IDEOLOGY, SOCIETY & LANGUAGE

The Odyssey of NATHAN BIRNBAUM



LEADING ADVOCATE OF YIDISHKAYT
COINER OF "ZIONISM"
PROTOTYPE OF THE MODERN JEWISH INTELLECTUAL

Joshua A. Fishman

IDEOLOGY, SOCIETY & LANGUAGE

Via a dovetailing of the social sciences, Jewish studies and sociolinguistics, this book attempts to understand the startlingly contrasted ideologies of Nathan Birnbaum, an individual language activist and advocate, in each of the three dramatically different periods of his life and with explicit reference to the social and cultural factors that prevailed in each period. It seeks to discern the degree of centrality that language actually occupied in his thinking and in his leadership efforts during each of these periods.

With its focus on the efforts of Nathan Birnbaum, this work represents a contribution to the study of ideologically complicated, multilingual, minority-majority interaction contexts everywhere and, most particularly, to the understanding of the pre-Holocaust Jewish experience in Central and Eastern Europe, the cradle of Zionism, the Diaspora Cultural Autonomy movement, Yiddishism and the Return to Traditional Orthodoxy. All of these intellectual and political movements came together and then irreconcilably parted from each other both in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a whole and in the intellectually tempestuous life of Nathan Birnbaum in particular. By facing their partial contradictions and their partial agreements with an unprecedented degree of honesty and soul-searching, he became the prototype of the modern Jewish intellectual caught between the assets and debits of rationalism and super-naturalism, democracy and assimilation, modernization and cultural dislocation, endemic antisemitism and maximal separation from these worlds. Nathan Birnbaum arises from this confrontation as both a man for all seasons and the prophet of a Holocaust to come.

IDEOLOGY, SOCIETY & LANGUAGE

The Odyssey of NATHAN BIRNBAUM



Joshua A. Fishman

KAROMA PUBLISHERS, INC.
ANN ARBOR
1987

Digitized by Project Zikaron
Touro University-NY Libraries
www.zikaron.tourolib.org
2025

Jacket design: Lilian E. Stafford

Digitized by Project Zikaron
Touro University-NY Libraries
www.zikaron.tourolib.org
2025

Copyright © 1987
Karoma Publishers, Inc.
All Rights Reserved

ISBN 0-89720-082-9

Published in the United States of America

IDEOLOGY, SOCIETY & LANGUAGE



Monogram designed by
S. A. Birnbaum for his
father, Nathan.

נחנאלען אַ מחנה:

ווען פֿון בלעטער שפּראָצן בלומען
און די בלומען ייִדיש רעדן,
קוויקן דורות זיך מיט קלאַנגען
שפּריַזן זיידעס מיט גרויסע גרויסן.

Contents

Foreword vii

Acknowledgments xi

1 The Sociolinguist as Biographer: Questions 1

2 Nathan Birnbaum's First Phase:
From Zionism to Eastern European Jewry 11

3 Nathan Birnbaum's Second Phase: The Champion
of Yiddish and Jewish Cultural Autonomy 26

4 The Role of the Tshernovits Language Conference
in "The Rise of Yiddish" 38

5 Nathan Birnbaum's Third Phase:
The Activization of Jewish Sanctity 72

6 Continuity and Change in
Nathan Birnbaum's Thought 85

7 Ideology, Society and Language:
The Sociolinguist as Biographer: Returning to
Initial Questions and Turning to New Ones 109

8 The Sociolinguist as Biographer: Reflections on
Taking Leave 132

Notes to Photographs 142

Fifteen Selected Articles by Nathan Birnbaum 145
Peoplehood and Language 147
Peoplehood and World Citizenship 151
The Jewish Jargon 157
Jewish Literature and Jewish Newspapers 163
The Yiddish Speaking Jews and Their Stage 169
Hebrew and Yiddish 177
Jewish Autonomy 185
Opening Address at the Conference for the Yiddish Language 191
Americanism and the Jews 197
Struggle for the Recognition of the Jewish People: The Census in Galicia 211
The Absolute Idea of Judaism and the Yiddish Language 219
"Havaraaaa Ssephardiiiit" 227
Oppressed by Fellow Jews 231
Then and Now 241
A Few Words About Yiddish 245

Glossary 247

Index 279

Foreword

BIOGRAPHY HAS NOT been a traditional genre of Jewish writings, and sociologists have rarely turned to life stories as a form of scholarship (cf. Bogdan & Taylor 1975), and thus Joshua Fishman, Jewish sociologist of language, felt "considerable trepidation" as he undertook his biographical study of Nathan Birnbaum/Nosn Birnboym, the proponent of Yidishkayt and coiner of the word "Zionism". Yet it is also true that among the greatest life stories of the world's literature are those of Joseph, Moses, and David in the Jewish scriptures, and the collections of anecdotes and legends that grew up around the life stories of Hasidic *rebes* are among the world's most fascinating accounts of individual leaders in relation to their communities.

Unlike the Greek and Roman biographies of Classical literature and the hagiographical literature of the Christian Middle Ages, the life stories embedded in Jewish scripture were not panegyrics to emphasize only the exemplary aspects of ruler or saint. They portrayed good deeds and questionable ones, personal and public shortcomings as well as great acts of faith and courage. Those life stories were told in order that the Jewish people should understand their own history, both in its global and cosmic dimensions (the people and God, the Jews and other nations) and in its internal, societal dimensions (places and tribes, judges and kings, priests and prophets). Fishman's life of Birnbaum is not a form of scriptural writing at all, but it has similar aims. It presents the man, with all his internal ambivalences and tensions and his successive changes of view, as a key figure in understanding the complex history of Jewish self-concepts, religious interpretations,

Jewish nationalisms, and questions of language choice. This biography of Birnbaum is a compelling textbook on ideology, society, and language, as its title proclaims. The subject matter of the book is obviously of interest to students of Jewish history, Zionism, turn-of-the century European nationalisms, and the history of Yiddish. But it is of interest for a far broader readership. We know of no better introduction to the complex interrelations of ideology, society, and language in human affairs than this case study of a single individual. Scholarly attempts to understand these affairs rarely attain the necessary depth of detail and breadth of concern within a single focus of study. We think of our favorites, such as Brass's phenomenal volume on religion, language, and politics in northern India (Brass 1974), but the focus on a single life story reveals the issues with a clarity and poignancy that the more discursive, detached social analysis cannot match.

The other Jewish biographical tradition of Hasidic folktales, already alluded to, differs from modern literary biography by concentrating on "good stories" typically told by and to followers and admirers of the hero subject. Humor, affect, and moral cogency are interwoven in the legendary accounts (cf. Ben-Amos & Mintz 1972). Fishman's biography of Birnbaum is not at all the legendary hero-building of Hasidic *rebe* tales. It is, on the contrary, serious scholarship, based on historical documents doggedly searched out and painstakingly analyzed; it is socio-history of the highest order. Yet there is something in it of the sympathetic admirer telling the story so that others will come to see the virtues of his hero and the continued relevance of his values for other times and places.

We (Shirley and Charles) have been privileged to be with Joshua and Gella Fishman at several points in the evolution of this sociolinguistic biography. We were present at the Aberystwyth conference on language spread in 1978 when Joshua read his paper on the Tshernovits conference on Yiddish. We visited with Joshua and Gella in Wassenaar in 1982 when they were tracking down people and documents connected with Birnbaum's life in Belgium and Holland, and we stood with them then before Birnbaum's gravestone.

This final biographical text on Nathan Birnbaum, along with

the translations of selected writings of his, constitute a fine example of a "life and works" with its special focus on ideology, society, and language. They also constitute a kind of *apologia pro vita sua* of Joshua Fishman himself. In studying Birnbaum and "talking to Birnbaum", the biographer comes to terms with his own values and discovers where he identifies with his subject and where they disagree. Most of the readers of the volume will not come to the point of "talking to Birnbaum" as Fishman has. However, these translations of some of Birnbaum's writings will, no doubt, invite others to take up debate with him and to consider, as Fishman has, the relevance of his views for current language choices—personal and ethnolinguistic. We can thus hope that reading the biography will do more than just help us in our understanding of sociolinguistic processes, that it will move us to clarify and articulate our own values, to take our own stance on the issues of ideology, society, and language, not in a narrow, localized way, but—in the Latin phrase of another Dutch Jew—*sub specie aeternitatis.*

Charles A. Ferguson
Shirley Brice Heath
Stanford University

References

Ben-Amos, Dan & Mintz, Jerome R. (eds. and transls.) 1972. *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Bogdan, Robert & Taylor, S.J. 1975. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods.* New York: Wiley.

Brass, Paul R. 1974. *Language, Religion, and Politics in North India.* London: Cambridge University Press.

Acknowledgments

I OWE A PUBLIC expression of thanks to many agencies and individuals who assisted me greatly in this work:

The *Jewish Memorial Foundation,* which twice provided me with small research grants so that I could locate Nathan Birnbaum's publications;

The *Rosenthalia Judaica Library* in Amsterdam and the *Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study* in Wassenaar, for interlibrary loans and fellowship support so that I might concentrate on the Dutch phase in Birnbaum's life;

Joel Cahen, archivist at the Jewish Museum in Amsterdam, for putting me in touch with some of the last remaining individuals in The Netherlands and Belgium who remembered Nathan Birnbaum: Miriam Birnbaum, Dr. D. Hausdorf, David Goudsmit, Charles Gutwirt, Rabbi D.S. Osterzetser, Frans Prins, and J. Stemmer;

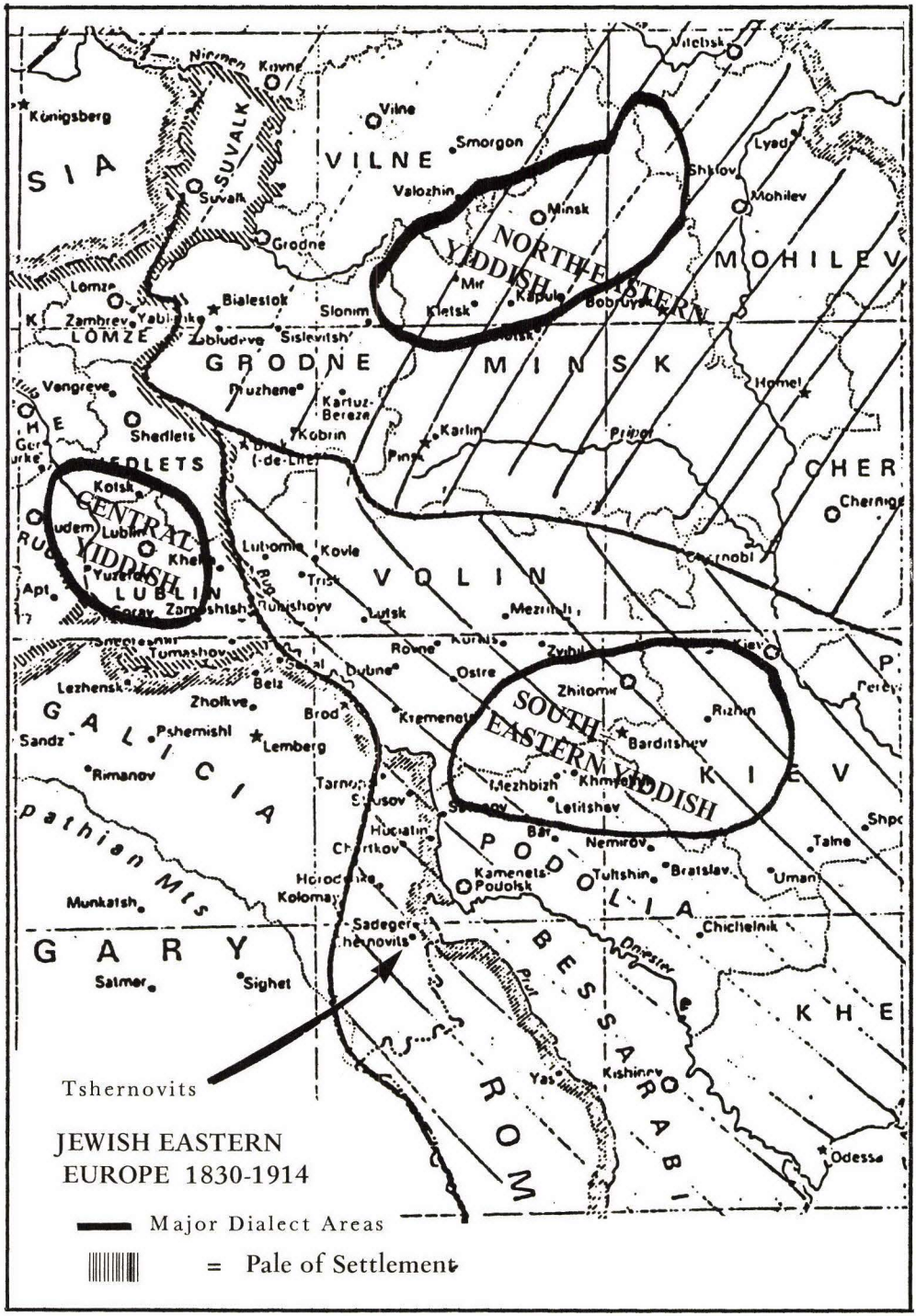
Daphne Slonim, my assistant at Yeshiva University (1980–82), J. Copenhagen, my assistant at The Israel Institute for Advanced Study (Spring 1983), and S.A.B. and D.E.F., both of whom would rather remain anonymous, for invaluable help in obtaining copies of hard to find publications and pictures and for critical reactions to earlier drafts of this work;

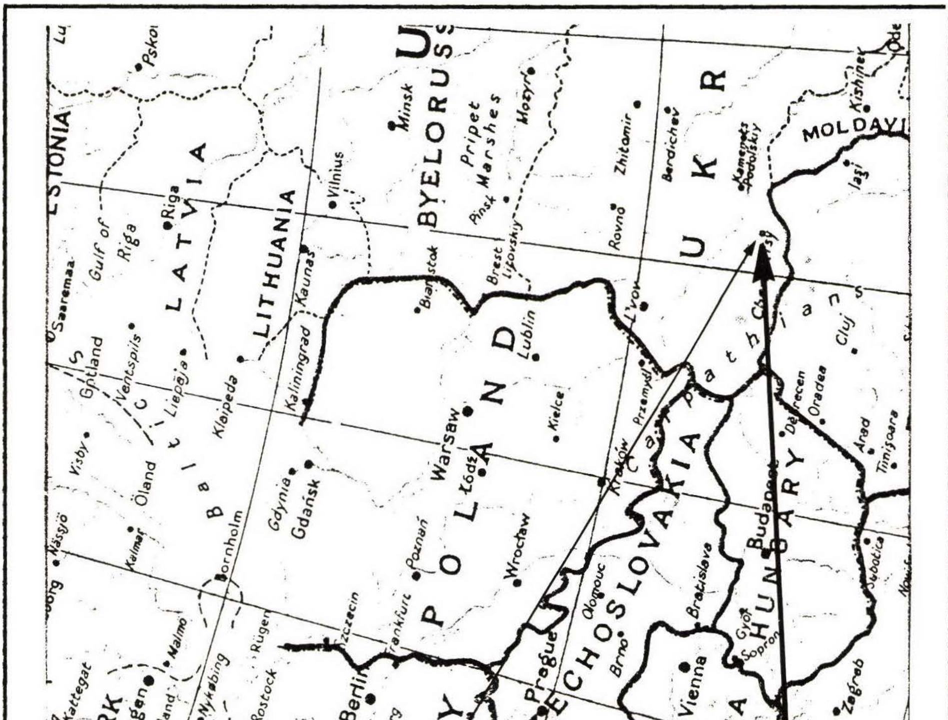
Dina Abramovitsh, Chief Librarian of The Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, for invaluable assistance in locating and copying Nathan Birnbaum's far-flung Yiddish writings;

Walter Kramer, Michael Gertner, Itzek Gottesman and Michael Skakun for their translations of Nathan Birnbaum's works from German and Yiddish into English and for their checking on each others' translations of these works;

To the publishers of *Afn shvel, Shofar, The Els Oksaar Festschrift* and *The Charles A. Ferguson Festschrift* for publishing earlier drafts of several chapters of this work, and to T.L. Markey of Karoma Publishers Inc., for making sure that this book would appear in time to commemorate Nathan Birnbaum's fiftieth *yortsayt*.

And above all, to my wife Gella, who helped and encouraged me to undertake this study, to keep coming back to it on three continents, and, finally, to complete it. Her fascination with Nathan Birnbaum made me realize that he was still (or, perhaps, had again become) a figure of great general interest.


Königsberg
SIA
SUVALK
Kovne
Vilne
VILNE
Smorgon
Vilebsk
Lyad
Shklov
Mohilev
Valozhin
Minsk
NORTHEASTERN YIDDISH
MOHILEV
Suvalk
Grodne
Lomze
Bialestok
Slonim
Mir
Kletsk
Kapulye
Bobruysk
LOMZE
GRODNE
MINSK
Homel
Vengreve
Shedlets
Kartuz-Bereze
Pinsk
Karlin
Pripet
CHER
Kolsk
CENTRAL YIDDISH
Lublin
Khelm
Lubomle
Kovle
Trisk
VOLIN
Rovne
Kurnik
Zybul
Kiev
Dubne
Ostre
Zhitomir
Lezhensk
Belz
Zholkve
Brod
Kremenets
SOUTH EASTERN YIDDISH
Rizhin
Sandz
Pshemishl
Lemberg
Barditshev
GALICIA
Rimanov
Tarnov
Mezhbizh
Khmelnik
KIEV
Letitshev
Pathian Mts
Hutsulin
Chortkov
Nemirov
Talne
Kamenets Podolsk
Tultshin
Bratslav
Uman
Horodenke
Kolomay
Munkatsh
PODOLIA
Sadegere
Chernovits
Chichelnik
GARY
Satmer
Sighet
Dniester
BESSARABI
KHE
Tshernovits
Yas
Kishinev
ROM
Odessa
JEWISH EASTERN EUROPE 1830-1914
Major Dialect Areas
= Pale of Settlement



From Tshernovits to Scheveningen

THE ODYSSEY

Chapter 1

The Sociolinguist as Biographer: Questions

I MUST ADMIT, at the very outset, that I undertook what is essentially a biographical study with considerable trepidation. As a sociologist and sociolinguist I had made excursions into history (i.e., the 97 page foreward to my *Never Say Die!*, 1981, is essentially a sociologically informed history of the Yiddish language), into social psychology (e.g.. my work on language attitude measurement: Fishman 1972a, Cooper and Fishman 1977) and into political science (the differences and similarities between polities have long fascinated me, e.g. Fishman 1966 and Fishman 1972b), but, after three decades of social research, I had never undertaken a biography. This self-denial needs to be both admitted and examined.

Reluctance

The more obvious reasons for not engaging in biographical research are not hard to imagine. My focus on society and societal processes requires data on individuals but it is society and not the individual that is the focus on inquiry. Indeed, each individual is submerged in a mass of data on countless others so that regularities or tendencies over and above individual characteris-

tics (motives, goals, priorities) are the ones that are sought out, analyzed and interpreted. The individual, any individual, is merely error variance from the perspective of social research. Each individual's behavior is over-determined in terms of his or her personal dynamics. Social research, on the other hand, is concerned with factors, dimensions and parameters that are demonstrable over and above the varying (and invariably opposing) tendencies, dispositions and idiosyncracies of unique individuals. All of our much vaunted statistical tests are built upon this very principle: to contrast between-group variance with within-group variance. Only when the former is sufficiently greater than the latter do we call our findings "statistically significant."

However, the obvious difference in level of analysis between social research and clinical research (and a biography, even an intellectual biography such as this, *is* an example of clinical research) constituted only a small part of my trepidation. Nor was the essentially archival nature of the data that I could expect to deal with a serious problem for me. I had worked with archival data many times before (e.g., Fishman and Schweid-Fishman 1959, Fishman and Casiano 1972) and have often encouraged students and colleagues alike to regard the library as a laboratory for testing hypotheses and to view content analysis as being every bit as much a scientific method as experiments, surveys or ethnographies. Granted that biographers cannot re-interview those subjects who have passed on to their eternal rewards, in order to clarify conflicting archival records or to fill in gaps when records are no longer extant, nevertheless, it did not (and does not) strike me that incompleteness of the record or lack of agreement between one record and another were particularly related to biographical research more than to social research generally. Even the most meticulous ethnographer is often faced by such problems after returning from the field and when informants are no longer accessible.

No, neither level of abstraction nor methodological strictures explain my trepidations fully. What needs to be added to the above considerations is something more personal: perhaps a conviction that individual lives are sacred mysteries that should not be

approached too closely, that should not be rummaged around in and exposed to the hands and eyes of strangers. We are forbidden to see the nakedness of our parents, but does not this prohibition also apply to the nakedness of any individual's soul, to the discovery of any individual's agony, ambition, discomfort, shame, defeat? And, in the end, are we not all defeated? Jews are forbidden to look at the Kohanim, the traditional Jewish priests, as they "bless thy people Israel with love", but when we examine the fabric of an individual life do we not dissect the love that our biographee possessed, do we not demystify it, profane it? Frankly, although I love to kiss my dear ones, I do not like to watch couples kissing passionately on the street. Whatever this may reveal about my own psychosexual dynamics, I myself interpret it as a reluctance to publicly display that which is sanctified, separate, special. Biographers constantly run the risk of doing just this; indeed, some would say that they cannot possibly do a good job and do otherwise.

Eagerness

Given my reluctances at several levels, I obviously would not have gone ahead with this undertaking, and pushed through to completion, had there not been eagernesses of counterbalancing or even greater moment. The greatest positive push was undoubtedly the character of the biographee *per se*. The more I learned about him the more I wanted to know. The more I found out about him the more puzzled I became. The more I clarified these puzzles the more it seemed to me that they might well be of substantial interest to colleagues, students and intelligent lay readers more generally.

I first came across Nathan Birnbaum in connection with my research on the First World Congress for the Yiddish Language, more popularly known as the Tshernovits Conference of 1908. I had heard about the Conference innumerable times over many years, indeed since my adolescence, but always in conjunction with such illustrious names as I.L. Perets, Sholem Asch and others who later became well known in Yiddish literary and Jewish secular-nationalist endeavors between the two World Wars. However,

since the minutes of the Conference were lost by the mid-twenties, its reconstruction and evaluation became a formidable task, particularly given the destruction of Jewish archives and libraries by the Nazis, on the one hand, and the Communists, on the other. Others had tried their hand at it before and I resolved to do my bit too, particularly in connection with the issue of verifiable consequences or follow-through of the Conference. When The Ford Foundation invited me to a colloquium on language spread (in Aberystwyth, September 12–14, 1978), my contribution was a paper on the Tshernovits Conference (Fishman 1981). Its immediate result was to illustrate that language spread was not only the spread of a language to new speakers but, also, the spread of a language to *new functions* for the same speakers. Its longer term result was to get me "hooked" on Nathan Birnbaum.

Language Elites and Language Movements

To my great surprise, I must say, I had not previously known that Nathan Birnbaum had fathered the idea of convening the Conference, was one of a handful of well known individuals who initially issued the worldwide call to convene the Conference, presented the opening address at the Conference and was its general chairman. "How could that be?" I asked myself. How could someone I had never even heard of before have been so central to the Conference and how could someone so central to the Conference—a conference that I had been so fully aware of for so many years (indeed, several years before I had selected an excerpt from Perets' address at the Conference to be inscribed on my father's gravestone)—be someone I had never even heard of before? Where had this Nathan Birnbaum even been before the Conference? Where did he go on to after the Conference? Why were the conscious and conscientious guardians of Yiddish—organizations, periodicals and individuals that were all so well known to me—so uninterested in and oblivious of someone who had obviously been so central to their collective enterprise? Can someone really just "drop in" and "drop out" of a movement so completely? If so, the implications for a better understanding of language elites and movements were substantial.

I have shared with political sociology and history an interest in ideological elites and movements. I have seen the relationship between elites and masses or constituencies as a reciprocal one, rather than either of them as chicken or egg. The magical spark between a would-be leader seeking a constituency, a dissatisfied but unmobilized mass waiting for a leader and a moment in time when the two discover each other, is something both fearful and beautiful to behold. It is a spark that leaves its mark, both good and bad, on those involved (frequently on an entire generation). I had tried to trace the trajectory of such sparks in my *Language and Nationalism* (1972). Language activists, spokesmen, leaders, ideologists were the particular elites that I had studied most and felt I had come to know best. But my unexpected encounter with Birnbaum made me suspect that there were aspects to the lives of such people that I had missed or underestimated before. I had correctly appreciated that each language leader is simultaneously interested in many issues going beyond language. Language is, for all of them, *part* of a greater whole, *symbolic* of that whole, and *indexical* of that whole. Nevertheless, there is an obvious and enduring centrality to language in the entire complex of interrelated goals and programs in which such leaders are immersed. So, at least, it had appeared to me until I met Nathan Birnbaum. So I was accustomed to view Herder and Whorf, Ben Yehuda and Zamenhof, Aasen and Korans. They had each become identified with the primacy of (a particular) language in their total intellectual and societal effort. So I viewed them as a sociolinguist. A language ideologist was a language ideologist, first, foremost and forever. But Birnbaum forced me to reexamine that assumption. This was the case not so much because I had never heard of him before (even though he was a leader on behalf of a language that meant so much to me that I had been sure that I had heard of "everyone who was anyone" in connection with it), as because even as a leader it was not at all clear how he had gotten there, where he went from there and why his movement itself had lost sight of him. Yes, I had always known that there was more than language in the crystal ball and in the program for action of language elites, but it took Birnbaum to make me ask "how much more?" and "can one language displace another?" and "can

language drop out entirely?", i.e. to suspect that there might be much more variance, and patterned variance at that, in this connection than had generally been revealed by historically and sociologically informed studies of language leaders. The amnesia of a language movement for one of its founders was a surprise to me, but also an indication that unraveling the mystery might reveal more about such movements and their founders than either I or others had previously suspected.

Consistency

A first approximation to explaining some of the reasons why Nathan Birnbaum had been so studiously forgotten was not difficult to arrive at. It quickly became clear that he was a "convert" to Yiddishism and, subsequently, a "returnee" to what would now be termed ultra-Orthodoxy (but what was then virtually the only Orthodoxy in existence). Indeed, Birnbaum had helped found a surprising variety of movements and had left two of them behind (Yiddishism being one of them) en route to yet another. The details of his peregrinations I will leave for later. Here I want to stress that peregrinations such as his, wide swings of the ideological pendulum within the same person, pose a challenge for all of the social sciences and humanities. These fields of study are, by their very nature, heavily invested in the consistency of human behavior and human personality. Personality itself is a construct of consistency. What we know about individuals is an abstraction constructed out of their consistency. Similarly, what we know about society, culture, politics and the lessons to be learned from history (if any) derives from our search for and purported discovery of consistencies across time, across populations and across circumstances.

What, then, is one to do about manifest inconsistencies? They could be swept under the rug, of course, disregarded, treated as error variance (i.e., as variation that is merely "noise", and, therefore inherently uninteresting to anyone who is intent on the message, the figure, the ball). However, my view of error variance has always been to regard it as "a sometimes thing" rather than as anything "inherently" unworthy of further dissection. What is

viewed as error variance for the purposes of one piece of research (or in one discipline) could very well be the main effect (the main focus of attention) for another study (or in another discipline). Furthermore, I see no reason why variability itself cannot be the focus of study, whether in individuals or in collectivities. Indeed, I have spent most of my professional career studying two sociolinguistic concomitants and byproducts of social change (language spread and language shift) and, as a result, change per se, rather than constancy, has been of major interest to me. But this interest in change had never been followed up in connection with a cohort of language leaders to see how they themselves changed during their lifetimes. As a result, we are left with a picture of such leaders that probably overemphasizes their longitudinal consistency and insufficiently recognizes the inconsistencies (or is it opportunism and, therefore, self-centered consistency after all?) that characterizes them as well.

My pursuit of Birnbaum, from one ideology to the next, enabled me to inquire whether inconsistency is only in the eyes of the external observer or whether it is admissible to internal consciousness as well. Had Birnbaum been consistent or inconsistent in his own eyes? If the latter, and if he, like most others, nevertheless tended toward a positive self-image, how did he reinterpret inconsistency so as to stress its positive or redeeming features? Such redeeming features must inevitably be there, otherwise self-directed (uncompelled) ideological and behavioral change would not occur. Similarly, there must also be societal appreciation of inconsistency, otherwise social change could not occur and new-found adherents to an ideology would not be welcomed into their new fold as they most often are. Particularly intriguing is the trigger-mechanism that is responsible for individual change. Is it an event? An experience? A trauma? An internal or external difficulty? A self-devised solution to otherwise unresolvable stress? Is the solution (the change, the views and behaviors that are inconsistent with the past) really unprecedented in the individual's own repertoire of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors or was it there before, but with far lesser highlighting? Leaders must certainly be adept at helping masses to negotiate change collectively and to do so without implications of

disloyalty or of unreliability. Is it possible to reinterpret change and inconsistency as just the opposite, namely, as steadfastness and continuity? If so, then such reinterpretation must really be the *vade mecum* of political leadership.

Socio-Biography

I have admitted, earlier, that I have a certain hesitancy about engaging in biography. Perhaps I am not enough of a psychologist to really want to or to be able to get to the innermost recesses of an individual's heart and mind. I am primarily a *socio*linguist after all. (Although my degree is in social psychology and my appointment is in a school of psychology, the last time I taught psychology proper was in 1958. Since then I have been teaching sociolinguistics, sociology, medical anthropology, and social science measurement: theory and practicum, all of them "good things" for budding psychologists to learn, but hardly at the very heartland of psychology). Is it possible to write a *socio*-biography? What I mean by this is: a biography that stresses the social and historical circumstances that shape a person's life. It is not unusual, of course, for biographies to show how biographees were influenced and even fundamentally conditioned by the time and place in which they lived. But can this approach be taken a step further, so that a biography is written almost entirely in societal terms, exploring societal issues and processes as much as or even more so than individual ones? Can an individual's life inform our understanding of his or her time and place, as much as the latter are often invoked in order to inform the former? This is what I would like to explore and Birnbaum would seem to be as likely a prospect as any, indeed: more likely that most, on which to attempt such exploration. He lived in a period of accelerating social change; espoused three different ideologies; lived in Central, Eastern and Western Europe; spoke, read or wrote three languages well (and at least two others somewhat more marginally). Certainly, here is a life that might serve to illuminate the larger arena of which it was a part.

The most obvious *socio*-side of Nathan Birnbaum's intellectual odyssey is the Jewish side. His was a life passionately devoted to

the cultural welfare of European Jewry, Western, Central and Eastern alike. It will obviously be necessary to explain the sociocultural situation of European Jewry in the latter third of the nineteenth and in the first third of the twentieth centuries. In addition, it will be particularly important to explain how Birnbaum interpreted the problems of European Jewry and what solutions he favored in connection with these problems. However, we must also seek to determine the generalizable dimensions to these problems and these solutions. Since the Holocaust we are all accustomed to viewing Jews and Jewish problems as special, unique. That may well be so even in a non-trivial sense, i.e. above and beyond the obvious fact that all minority ethno-religious-linguistic collectivities are, in some ways, unique and necessarily so. Nevertheless, they are also in some ways similar to each other. Part of the challenge of familiarizing ourselves with Birnbaum is to try to fathom the parameters of difference or uniqueness and the parameters of similarity that typify the Jewish case. The fact that an ethnic revival occurred throughout the Western industrial-democratic world, from the mid-60's to the late 70's (Fishman et al. 1985), involving scores of minority groups roughly at the same time and in similar ways, implies that the similarities in their circumstances and in their responses to these circumstances may be quite noteworthy. That being the case, we may be all the more willing not merely to immerse ourselves in the details of the Jewish case during Birnbaum's lifetime, but, also, all the more hopeful that out of such immersion we will be able to glean some understanding of minority ethno-religious-linguistic aspirations more generally. Birnbaum's life, given its unique multi-directional range, may be particularly provocative from that point of view.

This, then, is the type of biography I would like to attempt: a biography that seeks to raise questions and attempts answers that are of greater general interest than those normally addressed to one life alone. However much or little sociolinguistics will benefit from such a biography (and I hope it will benefit, at least modestly), however much or little other disciplines and areas of inquiry may benefit, the life I have chosen (on which to attempt this exercise in questioning, answering and illuminating) is such an interesting one that I think that even to be only half way

successful in using it as a springboard to other matters will be time well spent. I hope that some 270 pages from here my readers will think so too.

References

Cooper, Robert T. and Joshua A. Fishman, "A study of language attitudes," in J.A. Fishman, R.L. Cooper and A.W. Conrad. *The Spread of English*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1977, 239-276.

Fishman, Joshua, A. "Some contrasts between linguistically homogeneous and linguistically heterogeneous polities," *Sociological Inquiry*. 1966, 36, 146-158.

Fishman, Joshua A. Bilingual attitudes and behaviors, in J.A. Fishman, R.L. Cooper, Roxana Ma., *Bilingualism in the Barrio*. Bloomington, Indiana University Language Sciences, 1972a, 105-116.

Fishman, Joshua A. "National languages and languages of wider communication in the developing nations," in my *Language in Sociocultural Change*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1972b, 191-223.

Fishman, Joshua A. *Language and Nationalism; Two Integrative Essays*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1972c.

Fishman, Joshua A. "Attracting a following to high-culture functions for a language of everyday life," in my (ed.) *Never Say Die! A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters*. The Hague, Mouton, 1981, 369-394.

Fishman, Joshua A. and Heriberto Casiano. "Puerto Ricans in our press," in J.A. Fishman, R.L. Cooper and Roxana Ma. *Bilingualism in the Barrio*. Bloomington, Indiana University Language Sciences, 1972, 13-42.

Fishman, Joshua A., M.H. Gerner, Esther A. Lowey and W.G. Milan. *The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival*. Berlin, Mouton, 1985.

Fishman, Joshua A. and Gella Schweid-Fishman. "Separatism and integrationism: a social-psychological analysis of editorial content in New York newspapers of three American minority groups," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*. 1959, 59, 219-261.

Chapter 2

Nathan Birnbaum's First Phase: From Zionism to Eastern European Jewry

THE PROVERBIAL "hundred and twenty years" have now elapsed since Nathan Birnbaum[1] was born on May 16, 1864 (equivalent to Iyar 10, 5624, of the traditional Jewish calendar). Among those who think frequently and earnestly about any aspect of the modern Jewish experience, he has been very much alive during all of this time, although "hard to place", in view of his involvement in Zionism *and* anti-Zionism, Hebrew *and* Yiddish, modernization *and* the return to religious Orthodoxy, Western European *and* Eastern European realities. As a result, he has been more remembered than analyzed, part of the background but rarely in the foreground of inquiry into any of the movements, periods or places with which he interacted and which he influenced. "A Jewish soul cannot be fully appreciated", a Yiddish proverb tells us. Birnbaum remains partially enigmatic, surrounded by riddles to this very day, giving ample testimony to the complexity and mystery of human behavior and motivation, in general, and to his own uniquely delicate balance between

constancy and metamorphosis, in particular. Perhaps it is best to begin our account of his first steps by admitting that this is so.

The Miracle and the Riddles

Many Central and South-Central European Jews, born in the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian monarch of pre-World War I days or in its successor states of the pre-World War II period, liked to claim that they were born in Vienna. Such a claim added the luster of Western culture and modern sensibilities to one's image, even though many of the claimants were actually (or were much closer to being) *bukoviner*[2] than *viner*. Nathan Birnbaum, however, was actually born in Vienna, the first and only child of parents who had only arrived there a few years earlier—as had thousands of other Jews—from the more easterly province of Galicia.[3] They were not very observant folk, although still somewhat traditional notwithstanding their eagerness to adopt a more Western Jewish lifestyle, and their son, by his own admission, soon became even less observant than his parents.[4] The German name that was given to him (apparently in admiration of "Nathan der Weise," an enlightened, tolerant and humanistic Jewish prototype created by the German dramatist and critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, 1729–1781) was indicative of their orientation and almost completely displaced his Jewish name (Nakhum, or, as it was pronounced among Yiddish speakers: Nokhem). A name is just a minor matter, in and of itself; nevertheless, it is one more straw in the wind which adds up to a veritable whirlwind of early counter-indicative signs vis-à-vis Birnbaum's ultimate Jewish identity.

What miracle led to Nathan Birnbaum's early stress upon the very Jewishness that his parents, his contemporaries and he himself, originally, so predictably de-emphasized? What really led to his life-long searches, aspirations and admonitions on Jewish themes? Why did *he* jump into that maelstrom of conflicts, tensions, poverty and prophecy, when practically all of his contemporaries of similar backgrounds headed straight down the paths of Germanized or other co-territorial assimilation and success in professional careers? Which Jewish and general occurrences during his childhood and youth might have

influenced him to adopt such an atypical direction? What personality characteristics fortified him, again and again, not only to face adversity but to court it? Perhaps a review of his first phase (through to the close of the Second World Zionist Congress in 1898), the most overlooked phase of the many through which he ultimately passed, will enable us not only to understand the subsequent phases better but also to better appreciate the unconflicted continuity of this constantly searching, questioning, re-evaluating, straining, creating and aspiring soul. There is no evaluating a human soul. The miracle at the center of all life will remain clothed in mystery, even if many of the riddles that surround it give way to analysis.

Germanized Jewry in the 1860s and 70s

Vienna was a center of Germanized Jewry, some of whose other centers were in the major urban areas of Germany proper while others were in Austro-Hungary. Although the Jews of these two countries were undoubtedly of a higher social class and of much more advanced Westernization, both in daily life and in High Culture, than were their Eastern European counterparts, they were, nevertheless, still quite uncertain and often deeply concerned with respect to their legal rights and their social status vis-à-vis their non-Jewish neighbors. It was not until 1872--eight years after Birnbaum's birth—that German Jews were granted full political rights. Nevertheless, attainment of this long-delayed status (attained by Austro-Hungarian Jews in 1867) hardly diminished the anti-semitism—populist, on the one hand, and intellectual, on the other—that had many times before reversed and postponed the granting of such rights. The reasons for this were many: partially economic (the rapid upward social mobility of urbanized Jewry elicited the envy and opposition of the bourgeosie as well as of the constantly growing proletariat), partially cultural (the number of Jewish writers, researchers, musicians and teachers—many of them destined to be internationally renowned: Freud, Mahler, Einstein, Kafka, etc.—increased dramatically, not to mention the legions of Jewish consumers of German literature, theatre, music, art and intellectual criticism on any and all topics),

partially political (Austro-Hungary was plagued by nationality secessionist movements and Germany itself had only just consolidated between 1866 and 1871, and its immediate victories over France, 1871, and the Jesuits, 1872, exacerbated local patriotism and xenophobia toward external competitors and internal "foreign bodies").

All of the foregoing processes and tensions merely served to accelerate the widespread Jewish passion for "Germanness" in language, customs, manners, tastes and *weltanschauung* as a whole.[5] Germanized Jews in general, but particularly those who hailed from Galicia and from even further to the East, consciously and repeatedly stressed their Germanness and denied or disguised as well as they could huge areas of their Jewish "differentness." Both the Reform movement as well as Neo-Orthodoxy stressed their patriotism, their devotion to the purest of pure German (Yiddish was widely ridiculed, among most Jews as well as among most non-Jews, whether spoken in its Western or in its Eastern variants, as "judelen" or as "mauschelen," i.e. as corrupted German spoken in the manner of Jews or "Moyshes"), and their absolute trust in *Bildung* (education) in general and in the superiority of German *Kultur* in particular. If anything appeared in the eyes of most Germanized Jews to be the very opposite of the image that *Kulturjuden* (Western educated, cultured Jews) should represent to the outer world, most particularly in the light of constant anti-Semitic rumblings, it was precisely the *Ostjuden* (Eastern European Jews). These were not only poorer and comparatively ignorant of Western, modern thought, but they were viewed as dirty, backward, physically stooped and repugnant: "ghetto Jews" who lived in "Halbasien" ("almost Asia") not only because they were forced to do so but because they knew no better due to their "rabbinic fanaticism" and "talmudic obscurantism".

During Birnbaum's childhood and adolescence culturally Germanized Jews who constituted the model for Viennese Jewish society, feared, above all else, to be suspected of "Eastern Jewish tendencies" or to be accused of revealing tell-tale "Eastern Jewish traits." Many, like Birnbaum's parents, were derived from easterly areas and most were painfully apprehensive lest they, their

parents or other relatives, lose the rights and the opportunities that they had so recently been granted and that still appeared to be so exposed and fragile in the face of innuendos, criticisms and attacks from some of their most influential non-Jewish neighbors. They either courted assimilation or passively drifted toward it, their Jewishness becoming ever more peripheral in their own eyes.

The Eastern European Invasion

In 1881, when Birnbaum was merely 17 years old, the insecurities of Germanized Jews came to be exposed to a trauma which only World War I brought to a temporary halt. Until then the objectionable in-migration of Eastern European Jews, seeking to benefit from the higher standard of living that characterized Germanized Jewry, was still bearable, aggravating though it was. Most of the newcomers until then had hailed originally from Posen (Poznan, previously a Polish province, first annexed by Prussia in 1793) or, subsequently, from Galicia; and, although they obviously complicated the so passionately cultivated "German-Jewish dialogue" that, it was hoped, would lead to full Jewish participation in German life, their numbers were at least reasonably manageable and most of these newcomers had been at least partially "civilized" by prior exposure to the blessings of Germanness in their regions of origin, even before arriving on the streets of Vienna or Berlin. However, after the 1881 pogroms in Czarist Russia—pogroms repeated again and again in the years that followed—there came an avalanche of Jewish transmigration and immigration, the magnitude and nature of which simply boggled the imagination. By 1914, nearly three million Eastern European Jews had crossed the German and Austro-Hungarian borders, most for shorter but some for longer periods of stay. And this avalanche brought precisely those *Ostjuden* who were entirely without the slightest grace of German culture. They provided German and Austro-Hungarian anti-Semites with ready-made excuses for mounting a vociferous campaign to "liberate" their countries "from the Jewish plague" and they destroyed forever the hopes of Germanized Jews that their cultivation of education, progress, aesthetic refinement and rationality would ultimately

lead to their full-fledged acceptance as Germans among Germans.[6]

The Eastern European floodtide evoked many different responses among Germanized Jews. Some redoubled their efforts in the direction of Germanization. Others moved in the direction of Zionist and Jewish nationalist sympathies. Among a very small group, and Birnbaum was one of their number, there even developed a rapprochement with Eastern European Jewry, sometimes merely along nostalgic lines, sometimes more overtly but yet, all in all, quite amateurishly and selectively, and, very rarely indeed, in the fashion of the *bal-tshuve*, the repentant returnee, who breathlessly pursued unlimited authenticity, following it determinedly from self-recognition to self-transformation.

