerstone of the Representation’s attempt at presenting its own interpretation of history to its readership. The article begins by proclaiming that the Polish Bund is the true heir of the early monolithic Bund before its fracture in World War I. It defends this claim by arguing that the Polish Bund, among offshoots of the Bund in different regions, most successfully practiced the “organizational principle” of the Bund. The organizational principle holds that the purpose of the Bund is to serve as an autonomous Jewish component of a given country’s Socialist party, making the voices of Jewish Socialists heard to the broader party and fostering secular Yiddish culture among its Jewish constituency. The article defends the worth of this principle by way of comparative histories: the Polish Bund and American Jewish Socialists serve as positive examples of the principle in action, while the lack of a Russian Bund observant of the principle is cited as the cause of present Jewish misery in the Soviet Union.

“*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*” offers some detail as to why the Polish Bund is a positive example of the organizational principle realized, but no details as to why American Jewish Socialism is also positive. This detail must be derived from the exploits of American Jewish Socialists in the 20th century prior to the Second World War. Russian Bundists arriving in New York City after the 1905 revolution established organizations such as the Jewish Socialist Agitation Bureau and the Jewish Socialist Federation to bring Jewish Socialists into the fold of the American Socialist Party and to develop a “Yiddish culture” among them. Following the dissolution of these organizations, other entities like the *landsmanshaftn* and the *Arbeter Ring* continued the work of cultural construction and raised aid on behalf of Jewish Socialists back in Eastern

Europe. By the Bund's definition, these Jewish Socialist movements in America, particularly in New York City, adhered to the organizational principle, whether they did so under the banner of the Bund or not. The intention of the article is to prove to readers that the histories of the Polish Bund and American Jewish Socialism intertwine and mirror one another, justifying aid from New York City to occupied Poland channeled through the Representation.

A natural and perfectly justified reaction to the claim I have presented in this section is that I have not truly proven that the Representation referred to the events in the history of New York City Jewry that I described when it called American Jewish Socialism a positive example. I believe that the strongest evidence that my claim is correct lies in an earlier article in *Unzer Tsayt*, from the issue of March 1941. It is entitled "*Bund un Bundizm*" ["Bund and Bundism"], and it is another vital component in the Representation's effort to use history in order to inspire charity in its readers. Where "*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*" fashions a shared history of the Polish Bund and New York City's Jewish Socialists based primarily on *theory*, viz. the organizational principle, "*Bund un Bundizm*" grounds this history more concretely: while its American historical examples are no more specific than in "*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*," the claim that it lays upon them is far more explicit: "*Bund un Bundizm*" credits the Bund with all the accomplishments of Jewish Socialists in the United States.

Fashioning History II: "*Bund un Bundizm*"

Though published one year earlier (March 1941), the article "*Bund un Bundizm*" ["Bund and Bundism"], by Y. Levine-Shatskes, is an ideal complement to "*Der Eyker*

fun Bundizm” because of the two purposes it serves: it establishes the Bund’s claim to all the good works that American Jewish Socialism achieved, and it turns an eye toward the future of American Jewish Socialism. An examination of this article concludes this chapter’s treatment of the Representation’s historiography.

“*Bund un Bundizm*” begins in a very technical, almost choppy manner. Its first paragraph offers effective summary of the main argument:

Bundism is not ordinary Socialism, but *Jewish* Socialism, that is, Socialism that is appropriate for the wants and needs of the Jewish masses. The “Bund” is Bundism *in action*, that is, the Jewish Socialist *movement*.

There are two points in this opening statement that should be noted. First, no geographic location is specified as the home of Bundism. Second, and less obvious until later in the article, there exists no other manifestation of Jewish Socialism except for the Bund.¹³

The full implications of these two points emerge as the article progresses, and constitute both praise for the past of American Jewish Socialism and responsibility for the present.

The reason that the opening paragraph does not mention geography is that the Representation acknowledges that the living conditions of Jews vary from place to place and from age to age (e.g., czarist Poland and interwar Poland). Thus, each branch of the Bund will be different from its counterpart in a different land not because it is any better or worse, but because it is the appropriate Bund for the “wants and needs” of Jewry there. The first hint of the importance of the statement that Bundism *is* the Jewish Socialist movement is the claim that pseudo-Socialist movements opposed the Bund but ultimately could not overcome it because they lacked its “living contact” with the Jewish masses.¹⁴

¹³ Y. Levin-Shatskes, “*Bund un Bundizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, March 1941, 33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

“*Bund un Bundizm*” describes the hardships unique to Jewish Socialism in America. First, the efforts of Jewish Socialists were met with derision from imagined onlookers, who decried their foreign Socialist ideology and mocked their failure to “‘make a life’ in the golden land.” Next, the efforts themselves, though valiant, were often haphazard and ineffective. The author employs the metaphor of a farm, cursed with poor soil for sowing and reaping the fruits of Socialism. As an added burden, the broader American Socialist movement is impotent, and this naturally weakens its Jewish contingent. Lastly, the presence of such hostility and futility is often enough to turn an American Jew away from Socialism. He loses his desire to help a flagging movement and finds himself drawn toward a more vibrant one, whose ideology he slowly accepts.¹⁵

And yet for all these shortcomings, continues the article, American Jewish Socialism has enjoyed several significant triumphs. Here in America, workers who were not daunted by setbacks banded together to create “labor institutions,” presumably a reference to mutual aid societies such as the *landsmanshaftn* and *Arbeter Ring*. Abroad, Jewish Socialists in the clutches of the Gestapo have been rescued by the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC), a product of the American Jewish labor movement. The JLC “did not fall from heaven.” Rather, it was born from enthusiasm and action on the part of an admittedly small and weak movement. These feats demonstrate the great potential of the Jewish Socialist movement in America, if only the American Jewish masses would support it and expand it.¹⁶

All discussion of Bundism adapting to the character of whatever state it resides in and the uniquely American hardships that confronted Jewish Socialists there pivots

¹⁵ Y. Levin-Shatskes, “*Bund un Bundizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, March 1941, 35-36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

around the climactic claim of the article: “The Jewish Socialist movement in America is the Bundist movement *here*, independent of whether it carries the name of ‘Bund’ or not.”¹⁷ This claim echoes the article’s opening, which held that any manifestation of Jewish Socialism is Bundism, even if its practitioners are unaware of that. By this definition, even American Jewish Socialist movements that were at work before the Bundists’ arrival or never counted a single Bundist among their ranks are parts of the Bund. In this single sentence, “*Bund un Bundizm*” stakes the Bund’s claim to all facets of American Jewish Socialism: its triumphs, its failures, its potential for greatness, and its propensity for lassitude. All societal advancements effected by the *landsmanshaftn* and *Arbeter Ring*, all Yiddish cultural flowerings, all aid raised for and sent to Eastern Europe, are credited to the Bund.

It was the American Bundists, continues the article, who provided the years of Socialist enlightenment and education that galvanized the Jewish masses to form the JLC¹⁸ and rescue their brethren from fascist oppression. This is proof that great potential lies within the American Bundist movement, and the movement can realize this potential so long as it does not stray from the tenets of Bundism. The Bund in America is a part of the same “choir,” or “Socialist world orchestra” as the Bund in Poland. Because of this, the best course of action for American Jews is to put hand and shoulder to work in strengthening the movement in America. This will shape the future of Jews in America, Jews yet to come to America, and Jews who remain in Europe. The article concludes by noting the responsibility of American Jews to advance Socialism and democracy in the

¹⁷ Y. Levin-Shatskes, “*Bund un Bundizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, March 1941, 34.

¹⁸ See Chapter One, page 17.

world, particularly at such a time as World War II, when Socialism and democracy are opposed by forces of “arbitrariness and slavery.”¹⁹

Read together, the articles “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*” (October 1942) and “*Bund un Bundizm*” (March 1941) comprise a concise presentation of the historical narrative that the Representation sought to instill in readers of *Unzer Tsayt*. “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*” identifies the Polish Bund as the sole legitimate heir to the original Bund because it has continued the original Bund’s practice of the “organizational principle,” in which an ethnic organization exists as an autonomous group within a larger party, advocating for the group and seeing to its internal needs. “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*” considers the Polish Bund and the American Jewish Socialist movement to be successful examples of the organizational principle in practice, as they created better conditions for Jewish labor in those lands than in the Soviet Union, which no longer has a Bund. “*Bund un Bundizm*” explicitly labels any form of Jewish Socialism in America as Bundism in America and offers a defense of the maligned and rather dormant American Jewish Socialism, saying that if the American Bund musters the necessary drive, it can and has achieved good works for Jews in America and in Eastern Europe. “*Bund un Bundizm*” concludes by exhorting readers to lend their efforts to their Socialist movement in this crucial time.