Nathan Birnbaum's Early Jewish Convictions

I must admit that, in all truth, I cannot explain why Birnbaum, rather than most others, proceeded along this last mentioned, rarest of all the paths; why he, rather than others, remained so exceptional. His powerful personality and his constant internal restlessness inexorably led him exactly in those directions where others feared to tread. Although German culture had already deeply influenced his parents as well as himself, and although he was already deeply committed to anarcho-socialist thought,[7] he never considered himself to be a German, "although at that time there was not a single other Jewish youngster in Vienna who did not consider himself to be a German." If we ask why *that* was so we find no answer. Indeed, by 1881 Birnbaum was, on the one hand, less Jewishly observant than his mildly traditional parents, and, on the other hand, expressed views among his acquaintances which they would never have uttered, namely, that "Jews are a separate people and should really present themselves as such" since they "need to re-acquire their country, the Land of Israel."

Other Germanized Jewish intellectuals had already expressed similar heretical views. Indeed, Moses Hess's *Rome and Jerusalem* had appeared as far back as 1862 (in German, of course) and had scandalized the entire socialist intelligentsia of Western Europe. But Hess, for all of his falling from grace among leading European

socialists (who immediately caricatured him as "Rabbi Moses"), never became either a believing or a practicing Jew as a result of his "heresy." Birnbaum, on the other hand, quickly deduced several personal implications of his views and "began to study the Bible, engaged a teacher to study Talmud" with him, "read the Yiddish, and particularly, the Hebrew periodical press" and discovered thereby "the Jewish nationalist movement in Eastern Europe."

He was merely 19 years old when, as a confirmed pre-Herzlian Zionist, he began attending courses at the University of Vienna, first in "orientalistics" and then in jurisprudence. Much before Herzl came on the scene (and, most particularly, much before the Dreyfus affair of 1894 shocked the sensitivities of all Western Jewish intellectuals), he gave public talks and published brochures for Jewish students stressing that Jews were members of "a Jewish people, a people whose renaissance depended on the Land of Israel."[8] He literally coined the word "Zionism", both in German and in Hebrew,[9] and, together with a few other students at the same university—all of the others, by the way, Eastern European—he organized the first university-linked Jewish student organization,[10] *Kadimah* (1883) and founded, edited and published its journal *Selbst-Emancipation!* (1885),[11] a publication that soon reached far and wide among "Jewish ethnonationally" oriented students and other readers among German-speaking Jewry. He championed the need for unity among Jews, holding that otherwise no goals could be attained and no improvements in Jewish life were securable.[12] He bitterly criticized those whose Jewishness was merely the byproduct of anti-Semitism and who were kept from escaping from their own people only by the hatred of Jews among their co-territorial neighbors.[13] He argued that genuine cultural creativity was possible for Germanized Jews only on their assumption of deep bonds with their own people and its culture.[14] Otherwise they could attain no more than pale, inauthentic imitations of German culture, given that Christianity was a basic ingredient of that culture. Jews could evolve to new moral heights (he was an opponent of Jewish urbanism and commercialism from his earliest writings, considering them both to be moral negatives), he believed, only if they cultivated Judaism and settled on the soil of the Land of Israel.[15] Iconoclastically, he

stressed that socialism would not result in a better world as long as it did not support the aspirations of small peoples, the Jews among them, for ethnonational recognition. On the contrary, he predicted socialism would merely lead to a new kind of barbarism unless, like the Jewish prophets of old, it became associated with the principles of ethics and justice between nationalities. He felt that America could not save the Jewish soul because that soul could become strong and creative only on the soil of its historic homeland where it would not need to imitate others.[16] Assimilation could no more provide a constructive answer to the problems of the Jewish people, he believed, than suicide could provide an answer to the problems of Jewish individuals.[17] He co-authored a correspondence course so that adults could master Hebrew at home,[18] since he was convinced that only through Hebrew could the Jewish soul be awakened.[19] He celebrated the growth of Hebrew courses, clubs and periodicals, both in Eastern Europe and in Palestine. Above all he stressed the importance of the Land of Israel for "modern" (that is for Westernized and, particularly, for Germanized) Jews, because only there, he believed, could Jewish socialism and Jewish modernity develop hand in hand.[20] Only Zionism, he maintained, could unite Jewish thought with pan-human thought. He considered Zionism to be, first and foremost, a *cultural* movement that enriched Eastern European Jews by stimulating them to modernity (both in Yiddish and in Hebrew), and by bringing Western European Jews to genuine Jewish ethnonational identity.[21] Zionism alone, he believed, could bring them both together and unite them again into one people, as they had been before the Westernization, emancipation and assimilation of Western European Jews. Zionism could give both Western and Eastern Jews a joint footing in a land where Jews would once again be able to contribute to the ethical and the aesthetic progress of mankind as a whole, as they had done in days of old.[22]

Today, when ideas, formulations and emphases that were original with Birnbaum have entered into the mainstream of ordinary (and even tritely propagandistic) phraseology, and when the reality of Israel is often much different from what Birnbaum had imagined it would be, it is easy to overlook the originality and

even the revolutionary nature of Birnbaum's Zionist pronouncements. In stark contrast to Herzl and most other Germanized Zionists, Birnbaum obviously did not stress mobilizing Western Jewish political pressure and Western Jewish access to funds in order to save Eastern European Jews from persecution, discrimination, poverty and backwardness.[23] For Birnbaum, Zionism was not at all a tremendous charity campaign on behalf of pitiful *Ostjuden*. Zionism was, instead, a movement on behalf of cultural regeneration, for reunification of East and West, fostering renewed and strengthened Jewish ethical, aesthetic and social elevation and creativity.

Birnbaum's views concerning Zionism changed radically in later days, as did his attitudes toward Judaism and Jewishness. He became less and less enamoured of altering or rebuilding either of them and more and more convinced of the eternal values, initially of modern Yiddish language and literature and, ultimately, of the tradition-anchored Jewish life and thought of Eastern European Jews. After the Second World Zionist Congress he withdrew from any affiliation with official, organizational Zionism *per se* and completely severed his contacts with Herzl, with whom he differed fundamentally on many theoretical, practical and personal grounds. However, until the very end of his days he remained the defender, the inspired interpreter and the devoted stimulator of Jewish creativity, Jewish thought and Jewish longings for salvation via an authentic and elevated Jewish life.

Nathan Birnbaum's Early Attitudes Toward Yiddish

Attitudes toward the language in which a culture is implemented, symbolized and indexed are, of necessity, related to attitudes toward the culture as a whole. And so it was with Birnbaum as well. His views concerning Yiddish developed and changed slowly during his first phase. Initially, his views were based on the premise that only Hebrew was capable of rendering conscious, reviving and elevating the suppressed ethnonational feelings of Germanized Jews.[24] Accordingly, he initially viewed Yiddish as "that hoarse child of the Ghetto," even though he was aware quite early that it not only had its intellectual defenders but

an enviable literature as well. Nevertheless, the best that he could foresee for it was that this "miscarriage of the diaspora," unworthy of being the instrument of a cultured people in search of its former greatness,[25] would help achieve the success of that search, the Zionist search, and, after bringing the masses into the mainstream of that success, would seal its own doom. This view of Yiddish, as worthless in itself but as a bridge to worthwhile goals, was hardly an original thought, but, rather, one that was quite widespread at the time among Jewish intellectuals in both Eastern and Western Europe. Nevertheless, even with all his negativeness toward Yiddish at this early point in his development, Birnbaum was also convinced that the Zionist movement had not yet taken the role of Yiddish seriously enough. He was never one to let go of an issue, to be satisfied with facile answers, whether they be those of others or his own. He began his voyage toward Yiddish in the very phase in which he was most critical of it, indeed, in the very same articles in which he berated it. He began by extolling Eastern European Jewry, its vitality and its authenticity.

After his departure from active Zionist efforts, the appreciation of Eastern European Jewry and of its language, Yiddish, becomes a dominant theme in his writing, but even in the first phase it was already there. He bemoaned the fact that the publications and literature by and for Germanized Jews had reduced Judaism to a "Mosaic confession." By so doing they had effectively assimilated, alienated, estranged and destroyed their own readers.[26] Modern Hebrew literature and the modern Hebrew press of Eastern Europe were the true media of Jewish self-defense, but the vast majority of Jews of Central and Western Europe had absolutely no access to them. How good it would be, he wrote, if the East could help the West in the difficult task of interesting readers in Jewish history, customs and literature. Zionism would never be able to reach its own (actually Birnbaum's own) goals unless the mighty East could influence the anemic West to become its partner on behalf of the rebirth of the Jewish people via the cultivation of its own ethnonational identity, ethnonational customs and ethnonational economy.

In this, his very first phase, Birnbaum had already turned trite Germanized-Zionist sloganeering upside-down. For Birnbaum,

Zionism was a movement on behalf of Jewish culture, and not just a movement to foster immigration to Palestine. It was a movement to Judaize the interests and behaviors of Germanized Jews, rather than merely to save the lives of *Ostjuden*. It had goals in the realm of traditional and plebian customs, rather than only highsounding political, economic and philosophical goals, a realm which he recognized as being entirely unattainable in either German or Hebrew. As far as Hebrew itself was concerned, Birnbaum was honest enough to grant that even the Zionist movement rarely either required or stimulated its members to really learn it. On the other hand, there were many great masters of Hebrew, both in the East and in the West, who were either assimilationists or anti-Zionists.[27] The surging Jewish life of Eastern Europe was primarily based neither on Zionism nor on Hebrew. After his disappointments, on both personal and philosophical levels, at the first two World Zionist Congresses (1897, 1898)—which deserve separate treatment elsewhere—Birnbaum was ready to go to the East itself and to immerse himself in it, rather than to wait for the East to come to the West in order to invigorate it. And this brought him not only to positiveness and activism on behalf of Yiddish but to a level "even higher than that."[28]

Notes and References

1. During much of his life N.B. was referred to as *Nosn Birnboym*, (in accordance with the rules of Yiddish phonology), and there is good reason to refer to him so today so that the English-speaking world may know the name by which the vast majority of his contemporaries called him. We speak of Johann Sebastian Bach, not John Steven, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, not some Americanization or Anglicization of those names. However, their cases are not really fully comparable to N.B.'s. He did call himself Nathan Birnbaum in his numerous German writings (when he did not use a pseudonym). He referred to himself by this name fairly exclusively during the first half of his life and very commonly during the last half as well. If we add to the above considerations the further fact that the literature about him in all languages other than Yiddish (or Yiddish *and* Hebrew, if the latter too is pronounced in the Askhenazi or Central and Eastern European fashions) all utilize the German version of his name, then we must come to the conclusion that a break with this spelling (and pronunciation) convention might now be more confusing than enlightening. Nevertheless, in my own spoken references to N.B. I continue to use the Yiddish

form of his name, Nosn Birnboym (and have done so in one or two of my earlier published mentions of him), precisely because I feel that it tells us something about him that the German version does not convey. How typical this is of N.B.! Neither version of his name can fully represent him.

2. A Yiddish speaking Jew might inquire about a third party "er iz take a *viner*?" ("Is he really Viennese?") and the answer might come back "nit azoy a viner vi a *buko*viner" (not exactly Viennese, but rather from Bukovina). We will have more to say about Bukovina in our discussion of a later chapter of N.B.'s life ("Nathan Birnbaum's Second Phase: The Champion of Yiddish and Jewish Cultural Autonomy").

3. Galicia, now a region in Southeast Poland and the Northwest Ukrainian S.S.R., was formerly (after the first partition of Poland in 1772) an Austrian crownland. The German-Jewish *haskole* or Enlightenment movement, seeking to Germanize, modernize, and "normalize" Jewish life, intellectually, politically and economically, penetrated Galicia almost from the time of its very origins in Berlin under Moses Mendelssohn and produced in Galicia a large roster of scholars and literary figures. Full political rights were granted to Galician Jews in 1859. For further details see Paul R. Magocsi, *Galicia: A Historical Survey and Bibliographic Guide.* Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1983. Concerning Galician Jews in Vienna, see Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna: 1867–1914.* Albany, SUNY Press, 1983, and M. Henisch, Galician Jews in Vienna in Josef Fraenkel, ed. *The Jews of Austria: Essays on Their Life, History and Destruction.* London, Vallentine Mitchell, 1970, 361–373.

4. See his "An iberblik iber mayn lebn (A review of my life)", *Yubileyum-bukh tsum zekhtsikstn geburtstog fun dr. nosn birnboym (Sixtieth Birthday Celebration Volume).* Warsaw, Yeshurin, 1925.

5. Smaller contingents of Jews were also becoming Magyarized, Polonized, etc., but these also frequently regarded German and Germanness as "higher states" in accord with socio-cultural and socio-economic realities up to World War I. Germanization, therefore, was long a key process among Jews in Central and Eastern Europe and a key antithesis in most of Birnbaum's exertions throughout his life.

6. There is considerable literature dealing with the rational and irrational fears and antipathies that Germanized Jews of the latter part of the 19th century harbored vis-à-vis East European Jews, the latter commonly being viewed as "spoilers" of the acceptance that Germanized Jews generally sought within the world of German culture. For introductory readings in this area, see Aschheim, Steven E. *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jews in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923.* Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1982; Gilman, Sander L. *Jewish Self-Hatred.* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; and Reinharz, Jehuda. "East European Jews in the *Weltanschauung* of German Zionists, 1882–1914," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry,* 1984, 1, 55–95. For an introduction to the deeply ingrained German (and Austrian-German) anti-Semitism of the period, see Bronsen, David (ed.). *Jews and Germans from 1860 to 1933: The Problematic*

Symbiosis. Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1979; Kahn, Robert. "German-speaking Jewry during Austria-Hungary's constitutional era (1867–1918)," *Jewish Social Studies,* 1948, 10, 239–256; Lea, Charlene A. *Emancipation, Assimilation and Stereotype: The Image of the Jew in German and Austrian Drama (1800–1850).* Bonn, Bouvier, 1978; Poliakov, Leon. *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe.* New York, Basic Books, 1971; Rothkrug, Lionel. "Peasant and Jew: fears of pollution and German collective perceptions," *Historical Reflections,* 1983, 10, 59–77; and Tal, Uriel. *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870–1914.* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1975. For initial exploration of the Jewish passion for secularization, modernization and Germanization, see Bach, H.I. *The German Jew: A Synthesis of Judaism and Western Civilization, 1730–1930.* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985; Cuddihy, J.M. *The Ordeal of Civility.* New York, Basic Books, 1975; Gay, Peter. *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernized Culture.* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978; Lamberti, Marjorie. *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany.* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1975; Pawel, Ernst. *The Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka.* New York, Straus and Giroux, 1984; Richarz, Monika (ed.). *Judisches Leben in Deutschland.* 3 vols. Stuttgart, Deutsches Verlag-Anstalt, 1976, 1979, 1985; and most of the contributions to Reinharz, Jehuda and Walter Schatzberg, eds. *The Jewish Response to German Culture.* Hanover and London, University Press of New England, 1985.

7. See footnote 4, above.

8. Nathan Birnbaum (=N.B.). *Die Assimilationssucht. Ein Wort an die soganannten Deutschen, Slaven, Magyarwn, etc. mosaicher Confession. Von einem Studenten judischer Nationalitat.* Several aspects of this title show the influence of Pinsker's *Autoemanzipation* (see footnote 11, below).

9. Confirmed most recently by G. Kresl. Mi haya harishon shehamzi et hamila zionut? (Who was the first to coin the word Zionism?) *Et-mol.* 1978, 3, 22–33. Earlier views arriving at the same conclusion are those of the Hebrew writer and philosopher Akhad Ha'am (1856–1927), with whom Birnbaum differed sharply with respect to the value to be assigned to Yiddish, and Alex Bein, former director of the Central Zionist Archives and State Archivist of Israel. See the latter's "The origin of the term and concept 'Zionism'", in Raphael Patai (ed.), *Herzl Year Book,* v. II. New York, Herzl Press, 1959.

10. The text of the call to Jewish students to join the new organization is reproduced in Hugo Gold, *Geschichte der Juden Wien: Ein Gedenkbuch.* Tel Aviv, Olamenu, 1966. The name "Kadimah" signifies "eastward" as well as "forward" and was suggested by Perets Smolenskin (1840–1885), Russian-Jewish Hebrew novelist and journalist. Smolenskin spent 17 years of his life in Vienna, where he published his influential journal *Hashakhar* and worked as the Hebrew proof-reader for a well-known publishing house. For various accounts and interpretations of the work of "Kadimah", see Cahnman, Werner J. "The fighting Kadimah," *Chicago Jewish Forum,* 1958, 17, no. 1, 24–27; Pass, Harriet Z. *Jewish Nationalism in Vienna before Herzl,* M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1970; Rosenheck, Ludwig (ed.). *Festschrift Kadimah.* Modling, 1933 (contains six articles,

one by Birnbaum); and Schoeps, Julius H. "Modern heirs of the Maccabees; The beginning of the Vienna Kadimah, 1882–1897," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 1982, 27, 155–170 (contains extensive bibliography).

11. *Selbst-Emancipation! Zeitschrift fur die nationalen, socialen und politischen Interessen des Juddischen Stammes.* Since this name was obviously inspired by Leon Pinsker's seminal volume *Autoemanzipation; Mahnruf an seine Stammesgenossen von einem russischen Juden* (1882), the slight alteration in name (from *Auto-* to *Selbst-* is but another indication of Birnbaum's need for independence, for being original or at least different, in small things as well as in large ones. With some interruptions *Selbst-Emancipation* continued to be published until 1895. For further details, see G. Kresl. "Zelbstemantsipatsyon" (in Hebrew). *Shivat zion.* 1956–1957, 4, 55–99.

12. N.B. "Panjudaismus," *Selbst-Emancipation!* (=*S-E*). 1885, 1 no. 6.

13. N.B. "Verjudung-Entjudung," *S-E.* 1885, 1, no. 7.

14. N.B. "Unsere Culturaufgabe," *S-E.* 1885, 1, no. 19.

15. N.B. "Volksthum und Weltbürgerthum," *S-E.* 1890, 3, no. 2.*

16. N.B. "Osten und Westen," *S-E.* 1890, 3, no. 14.

17. N.B. "Um Ehre und Wohlfahrt unseres Volkes," *S-E.* 1890, 3, no. 1.

18. N.B. and Eliahu Saphir. *Brieflicher Sprach- und Sprech-Unterricht zur Erlernung der hebräischen Sprache.* Vienna, 1893. Four lessons (called "Letters," in view of their correspondence course format) appeared, the first three, printed and the fourth, written in N.B.'s own hand.

19. N.B. *Die nationale Wiedergeburt des jüdischen Volkes in Seinem Lande als Mittel zur Lösung der Judenfrage.* Vienna, 1893. Note that Herzl's *Judenstaat* did not appear until 1896.

20. N.B. "Die jüdische Moderne," *Zion.* 1896, 2, nos. 7–10. (Also published as a separate brochure: Leipzig, 1896) This publication is signed "Mathias Acher", one of Birnbaum's pseudonyms. It dates back to 1895 and remains in use (and in many years, in very frequent use) until 1916. (See Chapter 5, footnote 27, for a discussion of the significance of this pseudonym). As for "Die jüdische Moderne", Martin Buber claimed that his accidental reading of this article/brochure in 1898 converted him to lifetime Zionism.

21. N.B. "Judaismus und Hellenismus," *Die Zeit.* 1896, 8, no. 94. Birnbaum may well have coined the terms Ostjuden and Westjuden and established them as polar opposites (but bridgable ones, from his point of view).

22. N.B. *Der Zionismus als Kulturbewegung. Referat Gehalten auf dem Zionisten-Kongresas in Basel am 29 August, 1897.* Published, subsequently, as part of his *Zwei Vorträge über Zionismus.* Berlin, 1898.

23. For analyses of the more common German-Jewish approach to the goals of Zionism, see Adolf Böhm, *Die zionistische Bewegung bis zum Ende des Weltkrieges.* Tel Aviv, Hozaah Ivrith, 1935, and, even more sharply delineated: Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised Land: The Dilemma of the German Jew, 1893–1914.* Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1975.

24. N.B. "Nationalität und Sprache," *S-E.* 1886, 2, no. 4.*

25. N.B. "Der jüdische Jargon," *S-E.* 1890, 3, no. 15.*

*Asterisked items have been translated and included in this Volume.

26. N.B. "Jüdische Literatur und judische Zeitungen," *S-E.* 1892, 5, no. 1.*

27. N.B. "Hebräische Sprache," *S-E.* 1892, 5, no. 14.

28. The allusion here is to a short story by the modern Yiddish classicist I.L. Perets (1852–1915), "If Not Even Higher", in which one who originally doubted that the saintly Rabbi of Nemerov actually ascended to heaven, prior to the High Holidays, in order to intercede on behalf of his flock, finally opines (after secretly observing the rabbi's anonymous efforts to minister to the needs of the sick and the poor) that the rabbi's ascent was "evèn higher" than that which his followers claimed.

Chapter 3

Nathan Birnbaum's Second Phase: The Champion of Yiddish and Jewish Cultural Autonomy

IF THERE ARE unanswered questions and unexplainable (some might say: miraculous) developments in Nathan Birnbaum's first stage, a stage in which he travelled from a very brief period of left-wing disinterest in Jewish matters of any kind to a passionate interest in "Zionism as a cultural movement," his second chapter is, if anything, even more unusual and idiosyncratic. Even in his first stage he had come to criticize the empty-headedness and outright ignorance vis-à-vis Jewish matters of most of his Germanized Zionist contemporaries in Vienna, Berlin, Prague and other urban centers of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Their Zionism neither derived from nor led to personal Jewish commitments, whether at the individual or at the societal level. At best, they sought a place of refuge for the persecuted "Ostjuden" of the Czarist Empire; at worst, they sought to guarantee a place to which they themselves could escape if their own situation in the "civilized" West were ever to deteriorate "beyond control." Later, in his religious phase, he would call them

"café Zionists." Since anti-Semites had once insulted them in their favorite cafe in Berlin or Vienna, they were interested in a Jewish homeland in Palestine so that there would be a place where they could drink their coffee quietly, without embarrassment. The fact that Herzl devoted almost all of his time to high level political activity, meeting with heads of states and other influential world leaders, deeply troubled Birnbaum, and the fact that almost all of those whom Birnbaum had so painstakingly attracted to Zionism now proceeded to flock to Herzl's corner, disappointed him greatly and alienated him from official Zionism all the more. Herzl's lack of Jewish knowledge, of personal Jewish observance of *any* kind, of any appreciation for the deeply Jewish life and robust national identity of Eastern European Jews and their most creative intellectuals, all these things provided Birnbaum with additional rationale for a rupture with the movement that he had co-founded, had named, had served, and had led for nearly a score of years. However, his major impetus was clearly that he identified increasingly with Eastern European Jewry, with a Jewry which was not about to pull up stakes, with a Jewry that appeared as deep and as permanent as the sea itself, a sea in which he himself began to swim with increasing frequency and ease, a sea that led him eastward, but to Tshernovits rather than to Jerusalem. With his estrangement, Western European Zionism lost an important, original and Jewishly authentic force whose absence many soon came to regret.[1] Birnbaum, for his part, maintained a life-long interest in planned Jewish concentration, and, when necessary, planned resettlement, but did so entirely outside of the Zionist establishment and in frequent opposition to Zionist thought.[2] During the ensuing 15–16 years, i.e. from after the Second Zionist World Congress in 1898 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, he concentrated primarily on two themes: Jewish cultural autonomy and the importance of the Yiddish language. By the end of this period he had already begun to move in the direction of his third and final phase: traditional Jewish Orthodoxy.

Cultural Autonomy for Jews

Birnbaum came to regard the ever more vociferous struggle of nationalities within the Austro-Hungarian Empire (i.e., the struggles of nationalities that co-inhabited the same provinces and competed for the control of the provinces in which they resided) as a natural opportunity to achieve one of his main goals: the organized concentration and subvention of Jewish cultural life. He viewed such concentration and subvention as being doubly desirable. On the one hand, it would provide some defense against the strident racism which was becoming alarmingly fashionable (and, therefore, doubly dangerous) as a result of the pseudo-scientific writings of such figures as Stuart Houston Chamberlain,[3] who managed simultaneously to extol ancient Judaism and to defame its modern-day practitioners as the carriers of a biological and psychological infection throughout Christian Europe. Cultural autonomy would provide modern Jews with respectability in the eyes of their co-territorial neighbors. But in addition, and even more importantly, cultural autonomy would stem the specious assimilation of East European Jewish intellectuals in the direction of rapid, "copy cat" Germanization, Polonization, Magyarization or Russification. Finally, he believed that organized stability and concentration of Jewish cultural life could be realized only if the Austro-Hungarian government (but, later on, also the governments of the Czarist Empire and of the USA, the former hopefully becoming more democratic and the latter, more attentive to its growing Jewish immigrant population) would recognize Yiddish in its own bureaus and offices, in schools for Jewish children and via stipends for writers, poets and journalists. In 1905 he first presented his thinking along these lines (in German, of course; he was not yet up to lecturing in Yiddish) to a sympathetic Jewish audience precisely in Tshernovits,[4] a city that was to loom large in his later activities. Three years later he would return there, to convene the "First World Conference for the Yiddish Language," a conference which had not only language goals but which was a building-block in his broader program for Jewish cultural autonomy. He subsequently proceeded to spell out his ideas about cultural autonomy both in

his own journal *Neue Zeitung* (Vienna 1906–1907) and in a variety of other periodicals, stressing the view that Jews were as entitled to cultural autonomy as were the other contending nationalities (Serbs and Croatians, "Czechoslavs", Italians, Poles, Ukrainians—then more commonly called Ruthenians, particularly in Austria-Hungary—Rumanians and Slovenians) who sought it. In all of his arguments he pointed to Eastern European Jews as a sterling example to be emulated and assisted. Whereas assimilatory Jewish intellectuals were still seeking to escape from Jewishness, thereby losing any semblance of a national character of their own without fully acquiring any other, Eastern European Jewish thinkers—Zionists and Bundist-Socialists alike—were being drawn increasingly into the proud struggle for cultural autonomy.[5] At the "Conference of Nationalities" on June 7, 1905, in Vienna, where more than half of all the participants were Jews, only Nathan Birnbaum came as a (self-proclaimed) representative of the "Jewish nationality."[6]. He stressed that Austro-Hungary existed to serve its people, and not vice versa, and that this goal could best be attained when these peoples regulated their own cultural affairs. Western Jews in Austro-Hungary were particularly in need of the possibilities that cultural autonomy would provide, because otherwise they were faced with total assimilatory extinction. Galician and Bukovinian Jewry, on the other hand, would not only further enrich their still vibrant traditions via cultural autonomy but would serve as examples for their more Westerly brothers, as well as for the Jews of the Czarist Empire, who could only dream of cultural autonomy in their current oppressed situation.[7] As early as 1906 Birnbaum began to stress that Jews needed to declare Yiddish to be their "language of normal discourse" in the census that was being planned for 1910, if their cultural autonomy aspirations were to be taken seriously. Even if cultural autonomy were not to fully solve all the problems of Austro-Hungarian Jewry (he held, e.g., that even socialism would not be able to quickly end anti-Semitism because of the latter's deeply ingrained position in most Christian cultures), it would, nevertheless, help minimize inter-group friction (each group being in control of its own tax-derived funds and its own institutions) and provide Jews with both a sense of pride and a

sense of security that would transfer to other areas as well.[8] At this point he also decided to become a candidate for the Austrian Parliament.

Birnbaum's Failure in the Elections of 1907

Jews had traditionally voted for the ruling ethnic group in each of the two sections of the Empire in which they were concentrated. They voted primarily for German candidates in Bukovina and for Polish candidates in Galicia, thereby often damaging the aspirations of the Ukrainians/Ruthenians in both areas.[9] Even when they did vote for Jewish candidates—indeed, by then there were already a few Jewish members of Parliament—these were generally Germanized or Polonized Jews without the slightest interest in Jewish concerns or aspirations. However, 1907 promised to be an election with a difference. There were several "genuinely Jewish" candidates, most of them running with the support of one or another of the various Galician Zionist groups who were really willing to do "Gegenwartsarbeit" (work for the here and now) rather than solely stress the homeland, in Palestine, that was far off both in time and place. Although Birnbaum did not seek Zionist support, running on a ticket of his own, he was nevertheless supported not only by most Jews in his district (Bitshutsh, Galicia) but even by the Ruthenians whose cause he had long championed. Nevertheless, Birnbaum lost the elections because of irregularities and illegalities engineered by the ruling Polish local administration.[10] Troops were sent to seal off the bridges leading into town and to expel from the polls those suspected of anti-Polish sentiments, so that, in one way or another, most Jews and Ruthenians were kept from casting their ballots. On the other hand, a few dozen hired hands "voted early and often," not only in their own names but in the names of hundreds of individuals who had died since the last elections but whose names were still on the election rolls. Some Jews joked that "Koyhanem (members of the traditional Jewish priestly caste) were obliged to keep away from the ballot box because so many dead folk were obviously in its vicinity." Birnbaum found the situation far from funny and sent off telegram after telegram protesting

these irregularities to the Ministry of the Interior in Vienna, but to no avail. The district had been "promised" to the Poles and Birnbaum never set foot in Parliament. Years later, the great Hebrew Nobel Prize Laureate, Agnon, who witnessed these events as a young man growing up in Bitshutsh, wrote up the entire incident in one of his works.[11] It was neither the first nor the last rigged election in Galicia.[12] Characteristically, Birnbaum snapped back from his defeat and responded to it by intensifying his struggle for Jewish cultural autonomy.

He threw himself into his earlier plan for a "World Conference for the Yiddish Language" and brought his plans to fruition in 1908, after returning from a brief visit to the U.S.A., thanks to the help of his admirers in Tshernovits, many of whom had been students at the University of Vienna and, had, therefore, long been under his spell. He thundered away at those Eastern European Jewish intellectuals who parroted their benighted counterparts in the West, exchanging their vibrant birthright for pale imitations of non-Jewish cultures.[13] He preached the "emancipation of Eastern European Jewry from Western Jewish tutelage,"[14] the liberation of "genuine Jews" from "false Germans." Although he himself had been born in Vienna, he referred to Eastern European Jews as "we" and "us" and to *"Yehudim"* (an Eastern European reference to Germanized Jews) as "they" and "them." He urged Eastern European Jews to establish a parliament for all of world Jewry, but one that they rather than the Yehudim would control, so that they could advance not only their own culture but save Jewry at large. Only Eastern European Jewry still possessed a great, creative, independent Jewish way of life and only it, therefore, could nourish less fortunate Jewries elsewhere. Again and again he returned to the issue of cultural autonomy (particularly to the need for schools, at all levels, in which Yiddish would be the language of instruction), to the legitimization of *nine* nationalities in the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, rather than just *eight.*[15] He headed the non-partisan committee that brought together 3,000 Jews (a large number for those days) to demonstrate in Tshernovits, in 1910, against the regulation that excluded Yiddish from the list of permissible vernaculars for the forthcoming census.[16] He refused to become

discouraged at his meager progress on the cultural autonomy front, realizing full well that "every victory in the life of a people must be built upon many losses and sacrifices."

Birnbaum and Yiddish: Love Without Limits but Without Rejection of Hebrew

In his own biographic sketch,[17] Birnbaum tells us that he "came naturally to the language of the diaspora, Yiddish, after having come to diaspora nationalism and, accordingly, began a long struggle to gain for it the dignity and honor it deserved." His earlier negativism toward Yiddish, during his Zionist phase, disappeared completely and even his ambivalence (regarding Yiddish as valuable only insofar as it permitted intellectuals to influence the masses in directions that would ultimately undercut Yiddish) vanished and was replaced by unadulterated adoration. Typically enough, Western aesthete that he was, his transformation began with the Yiddish stage (as did Kafka's too, somewhat later). The Yiddish theatre reflected an independent soul, an authentic culture, whereas German Jewish theatre, no matter how refined it might be as drama, was enslaved to a foreign model.[18] However, both Yiddish and Hebrew had strong claims upon him and he ultimately arrived at a view that accommodated them both and that totally rejected the extremists at both ends who rejected each other's favorite language. He considered both languages to be vital and, therefore, viewed the extremists as doing great damage to the entire Jewish people. Basically, he believed that only the new creativity that was related to Yiddish could result in a modern Jewish life in which Hebrew too would remain vibrant in its non-vernacular functions.[19] Through Yiddish, millions of Jews gained entry into a modern Jewish culture. Through Yiddish they immediately joined the ranks of all those who struggled for cultural autonomy. He viewed Eastern European Yiddish as being incomparably richer than its Western counterpart in the German speaking countries. Indeed, he compared Eastern European Yiddish to English, i.e. to another widespread fusion language which had arrived at an elevated, elevating and proud internal unity.[20] Initially he flirted with the

idea of writing Yiddish with Latin letters (as did several others at the time) but this was just a passing thought. What was constant in his thinking was a concern to develop the language, attract more intellectuals to it, gain for it rights, recognition and protection via Jewish cultural autonomy.

Never a theoretical or platonic lover, he immediately set to work to serve his beloved. In 1905, at the University of Vienna, he organized the very first academically affiliated student organization on behalf of Yiddish, "Yidishe kultur,"[21] whose members, many of them hailing *from* Tshernovits, soon formed the administrative unit that convened and conducted the "First World Conference for the Yiddish Language" *in* Tshernovits. He also arranged "tours" for Yiddish writers that took them through various towns and townlets in Galicia, accompanying them and introducing them in German wherever that was necessary to gain a proper hearing for them.[22]

With respect to the competition between Hebrew and Yiddish, both of which went through intense cultural and political symbolic elaboration at the same time, leading to a heated and bitter competition between them, Birnbaum remained a peacemaker. He felt that Hebrew was no more dead than Yiddish was a jargon. He rejected the error that viewed "the only real Jewish language" (Hebrew) as not being alive and "the only live Jewish tongue" (Yiddish) as not being a language.[23] Although he resorted frequently to the usual romantic imagery of the age he also managed to transcend it on occasion and to point out that Yiddish did not create the Jewish people but served it, organized it by providing it with a superb communication channel, and united it around common experiences and symbols. The fact that intellectuals ridiculed it saddened him tremendously because he regarded such behavior as a sign of their opportunism and of their insecurity in the face of non-Jewish prejudices. He defended Yiddish against the attacks of Eastern European Zionists and philosophers.[24] Before the Tshernovits Conference convened, he wrote articles in German explaining its importance and who its luminaries would be.[25] He gave the opening address at the conference (in Yiddish, for the first time in his life).[26] He spoke again at its festive banquet (this time in his most flowery German).

He refrained from polemics with both sets of extremists that attended the conference and firmly supported (some say: originated) the minimalistic resolution (Yiddish is *an* ethnonational language of the Jewish people, not *the* ethnonational language of the Jewish people) so that no official statement issuing from the conference would besmirch the good name of Hebrew. After the conference he defended this controversial resolution that made it famous[27] (the view that Yiddish was "*an* ethnonational language of the Jewish people") as tantamount to a veritable revolution in the previously established relationship between Hebrew and its "servant girl". He also defended Tshernovits as the logical place to have held a conference which was to be but the first step in the march toward cultural autonomy.[28] He never tired of explaining that only among those who cultivated Yiddish as a bastion against assimilation would Hebrew also be retained as a bastion against assimilation.[29]

The End of an Era

After the conference Birnbaum remained in Tshernovits for only three years, i.e. to 1911, even though he had been asked to establish a permanent secretariat there for its ongoing "cultural work." His bookstore there (established with the support of a "Young Ukrainian" organization, out of gratitude for his constant ideological support for their efforts) did not really provide him with a living.[30] The locally dominant Jewish atmosphere, a mixture of "mechanical political Zionism" and "imitative Germanization", neither satisfied nor accepted him. He left Tshernovits in 1911 and went on a lecture tour of Russian Poland to expound his diaspora nationalist ideas. He continued to "defend the honor of Yiddish" among Eastern European Jews[31] and to familiarize Western European Jews with its literature and folklore.[32] However, as Tshernovits receded and as the First World War drew near, it became ever clearer that his views were changing. While returning from America (in 1908) he had experienced "the presence of God", while looking out on the waters of the mid-Atlantic, but it was so momentary and fleeting an experience that he soon persuaded himself that it was but a

dream. During his lecture tour of Russian Poland he rose to comment on a lecture of another speaker and found himself proclaiming God and the Torah as the only reliable defenses that the Jewish people had. He struggled to combine "Yiddish and the absolute Jewish idea."[33] The war erupted and he foresaw the damage that it would do to the last stronghold of authentic Judaism. His three sons were drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army and two of them were sent into the thick of battle and seriously wounded. He returned to Vienna and there, in the midst of a horrible war waged on several fronts, he searched more intensely than ever before for "the absolute Jewish idea."

Notes and References*

1. Herrmann, Leo. *Nathan Birnbaum: Sein Werk und Seine Wandlung.* Berlin, Jüdischer Verlag, 1914.

2. N.B. "Die Lösungen der Judenfrage," *Ost und West.* 1902, 2, no. 6.

3. M.A. "Etwas ueber Houston Stewart Chamberlain," *Ost und West.* 1902, 2, no. 12.

4. N.B. "Ostjudische Aufgaben," *Bukowinaer Post.* (Tshernovits) 1905. (Separatdruck)

5. N.B. "Die jüdisch-nationale Bewegung," *Ruthenische Revue.* 1905, 3 no. 15.

6. Birnbaum, S.A. "Nathan Birnbaum and national autonomy," in Josef Frenkel, ed. *The Jews of Austria: Essays on their Life, History and Destruction.* London, Vallentine-Mitchell, 1970, 132–146.

7. N.B. "Jüdische Autonomie," *Ost und West.* 1906, no. 1. Also in Yiddish in the same year, in *Yidishes Vokhnblat* (Tshernovits) and in *Der Yid* (Kruke/Cracow).**

8. For views in opposition to Birnbaum's, note: (a) the Yiddish publication (in translation) of the widely read Austrian Social Democratic Party leader, Karl Kautsky, *Der kamf fun di natsyionalitetn un dos shtatsrekht in estraykh.* Vilna, Rom, 1906, in which Jews are not mentioned at all, although nationality rights are fervently espoused and (b) the pro-Polish stance of Wilhelm Feldman, detailed by Ezra Mendelsohn in his: "Jewish assimilation in L'viv: The case of Wilhelm Feldman," in A.S. Markovits and F.E. Sysyn, eds. *Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism: Essays on Austrian Galicia.* Cambridge, Harvard University Press/Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1982.

9. Kann, Robert. "German-speaking Jewry during Austria-Hungary's constitutional era (1867–1918)," *Jewish Social Studies* 1948, 10, 239–256.

10. See Kahan, Yisrael. *Sefer bitshutsh.* Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 1956; Tenenboym, Yoysef. *Galitsye, mayn alte heym.* Buenos Aires, Farband fun Poylishe Yidn in Argentine, 1952. Chapter 9, and Everett, Leila . "The rise of Jewish national politics in Galicia, 1905–1907," in A.S. Markovits and F. E. Sysyn, eds.

*N.B.: Nathan Birnbaum. M.A.: Mathias Acher, a pseudonym frequently employed by N.B. from 1895 to 1913.

**Asterisked items have been translated and included in this Volume.

Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism: Essays on Austrian Galicia. Cambridge, Harvard University Press/Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1982, 149–177.

11. Agnon, Shmuel Yosef. "B'naareynu u'v'zikneynu," in his *Al kapot hamanuel.* Tel Aviv, Schocken, 1961, 273–275.

12. Brur, Yaakov. "B'naareynu u'v'zikneynu k'misgeret khayey hamekhaber," in B. Kurtsvayl, ed. *Yovel shay.* Ramat Gan, Bar Ilan University, 1958. Also see details in Everett, op. cit. and Teneboym, op. cit. The latter claims that the local Polish-Galician authorities kept the results of the Bitshutsh elections secret for several days until they had burned sufficient ballots to defeat Birnbaum.

13. N.B. "Inteligents un folk," *D"r birnboyms vokhnblat.* 1908, 6.

14. N.B. "Die Emanzipation des Ostjudentums von Westjudentum (Herbst, 1909)," in his *Ausgewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage.* Tshernovits, 1910, vol II, 13–33.

15. N.B. "Akht oder nayn natsyionalitetn?" *Yidishes Tageblat* (New York). 1910, August 12. The "eight or nine" nationalities pertain only to Austria and do not take into account the Ladins, Slovaks or Hungarians in that part of the Monarchy.

16. N.B. "Kamf farn anerkenen di yidishe natsyon," *Der fraynd* (St. Petersburg), 1911, January 20.*

17. N.B. "An iberblik iber mayn lebn," *Yubileyum-bukh tsum zekhtsikstn geburtstog fun d"r nosn birnboym.* Warsaw, Yeshurin, 1925.

18. N. B. "Die jüdisch sprechenden Juden und ihre Bühne," *Die Welt.* 1901, 5, no. 41. In this Volume: "The Yiddish Speaking Jews and Their Stage."*

19. N.B. "Hebräisch und Jüdisch," *Ost und West.* 1902, 2, no. 7.*

20. N.B. "Die Sprachen des jüdischen Volkes," *Jüdische Abende.* 1904, no. 1.

21. Naygreshl, M. Di moderne yidishe literatur in galitsye, in his *Fun noentn over.* New York, Yidisher Kultur Kongres, 1955, 398–469. Also note the reference to his tours of Galician towns to introduce Yiddish writers in D. Sh. and M. Kleinman, "L'zekher natan birnbaum," *Davar.* 1937, May 7.

22. During this period Birnbaum also acted as chaperon-for-Yiddish in his monthly "Jüdische Abende", an insert in the *Jüdischer Volksblatt* (Vienna, 1905). The Yiddish poet Avro[he]m Reyzn, then briefly residing in Vienna, remembered the impact of the publication and of Birnbaum's monthly "evenings," at which previously published and as yet unpublished works of Yiddish literature were presented, as follows: "These evenings were attended by many hundreds of Germanized Jews, particularly by Jewish university students, and took place in one of the large and comfortable theaters in Vienna.... The enthusiasm that followed every recited story and poem was exceptionally great.... Dr. Birnbaum was the chairman and he beamed for joy. This was his triumph!" *Forverts,* 1937, May 5, no. 14399, p. 6.

23. N.B. "Die Todte 'Sprache'; Die lebende 'Nichtsprache'," *Neue Zeitung.* 1906, 1, no. 2, September 14.

24. N.B. "Für die jüdische Sprache," *Jüdische Zeitung.* 1907, 1, no. 20, November 29; also "Zum Sprachenstreit; Eine Entgegnung an Achad Haam," in

his *Ausqewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage.* v. II, 52–74. Tshernovits, 1910.

25. N.B. Gaste in Czernowitz. *Jušdische Zeitung.* 1908, 2, September.

26. N.B. "Efenungs-rede af der konferents far der yidisher shprakh," *D"r birnboyms vokhnblat* 1908, 1, no. 1, 3-7. (*In this Volume: Opening Address at the Conference for the Yiddish Language). Before the Tshernovits conference Birnbaum had published only five articles in Yiddish (at least one of these having been translated into Yiddish for him).

27. N.B. Shtimen vegn der konferents. *D"r birnboyms vokhnblat.* 1908. no. 6, September/October. (Authorship not confirmed).

28. N.B. "Der emes," *D"r birnboyms Vokhnblat.* 1908, no. 5, September/October.

29. N.B. "Der 'zhargon'," *Gershom baders yidisher folkskalendar.* (Lemberg/L'viv). 1909. Also published in German in his *Ausquwählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage.* v. II, 46–51. Tshernovits, 1910.

30. Zahavi-Goldhamer, "A. Tshernovits," in Y. L. Kohen-Maymon, ed. *Arim V'imohot B'yisrael.* Jerusalem, Mosad Harav Kuk, 1950. The "Young Ukrainians" opposed the local "old Ruthenians" who favored Russian rather than Ukrainian as their ethnonational language. See Paul R. Magocsi. *The Shaping of a National Identity.* Cambridge, Harvard University Press. 1978, p. 82. According to Tenenboym (op. cit.), Ukrainians had not only supported Birnbaum's candidacy in Bitshutsh but the entire notion of nationalistically oriented Jewish candidates to the election of 1907. The two journals that Birnbaum edited/published during his three years in Tshernovits (*D"r birnboyms vokhnblat,* in Yiddish, and *Das Volk,* in German) have been little studied due to their unavailability even in most of the largest Judaica collections. This may explain why the brief discussion of Birnbaum's Yiddish periodical in Flinker, D. et al. *The Jewish Press That Was* (Tel Aviv, World Federation of Jewish Journalists, 1980) is factually a comedy of errors.

31. N.B. *Der yikhes fun yidish.* Berlin, Sh. Lifshits Publishing House, 1913 (=*Naye bibliotek far yidishe fragn,* no.1).

32. M. A. "Auf dem Volksliederabend von Ost und West," *Ost und West.* 1912, 12, no. 1, 17-24.

33. N.B. "Di absolute ideye fun yidntum un di yidishe shprakh," *Di yidishe velt.* St. Petersburg, 1912, March.*

Chapter 4

The Role of the Tshernovits Language Conference in the "Rise of Yiddish"

THE "SPREAD OF LANGUAGE" does not always entail gaining new speakers or users—whether as a first or as a second language. Frequently it entails gaining new functions or uses, particularly "H" functions (i.e., literacy-related functions in education, religion, "high culture" in general, and, in modern times, in econo-technology and government, too) for a language that is already widely known and used in "L" functions (i.e., everyday family, neighborhood, and other informal/intimate, intragroup interaction). Wherever a speech community already has a literacy-related elite, this type of language spread inevitably involves the displacement of an old elite (the one that is functionally associated with the erstwhile "H") by a new elite that is seeking a variety of social changes which are to be functionally associated with the prior "L" and which are to be instituted and maintained under its own (the new elite's) leadership.[1] The last century has witnessed the rise and fall (but not the complete elimination) of such efforts on behalf of Yiddish.

The traditional position of Yiddish in *Ashkenaz* (the traditional Hebrew-Aramaic and Yiddish designation for Central and Eastern

Europe, Jews living in or deriving from this area being known, therefore, as *Ashkenazim*) was—and in many relatively unmodernized Orthodox circles still is—somewhat more complex than the H versus L distinction usually implies. At the extreme of sanctity there was *loshn koydesh*[2] alone, realized in hallowed biblical and postbiblical texts. At the opposite extreme, that of workaday intragroup life, there was Yiddish alone: the vernacular of one and all, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, pious and less than pious, with some members of each pair engaging in a growing modicum of Yiddish "entertainment" reading as well. Although "sanctity" and "workaday" existed on a single continuum and were connected by a single overarching set of cultural values and assumptions, they were, nevertheless, distinct, overt cognitive and emotional opposites. In between these two extremes were numerous situations in which (a) *loshn koydesh* and Yiddish cooccurred insofar as intragroup life was concerned, and less numerous ones in which (b) coterritorial vernaculars or written languages were employed insofar as intergroup activities involving the worksphere, government and infrequent "socializing" required.

The traditional intragroup intermediate zone resulted in a Yiddish oral literature of high moral import and public recognition (sometimes published in Yiddish but, at least initially, as often as not, translated into *loshn koydesh* for the very purpose of "dignified" publication). It also included the exclusive use of Yiddish as the process language of oral study, from the most elementary to the most advanced and recondite levels. And it included the exclusive use of Yiddish as the language of countless sermons by rabbis and preachers and as the language of popular religious tracts (ostensibly for women and uneducated menfolk). Thus, Yiddish did enter pervasively into the pale of sanctity and even into the pale of sanctity-in-print (hallowed bilingual texts—*loshn koydesh* originals with accompanying Yiddish translations—had existed ever since the appearance of print and, before that, as incunabula, but it never existed in that domain as a fully free agent, never as the sole medium of that domain in its most hallowed and most textified realizations, never as a fully independent target medium but only as a process medium underlying which or superceding

which a single *loshn koydesh* text or a whole sea of such texts was either known, assumed, or created (Fishman 1975).

As a result, when traditional Eastern European Jewry enters significantly into the nineteenth century drama of modernization, *loshn koydesh* and Yiddish are generally conceptualized, both by most intellectuals and by rank-and-file members of Ashkenaz, in terms of their extreme and discontinuous textified versus vernacular roles, their shared zones having contributed neither to the substantial vernacularization of *loshn koydesh* nor to the phenomenological sanctification of Yiddish. As the nineteenth century progressed there were increasing efforts to liberate Yiddish from its apparent subjugation to *loshn koydesh* (the latter being metaphorically referred to as the 'noble daughter of heaven', Yiddish being no more than her 'handmaiden'), particularly for more modern intragroup H pursuits. In addition, there were also increasing efforts to liberate Yiddish from its inferior position vis-à-vis coterritorial vernaculars in connection with modern learning and nontraditional life more generally. It is with the former type of language spread that this paper deals most directly (and with its implications for the role of *loshn koydesh*, which was also then being groomed for modern H roles at the intragroup and at the intergroup levels), although the spill-over from the former to the latter type of language spread was often both an objective and an achievement as well. Obviously, when one component of a traditional diglossia (here: triglossia) situation changes in its functions, the societal allocation of functions with respect to the other(s) is under stress to change as well.

The Tshernovits Language Conference: Success or Failure?

Three different positive views concerning Yiddish were clearly evident by the first decade of the twentieth century, and a fourth was then increasingly coming into being.[3] The earliest view was a traditional utilitarian one, and it continues to be evinced primarily by ultra-Orthodox spokesmen to this very day. In accord with this view, Yiddish was (and is) to be utilized in print for various moralistic and *halakhic*[4] educational purposes, because it has long been used in this way, particularly in publications for

women, the uneducated and children. Any departure from such use—whether on behalf of modern Hebrew or a coterritorial vernacular—was and is decried as disruptive of tradition. Another view was a modern utilitarian one, namely, that Yiddish must be used in political and social education if the masses were ever to be moved toward more modern attitudes and behaviors, because it was the only language that they understood. This view was, and is, to some extent, still widely held by *maskilic*[5] and Zionist/socialist spokesmen. A third view was also evident by the turn of the century, namely that Yiddish was a distinctly indigenous and representative vehicle and, therefore, it had a natural role to play both in expressing and in symbolizing Jewish cultural-national desiderata. Finally, we begin to find the view expressed that for modern Jewish needs, Yiddish is the *only or major* natural expressive and symbolic vehicle.

In the nineteenth century the first two positive views (and the counterclaims related to them) were encountered most frequently, but the latter two were beginning to be expressed as well (see, particularly J.M. Lifshits's writings, e.g., 1863, 1867; note D.E. Fishman's discussion [1986] of Lifshits as transitional ideologist). In the twentieth century the latter two views (and their respective refutations) came into prominence and the former two receded and were ultimately almost abandoned.[6] The last public encounter of all four views was at the Tshernovits Language Conference. There the first two views were presented and strongly refuted whereas the last two remained in uneasy balance, neither of them appearing clearly victorious over the other.

Planning the Conference

As we have noted in Chapter 3, the father of the idea of convening an international conference on behalf of Yiddish was Nathan Birnbaum.[7] He had first broached the idea in a 1905 lecture in Tshernovits,[8] well before he ran for a seat in the Austro-Hungarian parliament in 1907. Upon his defeat he decided to relocate from Vienna to Tshernovits, where he had many followers and admirers (particularly among university students

whom he had met and influenced in Vienna but who hailed from Tshernovits). However, although he founded both a Yiddish weekly (*Dokter birnboyms vokhnblat*) and a German monthly (*Das Volk*) there, Tshernovits could provide him neither with visibility nor with the income that he required. Accordingly, he decided to visit the United States in pursuit of both and on behalf of Yiddish "the world language of a world people". It was among Yiddish writers and intellectuals in New York, the capital of Eastern European immigrant life in the New World, that he secured the first noteworthy moral support for his plans to convene The First World Conference for the Yiddish Language. Since Tshernovits was the town where Birnbaum lived and where he could most conveniently supervise the practical arrangements for such a conference, that is the town in which it was agreed that it would take place. This decision, as we will see, had other practical justifications as well as definite consequences for the conference itself.

Birnbaum's initial host in the United States was the socialist-Zionist Doved Pinski, already well known as a Yiddish novelist and dramatist, who had read Birnboym's articles in German and was eager to help him reach a wider pro-Yiddish audience. Immediately attracted to Birnbaum's cause was the socialist-territorialist[9] theoretician and philosopher Khayem Zhitlovski (for extensive bibliographic details, see Fishman 1981). The three of them formed a curious troika (a neo-traditionalist on his way back to full-fledged Orthodoxy, a labor-Zionist, and a philosophical secularist), but together they issued a resolution for a world conference concerning Yiddish, composed in Pinski's apartment on Beck Street in the South Bronx (also signed by the playwright Yankev Gordon and the publisher Alex Yevalenko), and together they brought it to a massive audience at two "evenings" (Yiddish: *ovntn*, although not necessarily transpiring in the evening) the larger of which took place in Webster Hall, on the Lower East Side. Far more unforgettable than the arguments that they then marshalled for such a conference, and more impressive than the proposed order of business suggested in connection with it, was the fact that its chief architect, Birnbaum, spoke to the audiences in German (for he could not yet speak standard or formal Yiddish,

although he had begun to write Yiddish articles in 1904). His addresses, although purposely peppered with Yiddishisms, struck most commentators as impressive but funny, funny but painful. The intelligentsia was learning its mother tongue so that the latter could fulfill new functions and thereby provide new statutes to masses and intelligentsia alike.

But there was an intended "order of business" for Tshernovits, no matter how much it may have been overlooked at the *ovntn* or even at the conference itself. Birnbaum, Zhitlovski, and Pinski agreed (primarily at the latter's insistence) to "avoid politics" and "resolutions on behalf of Yiddish" (Pinski 1948), particularly since the political and ideological context of Yiddish differed greatly in Czarist Russia, in Hapsburg Austro-Hungary and in the immigrant United States. Thus they agreed upon a "practical agenda" and a "working conference" devoted to the following ten points:

1. Yiddish spelling
2. Yiddish grammar
3. Foreign words and new words
4. A Yiddish dictionary
5. Jewish youth and the Yiddish language
6. The Yiddish press
7. The Yiddish theatre and Yiddish actors
8. The economic status of Yiddish writers
9. The economic status of Yiddish actors
10. Recognition for the Yiddish language

The agenda starts off with four items of corpus planning.[10] Yiddish was correctly seen as being in need of authoritative codification and elaboration in order to standardize its usage and systematize its future growth. Major corpus-planning efforts for Yiddish—though previously called for and attempted—were a sign of its new importance. Point five recognized the dangers that modernization represented for the ethnic identity of the younger

generation, particularly if it pursued education and advancement in coterritorial vernaculars to the exclusion of Yiddish. Points six to nine stressed press and theater—their quality and their economic viability—the massive means of bringing modern Yiddish creativity to the public. Finally, the last point recognized something that was certainly on Birnbaum's mind. Jews themselves—not to speak of Gentiles—were unaccustomed to granting recognition to Yiddish, and, therefore, such recognition was often begrudged it even by democratic or democratizing regimes that gave some consideration to cultural autonomy for minority nationalities or to officially recognized cultural pluralism (as did pre-World War I Austro-Hungary). As Pinski in particular feared, the entire agenda of the conference was "subverted" by the tenth point and, indeed, was dominated by what was in reality only half of that point: Jewish recognition for Yiddish.

Why Was the Conference Held in Tshernovits?

Tshernovits was only a modest-sized town (21,500 Jews out of a total population of 68,400) and of no particular importance vis-à-vis Jewish cultural, political, or economic development. It was clearly overshadowed by Varshe, Vilne, Odes (Warsaw, Vilna, Odessa) and several other urban centers in the Pale of Settlement within the Czarist empire. Nevertheless, the recent history of Czarist repressions may have made it undesirable (if no longer clearly impossible) to convene the conference in one of those centers. Even within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, however, such Jewish centers as Kruke (Cracow), Lemberik/Lemberg (Lvov), and Brod (Brodie) were clearly of greater importance than Tshernovits. Tshernovits was, of course, easily accessible to Yiddish speakers in Austro-Hungary and Czarist Russia, but its symbolic significance far surpassed its national convenience and was twofold: (a) Not only was it in *frants-yosefs medine* (the Austro-Hungarian monarchy) but many segments of its hitherto significantly Germanized Jewish intelligentsia were already struggling to revise their attitudes towards Yiddish—a struggle that was particularly crucial for that period in Austro-Hungarian cultural politics vis-à-vis Germans, Poles, Ukrainians/Ruthenians,

and Jews in Bukovina and in Galicia as well—and (b) Birnbaum had already relocated there and had several young followers there (many of whom were students at the university in Vienna during the school year—and had been influenced by Birnbaum there). These young followers could provide (on a volunteer basis and during the summer vacation period in particular) the technical/organizational underpinnings of a world conference for Yiddish. Indeed, these followers constituted, with Birnbaum, the organizational committee that sent out the invitations to individual organizations and committees, secured a hall (not without difficulty), planned a banquet and literary evening, and disbursed the meager fees that the participants in the Conference paid in order to be either delegates (5 Kronen) or guests (1 Kronen). Both of these factors (the convening of the Conference in Tshernovits, and Birnbaum's young and inexperienced followers there, in the grips of their own discovery of H-possibilities for Yiddish), influenced the course of the Conference. The delicate balance of minority relations in Galicia and Bukovina resulted in more widespread attention being paid to the first Yiddish World Conference than its sponsors had bargained for. The census of 1910 was already being discussed, and it was apparent that the authorities again wanted Jews to claim either Polish (in Galicia) or German (in Bukovina) as mother tongue (as had been done in 1890) in order to defuse or counterbalance the growing pressure from Ukrainian/Ruthenians and Rumanians for additional language privileges and parliamentary representation. Previously, Jews had been counted upon to buttress the establishment out of fear that "unrest" would lead to anti-Jewish developments of one kind or another. It was apparent that young Jews were disinclined to play this role any longer and that they were threatening to claim either Yiddish or Hebrew, even though neither was on the approved list of mother tongues and even though claiming a language not on the list was "a punishable offense." Indeed, so great was the tension concerning the Conference that the President of the Jewish Community (*kehile*) in Tshernovits refused to permit the Conference to meet in community facilities for fear of incurring official displeasure or worse. Clearly, a new within-fold status for Yiddish would have

intergroup repercussions as well: upsetting the former within-group diglossia system was also related to new intergroup aspirations and these were, of necessity, political and economic (or likely to be suspected of being such), rather than merely cultural (no matter what the official agenda of the Conference might be).

Moreover, meeting in Tshernovits also determined the very nature of the quests and delegates (a distinction that was soon ignored) that could attend, discuss, propose, vote upon, and ultimately implement the Conference's deliberations and resolutions. The regional tensions in conjunction with national/cultural rights resulted in attendance by a more substantial number of students and ordinary folk, many in search of something spectacular or even explosive, than might otherwise have been the case. Similarly, because of the characteristics of Bukovinian Jewry *per se* there were more Zionists and fewer Bundists,[12] more traditionally-religiously oriented and fewer proletarian-politically oriented delegates and guests than would have been the case elsewhere. Birnbaum's youthful admirers and assistants were quite incapable of rectifying this imbalance by such simple means as sending more invitations to more "ethno-nationally conscious" circles. Indeed, for them, as for most Jewish intellectuals in Tshernovits, the idea of a Conference on behalf of Yiddish and conducted in Yiddish was not quite believable even as it materialized. Most local Jewish intellectuals were "the mainstay of . . . *daytshtum* (Germanness), and of a sui generis *daytshtum* to boot, Bukovinian *daytshtum*. None of the socially and politically active local (Jewish) intellectuals imagined anything like speaking to the people in its language. Indeed, when Berl Loker, who belonged to the exceptions, then a young student, was about to give a lecture in Yiddish, he invited my wife to attend as follows: 'Come and you will hear how one speaks pure Yiddish at a meeting!' The best recommendation for a speaker was the accomplishment of being able to speak to a crowd in lovely and ornate German" (Vays 1937). Thus, the lingering disbelief that Yiddish was suitable for H pursuits ("Is Yiddish a language?") surrounded the Conference and even found its way into the Conference, and did so in Tshernovits more than it would have in many other, more industrialized and proletarianized centers of Jewish urban

concentration and modernization. Bukovinian Jewry and its modernizing elites were then both still relatively untouched by the more sophisticated pro- and anti-Yiddish sentiments that were at a much higher pitch in Warsaw, Vilna, Lodz, or Odessa.

Who Attended the Conference?

The invitations sent by Birnbaum's "secretariat" were addressed to those organizations and committees whose addresses they happened to have. Many unimportant societies and clubs were invited, whereas many even more important ones were not. Personal invitations were few and far between. The writer and essayist Y. L. Perets (Warsaw, 1852–1915), perhaps the major influence upon the younger generation of Yiddish writers and a conscious ideologist of synthesis among all Jewish values and symbols, modern and traditional, was invited and came with his wife (with whom he spoke more Polish than Yiddish). The two other "classicists of modern Yiddish literature," Sholem Aleykhem (1859–1910) and Mendele Moykher Sforem (1836–1917), were also invited but did not come. Sholem Aleykhem at least claimed to be ill; but Mendele, in his seventies, offered no excuse at all, and, as a result, was sent no greetings by the Conference such as were sent to Sholem Aleykhem. Zhitlovski came, but Pinski was "busy writing a book" (Pinski 1948). A young linguist, Matesyohu Mizes (Mathias Mieses), was invited (as were two other linguistic-oriented students, Ayzenshtat and Sotek) to address the Conference on the linguistic issues that apparently constituted forty percent of its agenda. Other than the above individual invitations, a general invitation was issued and broadcast via the Yiddish press and by word of mouth "to all friends of Yiddish." All in all, some seventy showed up and these were characterized by one participant (and later major critic) as having only one thing in common: "They could afford the fare... Everyone was his own master, without any sense of responsibility to others." (E[ste]r 1908).

The geographic imbalance among the resulting participants is quite clear:

From the Czarist empire: 14. Among this delegation were

found the most prestigious participants: Perets, Sholem Asch (still young but already a rising star), Avrom Reyzn (a well-known and much beloved poet), H. D. Nomberg (writer and journalist, later a deputy in the Polish Sejm and founder of a small political party, *yidishe folkistishe partey*, stressing Yiddish and diaspora cultural autonomy), N. Prilutski (linguist, folklorist, journalist; later a Sejm deputy), Ester (Bundist, later a Communist *Kombund* and *Yevsektsiya* leader). Zhitlovski (though coming from the United States) and Ayznshtat (though then studying in Bern) were also usually counted with the "Russians".

From Rumania: 1. I. Sotek of Braila (an advocate of writing Yiddish with Latin characters and a student of Slavic elements in Yiddish).

From Galicia and Bukovina: 55. Among these were eight minor literary figures and forty-seven students, merchants, bookkeepers, craftsmen, etc., including one "wedding entertainer" (*badkhn*). This group was the least disciplined and, on its home territory, least impressed and convinced by attempts to keep to any agenda.

> At the most crucial votes no more than forty members participated . . . In the vote on the resolution that Yiddish be considered an ethnonational [Jewish] language no more than 36 individuals participated. People were always arriving late to sessions. Some did not know what they were voting about. People voted and contradicted their own previous votes. In addition, it was always noisy due to the booing and the applauding of "guests from Tshernovits". No one at all listened to Ayznshtat's paper on Yiddish spelling. (E[ste]r 1908).

Nor were the banquet or the literary program any more orderly or consensual. When local Jewish workers arrived to attend the banquet

> it was discovered that they lacked black jackets and they were not admitted. They began to complain. Some of the more decently clad ones were selected and admitted without jackets. Some of the "indecently" clad workers took umbrage and protested so long that the policeman took pity on them and sent them away. As a result, the "decently" clad ones also decided to leave. After the opening remarks, I called everyone's attention to what had occurred. It immediately became noisy and I was told to stop speaking. I left the banquet and a few others accompanied me. (E[ste]r 1908)

Attracting an elite to modern H functions for an erstwhile traditional L runs into problems due to the fact that prior and concurrent social issues have established allegiances and identities that are not congruent with those that further the interests of the new elite and the new functions. Reformulation of identities and regrouping of allegiances is called for and is difficult for all concerned.

The Conference *Per Se*

The Conference began on Sunday, August 30, 1908, and lasted for a little under a week.

> A quarter after ten in the morning there walked onto the stage Nosn Birnboym in the company of Y. L. Perets, S. Ash, Dr. Kh. Zhitlovski and other distinguished guests... Dr. N. Birnboym opens the Conference reading his first speech in Yiddish fluently from his notes... He reads his speech in the Galician dialect. (*Rasvet*, September 1908: quoted from *Afn shvel* 1968)

Birnbaum stressed the fact that this was the first world-wide effort on behalf of Yiddish, sponsored by its greatest writers ("respected even by the opponents of Yiddish") and the beginning of a long chain of efforts yet to come. These opening remarks caused a sensation among local Tshernovitsians.

> Everyone knew that he [Birnbaum] doesn't speak Yiddish and that the speech would be translated from German. However, all were eager to hear how the "coarse" words would sound coming from the mouth of Dr. Birnbaum who was known as an excellent German speaker... However at the festive banquet in honor of the esteemed guests... he spoke superbly in German, the way only he could. (Vays 1937)

Indeed, a speaker's ability to speak Yiddish well and the very fact that Yiddish could be spoken as befitted a world conference, i.e., in a cultivated, learned, disciplined fashion in conjunction with modern concerns, never ceased to impress those who had never before heard it so spoken.

> Zhitlovski made the greatest impression on all the delegates and guests, both at the Conference and at the banquet (which was a great event for Yiddish culture that was still so unknown to most of those in attendance). "That kind of Yiddish is more beautiful than French!" was a comment heard from all quarters and particularly from circles that had hitherto rejected Yiddish from a "purely esthetic" point of view (Vays 1937)[13].

Yiddish used adeptly in an H function was itself a triumph for Tshernovits, almost regardless of what was said.

But of course a great deal was said substantively as well. The linguistic issues were "covered" by Ayznshtat, Sotek, and Mizes. Whereas the first two were roundly ignored, the third caused a storm of protests when, in the midst of a paper on fusion languages and their hybrid-like strength, creativity, and vigor, he also attacked *loshn koydesh* for being dead, stultifying, and decaying. Only Perets's intervention saved Mizes's paper for the record as "the first scientific paper in Yiddish on Yiddish" (Anon. 1931).[14] Obviously, the tenth agenda item stubbornly refused to wait its place in line and constantly came to the fore in the form of an increasingly growing antagonism between those (primarily Bundists) who wanted to declare Yiddish as *the* ethnonational Jewish language (Hebrew/*loshn koydesh*—being a classical tongue rather than a mother tongue—could not, in their view, qualify as such) and those (primarily Zionists and traditionalists) who, at best, would go no further than to declare Yiddish as *an* ethnonational Jewish language, so that the role of Hebrew/*loshn koydesh*—past, present and future—would remain unsullied.[15] In the midst of this fundamental argument, more primitive views still surfaced as a result of the presence of so many ideologically unmodernized guests. One of the delegates recounts the following tale:

> ...(T)here suddenly appears on the stage a man with a long, red beard, wearing a traditional black *kapote* (kaftan) and *yarmelke* (skull-cap). He begins speaking by saying "I will tell you a story." The hall is full of quiet expectancy. We all listened carefully in order to hear a good, folksy anecdote. The man recounts in great detail a story about how two Jews once sued each other in court because of a *shoyfer* (ritual ram's horn) that had been stolen from the *beys-medresh* (house of study and prayer).With great difficulty they explained to the gentile judge what a *shoyfer* is. Finally the judge asked: "In one word—a trumpet?" At this point the litigants shuddered and one

> shouted to the other: "I ask you: is a *shoyfer* a trumpet?" The assembled participants in the hall were ready to smile at this "anecdote" which had long been well known, when the man suddenly began to shout at the top of his lungs: "You keep on talking about language, but is Yiddish (*zhargon*) a language?" (Kisman 1958)

The compromise formulation penned by Nomberg (*"an* ethnonational Jewish language") was finally adopted, thanks only to the insistence of Perets, Birnbaum, and Zhitlovski, and over the vociferous opposition of both left-wing and right-wing extremists who either favored an exclusive role for Yiddish (*"the* ethnonational Jewish language") or who wanted no resolutions at all on political topics.[16]

Very little time was devoted to organizational or implementational issues such as whether the Conference itself should sponsor "cultural work," convene a second conference within a reasonable time, or even establish a permanent office (secretariat) and membership organization. Although the last two recommendations were adopted (the first was rejected due to unified left-wing and right-wing disenchantment with the Conference's stance regarding the *"the* or *an"* ethnonational language issue), and although Birnbaum and two young assistants were elected to be the executive officers and to establish a central office, very little was actually done along these lines. At any rate, the tasks entrusted to the secretariat were minimal and innocuous ones indeed. In addition, Birnbaum soon moved ever-closer to unreconstructed Orthodoxy and to its stress on matters "above and beyond language". At any rate, he was not an administrator/executive but an ideologue. He was, as always, penniless, and the funds that were required for an office and for his salary never materialized. Zhitlovski returned to America and threw himself into efforts there to start Yiddish supplementary schools and to restrain Jewish socialists from sacrificing their own Jewishness and the Jewish people as a whole on the altar of Americanization disguised as proletarian brotherhood. Perets did undertake one fund-raising trip to St. Petersburg where Shimen Dubnov (1860–1941), the distinguished historian and ideologist of cultural autonomy in the diaspora and himself a recent convert to the value

of Yiddish, had convened a small group of wealthy but Russified potential donors. The latter greeted Perets with such cold cynicism that he "told them off" ("our salvation will come from the poor but warm-hearted Jews of the Pale rather than from the rich but cold-hearted Jews of St. Petersburg") and "slammed the door". Thus, for various reasons, no office was ever really established in Tshernovits and even the minutes of the Conference remained unpublished. Although S. A. Birnbaum helped prepare them for publication by editing out as many Germanisms as possible, they were subsequently misplaced or lost and had to be reconstructed more than two decades later from press clippings and memoirs (Anon. 1931).

Intellectuals (and even an intelligentsia) alone can rarely establish a movement. Intellectuals can reify language and react to it as a powerful symbol, as the bearer and actualizer of cultural values, behaviors, traditions, goals. However, for an L to spread into H functions, more concrete considerations (jobs, funds, influence, status, control, power) are involved. Only the Yiddishist left wing had in mind an economic, political, and cultural revolution that would have placed Yiddish on top. But that left did not even control the Tshernovits Conference, to say nothing of the hard, cruel world that surrounded it.

American Reactions to the Tshernovits Conference

The increasingly democratic, culturally pluralistic, and culturally autonomistic prewar Austro-Hungarian monarchy was the model toward which mankind was moving insofar as the leading figures at Tshernovits were concerned. One of the areas of Jewish concentration in which this model did not prevail—and where the very concept of a symbolically unified, modernized, world-wide Jewish nationality with a stable, all-purpose vernacular of its own was least understood, accepted, and actualized—was the United States. No wonder then that the Tshernovits Conference was generally accorded a cool reception here and even a derisive one.[17] The idea of teaching people how to spell or write or speak Yiddish "correctly" was viewed by one journalist as being no less ridiculous than the idea of teaching

people to laugh correctly, grammatically (Sambatyen, "A falsher gelekhter, gor on gramatik," *Yidishes Tageblat*,[18] Sept. 1, 1908). The *Tageblat* was an Orthodox-oriented paper, and in its editorials before and after the Conference it stressed that *loshn koydesh* alone was of value for Jewishness while English (or other coterritorial vernaculars elsewhere) met all of the general and citizenship needs that Jews might have. To elevate Yiddish to H functions was not only ridiculous but blasphemous.

> If the resolutions of the Conference declare . . . that all of Jewishness will be found in Ash's drama "God of Vengeance" and in Perets' "Shtrayml" . . . will anyone care? Our people decided long ago that we are a nationality and that our ethnonational language is none other than that in which the spirit of the Jewish people developed . . . the language in which the Bible is written, the Book that has made us immortal. (Sept. 29, 1908)

If the Orthodox-bourgeois *Tageblat* was unfriendly toward the Conference, to say the least, the secular-socialist *Forverts* (still publishing to this day) was almost every bit as much so. Its correspondent Moris Roznfeld (a famous Yiddish laborite-poet in his own right) wrote from Galicia just a few days before the Conference opened,

> I know that with just a few exceptions there is not much interest in America in this Tshernovits Conference and for many reasons. First of all, most believe that nothing practical will come of it. Secondly, the American Yiddish writer, as well as the Yiddish reader, is not terribly interested in rules of grammar. What difference does it make whether one writes גיין, געהן or גבן [all pronounced geyn/gayn depending on speaker's regional dialect], יו, איד, יוד or even אַחוד [the first three pronounced id/yid and the last—utilized only ironically/contrastively in Yiddish—Yahudi, and, therefore not really an orthographic variant in a continuum with the first three], as long as it can be read and understood? . . . Among the majority of even our good writers, Yiddish is regarded merely as a ferry that leads to the other side, to the language of the land, which each of us must learn in the land in which he finds himself.
>
> But these views, objectively and impartially stated, apply only to America. Here, in Galicia, they are more than merely grammatical issues. Here it is a political issue, an issue of life itself . . .
>
> . . . If it were to be officially decided that *loshn koydesh* is the Jewish language, then the Jewish masses would lose their power and their

> vernacular would be ignored. Only the Jewish snobs, the aristocratic, "let-them-eat-cake" idealists, would gain thereby. Therefore, the eyes of the real friends of the people and of the friends of the workers in Galicia and even in Russia are turned toward Tshernovits. Therefore the Conference there has major, historical importance. I don't know from what point of view the Conference will treat the language issue... The Conference might even be of an academic, theoretical nature.... Nevertheless, the Conference will have strong reverberations on Jewish politics in Galicia.

Note Roznfeld's total disinterest in either the linguistic portion or in any portion of the Tshernovits agenda as being valid for Americans. In 1908 few American Yiddish writers, few even of the secular laborites among them, aspired to H functions for Yiddish. In their eyes Jews, as workers, were destined to be part of the greater American proletariat; and English would, therefore, be its language for higher social purposes, and, ultimately, its brotherly interethnic vernacular as well. The Bund's 1950 Declaration, and its advocacy of Jewish cultural autonomy in Eastern Europe, with Yiddish as the ethnonational language of the Jewish proletariat, was considered, at best, to be a politically relevant platform for Eastern European Jewry alone, but one that was irrelevant for those who had immigrated to "the Golden Land." Thus, if neither the linguistic nor the political potentialities of the Conference applied here, then the Conference as a whole was merely a distant echo, and either a somewhat funny one or a clearly sacrilegious one at that. If it was difficult to assign H functions to Yiddish in its very own massive heartland, where its stability was less threatened (so it seemed) and where all agreed as to its utility, how much more difficult was it to do so in immigrant-America where its transitionality was assumed by secularists and traditionalists alike?

Eastern European Reactions to the Conference

If the brunt of American commentary on the Conference was negative, that in Eastern Europe was initially equally or even more so, and on three grounds. As expected, the Hebraist and extreme-Zionist reaction was unrelentingly hostile. In their eyes Yiddish was a language that demoted Jewry from its incomparable classical

heights to the superficiality and vacuousness of such illiterate peasant tongues as Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Rumanian, etc. To foster Yiddish struck J. Klausner, I. Epshteyn, and many other Hebraists as being laughable, if it were not so sad, an exercise in self-impoverishment and self-debasement. A considerable number of those who shared their view urged that a massive counter-conference be convened (and, indeed, the First World Conference for the Hebrew Language was convened in Berlin in 1910) and that an even more massive propaganda campaign be launched to attack Tshernovits and its infamous resolution. However, the veteran Hebraist and philosopher Ahad Ha'am (1856–1927) argued vehemently against such efforts, on the grounds that they would give Tshernovits more visibility than it could ever attain on its own. According to Ahad Ha'am, the Jewish people had already experienced two great philosophical disasters in the diaspora: Christianity and Hasidism.[19] Both of these had mushroomed precisely because Jews themselves had paid too much attention to them by dignifying them with unnecessary commentary. This sad lesson should not be applied to Tshernovits and to Yiddishism as a whole. They were *muktse makhmes miyes* [mukẓa maḥamat mi'us], loathsomely ugly, and the less said about them the better.

If the right-wing opposition generally elected to counter Tshernovits with a wall of silence, the left-wing opposition apparently decided to drown it in a sea of words. From their point of view Tshernovits had been a "sell out" on the part of those who were willing to water down, render tepid, and weaken the position vis-à-vis Yiddish of "the broad folk-masses" and "the Jewish proletariat," in order to curry favor among the bourgeoisie, by adopting an uninspired and uninspiring "all Israel are brothers" approach. The modern, secular, socialist sector of the Jewish people, "the revolutionary and nationality-building sector," had, by then, already surpassed the meager goals and the lukewarm resolutions of Tshernovits. They, therefore, refused to be compromised and whittled down by a conference that was "an episode instead of a happening" (Kazhdan 1928), and whose resolution was no more than "a harmful illusion" (Zilberfarb 1928) and "a mistake that must not be reiterated" (Khmurner 1928).

> The Tshernovits Conference was converted into the opposite of what its initiators had projected. Its isolation from the Jewish labor movement took its revenge upon the Conference . . . The great masters of Yiddish literature did not possess the magic to convert the Jewish middle class and the bourgeois intellectuals into co-combatants and partners with the Jewish workers in the latter's great national role of limitless loyalty to the Yiddish language. Yiddish cultural life, therefore, far surpassed the Tshernovits Conference . . . Neither at the Teachers' Conference in Vilna, nor at the organizational Convention of the Central Yiddish School Organization (Tsisho), nor at the Tsisho-Convention of 1925 where the founding of the Yivo [Yiddish Scientific Institute; today: Yivo Institute for Jewish Research] was proclaimed, nor at any of the many other [Yiddish] teachers' conferences in Poland was there even a word spoken about the Tshernovits Conference . . . Today, 60 years after Tshernovits, we know: Tshernovits was not destined to have any heirs. . . . There was really nothing to inherit. (Kazhdan 1969)

Even now, over four decades after the Holocaust—when most commentators tend to wax lyrical about Jewish Eastern Europe and to remember it in somewhat rosy terms—there remain Bundist leaders who remember Tshernovits only as a flubbed opportunity.

Even those who were quite satisfied with Tshernovits in symbolic terms soon realized that it was a fiasco in any practical organizational terms. As soon as the First World War was over (and, indeed, in the very midst of the War in anticipation of its conclusion), various Yiddish writers and cultural spokesmen began to call for "a world conference for Yiddish culture as a result of purely practical rather than demonstrative and declarative goals. We have outgrown the period of mere demonstrations and theoretical debates. There is much work to be done!" (Sh. N[iger]. 1922). Zhitlovski himself called for "an organization to openly unfurl the flag on which it will be clearly written: Yiddish, our ethnonational language, our only unity and freedom . . . a 'Yiddishist' organization with the openly unfurled flag of our cultural liberation and ethnonational unity" (1928). Others repeatedly reinforced and repeated this view (e.g., Lehrer 1928, Mark 1968, Zelitsh 1968). As a result, most subsequent major nonpartisan or suprapartisan international efforts to organize Yiddish cultural efforts more effectively have viewed themselves

as the instrumental heirs of the Tshernovits Conference (e.g., YIKUF-Yidisher kultur farband 1937; Yidisher kultur kongres 1948; Yerushelayemer velt konferents far yidish un yidisher kultur 1976). Clearly, however, the realities facing Yiddish after World War I were far different from those that Tshernovits assumed. The multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian monarchy had been split into several smaller states, each jealously protective of its particular ethnonational (state-building) language and quick to set aside the Trianon and Versailles guarantees to Yiddish (Tenenboym 1957/58). The former Czarist "Pale of Settlement" was either in the same situation as the foregoing (insofar as Poland and the Baltic states were concerned) or, ultimately, under even more powerful Russificatory control than before (in White Russia and in the Ukraine). Despite Bundist grievances, a good part of the spirit of Tshernovits lived for two postwar decades in the Yiddish schools, youth clubs, theaters, and cultural organizations of Poland, Lithuania, and Rumania, and, despite Communist attacks, in their regulated counterparts in the USSR. However, just prior to the Second World War, the former were economically starved and politically battered (Eisenstein 1949, Tartakover 1946), whereas the latter were being discontinued under duress of Russification fears and pressures (Choseed 1968). After the Second World War, Jewish Eastern Europe was no more. It became incumbent on Yiddish devotees in the United States and in Israel, i.e., in two locales where Yiddish was originally not expected to benefit from the spirit of Tshernovits, to defend it, if possible.

Reevaluating the Tshernovits Conference: Shadow or Substance?

Notwithstanding Kazhdan's lingering negative evaluation in 1968, distance has made the heart grow fonder insofar as the majority of commentators is concerned. Those few who initially held that the symbolism of Tshernovits had been substantial, i.e., that it had raised Yiddish to the status of an honorific co-symbol, regardless of what its practical shortcomings might have been (for example: Mayzl 1928, Prilutski 1928, Pludermakher 1928), finally carried the day. The views that are encountered today in

Yiddishist circles are very much like those that began to be heard when the first commemorative celebrations in honor of Tshernovits were organized in 1928. (In September 1918 the First World War had technically not yet ended and celebrations were presumably not possible.) "Yes, Yiddishism is a young movement, but it is not all that poor in traditions. One of the loveliest traditions of Yiddishism is the memory of the Tshernovits Conference. No memoirs, pedantry or arguments can darken the glow of that bright cultural dawn's early light that is known by the name: The Tshernovits Conference of 1908" (Pludermakher 1928). Perhaps it was and perhaps it wasn't necessary to compromise in connection with the crucial resolution. In either case, no one was fooled by the compromise. "The Tshernovits Conference was recorded on the morrow immediately after the last session as the Yiddishist revolt—and that is the only way in which the opponents of the Yiddish language could regard it" (Prilutski 1928), for even to claim H co-functions alongside of Hebrew/*loshn koydesh* was a devastating rejection of what these opponents were aiming at. As a result, Tshernovits deserved to be viewed as "the first mobilization" (Mayzl 1928) on behalf of Yiddish.

More than seventy-five years after Tshernovits, Yiddishist opinion with respect to it is, if anything, even mellower. Living as they do with the constant if quiet anxiety produced by the continual attrition of Yiddish, Yiddishists have come to view Tshernovits not merely as a milestone in the millennial struggle of Yiddish for symbolic recognition, but as symbolic of the best that Eastern European Jewry as a whole achieved and can offer to its far-flung progeny today. Tshernovits is viewed increasingly as a byproduct of the confluence of the three organized movements in modern Jewish life: Jewish socialism, Zionism, and neo-Orthodoxy. At Tshernovits, representatives of all three recognized the significance of Yiddish. Tshernovits was the byproduct of a confluence (and, therefore, it disappointed those who wanted it to be all theirs). It was a momentary confluence of three disparate forces; it quickly passed, and from that day to this, no one has been able to "put them together again." Indeed, distance does make the heart grow fonder.