These two articles also encapsulate the Representation’s fundraising pitch expressed throughout runs of *Unzer Tsayt*: the Representation reminds readers that its parent league, the Bund, enlightened and encouraged American Jewish Socialists and spurred them on to great deeds. Now American Jewish Socialism needs similar industry from the populace in order to once again aid the beleaguered Polish Bund, which has

¹⁹ Y. Levin-Shatskes, “*Bund un Bundizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, March 1941, 36-37.

historically been of such great benefit to Polish Jews and is their best hope of surviving the present war.²⁰

Chronicling the Holocaust

Of course, the Representation did not use *Unzer Tsayt* solely for the purpose of transmitting abstract ideology. The newspaper's primary aim was to report relevant news. This meant that virtually every issue contained one or several articles devoted to the plight of Jews in occupied Poland. In the first year of *Unzer Tsayt*'s circulation, it addressed oppressed Polish Jews very generally in a campaign to rouse readers to outrage about apparently inactive governments and to action of their own (i.e. contributions to relief funds). But beginning with the January 1942 issue, *Unzer Tsayt* also reported the fates of Bundist leaders Henryk Erlich and Viktor Alter after their re-arrest,²¹ and after reports of their deaths reached the United States in 1943, the two men were folded into the broader chronicle of tragedy.²² (The story of Erlich and Alter is told later in this chapter.) Other individual tales of the Holocaust later emerged in the Representation's 1944 volume *Geto in flamn [Ghetto in Flames]*, and were similarly appropriated.

The October 1942 article "*Veygeshri fun der Yidisher Bafelkerung in Poyln*" ["Cry of Pain from the Jewish Population in Poland"] is a good example of the tales of anonymous victims that characterized the early reports of *Unzer Tsayt*. The article is a

²⁰ These two articles effectively summarize the Representation's historical outlook, but they are not the only articles in which it is present. Other particularly good examples of such articles are Yankev Grosman's November 1943 article "*Di Poylishe Yidn un der 'Bund'*" ["Polish Jews and the Bund"] and Abraham Menes's February 1941 article "*Di Natsyonale Shlikhes fun Bund*" ["The National Mission of the Bund"].

Yankev Grosman, "*Di Poylishe Yidn un der 'Bund,'*" *Unzer Tsayt*, November 1943, 31-33; A. Menes, "*Di Natsyonale Shlikhes fun Bund,*" *Unzer Tsayt*, February 1941, 6-7.

²¹ For example, "Comrades Erlich and Alter Arrested Again," *Unzer Tsayt*, January 1942.

²² For example, "The Murder of Henryk Erlich and Viktor Alter," *Unzer Tsayt*, April 1943.

reprint of a speech given on September 2, 1942 at an “international meeting” in London by Szmuel Zygielbojm, a Bundist who lived and worked there during the war. The article does not lack figures and anecdotes for the arousal of pathos in its readers. “[S]ources in our country [Poland]” report rates of starvation and tolls of mass executions, and among the stories is a description of mothers gassed while their infant children suckled.²³ However, not a single name is provided. Ultimately, though, this does not matter. In concluding his speech, Zygielbojm proclaims:

As a representative of these masses, I bring to the attention their outcry of pain and protest and their call to humanity to find ways to stop the greatest crimes in human history!...[T]here will be no one to save in Europe if we do not find the way at this time to protect the population of Poland and of other occupied lands.²⁴

The audience of the speech and Jews in New York City reading the Yiddish-language transcript of it need only know that there are *masses* of suffering Jews in Poland in need of help. Because the speaker is a Bundist proclaiming himself to be a “representative of these masses” and the speech was relayed to them by the Representation’s newspaper, New York City Jews reading *Unzer Tsayt* would have concluded that the surest way of contributing would be through the Representation and its affiliated organizations.

But it was not only with New York City’s Jews in mind that the Representation wrote of victims: during the war, the American Jewish collective consciousness became something of a battleground for both governmental and non-governmental propaganda efforts. In particular, the Polish government-in-exile kept its finger on the pulse of American Jewish public opinion in order to marshal support for its cause and monitor the

²³ “Veygeshri fun der Yidisher Bafelkerung in Poyln,” *Unzer Tsayt*, October 1942, 19.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

success of the Soviet Union's "information efforts" among American Jewry.²⁵ Aware of this influence held by its readership and seeking, perhaps, to muster visible support for its emissary to the Polish government-in-exile in London, Zygielbojm, the Representation issued several articles in *Unzer Tsayt* about the government-in-exile, occasionally utilizing the Jewish plight. One such article was April 1942's "*Un vu zaynen di maysim?*" ["And where are the Actions?"]. This diatribe against empty gestures on the part of the London Government concerning Polish Jews deals with the victims far more harshly than does "*Veygeshri*." Its opening paragraphs mock the Polish government-in-exile, pointing out that "[t]he present government over Poland has its own way to solve the Jewish Question," and that the government-in-exile is powerless to ameliorate the situation.²⁶ It is language crafted to elicit anger rather than pathos. Printed in a New York City-based Yiddish newspaper, this harangue would have had no direct effect on the London Government. Instead, the motivation behind this article is clearly to foster outrage among readers and promote the opinion that the Polish government-in-exile should take more decisive action to aid its beleaguered Jewish constituents in the hope that the government would detect this opinion and respond accordingly.

Before the war, Henryk Erlich and Viktor Alter had served on the Central Committee of the Bund in Poland. When German forces invaded Poland, the two men did not immediately flee Warsaw, being among those who advocated defending Warsaw alongside the Polish workers. However, when the Central Committee voted to flee, Erlich and Alter made for Lublin, southeast of Warsaw, before *Wehrmacht* movements prompted them to instead move more directly eastward toward Soviet lines. They

²⁵ Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 83.

²⁶ F. Shvartz, "*Un Wu Zaynen di Maysim?*," *Unzer Tsayt*, April 1942, 27.

became separated and were arrested separately by Soviet police in late September 1939, and were imprisoned and interrogated until June 1941. Blatman explains that the Soviets regarded Erlich in particular as the highest-ranking Polish political leader they had captured and interrogated the two men primarily concerning Socialist political activity in interwar Poland and their Socialist connections in Western Europe. A Soviet military tribunal convicted them of sedition and collaboration with opponents of the regime and sentenced them to death, but they were released soon after as part of Josef Stalin's ploy to garner Western support in the midst of some of his country's darkest days of the war.²⁷

Once released, they began working in the Soviet project of creating a "Jewish committee that would help mobilize Western Jewish public opinion for the Soviet war effort." The two men established the Jewish anti-Hitlerist Committee (ŻKA), and in October 1941 they sent a memorandum to Stalin and Lavrenty Beria (head of the NKVD, the Soviet secret police) detailing its objectives. They wanted the ŻKA to provide relief to Polish Jewish refugees who reached the Soviet Union, recruit American Jewish volunteers to form a legion on the Eastern Front, assist the Jewish underground in Poland, and "act on behalf" of Jews in German-occupied lands. This agenda would have made the ŻKA an autonomous entity able to collaborate with other organizations and governments. Erlich and Alter were already in contact with supporters in Britain and the United States.²⁸ It was too much for the NKVD, which rearrested them on similar charges of foreign entanglements in December 1941, executing Alter by firing squad on February 17, 1943. Erlich had already hanged himself the previous year.²⁹

²⁷ Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 69-70, 73.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 74-6

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 81, 84-5.

Upon learning that Erlich and Alter were once again imprisoned, the Representation began a campaign to have them freed, but to no avail. The American and British governments, neither of whom wished to sour relations with the Soviet Union in the wake of its heroic defense of Stalingrad, labeled the matter a Soviet internal affair and said nothing more. The Polish government-in-exile used the two men as a point of debate concerning the citizenship of displaced persons. According to Daniel Blatman, news of Erlich's and Alter's deaths was regarded by the Representation as a death knell of Polish Jewry. They despaired at their inability to save such important leaders and at the purging of their beloved party's structure.³⁰

The Representation recast this despair into a dire call for action. One instance of this transformation occurs in the April 1943 issue of *Unzer Tsayt*, which reported of the deaths of Erlich and Alter in its front page article and in several other articles within the same issue.³¹ On the 19th of the same month, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began, and this same issue of *Unzer Tsayt* contains an article about it. The conclusion of the article concerning the Uprising contains this excerpt:

In this call [from the ghetto fighters] lives the spirit of generations of Jewish revolutionary fighters. In it the deep traces of Erlich, Alter, and other unforgettable people are felt; it is a worthy service... [to] the defense of Warsaw in September 1939, [to] heroic underground.

In this call a further demand to the world is heard: do not silence our tragedy, do not let a people be annihilated!³²

³⁰ Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 81-3, 86.

³¹ That aforementioned first article of the issue is "The Murder of Henrik Erlich and Viktor Alter." The following five articles are either about the deaths Erlich and Alter or articles whose authorship is attributed to the two men. Not until page 22 does the article "Armed Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto" appear. *Unzer Tsayt*, April 1943.