> They were three, the convenors of the Tshernovits Conference: the champion of Jewish cultural renaissance and consistent Zionist, Doved Pinski. He came to the land (of Israel) in advanced age and died here. Khayem Zhitlovski, one of the first Jewish socialists who, after countless reincarnations in search for a solution to the Jewish question, in his old age sought to attach himself to the "Jewish" Autonomous Region, Birobidjan. And Nathan Birnbaum, the ideologist of Zionism and nationalism, who, after various geographic and ideological wanderings, after various apostasies and conversions, finally reached the shores of Jewish eternity. He waited for the Messiah all his life and suffered terribly the pangs of His delayed coming... He sowed everywhere and others reaped. He gave up this world for the world to come. All three of them served the Jewish people, each in his own way, and, as such, they [and Tshernovits] will remain in our historical memory. (Rosnak 1969)

Theoretical Recapitulations

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century efforts to gain and activate intellectual and mass support for Yiddish, and the Tshernovits Conference of 1908 in particular, illustrate several of the problems encountered in a particular type of language spread: the spread of a former L into H functions in High Culture (education, literature, scholarship), government, technology, and modern literacy-dependent pursuits more generally.

1. Many of those most active on behalf of advocating, rationalizing, and ideologizing this type of language spread will, themselves, have to learn how to use the erstwhile L in H functions, and, indeed, may have to learn the L *per se*. In this respect the spread of an L into H functions poses similar problems for those who are already literate (and who may, indeed, be the gatekeepers or guardians of literacy), as does the spread of any new vernacular into H functions. Nationalist language-spread movements that are not derived from an intragroup diglossia context (e.g., the promotion of Czech, Slovak, etc., in pre-World War I, or of Catalan, Occitan, Irish, Nynorsk, etc., more recently) also often begin with intelligentsia that do not know or master the vernaculars that they are championing. In the Yiddish case, many intellectuals of the late nineteenth century were not only oriented toward Hebrew/*loshn koydesh* as H for Jewish cultural affairs but

toward either German, Russian, or Polish as H for modern purposes. Thus, Ls existing within a traditional diglossia setting may face double opposition in seeking to attain H functions.

2. One set of factors hampering the spread of Ls into H functions is their own lack of codification (e.g., in orthography, grammar) and elaboration (in lexicon). However, there is a tension between such corpus planning, on the one hand, and status-planning needs, on the other hand. It is difficult to turn to serious corpus planning while status planning is still so unsettled (or opposed), and it is difficult to succeed at status planning (particularly insofar as attracting ambivalent or negative intellectuals and literacy gatekeepers is concerned) on behalf of an L that is clearly deficient in terms of corpus characteristics that might render it more suitable for H functions.

3. The vicious circle that exists between lack of corpus planning and lack of status planning is most decisively broken if a status shift can be forced (by legal reform, revolution, or disciplined social example). The Tshernovits Conference's gravitation toward the "political (status-planning) issue" was a spontaneous recognition of this fact, so often pedantically overlooked by language technicians and "experts" who are oriented toward the relatively easier corpus-planning task alone.

4. The very same intragroup and intergroup status and power reward systems that previously led intellectuals to seek and acquire literacy and position through one or more Hs subsequently hinder the spread of Ls into these H functions. Any such language spread would imply a major dislocation or a change in intellectual and econo-political elites and prerogatives. If Yiddish had achieved H intragroup functions in the cultural-intellectual realm, this would have threatened rabbinic/traditional and modern Zionist/Hebraist hegemony in that sphere. In addition, the spread of Yiddish into H functions would not only have meant the displacement of one power/status elite by another but the popularization/massification/democratization of intra-group political participation and a de-emphasis on elitism as a whole. This too is similar to the dynamics and consequences of many modern nationalist advocacies of vernaculars, except that the cultural-political opposition faced in the case of Yiddish may

have been more variegated insofar as "preferred" language is concerned, since not only Hebrew/*loshn koydesh* but Russian, German, and even Polish were its rivals for H functions throughout the Pale.

5. However, just as modern recognition of *Ausbau* languages (see note 20, below) derives more from their adoption for nonbelletristic than for belletristic functions, so it is the spread into econo-political functions that is particularly crucial in this century if status planning for erstwhile Ls is to succeed. In connection with Yiddish, only the Bundists seem to have glimpsed this truth before, at, or soon after Tshernovits (subsequently the Jewish communists—many of them ex-Bundists—did so as well, but with quite different purposes and results), and even they spoke of Yiddish more commonly in terms of cultural autonomy. Ultimately, however, their design foresaw a socialist revolution: the complete displacement of religio-bourgeois econo-political control and the recognition of separate but, interrelated and orchestrated, culturally autonomous populations each with control over its own immediate econo-technical apparatus. Although the political representation of Yiddish-speaking Jews as such (i.e., as a nationality with its own ethnonational [mother] tongue) in the coterritorial parliaments was advocated also by some Labor Zionists, by minor Jewish parties such as the Folkists and the Sejmists, and even by (some) ultra-Orthodox spokesmen (e.g., those of Agudes Yisroel), only the Bundists had a real economic realignment in mind with education, political, and cultural institutions deriving from and protected by firm Yiddish-speaking proletarian economic control.

6. The weak representation of Bundists at Tshernovits led to the complete neglect of a consideration of the economic basis of Yiddish as either *a* or *the* Jewish ethnonational language and to a complete preoccupation with cultural ideology, cultural symbolism, and cultural rhetoric. As a result there also arose the view that the Conference itself might be an ongoing moving force—either because it would have an executive office for "cultural work" or because it simply had convened and sent forth its resolutions into the world. However, languages are neither saved nor spread by language conferences. Ideology, symbolism,

and rhetoric are of undeniable significance in language spread—they are consciously motivating, focusing, and activating—but without a tangible and considerable status-power counterpart they become, under conditions of social change, competitively inoperative in the face of languages that do provide such. They may continue to be inspirational but—particularly in modern times—they cease to be decisive, i.e., they ultimately fail to safeguard even the intimacy of hearth and home from the turmoil of the econo-political arena. The ultimate failure of Tshernovits is that it did not even seek to foster or align itself with an econo-political reality that would seek to protect Yiddish in new H functions. The ultimate tragedy of Yiddish is that, in the political reconsolidation of modern Eastern Europe, its speakers were either too powerless or too mobile. They were the classical expendables of twentieth century Europe and, obviously, no language conference or language movement *per se* could rectify their tragic dilemma. Unfortunately, few at Tshernovits were sufficiently attuned to broader econo-political realities to recognize that instead of being en route to a new dawn for Yiddish, they stood more basically before the dusk of the Central and Eastern European order of things as it had existed till then.

7. However, it is the delicate interplay between econo-political and ethno-cultural factors that must be grasped in order to understand both success and failure in language spread. Any attempt to pin all on one or another factor alone is more likely to be doctrinaire than accurate. The Yiddish case, because it involves a diglossia situation and multiple possibilities for both L and H functions in the future, is particularly valuable because it makes the simultaneous presence of both sets of factors so crystal clear. Awareness of econo-political factors alone is insufficient for understanding the internal rivalry that arose from Hebrew/*loshn koydesh* or appreciating the fact that the latter was undergoing its own vernacularization and modernization at the very same time that Yiddish was being championed for H functions. On the other hand, no amount of internal ethno-cultural insight can explain the allure that German and Russian (and, to a smaller degree, Polish) had for the Jewish bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. Finally, as a capstone to what is already an

insuperable burden of opposition to Yiddish, there comes the linguistic relationship between Yiddish and German—the extra burden of all weak *Ausbau*[20] languages—and the cruel compound of moral, esthetic, and intellectual caricature and self-hatred to which that lent itself. After being exposed to such a killing array of internal and external forces for well over a century, is it any wonder that the 1978 Nobel Prize for literature awarded to the Yiddish writer I. B. Singer often elicits only a wry smile in what remains of the modern secularist world of Yiddish?[21]

Notes

1. The traditional coexistence of nonvernacular language of high culture (H) and a vernacular of everyday life (L), the former being learned through formal study and the latter in the context of familiar intimacy, was dubbed diglossia by Charles A. Ferguson (*Word*, 1959, 15, 325–40). Such contexts and their similarity and dissimilarity vis-à-vis other multilingual and multidialectal contexts have been examined by several investigators, among them John J. Gumperz, "Linguistic and social interaction in two communities," *American Anthropologist*, 1964, 66, no. 6, part 2, 137–53, and in my "Bilingualism with and without diglossia; diglossia with and without bilingualism," *Journal of Social Issues*, 1967, 23, no. 2, 29–38.

2. Throughout this paper, the distinction will be adhered to between the traditional amalgam of Hebrew and Aramaic, referred to by Yiddish speakers as *loshn koydesh* (Language of Holiness) and Modern Hebrew, as developed in Palestine/Israel during the past century as a language of all of the functions required by a modern econo-political establishment. Where the distinction between Hebrew and *loshn koydesh* is not clear or is not intended they will be referred to jointly.

3. For a full treatment of each of these four substantively distinct but also interacting views of Yiddish, see "The Sociology of Yiddish: A Foreword" in my *Never Say Die! A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters*, The Hague, Mouton, 1981.

4. Halakhic, an adjective derived from halakha (Yiddish: halokhe), refers to the entire body of Jewish law (Biblical, Talmudic, and post-Talmudic) and subsequent legal codes amending, modifying, or interpreting traditional precepts under rabbinic authority.

5. Maskilic, an adjective derived from *haskala* (Yiddish: haskole), an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century movement among Central and Eastern European Jews, associated in Germany with the leadership of Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), designed to make Jews and Judaism more modern and cosmopolitan in character by promoting knowledge of and contributions to the

secular arts and sciences and by encouraging adoption of the dress, customs, economic practices, educational programs, political processes and languages of the dominant non-Jewish coterritorial populations. For observations as to differences between the *haskole* in Central and Eastern Europe, see D.E. Fishman 1985.

6. Both Zionists and socialists increasingly shifted from the second to the third positive view at or around the turn of the century. In 1889 the Zionist leader Nokhem Sokolov defended Yiddish merely as a necessary vehicle of mass agitation and propaganda (Roznak 1969), and even Herzl, who knew no Yiddish, founded a weekly (*Di velt*) in 1900 in order to reach the Eastern European masses. Similarly, socialist spokesmen such as Arkadi Kremer merely advocated the use of Yiddish in order to attain their mass educational purposes in 1893 and organized *zhargonishe komitetn* (Yiddish-speaking committees) in order to foster literacy and to spread socialist publications among Jews in the Czarist empire. Soon, however, a new (the third) tune began to be heard. In 1902 the Zionist editor Lurye (co-editor with Ravnitski of the well-known periodical *Der yid*) wrote that Yiddish must not only be considered as a means of propaganda but as "an ethno-national-cultural possession which must be developed to play the role of our second ethno-national language (Roznhak 1969)." In 1905 the Bund adopted its declaration on behalf of Jewish ethno-national-cultural autonomy with Yiddish as the language of the Jewish proletariat and of the intellectuals that serve and lead that proletariat. Scholarly literary organizations in the field of Yiddish began to arise soon thereafter: in 1908, The Yiddish Literary Organization (St. Petersburg); in 1909, The Yiddish Historical-Ethnographic Organization (St. Petersburg); and also in 1908, The Musical-Dramatic Organization (Vilna).

7. Birnbaum's advocacy of Yiddish deserves special mention and, indeed, further investigation in connection with the topic of re-ethnification of elites. Such re-ethnification and accompanying re-linguification is a common process in the early stages of very many modern ethnicity movements (see my *Language and Nationalism*, Rowley, Newbury House, 1972) and exemplifies both the proto-elitist return to (or selection of) roots (often after failure to transethnify "upwardly" in accord with earlier aspirations), as well as the masses' groping toward mobilization under exemplary leadership. However, modern ethnicity movements are essentially attempts to achieve modernization, utilizing "primordial" identificational metaphors and emotional attachments for this purpose. Thus, they are not really "return" movements (i.e. not really nativization or past-oriented efforts). They exploit or mine the past rather than cleave to it. Partially transethnified elites can uniquely serve such movements because of their own double exposure. Birnbaum is therefore exceptional in that he ultimately rejected his secularized, Germanized, Europeanized milieu on behalf of a "genuine return" to relatively unmodernized Orthodoxy. By the second decade of this century he had rejected Jewish modernization (in the guise of socialism, Zionism, and diaspora nationalism, all of which he had once charted)

as hedonistic and as endangering Jewish (and possibly world) survival. There is about the late Birnbaum a Spenglerian aura foretelling the "decline of the West" and cautioning Jews that their salvation (and the world's) would come only via complete immersion in traditional beliefs, values, and practices (Birnbaum 1918; 1946). He ultimately viewed Yiddish as a contribution toward *that* goal, rejecting its use for modern, hedonistic purposes such as those which he himself had earlier espoused both immediately before and after the Tshernovits Language Conference of 1908. This rare combination of complete Orthodoxy and uncompromising defense of Yiddish within an Orthodox framework has made Birnbaum into something of a curiosity for both religious and secular commentators. Such genuine returners to roots also exist in the context of other modernization movements (for example, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Greek, Arabic, Slavophile, and Sanskrit contexts) and represents a vastly overlooked subclass within the study of ethnicity movements. Even in their case it would be mistaken to consider them as no more than "spikes in the wheels of progress," merely because they frequently represent an attempt to attain modernization without Westernization. A contrastive study of Birnbaum and other such "genuine returners" would be most valuable for understanding this subclass as well as the more major group of "metaphorical returners." Note, however, that Birnbaum remained a committed advocate of Yiddish (although not in any functions that would replace *loshn koydesh*) even when he embraced ultra-Orthodoxy, whereas "true returners" in other cases embraced their respective indigenized classic tongues. To revive Hebrew was long considered anti-traditional and was not possible except in speech networks that were completely outside the traditional framework—ideologically, behaviorally (in terms of daily routine), and even geographically. The dubious Jewish "assets" of complete dislocation and deracination were denied the unsuccessful advocates of Sanskrit and Classical Greek, Arabic or Irish.

8. Tshernovits is currently located in the Ukrainian SSR, close to the Rumanian and the Moldavian SSR borders. Between the two World Wars it was in Rumania. At the time of the Language Conference, and ever since the Austrian occupation in 1774 (after defeating the Ottoman Turkish occupants), it was in a section of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy known as Bukovina (until 1918, administratively a part of Galicia, with which Bukovina remained closely connected as far as "Jewish geography" was concerned).

9. Territorialism acknowledged the need for planned Jewish resettlement in an internationally recognized and protected Jewish territory, but did not consider Palestine to be the only or the most desirable location for such resettlement in view of the conflicting claims and geopolitical perils associated with it. Various territorial concentrations in Eastern Europe itself, in Africa (Angola, Cirenaica, Uganda), in South America (Surinam), in North America (Kansas-Nebraska), in Australia (Kimberly Region) and elsewhere have been advocated since the latter part of the nineteenth century. At one point, Herzl himself was not convinced that a homeland in Palestine and only in Palestine should be adamantly pursued and was willing to consider a "way-station" elsewhere. Most territorialists split

with the Zionist movement and set up an organization of their own in 1905, when the Seventh Zionist Congress rejected an offer by the British government to create an autonomous Jewish settlement in Uganda. For a further discussion of Birnbaum's territorialism, see Chapters 6 and 7, below.

10. Corpus planning is one of the two major branches of language planning: the authoritative allocation of resources (attention, funds, manpower, negative and positive sanctions) to language. Corpus planning entails modifying, enriching, or standardizing the language *per se,* often through publishing and implementing orthographies, nomenclatures, spellers, grammars, style manuals, etc. Its counterpart is status planning, i.e., attempts to require use of a language for particular functions: education, law, government, mass media, etc. Corpus planning is frequently engaged in by language academies, commissions, or boards. Status planning requires governmental or other power-related decision-making and sanctions-disbursing bodies: political, religious, ethnocultural or economic. The two processes must be conducted in concert if they are to succeed and take hold across a broad spectrum of uses and users. Yiddish has constantly suffered due to deficiencies in the status-planning realm and, as a result, its corpus-planning successes are also limited, although several can be cited (Shekhter 1961). For a detailed empirical and theoretical review of language planning, see Joan Rubin, et al. *Language Planning Processes,* The Hague, Mouton, 1977.

11. Vays reminisces as follows (1937, i.e., nearly thirty years after the Conference):

> As is well known, Yiddish was not recognized in Austria as a language, just as the Jewish people was not recognized as such. At the university, e.g., it was necessary to fill out a rubric "nationality" and no Jew was permitted to write in "Jew." The nationalist-oriented Jewish students, not wanting to cripple the statistical distribution in favor of the ruling nationality to the detriment of the minority nationalities, sought various ways of forcing the authorities to recognize the Jewish nationality. Some wrote the name of a nationality that happened to occur to them. There was no lack of entries of "Hottentot" mother tongue and "Malay" nationality.

This context for the Conference led the Yiddish *Sotsyal demokrat* of Cracow to greet the Conference as follows: "The significance of the Conference is augmented by the fact that it takes place in Austria where Yiddish is closest to official recognition" (Kisman 1958). Tshernovits itself also impressed the delegates and guests from abroad (primarily from the Czarist empire) not only with its ethnic heterogeneity but with its "air of relative democracy, where at every step one could feel European culture" (Kisman 1958).

For Eastern European Jewry the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Austro-Hungarian monarchy represented Western-style democracy plus ethno-national-cultural rights, both of which were still sadly lacking in the Czarist empire and both of which were fundamental to the Conference's goals, although neither was explicitly referred to at the Conference itself.

12. The Bund (full name: Jewish Workers Bund [Alliance] of Russia,

Lithuania and Poland) was organized in Vilna in 1897, the same year as the first Zionist Congress was held in Basel. Always socialist, it adopted a Jewish cultural-autonomist, Yiddish-oriented platform in 1905, as a result of which it clashed with Lenin, Trotsky, and other early Bolshevik leaders. The Bund became the mainstay of secular Yiddish educational, literary, and cultural efforts in interwar Poland. For further details and an entree to a huge bibliography, see Mendelsohn 1970 and Kligsberg 1974.

13. The "esthetic point of view" is dealt with at length by Miron (1973). Although not unknown in connection with other supposedly inelegant vernaculars during the period of struggle to legitimize them for H functions, the vituperation heaped upon Yiddish in terms of its claimed esthetic shortcomings clearly seems to border on the hysterical. Loathsome, ugly, stunted, crippled, mangled, hunchbacked, gibberish were commonplace epithets. "Away with dirt, with spiderwebs, with zhargon and with all kinds of garbage! We call for a broom! And whom the broom of satire will not help, him will we honor with the stick of wrath! Quem medicamenta non sanant, ferrum et ignis sanant!" (*Jutrzenka*, 1862, no. 50, 428). Note however that the esthetic metaphor (e.g., the German Jewish historian Graetz refused to "dirty his pen" with Yiddish or to have his works translated into that "foul tongue"), interesting though it may be in and of itself, must not obscure from analysis more basic, social, cultural and political goals and loyalties of those that express them. The Yiddish proverb "nisht dos is lib vos iz sheyn, nor dos is sheyn vos iz lib" (We do not love that which is lovely, rather we consider lovely that which we love) applies fully here. By the time of Tshernovits the full force of invective had begun to pass (although it can be encountered in Israel and elsewhere to this very day; see, e.g. Fishman and Fishman 1978) and the countertide of positive hyperbole had begun to rise, assigning to Yiddish not only beauty but virtue, subtlety, honesty, compassion, intimacy and boundless depth.

14. While it is certainly inaccurate to consider Mizes's comments as "the first scientific paper in Yiddish on Yiddish," it is not easy to say whose work does deserve to be so characterized, primarily because of changing standards as to what is and is not scientific. One of my favorites is Y. M. Lifshits's *Yidish-rusisher verterbukh* [Yiddish-Russian Dictionary], Zhitomir, Bakst, 1876, and his introduction thereto, both of which remain quite admirable pieces of scholarship to this very day. Other candidates for this honorific status abound, several of considerably earlier vintage.

15. Somewhat positive Zionist stances toward exilic Jewish vernaculars had surfaced from time to time well before Tshernovits. Reference is made here not merely to utilizing such vernaculars for immediate education/indoctrinational purposes, such usage being acceptable to almost the entire Zionist spectrum, but to allocating intimacy-related and even literacy-related functions to them, both in the diaspora and (even) in Erets Yisroel on a relatively permanent basis. Herzl himself (in his diary, 1885), suggests a parallel with Switzerland, such that Hebrew, Yiddish, and Judesmo (Judeo-Spanish) would be recognized. Except in Labor Zionist circles such views were very much in the minority, remained little

developed or concretized, but yet provided the basis for claims at Tshernovits that since many Zionists/Hebraists had been careful not to reject Yiddish, so Socialists/Yiddishists should do nothing to reject Hebrew/*loshn koydesh*.

16. Interestingly enough, the Balfour Declaration, issued by the British government on November 2, 1917, favoring "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jews, but without prejudice to the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities" also used the indefinite 'a' rather than the definite article 'the' as a compromise between opposite extreme views in the Foreign Ministry.

17. Several of the references and citations in this section are originally found in Rothstein 1977.

18. Just as Yiddish books commonly carried *loshn koydesh* titles until rather late in the nineteenth century, so Yiddish periodicals commonly bore either *loshn koydesh* or German titles even into the present century. The diglossic implications are manifold even at an unconscious level. The people of "The Book" was (and in the more unreconstructed Orthodox circles still is) accustomed to encounter serious H-level writing (and particularly such on intragroup concerns) in *loshn koydesh*. Thus, a Hebrew title for a Yiddish book is, in part, a visual habit, in part a cultural signal, and in part a disguise (vis-à-vis rabbinic criticism and other possibly hostile authorities). Similarly, a relatively ephemeral periodical dealing with the wide world of modern secular events is titled in German for much the same reasons. Neither *forverts* nor *yidishes* nor *tageblat* were part of commonly spoken Eastern European Yiddish by well before the nineteenth century. Nevertheless these were perfectly acceptable components of a journalistic title of those times, particularly in the United States.

19. Hasidism: a Jewish movement founded in Poland in the eighteenth century by Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov and characterized by its emphasis on mysticism, spontaneous prayer, religious zeal, and joy. The various hasidic leaders or masters (singular: *re'be;* plural: *rebe'yem,* as distinguished from *rov, rabo'nem* among non-Hasidic rabbis) typically instructed their followers through tales. Yiddish was, therefore, their crucial medium and their tales became an early major component of popular Yiddish publishing (many also being published—first, simultaneously or soon thereafter—in *loshn koydesh*). Although much opposed by most rabbinic authorities for almost two centuries (the latter and their followers being dubbed *misnagdem,* i.e., opponents of the hasidim), hasidism finally became generally accepted as an equally valid version of Jewish Orthodoxy and is a vibrant (and the more numerous) branch thereof, as well as a major (but largely unideologized) source of support for Yiddish, to this day.

20. *Ausbau* languages are those that are so similar in grammar and lexicon to other, stronger, previously recognized languages that their own language authorities often attempt to maximize the differences between themselves and their "Big Brothers" by multiplying or magnifying them through adopting or creating distinctive paradigms for neologisms, word order and grammar, particularly in their written forms. Thus, *Ausbau* languages are "languages by

effort," i.e., they are consciously built away (=German *ausbauen*) from other, more powerful and basically similar languages, so as not to be considered "mere dialects" of the latter, but rather, to be viewed as obviously distinctive languages in their own right. The *Ausbau* process is responsible for much of the difference between Landsmål/Nynorsk and Bokmal, Hindi and Urdu, Macedonian and Bulgarian, Moldavian and Rumanian, Belorussian and Russian. For the particular difficulties faced in finding, creating, and maintaining *Ausbau* differences, including examples from the Yiddish versus German arena, see Paul Wexler, *Purism and Language,* Bloomington, Indiana University Language Science Monographs, 1974. The original formulator of the term *Ausbau* (and of its contrast: *Abstand*) is H. Kloss (see: *Anthropological Linguistics,* 1967, 9, no. 7, 29–41).

21. Some additional useful secondary sources concerning the Tshernovits Language Conference are Goldsmith (1977), Passow (1971), and Lerner (1957). A literally endless list of other journal articles (pre-1928 but primarily post-1928, this being the date of Yivo's twentieth anniversary volume [Anonymous 1931]) remains to be exhaustively catalogued. The only treatment of the Hebraist reaction to the Conference is my preliminary study *Der hebreyisher opruf af der tshernovitser konferents,* Ms. 1983.

References

Anon. *Di ershte yidishe shprakh-conferents* [The First Yiddish Language Conference]. Vilna, Yiddish Scientific Institute-Yivo, 1931.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Di konferents far der yidisher shprakh: efenungs rede," *Dokter birnboyms vokhnblat,* 1908, 1, no. 1, 3–7. Reprinted, in Anon. *Di ershte yidishe shprakh-konferents* [The First Yiddish Language Conference]. Vilna, Yiddish Scientific Institute-Yivo, 1931, 71–74 (also reprinted *Afn shvel,* 1968, no. 4 (1895), 3–4 and in this Volume).

_____. *Gottes Volk.* Vienna, Löunt, 1918.

_____. *Selections from His Writings.* London, Hamagid, 1946.

Choseed, B. *Reflections of the Soviet Nationalities Policy in Literature. The Jews, 1938–1948.* Ph.D. Dissertation: Columbia University, 1968 (University Microfilms, no. 69–15, 665).

E[ste]r, R. [Ester Frumkin]. "Di ershte yidishe shprakh konferents," [The First Yiddish Language Conference] *Di naye tsayt,* 1908, 4, 89–104.

Eisenstein, Miriam. *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–1939.* New York, King's Corwin, 1949.

Fishman, David E. *Science, Enlightenment and Rabbinic Culture in Belorussian Jewry: 1772–1804.* Ph.D. Dissertation: Harvard University, 1985 (University Microfilms, no. 85–20193).

Fishman, David E. "Y. M. Lifshits fun Berditshev: maskil tsi yidishist?" *Yidishe shprakh,* 1986.

Fishman, Joshua A. "The phenomenological and linguistic pilgrimage of Yiddish. (Some examples of functional and structural pidginization and depidginization)," *Kansas Journal of Sociology.* 1973: 9, 122–36.

_____."Yiddish and loshn koydesh in traditional Ashkenaz. The problem of societal allocation of macro-functions," in A. Verdoodt and R. Kjolseth (eds.) *Language in Sociology*, Leuven, Peeters, 1975, 39–74.

_____, ed. *Never Say Die! A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters*. The Hague, Mouton, 1981.

Fishman, Joshua A. and Fishman, David E. "Yiddish in Israel: A case study of efforts to revise a monocentric language policy," in J. A. Fishman (ed.) *Advances in the Study of Societal Multilingualism*. The Hague, Mouton, 1978, 185–262.

Goldsmith, E. S. *Architects of Yiddishism*. Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickenson Press, 1976. (See particularly the chapters on Birnbaum, Perets, Zhitlovski and the Tshernovits Conference *per se*.)

Kazhdan, Kh. Sh. "An epizod onshtot a gesheyenish (20 yor nokh der tshernovitser conferents) [An episode instead of an event (20 years after the Tshernovits Conference)]," *Undzer tsayt*, 1928, no. 7, 73–77.

_____."Tshernovits - kholem un vor [Tshernovits: dream and reality]," *Undzer tsayt*, 1969, January 17–21.

Khmurner, Y. "Vegn a feler vos khazert zikh iber. [About an error that is being repeated]," *Bikhervelt*, 1928, no. 7, 1–6.

Kisman, Y. "Tsum fuftsikstn yoyvl: di tshernovitser shprakh-conferents [On the fiftieth anniversary: the Tshernovits Language Conference]," *Undzer tsayt*, 1958, July/August 8–13.

Kligsberg, M. "Di yidishe yugnt-bavegung in poyln tsvishn beyde velt-milkhomes (a sotsyologishe shtudye) [The Jewish Youth movement in Poland between both World Wars (a sociological study)]," in J. A. Fishman, ed., *Shtudyes vegn yidn in poyln*, 1919–1939. New York, Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 1974, 137–228.

Lehrer, L. "Tsayt tsu shafn a kultur-gezelshaft [Time to organize a culture society]," *Literarishe bleter*, 1928, no. 26, 500–501 and 509.

Lerner, H. J. *The Tshernovits Language Conference: A Milestone in Jewish Nationalist Thought*. Master's Thesis. Columbia University, 1957.

Lifshits, Y. M. "Di fir klasn [The four classes]," *Kol mevaser*, 1863, no. 21, 323–28 and no. 23, 364–66. Also see the editor's (Alexander Tsederboym's) comments: pp. 375–80 and 392–93). Also in J. A. Fishman, ed., *Never Say Die!* op. cit., pp. 259–266.

_____. Y. M. "Di daytsh-yidishe brik [The German-Jewish bridge]," *Kol mevaser*, 1867, 5, no. 31, 239–41. See nos. 32, 33, 34, 35 and 41 for subsequent comments.

Mark, Y. "60 yor nokh der shprakh-konferents in tshernovits [60 years after the language conference in Tshernovits]," *Forverts*, 1968, August 25, Section 2, 11–15.

Mayzl, Nakhmen. "Di ershte mobilizatsye. [The first mobilization]," *Literarishe bleter*, 1928, no. 35, 681.

Mendelsohn, Ezra. *Class Struggle in the Pale*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970.

Miron, Dan. "A language as Caliban," in his *A Traveler Disguised.* New York, Schocken, 1973, 34–66.

N[iger], Sh. "A yidisher kultur kongres (A congress for Yiddish culture)," *Dos naye lebn,* 1922, 1, no. 2, 1–4.

Passow, I. D. "The first Yiddish language conference," in I. D. Passow and S. T. Lachs (eds.) *Gratz College Anniversary Volume.* Philadelphia, Gratz College, 1971.

Pinski, D. "Geburt fun der tshernovitser konferents; a bletl zikhroynes [Birth of the Tshernovits Conference; a page of memories]," *Tsukunft,* 1948, Sept., 499–501.

Pludermakher, G. "Di tshernovitser konferents un di ufgabn fun itstikn moment. [The Tshernovits Conference and the current task]," *Literarishe bleter,* 1928, 40, 777–78.

Prilutski, N. "Nokh di tshernovitser fayerungen [After the Tshernovits Celebrations]," *Literarishe bleter,* 1928, no. 4, 797–99.

Rothstein, J. "Reactions of the American Yiddish press to the Tshernovits Language Conference of 1908 as a reflection of the American Jewish experience," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language,* 1977, 13, 103–20.

Roznak, Sh. "Hebreyish-yidish (bamerkungen tsu un arum der tshernovitser shprakh-konferents). [Hebrew-Yiddish (comments on and about the Tshernovits Language Conference)]," *Goldene keyt,* 1969, 66, 152–69.

Shekhter, M. "Mir shteyen nit af an ort [We are not standing still]," *Yiddish.* New York, Congress for Jewish Culture, 1961, 351–63.

Tartakover, A. "Di yidishe kultur in poyln tsvishn tsvey velt-milkhomes [Jewish culture in Poland between two World Wars]," *Gedank un lebn,* 1946, 4, no. 1, 1–35.

Tenenboym, Yoysef. "Di yidishe shprakh af der togordenung fun der sholem-konferents in pariz, 1919 [The Yiddish language on the agenda of the Peace Conference in Paris, 1919]," *Yivo-bleter,* 1957/1958, 41, 217–29. Also in J. A. Fishman, ed. *Never Say Die!,* op. cit., pp. 395–408.

Vays (Slonim), Sh. "Oys di tsaytn fun der tshernovitser konferents [From the times of the Tshernovits Conference]," *Fun noentn over,* 1937, 1, 57–63.

Zelitsh, Y. "A tsveyte konferents far der yidisher shprakh—60 yor nokh tshernovits [A second conference for the Yiddish language—60 years after Tshernovits]," *Afn shvel,* 1968, 185(4), 2–3.

Zhitlovski, Khayem. "Tshernovits un der yidishizm: tsu dem tsvantsik yorikn yoyvl-yontev fun der tshernovitser konferents [Tshernovits and Yiddishism: In honor of the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Tshernovits Conference]," *Tsukunft,* 1928, December, 735–37.

Zilberfarb, M. A. "A shedlekhe iluzye [A harmful illusion]," *Bikhervelt,* 1928, no. 8, 38–43.

Chapter 5

Nathan Birnbaum's Third Phase: The Activization of Jewish Sanctity

HAVING ALREADY passed through two highly visible and contrasting phases, one as leader and formulator of pre-Herzlian Zionism (particularly among Germanized Jews of Central and Eastern Europe),[1] and the other as the spokesman of cultural autonomy and Yiddish cultivation (particularly among Eastern European Jews, but also among assimilated Western Jews),[2] Nathan Birnbaum became increasingly drawn to Jewish Orthodoxy as World War I approached. This became apparent in many ways to all who knew him, and was most apparent of all when he settled again in Vienna, in 1914, the city of his birth (1864) and the city that he had left in 1908, en route to Tshernovits and to Eastern European Jewish authenticity. Bit by bit, he learned all those things that an observant Orthodox male is expected to know and do and, in some cases, he relearned things that he had briefly been exposed to up to adolescence, before he entered a similarly brief stage marked by extreme left-wing sympathies. He mastered the thrice daily prayers, the putting on of phylacteries, the strict observance of Sabbath and holidays, the study of Talmud and rabbinic commentaries. The change process, including a

change from entirely Western to traditional Orthodox garb, could not have been an easy one for a distinguished individual, already in his late 40's and very much in the public eye. Nor could it have been an easy change for his wife and three adult sons, two of whom followed him, one all of the way and the other a good bit of the way, into the Orthodox fold. It may not seem like such a far-reaching transformation today, when the ethnic revival among Westernized Jews has led thousands upon thousands of them to undertake a similar "penitent-return" to Orthodoxy and when such "returnees" are known by so many Americans, Europeans and Israelis in all walks of life. However, at that time, when the *Zeitgeist* was still primarily streaming in the opposite direction, away from "old fashioned" religion and toward the various versions of modern secular European rationalism, socialism, nationalism, internationalism, the road that Birnbaum selected—the third and final road that he was to follow—was a particularly difficult one, all the more so, given his own immediately prior background, friends, contacts and intellectual circle.[3] However, just as he had done when he entered into each of his previous two paths of conviction, so, this time too, Birnbaum stoutly held that he must do more than merely proclaim his new understanding and appreciations to others. He must apply the precepts, strictures and commandments of Orthodoxy first of all to himself, to his own daily existence, just as he had done before when he became a prophet of Zionism and, then, a prophet of diaspora nationalism. Furthermore, again, just as he had done previously, he began to develop new theoretical and applied programs on behalf of the realization of his new convictions. He had always been an action-oriented, doing-oriented, organization-prone thinker. He could never be satisfied by what already existed, by what was already said and done and thought. Ever since he had abandoned his left-wing adolescent views he had viewed himself as required, as destined, to make concrete contributions to the improvement of Jewish life and to the protective cultivation of its authentic greatness. It can be no wonder then, that in his third stage he set out to do so once again.

The Birnbaum "Revolution" in Orthodoxy

Although, at first, while still in transition from diaspora nationalism to *frumkayt* (Orthodox piety), he continued to write on many of his earlier themes,[4] the increase of religious themes and Orthodox interpretations became ever more noticeable, and rather quickly so. He soon not only reiterated his earlier rejection of the *haskole* (the 18th and 19th century "enlightenment") and what he considered to be the parrot-like imitation of European thought and values on the part of so many modernized Jews who followed in its footsteps,[5] but he also severely criticized the routinized path that most of the Orthodox followed. In a series of interlinked publications that appeared between 1917 and 1918 (*Words of the Ascenders, Time to Act,* and *Nation of God*),[6] the first written in Hebrew and the other two in German, but all of them published almost simultaneously in German, Hebrew and Yiddish, he formulated a veritable revolutionary program for the activization of Orthodoxy into a movement capable of preparing Jewry for the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the world. He castigated conventionalized Orthodoxy as too set in its unthinking, unfeeling routines to be able to fulfill its own goals, its own mission. Orthodoxy had become a mainline "Church," in the Weberian-Troeltschian sense, and Birnbaum sought to breathe into it again the self-renewing and self-correcting stimulation of a Messianic "Sect", a group that took the coming of the Messiah seriously and that felt that it should, could and did influence that coming. In order to function in this way, Orthodox Jews must simultaneously lead elevated and separated lives, elevated above despair and humdrumness and separated from the snares of modernistic, "pagan" life and its tendency toward egoistic instinct-gratification, on the one hand, and rationalism (rather than faith), on the other. Just as in his prior two phases, he sets about building an organization, "The Ascenders", to accomplish the goals that he considers vital, among these being the establishment of small agricultural and handicraft settlements (he was always a vehement critic of Jewish urban, commercial concentration) in which Jews could be more actively involved in cultivating their own ethical and spiritual beauty and in maintaining undiluted

Jewish authenticity and exceptionality in language, custom, costume and world-view.[7]

The thoroughgoing revision that had occurred in his own thinking becomes apparent when one realizes that he now considered both "Zionist statism" and "diaspora nationalist" cultural autonomism to be "pagan" *weltanschauungen* in Jewish disguise and, therefore, capable of doing untold injury to unwary members of the Orthodox rank and file, particularly to its young folk. He charged both of them with being programs that rooted in foreign, Christian cultures, and viewed their Jewish goals as being hardly different from those of missionaries: to capture unsuspected Jewish souls and lead them away from Jewish distinctiveness, Jewish belief and Jewish dedication to implementing God's commandments in all details, thereby paving the way for the coming of the Redeemer.

Although "The Ascenders"[8] never became a large organization, indeed, in some respects it never even became a fully formed organization, Birnbaum's call for such a group of defenders inspired many Orthodox young folk and helped them toward a newer and deeper appreciation of the goals and merits of Orthodoxy in modern times. In addition, his views also brought him to the attention of the leading Orthodox rabbis and scholars and as a result, when the Agudes Yisroel was reorganized in 1919 (having been initially organized in 1912), becoming the major force of uncompromising, anti-Zionist, ultra-Orthodoxy, Birnbaum (who had briefly served as first General Secretary of the World Zionist Organization, 1896, and subsequently, was elected to serve as the General Secretary of a hoped-for follow-up organization to implement the resolutions of the First International Conference for the Yiddish Language, 1908) was invited to become its first General Secretary. He had a great deal of eastern fervor and western know-how and contacts to offer the organization and it is not quite clear why he resigned after only a few years in office. Undoubtedly, his "revolutionary tendencies" and his "philosophical inclinations" were not entirely to the liking or to the understanding of the leading Orthodox rabbis of the time, many of whom may have worried whether Birnbaum could be trusted not to leave the Agude,[9] just as he had left other Jewish

movements in his earlier years. However, Birnbaum remained with the Agude to his dying day, although not in any office or leadership role, and helped it considerably to interpret, explain and update its basic principles. At the same time, after he stepped down from his office, Birnbaum undoubtedly found it easier to write and to speak in his own inimitable fashion.

In Bondage to Fellow Jews

Just as he had initially held that many Western and Eastern European Jewish intellectuals were cognitively and emotionally enslaved to "false gods" (to the cultures and languages of the non-Jewish Western world), so he early became convinced, in his Orthodox phase, that truly religious Jews were controlled, manipulated and directed by non-religious mega-organizations and their spokesmen. Even in times of desperate need, when the first order of the day was to provide food, clothing, shelter and local organizational funds for millions of uprooted and wartossed refugees and invalids, the religious masses found their needs "evaluated" and "taken care of" by already established nonreligious leaders and organizations of world-wide stature. They were the ones to decide which schools and hospitals and training institutions to support in order to help the needy. They were the ones who mapped out grand strategies of emigration and resettlement. They were the ones who were always thinking up new schemes, programs and projects to help their "benighted religious brethren". However, these were the same leaders and organizations who, consciously or not, also wanted religious Jews to "become civilized" ("doctors, salesmen, innkeepers, owners of movie houses and saloons—that is what they think we need to be in order to be civilized, to be real human beings like themselves"), while they themselves lacked the slightest familiarity with traditional Jewish spirituality and dedication to sanctity. In the final analysis, what might come to pass is that Judaism itself could be destroyed in a process by which deracinated Jewish leaders and their organizations ruined much more than they saved. The only solution, Birnbaum felt, was to rescue Orthodoxy from its current status of being "in bondage to fellow Jews",[10] by taking control of

their own lives, of their own futures, of their own right to rescue themselves, their own institutions and their own values.[11] Birnbaum's arguments not only strengthened the demands of Agudes Yisroel to be included in various high level relief, rescue and reconstruction conferences of the 20's and 30's, but they strengthened ordinary Orthodox men and women in their conviction that Orthodoxy should and could become an independent political force.[12] As a "penitent returnee" to Orthodoxy, Birnbaum was in a position to recognize and to highlight injustices and imbalances in the relationship between the "modern" and the Orthodox sectors to which Orthodox folk themselves had long grown accustomed and, therefore, no longer reacted to. Birnbaum never tired of reminding and demanding that Orthodoxy must stand on its own legs, organizationally, programmatically and fiscally, if it were to be able to pick its own priorities and move in its own directions.[13]

Birnbaum's Territorialism

The notion that masses of European Jews needed to be resettled in pre-planned settlements was first espoused by Birnbaum toward the end of his Zionist phase, when he was among the first to realize that Palestine was both insufficiently developed and was the home of too large an Arab population to be able to safely accommodate all the Jews who were in need of resettlement.[14] He now returned to this same theme and combined with it elements of rescuing victims of mass antisemitism, fostering Orthodox self-sufficiency and freedom from Zionist influence, supporting small agricultural and other non-urban life styles and the occupational retraining necessary for the latter purpose. The First World War had barely ended when Birnbaum began to prophesy an unprecedented future "catastrophe". He attributed the coming cataclysm to the destruction of pluralistic Austro-Hungary, the preservation of monistic Germany and the exacerbation of the grievances of both by communist and anti-communist extremists. He predicted that a "storm" would tear out millions of Jews from their homes and communities and that the resources of Palestine would be

incapable, whether physically or in terms of inter-ethnic peace, to provide them with the massive help that would be required in order to renormalize and re-traditionalize their lives. This holocaustic vision led him to agitate all the more vehemently for planned Jewish emigration from Europe to countries that were lightly populated, democratically governed, and suitable for small scale settlements with agriculture and the crafts as their economic foundations. In order to achieve these goals it was obviously necessary that large numbers of Jews retrain quickly.[15] Birnbaum felt very strongly that by so doing they would not only save their own lives, but would save and even revitalize their Orthodoxy as well. The latter was a crucial goal, as far as Birnbaum was concerned, since for him "Israel comes before Zion" and God and his Torah rather than land or a state had to remain at the center of the stage of Jewish life.[16] Only under such circumstances would Jews live a Jewish life rather than merely become just one more set of players in the "cultural circus of the modern world".[17]

Under Birnbaum's influence a small number of youth groups and agricultural training stations were organized, both in Eastern and in Western Europe, for the purpose of preparing Orthodox youngsters and young adults for planned and concentrated resettlement in more hospitable parts of the world. In the two German periodicals that he edited during the 30's (*Der Aufstieg*, 1930–1933, and *Der Ruf*, 1934–1937, the latter being published in Holland where he had moved from Berlin after Hitler's rise to power), Birnbaum encouraged such resettlement and the founding of two organizations, one for occupational retraining[18] and the other, the "Jewish People's Service", for resettlement. The "Service" soon became the Dutch branch of the "Freeland League", a small international Jewish body that sought to resettle European Jews in ways very similar to those that Birnbaum had independently formulated but not necessarily limited to his Orthodox focus.[19]

Birnbaum's Language Views in his Third Phase

In essence, Birnbaum's third phase was probably the least language-focused stage of his three major Jewish phases. During

this phase his home was mostly in Berlin (where he had moved initially in connection with his Agudes Yisroel work and where he remained—except for frequent trips elsewhere—until 1933) and his most immediate flock were primarily German speakers. Nevertheless, he never abandoned the close association with Yiddish that he had begun toward the end of his Zionist phase and that had become so intense, so passionate, so all-embracing, during his diaspora nationalist phase. Yiddish remained, even in his Orthodox stage, part of the distinctiveness of a holy people that possessed not one but two great and deeply authentic languages in diglossic mutual-complementarity. The revernacularized "Zionistic" Hebrew he viewed as the "philistinization" and profanation of a great national religious treasure,[20] and the Zionist-backed preference for the Sefardi pronunciation in that revernacularization he considered to be tantamount to an abandonment of authenticity and of genuine links to their own distinctive Jewish roots when adopted by Ashkenazim.[21] When the Yivo (then "Yiddish Scientific Institute," Vilna; now "Yivo Institute for Jewish Research," New York) succeeded in obtaining an article from him for its 20th anniversary volume commemorating the Tshernovits Conference, he made use of the occasion to complain bitterly that left-wing parties were attempting to monopolize the Yiddish language for their own narrow purposes. He argued that "Orthodox Jews were the original and the true creators of Yiddish" and that due to secular Jews, Yiddish was "confronted with the danger of losing its true Jewish nature, its distinctive colors" and might even, God forbid, become "just another European language, just a language."[22] However, writing that very same year in the Orthodox *Beys yankev* journal (Lodzh), he scolded Orthodox Jewry for not being sufficiently concerned about Yiddish. He whole-heartedly subscribed to the view that Jews should not only be "careful that no *shatnez* (garments mixing wool and linen, prohibited in accord with Biblical injunctions: Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:11; more generally: any undesirable mixture) touch (their) bodies, but (that they should) not permit foreign garments to clothe (their) tongues".[23] And those who gave as their excuse the claim that non-believers were among the chief adherents of Yiddish, he advised that it was their

duty to combat the dark forces[24] that seek to "overcome the shining influence of Yiddish . . . and for this struggle in particular Yiddish is a mighty weapon . . . because it is so infused with the very juices of the Jewish soul." Even when he wrote in German, as his circumstances more frequently required, he frequently reminded his readers (and frequently published reminders written by others) of the riches of Yiddish for Orthodox life, of its vital contribution to maintaining the necessary maximal differences between Jews and their neighbors, and of its suitability for the ultimate goal of Orthodox Judaism *per se:* through absolute fidelity to all things Jewish to hasten the coming of the Messiah. Few Orthodox spokesmen had ever placed Yiddish in such a strong context of co-sanctity. In his very last stage, when he was of necessity stressing the ultimate importance of commandments that "raised us (Jews) above all languages"[25] he nevertheless included Yiddish not only within the path to ultimate sanctity but within its very portals as well.

The Constant Core in Birnbaum's Three Phases

Birnbaum died on April 2, 1937 (the 22nd of Nisan, 5697), in his home in Scheveningen, a coastal resort area of The Hague. His burial plot is in the Cemetery of the Jewish Community of the Hague, in Wassenaar, next to that of his wife, and his tombstone was in good repair when I visited it in the Fall of 1982. He was, quite understandably, primarily mourned and most positively remembered by the ultra-Orthodox community. Zionists remembered him (as they do even today, if they are reminded of him as the one who coined the word *Zionism*) as one who came to oppose them on three fronts: diaspora nationalism, ultra-Orthodoxy and territorialism. Secular Yiddishists had generally lost all contact with him well before then (although he had not only convened the Tshernovits Conference but may even have coined the very word *Yiddishism*) and found it particularly hard to understand how he could leave the world of modern education, literature, theatre and social criticism for "retrogressive Orthodoxy."[26] Perhaps this would be somewhat easier to understand today, when a similar return to fundamentalism is a

more common occurrence among Jews and non-Jews even in academic and intellectual circles. All in all, however, secularists, whether Zionists or Yiddishists, found (and still find) more to their liking about Birnbaum when he was Acher[27] than when he was a meticulous observer. On the whole, however, there is an unfortunately widespread view of Birnbaum, namely one that views him for all intents and purposes, as three quite different split personalities.[28] Very few, indeed, have been those who have found the threads that unite all of his phases. Nevertheless, there are several such threads.

His repeated concern (recurring consistently after his brief, left-wing adolescent years) for protecting the uniqueness of the Jewish people, of fostering its great and authentic cultural past, on the one hand, and its continued creative possibilities in the present and future, on the other hand, is certainly a major premise that ties together all of his phases and all of his manifold efforts. His consistent readiness to deepen his own Jewishness doubtlessly also flows from this same source, as do his endless articles, lectures and organizational exertions. Only one who was primarily striving to perfect his own Jewish nature could have been so ready to ever suffer hunger and physical discomfort (I have not dwelled upon his personal poverty in order not to embarrass his memory, but it must, at least, be mentioned to make it absolutely clear that the well known changes in his views were totally unrelated to any changes in his material well-being). He followed a calling of "service to the people" which was always higher in his priorities than service to himself, or to any party, or to any language. In the end, he interpreted "service to the people" as "obedience to God," because he considered that to be the most all-encompassing and uncompromising view of "service" to which both he and his people could possibly attain. Had other Orthodox leaders shared his views more fully, Yiddish today would be more positively and more overtly included in the Jewish totality which they too seek to advance. Birnbaum represents an as yet unmet challenge to Ashkenazic Orthodoxy: to overcome its negative (or, at best, neglective) attitudes toward Yiddish and to begin treating it as a valued (even if not specifically halakhically enumerated) desideratum of Ashkenazic authenticity, on the one hand, and of Ashkenazic modernity, on the other.

Notes and References

1. For a treatment of this stage in Nathan Birnbaum's life see my "'D'r nosn birnboyms ershter perek: afn veg tsu yidish un tsum mizrekh-eyropeyishn yidntum." *Afn shvel* 1984, 253 July-September 13–16.

2. For a treatment of this stage in Nathan Birnbaum's life see my "Nosn birnboyms tsveyter perek: der kemfer far yidish un yidishe kultur-oytonomiye," *Afn shvel*, 1985, 255, January-March.

3. Hurvits (Horovits), Tuyvye. "Af der grenets tsvishn tsvey veltn: mayn ershte bagegenish mit d'r birnboym," *Dos yidishe vort*, 1977, 24 (195), 17.

4. He writes again, e.g., about the differences between Eastern and Western European Jews (1914), and about Yiddish writers (e.g. about Y. L. Perets, 1915, and Sholem-Aleykhem, 1916, on the occasions of their death). He had last met Perets in Switzerland in 1914 (they had met many times before, of course) and came away with the impression that Perets too was considering a return to religious Judaism, i.e. planning to embark on a path similar to Birnbaum's own. Perets died soon thereafter without having taken "this crucial step."

5. Nathan Birnbaum. "Jüdisches Wesen and jüdisches Leben," *Freistatt*, 1914. Reprinted in his *Um die Ewigkeit: Jüdische Essays*. Berlin, Welt-Verlag, 1920, 126–133. In English: *Confession*. New York, Jewish Pocket Books, 1946; 2nd printing: 1947.

6. Nathan Birnbaum. *Divrey haolim*, Vienna, 1917 (In Hebrew and Yiddish in the same year. In German: 1918. *Eys Laasoys* was originally published as part of this volume. Later [1919] it also appeared separately); *Gottes Volk*, Vienna 1918; *Gots folk*, Berlin, 1921.

7. Birnbaum was at least partially coopting a term that had Zionist implications (in *that* context "Olim" are those who go up, i.e. immigrate, to Zion) and returning it to its original metaphorical implications of spiritual rather than merely physical ascent.

8. Laykhter, V. (=Meyer Voydeslavski) "Ha-olim shel birnbaum," *Ketuvim* (Tel Aviv). 1930, 4, no. 29, p. 3. Concerning the programmatic goals of the O'ylem/Oli'm see the official formulation *Vos mir meynen un vos mir viln*. Berlin, Oylem, 1931.

9. *Agúdes Yisróel* (Association of Israel) is a Hebrew nominal construct form. When the name is shortened it reverts to its absolute form: *Agúde*. In Israeli Hebrew the name is pronounced *Agudát Yisraél* and *Agudá*.

10. Nathan Birnbaum. "In goles bay yidn," Central Bureau of the Agudes Yisroel, 1919.*

11. In his *Fun amsterdam biz yerushelayem: di geshikhte fun d"r yankev yisroel de haan, zayn shturmish lebn un tragisher umkum inem kamf far toyre hershaft in heylikn land* (Brooklyn, Author, 1978), Moyshe Y. Glaykher sketches Nathan Birnbaum's role as the representative of Agudes Yisroel at an international conference of Jewish organizations on behalf of post-war assistance, Carlsbad, 1920. At this conference Birnbaum vigorously defended the needs of Orthodox leaders and institutions (synagogues, religious schools, orphanages, etc.) that the conference had neglected in favor of more modern, secular counterparts.

12. Shtayer, Elimeylekh, "Demolt ven s'hot ofgeblitst," *Beys yankev*, 1937, 14, 142, 4–5.

13. Nathan Birnbaum. "Religiöse Heimat und religiose Heimkehr," in *Festschritt Rosenheim*. Frankfort a.M., Kauffman Verlag, 1931, 77–81.

14. The general view that planned, concentrated Jewish settlements should be established in lightly populated, democratic locations outside of Palestine, whether for long term or short term durations, goes back to the early history of Zionism itself and was, to some extent, briefly shared by Herzl himself. After its rejection at the Seventh Zionist Congress, Basel, 1905, this point of view established its own organizational entity, the Jewish Territorial Organization, whose president was Israel Zangwill. A typical viewpoint of Territorialism is that expressed in 1948 by one of the JTO's successor organizations, the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Settlement (established 1941 in New York) that while it welcomed the founding of a Jewish State it felt that because of the limited area and hostile neighbors, it "dare not allow the whole Jewish future to depend solely on Israel." For a complete history of Territorialism see Astur, Mikhal: *Geshikhte fun der frayland lige* 2 vols. Buenos Aires and New York, Freeland League, 1967. For recognition of Nathan Birnbaum's early concern that the Palestinian Arabs posed a problem, at a time when most Zionist leaders were seemingly unaware of their presence in Palestine, see S. Schachnowitz, Zur Würdigung Dr. Nathan Birnbaum's, z'l," *Nach'lath Z'vi*. 1937, 179–184.

15. Nathan Birnbaum. *Vor dem Wandersturm*. Frankfort A.M., L. Sänger, 1919.

16. Nathan Birnbaum. Religyezkayt—modernizm—dos yinge dor. *Panuderekh*, (Yiddish by S. A. Birnbaum) 1932, 1, 1, 3–10. Also see J. Rosenheim. *Oholey Yaakov: Ausgewä*hlte Aufsatze und Ansprachen 2 vols. Frankfort a.M., Kauffman Verlag, 1930.

17. Nathan Birnbaum. Weltjahrmarkt oder jüdische Kultur. Vienna, Luach-Blätter, 1928. (Also in Hebrew: "Yarid olami o tarbut yisraelit," *Ketuvin* (Tel Aviv) 1977, 4, 30.

18. *Dr. Nathan Birnbaum Stichtung voor Joodsche Beroepswijziging in Nederland*, 1934.

19. Dan Michman. *The Jewish Refugees from Germany in the Netherlands, 1933–1940*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1978.

20. Nathan Birnbaum. "Das Erwachen der jüdischen Seele," *Um die Ewigkeit: Jüdische Essays*. Berlin, Welt Verlag, 1920.

21. Nathan Birnbaum. "Havaraaaa Ssephardiiiit," *Die Freistatt*, 1913, I. 8.* Some mention should be made here of the fact that the editor of this journal, Fritz M. Kaufmann, was originally a Zionist and later became a staunch admirer of Eastern European Jewry and Yiddish folklore. Birnbaum was able to publish a number of his earliest religious articles in *Die Freistatt*. Kaufman became a great admirer of Birnbaum and published two special issues of *Die Freistatt* in honor of Birnbaum's 50th birthday.

22. Nathan Birnbaum. "A mol un atsind," in *Di ershte yidishe shprakh-konferents*. Vilna, Yiddish Scientific Institute, Yivo, 1931.

23. Nathan Birnbaum. "A por verter vegn yidish," *Beys yankev*. 1931, 8, no. 71–72, p. 6.* The final quotation is from p. 2 of the same issue (devoted entirely to

strengthening the role of Yiddish in Orthodox circles) and was formulated by the issue-editor.

24. Referring to secular-nationalist Jewish circles as "dark forces" is another of Birnbaum's tour-de-forces since that had customarily been the expression that secularists used to refer to the Orthodox world, its leaders and institutions.

25. This quotation (used by Nathan Birnbaum in one of his articles) is from the traditional festival benediction. The usual interpretation of the phrase "roymemonu mikol loshn" is "who hath exalted us above all language groups." Birnbaum obviously was aware of the usual interpretation, but because the construction is an ambiguous one (*loshn/lashon* is in the singular and therefore, strictly speaking, denotes "language, tongue" rather than language groups; in addition, the prior phrase (the two phrases together are an instance of biblical parallelism, a frequent stylistic device) is *kidashtonu mikol om*, "who hath sanctified us from among all peoples," where the more usual word for a people, *om/am*, is also given in the singular), he cites it to make the point that language loyalty itself, whether to Yiddish or even to Hebrew, was not the very highest level of Judaic commitment.

26. True to his Viennese origins and his early and long continued interest in theater and literature, about both of which he wrote dozens of articles, Birnbaum did not lose his esthetic sensibilities during his Orthodox stage. Among the three major paths that he set for his "Ascenders" one was *tiferes* 'beauty,' as a way to recognizing and extoling the greatness of God. All three of Birnbaum's sons have excelled in one art form or another.

27. Mathias Acher [Akher] was Birnbaum's most frequent pseudonym from 1895 to 1916, i.e., prior to his Orthodox stage. The meaning of *akher* is 'other' or 'different'. It is not quite clear why Birnbaum chose it. Perhaps he did so to indicate that he had (repeatedly) turned away from his other ideas, as is claimed by his son, S. A. Birnbaum, in Leo Jung, ed. *Men of the Spirit*. New York, Kymson, 1964, p. 525, or, perhaps, it connotes his own sense of being different, of differing. As an appellation its only precedent is in association with Elisha ben Avuya, who came to be known as Akher, a famous mishnaic master who lived in the century after the destruction of the second Temple and who left traditional Judaism as a result of immersing himself in mystic studies. So great were his sins, thereafter, that it was said that all sinners would be pardoned if they repented, except for Akher. On this theme in conjunction with Birnbaum see Josef Frankel. Mathias Acher's fight for the "Crown of Zion," *Jewish Social Studies*, 1954, 16, 115–134, and V. Laykhter, "Birnbaum—Akhar l'sh'avar," *Ketuvim* (Tel Aviv), 1927, 4, 30.

28. Among the few exceptions are articles written by various members of his immediate family, e.g., Uriel Birnbaum's "My Father Nathan Birnbaum," *Freeland*. 1953, 7 no. 3, 6–7 (also in Yiddish in *Afn shvel*. 1955, January-February, 3–5); also Miriam Birnbaum's "De weg van Nathan Birnbaum," *Hakehila* (Amsterdam). 1964, 9, no. 9, 10–12.

Chapter 6

Continuity and Change in Nathan Birnbaum's Thought

TO A CONSIDERABLE extent, Nathan Birnbaum's thought on many topics is clearly indicated by his ideological and activist positions at various phases of his life. Having reviewed these phases elsewhere (Fishman 1985, 1986, 1987) and in Chapters 3, 4 and 6, above, it has already been necessary to review his thinking about Zionism as a solution to the cultural problems of Western and Eastern European Jewry, his views of the societal and ethno-national functions of Yiddish and Hebrew, his attitudes toward the quest for Jewish cultural autonomy in the Austro-Hungarian Empire ("The Monarchy", as it was then referred to in ordinary discourse), and his views of Judaism as the religion of the Jewish people. However, a phase by phase approach to any individual's life tends toward segmentation and toward internal consistency *within* stages, at the expense of unraveling topics and analyzing ideas that reveal consistency, contrasts or linkages *between* stages. It is to such a more detailed examination of ideas that we now turn, in the expectancy of finding both continuity and change, consistency and inconsistency, without prejudging either their degrees or their topical locations.

Varieties of Anti-Semitism

Birnbaum often commented on anti-Semitism, doing so in each of his phases. As in many other areas, his views here are often rather original, departing from the predictable concern with right wing or left wing anti-Jewish bias. In one of his very first publications (1885), when Birnbaum was a 21 year old university student, he expresses the view that those Jews who seek to abandon their Jewishness, confirm, by their negative behavior, the worst suspicions of anti-Semites and, thereby, both elicit anti-Semitism and deserve it. In a sense Birnbaum confronts both external (non-Jewish) and internal (Jewish, particularly Western Jewish and most particularly Germanized Jewish) anti-Semitism and finds some startling similarities between them. Both view Jewish society "as a sickly organism . . . a national something" (1890a p. 2) and not even such revolutionary re-organizations of reality as envisaged by socialism or by the American dream can be relied upon to change these views. On the one hand, "the Aryan world in its unbelievable barbarity is nowhere near ready for the socialism of love" and, at best, will bring a "socialism of uneven and raw power" in which Jews and other small nationalities will continue to be scapegoats and to suffer (1890a p. 2). On the other hand "the speculative desires of the New World still seductively permeate the senses" so that Jews there will once again "succumb to the old restless life and again offer . . . provocation for jealousy, hatred and anti-Semitic persecution. . . . Also in America the 'hepp-hepp' cry will ring out louder and more frequently" (1890b, p. 3). Alienated Jews search for "a European citizenship without specific national affiliation but, in reality, it is only they who lack such an affiliation" because they have abandoned their own ([1897] 1898, p. 72) and this abandonment elicits rather than counteracts anti-Semitism.

In later years Birnbaum returned to this view that certain Jews themselves foster anti-Semitism by their alienation from Jewish values. It is not that he believed that Jewish authenticity itself could counteract anti-Semitism. (Actually, he believed that anti-Semitism was too ingrained in Christian culture to be easily extirpated under any circumstances.) But he did see Jewish

alienation (whether from Judaism in general or from tradition in particular) as fostering reforms, revolutions and rebellions against establishments that then vented their respective anger against all Jews (1919a, p. 77). Such anger, being endemic, could be expected under almost any and all circumstances, but the only responsible and constructive Jewish response to it was one of proudly appreciating, identifying with and fostering Jewish values, Jewish goals and Jewish behaviors. Remaining indifferent to or opposed to Jewish desiderata, being at best only pseudo-Germans and pseudo-Europeans, was, therefore, doubly counter-productive, since it brought together external and internal anti-Semitism in quintessential fashion (1908, p. 4). Birnbaum's conceptualization of anti-Semitism must not be misconstrued as a type of "identification with the aggressor." It was never that. It was however a conceptualization that viewed various Jewish responses to anti-Semitism as unfortunately less than helpful; indeed, as contributing to the very disease that they were attempting to eradicate. It represented a view that he subscribed to in every phase. All cultures merit the self-respect of their members. In the fact of anti-Semitism, so endemic in Christian cultures as to infect even the loftiest social reform movements, such respect for one's own culture is not only the *only* decent Jewish response, but also the only constructive Jewish response as well.

Language

Birnbaum's views of specific languages (English, among them), have been reviewed before, particularly those views touching upon Hebrew and Yiddish. His views on language more generally, as an element in the language-and-ethnicity complex, have received less attention and will be focused upon here, as will a few other language-related themes.

By the time Birnbaum began to produce his earliest Zionist writings, European romanticism had found it necessary to compromise the unadulterated Herderian view that a language was the dynamo that sparked the soul of a particular people (Fishman 1982). Indeed, both directions of causality were widely

and unconflictedly subscribed to (The Herderian original and its antithesis, namely, that the *Volksgeist* infuses, fashions, and activates the language) and Birnbaum exhibited no reluctance at doing so as well. Indeed, the frequent relinguification that Jews had experienced throughout their history (and that Germanized Jews themselves had experienced in the very 19th century in whose latter half Birnbaum grew up and passed through his first phase) was sufficient reason to be rather cautious with the remnants of unreconstructed Herderian rhetoric still common in his time. Initially, therefore, Birnbaum takes a more cautious view, one that holds that language is a *byproduct* of other national characteristics ("The individual character of the race determines the individual character and the mode of thinking and feeling of a people and this, in turn, creates the individual character of the language" (1886, p. 2)) and that Jews are protected against dissolution also by means of factors other than language. Indeed, initially Birnbaum even admitted that language could be "a seductress" leading Jews away from their true nature along foreign, imitative paths (1886, p. 2).

However, there were occasions when his passions for one or another Jewish language did lead him to stress its causal capacities. Well before the First World Zionist Congress (1897), he sounded a clarion call for Hebrew precisely because "Only through its ancient, great tongue can Israel become reaccustomed to its original world view. More so than anything else . . . this language can lead it to national consciousness. The language of Zion will elicit in the nation an irresistible urge to return to Zion." (1892, p. 140). Somewhat later, when he came to subscribe to more diglossic sentiments and when Yiddish too occupied a major place on his agenda, his stress on language as *primum mobile* remained. He believed that the two great Jewish languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, each had their own virtues and desirable effects. Each required attention, cultivation and protection via status planning and corpus planning, for only Hebrew was the link to "that power with which we have resisted the extermination of our individuality and the destruction of our community" in the past, and only Yiddish could do so as a vernacular in the present and in the future. Finally, in his Orthodox phase, he returned once more

to a less lingua-centric and, therefore, to a less lingua-causal view of Jewish national existence. "We love both languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, each with a different love . . . [but] we also realize that before this love comes the love of

> 'You should love the Lord your God.'" (1919a, p. 77).

Birnbaum's revisions with respect to the centrality of language faithfully reveal the interplay between language attitudes and other concurrent attitudes. This was so even for Herder or for Whorf, for both of whom an ethno-pluralistic world (and, therefore a linguistically diverse world) was a supreme desideratum of the highest philosophical and practical urgency insofar as human existence itself was concerned. Little wonder then that Birnbaum too reveals that language views are also *mirrors* of the other views with which they are associated. Even in his nationalist autonomist phase, when he endlessly and zealously championed the rights, virtues and prospects of Yiddish, it was always something beyond Yiddish that he was aiming at. He did not expect either Yiddish or Hebrew to magically produce the attitudes, behaviors, beliefs and sensitivities which each presumably fostered. Even when languages were viewed as active forces (Herderian dynamos), they still needed to be fostered, developed, supported, protected. A feedback system and a symbiotic interdependence is, therefore, implied, even though unidirectional rhetoric is sometimes invoked.

The Spirit and Soul of the Nation

Birnbaum's first two phases transpire within the context of growing minority-nationality movements (and growing recognition for such movements) and their demands in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Although Birnbaum is one of the first Jewish heralders of this crescendo of concern for ethnicity (i.e., for ethnicity beyond the bounds of the two "state building nationalities"—German and Hungarian—of the Empire) he was, nevertheless, constantly faced by three counterstreams within the Jewish fold. One stream sought an international, pan-human or at

least pan-European identity without any national identity; one courted a German (or, in Hungary, a Hungarian) identity and considered such to be the highest state of blessedness; and one preferred one or another Jewish identity quite at odds with the particular phase in which Birnbaum found himself. What each of these directions shared was a vocabulary that is either lacking in English or that now has substantially different semantic fields in English than its cognates then had in German (Glick 1982, p. 548). When we say "national" in English we hear overtones of "nationwide" rather than nationalism. When we say "nationality" we interpret this as a "minority" rather than a proudly independent ethnocultural entity. When we say "race" we think of Nuremberg, Mississippi or Apartheid rather than ethnic heritage. It is, indeed, very difficult to examine this whole area of discourse, precisely because we can only do so through words that do not have the connotations for us that they had then, in Birnbaum's time and in his milieu.

When Birnbaum approvingly quotes Disraeli that "the spirit and soul which characterize a nation can in fact only be explained in terms of natural history [because] race is everything" (1886, p. 1), we tend to focus on "race" as the significant code word in this passage. "Race" did imply deeply ingrained traits and fundamental properties, much along some of the lines that we are likely to imagine today, even when we reject the term as an explanatory social science variable. However, it is "spirit and soul" that Birnbaum is really stressing in his utterance, two terms that we are almost incapable of understanding today when applied to ethnolinguistic aggregates. For Birnbaum these were crucial terms indeed, because beginning with his early Zionist phase he always believed that Jews were the carriers of certain properties of "spirit and soul" that had produced greatness before and, if properly exercised, would do so again. In his various phases Birnbaum characterized this greatness in varying terms, but he had no doubt that great visions, ideas and ideals were within this people's nature. I stress this because this conviction and the quests that it engendered within him both brought him to and took him from each of his phases since, in large part, his peregrinations expressed his constant search for a truer, firmer grasp on the exact nature of his people's "spirit and soul."

Basically, Birnbaum resisted the stylish intellectual (and, particularly, Jewish intellectual) debunking of nationalism that imputed to nations not only obsolescence but brutality and factiousness, because he was convinced that peoples were truly phenomena of nature, in the same way that "different seasons and different climates" are. "It is vain, childish spite to rebel against the sovereign will of nature" (1890, p. 1). This is an implication of preprogrammed potential and inescapable variability of humankind, on the one hand, even though Birnbaum was also convinced, as was Herder himself, that, on the other hand, individual peoples could rise and fall, come into being and pass from history, as they either actualized or abandoned the potential that was theirs. Different peoples were needed, were beneficial to humanity as a whole ("in the interest of the totality of mankind" (1899a, p. 2); indeed, they represented "the economic principle of division of labor" and "the true democratic principle of equality and social welfare" combined.

The Jewish people, of course, had its special mission to fulfill, in fact a double mission, a "messianic idea... the synthesis of nationhood and humanity: Zion's golden destiny and the final redemption of all of mankind" (1890a, p. 2). These words were penned 25 years before Birnbaum's Orthodox phase and they pressage his messianic emphases in that stage, his conviction that Jews must truly merit, seriously prepare for and help bring about the coming of the Messiah. Then, toward the end of his life, he railed against those who took the coming of the Messiah as a routine, mechanical goal rather than as a vibrant, revolutionary, totally electrifying matter of uniting one's individual spirit and soul with the collective spirit and soul. Much earlier, in his early post-Zionist and pro-Yiddishist phase, he had similarly railed against Herzlian tactics. "One cannot... maintain a nation in fruitful movement by allowing the soul of the nation to languish, replacing it with the mechanics of a goal" (1905, p. 261). "Fruitful movement" is an apt self-description for Birnbaum's own lifelong quest. "The soul of the nation" is the holy grail that he pursued. "The mechanics of a goal", that more practical and more successful leaders favored, always disappointed him in comparison with his own yearning and in comparison to the "spirit and soul" of the

people to which he had dedicated himself. There is a surprising consistency here across a route stopping at very dissimilar way-stations.

The Holy Land

It is not hard to theorize about a people's "spirit and soul"; indeed, what else can one do in connection with such an ambiguous referent? A land, however, is not an abstraction and lends itself to more concrete treatment. In Birnbaum's hands, however, the Holy Land never ceased to be exactly that: "The holy land, the land of the Bible, the land of our national grandeur" (1890b, p. 2). Only there, he initially believed, could Jewry "emerge from its tragicomic role of an imitated Aryanism and regain its own natural state". Of course he also saw Palestine as a physical, pragmatic entity. There, both Western and Eastern Jews could finally meet, interact and positively influence one another ([1897], 1898, p. 75). There, Jews as a whole could mediate between East and West and, thereby, make a contribution to mankind ([1897], 1898, p. 81). Nevertheless, it is the spiritual role of Palestine, its spiritual significance, its contribution to Jewish spirituality, to which he returns again and again. Initially, he was certain that "the Jews, who called out the message of justice, will make sure that their new society in their old land, will ensure such justice. Only the earth of Palestine can guarantee this" (1897, p. 79). If, ultimately, doubts arise in his mind as to the advisability of Jewish settlement in Palestine, it is because he judges other contextual factors there to have vitiated the potential for Jewish spirituality which could be that land's greatest asset. After breaking with official Zionism, Birnbaum sadly comments that this movement that he had helped to found had become enamored of Jewish concentration in Palestine, but had evinced no corresponding passion for the spiritual culture that such concentration was intended to revive and perfect. Diaspora nationalism, on the other hand, struck him as stressing only the latter while slighting the former. Finally, those Jews who put their trust in socialism alone, he accused of foregoing both desiderata, neither Jewish territorial concentration nor Jewish spirituality being of concern to them

(1902). Faced by these alternatives in the world of practical polemics, Birnbaum increasingly opted for the second, Jewish spiritual culture (which he interpreted differently in his two post-Zionist phases) taking precedence over mere territoriality.

During his later years, Birnbaum came to be widely known as an anti-Zionist. In truth, however, he was no more against Jewish settlement in Palestine during his third phase than he was against Hebrew; rather he was against the desanctification or profanization of what he took to be holy vehicles. "For the Jewish nationalists the Jewish land is not the land given by God to our people so that it may there live for Him, but merely a historic domicile in which we can live 'like all the nations.'" For them, the Hebrew language is not the language of Holy Writ, expressing the profound pathos of universal humanity, but merely the language of a certain people" (1917, p. 35). This critique of Zionism is expressed in religious metaphor, but it is, in many respects, merely a transformation of the emphasis that led him to distance himself from Herzl and political Zionism nearly a score of years earlier. Whereas he had emphasized Jewish culture then, defining it in eternal-moral and modern-secular terms, he later came to substitute religious symbols, values and ecstasy exclusively. If he opposed Zionist settlement efforts in Palestine, it was only because for "them, The Land of Israel is an enlarged city of refuge, a place to which one flees.... They want to settle [there] in accord with the usual approach of the nations of the world ... with enlightened theatres, enlightened cabarets, enlightened conflict and violence—and without the Jewish religion, without God and without the Holy Torah" (1919a, p. 76). For Birnbaum, in this third stage, if Palestine was not the Holy Land, then it was merely land and, therefore, not merely frought with all of the temptations of the modern secular world (a world that he referred to as "heathen"), but also a destabilizing threat for the continuity of Orthodox communities and their traditional way of life with its spiritual potential. He formulated a widely accepted slogan, "Israel comes before Zion," which was not so much a rejection of Zion as a rejection of Zion profaned, of Zion without a focus on its particularly and crucially spiritual past and potential for the future. What was at stake was the Jewish people itself! "The

Jewish people will either be the breeding ground of a spiritual view of life and, from this point of departure, once again liberate momentous salvational energies as it did originally, or it will cease to exist at all" (1914, p. 127). Both in his first and third phases, when Birnbaum was most frequently immersed in issues touching upon Jewish territorial concentration, Palestine appealed to him only because it would be (or, ultimately, only if it would be) such a breeding ground and point of departure. In this respect his third phase merely picks up and develops further views toward Palestine that had been present in his first phase as well and that had particularly characterized the final years of that phase.

Immigration and Resettlement

As Birnbaum's Palestine-centrism waxed and waned, so his interest in other centers of Jewish reconcentration waned and waxed. His criteria for evaluating other areas of settlement were consistently those of fostering Jewish cultural/spiritual authenticity. In Birnbaum's eyes, this required not merely encouraging resettlement where the greatest cultural/spiritual benefits could accrue, but planning, coordinating or guiding such resettlement so that it would not be left to the whims of individual chance or opportunistic calculations. Thus, Birnbaum differentiated between hurried, emergency, crisis-governed "rescue-actions,—always necessary from time to time" and resettlement that bears a "genuine, national Jewish character" (1890b, p. 1) and is carefully planned accordingly. Jewish immigration to Palestine, he initially believed, would definitely be of the latter type. That to America, e.g., would not. Accordingly, Zionist resettlement would be superior in two respects; it would bring Jews to the proper place where "the semitic nationality of the Jewish people, its spirit and its language, can be rejuvenated" (1890b, p. 2), and it would do so in the proper coordinated fashion; that to America would accomplish neither and, therefore, would have no lasting Jewish significance.

Birnbaum returned to his stress on coordinated resettlement in his third phase. Even his second phase may be viewed as one of dedication to regionally concentrated Jewish authenticity.

However, that concentration and that authenticity had been much harmed by the First World War. In addition, that war had unleashed forces, both of the Right and of the Left, that would, he prophesied, do even greater damage to this last great outpost of traditional authenticity. The urgency of planned resettlement was, therefore, even greater, and in his third phase Birnbaum stresses it as much as in his first, if not more.

In his early post-Zionist days Birnbaum implicitly criticizes the lack of planning and realism in much of the Zionist effort to encourage Jews to resettle in Palestine (1902, p. 151). In addition, he also recognizes that emigration is dislocative, disturbing of long-established cultural patterns and practices which may never again take root. "A rational emigration policy must set sensible limits for itself. It should not support and organize more emigration than is absolutely necessary" (1905a, p. 264). However, after World War I the urgency of planned emigration elsewhere never leaves him and "the approaching catastrophe" is always in his consciousness (1919b). Even so, he deeply regrets "panicky mass migration [that] will lead millions of Jews to a life of dislocation and assimilation" (1919b, p. 15). Ideally, immigrants must be carefully selected on psychological and physical grounds, retrained for the occupations they will need to enter later in their new places of concentration, protected politically, assisted economically and provided with accurate information concerning health and climatic factors in their new places of residence. This is a momentous task that transcends party politics and should not be left to Zionists alone or even primarily (1919b, pp. 29–30). Up to his very last years in The Netherlands, his stress on adequate preparation for emigration continued uninterrupted. Indeed, it gained in urgency, although it would be difficult to imagine a more urgent call than the one that he issued in 1919 warning that "Soon, very soon, it will happen. The storm approaches! Within the batting of an eye it can break loose, and woe unto us if we have not by then protected our hapless brethren, securing for them a road to rescue, a shield behind which our ethnoreligious community can wait out the most difficult circumstances imaginable" (1919b, 30–31). Even in his Zionist days he had entertained notions of various temporary refuges until the absorptive capacity of

Palestine could be increased (1894). Toward the end of his life, as the fury of the impending storm became ever clearer to him, he increased his attention to this area of concern, ultimately stressing the most basic need of all: the need to save lives.

Agriculture

Birnbaum shared the widespread romantic glorification of rural, agricultural life. Only such a life could cleanse the national soul from the harmful influences of centuries of urban and mercantile immersion and return it to its original pristine purity. "Only the earth, via a peasantry that is constantly in close contact with it, with its very aroma, can activate the moral and spiritual development of a people" ([1897] 1898, p. 77). He makes it clear that both Eastern European and Western European Jews are in need of such a return to the soil—the first in order to escape from their physical and intellectual ghettoization, and the second, in order to leave behind their abstract Europeanism.

The theme of agriculture was, of course, also prominent in Zionism. In terms of the glorification of hard physical work (rather than prayer-house scholarship or market-place involvement) it was also adopted by Jewish socialism and territorialism more widely. All of these movements conceived of agriculture and hard physical labor as productive rather than parasitic, as more noble, more creative and more normal than the economic pursuits that most Jews engaged in. Birnbaum initially shared all of these views, never fretting that they were ideological borrowings from without the Jewish fold nor that they repeated various Gentile stereotypes and pejorative evaluations of Jewish life. However, he ultimately give them a more distinctly Jewish rationale. Small agricultural and handicraft communities could be more authentic, more independent of the mainstream, than could huge urban concentrations that were necessarily exposed to endless nontraditional stimuli that they could not control. Accordingly, Birnbaum called for a reorganization of Jewish life, even prior to emigration, spearheaded by a dedicated order of *Ascenders* (oy'lem/olím), that would shun the big cities, devote itself to agriculture and handicrafts, and be immersed in Jewish

spirituality, i.e. not only in the *preservation* of its distinctively Jewish languages, attire, practices and values, but in their elevation and intensification as well. In such settings it would be possible to "keep away from the confusions of our world: drunken pleasures, in place of divine joy; the craving for money, in place of quiet satisfaction; intellectual confusion, in place of a wise heart" (1917, p. 57). The new Jew that Birnbaum hoped for would be nearer to nature and, therefore, to God. Unlike modern simplifiers like Ivan Ilitch, Birnbaum was more Tolstoyian in outlook. He did not value simplication of a return to nature for its own sake, as a good in and of itself, but, rather, as a way of clearing man's path to God, to sanctity, and of clearing the Jew's path to God and to sanctity in a Jewish way.

Culture vs. Civilization

If Birnbaum had little overt sympathy for a purely Ilitchian approach to simplication and purification via agriculture, he was much more directly influenced by Nietzschian and other German thought—both before and after Nietzsche—pertaining to the distinction between culture and civilization. To follow this line of thought one must realize that beginning with the romantics of the 18th century the term "culture" (Kultur) had important overtones in German that it does not have in modern English. It "centered upon an inward feeling . . . opposed to rationalism and science . . . mystical and biological. . . . A culture possesses a soul, while civilization is . . . external and artificial" (Mosse 1961, pp. 1–2). The origin of the soul of a people, the birth of its "culture", was identified with the peasantry, while all of the artificiality and foreign influences associated with "civilization" was identified with the city (Fishman 1972). German romantics—Wagner, Father Jahn, Langbehn, and many others—admonished their listeners and readers that it was "better to split wood than to continue this contemptible life of civilization and education; we must return to the sources, on lonely mountain peaks" (Paul de Lagarde, *German Writings*, 1878; cited by Craig 1982, pp. 205–206). This line of thought often associated Jews with civilization alone, with cities, with rationalism and mercantilism, with the foreign,

urban pollution of the German soul (Glick 1982, pp. 549–550). On the other hand, it had a very powerful influence on Jewish thinkers as well, particularly those, Birnbaum among them, who suspected that the Jewish trust in *Bildung* and rationalism, Jewish urbanization and mercantile concentration, were destined to be counter-productive in the Jewish struggle for existence. Zionists, non-Zionists and anti-Zionists, in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, all made use of the culture-vs.-civilization and countryside-vs.-city contrast. Birnbaum was among the first to do so within the Jewish fold and found the metaphor a useful one in each of his stages.

In his major address on "Zionism as a cultural movement" at the First Zionist World Congress (1897), Birnbaum argues that Westernized Jews may be co-participants in Western civilization but they are really outsiders vis-à-vis the cultures of their countries of residence, cultures that are necessarily Christian and agrarian in origin and in essence. The anomaly of Western Jews, indeed, is that they are highly civilized but "have no soul, no culture" of their own ([1897] 1898, p. 72). He viewed Zionism as the movement that would provide Eastern Jews, who had a vibrant culture of their own, with entree into European civilization, while, at the same time reinfusing Western Jewry with the Jewish soul, with a culture of its own to replace the "dead Europeanism" that it currently espoused ([1897] 1898, p. 74). Only a few years later, however, he became convinced that such a two-pronged program could not be implemented, much less formulated, initiated or conducted by Western Jews. "People who have not yet learned to distinguish between culture and civilization often speak of the duty of Western Jews to bring culture to the Jews of Eastern Europe.... Culture, however, a national life and a creative personality, is what the Western Jews themselves need most urgently" (1905a, p. 261). He anticipates a Spenglerian metaphor by proclaiming that such Jews "are condemned to live within their cultural twilight, the likes of which there is none in world history.... A kind of non-living existence" (1905a, p. 262).

In his final, ultra-Orthodox stage the distinction between culture and civilization is made again and again in order to differentiate Orthodoxy from its secular opponents. What was

initially a contrast derived from without the Jewish fold and, indeed, a contrast that had developed a distinctly anti-Semitic thrust ("This differentiation between culture and civilization, still part of the intellectual equipment of many Germans, is one of the clues to the Jewish tragedy of our times", Mosse 1970, p. 60), was converted into a Jewish intra-group distinction whereby Birnbaum differentiated between views and patterns that he advocated and those that he opposed. In essence, just as he (among several other Jewish intellectuals) had succeeded in Judaising romanticism proper and the agricultural mythos derived therefrom, so he also succeeded in Judaising the culture-civilization contrast and in putting it to work throughout his various phases. What is particularly of interest here is not so much his ability to seize hold of currently fashionable concepts and incorporate them into his own way of thinking (sometimes doing so again and again, reinterpreting them, as needed, in one phase after the other), but his ability to convince himself and others that he was operating from within the storehouse of Jewish ideas, values and purposes at all times. There are no acknowledged "foreign ideas" within Birnbaum's thinking at whatever stage he finds himself. At a subsequent stage he may reject his earlier thinking and characterize it as non-Jewish or deficiently Jewish, but, at whatever stage he may be, these ideas have been fully digested and indigenized and their link to the outer world is no longer conscious. Authenticity was undoubtedly the major continuous striving of his life, yet, as with all authenticity spokesmen and thinkers, it is not so much the origins as the purposes of ideas that ultimately determine their foreign markedness, not so much authenticity *per se* as the authenticating process. This is not an embarrassment, nor should it be; rather it is testimony to the priority of process over product in human life and in group culture.