³² "Bavofente Vidershtrand in Warshaver Geto," *Unzer Tsayt*, April 1943, 22.

The Representation wasted no time inducting Erlich and Alter into its chronicle of Jewish victimhood. The very same issue that reports their deaths also uses them as a reason to extol the Warsaw Ghetto fighters and places them in the same tradition of heroism that began with the 1939 defense of Warsaw and continued with underground activists. All elements of this tradition issue a call to the world not to allow the annihilation of Polish Jews. Since this call is being communicated in Yiddish, the onus of alerting the world and thus preventing annihilation falls on Jewish readers in New York City. The Representation's fears for the future of Polish Jewry did not halt its appeals for action, but rather fueled new ones. Articles specifically about Erlich and Alter grew sparser following April 1943, but articles lamenting the plight of Jews in Poland and calling for action from readers remained a regular feature.

The 1944 collection *Geto in flamn [Ghetto in Flames]* contains essays about events in Poland and elsewhere. The essays about occupied Poland focus almost entirely on the stories of individuals, most of whom are Bundists. Nonetheless, these personal accounts contain references to the Bund's past and to its anti-Zionist stance, thus advancing the same messages that the Representation presented in *Unzer Tsayt*. The piece "*Der Untererdisher 'Bund'*" ["The Underground Bund"], for example, describes heroes such as F.J. Zilberberg, a young Bundist whom the Nazis tortured in front of his wife in order to obtain information about Bundist documents. He did not yield the information. It also describes the relief work that the Bund carried out, such as establishing soup kitchens. "We do all this," reads a Bundist report quoted in the essay, "because we are full of the will to accomplish our task...our work is dictated by a stubborn will to struggle with the enemy...it is...our glorious tradition of socialist

struggle.” Another quoted report rejected “every emigration solution of the Jewish Question,” referring to Zionism.³³ The essay “*Der Nes fun Ufshtand*” [“The Miracle of Resistance”] describes several episodes from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising before concluding, “the heroes in the ghettos were...heirs of generations.”³⁴ Though the volume is dominated by individual narratives, it is careful to insert them into the same general Bundist history as other reports of the Holocaust by the Representation.

In January 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the formation of the War Refugee Board and assigned it \$1 million dollars in funding. The purpose of the War Refugee Board was the “rescue and relief of ‘the victims of enemy oppression.’” However, the Board’s efforts promptly stalled: leaders of the U.S. Treasury Department such as Hans Morgenthau were eager to proceed, but figures from the State Department hesitated, arguing that the Nazis would likely requisition any aid supplies sent to the ghettos and that the United States was not prepared to handle the outright rescue of Jews in occupied lands.³⁵ The following March, *Unzer Tsayt* ran an article by Shloime Mendelsohn, who began by briefly announcing the creation of the War Refugee Board and then used the rest of the first page to harangue the American government for waiting until 1944 to take this step when the slaughter of Jews had begun years before and the Jews of Poland had already engaged in tragic, heroic resistance.³⁶

Additionally, the article faults American Jewish society for sharing in this “defeatist passivity.” The final section of the article is a call for continued action on the

³³ Sh. Herts, “*Der Untererdisher Bund*,” in *Geto in flamm* (New York: American Representation of the General Jewish Workers’ Union in Poland, 1944), 61, 68-69, 75-76.

³⁴ Jacob Pat, “*Der Nes fun Ufshtand*,” in *Geto in flamm* (New York: American Representation of the General Jewish Workers’ Union in Poland, 1944), 95.

³⁵ Monty N. Penkower, “Jewish Organizations and the Creation of the U.S. War Refugee Board,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 450 (July 1980): 133-5, <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed February 3, 2012).

³⁶ Shloime Mendelsohn, “Der Retung-Board un di Flikht fun der Gezelshaft,” *Unzer Tsayt*, March 1944, 3.

Jews' part. "The American board is...unable to accomplish much," proclaimed Mendelsohn. "All is dependent on whether the board will quickly swim over...proceedings and propaganda and will pass to actions." The creation of the Board, he concluded, ought to "stimulate a strengthening of activism" on the part of Jewish organizations, whose responsibility it now was "to help the board and make demands of it."³⁷ An article that begins as a simple news report draws upon the language of suffering and heroism to reach its climax pleading for further aid.

Accounts of Jewish suffering in occupied Poland had a regular presence in issues of *Unzer Tsayt*. During the first two years of the newspaper's run, such articles spoke in general terms and sought to accomplish several goals. Some articles, like "*Veygeshri fun der Yidisher Bafelkerung in Poyln*," made direct appeals to the Jewish readers of *Unzer Tsayt* in New York City to contribute to relief efforts. Others, like "*Un vu zaynen di Maysim?*," were intended as catalysts of a particular opinion. "*Un vu zaynen di Maysim?*" looked to stir outrage directed at the Polish government-in-exile. Following the deaths of Henryk Erlich and Viktor Alter, those two respected and beloved Bundist leaders became a part of the continuum of woe. Tales of individual heroism in the volume *Geto in flamn* also harkened to the Bund's tradition of service and sacrifice for the Jews. Even Franklin Roosevelt's creation of the War Refugee Board was an occasion for Representation leader Shloime Mendelsohn to recount Jewish suffering and resistance in Poland and to urge his readers on to even greater outpouring of support. The Representation's tales of Jewish victims in the General Government were ubiquitous appeals to their readers' sense of solidarity with their brethren across the ocean and warnings that the wider American society could not be relied upon to save them.

³⁷ Shloime Mendelsohn, "*Der Retung-Board un di Flikht fun der Gezelshaft*," *Unzer Tsayt*, March 1944, 4.

CHAPTER THREE: Solving the “Jewish Question”: Anti-Zionism in *Unzer Tsayt*

Though the Representation claimed that the first item on its and the American government’s agenda ought to be saving the Jews of Europe who remained alive,³⁸ a secondary but significant effort both in print and in its dealings with other groups aimed at resisting the American Zionist camp. The theoretical criticisms of Zionism that the Representation presented in *Unzer Tsayt* can be reduced to this: the very tenets of Bundism that made it the ideology Jews should adopt were violated or rejected outright by Zionists. While the Bund urged Jews to remain in their countries of residence, support the Socialist movement of that country, and forge a Jewish culture around the Yiddish language, Zionists (the Representation claimed), desired that Jews emigrate to Palestine or at least assign it primacy in their thoughts and that they forsake Yiddish for Hebrew. Bundism maintained hope that Jew and Gentile could coexist in a true Socialist world in all lands. The Zionism described in critical *Unzer Tsayt* articles abandoned all faith in Jewish Diaspora life, dismissing not only the accomplishments of Jews there, but the feasibility of national coexistence and of democracy. In the Representation’s eyes, the most important consequence of the radical differences between the two movements was that Bundism offered a solution to the Jewish Question (put simply, what is the place of Jews in Europe?), whereas Zionism benefited only Palestine. Additionally, Zionism’s conviction that Jews would only prosper in a state of their own demonstrated a rejection of the democracy and ethnic coexistence that the United States championed. The practical critiques of Zionism were that a Jewish state in Palestine would not be self-sustaining, and would be constantly in need of charity from the Diaspora, and that the

³⁸ Shloime Mendelsohn, “Di ‘Heylike’ Milkhome Kegn ‘Bund,’” *Unzer Tsayt*, April 1944, 24.

creation of a Jewish state would effectively strip the Jews of citizenship in the other countries where they lived, forcing assimilation upon them. “Between ‘Diaspora’ and Palestine,” proclaimed *Unzer Tsayt*, “there is no possible balance...[A]ll that Palestine accomplishes is at complete odds with the Jewish life of the ‘Diaspora,’ and no peace is possible between them.”³⁹ This distinction between abstract and practical critiques is imperfect, and some articles of *Unzer Tsayt* can reside in either category, but I consider it a useful one because it demonstrates that the Representation attempted to discredit Zionism in the same realms wherein it lauded the Bund: the theoretical and the actual. By thus defining the opposition in *Unzer Tsayt*, the Representation sharpened the image readers would have of the Bund.