Aesthetics

Another indication of Birnbaum's ability (an extremely creative and yet commonly widespread ability) to both persevere and reinterpret, to retain an orientation of constancy amid a sea of

change, was his ongoing love affair with the world of aesthetics. Indeed, an aesthetic sense and inclination may actually be the most stable, the most continuing trait that informs his endeavors, harking back even to his pre-Zionist adolescence. His involvement in and admiration for visual aesthetics are evident in his own sketching and penmanship, as well as in the artwork of his three sons, one of whom (Menachem) became a well-known portraitist, draftsman, book-designer and caricaturist, and another of whom (Uriel), became an artist of international reputation, as well as a draftsman, poet and author. Even in his very last stage, Birnbaum included *tiferes* (beauty, splendor) among the attributes, concerns and responsibilities of those who aspired to be *Ascenders*, to draw closer to God and to foster, thereby, the coming of the Messiah.

However, it is in the verbal realm that Birnbaum's fascination with aesthetics really comes to the fore. The beauty of literature, of song and poetry, and, perhaps, above all, of the stage, are recurring strains in his writing, much of which is on non-Jewish themes (e.g., 1896, 1899, 1903, 1906b, 1912b) in the realm of aesthetics. In his early rejection of Yiddish (1890c), its literary association is, nevertheless, its saving grace. Somewhat later, he admits that "art already exists in the Yiddish language, even if only in lyric and epic form" (1901, p. 3). When he becomes a widely acknowledged interpreter and defender of Yiddish literature and drama among Germanized Jewry, he waxes lyrical about the touching beauty of Yiddish folksongs (1912, p. 19). He boasts of "the literati and poets, many of whom have risen to world renown" who have appeared on the Yiddish scene (1906, p. 2), and of "the poetic and the so-called fine literature" that has developed in the very language that has so often been maligned as coarse, gibberish and ugly (1907, p. 39).

The previously mentioned Yiddish proverb which claims that "we do not love that which is beautiful, but, rather, those things that we love appear beautiful to us" applies to Birnbaum by and large, of course, as it does to the rest of mankind. Nevertheless, Birnbaum also reveals a tendency to react to the aesthetic even before, in advance of, his having arrived at a value position. In addition, even when his value position tells him that there are higher principles than the aesthetic, he, nevertheless, upgrades

aesthetics to a high-level principle as well. Eastern European Jews sometimes reacted to his aesthetic stress (in which he also included physical cleanliness and attractiveness) as a kind of German fuddy-duddy critique of their greater informality and spontaneity. Nevertheless, he retained this stress and cultivated it to the very end.

East is East and West is West

Birnbaum constantly attempted to bridge the gulf that separated Western European Jewry and Eastern European Jewry. He viewed each of his phases as offering a new opportunity for the rapprochement that he advocated, a rapprochement that had so much to offer to Western Jews in particular, that is—precisely to those Jews who were already satisfied with themselves and whose major Jewish commitments expressed themselves via charitable impulses toward their backward and persecuted Eastern European brethren.

As early as his major address to the First World Zionist Congress (1897), Birnbaum stresses that "Eastern Jews, those who speak the Jewish jargon, are three quarters of the Jewish people. They possess a national authenticity that is expressed in custom and in language, in literature and in art, in customs and in practices, in religious, social and legal codes. In other words, they have a culture of their own" ([1897] 1898, p. 70). In his post-Zionist phase this recognition of East European Jewry is intensified and he exclaims that "for the first time since the days of old, a Jewish nation in the full sense of the word has again entered upon the world stage" (1905a, p. 263). He expounds upon the differences between Western and Eastern Jews, not only to each of them separately (in German to the former and in Yiddish to the latter), but he brings this message to outsiders as well. Writing in the *Ruthenische Revue* in 1905 (initiating a positive working relationship with Ruthenians/Ukrainians that lasted for many years), he also stresses that Ruthenians have nothing to fear from Eastern Jews "who remain Jews and . . . will not join the national oppressors (of Ruthenians)" (1905b, p. 372), whereas from Western Jewry "there still flows the wind of that assimilation which is no assimilation but the relinquishment of one national

character without the acceptance of another.... the spirit of shallow, business-proficient, sham progressivism" (1905b, p. 372).

How can the gap between these so very different branches of Jewry be closed? The prescription varies with his phase. Originally, Zionism and the Holy Land plus the Holy Tongue will do this. Subsequently, "a certain amount of expertise in Yiddish" will work wonders in bringing Westerners to a proper appreciation of Eastern virtues (1906, p. 2). He views Western notions of directing the future of Jewry as utterly ridiculous. "We are alive; you are battling against death ... we are the root, you are the twig. It is unfitting that you rule over us. It harms both the spirit that lives in us and that barely breathes within you. We no longer will permit the most important concerns of Jewry to remain in the hands of a couple of alienated oligarchs. We want to have as much say in the salvation of a united Jewry as befits our numbers" (1910, p. 28). However, what is most startling, in this context, is not the continued anti-Herzlian strain, nor even the Herderian preference for the vibrant East as opposed to the decaying West (indeed, Birnbaum consciously rejects such imagery, even if it, nevertheless, slips through in his pathos), but the forebodings of cataclysms to come with which the internal split in European Jewry is associated. It is only one year after Tshernovits when Birnbaum first foresees "the death-danger for all of Jewish peoplehood" unless Eastern Jewry succeeds in emancipating itself from Western Jewry and, thereby, arming itself against destruction. "If Eastern Jewry dies off then no one will remain that can carry on Jewish life and Jewish culture across time" (1910, p. 33). This remains Birnbaum's view also in his Orthodox phase, a phase which ends with his frantic awareness that the dangers engulfing Jewry are such that even a vibrant, Eastern-derived inspiration and commitment may well be powerless to cope with them. Internal unity and Eastern hegemony continue to be his goals, but his visions of their imposition via overarching and inescapable catastrophe become ever more frequent.

Modern, Progressive, European... Heathen

Birnbaum's initial Western orientation is nowhere revealed more fully than in his initial enthusiasm for all that is "progressive... future-bound... modern... European" in Jewish existence (1905a, p. 273). He shared with most secular, nationalist spokesmen the simultaneous pursuit of the authentically national past and a modern European future, no matter how strained the relationship between these two was destined to be. Indeed the distance between them defined the goal to be achieved. His initial critique of Eastern Jewry is that it is "not really progressive" and "not really creative" but merely possesses "a pale imitation of Europeanism" ([1897] 1898, p. 71). Nevertheless, his first doubts arise toward the end of his very first stage, when he begins to realize that uprooting Jews in order to resettle them in Palestine (where the true authentic-modern interaction could transpire) was not necessarily a desirable undertaking. From viewing modernization as a two-edged sword he slowly but surely came to view it as without any saving grace whatsoever. It had de-ethnicized Western Jewry, its influences were spreading to Eastern Jewry, it threatened to undermine the entire Jewish people. Although a recurring admiration of Western aesthetics continues to show through, now and again, his major reaction to modernization is one of sarcastic rejection. "More machines, more politics, more entertainment, more theories, more hypotheses will be the salvation of the world" (1919a, p. 76). He pokes fun at modern, secular Jewish movements and their leaders. "Can you imagine!? They want to transform us into proper human beings! into doctors, salesmen, specialists in innkeeping, movie theatres and saloons—and we have the nerve to resist!". In contrast to these pale and dubious blessings of modernity, these trivial and material concerns, stand the towering contributions of Jewish traditions: faith, justice, law and identity. No wonder that he finally settled on "heathenism" as the term to denote all that he loathed in modern, and in modern Jewish, values, behaviors, means and ends.

But he had used the term before, long before, his ultra-Orthodox stage. In a detailed treatment of "Judaism and

Hellenism" that predates the First World Zionist Congress he used that very term to designate "the principle of joy of life, of enjoyment of the here and now, of prudent pleasures" (1890, pp. 131–132), all of these being part and parcel of "the quiet, modern revolution . . . against Judaism . . . against the principles of seriousness of life, of agonizing for the world, of spiritualizing self-denial". Whereas he initially proclaimed Zionism to be "a synthesis of both Weltanschauungen" and believed that "the future of society as a whole rests on the practical combination of Judaism and Hellenism" (1896, p. 139), this was a view that he spent the second half of his life combatting and rejecting, particularly since compromises tended to undercut Jewish authenticity from within rather than merely from without.

Even such a goal as the revernacularization of Hebrew was ("in addition to being obviously impossible of attainment") "nothing more than a link in the chain of . . . consciously or unconsciously detracting from the sanctity of Judaism, of secularizing its inheritance from its great national-religious era, of fundamentally Philistinizing it" ([1911], 1913, p. 86). The basic enemy within the gates he defines as the Jewish Enlightenment (haskole: 1914, p. 127) and he rejects it because it did not seek to enable Jews "to live as a community dedicated to God, with its own religious culture, but only to imitate the newest European fashions . . . a pagan rebellion in Jewish garb" (1917, p. 34–35). What the so-called Enlightenment has peripheralized he demands be recentralized. He refuses to see traditional Judaism as being of a lower, less worthy order, an order that needs to be elevated via new knowledge, appreciations and sensitivities (see Levenson 1971 for similar issues in the confrontation of China with the West). He rejects "The notion that utter brightness exists in the outside, non-Jewish world and that Jews live in utter darkness; moreover, that one should introduce this light into that darkness" (1919a, p. 76). All Jews recognize Christian missionizing as rejective and destructive. Heathenism in a Jewish garb is even more destructive because it is not recognized as an enemy and operates within the fold.

Continuity and Change

Birnbaum has been long and widely interpreted as a highly unstable and contradictory thinker and activist. Yet there is definitely much that is cumulative and continuous in his thinking and in his efforts. Even his Zionist and his Orthodox stages, superficially so far apart, have much in common, particularly at deeper dimensional levels. All his stages are marked by the conviction that flight from Judaism can never solve Jewish problems, that Jewish languages express and foster crucial aspects of Jewish authenticity, that only concerted planning and organized effort can begin to cope with massive Jewish problems, that the cultural differences between Jews and the world at large are eminently worth retaining and fostering rather than losing and disguising, that Jewish cultural authenticity deserves to be a source of pride and steadfast devotion, non-modern though it be.

Above all else, there is in Birnbaum a constant critique of the status quo, a plaintive cry and call to reappraisal, to Jewish self-improvement in the ethno-cultural sphere. He is always half prophet and half scold, half philosopher and half pamphleteer. Underlying the constant cerebral call there is a deep emotional current, a stress on feelings and acceptance of feelings. Although he is constantly engaged in programmatic thinking he is also constantly engulfed by the rhetoric of his environment. Indeed, he is a master rhetorician himself, formulating phrases and catchwords, slogans and keywords that are noteworthy in their endurance and in their mobilizing capacity. No one escapes unscathed from his constant campaign against routinization and against demystification of Jewish sanctities. He is constantly Messianic, constantly revolutionary, constantly attacking his environment's inability to go beyond contextually accepted ways of thinking. He may well have been a constant thorn in the side of adherents as well as in the side of opponents. Nevertheless, he never made life easy for himself either, always beginning each new chapter with a thorough and demanding personal reformation.

There is a definitely ominous tone about his final rejection of Western culture, a rejection which fundamentalist Jewish, Islamic and Christian groups have paralleled and intensified in recent

years. All of modern sociology has bemoaned the bureaucratization, materialism and alienation that modernity has exacted as the price to be paid for the assets of rationalism, industrialization, secularism, relativism and mass participation in the political process. Birnbaum ultimately came to believe that without the centrality of the ancient verities, life itself was unworthy and Jewish life: impossible. This was not a totally surprising or unprecedented conclusion for a Western intellectual and a passionate Jew to arrive at, even in his own day, and it is even less surprising and less unprecedented today. The dilemmas to which Birnbaum pointed have increased in complexity. We are now even further from solving the contradictory demands of freedom and affiliation, of cultural interaction and cultural self-regulation. He wrote about the conflicting claims of "nationhood and world citizenship" near the very beginning of his career (1890a). Since then the claims of extreme camps have become more vociferous and their views less compatible. Indeed the closer we come to any solution (to any *enforced* solution, since almost any solution brings with it its own brand of enforcement) the less it appeals to all of our needs and sensitivities.

We may not care for Birnbaum's "final credo"—indeed, it may fill us with unspeakable fears for the future—but we must admit that he clearly saw the catastrophe of modernization and the modernization of horror when others either would not or could not see them. The clarity of the Holocaust in his nightmares, the enormity of the Jewish tragedy which he foretold (not only toward the end but well before then too), may explain the severity of his solution, and the rejection of modernity on which it is based. If his solution is not our solution, then at the very least, we must admit that *there may be no solution;* indeed, that we have lost faith in all solutions, and that the prospects for Judaism, Jewry, humanity and the world are now worse, rather than better, than when Birnbaum thundered and called upon us to assume personal, daily responsibility for the coming of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God. It is the deeper consistency of his thinking, rather than any surface inconsistency in it, that enables us to grasp the enormity of the core-problem with which he was contending (the peculiar exposure of Jews to modernization via its destabilizing assets and

its annihilating debits) as well as our own basic inability today to do better than he did in seeking to solve it.

References

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Verjudung-Entjudung [Judaization-dejudaization]," *Selbst-Emancipation.* 1885, vol. 1, no. 7, 1 May.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Nationalität und sprache [Peoplehood and language.]," *Selbst-Emancipation.* 1886, vol. 2, no. 5, 16 February.*

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Volksthum und Welbürgerthum [Peoplehood and world citizenship]," *Selbst-Emancipation.* 1890a, vol. 3, no. 2, 16 April.*

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Osten oder Western [East or West]," *Selbst-Emancipation.* 1890b, vol. 3, no. 14, 17 October.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Der jüdische Jargon [The Jewish jargon]," *Selbst-Emancipation.* 1890c, vol. 3, no. 15, 2 November.*

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Hebräische Sprache [Hebrew language]," *Selbst-Emancipation.* 1892, vol. v, no. 14, 18 July.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "So lange es Zeit ist [As long as there is time]," *Jüdische Volkszeitung.* 1894, vol. 7, no. 14, 3 April.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Judaismus und Hellenismus [Judaism and Hellenism]," *Die Zeit.* 1891b, vol. 8, no. 94, 18 July.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Strindberg in tausend Aengsten," *Die Welt am Montag.* 1896, 2, no. 41, 12 October.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Der Zionismus als Kulturbevegung: Referat, gehalten auf dem Zionisten-Kongress in Basel am 29 August 1897 [Zionism as a cultural movement: Address delivered at the Zionist Congress in Basel on the 29th of August, 1897]," First published as part of *Zwei Vortrage über Zionismus.* Berlin, 1898.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Kunst, Kunstwerk und Kunstliteratur," *Judisches Volksblatt.* 1899, 1, no. 1, 18 February.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Die jüdisch sprechenden Juden und ihre Bühne [The Yiddish-speaking Jews and their stage]," *Die Welt.* 1901, vol. 5, no. 41, 11 October.*

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Die 'Lösungen' der Judenfrage [The "solutions" to the Jewish problem]," *Ost und West.* 1902, 2, no. 6, June.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Gorkys 'Nachtasyl'," *Freisinnige Zeitung, Jungösterreichisches Organ.* 1903, 1, no. 13, 23 May.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Ostjüdische Aufgaben [The Tasks of East European Jews]," *Bukowinaer Post (Separatdruck),* 1905a, July.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Die jüdisch-nationale Bewegung [The Jewish national movement]," *Ruthenische Revue.* 1905b, v. 3, no. 15, August.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Die 'todte' Sprache; Die lebende 'Nichtsprache' [The 'dead' language; the living 'non-language']," *Neue Zeitung.* 1906a, vol. 1, no. 2, 14 September.

*Asterisked items have been translated and included in this Volume.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Ibsen's 'Unwahrscheinlichkeiten'," *Die Wage.* 1906b, 9, no. 29, 15 July.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Für die jüdische sprache [For the Yiddish language]," *Jüdische Zeitung.* 1907, vol. 7, no. 20, 29 November.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Inteligents un folk [Intellectuals and the people]," *Docter birnboyms vokhnblat.* 1908, no. 6. 14 tishrey.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Die Emanzipation des Ostjudentums von Westjudentum [The emancipation of Eastern European Jewry from Western European Jewry]," in his *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Jüdischen Frage.* vii. Tschernowitz, 1910, 13–33.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Auf dem Volksliederabend von 'Ost und West' [At the folksong concert of 'Ost and West']," *Ost und West.* 1912a, 12, no. 1.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Entheiligte Kunst," *Xenion.* 1912b, 5, May and June.

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Das Erwachen der jüdischen Seele [The awakening of the Jewish soul]," in *Vom Judentum: Ein Sammelbuch.* Leipzig, Kurt Wolff, 1913. (Originally published in Hebrew in *He-atide,* 1911, v. 4).

Birnbaum, Nathan. "Jüdisches Wesen und jüdisches Leben [Jewish existence and Jewish life]," *Freistatt.* 1914, vol. 2, no. 2, May.

Birnbaum, Nathan. *Gottes Volk* [The People of God.] Vienna and Berlin, R. Löwit, 1917.

Birnbaum, Nathan. *In goles bay yidn* [Oppressed by fellow Jews]. Tsentral-byuro, Agudes Yisroel, 1919a.*

Birnbaum, Nathan. *Vor dem Wandersturm* [Before the Wanderstorm]. Frankfurt a. M., L. Sänger, 1919b.

Craig, Gordon A. *The Germans.* New York, Putnam, 1982.

Fishman, Joshua A. *Language and Nationalism.* Rowley, Newbury House, 1972.

Fishman, Joshua A. "Whorfianism of the third kind: ethnolinguistic diversity as a worldwide societal asset," *Language in Society.* 1982, 11, 1–14.

Fishman, Joshua A. "Nathan Birnbaum's first phase: from Zionism to Eastern European Jewry," *Shofar,* 1985, 4 no. 1, 17–27.

Fishman, Joshua A. "Nathan Birnbaum's third phase: The activization of Jewish sanctity," *The Fergusonian Impact: Charles A. Ferguson Festschrift,* Vol. II. Berlin, Mouton, 1986, 325–336.

Fishman, Joshua A. "Nathan Birnbaum's 'second phase:' The champion of Yiddish and Jewish cultural autonomy," *Spracherwerb und Mehrsprachigkeit: Els Oksaar Festschrift.* Tubingen, Gunter Narr, 1987, 173–180.

Glick, Leonard B. "Types distinct from your own; Franz Boas on Jewish identity and assimilation," *American Anthropologist.* 1982, 84, 545–565.

Levenson, J. R. *Revolution and Cosmopolitanism: The Western Stage and The Chinese Stages.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971.

Mosse, George L. *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.* New York, Rand McNally, 1961.

Mosse, George L. *Germans and Jews: The Right, The Left and The Search for a "Third Force" in Pre-Nazi Germany.* New York, Fertig, 1970.

Chapter 7

Ideology, Society and Language: The Sociolinguist as Biographer: Returning to Initial Questions and Turning to New Ones

Introduction

Although language ideologists, those who conceptualize and lead language movements, have occasionally been written about in the sociolinguistic literature (see, e.g., the studies of Aasen [Haugen 1966], Ben Yehuda [Fellman 1973], Ataturk [Heyd 1954, Lewis 1984], Karadzik [Gallis 1950], Stur [Auty 1953], etc.) there have been too few sufficiently detailed studies to enable us to establish a typology of such ideologists or to otherwise dimensionalize the dynamics that characterize them. Of particular concern at this point, as we approach the end of our efforts to understand Nathan Birnbaum and, through him, language ideologists more generally, is the question of the degree to which

language *per se* is central in the total program of those whom society at large takes to be such ideologists, i.e., whether the language to which each of them is devoted is viewed by them as a goal in and of itself or whether it is viewed as having primarily instrumental or associational value in the attainment of other, more primary goals. If the latter position corresponds to a frequency stance of language ideologists, then the issue of "how central" (i.e., the degree of centrality) needs to be addressed and the functionality of language with respect to other goals requires dimensionalization. The changes in ideology over Nathan Birnbaum's life-span will be reviewed in the hope of providing greater understanding of various dimensions and contrasts that may contribute to examining, and, perhaps, partially answering questions such as the above.

The Functions of Language Ideologies

The social science literature in general, and the sociolinguistic literature as well, tends to have a suspicious attitude toward ideologists. This view derives from the "functional" bias of these disciplines. Elites and proto-elites, i.e. those who formulate and stress ideologies, are suspected of self-serving goals and their ideologies are suspected as advancing their own personal interests or the interests of their most immediate kin, of their own ethno-religious group or of their own social class. This view contrasts starkly with the self-concepts of the ideologists themselves and with the evaluations of such ideologists that are frequently subscribed to by their followers. In the latter instances the major motivating factors that are suggested tend to be altruistic, humanistic and philosophically encumbered. Of course, both of these perspectives may be valid. An initially altruistic conviction may ultimately lead to self-serving gains. Particularly as ideologists succeed in attracting a mass following and in obtaining the various material and non-material rewards which are the prerequisites of successful leadership, it may become impossible to avoid the conclusion that motives other than the altruistic are involved, at least to some extent, in their efforts. On the other hand, with their own success being no less a part of their total life-

program than is normally the case for most human beings, it is, nevertheless, possible for them to convert their success-mechanisms into drives, i.e., to arrive at altruistic dedication, at least to some extent, even if they did not begin from that point of departure. The distinction between conscious and unconscious motivation also needs to be considered in connection with any analysis of what motivates ideologists, these two levels of behavior being no more in necessary agreement with respect to language ideologists than they are in the behavior of most of the rest of humanity.

However, the question of the functionality of ideology has about it yet another dimension, one with which the above line of inquiry does not really come to grips. I am referring to the centrality of any particular aspect of ideology within the total ideological constellation. In connection with language ideologists we must squarely raise the question "why language?", i.e., given that ideologies are reformist, seeking to set matters aright in the world, how central is language *per se* within the total reformist vision of the ideologist? In connection with this line of inquiry, "functionality" is also assumed. Ideologists generally want to accomplish something beyond the formulation and communication of their ideology. What remains to be examined, therefore, is not whether the ideologist has an agenda, nor whether this is a hidden or an open agenda, but whether there is anything else, besides language, in that agenda and, if so, how central language is to the total agenda. Just how language-centered are language ideologists and what is the nature of the link between language and the "ultimate good" that most ideologists claim to pursue? How does proper language ("proper" in the sense of the use and cultivation of one rather than another language, where consensually different languages are problematic, or "proper" in the sense of the use and cultivation of one variety vs. another *of the same language,* when issues of purity and modeling within the same language are on the agenda) lead to anything other than use of proper language? If "proper" language somehow leads to desirable cognitive, moral, ethical or spiritual goals, how central is the linguistic route to such goals in comparison to other possible routes? If, on the other hand, "proper" language somehow leads to

political, economic and other material benefits, we must again ask: how central is the linguistic route to such benefits relative to other possible routes? A concrete case-study, such as the one we have been pursuing, may help us to more precisely formulate the problem we are raising, as well as to examine several of the alternative paths that elites have followed in connection with it. Furthermore, by summarizing this case we may also be able to direct some overdue attention to some of the characteristics of socio-biography more generally, as a method of exploring the sociology of knowledge within the sociolinguistic enterprise as a whole.

Socio-biography

I have told the reader nothing about Birnbaum's happy or unhappy childhood, nor about how he coped with his oedipal problems. Was he a good father, a devoted husband, a doting grandfather? I have avoided the usual grist for the biographical mill in order to stress his times, his socio-cultural context, on the one hand, and his ideas and strivings, on the other hand. He began his public career in Vienna at a time when Austro-Hungary was a world-renowned stage on which dozens of nationalist movements indigenous to the Monarchy (and scores of foreign ones too) played out their claims and aspirations. In many ways, the Monarchy was moving, slowly and clumsily, toward greater cultural autonomy for its various "non-state-building" peoples, although whether Jews would ever have been included in this process seems somewhat dubious, due largely to their own internal factionalization. In a sense, Birnbaum never left Austro-Hungary, or, if he did, it was only in his very last years. He certainly believed that its dissolution was a tragedy for Jews, for Europe and for the world as a whole. Its destruction always struck him as needless and, indeed, as counter-productive to democratic and orderly political processes, particularly when coming, as it did, just at the time when the cultural autonomy possibilities inherent in the Monarchy's evolving system were at an all-time high (Kahn 1950). It is fully within the framework of this Monarchy (its realities and its possibilities) that his first two stages must be viewed.

Even "state-building" itself, as a solution to Jewish cultural disadvantages, probably came to mind more easily in Austro-Hungary, where the conceptual distinction between state-building and non-state-building peoples was already well developed and where some modus vivendi between the two struck many intellectuals and educated laymen as necessary and possible. Within that realm—as distinct from either England, Germany or even France—and particularly within its capital, Vienna, a Westernized Jew could, nevertheless, still conceptualize Jews as a separate indigenous people (rather than merely "Germans—or Magyars—of Moses' persuasion"). This was so particularly if the Westernized Jews' own roots were in the Eastern Galician provinces where many Jews still lived as a vibrantly distinct people, with a complete High and Low culture of their own and with well defined and mutually recognized boundaries between themselves and others. It was within that realm, Austro-Hungary, in that capital, Vienna, and at that time in history, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries—rather than in England, Germany or France—that Jews too could be thought of in terms of a democratically attainable, governmentally recognized and subsidized cultural autonomy. However, it was also within that realm, in which the combination of rapid social mobility, growing anti-Semitism and growing democratization were rapidly impacting traditional Jewish separateness, that the remaining contrasts between Eastern (European) and Western Jews were most keenly felt. Indeed, just as we cannot understand Birnbaum without understanding Austro-Hungary, so pre-World War I Austro-Hungary is better understood, particularly in terms of the fascination for Germanization and Magyarization that most of its minority middle classes and proto-intellectuals evinced, through the prism of Birnbaum.

The Jewish situation in Austro-Hungary was similar in many respects to the situations of other "non-state-building" minorities. However, there were important differences too. Like the Moslems in the Monarchy, Jews lived surrounded by an often hostile Christian world. Like the Moslems too, they had an ancient ethnoreligious tradition that adamantly resisted modernization along the lines of the increasing Western European separation of

religion from the bulk of daily life and its social institutions. (The Jewish Reform movement that was strongly committed to just such modernization and separation was only a century old even in more mono-ethnic Germany, where it had originated, when Birnbaum was born. In Hungary, it went through a far less extensive transformation under the label "Neolog community". In the rest of the Monarchy, particularly in its more easterly provinces, it was generally even less influential than in Hungary.) Jews, therefore, were faced by a dilemma unlike that of Moslems or the various Christian minorities. Being spread throughout the Monarchy, they could not as easily appeal to the territoriality principle for their ethnoreligious cultural maintenance and cultural development, as could, e.g., Slovenes or Montenegrins. Their Western and Eastern factions differed too greatly for any single solution to be equally appealing or well suited to both, a problem which Ukrainians in the Monarchy also shared, to some extent, and also "solved" in equally indecisive, internally factioned fashion (Magocsi 1978).

Nevertheless, as long as the Monarchy existed, Birnbaum's approaches to augmenting Jewish cultural authenticity were distinctly related to its concepts, metaphors and conventions. It is only with the impending collapse of the Monarchy that Birnbaum breaks out of this framework to some degree and escapes from the Hobson's choice that so disturbed most of his co-religionists, namely the choice between assimilation, on the one hand (and, thereby, an implied loss of authenticity), or autonomy, on the other hand (and, thereby, an implied loss of Westernization-dependent social mobility).

Birnbaum's post-Monarchy solutions may be viewed as attempts to foster a Jewish nativization or revitalization movement. Such movements are generally the fruits of despair and serious sociocultural dislocation. Their rejection of modernization entails more than disappointment with its promise and more than its identification as the despoiler of indigenous, pre-modern verities. Revitalization movements are antipathetic to synchretism (however much they may practice it) and, therefore, are more extreme in their rejection of foreign models, ideals and Weltanschauungen than are other authenticity movements that

constantly seek to place the mastery of modernization under the control of their own elites (Fishman 1972). Birnbaum's stridency during his last stage undoubtedly reflects the depth of his rejection of Westernization as well as the completeness of his acceptance of Orthodox authenticity as the only remaining possible solution. Finally, when he realized that only other-worldly intervention could save European (and particularly Eastern-European) Jewry, i.e., that even the conventional Orthodoxy of his time and place could be no bulwark against the coming wrath of God, the true difference between the Jewish situation (both in ethnoconceptual as well as in interethnic reality terms) and the situation of other relatively powerless, late-modernizing European minorities becomes clear to him. The Jewish situation in the modern Western world has been most unique precisely in this respect: not just the availability and the imposition of exterminating force as a means of "solution", but that availability and imposition again and again, both as a traditionally expected solution and as a repeatedly experienced one. Birnbaum's life, his thought and his socio-biography must all come to grips with this ultimate cultural and intercultural reality.

The Case of Nathan Birnbaum in the Understanding of Language Elites and Language Movements: Recapitulation and Interpretation

I have selected Nathan Birnbaum as the case to analyze in detail, in my pursuit of a better understanding of language ideologists, primarily because it constitutes three cases wrapped up into one. Precisely because Nathan Birnbaum headed three different ideological movements during his life-time, he permits us more easily to contrastively examine and to analyze the centrality of language among language ideologists, with the possibility of doing so in a greater variety of contexts than is usually the case in studies of individual language intellectuals or leaders of movements.

Phase One: Zionism

In the last two decades of the 19th century, Birnbaum, living primarily in Vienna, the city of his birth, was one of the foremost Zionist ideologists among German-speaking Jewry. Indeed, the very word "Zionism" was his invention and his advocacy of Zionism predated Theodore Herzl's involvement in this cause by well over a decade. However, Birnbaum differed greatly from other Zionists of the period (and, therefore, probably lost his ascendancy in Zionist circles as a result) in that he emphasized "Zionism as a cultural movement", a movement whose mission should be to intensify the Jewish identity and to render authentic the cultural creativity of Germanized (and, more generally, of Westernized/Europeanized) Jewry itself, rather than merely seek to resettle ancient Palestine as a homeland for persecuted Eastern European Jewry. In this stage of his life, Birnbaum advocated the "cultural reawakening" of Germanized Jewry, stressing that Jews were a separate people rather than merely "Germans of Moses' persuasion". This ethnic revival goal could be attained, he believed, by mastering Hebrew (a goal that he defined even before Ben Yehuda had set out to revive/revernacularize that language) and, thereupon, immersing one's self in both ancient and modern Hebrew literature. Naturally, Birnbaum also advocated joining Zionist-oriented clubs, contributing to Zionist-oriented causes, visiting the Holy Land, ultimately resettling in the Holy Land, and, of course, subscribing to Zionist-oriented publications (his own publication, *Selbst-Emancipation!*, was in German, to make it possible for him to reach the Germanized intellectual readers to whom he primarily addressed himself). However, the initial and main step that he envisaged, in order to make the entire Zionist venture into the cultural movement and the cultural reawakening that he considered to be its very core and raison d'être, was the acquisition, mastery and utilization of Hebrew.

Birnbaum shared the widespread Herderian notion that languages contained a mystic capacity to authentically ethnify or re-ethnify their speakers. This view presented several problems, as far as Jews were concerned, since Birnbaum could not but acknowledge that this people had created, spoken (and even

written) quite a number of languages of its own in the more than three millennia of its recorded history. Those who were Jews were Jews even if they only prayed in Hebrew (or even if they did not pray at all), while using a variety of Jewish vernaculars and coterritorial languages for all other daily pursuits. Birnbaum, nevertheless, proclaimed that the ancient spiritual, ethical and cultural glories of the Jews, glories to which they could once again return, were all stimulated, triggered as it were, by the spirit of the Hebrew language (and by the very soil of the ancient homeland which that language had irrevocably impregnated). Only by returning to that language as the language of their everyday lives could the Jews (and particularly the inauthentic Germanized Jews) recapture their true selves, their best selves. Although Birnbaum sometimes engaged in dubious reasoning (on the one hand, he believed that the spirit of the language created the genius of the people [indeed, the language created the "peopleness" of the people *per se*], but, on the other hand, he believed that both the language and the genius somehow hibernated, existing in the abstract, even when the bulk of the people no longer knew or used the language, patiently waiting to be reactivated by the people's return to the language), he clearly operated within a rhetoric that was well known to and fully accepted by the other language movements of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in which he had grown up (and also accepted elsewhere, far and wide, as well). All of these movements shared a common view of the purportedly dynamic centrality of language. However, the other movements were focused on one or another governmentally unrecognized vernacular, whereas Birnbaum was able to apply the Herderian notions of the causal centrality of language to a religious classical tongue. It is also clear that local political and economic goals played no role in Birnbaum's agenda. He did not believe, nor did he have any interest in the possibility, that speaking Hebrew would fashion Jews into a more powerful political bloc or that it might enable them to attain a more secure economic footing. Indeed, although he had briefly been a socialist/anarchist during his late adolescence, he had come to doubt the primacy of material factors in societal processes in 1881, when he noticed (with the influx into Austro-Hungary of Jews from the Russian Empire, seeking to

escape from governmentally sponsored pogroms there, following the assassination of Czar Alexander II) that the Jewish proletariat was subjected to anti-Semitism (even to socialist anti-Semitism), every bit as much as was the Jewish bourgeoisie. From his Zionist period and onward, Birnbaum strongly believed that history, culture and ethnicity were governed by dynamics that were far more basic than those that economic and material factors alone could account for. His own personal life also repeatedly revealed a willingness to live in poverty rather than to pursue material goals that were at odds with his philosophical/ideological convictions.

In general, therefore, one might say that in his first phase Birnbaum was markedly linguacentric and that this linguacentrism was based upon the Herderian notion that all desirable cultural goals flowed from or are sparked by the faithful correspondence between an ethnocultural aggregate and its historically associated language. Nevertheless, language was not stressed for its own sake, as much as for the sake of its consequences. Language was considered central because nothing else was viewed as having the same dynamic significance as language. Nothing else could function as the "motor of history" in preserving, expressing, shaping and reshaping the spirit and soul of a people. The "proper" language had desired consequences and it was these consequences that Birnbaum clearly pursued even in his most linguacentric phase.

Phase Two: Cultural Autonomy

During the bulk of his "phase one" Birnbaum had espoused a negative view of Yiddish, although he came to recognize quite early both (a) its utility in bringing the Zionist message to a huge Eastern European Jewish audience that knew no other language, and (b) the striking fact that a considerable modern literature had been created in this much abused "non-language". After his departure from the ranks of official Zionism (soon after the Second Zionist Congress of 1898), saddened by his recognition that its leaders were primarily focused on political rather than upon cultural goals, he became a progressively stronger champion of Yiddish and Eastern European Jewry and a staunch advocate of

local cultural autonomy for diaspora Jewry as a whole and, particularly, for its Askenazic heartland.

In his surprising advocacy of Yiddish (surprising, because he had been raised as a German speaker; he had only heard snatches of Yiddish from family and acquaintances while he was growing up yet succeeded in acquiring not merely competence but polished competence in both spoken and written Yiddish when he was already in his mid-thirties) Birnbaum never rejected Hebrew. He constantly affirmed the exceptionality of the Jewish people, a people with a sanctified classical language that was undergoing modernization, as well as with various local vernaculars in different parts of the world, Yiddish the most widely spoken, vigorous, cultivated and aesthetically developed among them, as well as the one also undergoing dramatic modernization. He acknowledged no necessary conflict between Hebrew and Yiddish and sharply castigated those who advocated one without the other. As for Yiddish, he considered it to be a thoroughly Judaized, authentic creation of the Jewish free-spirit. Although it was primarily fashioned out of Germanic linguistic material, he considered it to have departed from German in every conceivable way: linguistically, culturally and in its entire spiritual and emotional make-up. Yiddish was an expression of the Jewish genius to overcome adversity and to rise to new creative heights. It was the cornerstone of the authentic here-and-now of Eastern European Jewry. It was the hallmark of that Jewry's status as a separate people living in the midst of other peoples. It was the language of a great modern literature, of a stirring modern theater, of various modern political parties, and, above all, it was the Jews' entrée into the arena of modern European nationhood on an equal footing with others. Germanized Jewry, that had until recently (mid 1850's) still been overwhelmingly Yiddish speaking, could easily recapture it (indeed, Yiddish still constantly interfered with Germanized Jewry's German and he was mocked by anti-Semites as "mauschelen" or "judelen", i.e., speaking in the manner of Jews) and Eastern European Jewry could continue to hold fast to it, thereby making the cultural re-unification of these two major branches of Ashkenazic Jewry a distinct possibility. What pernicious modernization and assimilation had split asunder, Yiddish could re-unite and re-ethnify.

There are certain aspects of Birnbaum's co-advocacy of Yiddish that are similar to his earlier advocacy of Hebrew as the one and only Jewish language. The conceptual apparatus is again heavily Herderian. However, just as the Herderian apparatus had to be adjusted before, in order to cope with a non-vernacular, so now, in his second phase, the Herderian apparatus needed to be adjusted in order to cope with a language that did not have the usual *ab initio* association with its ethnocultural aggregate. While it was true that Yiddish had come onto the scene long ago, roughly in the 11th century, this merely gave it thin historicity among a people that gloried in many millennia of recorded, world-recognized history. Nevertheless, Birnbaum believed that the same mystic spirit of the people that had been created and nurtured by the Hebrew language also created, permeated and fully authenticated the Yiddish language, making it not only a fitting expression of that spirit but also an invaluably essential protector and cultivator of the true Jewish genius.

However, there are obvious differences in Birnbaum's practical expectation vis-à-vis Yiddish and those he had harbored (and continued to harbor) vis-à-vis Hebrew. Hebrew had more ethereal, spiritual and psychological benefits. It could uplift Jewry ethically and culturally and return its new-found speakers—while they were yet only slowly en route back to their ancient homeland—to a position of leadership among the creative and culturally influential nations of the world. In contrast to this "music of the future", Yiddish was related to the reality of the Jewish here and now, to urgent steps and opportunities in connection with culture-building and nationality-building within the modern European context.

Birnbaum spearheaded the movement for Jewish cultural autonomy within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Many other minority populations (i.e., populations that did not, as most Germans, Hungarians and Poles did, constitute majorities in the provinces in which they resided) sought such autonomy and Birnbaum considered this to be both a possible and an urgent goal for Jews as well. Since the other minorities were defined on vernacular grounds, Yiddish would enable Jews too to be so defined. Jews could have their own local schools, their own local

libraries, their own local magistrates, their own theater and periodical press and artists, all supported by governmental recognition and funds. The major asset that would flow from cultural autonomy would be a network of schools in which Yiddish would be the first and continuing language of instruction. The ultimate byproduct of cultural autonomy for Jews would be a greater ability to withstand the transethnification dangers of galloping social modernization and cultural Westernization. Even anti-Semitism would be lessened under cultural autonomy, because each ethnocultural aggregate could, within the sphere of its own treasured cultural institutions, feel perfectly safe from outside meddling and, therefore, anti-Semitic scapegoating could subside.

Thus, in comparison to his Zionist phase, Birnbaum was somewhat *less linguacentric* in his cultural autonomist phase, even though that stage was so closely identified with his advocacy of Yiddish. He did constantly stress the importance of Yiddish, but not merely on long range ideological-philosophical grounds, not only on spiritual, esthetic and authenticity grounds, but on very practical, immediate and political grounds as well. Only by espousing Yiddish as an ethnonational Jewish language (not the *only* such, even though it was definitely the major Jewish vernacular, since Hebrew too must always be fostered, at least for its traditional functions related to prayer, ritual and textual study) could Jews be recognized for the purposes of cultural autonomy. If cultural autonomy were granted, then Yiddish speaking Jews could re-ethnicize those who had adopted coterritorial vernaculars and a greater Jewish cultural unity, authenticity and creativity could be attained. Jews could be in the modern world and *of* the modern world, as a vibrant and culturally secure people. Yiddish and Hebrew were both viewed by Birnbaum as links in a causal chain, but in the case of Yiddish the applied goals to which the language could lead were far nearer at hand. Within a conceptual order in which vernaculars became the open sesame to cultural autonomy claims, Jews too must have their own vernacular and in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Yiddish was not only theoretically but also practically best qualified to play this role. Phase two, therefore, represents a more practical, a more

immediately goal-oriented type of focus upon language, perhaps even an exploitation of language, than that which we encountered in phase one.

Phase Three: Religious Orthodoxy

The destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy coincided with Birnbaum's turn toward religion, a turn that he had begun to experience even before World War I had started and which intensified during the War itself. In his third phase Birnbaum came to see the God of Israel and His commandments as the only remaining hope for Jews and Jewish survival. The other "isms" (Zionism, cultural autonomism, Bundism) now appeared to him to be no more than Jewish parodies of the widespread secular "paganism" that typified so much of modern, Western life. They led, inevitably, to the loss of Jewish authenticity. Zionists wanted Jews to have their old homeland again, not because it was the Holy Land of a Holy People, but so that Jews could again be "like all other peoples". The cultural autonomists favored Yiddish so that Jews could benefit from the same arrangements that might apply to any and all minorities. The socialists had no Jewish program at all and recognized material justice as the only goal worth pursuing, as if individuals and nations led no spiritual lives and needed no spiritual goals in order to attain their highest human potentials. The Jewish people had been chosen by God to observe certain commandments, to live a life that was not only different but that was sanctified. This is what it should do, devotedly, joyously, meticulously. By so doing, the coming of the Messiah would be hastened and the deliverance of the Jews and of all humanity would be attained.

Is there still any room for language in a vision such as the immediately foregoing? Certainly, Hebrew was espoused as the Holy Tongue (i.e., not merely as the national tongue and daily vernacular which Zionists [in the diaspora] advocated and [in Palestine] had revernacularized). Yiddish too was advocated, as the language of daily piety and religious traditionalism (i.e., not as just the modern secular vernacular that the cultural autonomists recognized it to be). Yiddish was a link between generations.