The Representation was responding to a Zionist movement that had been steadily growing in size and influence in the United States since its beginning (at roughly the same time as Jewish Socialism), and whose growth had spiked in the latter half of the 1930s. The first section of this chapter will chronicle this rise of American Zionism until the Second World War in order to better contextualize the Representation’s animosity, fear, and activity. In the second section of this chapter, I detail the criticisms that the Representation leveled against their Zionist contemporaries in *Unzer Tsayt*, which included both ideological and practical arguments. I begin with the Representation’s defense of Yiddish as the mother tongue of the Jews, not to be subjugated by Hebraists in Palestine; and of the so-called “Diaspora,” which Zionists disparaged but which the Bund lauded. Next, I focus on an article called “*Der Eyker fun Tsiyonizm*” [“The Principle of Zionism”], wherein Representation leader Emanuel Nowogrodzki both defends Bundism from a Zionist’s accusations and disputes the Zionist position on the same points. I

³⁹ S. Kahn, “*Palestine un di Yidn-Frage*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, December 1941, 7.

consider “*Der Eyker fun Tsiyonizm*” the *magnum opus* of the Representation in its anti-Zionist writings because the points of debate are so fundamental to the Bundism-Zionism conflict and because the title harkens to “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm.*” Finally, I examine the Representation’s claim that a Jewish State in Palestine would threaten the status of Jews remaining in the Diaspora.

The Life of American Zionism

The story of American Zionism begins in the late-19th-century Russian Empire. Zionism, which at its most basic desires the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, originated in this time and place because Russian Jews were becoming increasingly insecure in their homeland. In his book *The Emergence of American Zionism*, Mark Raider explains that the Jews of Western and Central Europe did not initially embrace Zionism because they had already assimilated to various degrees and had undergone legal emancipation. Jews of the Russian Empire, however, still lived primarily in cloistered, segregated communities under more restrictive imperial laws. In their isolation, Russian Jews either lived according to strong traditional law and ritual or embraced the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment), which emerged in the early 19th century and promoted spiritual renewal and Hebrew revival along with some acculturation in Russian society.⁴⁰ Raider casts the first proto-Zionists as rebels against both these trends, “arrayed against the camps of both Western assimilationism and Eastern religious orthodoxy.”⁴¹ One of the forerunners to Zionism (the term was not coined until 1890⁴²)

⁴⁰ *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (online edition), s.v. “Language: Yiddish,” by Dovid Katz, accessed October 18, 2012, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Language/Yiddish>.

⁴¹ Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 6.

was the movement Hibbat Zion [Love of Zion], which emerged in 1881 and advocated use of the Hebrew language, emigration to Palestine, and establishment there of self-sufficient agricultural settlements.⁴³ Even before Zionism and Bundism were officially established, early proponents of those ideologies, such as members of Hibbat Zion or the Vilna movement, engaged in debate.⁴⁴

It was not only with other parties or ideological opponents that Zionists contended. Like Bundists, Zionists feuded among themselves on the issue of how their ideology would take effect amid the realities of Jewish life in the Russian Empire, the United States, or elsewhere. Two of the earliest Zionist camps were Political Zionism (championed by Theodor Herzl), which looked to establish a Jewish State through political means, such as negotiations with the Ottoman Empire or Great Britain; and Practical Zionism, which made its priority the settlement of Palestine while it was still under Ottoman rule. Several other divisions of Zionism existed; future President of the State of Israel Chaim Weizmann coined the term “Synthetic Zionism” in 1908 as a merger of Political and Practical Zionisms’ goals.

Synthetic Zionism espoused the doctrine of *Gegenwartsarbeit* [“present work”], which called for Jewish revival in the Diaspora before the Jewish State was formed. This project took such forms as schools for Modern Hebrew, the establishment of Jewish sports clubs (Bar Kokhba, which later became the Maccabi Games, was founded in this time), and the participation of Jewish parties in secular politics to represent Jewish (and

⁴² *Encyclopedia Judaica* (online edition, through the Gale Virtual Reference Library), s.v. “Zionism,” by Getzel Kressel, accessed December 28, 2012, <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587521568&v=2.1&u=umuser&it=r&p=GvRL&sw=w>.

⁴³ The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe (online edition), s.v. “Hibat Tsiyon,” by Michael Stanislawski, accessed December 6, 2012, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hibat_Tsiyon.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 195.

Zionist) interests.⁴⁵ Engaging in *Gegenwartsarbeit* in the Russian Empire, Zionists would have interacted with a constituency that overlapped the Bund's. I found no mention of *Gegenwartsarbeit* in my reading of *Unzer Tsayt*, but the July 1942 article "Yidishe Akhodes" ["Jewish Unity"] faults

those who, because of 'higher Jewish interests' (simply a friendly word for Zionism) bowed in the ministerial corridors and in the Gentile pro-Palestine committees before the...fascist Polish government.⁴⁶

Presumably, this echoes earlier Bundist objections to that and other components of *Gegenwartsarbeit*. Several Zionist luminaries vehemently opposed *Gegenwartsarbeit*,⁴⁷ and so to participate in it constituted a definite identification with one form of Zionism and not another.

A crucial moment in the development of Zionism within the Russian Empire was the 1881 assassination of Czar Alexander II. The wave of pogroms that followed increased the popularity of Hibbat Zion.⁴⁸ A significant number of Jews emigrated to the United States. There, the atmosphere of freedom and tolerance coupled with the presence of already-established Jewish communities and communal organizations allowed the infant proto-Zionist movement to expand and splinter into camps like the Labor Zionists, who viewed the Zionist enterprise as a Socialist enterprise, and the Religious Zionists, whose vision of Jewish life in Palestine was one lived according to *Halakha* (Jewish

⁴⁵ *Encyclopedia Judaica* (online edition, through the Gale Virtual Reference Library), s.v. "Zionism," by Getzel Kressel, accessed December 28, 2012, <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587521568&v=2.1&u=umuser&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w>.

⁴⁶ B. Shefner, "Yidishe Akhodes," *Unzer Tsayt*, July 1942, 11.

⁴⁷ e.g., Nachman Syrkin in the Russian Empire and Nehemiah de Lieme in the Netherlands. Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 319-320; *Encyclopedia Judaica* (online edition, through the Gale Virtual Reference Library), s.v. "Zionism,."

⁴⁸ The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe (online edition), s.v. "Hibat Tsiyon," by Micahel Stanislawski, accessed December 6, 2012, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hibat_Tsiyon; also see Chapter One, pages 10-11.

law).⁴⁹ However, the most important group in this period remained Hibbat Zion. In the United States, Hibbat Zion assumed a more nationalist character than other Jewish movements and engaged more with the existing leadership of American Jewry. It won over many leaders in religion or the Jewish press to its cause, but also encountered opposition from groups such as the Central Conference of American Rabbis (a national association of Reform Jewish rabbis), which explained that Jews were a religious community rather than a national one, and a national conference of Jewish labor leaders, which affirmed the importance of the Yiddish language and renounced any presence of a “Jewish Question” in America. Ultimately, later Zionist movements absorbed or supplanted Hibbat Zion, but Raider identifies it as the movement whose far reach and nationalist rhetoric made Zionism on the model of Theodor Herzl feasible in the United States.⁵⁰

The turn of the 20th century was the moment at which Zionism emerged in the United States, and it emerged at that time for multiple reasons. Perhaps the most obvious and important cause was the person of Theodor Herzl. Herzl’s writings, such as his book *Der Judenstaat [The Jewish State]*, made an early case for Political Zionism.⁵¹ Another formative event was the 1903 Kishinev Pogrom, which became the “archetypal pogrom” of Eastern Europe for world Jewry because of its scale and the literature it inspired.⁵² Following the pogrom, Jewish and non-Jewish newspapers alike published personal letters that arrived in streams to American Jews from relatives in the area who had

⁴⁹ Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 7-9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 11-13.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13, 16.

⁵² The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe (online edition), s.v. “Pogroms,” by John Klier, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Pogroms>.

witnessed or survived the pogrom. Jews of all cities and walks of life were horrified at what they read and clamored for the resettlement of endangered Russian Jews, some pointing to Palestine. This fervor faded as the violence subsided, revealing to American Zionist leaders the link between Jewish crisis and sympathy for Zionism.⁵³

No wing of Zionism ever brought all Zionists or Zionists sympathizers into its fold, but Labor Zionism (championing a Socialist Jewish State) assembled the largest following during the 1910s and dominated the Zionist scene in the United States for decades to come. Raider explains the success of Labor Zionism by three main factors: first, it counted among its ranks some of the most influential American Jewish leaders, such as Louis Brandeis. Second, by treating Palestine as “a progressive Jewish society-in-the-making, rather than as an object of pious devotion,” it did not alienate constituents who adhered to a belief in the American Dream and were less strict in their observance than the Religious Zionists. Lastly, Labor Zionism was the incarnation of Zionism most attuned to the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine) because it revered the pioneer ethos and cooperative efforts of the *Yishuv*. Raider concludes that Labor Zionism became the “mainstream” Zionism within American Jewry, even if its supporters did not consciously choose to support Labor Zionism over some other form.⁵⁴ It was Labor Zionism that would serve as the most effective source and conduit of aid from American Jewry to pioneers in Palestine.

The main voice of Labor Zionism in the United States was the Poalei Zion [Workers of Zion] Party, founded in 1905. Poalei Zion was the offspring of a radical Socialist Zionist party in the Russian Empire, and its early composition and activity

⁵³ Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 17-18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 27, 29.

reflected this descent. The party combined an agenda of Labor Zionism with one of immigrant self-help. Unsurprisingly, many party members were primarily interested in Labor Zionism the world over and the global effort to erect a Jewish Socialist state in Palestine. However, there were other projects and events more appropriate for Jews more interested in the American life. For example, the party raised money for the pioneers in Palestine, but also created local institutions such as cooperative grocery stores and bakeries.⁵⁵ The multifaceted nature of Poalei Zion meant that it could attract and retain a diverse following, if not a numerically large one. Poalei Zion was also a polyglot party. Its network of *Folkshuln* [Peoples' Schools] around the eastern United States offered instruction in the (modern) Hebrew and Yiddish languages, along with classes on the Hebrew Bible and Yiddish literature.⁵⁶

Gegenwartsarbeit was alive and well in the United States, and some Jewish leaders were opposed to it. One of the leading newspapers among Jews in New York City was the Yiddish-language daily *Forverts* [*Forward*]. At first, under the editorship of Abraham Cahan, *Forverts* was at best indifferent and at worst hostile toward Zionism.⁵⁷ Cahan himself wrote an editorial in the May 5, 1921 issue of *Forverts* entitled “*Far vos a sotsyalist ken nit zany keyn tsiyonist*” [“Why a socialist cannot be a Zionist”]. Cahan explained that not only was the land of Palestine too small and poor to sustain all the Jews of the world, but the very Zionist project to create a Jewish home there was “chauvinistic nationalism,” which every Socialist, as an internationalist, had a duty to resist. Poalei Zion, he acknowledged, believed that it had merged Socialism and

⁵⁵ Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 30, 32.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

⁵⁷ Yaacov N. Goldstein, *Jewish Socialists in the United States: The Cahan Debate 1925-1926* (Brighton, England: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 17.

Zionism, but this was impossible. Socialism is internationalist and envisions all nations living as brothers, while Zionism is distinctly nationalist and wishes for the Jews, a thoroughly international people by now, to live apart from other nations.⁵⁸

However, after Cahan took a tour of Palestine in 1925, he became a supporter of Labor Zionism, and his journalism reflected this.⁵⁹ In an article from the *Forverts* of December 15, 1925, Cahan acknowledged that Palestine needed to develop its industry and that it would remain only a small Jewish center. However, it would “always play some part in Jewish life.” Cahan concluded the piece by saying, “the idealists who sacrifice themselves for the building of Eretz Israel and the agricultural settlements...deserve...the warmest sentiments and the best wishes of every socialist.”⁶⁰ Here and elsewhere, Cahan renounced the view of Bundists (and of his past writings) that Zionism and Socialism were incompatible. Between December 1925 and May 1926, Cahan allowed the pages of *Forverts* played host to a debate between many of the leading figures in American Jewish Socialism concerning the relationship between Socialism and Zionism in order allow real discussion of the topic.⁶¹

Baruch Charney-Vladek, a member of the Bund in the Russian Empire who had immigrated to the United States in 1908, faulted the Zionist use of the Yiddish language to further its aims because Zionism had no interest in the “development of Yiddish cultural in the Diaspora,” which ought to have been the true goal of Yiddish education, and sought only to advance its ultimate aim of building a Jewish homeland. David

⁵⁸ Abraham Cahan, “*Far vos a sotsyalist ken nit zayn keyn tsiyonist,*” *Forverts*, 5 May 1921, 4.

⁵⁹ Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 48.

⁶⁰ Abraham Cahan, “Is There a Future for Eretz Israel?,” *Forverts*, 15 December, 1925. Quoted in Yaacov N. Goldstein, *Jewish Socialists in the United States: The Cahan Debate 1925-1926* (Brighton, England: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 130-131.

⁶¹ Goldstein, *Jewish Socialists in the United States*, 35.

Einhorn, another Bundist immigrant, wrote simply, “Zionism is a nationalism that hauls us backwards.”⁶² Bundist leaders, in short, resented the Zionists’ appropriation of the Yiddish language in a network of schools and other institutions that ultimately operated for the benefit of the *Yishuv*, rather than world Jewry as a whole.

Despite this opposition in the press, Poalei Zion’s broad appeal allowed it to make inroads among American Jewish Socialists, as evidenced by a series of collaborative fundraisers for the *Yishuv* in the 1920s with the United Hebrew Trades, an entity promoting cooperation between Jewish Socialist groups. Even non-Jewish Socialist organizations such as the American Federation of Labor expressed sympathy and solidarity with the party’s program.⁶³ Unsurprisingly, this resulted in some conflict with already established, more internationally oriented Jewish Socialists. In particular, one leader of the *Arbeter Ring* proclaimed “every member...is in duty bound to be loyal to the interests of the labor movement.” New members of the *Arbeter Ring* swore an oath to join the union of their trade and vote in elections for the candidates of “working class parties,” i.e., the Socialist Party or Socialist Labor Party.⁶⁴

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Poalei Zion and other Labor Zionist groups remained small in number,⁶⁵ but Labor Zionism’s clout increased due to several social and political factors. Hostility toward Jews in 1920s America manifested itself in

⁶² Yaacov Goldstein, *Jewish Socialists in the United States: The Cahan Debate 1925-1926* (Brighton, England: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 66-67; Baruch Charney-Vladek, *Forward*, 9 January, 1926, quoted in Goldstein, *Jewish Socialists in the United States*, 37; David Einhorn, *Forward*, 8 March, 1926, quoted in Goldstein, *Jewish Socialists in the United States*, 39.

⁶³ Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 37, 48.

⁶⁴ Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A., Vol. I: An Industrial, Political, and Cultural History of the Jewish Labor Movement 1882-1914* (New York: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee, 1950), 309-310.

⁶⁵ Between 1914 and 1918, Labor Zionism’s numbers increased from 2,630 to 7,000 members. By 1933, *Poalei Tsiyon*’s membership was 5,000, and only 63,850 people (1.5% of the population of the United States) were members of any American Zionist group. Raider, *American Zionism*, 41, 58-59.

immigration restrictions, university quotas, the rhetoric of Henry Ford, and agitation by the Ku Klux Klan, and this reactivated the crisis-inspired upwelling of support of American Jewry for Zionism. Labor Zionism remained the most connected to *Yishuv* life, and Poalei Zion in particular reprinted articles from the Hebrew press in Palestine in its own newspaper in addition to hosting visiting delegates from the *Yishuv*, including David Ben-Gurion.⁶⁶ Following the first one in 1924, Poalei Zion fundraising campaigns raised more each year, increasing from \$50,000 that year to \$175,000 in 1930. But, as Raider points out, finances do not tell the complete story: each year, the donations came from more and more groups, including mutual aid societies such as the *landsmanshaftn*. Lastly, Labor Zionists reached out to Jewish youth with activities such as summer camps (often run by labor leaders from Palestine) and Hebrew schools. The scope of American *Gegenwartsarbeit* was increasing: Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) president Solomon Goldman envisioned ““a chain of Zionist schools for children throughout the country”” where teachers were equipped with ““guides on Palestine and Zionism”” and the ““ablest young Jewish minds”” were ““nurse[d]...for Jewish and Zionist leadership.”” Goldman admitted his goal was beyond the ZOA’s capability, and his particular vision was never implemented, but by 1941 an estimated 200,000 or more Jewish children were studying in Jewish schools.⁶⁷

Like many groups, Labor Zionist parties’ membership dropped during the first years of the Great Depression,⁶⁸ but the movement was able to survive and even grow in influence due to a merger in the United States of Poalei Zion with Zeirei Zion, a Labor

⁶⁶ Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 42-43.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 49, 51-52.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 13, 16.