Yiddish, particularly as used by the pious, was suffused with Jewish "soul", love of God, commitment to an authentic way of life. Nevertheless, God's laws, the commandments and their 613 punctilious implementations, were clearly considered primary. They came before and stood over and above any other considerations. They must be central and without rival in the House of Israel. Language and languages were but puny means to the greater understanding and better observance of all that was required of a traditional Jew. Jews must retain their unique languages, but, even more importantly, they must also retain their unique dietary laws, their unique ways of dress, their unique customs, and, above all, their unique access to God and their unique relationship with God. Thus, language, as a goal in and of itself, came to be focused upon even less than before, as God *per se* and one's obligations toward God became completely centralized for him. Indeed, language became somewhat peripheralized. It never disappeared entirely from Birnbaum's agenda, but, as he addressed himself increasingly to German-speaking Jewry (and, after the rise of Hitler, with his resettlement in Scheveningen, to German-speaking Jewry in Holland) he was moved, of necessity, to stress other matters than Yiddish or than language as a whole.

Recapitulation vis-à-vis Leadership

Nathan Birnbaum was certainly not a huge success, neither as the world generally views success nor as leaders are normally evaluated by the movements that they found, mobilize and lead. He did not long remain at the helm of any movement with which he was associated, nor did he lead these movements to landmark attainments. Nevertheless, there were certain characteristics that he possessed that enabled him to rise to the forefront of movement after movement, even in connection with those in which he did not also have the benefit of *primum mobile* but was, instead, a late bloomer. Among his chief assets were his penchant for starting organizations (particularly youth organizations), his startling skills as a communicator (writer, speaker, editor, on the one hand, and originator of striking terminology and phraseology, on the other), and his emphasis on ideals, rather than just ideas, as a

force in the activation of masses of followers. These assets appear first in his Zionist phase, a phase in which he initially had few rivals, and then reappear with astonishing predictability in each of the subsequent stages in which he is attracted to movements some of whose prior leaders always regarded him as a Johnny-come-lately (and a potentially unreliable one at that). Given these assets, it is not difficult to see how he could appear, literally out of the mist, at the very summit of movements in which he had been generally unknown just a few years earlier. Of course, neither Zionism, Yiddishism nor Orthodoxy were really fully consolidated movements when Birnbaum appeared at their helms. They were, indeed, proto-movements, congeries of individuals in search of common threads and structures to bind them together effectively into operative forces. Birnbaum was a capable architect, as he revealed again and again, in the design, activation and integration of just such threads and structures.

Unfortunately, he was far less effective as a consolidator of movements than as their architect or initiator. I am not referring to the ability to engage in humdrum, nitty-gritty organizational work, nor to the ability to work well with others, nor even to the ability to compromise or take second place in any organizational hierarchy, all of which other commentators have speculated to be weak or absent in Birnbaum. Other leaders have successfully remained at the forefront of movements although they too suffered from these very (and very common) leadership shortcomings. What I *am* referring to, in connection with the topic of Birnbaum's deficiencies as a consolidator, is his penchant for apparently synthesizing opposites and for seemingly harmonizing accepted contradictions, a penchant which regularly made him a little offbeat and even a little threatening in whatever movement he was trying to lead and to shape at any particular time. Land *and* culture, migration *and* stability, Hebrew *and* Yiddish, Yiddish *and* Hebrew, esthetics *and* ultra-Orthodoxy, messianism *and* occupational retraining, again and again he is incapable of narrowing his focus to the main thrust of the movement. His decentering tendency, his constant strain to broaden or round out or enrich the narrower, more focused, more sectarian and more predictable and characteristic emphases of the movements with

which he was associated, this tendency always permitted him to be outflanked by those who stayed closer to the straight and narrow organizational path. Birnbaum was always heterodox and unable to settle for anything simpler. His heterodoxy, however, was not only an annoyance to simpler minds and to more practical organizational stalwarts. It was the sign of an intellectual and emotional restlessness, of an internal quest that would not be denied, of a constantly ongoing pilgrimage that always inevitably carried him to another station than that foreseeable in terms of the official organizational platform. His departure was often regretted by those with firmer organizational anchors (and blinders), but it could not have been only regretted. Often, and to many, it must also have been a relief and, in part, an expectation. Thus, just as he dropped into the leading ranks of Yiddishism, so he later dropped out, ultimately unmourned in those circles and not even well remembered. He had never been entirely at home there and the other "leading figures" had never been completely at home with him.

Recapitulation vis-à-vis Yiddishism

With respect to Yiddishism in particular, it is clear that Birnbaum was an anomaly. However, Yiddishism was an anomaly for Birnbaum too. Indeed, as we have already noted, there are few language leaders for whom language is really the be all and end all of their program. Ben Yehuda may have been such a leader and perhaps Korais or possibly Aasen too, but, if so, that may be because they were all professional linguacentrics. Language *per se* was not only their program, but their work, their livelihood and their hobby. The majority of language ideologists, on the other hand, are early and easily "led astray" into philosophy, politics or culture-planning more generally. For most of them language is usually no more than a symbol, an index and a part of a far greater and more fundamental *something else,* often something more tangibly instrumental than language alone. It was definitely usually so for Birnbaum. His constant quest, both in terms of underlying ideology and as an expression of basic personality, was for Jewish ethnoreligious self-determination and continuity.

Language was an important aspect of this more general and never-ending quest, sometimes highlighted and sometimes in the background, but always only part of the story. Even in the very midst of his Yiddishist stage, it is cultural autonomy and the governmentally subsidized schools, theatre, press and artistic creativity that were expected to be the hallmarks of such autonomy that are at center stage. Of course these were to be in Yiddish (with Hebrew also having its due intellectual supports, given Birnbaum's inability to exclude any Jewish verity), but it is the autonomy that is the goal, with language being both key and means. This view, even when Yiddish was at its apogee in his thoughts, naturally tended to distance him from other Yiddishist elites whose programs were either more essentially linguacentric, on the one hand, or closely tied to socialism, territorialism, or even left-wing Zionism, on the other hand, rather than to cultural autonomy alone. Those who criticized Tshernovits for being too moderate, too *klal yisroeldik* (Jewishly all inclusive and, therefore, insufficiently uncompromising), were often reacting, in part at least, to Birnbaum's orientation which did not permit the displacement of Hebrew from a legitimate place in Jewish cultural life, not even by Yiddishists assembled at a world conference on behalf of Yiddish. The amnesia of Yiddishism with respect to Birnbaum is, therefore, attributable not only to the fact that he abandoned it (indeed, ridiculed it) after bringing it and its essentially modern-secular Weltanschauung to its first supra-local triumph, but that even this triumph was a muted one, in accord with Birnbaum's broader, more multi-faceted, less language-focused ultimate interests and underlying tendencies. The broader and the more complex the scope or the agenda of any language ideologist, the more likely this is to be his/her fate relative to the more apparently linguacentric and functionally focused core of most language movements.

Consistency in the Thinking of Language Ideologists

Having just devoted an entire chapter to continuity and discontinuity in Birnbaum's thought (Chapter 6), only a few observations are called for here by way of further commentary

and consolidation in connection with this topic. It should be clear that he was by no means the chameleon that he is often made out to be by those who were disappointed by (or who wanted to take personal advantage of) his "inconsistency". This is not to say that his thought did not undergo drastic transformations, for it did, but merely to point out that there always remained a very substantial constant core, not only in his own eyes but in externally verifiable respects as well. Even more important, however, is the fact that there is both a culturally recognizable and an interculturally recognizable dimension to Birnbaum's willingness to admit that he had changed, that he had progressed from heathenism to Judaism, from non-belief to faith in God and to punctilious observant of His 613 positive and negative overt behavioral specifications for the fulfillment of His commandments. En route to his final convictions Birnbaum had changed from one whose primary stress was on the Land of Israel to one who believed that "Israel (i.e., the God of Israel and the God-given laws of Israel) comes before Zion", from one who stressed the importance of Hebrew (or, later, Yiddish and Hebrew) to one who believed that the sanctified core of Judaism stood above and beyond any human tongue. Not only did he admit and regret and eschew the errors of his "hedonistic" past, but he sought to persuade others to do so as well, to join him in abandoning heathenism in Jewish disguise.

How can we understand this stress on change and on past error, a stress which might embarrass some. It would seem to be far less self-humiliating to avoid admitting to long and so drastic a set of changes, particularly when there was also so much underlying continuity that could much more comfortably be pointed to and stressed. Converts, of course, are frequently eager to publicize their conversions, both as indications of their own attainment of grace and as examples of beacons for others to follow. But Birnbaum was more than a convert (an "impatient convert" some have styled him); he was a *bal-tshuve* (a penitent returnee) in a culture that has admonished its erring sons and daughters to return to the authentic, sanctified path ("Return us, Oh Lord; yea we will return. . . . and renew our days as of old"; from the Sabbath morning worship) for literally thousands of years. In the culture of Orthodox Judaism the *bal-tshuve* is not

viewed as inconsistent; rather he/she is viewed as returning to authenticity, to tradition, to sanctity, indeed: *to consistency with one's oldest, truest and best self.* Thus, rather than being inconsistent with one's individual past, the *bal-tshuve* is being consistent with his or her deeper, original, collective past. All ethnonationalist movements make similar interpretations when they exploit authenticity longings and commitments—whether genuine or newly constructed—for the sake of their modern mobilizational potentials (Fishman 1972). Fidelity to one's eternal God and to one's forebears is very powerful stuff. It is the phenomenological experience out of which the triumph of life over death is sensed and, as such, it is not likely to be kept hidden from view. In Orthodox Jewish culture, however, the penitent returnee who has reacknowledged the light and proudly announced it to one and all, also enacts a traditionally recognized role and implements a traditionally approved, even an honored, status. Actually, Birnbaum had been a *bal-tshuve* twice before he arrived at his Orthodox stage. At each prior instance he had discovered and stressed a part of his patrimony that he had sadly neglected before. However, both secular Zionism and secular Yiddishism were too non-traditional, too new and unformed in themselves, when Birnbaum co-formulated and co-organized them into structured entities, to really recognize the status of a *bal-tshuve* relative to themselves. It was only when he entered the ranks of apparently timeless ultra-Orthodoxy that Birnbaum fully assumed a culturally recognized role and a status in which consistency with a deep and sanctioned collective past takes precedence over any surface inconsistencies relative to one's own recent path, a path full of errors and, therefore, all the more worthy of being demonstratively set aside. Ethnonationalist movements often re-interpret the new as authentic, i.e., as rooted in the authentic or reviving the authentic. They create traditions (Hobsbaum and Ranger 1983), so that these can be mined for their emotional and overt behavioral consequents. But Judaism and other classical ethnoreligious traditions are particularly likely to see the return to tradition as consistent with *sanctified cultural imperatives* (regardless of whether these imperatives themselves have undergone change over the millennia). Converts to such movements are rewarded

for their inconsistency to their erring ways; returning to the fold, "coming home" to the cultural norm; they are rewarded for their newfound (but, strangely enough, also totally expected, predicted and preordained) consistency vis-à-vis the eternal verities.

Summary and Conclusions

In each of Birnbaum's three stages language was associated with more fundamental goals. In his first stage, Hebrew was viewed as the key to recapturing an authentic spirit and a level of cultural, moral and ethical creativity that Jews had formerly attained but that they had lost, during centuries of dislocation, when this language had ceased to be their everyday companion. Since language was viewed as the one and only key to attaining the desired ethnocultural end-goal this may be considered Birnbaum's most linguacentric stage, although even then his obvious goal is not Hebrew *per se* as much as what Hebrew will ultimately do to and for the speech community that recovers it. Although the ultimate goals that concerned him were rather nebulous and far off, both in time and in space, the Hebrew language was viewed as the major immediate vehicle for movement toward "cultural reawakening". In his second stage, Yiddish was central, but it was also related to even more immediate opportunities and pressing problems. Yiddish had obvious instrumental value in that it was an essential ingredient in political efforts, in political programs and in political goals. In this stage Birnbaum was an applied sociolinguist or language politician, concerned with both status planning and corpus planning on behalf of the language that he advocated. In his third stage, Birnbaum de-emphasized language. More eternal, more sanctified, more fundamental concerns and demands were at center-stage. At best, language was merely one avenue, among many, for arriving at hallowed goals and for meticulously observing hallowed commandments that were fundamentally more important than any particular language and above and beyond language *per se*.

The three-in-one case of Nathan Birnbaum leads us to question the usual functional analysis of elitist language ideology in terms of self-serving or class-related bias. Birnbaum was always

the servant of Jewish authenticity at whatever stage we find him, and neither open nor hidden self-interest or group-membership bias can explain his *changing* views. He began impoverished and he remained impoverished and there is no evidence that material or status considerations ever led him in one direction rather than in another, although he changed directions relatively frequently. Even more importantly, however, his ideological peregrinations reveal how varied linguacentrism itself can be, both in degree of centralization of language and in the specific consequences expected from proper language behavior. Language ideologists probably always pursue other, more fundamental goals, goals that are outside of language *per se*. Language is probably always a key to other, non-language desiderata. At times, it may appear to them to be a conduit to rather general, theoretical, far-off goals. Korais and Ben Yehuda probably spent most of their lives as linguacentrics of this type. At times, it may appear to them to be a means toward immediate societal transformations with tremendous political overtones. Ataturk and Aasen probably devoted most of their language efforts under circumstances such as these. In his third stage, Birnbaum was focused on issues even more removed from "language *per se*". Most elites, i.e., those who never are language ideologists to begin with, usually operate in this way, giving even less thought to language than Birnbaum did toward the end of his life.

All in all, therefore, this case may be useful chiefly in that it forces us, by dint of careful examination of a single but highly variable language ideologist, to press toward a more sophisticated, more refined analysis of the motivations for and the centrality of language emphases in the total programmatic visions of elites in general and of language ideologists in particular. Self-serving vs. altruistic, material/political vs. theoretical/cultural, central vs. non-central, immediate vs. long range links to other goals, these are the major dimensions and sub-dimensions that our case has called to mind. There must be others as well. The rhetoric of motives is abundant and must be fully examined. We are merely at the beginning of a long journey of exploration and many more cases must be patiently explored before it will come to a reasonable (even if probably only a temporary) conclusion. Variations in the

degree of centrality of language in the ideologies of language elites and how to best describe and explain such variations, these are topics and tasks that definitely belong on the agenda of future sociolinguistic exploration and theory-building.

References

Auty, R. 1953. "The evolution of literary Slovak," *Transactions of the Philological Society*, [London], 143–60.

Fellman, Jack. 1973. *The Revival of a Classical Tongue.* The Hague: Mouton.

Fishman, Joshua A. 1972. *Language and Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays.* Rowley, Newbury House, 1972.

Gallis, Anne. 1950. "Vuk Karadzic—Jugoslavias Ivar Aasen," *Syn og Segn* 56. 1–9 and 62–72.

Haugen, Einar. 1966. *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Heyd, Uriel. 1954. *Language Reform in Modern Turkey.* Jerusalem: The Israel Oriental Society.

Hobsbaum, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kahn, Robert A. 1950. *The Multinational Empire; Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1845–1918.* 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lewis, G. L. 1984. "Ataturk's language reform as an aspect of modernization in the Republic of Turkey," in Jacob M. Landau, ed. *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey.* Boulder and Leiden: Westview and Brill.

Magocsi, Paul Robert. 1978. *The Shaping of a National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus', 1848–1948.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Chapter 8

The Sociolinguist as Biographer: Reflections on Taking Leave

SINCE MY BIOGRAPHY of Birnbaum has been far shorter than most biographies generally are (precisely because I have strayed very little from my own initial preference to study his life in order to consider a small number of general issues of wider sociological and sociolinguistic interest), I hope I may be granted a few more pages, in conclusion, in which to reflect upon him in connection with a few personal concerns that are not as closely related to sociolinguistics and to the neighboring social sciences. After all, sociolinguists are human too, or almost so, and must be pardoned if they have unanticipated free associations when immersed in the life and thought of an individual as interesting and as varied as Nathan Birnbaum.

A New Found Friend or Relative

Having never worked on a biography before, I did not anticipate how exhilarating and challenging it would be to try to pull together and digest the publications *of* a lifetime, as well as all those previously published *about* that lifetime. Indeed, I did not

fully succeed in either respect, although I did surprisingly well, even to the point of discovering publications that had hitherto been unrecorded or forgotten. The same is true about my photographs of Nathan Birnbaum. I have found a few that none of the archives or collections that I consulted had found. It would not surprise me if a few more articles and photographs were still to turn up in the years ahead. Actually, I often felt like a detective or like someone looking for a long lost relative. Finding something previously "unlisted" about Birnbaum became a cause for celebration, not only for me and my family but for others, as well, who became interested in my project. We would often find ourselves trying to guess how Birnbaum would react to this or that current problem, were he alive today. We often compared others to Birnbaum, sometimes his contemporaries and sometimes ours, in order to understand him or them better. I found myself wondering, for example, whether Birnbaum had read Spengler (he never mentions him, but I strongly suspect he may have read him) or in what language he became familiar with the pro-Riksmaal views of the Norwegian writer Bjornsterne Bjornson, whom he cites. I even found myself talking to Birnbaum during long walks or drives. Indeed, he came to be part of my life for the past many years, and now that I am about to complete my study of him I am beginning to feel that I will miss him. I felt that way too upon leaving Wassenaar in 1983, when it struck me that his gravestone would be lonely again, as it had been for so many years before my wife and I spent a half year at the nearby Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study.

Finding One's Self by Studying Another

Many people have told me that they suspect that I have devoted so much time and effort to rediscovering and reinterpretting this almost completely forgotten individual because he and I are very similar in many respects. Perhaps there is some truth to that, particularly if the religious Birnbaum is focused upon. My Zionism has always been far more theoretical than applied. My former Yiddishism has been transformed into a "Yiddish-makes-good-Jewish-things-better" view, a view that

disestablishes it from any possible role as a prime object of affection. My personal Orthodoxy has been acquired in adulthood, as was Birnbaum's, and like his, it grew out of the initial introduction to traditional practices that the pursuit of Yiddish itself provided. I even had a brief territorialist romance, but it predated my Orthodoxy by some 20 years, whereas his developed most vibrantly toward the very end of his life and fully in concert with his Orthodox activism. All in all, there are certainly many similarities between us, and these may very well have predisposed me to finding him as fascinating a subject as he has obviously been. It wouldn't surprise me if this were the case (usually an unstated case) for many other biographers and their biographies. Even those who start out from a purely objective point of departure must wind up with a bit of emotion, at the very least, and with more than a bit of increased self-understanding, as well.

In my case, however, it has also become clear to me that there are some crucial differences too, and I have found myself arguing with Birnbaum very frequently, particularly in his Orthodox stage. Neither his rejection of Jewish secularism nor his attacks against Westernization-modernization in general sit well with me. I too, of course, am the product of the interaction between my internal characteristics and those of my environment. Perhaps our personalities, Birnbaum's and mine, do not differ too greatly (we both tend to be overly serious, dissatisfied with ourselves and the world around us, and complexly pluralistic in our preferences and interpretations), but our environments are literally and figuratively worlds apart. I have grown up, matured and found professional recognition in a very accepting and stimulating environment, one simultaneously American and Jewish. It has been an environment full of opportunity, rich in alternatives, highly syncretistic, highly interactive across ethnic and religious lines, and, on the whole stimulating and rewarding too. Other than a few childhood fist-fights, I have had no personal anti-Semitic experiences and the fear of anti-Semitism has played almost no role in my life or in the lives of my immediate family. Although publicly subsidized cultural autonomy for ethnolinguistic minorities was not (and is not) a real option in the American scheme of things, cultural pluralism has been very much alive

nevertheless, and I have always felt that groups that were really willing to do so (like the Hasidim in Brooklyn) were fully at liberty to organize themselves institutionally to make sure that only as much of the "outside" as they wanted would ever impact the "inside" way of their life. Perhaps all of the foregoing help explain why much of what Birnbaum calls "heathenism" rather appeals to me, whether it carries a Jewish stamp or not.

The Sociolinguist As Auto-Socio-Biographer

I am very much in favor of Jewish secularism and secularized Jewishness—not as a replacement for Jewish sanctified practices and beliefs, but as an addition to them. I go to the Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish theater because, were I not to do so, I would have only non-Jewish theater to go to and that would constitute an imbalance in my cultural economy. Theater is a real cultural need for me and I am happy to be able to satisfy it both in a Jewish and in a general way. I feel the same way about fiction and non-fiction, the periodic press, music, films, lectures, radio and television. I am delighted that I live in a city where there are Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish avenues for sampling each of these in addition to the generally available American ones. I am glad that I don't have to depend entirely on either Jewish *or* non-Jewish secular media or institutions for my intellectual and cultural stimulation. I am glad that I have both kinds of secularism to draw upon, and each kind of secularism is vibrant and creative in my environment. I don't find that they weaken or unduly influence my religious convictions or obligations, perhaps because I have developed a capacity to compartmentalize. I don't think I could live in a world fully permeated and dominated by religion, not even one fully permeated and dominated by my *own* religion or by my *own brand* of my own religion. If that be "heathenism," then so be it, but I have always grown up with both Jewish and non-Jewish spheres of participation and have never found either one to harm the other.

I have no difficulty understanding Birnbaum's rejection of "heathenism," whether among Jews or non-Jews, but I don't share that rejection, (at least not that complete rejection) because I have experienced the mutually stimulating co-existence and two-way

interaction between Jewish secularism, Jewish religiosity, and general secularism. Perhaps this is an "only in America" phenomenon, but I doubt it. Nevertheless, America is certainly different from Austro-Hungary, and New York is definitely different from turn-of-the-century Vienna in these very respects. There is no historically deep nor basically Christian American ethnicity in New York (or even in America) in the way German-Austrian ethnicity was historically deep and historically Christian in Vienna (and in Austro-Hungary). That makes a big difference in the extent to which secular culture or American culture are, willy-nilly, Christian and, therefore, not merely non-Jewish but potentially anti-Jewish as well.

The Openness and Optimism of America

I may be mistaken, and I may be rudely disappointed in the future, but I have a sense of my "own kind" having contributed to secular American culture as much as anyone else did. I have a sense of American culture itself being pluralistic in a way and to a degree that Birnbaum never had in connection with Austro-Viennese culture. Indeed, a lot of American (and certainly a lot of New York) culture is Jewish in origin, in inspiration and in expression—both much of what I like and much of what I dislike being of this kind. It is not whether it is Jewish or not that always concerns me (although I like a balance between the two) as much as whether it is uplifting, reflective, insightful, stimulating, provocative, humanizing and intelligent.

Of course, the fact that my Jewish secularism and my general secularism are constantly in touch with each other, and the fact that my Jewish religious life and thought are constantly surrounded by my secular life and thought, poses a potential danger, both for Jewish secularism and for Jewish religiosity. But there are a few million other American Jews in the same boat, with enough alertness, concern, intelligence, originality, good will and fondness for creative tensions to give me both reasoned and substantial hope that I need not panic. American Jewry may suffer a lot of attrition during the decades ahead but those who really want to will come out ahead, Jewishly as well as secularly. I believe

they will come out *strengthened* by the creative tensions that await them as concerned American Jews, rather than weakened by them. At one point in his life, Birnbaum thought so too (Birnbaum 1909).

Taking Leave Does Not Mean Forgetting

Nathan Birnbaum would not agree with me in connection with most of the foregoing. He would tell me that the Germanized Jewish experience, in trying to combine Germanness and Jewishness, ended in tragedy. He would tell me that I have already lost much that was authentically Jewish and that I risk losing much more. He would tell me that I typify the very process that he had written about from 1885–1937, when Jews were the ones most willing to risk everything on behalf of an imaginary identity—a new, inauthentic, pseudo-identity—rather than being proud to be Jews, just Jews, authentic Jews in the classical, God-given sense. There are certainly days when I think he might be right after all. Fortunately, they are few and far between, although I admit that the lion's share of heroically sad and creative Jewish history bears out Nathan Birnbaum more than it bears me out. I carry within me a Jewish capacity, even a readiness, to be disappointed but never to be surprised by intolerance from both expected and unexpected quarters. My conversations with Nathan Birnbaum go on and on. I don't always enjoy them and I frequently don't agree with him, but I listen to him. He fascinates me. He frightens me. He challenges me. As I say "good-bye," I know I won't forget him.

Compartmentalization and Boundary Maintenance

But I am reluctant to say "good-bye" just yet because Birnbaum's religious thought must not be reduced, not even in brief summary fashion, to rejection of secularism and an identification of secularism with "heathenism." His religious thought also contains a clarion call for Jewish self-emancipation from reliance on general panaceas, on imported models, values, goals and standards. As much as my life is enriched and stimulated by interaction with as broad a spectrum of literary, intellectual and aesthetic creativity as possible, Jewish and non-Jewish, I respect

and take seriously his reminder that the ultimate choice of what "and how much" outside influences to accept must remain within Jewish culture if that culture is to survive. A culture that can no longer control its own boundaries is doomed to a cultural version of the "acquired immune deficiency syndrome" (AIDS). At the heart of Jewish culture is that sanctified tradition, and it must draw lines and set boundaries that may not be altered. Without the halakhic tradition, yes, the immutable and uncompromising halakhic tradition, Jewish culture has no impregnable fortress, no heartland in which it can be at least relatively safe against the uncontrollable influences that rage around it. If Birnbaum overstated the exclusivity of this heartland, if, for my tastes, he exaggerates the need and the possibility to adhere to its dictates and its dictates alone, he is, nevertheless, saying something that I believe and that most of my Jewish intellectual colleagues are no more inclined to hear now than they were in Birnbaum's days.

There must be a boundary that cannot be overstepped. Particularly in the diaspora this is a lesson that Jewish intellectuals must learn if God is to exist for us and if Jewish culture is to exist for us. With all our dedication to affirmative action, to mutual cultural enrichment, to the free flow of ideas, persons and goods, to an open society, the numerically, technologically, and culturally weak cannot withstand the mighty unless they maintain boundaries that cannot be crossed, authorities that cannot be gainsaid, sanctities that cannot be demystified, laws that cannot be fudged and customs that cannot be repealed, not even in the midst of a brave, new beautiful world of brotherhood, plenty and endless creativity. Indeed, it is precisely in such a world that compartmentalization becomes crucial and it is precisely in such a world in which self-compartmentalization becomes necessary, for it will not be imposed by the outside. Thus, Birnbaum leads us to the recognition of yet another eternal dilemma for minorities (indeed, even for small peoples resident in their own homelands). There is no culturally continuous self-emancipation without self-compartmentalization; there is no culturally continuous self-liberation without self-restriction. Birnbaum ended a lifetime of searching by stressing self-compartmentalization and self-restriction alone. I, who am still willing to undertake the risks that

he warned against, recognize that self-compartmentalization and self-restriction, the maintenance of uncompromising cultural boundaries, are all the more crucial for me and those like me, if we are not to wind up faced by cultural self-genocide and, indeed, if we are not ourselves to be the heralders and causes of such self-genocide. The dangers that Birnbaum saw are real and if his solution is extreme then I, being less of an extremist, must be ever careful not to merit his sad and stern "I told you so." Torah and science are an uneasy pair. So are Jewish culture and that of the modern secular world. If I want them both, then I cannot be cocky nor forgetful of boundary maintenance. I cannot laugh at Birnbaum, because the struggle in which I am engaged is on two fronts and is, therefore, no laughing matter. In many ways it is more difficult than his struggle for Orthodoxy alone.

Messianism

Hard as it may be for the modern Jewish liberal to accept the need to place limits on the extent to which the modern secular world will have entrée into the Jewish cultural heartland, it is, in all truth, not as hard to accept that need today as it was when Birnbaum proclaimed it. Now, more than three score years later, the limitations of secular modernity are better and more widely recognized than they were then, when secular modernity was still riding the crest and had not yet been tested in the crucibles of totalitarianism, militarism, materialism, anomie and international terror that have so clearly emerged since Birnbaum's demise. It is easier now than it was in his time to realize that secular modernism has not been a hugely successful solution, to put it mildly, to the problems of mankind, and, indeed, that it has added some new wrinkles, some heightened fears, some increased dangers, some magnified complexities to the manifold problems that it promised to solve. Even "devout secularists" must be somewhat more willing today than heretofore to admit that those who suggest that there be a limit to our dependence upon rationalism and ingenuity, as the only necessary guides to the good life, may have had sufficient provocation to do so. But Messianism? Can *that* possibly be taken seriously by modern intellectuals?

In all truth, Birnbaum probably experienced more trouble because of his espousal of Messianism as a serious undertaking, a serious responsibility, than he experienced in connection with his espousal of Jewish tradition as the one and only guarantor of Jewish life. Rabbinic Jewry is focused on the coming of the Messiah but has not generally verbalized much in that connection, nor directed specific behaviors toward its implementation, since the Kabbalists of the late Middle Ages. It is not that faith in the coming of the Messiah has in any way withered, but that the topic has been recognized as being too delicate, too much at risk of being misunderstood and vulgarized, for adequate consideration by mere mortals. Traditional Jewry has an abhorance of invoking the name of God and this abhorrence applies to the ultimate mysteries, the ultimate delights and the ultimate tragedies as well. It must have been a great shock for the recognized and established leaders of Hasidic and Misnagdic Jewry, with all of the prerogatives that were theirs in the very midst of massive, traditional Eastern European Orthodoxy, to be confronted with Birnbaum's statements and admonitions pertaining to practical Messianism. The holy Rabbi of Ger must have had some "notions" on this topic as well but, nevertheless, must have kept them to himself, while this "upstart," this "chameleon," this *bal-tshuve* who was still far from mastery of the Talmud and other basic sources, permitted himself to give advice on this sacrosanct topic! The uproar that Birnbaum's Messianism must have caused "in the highest circles" can only be imagined, yet it would have been totally out of character for Birnbaum to feel and believe anything deeply and not write and admonish and lecture about it as widely and as often as possible. The fact that he did not do so in connection with the Messianic theme, giving it rather less prominence in his last 10–15 years than initially seemed to be likely when he first enunciated it, must have been the outcome of various co-occurrences, both internal and external forces, that led in the same direction: the direction of leaving unsaid the lion's share of one's thoughts on the greatest mysteries. I certainly intend to follow this course myself, and yet....

It seems to me that the notion of Messianism is essentially no more outrageous than the notion of God. Indeed, however we can

fathom the depth of either notion, the existence of God implies the coming of the Messiah, and the acceptance of our obligations toward God implies the acceptance of our obligations toward the coming of the Messiah. There is a peculiar Jewish cultural stance here and it is a stance that I accept. The acceptance of God is signified by the implementation of commandments rather than by mere protestations of devotion. Therefore, it seems to me quite reasonable that the acceptance of the coming of the Messiah should be so signified as well. I interpret Birnbaum's Messianism as an effort to point this out and to activate each Jew's sense of responsibility to fulfill his or her obligations in this connection. I do not find this focus more outrageous or more outlandish than the acceptance of God *per se,* nor any more an abdication of rationality than the awareness that rationality itself is but a weak reed to lean upon for the exclusive guidance of individual or collective behavior.

Birnbaum had the rare capacity—rare in our days at least—to relate everything to questions of sanctity. We have seen how he related the Holy Land to this question, and Hebrew and Yiddish, and the continued existence of the Jewish people. The separateness, the differentness, the specialness that lies at the very core of the Jewish notion of sanctity, are such that they cannot (and should not) be fully defined or understood. We certainly do not fully understand Nathan Birnbaum, even after years of painstaking study. Perhaps this is merely a reflection of *his* specialness and of the specialness, the sanctity of every human soul.

References

Birnbaum, Nathan. Der Amerikanismus und die Jüden. *Die Welt.* 1909, 13, no. 2, 1 and 8. January (Also in this Volume).

Notes To Photographs

Date of article	Date of photo	
(1886)		Masthead of *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 1886 (p.146).
(1890a)		Title: Nathan Birnbaum (bearded) in the company of university students in 1890. Source: Mordecai Slipui. *Haole hagadol; dr. n. birnbaum, hayav vepoalav* [The Great Ascender; Dr. N. Birnbaum, his Life and his Works]. Jerusalem, Pninim, 1965, p. 7. (p. 150).
(1890b)		Title: Zionism in Germany; Birnbaum with (from right to left) Dr. Sveskin, Dr. A. Goldberg, (Birnbaum), Asterman and Dr. Richard Loewe. Source: Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, #13654. (p. 156).
(1897)		Title: The First Zionist Congress, Basel, 29–31 August 1897; 162 delegates. Birnbaum is in the center, row three. Source; L. Yafe, ed. *Sefer hakongres; Lemalot khamishim shana lakongres hatsioni harishon* [The Congress Book; On the Fiftieth Anniversary of the First Zionist Congress]. Jerusalem, The Jewish Agency, 1950, p. 1. (p. 162).
(1901)		Title: Nathan Birnbaum, roughly 1900–1905. Source: D. S. Avir hatshuva [The Champion of Repentance] *Davar*, 1937, #3646. (Supplement for Sabbaths and Holidays, p. 1) Photo originally in *Die Stimme der Wahrheit*, 1905. (p. 168).
(1902)		Title: Nathan Birnbaum, roughly 1903–1904. Source: *Hebrew Encyclopedia*. Jerusalem, 1968. Photo by A. M. Lilian. (p. 176).

(1906) Title: Nathan Birnbaum at Bitshutsh, 1907, as a candidate for the Austrian Reichsrat. Source: Israel Cohen, ed. *Sefer butshatsh: matsevet zikaron lekehila kedusha* [Bitshutsh Memorial Book: A Memorial for a Holy Community]. Tel Aviv, Am oved, 1956. (p. 184).

(1908) Title: The "Yiddish Culture" Organization and Participants in the Tshernovits Conference. (Nathan Birnbaum is on the extreme left, second row. Others in that row are Mrs. Birnbaum, Zinger, Mrs. Perets, I. L. Perets. In the third row are: extreme left: Sholem Ash; fourth from left: Avrom Reyzn; fifth from left: H. D. Nomberg; extreme right: Khayem Zhitlovski. Source: *Di ershte yidishe shprakh konferents.* Vilna, Yivo, 1931. (p. 190).

(1909) Title: Nathan Birnbaum in 1908. Source: Nathan Birnbaum. *Ausgewählte schriften zur judischen frage* [Selected writings on Jewish Issues]. Tshernovits, Birnbaum and Kohut, 1910, v. 1. (p. 196).

(1911) Title: Nathan Birnbaum at the Tenth Zionist Congress; Basel, 1911. Birnbaum, who was not a delegate, attended the Congress as a correspondent. Source: Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, no. 9145. (p. 210).

(1912) Title: Etching of Nathan Birnbaum by Joseph Budko, 1912. Source: *Encyclopedia Judaica.* Jerusalem, Keter, 1971, r. 4, p. 100. (p. 218).

(1913) Title: Front side of "Receipt for Contributors to The People's Gift to Dr. Nathan Birnbaum" (1914), quotes him (in German, Yiddish and Hebrew): "The Jewish soul is Jewish life. That is the source of Jewish power." Artist: Menakhem Birnbaum. Source: Archives of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Birnbaum file. (p. 226).

(1921) Title: Nathan Birnbaum with the Agudes Yisroel delegation to America 1921. From left to right: Nathan Birnbaum, Rabbi Yoysef Lev, Rabbi Meyer Don Plotski, Rabbi Doctor Meyer Hildesheimer, Rabbi Osher Leml Shpitser. Source: Mordecai Slipui. *Haole hagadol; dr. n.*

birnbaum, khayav vepoalav. Jerusalem, Pninim, 1967, p. 7. (p. 230).

(1931a) Nathan Birnbaum, strolling in Hamburg, 1931(?), accompanied by his son, Shloyme-Osher (on the right) and the Yiddish lexicographer Alexander Harkavy. Source: Archives, Hebrew University Library, Jerusalem, Birnbaum file. (p. 240).

(1931b) Drawing of Nathan Birnbaum by Menachem Birnbaum, 1936. Source: Front piece to Nathan Birnbaum, *Rufe; sieben Aufsätze.* Antwerpen, Messilo, 1936. (p. 244).

Fifteen Selected Articles by Nathan Birnbaum

1886	Peoplehood and Language	147
1890a	Peoplehood and World Citizenship	151
1890b	The Jewish Jargon	157
1892	Jewish Literature and Jewish Newspapers	163
=		
1901	The Yiddish-Speaking Jews and their Stage	169
1902	Hebrew and Yiddish	177
1906	Jewish Autonomy	185
1908	Opening Address at the Conference for the Yiddish Language	191
1909	Americanism and the Jews	197
1911	Struggle for the Recognition of the Jewish People: the Census in Galicia	211
=		
1912	The Absolute Idea of Judaism and the Yiddish Language	219
1913	"Havaraaaa Ssephardiiiit"	227
1919	Oppressed by Fellow Jews	231
1931a	Then and Now	241
1931b	A Few Words About Yiddish	245

Masthead of Selbst-Emancipation!

Selbst-Emancipation!

Abonnements-Preise:
(Postversendung, unfrankirt.)

Für	Oesterr.-Ungarn: Ganzjährig	fl. 3.00
	Halbjährig	„ 1.50
	Vierteljährig	„ —.75
„	Deutschland: Ganzjährig	Mk. 6.00
	Halbjährig	„ 3.00
	Vierteljährig	„ 1.50
„	Rußland: Ganzjährig	Rbl. 4.—
	Halbjährig	„ 2.—
	Vierteljährig	„ 1.—
„	die übr. Länder: Ganzjährig	Frcs 8.—
	Halbjährig	„ 4.—
	Vierteljährig	„ 2.—

Inserate billigst.

Zeitschrift
für die
nationalen, socialen und politischen Interessen des jüdischen Stammes.

Erscheint zu Anfang und Mitte jedes Monats.

Wenn ich selbst mir nicht helfe, wer denn?
Und wenn nicht heute, wann denn?
Hillel.

Redaction und Administration:
Wien, II., Theresiengasse 7.

Sprechstunde:
Täglich von 4—5 Uhr Nachmittags.

Unfrankirte Briefe werden nicht angenommen und Manuscripte nicht retournirt.

Nr. 19. Wien, 2. November. Jahrgang 1885.

Inhalt: Unsere Culturaufgabe. — „Assimilation" (Fortsetzung). — Chronik. — Correspondenzen. — Erez Israel. — Literarisches. — Viel Lärm um Nichts! — Officielle Mittheilungen des akad. Vereines „Kadimah". — Officielle Mittheilungen des Vereines „Ahawas Zijon" in Hamburg. — Briefkasten der Redaction. — Correspondenz der Administration. — Inserate. — Bußtage, Novelle von Nehemia Berner. — „Aus der ersten Zerstörung Jerusalems bis zum Auftreten Alexanders des Großen" von N. Birnbaum. — Räthselaufgaben. — Räthsellösungen.

Unsere Culturaufgabe.

„Mission" des jüdischen Stammes ist ein Wort, mit dem viel Unfug getrieben wurde und wird. Dieser Begriff ist für unsere Professions-Assimilanten zu einem Schlagworte geworden, in welchem sie ihre ganze nebulöse Gedankenverwirrung ausgedrückt glauben, mit dem es ihnen auch gelingt, so manche freie Geister und unabhängige Naturen für den Seifenblasenschaum ihrer Assimilationstheorie zu gewinnen. „Verbreitung der Gottesidee", „Veresittlichung der Völker", „Herbeiführung der Menschenverbrüderungszeit" u. s. w. sind die schmückenden Bänder für das „Mission"-Mäntelchen, das man den assimilatorischen Bestrebungen, die in Wirklichkeit ganz andere Richtungen haben, umhängt. Wenn man irgend einem solchen „Mis-

es der Milliarde Menschen, die national organisirt ist, viel besser geht, als dem Häuflein Juden in ihrem „glücklichen" denationalisirtem Zustande.

Die „Mission" des Judenthums wird in ganz falschen Lichte gezeichnet, nur um die Nothwendigkeit seiner Zerstreuung zu beweisen, aber über diejenige Culturarbeit, die es wirklich vermöge seiner sittlichen und geistigen Begabung, seiner eigenthümlichen historischen Stellung und seiner Racheneigenschaften zu vollführen hat, wird hartnäckig geschwiegen, um nicht die nationale Idee und den Zionsgedanken aufkommen zu lassen. Freilich die verschiedenen „Missionen" des Judenthums gestatten ja nebenher eine gewisse leibliche Behaglichkeit trotz des Hepp-Hepp-Geschreies von allen Seiten, denn man kann ja für die heilige „Mission" plappern und dabei mit dem vorgeworfenen „Schachergeist" sein Abkommen finden; dagegen

Peoplehood and Language*

EVERYWHERE ON THIS great earthly sphere, the moral, historical and practical correctness of the nationality principle has achieved full recognition. Nationality feeling and nationality consciousness have become the mainspring of today's events. So it is easy to explain why efforts are made on all sides to clarify from every angle the nature of this factor which has arisen to unanticipated significance in the life of nationalities. Particular attention, however, is devoted to the question of what is really necessary to turn a community into a nationality. This question is not so easy to answer as it perhaps seems, because one must guard against being misled by current confusions and inaccuracies. It is not the purpose here to enumerate all the single instances of false concepts and ideas of the nature of nationalities; we will concern ourselves with only one of these errors.

It is undeniable that a close relationship exists between nationality and language; it is incorrect, however, to make the latter the essential foundation of the former. It is incorrect for the writer of the *Neue Freie Presse* in his discussion of Mendelssohn's significance to say, "Through him, they (the Jews) learned to speak German, and language being a seductress, they also learned to think and to feel German." "Impossible," asserts the *Unverfälschten Deutschen Worte,* Schonerer's organ, to the abovementioned claim, and we must agree with this paper, which, apart from its extreme anti-Semitism, distinguishes itself by its correct

*"Nationalität und Sprache," *Selbst-Emancipation!* 1886, 2, no. 4, 16 February.

understanding and powerful advocacy of the nationality principle. Impossible! we repeat. It is impossible that the particular way of thinking and feeling of one nationality can be transferred onto another, just because the one begins to learn the language of the other.