Zionist youth movement, and an alliance with several groups in Palestine. At the 18th Zionist Congress (Prague, 1933), Labor Zionists comprised 138 of the 318 delegates, their first showing of such dominance within American and world Zionism.⁶⁹ Additional developments in world events sustained dominance of Labor Zionism during the 1930s. In its 1937 Columbus Platform, the Central Conference of American Rabbis now publicly declared its support for the *Histadrut* (the umbrella organization of labor in Palestine). Reports of Jewish hardships in Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union also won over Americans to the cause. Lastly, the emergence of Revisionist Zionism as the right wing of world Zionism aroused a great deal of distaste among Zionist sympathizers and provoked movement within Zionism toward the left wing of Labor Zionism.⁷⁰ At the 19th Zionist Congress (Lucerne, 1935), the Labor Zionists emerged again as the dominant faction and bolstered the feat by forging a coalition with the centrist General Zionists. Although the actual fraction of the Jewish population that belonged to a Zionist group remained small, Mark Raider demonstrates that American Jews were increasingly forced to engage with Zionism and construct their identities around it, using labels like “‘non-Zionism,’ ‘cultural Zionism,’ ‘spiritual Zionism,’ ‘philanthropic Zionism,’ and even ‘anti-Zionism.’” Furthermore, popular support for the *Yishuv* continued to mount even while Zionism's numbers remained low.⁷¹

On the eve of World War II, American Jewry watched with alarm as Western nations refused to admit Jewish refugees streaming out of Germany, and as Great Britain imposed restrictions on immigration into Palestine. In June 1938, representatives of four

⁶⁹ Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 59, 62.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 173-176.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 182-183, 190.

large Jewish organizations held a meeting in an attempt to craft a unified front and strategy, but they were unsuccessful.⁷² The invasion of Poland in September 1939 prompted the most lucrative fundraising for the *Yishuv* yet. Multiple organizations held largely independent campaigns. That of the National Labor Committee for Palestine (NLCP) was essentially a continuation of Poalei Zion's yearly fundraisers during the 1920s. The NLCP and Labor Zionism more generally sought to expand the resources and infrastructure of the *Yishuv* so that it could absorb more "illegal" immigrants (those who entered Palestine without British consent) from occupied Europe. The efforts reached more Jews than ever before, and some collaborative efforts in the early 1940s garnered millions of dollars.⁷³

This was the state of American Zionism at the time of the Bundists' arrival and the formation of the American Representation of the Bund in Poland in 1941. It was not a homogenous movement, and different Zionist parties and groups were given to squabbling. It was not a numerically large movement, never claiming more than 1.5 percent of the American Jewish population as official members.⁷⁴ However, Zionism was an ideology that every Jew in America had at least encountered, and it commanded considerable sympathy even among non-members. Zionism's influence, then, was not the result of a mass following among American Jews, but of outreach campaigns comparable to the East European *Gegenwartsarbeit* and a ubiquity in American Jewry's collective consciousness. Zionism also gained political clout in the United States thanks in large part to Louis Brandeis, who brought President Woodrow Wilson around to

⁷² Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 189-195.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 199-201.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

Zionism. Wilson later supported the Balfour Declaration and gave public support to a Jewish National Home.⁷⁵ As was the case with the Bund in Eastern Europe, American Jews demonstrated a propensity for stepping up their vocal and monetary support for Zionism and the *Yishuv* in the wake of traumas to world Jewry such as the Kishinev Pogrom or the onset of World War II. Zionist fundraising efforts of the early 1940s gathered the biggest windfall yet. In short, it was a movement that the Representation rightfully viewed and resisted as a rival.

Theoretical and Practical Critiques of Zionism

The fundamental fault of Zionism that articles in *Unzer Tsayt* routinely identify is its assumption that addressing the needs of Palestine also addresses the needs of world Jewry. The articles dispute this belief on both immaterial and material grounds. The common thread among theoretical objections is that Palestine and the Diaspora are simply destined to remain at odds with one another on matters of ethos. Jews living in Palestine find spiritual or cultural fulfillment in ways very different from Jews in other countries. More concrete detractors of Zionism pointed out that the contemporary *Yishuv* was dependent on the support of world Jewry and saw no reason why this would change in the future.

It is important to note that the Representation did not make the mistake of regarding Zionism as a monolithic movement. It recognized the multiple schools of thought that the Zionist label encompassed and engaged each one. One of these schools

⁷⁵ *Encyclopedia Judaica* (online edition, through the Gale Virtual Reference Library), s.v. “Woodrow Wilson,” by Selig Adler, accessed January 4, 2013, <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587520950&v=2.1&u=umuser&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w>.

was Cultural Zionism (also called Spiritual Zionism), championed by figures such as Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927). Ha'am did not envision a Jewish state in Palestine as the destination for Jews of the world. Instead, he hoped that the Jewish state would serve as a "spiritual center" for world Jewry, a model of Jewish life for dispersed Jews and a focus of their spiritual life. The presence of a spiritual center would reinvigorate world Jewry and instill a new sense of vitality into a religion that had grown stagnant.⁷⁶ The December 1941 article "*Palestine un di Yidn-Frage*" ["Palestine and the Jewish Question"] repudiates the mythos of the spiritual center in Palestine on the grounds that "[t]his is a center that has not influenced our life for a few decades," and that Palestine is in "full denial of all that is dear to us."⁷⁷ Even Cultural Zionists who supported the continuation of Diaspora life were not tolerated by the Representation because the Cultural Zionist vision was that the Diaspora would be a community subjugated to the practices of the Jewish state.

In particular, the rebuttal of Cultural Zionism in "*Palestine un di Yidn-Frage*" claims that the so-called "spiritual center" had separated itself from the Diaspora "with a high wall of language and style."⁷⁸ The question of language in the Jewish state and in the Diaspora was one that Jews had asked and debated since the *Haskalah*. On one side was Hebrew, the ancient language that Jews had inherited from their kingly history and their holy texts, but a language that until the advent of Zionism only male scholars of those texts actually learned. On the other was Yiddish, the beloved *mame loshen* [mother tongue] of Jews on the street, but derided by *maskilim* (proponents of the *Haskala*) as a

⁷⁶ *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, s.v. "Ahad Ha'am," by Steven J. Zipperstein, accessed December 27, 2012, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Ahad_Ha-Am.

⁷⁷ S. Kahn, "*Palestine un di Yidn-Frage*," *Unzer Tsayt*, December 1941, 7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

mere “jargon” unworthy of the status of a real language.⁷⁹ Although Zionists in Eastern Europe and in the United States had often used the Yiddish language in order to speak to the widest audience possible, *Unzer Tsayt* portrayed Zionists as people who had utter contempt for the language and the culture that it had spawned, which were exactly the “spiritual creation[s]” that were so “dear” to the Bund.⁸⁰

To convey this image, “*Palestine un di Yidn-Frage*” compares Zionists to oppressors of Jews such as the autocratic rulers of Eastern Europe. “Jewish masses,” it proclaims, “have conducted in the Diaspora a bitter struggle for the right of this mother tongue.” It then cites a communication from Palestine calling for the closing of non-Hebrew newspapers in Palestine, as they would “undermin[e] the mastery of Hebrew.” The article compares the ostracizing of Yiddish and any language not Hebrew to “ghetto restraints” on non-Hebrew speakers, and points out that unlike adopted policies concerning some national minority in the proto-state of Jewish Palestine, these measures target fellow Jews.⁸¹ Readers of the article are to be reminded of a Russian czar quashing the linguistic autonomy of Jews or other imperial minorities, and to be further outraged that the perpetrators now are Zionists targeting “their own brothers.”⁸² The use of the word “ghetto” during the Second World War would also have summoned thoughts of Nazi ghettoization.

The March 1943 article “*Vegn di Gefangene bam Hebreizm*” [“On the Captives of Hebraism”] intensifies the campaign for Yiddish by denouncing proponents of “bilingualism,” i.e., a “reconciliation” of the Yiddish and Hebrew language. The article

⁷⁹ Yiddish-speakers themselves often referred to Yiddish as “jargon” [“*zhargon*”], but for them the term was by no means disparaging.

⁸⁰ S. Kahn, “*Palestine un di Yidn-Frage*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, December 1941, 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸² *Ibid.*

compares the use of both languages in the task of advancing Jewish life to a man loving two brides. Such a man will lose both brides, and both languages will decline if the Jewish people speak both. The article also reaffirms the Bundist position that Yiddish must serve as the one Jewish language, reiterating that Diaspora Jews built a life and culture around the Yiddish language. Furthermore, it concludes, Yiddish is the “strongest dam against assimilation,” and the *Yishuv*’s refusal to use Yiddish creates disunity within Jewry and fosters “unbelief” in the creative power of Yiddish.⁸³

The very word “Diaspora”⁸⁴ is, in the *Weltanschauung* of Zionists, a term for exile that calls to mind a longing to return to Israel and a deep sadness that the Jews have not yet returned there. In several instances, writers in *Unzer Tsayt* put quotation marks around the word “Diaspora” to indicate their dismissal of this mindset. One direct defense of the so-called Diaspora is an article from the very first issue of *Unzer Tsayt* called “*Di Natsyonale Shlikhes fun Bund*” [“The National Mission of the Bund”]. In this article, writer Abraham Menes identifies the Bund as the one party whose fate is “completely” tied with that of the Jews in the Diaspora because it rejected hope of a return to the Land of Israel and “remained a Diaspora party.” Menes also reaffirms the Bund’s commitment to continue the struggle for Jewish life “in the countries where Jews live” in the future.⁸⁵ Zionism’s commitment to emigration to Palestine is not only a “dangerous utopia[n]” vision,⁸⁶ but an affront to an established and wonderful Jewish community that the Bund champions.

⁸³ Kh. Sh. Kazdan, “*Vegn di Gefangene bam Hebreizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, March 1943, 30-31.

⁸⁴ “*Galut*” in Hebrew, “*Goles*” in Yiddish.

⁸⁵ A. Menes, “*Di Natsyonale Shlikhes fun Bund*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, February 1941, 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

One of the most sweeping attacks on Zionism leveled by the Representation is in “*Der Eyker fun Tsiyonizm*” [“The Principle of Zionism”], which Emanuel Nowogrodzki wrote in January 1944. After an opening paragraph insulting the intelligence of one Shloyme Grodzenski,⁸⁷ the article presents three hostile (and probably rhetorical) questions posed by Grodzenski to the Bund in the Labor Zionist Yiddish-language newspaper *Der Yidisher Kemfer* [*The Jewish Fighter*], and then proceeds to answer each in turn. The questions, in summarized form, are as follows:

1. Why does the Representation not acknowledge the Socialist accomplishments in Palestine, while other Socialist groups (Jewish and non-Jewish) do?
2. Why does the Bund not give a “rational answer” to the question of the Jews’ own land? It cannot, because there is no reason why the Jews should not have one.
3. Why does the Bund not dare to argue against the principle of Zionism: that a normal national life is only possible when the nation is concentrated in its own “territorial region?”⁸⁸

In responding to the first question, Nowogrodzki contests the practicality of the Zionist enterprise. After first proclaiming that the Representation is happy “that the Jewish labor movement of Palestine is well organized” because “the success of labor in every other corner of the world would gladden [them],” he concludes that the success of labor in Palestine is tempered by Palestine’s “political and financial dependence on the general Zionist world organization.” A visitor to Palestine would only see the result of charity on the part of supporters the world over, but the Bund, which was always among

⁸⁷ This was a common practice in *Unzer Tsayt*. Another excellent example is the July 1942 article “*Yidische Akhodes*” (“Jewish Unity”), which tells of a debate between the Zionist Ignacy Schwarzbart and Bundist Szmuel Zygielbojm (the two Jewish representatives on the Polish National Council of the Polish Government-in-Exile). The article calls Schwarzbart “the so-called Jewish deputy of the last...fascist Polish Sejm.”

B. Shefner, “*Yidische Akhodes*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, July 1942, 11-12.

⁸⁸ Emanuel Nowogrodzki, “*Der Eyker fun Tsiyonizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, January 1944, 17-18.

the Jewish proletariat in Eastern Europe, witnessed firsthand what Nowogrodzki calls the “ruinous effect” Zionism had on working Jews in Łódź, Vilnius, and Białystok. Zionism dismissed the “real and painful needs” of Jewish life in its demand for support for the Zionist idea, and future prosperity in Palestine will continue to tax the Diaspora.⁸⁹

The second and third questions are more theoretical in nature, as are Nowogrodzki’s answers for them. “*Der Eyker fun Tsiyonizm*” answers the second question that the Jewish people have lived the past two thousand years of its existence as a people without a territory, and for this reason the Bund believes that a Jewish national life need not be lived in a Jewish nation-state. This solution to the Jewish Question--Jews living a “Jewish” life wherever they already are--will be the solution of the future Socialist society toward which mankind progresses. By rejecting this Bundist (and Marxist) hope of inexorable progress toward a better future and seeking to solve the Jewish Question by “forcibly transforming the Jews into a territorial nation,” Zionism rejects the possibility of “national coexistence” within the borders of one state.⁹⁰ The article begins its answer to Grodzenski’s third question by agreeing with him that a nation should live as a concentrated entity in a “territorial region,” disputing only that the region in question must be an independent state. The article recycles its earlier arguments that Jews have already lived and created a culture outside of Palestine for two millennia, but raises the new objection that the “principle of Zionism” is a rejection of democracy, which is nothing other than people of different nations sharing the territory of a state as citizens of that state. This, Nowogrodzki writes, implies that Zionists consider Jews in

⁸⁹ Emanuel Nowogrodzki, “*Der Eyker fun Tsiyonizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, January 1944, 18-19.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

Europe and America to be only “strangers” who are “visiting” those lands,⁹¹ a belief that Bundists trying to build a better Jewish life in the Diaspora would have rejected outright. Several times, the article offers the United States as a counterexample to Grodzenski’s claims, pointing out that Jews did not emigrate from Eastern Europe only to Palestine in the face of crisis, but journeyed in great numbers to America as well; and that citizens of the United States share in the wealth of the country regardless of their national origins.⁹²

Several *Unzer Tsayt* articles contended that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine would threaten the status of the Jews who remained in the Diaspora. For, as “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*” pointed out, Zionists could not possibly hope to bring all Jews, nor even the majority of Jews, to Palestine, and there would assuredly be Jews who remained in the Diaspora.⁹³ The Jewish state would alter the status of these Jews as citizens of the countries wherein they resided. According to “*Di Poylishe Yidn un der ‘Bund’*” [“The Polish Jews and the ‘Bund’”], the Polish Bund feared that activism on behalf of Zionism would be “harmful for the Jewish population in Poland” because it would convey the message to Polish Gentiles that Jews did not consider themselves citizens of Poland,⁹⁴ and the creation of the Jewish state would have cemented this conclusion in the collective minds of Diaspora countries. Exclusion from Polish citizenry would have been an anathema to the Bund, which advocated Jewish cooperation with all fellow socialists in a state. “*Palestine un di Yidn-Frage*” in particular envisioned a dystopian future in which Jews living outside the Jewish state would lose their status as

⁹¹ Emanuel Nowogrodski, “*Der Eyker fun Tsiyonism*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, January 1944, 21.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 20, 22.

⁹³ Henryk Erlich, “*Der Eyker fun Bundizm*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, October 1942, 10.

⁹⁴ Yankev Grosman, “*Di Poylishe Yidn un der ‘Bund’*,” *Unzer Tsayt*, November 1943, 32.

equal citizens and be pushed into assimilation because they were essentially citizens of a foreign fatherland.⁹⁵

Conclusion

The American Representation of the Bund attacked Zionism and Zionists in issues of *Unzer Tsayt* throughout the war because it opposed Zionist ideas and sought to prevent the Jews of New York City from donating any money to the Zionist enterprise.

Prominent Zionist leaders viewed the *Yishuv* as a place of importance for saving European Jews from the Nazis, while the Representation claimed that Palestine was just one of many lands that would need to take in Jewish refugees, and that the most pressing goal for Americans, both Jews and Gentiles, ought to be aiding the Jews still in Europe.⁹⁶

However, the Representation's crusade was not limited to print alone: it scored a tangible victory over the Zionists at a January 1942 meeting of the board of the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC). At this meeting, Bundist leader Shloime Mendelsohn and his Representation colleagues argued that the JLC should remove the issue of Palestine from its agenda, "since the Jewish community there, half a million strong, was not very meaningful for the future of the world's 16 million Jews."⁹⁷ The Bundists were successful: though the JLC continued to profess its concern for "the future of the Jewish people wherever Jews live," its secretary-general Jacob Pat removed issue of a Jewish national home in Palestine from the group's agenda. In practical terms, this meant that

⁹⁵ S. Kahn, "*Palestine un di Yidn-Frage*," *Unzer Tsayt*, December 1941, 7.

⁹⁶ Shloime Mendelsohn, "*Di 'Heylike' Milkhome Kegn 'Bund,'*" *Unzer Tsayt*, April 1944, 24-25, 29.

⁹⁷ Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 127; Kahn, *Unzer Tsayt*, December 1941, 7.

from 1942 onward, members of the Representation claimed a large share of the JLC's relief funds and apportioned it as they saw fit.⁹⁸

The Representation's ideological opposition to Zionism centered on the fundamental failure of the Zionist agenda to solve the so-called "Jewish Question" and the intellectual strife it would cause the Jewish people. Objections of this type included a repudiation of Hebrew's supremacy over Yiddish and the belief that a Jewish State would doom prospects of harmony between Jews and non-Jews in the Diaspora. The Diaspora itself is not a miserable exile, the Representation explained, but the home of most Jews and a home to be cherished. The practical faults of Zionism that the Representation pointed out were rooted in matters such as the logistics of a large-scale *aliyah* and the feasibility of building a Jewish homeland once in Palestine. Not all Jews could possibly relocate to Palestine, and the Jewish State would still have need of the Diaspora community. By polemicizing against Zionists who, according to *Unzer Tsayt*, championed a Jewish State in Palestine that would quash Yiddish language and culture and lord over a Jewish community in the Diaspora reduced to resident aliens, the Representation again delineated a Bund that would cherish Yiddish and work on behalf of Jews alongside non-Jewish Socialists to create a global Marxist paradise where Jews would live in bliss.

Today the victory of Zionism over Bundism is apparent, despite the efforts of the Bund and the Representation in print, in politics, and within Jewish society in Europe and the United States. The State of Israel was born in 1948, and each year it receives influxes of donations and immigration from around the world (though admittedly all Jews do not

⁹⁸ Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland 1939-1949*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 127-8.

live there). The Bund's hope of a global Socialist utopia never materialized, and the remnants of the Bund in Eastern Europe were disbanded by the Soviet Union by the end of the 1940s.⁹⁹ Elsewhere, the Presidium of the Representation voted to disband itself in 1945 and joined the newly formed International Jewish Labor Bund in 1947. However, this new body never exercised much authority over Bundist groups in different countries, whose worldwide membership numbered only a few thousand at its highest in the 1950s and who one by one closed their doors. Today, the Melbourne Bund chapter is the only one active.¹⁰⁰ But in the early 1940s, this triumph of Zionism was by no means assured. Palestine remained under the control of a British government eager to cooperate with the Arab populace, and Zionism remained one ideology out of many among Jews. The American Representation of the Bund in Poland could (and did) rightly claim that Zionism was a minority movement incapable of commanding the full support of American Jewry,¹⁰¹ and that the Bund's vision for the future of the Jewish people was a viable one.

⁹⁹ *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (online edition), s.v. "Bund," by Daniel Blatman, accessed December 27, 2012, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bund>.

¹⁰⁰ David Slucki, *The International Jewish Labor Bund after 1945: Toward a Global History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 19, 212, 217.

¹⁰¹ Shloime Mendelsohn, "Di 'Heylike' Milkhome Kegn 'Bund,'" *Unzer Tsayt*, April 1944, 29.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have argued that the American Representation of the Bund in Poland utilized its primary Yiddish-language newspaper, *Unzer Tsayt [Our Time]*, to advance its aim of raising material and financial aid in New York City to send overseas to Bundists remaining in Nazi-occupied Poland. Jewish Socialism in New York City originated with Russian immigrants who wished to continue the revolutionary struggle that they had begun in imperial Russia, but lacked the precedent and immediate need to do so in the United States. In order to achieve relevance among the Jews of New York City, Jewish Socialists used the Yiddish language and engaged in community service projects such as education and financial aid. Jewish Socialism in New York City was never united under one movement, but different parties shared this trait of assisting their constituency. The success of Jewish Socialism in the United States inspired the creation of the *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln, un Rusland* [General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia], commonly known as the "Bund," which sought to preserve Jewish communal interests and use the Yiddish language while simultaneously participating in international Marxism. In times of crisis, particularly in the event of pogroms or war, the Bund could rely on monetary aid from brother movements in places such as New York City.

During and after World War I, the Bund split along new state lines. The Polish Bund was the largest Jewish political party in the Second Polish Republic and financed youth activities and school systems. When the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, many of the Bund's key leaders fled the country and went to New York City,

where they established the American Representation of the Bund in Poland in 1941. Rapidly acclimating itself to a new country and a Jewish population with a markedly different outlook from the Jews of Eastern Europe, the Representation raised money throughout the war for the Bundists remaining in Poland and published several newspapers, including *Unzer Tsayt*. In this newspaper, the Representation worked to convince readers that any donations on behalf of Jews in occupied Poland ought to go to the Representation and thence to the Bund.

The Representation presented the history of the Bund to readers of *Unzer Tsayt* in a manner that would convince them that the Bund had done the most to benefit the Jews in Eastern Europe and the United States. In Eastern Europe, the writers of *Unzer Tsayt* claim, the Bund was the only group that successfully melded Marxist aims of progress toward a better world with the unique national and cultural interests of the Jews. In the United States, they claim, the Bund was really the driving force behind the success of Jewish Socialism, since any Jewish Socialism is merely an incarnation of the Bund adapted to that country and time.

In Eastern Europe and in the United States, Bundists and Zionists had a long-standing rivalry stemming from their completely incompatible aims. Zionists desired a return of the Jews to the Land of Israel and the use of Hebrew, while Bundists wanted to improve the lot of Jews in the lands where they lived using Yiddish. Zionism's popularity had grown in the United States since the turn of the 20th century, and the Representation resisted its influence on the coffers of American Jews during World War II. In *Unzer Tsayt*, they elucidated their belief that the Zionist agenda was incompatible

with Jewish life in the Diaspora and that Zionists cared nothing for the Diaspora or the Yiddish language, making them unworthy of Jewish support.

In this thesis, I sought to situate the newspaper *Unzer Tsayt* in the narrative of the Representation and its desperate attempt to support its comrades who remained under Nazi rule. In order to have raised the money that it did, the Representation had to have communicated effectively with the Jewish public in New York City. I sought to demonstrate the primacy of *Unzer Tsayt* in facilitating that engagement.

Epilogue: “Only the Bund can free the slaves”¹

In a conversation I had with Professor Zvi Gitelman of the University of Michigan regarding this thesis, I learned that he had met several former members of the American Representation of the Bund in Poland during his time as a graduate student at Columbia University. World War II had long ended, and the State of Israel had already fought two wars to defend its existence. Yet despite these world developments, Gitelman recalled, the Bundists continued to cling to the figures and ideologies of their past, unable to accept that that world was forever lost to them and that their future would never materialize.² Seeking textual testimony to this mournful devotion, I learned of a three-volume biography of Bundists called *Doires Bundistn [Generations of Bundists]*, compiled and edited in 1968 by Jacob Sholem Hertz, a former member of the Bund’s Central Committee who wrote, published, or edited multiple histories of the Bund after World War II.³ The very act of assembling *Doires Bundistn* attests to the great value the

¹ This is another line from the anthem “*Di Shvue*” [“The Oath”].

² Zvi Gitelman, interview by author, University of Michigan, September 21, 2012.

³ YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, “Jacob Sholem Hertz,” *Guide to the YIVO Archives*, <http://yivoarchives.org/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=34160> (accessed March 16, 2013).

postwar Bund placed in its history, but the entry about Representation leader Emanuel Nowogrodzki captures the group's fixation on the past particularly well.

During the war, writes fellow Representation member Emanuel Szerer, Nowogrodzki was willing to tailor the Bund to its new environment in New York City, but remained ardent in upholding the Bund's original ideology. Adaptation to America was never the goal of the Representation, but merely the means of achieving its goal: the dissemination of Bundist ideas in America. Even after the war, after the Holocaust, and after the declaration of the State of Israel, Nowogrodzki was among those who maintained that "principles and ideas of consistent, classical Bundism" and its "founding words and founding goals" were still right, "in America as in other lands where Jews live[d]." Nowogrodzki continued to work for the Bund in America after the war, overseeing the transfer of the Bund Archive to New York City, hosting the Bund's weekly radio program beginning in 1954, and serving as the first secretary for the worldwide Bund, which had its founding conference in Brussels in 1947. Nowogrodzki was partially paralyzed by a stroke in April 1961 and died six years later in an *Arbeter Ring* home for old members. Even in this condition, writes Szerer, until his dying day, Nowogrodzki still kept informed of Bundist news and lost none of his devotion to the party. Szerer concludes with these words: "The Bund was the most profound matter in his life. Even until his last moment."⁴

In my own opinion, the legacy of the Bund is an unhappy one. In its early years in the Russian Empire and in its heyday in the Second Polish Republic, the Bund never fully realized its goals to be both the voice of Jewry within the international Socialist

⁴ Emanuel Szerer, "Emanuel Nowogrodzki," in *Doyres Bundistn* Volume 3, ed. J.S. Hertz (New York: Farlag Unser Tsait, 1968), 19-22.

movement (its “organizational principle”) *and* the fosterer of secular Yiddish culture (its doctrine of “national-cultural autonomy”). In New York City, the Representation continued to advocate a party platform that the Bund had never achieved, constantly providing excuses for this failure and continuing to insist that the Bund’s program was still the right one for the future of the Jews. The Holocaust took a horrific toll on the Bund’s membership and zeal, and since the end of World War II the Bund has declined to almost nonexistence. Today, in my experience, the Yiddish language is almost entirely confined to the communities of academia and the *Khasidim*. A worldwide Socialist utopia did not emerge, but the State of Israel did. Perhaps the only solace that the Bundists of history would find in the modern world is that all Jews do not live in the State of Israel and most are content to live in the Diaspora. *Dokayt*, in some form, is the norm among world Jewry.

But really, the continued loyalty of aging Bundists to Bundism after the war is not so incomprehensible. In their youth, they had not sung idly when they swore “an endless loyalty to the Bund” and proclaimed “[o]nly it can free the slaves now.” As wiser veterans and members of the American Representation of the Bund in Poland, they used *Unzer Tsayt* to communicate their fervent belief that the Bund would create a better world for Jews in all lands, and that no other party or ideology could do the same. After decades of working on behalf of such a vision, they could not do otherwise but preserve it. Explaining why she remained a committed member of the Bund in New York City after the war and into advanced age, one woman explained simply, ““The Bund was an organization that took the poor and made them dreamers for justice.””⁵

⁵ Theo Richmond, *Konin: A Quest* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 180.

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