The mind and soul which characterize a people can, in fact, only be explained in terms of natural history. "Race is everything," said our great fellow kinsman, Lord Beaconsfield. The distinctive nature of a nationality lies in the distinctive nature of its race. Racial differences are the source of the variety of nationality characteristics. It is, therefore, due to racial contrast that the German or Slav thinks and perceives differently from the Jew. It is in this contrast that we find the explanation for the fact that the German created the *Nibelungenlied*, the Jew the Bible. How fundamentally wrong and ridiculous would be the assertion that the *Nibelungenlied* has produced the peculiar German, the Bible the peculiar Jewish character. Does this not constitute thoughtless confusion of cause and effect?

But some of those who, with justification would smile disdainfully at such a curious and confused assertion, would not in the least be repelled by another confusion which exactly resembles the above. What else is language but the product of the character and spirit of the people? The individual character of the race determines the individual character of the mode of thinking and feeling of a people and this in turn creates the individual character of the language. We believe the relationship is clear. It is not because of their language that the German people is German. It is rather because it is German that it had to create the German language. Should it ever be forced to forget the German language, but be able to retain its racial strain, it would remain German because its mentality would have remained German. If we apply this example, the Jews remained Jews although, through the influence of outside forces, they forgot Hebrew and the *Jargon* and became accustomed to speak other languages, for the simple reason that their race retained the power to retain its particularity to the present day. Were the Jews to speak the purest and most fluent German, this would not do away with the fact that Jewish spirit and Jewish temperament would dictate the sound of this German.

But if this is so, some would say, then careful cultivation of the national language would not be necessary at all. It would not matter to any nation whether or not it preserves its language; it would be of no consequence for the Jews whether Hebrew could be brought to greater significance or continue to be neglected. This would be false reasoning. Even if its own particular language is only the creation of its national individuality rather than part of the essence of its nationality, its significance as guardian of the national existence and for the furtherance of its national development should not be underrated. Language has a retroactive force which, though it does not go as far as determining national character, does assert itself in a protective and supportive way. The protective power of a language lies in the fact that it distinguishes the nationality from others, thus preventing intermingling; it provides supportive power by raising the nationality feeling to consciousness through its public exercise.

The Jewish people, as we have often emphasized, is also protected against dissolution into other nationalities through other circumstances. Its need of language for this purpose is therefore not urgent. All the greater is its need for it to raise its nationality consciousness for a spiritual rebirth.

Indeed, armed with the knowledge of Hebrew, the Jewish people would be a thousand times more enviable, its redemption much nearer; but from this, it does not follow that the German or Slavic speaking Jewish people would have stopped being Jewish or would have become German or Slavic.



Peoplehood and World Citizenship*

THE LAST ISSUE spoke of the ethno-national rebirth of the Jewish people as the only remedy capable of leading to a higher moral level and to greater material fortunes; and we tried to show that the opposite way—assimilation—aside from its questionable moral value—cannot lead to a successful outcome. Now, however, only in the last few years, the concept of assimilation has brought about substantial losses, or at the very least, a significant change to our people, which urgently needs a thorough examination as to its origin and nature.

When Jew-hatred, after having seemingly been laid to rest for a short time, celebrated its resurrection, there were bound to be those among a people as intelligent as the Jews who understood and admitted what a fiasco assimilation had been. But because modern Jew-hatred—up to date as it always is—arose in a nationalist guise, the ire of the disillusioned turned against the ethno-national idea itself, and, thereby, the most knowledgeable of our people missed an important turning point, distancing themselves perhaps further than ever from the road leading to real deliverance.

"Down with nationalism, long live world citizenship!" is now the new gospel whose staunchest messengers are the Jews envisioning the end of all their suffering in the elimination of all

*"Volksthum und Weltbürgerthum," *Selbst-Emancipation.* 1890, 3, no. 2, 16 April.

ethno-national differences. The nationality idea is presumed to have brought strife to the world, is brutal, and is not fitting for our progressive age. It is also presumed to be a passing idea of our century. That is the view which we most fittingly would call "anti-nationalism," but which appears in many widely different variations.

We will not here speak further of the liberal and conservative anti-nationalist tendency which desires the modern state, but wishes it divorced from the ethno-national idea, so that the nationality becomes the germ of the state which then represents the highest level of national development. Our age will by-pass this kind of nationalism which bases itself on privileged classes, on money or aristocratic birth, and proceed to today's agenda. Clerical anti-nationalism also need not here be considered. As things stand now, there is, thank God, little prospect that clerical powers will, in the forseeable future, again decisively interfere in political life and regard every popular regime as anti-dogma. If any anti-nationalist movement needs to be considered, it is the definitively democratic and socialistic one. For nothing that is espoused in the name of the libertarian and egalitarian development of mankind, in the name of social redemption, should be handled with haughty deprecation, and every reproach raised in its name must be examined conscientiously and without rancor.

We have become accustomed to contrast nationalism and patriotism on the one hand, and socialism on the other, indeed through spiteful practice we have turned these principles into real opposites. "Yours is narrowminded racial passion, ours generous love of mankind," shout the social and world-citizenship democrats. "Ours, noble inner peace and contentment; yours, jealousy and destructive impetuosity," reply the nationalists, and in the battle-calls of the two sides, the voice of quiet common sense and true devotion to the common good is muffled and unheard. Are there real and serious differences between the nationality idea on the one hand, and the democratic and socialist one on the other? No! It is an unfortunate error, seemingly the result of Aryan tendencies, to separate the two ideas, to rob them of their real fundamental essence, the single great idea of human welfare. This unifying idea becomes clear as soon as we examine both

principles to discover how they became distinct, when we free nationalism from its absurdities, and socialism from its world citizenship dreams.

Pompous, nationalistic saber rattling, which belongs in the playground of those of rigid and narrowminded outlook, can only bring forth painful discomfort in more thoughtful men; but seeing the essence of nationalism as first perceived by its earliest and noblest teachers, namely socialism in its practical moral form, even those of noblest heart need not fear the rule of the nationalist idea.

There will be individuals who will warn against identifying socialism with nationalism—the national chauvenist as well as the socialist fanatic. Whereas the former, in his worship of nationhood, would like to supress all rights of individualism, the latter, in his love for the individual, would destroy the basis of all civilization, the commonality of the state and the nationality. Both find themselves in contradiction to that which nature and history have emphatically confirmed since time immemorial. Tribes and peoples exist, not because they have preserved primitive man's instinctive hatred from earlier times, but because nature has developed and is still developing various races of mankind in the same way that it has developed different seasons and different climates. It is vain childish spite to rebel against the sovereign will of nature. Truly this manifold character of nationalities is not a shadow, but a photo-picture of human life. What else is it but the economic principle of division of labor applied to collective mankind. In the great, brilliant cultural effort, all of mankind divides itself in fabulously rich, colorful variety into tribes, each according to its own inclinations; the greater the diversity of assisting forces, the greater the result. And as nationalism externally signifies the cultural effort in the interests of the totality of mankind, internally, it represents the true democratic principle of equality and social welfare.

Every son of the people is the equal of another and has an equal claim to the achievements of the nationality, its support, and its glory. But as long as, and wherever, the first and last consequence of the nationality principle is not carried out fully, there is no true nationalism, only paltry and empty racism.

Of course, the socialist ultras will not be satisfied with pure

socialism as it is here described. One world without states, or the universal state; these are their castles in the air. To what extent this violates nature and history has already been pointed out. After an assumed momentary obliteration of nationality differences, wouldn't one decade be sufficient to create a new roll of peoples? And, what is more to the point, would all tribal groups be inclined to propose the same solutions to social problems, and furthermore, wouldn't the same social problems require everywhere different solutions suited to the land, the people and the climate? As long as and wherever the socialist principle scorns the obvious truth, the recognition of a nationality- and state-personality, there can be no true socialism, only loudmouthed, bombastic "save the world" romanticism.

The views expressed here are in no way novel; they are the heritage of Judaism. The great prophets of the Israelite people in hoary antiquity described beautifully and grippingly, in the double image of the messianic idea, the synthesis of nationhood and humanity. Zion's golden destiny and the final redemption of all of mankind were joined together in unity by the Jewish visionaries of old.

But we will not now reflect further on by-gone ages, but rather discern whether in the present circumstances or in the expectant future Jews are justified in a special attachment to an aimless, unbounded, essentially falacious world citizenship. Does the flaring flame of the social movement suddenly make us so venture-happy? Oh, we need not worry! The Aryan world with its unbelievable barbarity is nowhere near ready for the socialism of love; what they now, in their anxious, wild, labor pains, wish to bring into the world will be, despite the noble strivings of its champions, the socialism of envy and raw power. We deceive ourselves thoroughly and fatally if we await the victory of this socialism with eager anticipation. And if it is victorious in such a way as to conquer its own raw nature, it will then be less likely to be of the world citizenship stripe, and mankind, though it may be in better circumstances, will continue to fulfill its functions via states and nationalities.

And we Jews will then exist as a scrawny, sickly organism which feels pain at every ungentle touch, a people without a home,

a national something, whose outstanding characteristic is a thriving economic national existence, in other words, a people that has missed its true calling.

Therefore, we must not rely too much on the resolution of social problems through democratic principles as our final solution. Rather we must strive for the solution of social problems so that our entry into the European community of nationalities will not be slowed nor led into stray paths, but that our spiritual and civil abilities be enlisted in participation in the field of inter-nationality relationships. And once we resume our standing among the nationalities, as equal among equals, we can hope that other proud nationalities will draw upon our feeling of compassion in true and genuine socialism, in a socialism of love; and that in this way, they will borrow from us just as they drew upon our moral laws two thousand years ago.



The Jewish Jargon*

THE JEWISH *Jargon* has just recently been the subject of much comment and discussion. Against its embittered and relentless scorners, defenders of this dialect, even enthusiasts, have raised their voices. It is a dispute which unites opponents and alienates the likeminded.

In Germany, last Rosh Hashana, a prominent Rabbi read to his assembled congregation his pastoral letter in which, basing himself on the Talmudic saying, "A man should always strive for a pure tongue," he castigated the vulgarity of Yiddish, especially in the presence of Christian listeners. He calls it a transgression against the spirit of the German language as well as that of the Hebrew, and finally demands that the Jew in Germany, as a German, speak pure German, always and everywhere.

With this comment, which presumably is only directed at the weak residue of the *Jargon* in Germany, but which fittingly can be used as representing pure and unmitigated *Jargon* hostility, there is remarkable agreement, not only by those of German ethnonational aspirations, but also in connection with the campaign that has recently been opened by the many Hebrew journals against the German-Jewish idiom. To be sure, these latter opponents of the *Jargon* are proceeding not from a German nationalist, but from a Hebrew nationalist viewpoint. Whereas the former despise the *Jargon* as "Judendeutsch" (as distinct from "Hochdeutsch"), the latter regard it as "safa belula" (language mixture) as against "safa

*"Der jüdische Jargon," *Selbst-Emancipation*. 1890, 3, no. 15, 2 November.

berura" (clear language, i.e. Hebrew). Extreme assimilation and radical Jewish nationalism meet in the battle against the *Jargon*, both demanding a "pure" language.

But not everywhere is the Jewish jargon so despised. Only in recent years, outstanding scholars, among them non-Jewish ones, have actively occupied themselves with the *Jargon* and have aroused great interest for it. As for the Jewish representatives of this trend, such as, for example, the slavologist Kraus, they are certainly not in the stream of Jewish nationality sentiment, but on the contrary, are well known as dedicated followers of the theory of assimilation. It is, furthermore (perhaps mixed with a kernel of sentimental memory of older, more comforting times), only with a philological interest with which they approach Jewish-German, a philological interest which concerns itself more with tracing Middle High German and Old Polish than with "Jewish" for its own sake.

Aside from these assimilationist friends of the *Jargon* out of philological fondness, there also appear proponents who have become such out of the Jewish nationality impulse. They likewise cover their views with scientific reasoning in that they point out that the German-Jewish dialect is built on as sound grammatical principles as any other language and that its development has much in common with English. They refer above all to the fact that four fifths of the Jewish people speak "Jewish," and that in this often despised idiom there exists a literature which can display outstanding credentials. In the eyes of these friends of the *Jargon*, Jewish-German becomes the modern-day national language of Jews which must and can be nursed and developed; for them, Hebrew belongs to history, "Jewish" having become its successor.

This is a remarkable view which deserves greater attention, not only because it is expressed with the persuasion of Jewish nationality conviction, but also because the position of our party regarding the *Jargon* must in any case be elucidated.

What is the *Jargon*? It is the image of Israel in Exile. Just as the latter is a caricature of Aryan nationhood and semitic nationality spirit, yet, despite the ridiculous role that it plays, is transfigured by a glimmer of ancient Jewish spirit and nobility of character, so the former is a comic medley of languages which undeniably has

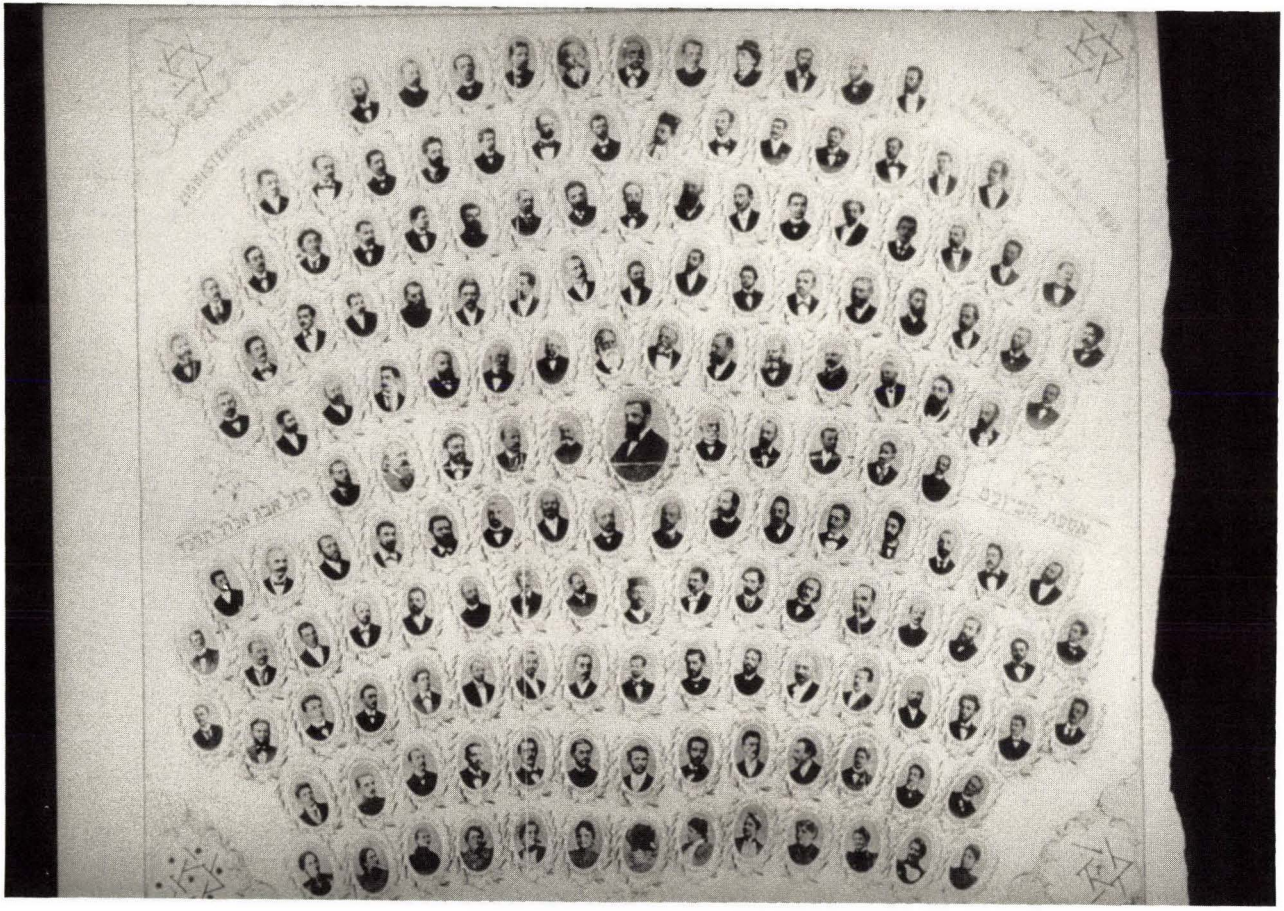
something of a cozy and nostalgic (one can almost say "stirring") quality. The *Jargon* is the scenery for the tragi-comedy named "Judaism in Exile." In this true recognition of the nature of the *Jargon,* both the goal-conscious assimilationist, whose striving seems to be a struggle for liberation, as well as the goal-conscious nationalist Jew, who acts for the true redemption of his people, both must raise a demand for the displacement of the *Jargon.* Certainly both wish to escape the ghetto, so both must unlearn the language of the ghetto.

Language of the Ghetto! These words best characterize Jewish-German. Comparisons are made with the development of English. How falacious! True, English was built out of the confluence of mainly two languages, but aside from the fact that both of these stem from the same language family, and do not evidence the same gap as exists between the German and the Hebrew components of Yiddish, it was a genuine confluence, a merger—with the result that today's English conveys a thoroughly unitary character. In contrast, the *Jargon*-Jewish, which despite its great age scarcely approaches the age of the English language, has remained a completely unorganic compound whose corrupted Hebrew component stands out crassly against its decayed and de-Germanified Old-German base. The *Jargon* lacks every unitary character of a language, and if one would ascribe such to it, it would only be on the basis of German, so that its fitness as a Jewish ethnonational language would become even more problematic. This language mishmash is not suited to become the language of a cultured nation, much less so the language of a people which wishes to struggle upward from its two-thousand year exile to the clear heights of ethnonational autonomy, and to return to its former moral greatness.

A nationalist Jew who is willing to accept the *Jargon* as a substitute for Hebrew is really not a nationalist Jew, because he lacks the alpha and omega of ethnonational Jewish conviction, and that is the awareness of the necessity of Israel's moral rebirth which can certainly not proceed under the domination of Jargon—this hoarse child of the ghetto. He is as little a nationalist Jew as the "American" who wants to restore Israel on the materialistically drenched soil of the New World instead of on the native ground of the Holy Land.

It is the duty of the true nationalist Jew to take care that *Jargon* be replaced by the Hebrew idiom. Only the exalted spirit of this beautiful language, which, despite its long mutedness, was never disrupted in its development, has been proven capable of serving a cultured nation with its own ancient vocabulary for the expression of its ideas, and foster the awakening of the magnificent, ancient Hebrew ideals of morality.

Nevertheless, we must warn of excessive haste in this respect. Not that we wish *Jargon* to be nursed and nurtured to assure it a long life. This is far from our minds. Rather it must, as soon as possible, make room for the pure Hebrew, in addition to which every Jew who lives in exile should also speak the language of the land in pure and uncorrupted form. But all this should not prevent us from recognizing the fact that *Jargon* is spoken by four fifths of our people and that it can already show a literature of its own. Should this fact be brought up, a fact which in no way proves *Jargon's* right to existence, then one must work through *Jargon* against *Jargon.* The nationalist Jew, whose goals are Zion and the Hebrew language, should not let himself be diverted from reaching these goals by rash and small-minded esthetic considerations. Insofar as *Jargon* places itself in word and print at the disposal of the Zion idea and of Hebraism, insofar then, as it prepares itself for a commendable termination which will reconcile us with its origin and dissonance, it will be greeted with joy as a means for battle. But insofar as a miscarriage of the exile harbors higher desires, and wishes to become a pseudo-Hebrew, decisive action must be taken against it. Once again, then: through *Jargon,* against *Jargon*!



Jewish Literature and Jewish Newspapers*

AS EVERYONE KNOWS, the fashion-setting personalities among the Jewish community in this century have solemnly renounced any claims to Jewry as a people. They had no mandate, but counted on a belated attitude of acceptance by the masses submissive to authority. This renunciation was fatal in several respects. One of its bitterest fruits is the servile position to which Jewish literature has sunk during the last decades. That conception, which in a flash made a 'Mosaic confession' out of the Jewish people, was able, with the same dexterity, to transform Jewish popular literature into a confessional literature for professionals. Naturally, the layman (in the strictly ecclesiastic sense of the word) has nothing to do with this domain of the neo-Jewish clergy. Genteelly laughing, he looks down on it. Actually, such contempt for the subject of real Judaism would not be particularly harmful if the newly indiscriminate Jewish public of Western Europe also showed sympathy for that larger part of Jewish literature which has absolutely no mawkish pastoral taste of seminary spiritual nourishment. We are referring in the first place to the Bible, that work of major importance throughout the world, which every Jewish schoolboy today mocks without even being able to spell it. In the second place, there is the Talmudic and related literature, which is derided as a curiosity. Finally, there is

*"Jüdische Literatur und jüdische Zeitungen," *Selbst-Emancipation*. 1892, 5, no. 1, 5 January.

the whole major area of neo-Hebrew, recent Jewish historical, as well as modern Jewish newspaper literature, the existence of which a Western European rarely even discovers.

The tiresome point of view of confessionality, under which the Jews of the present and of the West have learned to regard Judaism, misleads them into hasty judgments and prejudices. The Jewish people, which in its most religious times was not clerical, instinctively hates, to this very day, the form of churchliness into which it has been squeezed. A Jew may come upon something of this kind in the *History of the Jews* by Graetz or even in the Hebrew daily *Hameylits.* He will greet such things with the same aversion he feels for the insipid scribble of some modern Jewish professional cleric. Jews are immersed in literature where Jewish peoplehood thrives; only the Jewish "church" is suspicious of this immersion. This suspicion lures the Jewish "church" into becoming an increasing object of mockery, particularly since we are living in a secularly oriented age.

However, it is only fair that the leaders who adapt the Jewish people to a mosaic religious society, as long as they do it in literature (which is often the case), must personally bear the responsibility for the consequence of their doctrines. What wondrous men, who lure their people to self-surrender, and remodel the people into an unbelieving community of belief, and then for this suicidal people they write unbelieving religious books and newspapers: *Of all the writers in the world, they are the only ones who disperse their natural public* and owe their wretched material and social position to this action. Even the few who by chance are assured a fulltime spiritual position, a good income and some respect, are all poor wretches and literary pariahs. Any real bookseller would not publish their works, and anyone in the world who calls himself a writer would not recognize them as colleagues. If despite everything they do not forsake the road they are following, perhaps it is a case of admirable idealism; but for the most part this stiff-necked quality will have to be reduced to petty economies for the next day. By walking on a new path, the poor fear to scatter the few readers still remaining, but they do not suspect that even these readers will soon be lost anyway, precisely because of their increasing assimilation.

Yes, these gentlemen are sawing off the branch on which they are sitting. This phenomenon stands out most blatantly in the case of Jewish newspapers. We naturally do not refer to the less harmonious "Jew papers," as anti-Semites call them, but to the Jewish 'confessional,' 'professional' papers. These are compelled to utter their views on the political and social position of modern Jewry more often and more exhaustively than perhaps works with more theological or literary-historical content, and are in a position to glorify assimilation regularly. It is not by mistake that these newspapers are so rarely illustrated. The best illustration for them is their own thirsty existence (which existence, with few exceptions, is due to entirely local connections) and the literary anathema into which they are placed. Of all Jewish literati, the newspaper writers would be not only the most influential, but also the cleverest, if they would make a *tabula rasa* of assimilation and write the Jewish ethnonational idea on their banner.

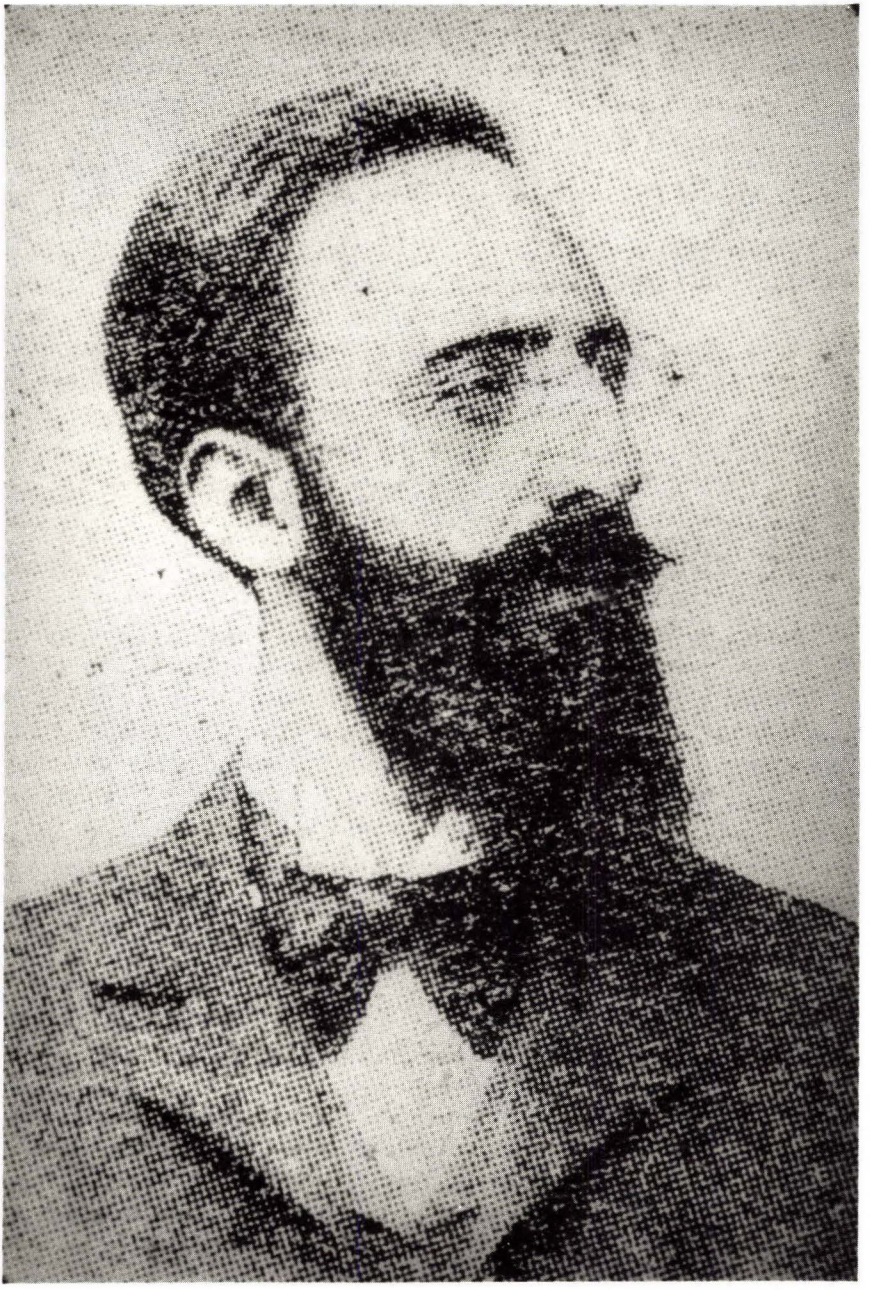
But we know that we have to speak nicely. These gentlemen will not surrender so easily to the majority, which of course ignores them by and large, but does occasionally toss a crumb of support, to humor them. Compared with this proven method, it seems to them a bit too risky to have to create a public for themselves first. Who knows (they probably ask themselves) whether it will succeed, and even if it does, won't the first steps on this road be as painful as the march so far? At least now there are ultra-wealthy patrons, but what would happen in the other case? Then... then it would certainly be the end of this cajoling, wheedling patronage from people who in the vast majority of cases do not at all understand the intellectual product they support, or may even make light of it. On the other hand, in their place, a reading public would step in, grateful to the authors and participating in the activity. And however small the audience might be at the beginning, the writers would have the uplifting awareness of an appreciative public. That would quicken their zeal, enhance their talent, increase their success. Ultimately, they would speak to an entire people.

The course of development of modern Hebrew literature among Jews in the East shows how right these conclusions are. Under the nationalist flag, this literature, including Hebrew

journalism, has made incredible progress within a relatively short time. On its own it has gained a large part of Eastern and Oriental Jewry as a permanent reading public. However, in doing so, it has also greatly served the cause of the revival of the Jewish people. If it seems in this respect to have reached the limit of its ability or nearly so, that is not in the least its fault, but merely the result of natural circumstances beyond its control.

Modern Hebrew literature is powerless where knowledge of the language has virtually ceased, thanks to systematically urged assimilation. The absolutely indispensable prerequisite for the end result cannot recover Central and Western European Jews for the Jewish nationality concept. First of all, it is necessary to create a non-Hebrew literature, which is fundamentally different from what is now called by that name in the West, but one that is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of love for Hebrew peoplehood. Every letter in these writings must become a flaming sword in the great and true battle for Israel's freedom, not a poisonous thorn sticking in the flesh of Judaism, destroying its organic structure. Only this new ethnonational literature can recall the Jewish people in both Western and Central Europe to their duties. The aforesaid branch of the Jewish tree will no longer be limited to vacuous scribbling, which exposes itself and its theologist caste to private amusement. The new era can best be hastened by a non-Hebrew Jewish nationalist newspaper literature. The newspapers of professional Jews are an archive full of unnatural, preaching bombast, the lamentable refugees of a miserable writer proletariat. As long as their weak breath holds out, they may continue their activity. However, we must take care that an impressive and proud, real, spiritual, morally healthy, influential popular Jewish press arise and flourish in the same countries where Jews have already lost their understanding of Hebrew. Only through such a newspaper literature can we succeed in getting Jewish literature in the real sense of the word, that is Hebrew literature, to regain its lost position. But this can happen only if the banner of Zionism is unfurled in the breeding places of assimilation. Nevertheless, as we have already often repeated and argued, without this last-mentioned early victory the ultimate victory of the Zionist movement is impossible. Our comrades in

the East, who understand and speak Hebrew, should not leave us alone in our efforts for an interim non-Hebrew ethnonational Jewish party press. The great and powerful Zionist party in Eastern Europe must not leave its stout-hearted vanguard in the West without support, for all Zionists in the world must be one in the struggle: *to make the Jews of the West comrades-in-arms for Zion, the Hebrew language, and the ethnonational economic and moral rebirth of Israel.*



The Yiddish-Speaking Jews and Their Stage*

THE JEWISH RACE today does not represent a single cultural unit. Rather it falls, aside from subdivisions, into three numerically unequal cultural groups. The first and smallest includes the main portion of the so-called Spanish Jews, as well as the Arab, Persian, Caucasus Mountain, and in general—all other Jews that have been established in Asia and Africa since time immemorial. Of the daring complexity, the restless drive for creativity and thought, the fermenting problematic nature of our modern European world, not a trace has penetrated to this group. It is fully oriental, and therefore, in complete contrast to the second, much larger group which has its home in Western and Central Europe, plus those in European overseas colonies who have attached themselves linguistically to the various European peoples. With the dramatic output of this group, especially its German branch, we have dealt with just recently.** The third and largest group, comprising at least four fifths of the Jewish people, developed its particular cultural significance in its ancestral home of Slavic Eastern Europe, but has now begun to carry it to other lands and continents. It is with this group and the significance of its drama that we are to occupy ourselves today.

---

*"Die jüdisch sprechenden Jüden und ihre Bühne," *Die Welt.* 1901, 5, no. 41, 11 October.

**See "Das deutsch-jüdische Milieudrama," *Die Welt.* 1901, 5, no. 39, 27 September.

Yes, but . . . did we not in the forgoing essays present the view that the Jews' ability to enjoy and to take part in creating the European drama would be contingent on their entry into the circle of international cultural civilization? One would then have to speak of such an entry by the Russian and Polish Jews. Can one do this? Certainly, indeed one *must* if one can overcome the narrow-minded bourgeois timidity toward the unfamiliar so as to examine the matter properly.

Nothing is more fallacious than to throw the group of which we are now speaking into the same pot with the first Oriental one. The error is approximately—but only approximately—the same as if we were to deny the Russians and the Poles themselves their European character and to count them among the Asians. Just as the Eastern Slavs represent a living link of European civilization, which through them has been mightily enriched with values, ideals, methods and personal qualities, just as they carry within themselves the effervescing desire for progress and upward mobility which distinguishes them from the Asiatics and qualifies them as Europeans—so it is similarly with the Jews who live among them. It matters not that the former, in their state institutions and the character of their churches, the latter in their ghettos, houses of prayer, and schools—drag along with them old Oriental elements. What matters is that both possess the desire for striving outward from old to ever new things, and forms, for eternally organizing anew, and for self-improvement. Whoever does not want to believe this, especially of the Jews of Slavic Eastern Europe, really should look more closely at how, in all areas, they narrow down ever more the familiar Orientalism, which, by the way, also remains to some degree in all other European nations, how they break the chains of superstition, how they override the confines of primitive economic forms, how they develop a working and fighting proletariat—finally, what a powerful impulse lives within them for a cultural language. For this, some turn to German, Russian, or Polish; others, before our astounded eyes, create in Hebrew the elastic idiom that modern man requires. Finally, and what is magnificent, the inherited mass dialect, "Jewish", steadily aspires upward toward becoming a cultural language and does so not at all slowly.

Much injustice is being done to Yiddish. It is scorned on two fronts: on the one hand, by many supporters of Hebrew; on the other by West European Jews. Of the latter, we need not be surprised. They, who have fundamentally no idea of the nature of this language, who do not know how to distinguish between it and the backward Jewish-accented German that spooks about among them—they indeed do not know any better; but why the antipathy of the others?

"Jewish" is supposedly an alien language. Is it really that? Only romantics afraid of the present and fond of the past can make this assertion. What, after all is "Jewish" other than precisely the classic product of the most difficult battle for individualism, the wonderfully vitalized resistance of the Jewish national soul against its Germanization? What is German about Yiddish? Basically nothing but a great, let us say the greatest part of its vocabulary. But even this only seemingly. For how much indeed is each single word de-Germanized, reformed, resouled (may one use such an expression?), becoming linked fraternally with words of Hebrew extraction which themselves are no longer Hebrew but Yiddish.

Yet Yiddish is a ghetto child, without pedigree. Just listen to its dissonance, this clumsy moaning and groaning.... Does not subjective feeling play the principal role in such tonal judgements, strongly influenced by a certain fear of the strange and unfamiliar, by pettily prejudiced ears? Admittedly, the language today still lacks elegance; must it remain so for all time? And does the entire nobility of a language really lie in euphony? Certainly not, as little as it does in its origin. Look at English. Here is inner and personal nobility. Toward this Yiddish also strives—through the wealth of its language sources, through its spiritual unity, through its growing suitability for the spiritual necessities of European civilization, through its close inner relationship with life and activity, with labor and recovery, with the instincts and will of the nation, of the masses of the people.

But what is really the purpose of all this? After all, no esthetic critique and no romantic regret can do away with the fact that Yiddish gains from day to day in European civilizational vibrancy and flexibility. With this fact, one of the clearest proofs of the

entry of Yiddish-speaking Jews into the ring of international cultural humanity, we began, and we now turn back to it as the necessary precondition for the Yiddish drama.

In all other areas of literature, the Hebrew language has not lagged behind the Yiddish. Indeed in scholarly writings, the former ranks mountain-high above the latter. With so to speak youthful limbs, the ancient one climbs the cliffs of concepts and definitions up to the highest peaks, while the young Yiddish still hesitatingly and weakly clings to the nethermost slopes. Even in journalism, it can also be assumed that Hebrew, which by the way thoroughly measures up to this most modern assignment, still has an advantage. In epic and lyric poetry the accomplishments of both tongues are on an equal level to each other. In the area of drama, however, the relationship is completely reversed. How can Hebrew drama flourish when, at least for the time being, the stage is denied to Hebrew?

Well, but is the stage not a mere mechanical prerequisite which leads a life apart from drama? At first glance, one could easily believe this, particularly if one remembers the familiar contrast between the theatrical and the dramatic, and how often pseudo-dramatic foolishness is presented on the finest stages and by the most accomplished actors. And yet it is not so. Rather, the stage is as much a product of the basic dramatic capability of a people as the drama itself, except that it is established earlier and is less developed. The dramatic seed, in fact, enters the soul of a people (as we saw in the article "Ohne Drama [Without Drama]"*) when it develops a desire for a life beyond reality. It then constructs stages for itself so as to produce on them its self-created extra-life. This extra-life is at first only an artificial and fabricated one. Only with time does it become artistic and literary; the enjoyment of a play becomes enjoyment of art, the stagepieces—drama. If one keeps this position of the stage in the history of drama in mind, then one can serenely accept the fact that everything that exists in Yiddish theater-pieces can hardly lay claim to the name dramatic literature—and yet be forced to admit that the foundation for a Yiddish drama has been laid.

**Die Welt* No. 37 Sept. 13 [1901].

Dramatic production in the Yiddish language has come until now almost exclusively from the pen of a single man: Abraham Goldfaden. He has written a whole series of pieces whose material he took from the Bible, from Jewish history, as well as from the contemporary life of Yiddish-speaking Jews. With the best of intentions, it is not possible to ascribe literary and dramatic merit to the work of this man, least of all to his historical pieces. We find in them not a trace of historical milieu description, but instead, an unbearable, romantically tendentious, hollow pathos. It is doubly unbearable because no language in the world is more useless for the antics of romanticism than Yiddish. Hebrew, at least, is suitable as a means of expression for the rich, genuine pathos of the Jews as experienced in the religious area; Yiddish: to a much more limited extent, but certainly not for sham pathos. In the atmosphere in which Yiddish developed there was, indeed, never a trace of historical *gloire* [glory] that one could extoll and so there remained a humbug-free, earthy, blunt, deeply witty language in which every piece of bombast and solemnity immediately has a comic effect. Precisely for this reason, the affectations of the Goldfaden historical pieces provoke laughter—not only from the German-Jewish listeners, who laugh at hero roles jabbering with Jewish accents, and sometimes even the attempt to make Jewish heroes believable—but even from the Yiddish-speaking public. It is an embarrassed laughter. The people feel the masquerade, the artificiality, the inner contradiction of these tirades to their life and their language. How completely differently they roar with laughter when Goldfaden slaps himself in the face by throwing into the midst of this pathetically tragic clatter some of the wit of his good humored and malicious rascals. These breathtaking, cutting, and yet so sensitive and good-natured jests—which, by the way, for us critical connoisseurs, would have something of the Shakespearean, if only they would not stumble into sham heroism, but instead would enter into really great and tragic human fate—are felt by the people to be part and parcel of its own spirit. Of course, his contemporary plays are also richly garnished therewith. These, by the way, rise very little above the historical plays. Although in them, the romantically tendentious temptation for excess, for hollow pathos, is absent, the principal defects of Goldfadenist

stage-pieces stand out that much more glaringly. These are, to state them briefly: the lack of any kind of motivation of plot, development and of the final outcome, and the absence of any genuine, realistic plot.

With this, of course, Goldfaden is judged as a dramatist, yet his significance for the Yiddish stage and the significance of this stage itself is not eliminated thereby. We can best recognize this when we see how he tries to fill the gross deficiencies in his talent. Instead of motivation for the action, he offers us quite good humorous sketches of individual characters; and instead of a sensible plot style, he presents us with proceedings full of movement. He increases this movement through musical additions. Each one of his works is a so-called "folk play with singing and dancing." Through all this, however, he demonstrates that he possesses those qualities which a man must have if he writes plays for an audience like the Yiddish-speaking people, which is still in the period of predramatic, but quite serious theater.

One must not therefore believe that Goldfaden is an accidental phenomenon having nothing to do with the nationality from which it arose. It is, in fact, correct that Goldfaden is a person who possesses a great deal of sense for theatrical action in general, as well as for the auxiliary effects of scenic grouping and musical rhythm; and accordingly, he seems to be not at all a bad stage director. He has at his disposal a remarkable amount of dedication, patience, and energy, and has come to all centers of Yiddish speaking Jews in order to be everywhere his own apostle. All this is correct, yet he is all this, not merely on his own, but rather as the embodiment of the ripened will of the people for the stage. Otherwise, he could not want to be all this as a single individual; otherwise new Yiddish theaters, in the East and the farthest West would not arise in which hundreds of actors, many of the first rank, appear; otherwise, the masses would not have streamed into the theater, already for decades now, night after night, there to find their most enjoyable entertainment, carrying his songs and couplets (complete with text and melody) into their daily lives as song and speech resource of the people's millions.

It is then, the masses of Yiddish-speaking Jews—not a single

venturesome person—that wish to have a Yiddish theater. Therefore, one must assume with high probability, that, sooner or later, the masses will demand drama and will create a dramatist. For this there is already a certain amount of evidence in that art in the Yiddish language already does exist, even if only in lyric and epic form. Further evidence, for example, is the fact that German Jews—by the way, through their connection with the Germans—also have been released from the pre-dramatic arena and have produced such rich, genuine dramatic talent. As strongest evidence, however is the fact that until now—in the ancient as well as in the recent past—drama has always developed out of pre-dramatic theater.

However, that this development is so highly likely, so almost certain from the Jewish cultural point of view, is shown by the pre-eminence of the initial Yiddish attempts at drama over the German-Jewish dramas. *Agnes Jordan* may be a work of art and *Di Kaprizne moyd* [The Capricious Lass] a botched work, yet the German-Jewish milieu drama is condemned to remain a vassal of German drama, while Yiddish theater is destined to create new and independent Jewish drama.



Hebrew and Yiddish*

THAT I CAN SPEAK about Hebrew and Yiddish to West European Jews, I owe to this periodical, which works to combat, at least to some extent, the general ignorance of fundamental facts in this area. In any case, what *Ost und West* has accomplished is that its circle of readers is far removed from the otherwise widespread "charming" naiveté which sees a prayerbook or a theological tract in every printed Hebrew book. That Hebrew and Yiddish are two languages which play an important role in the modern affairs and literary life of Eastern Jews, I have assumed in advance as a recognized fact.

The German-Jewish readers of this paper may, I believe, be less clear concerning the mutual power-relationship of the two languages, their cultural value, their prospects for continued existence, in short—concerning the wholly remarkable peculiarity of a people with two languages. Whoever wishes to be reasonably clearsighted about this, should not, above all, allow himself to be taken in tow by the firebrands of the two opposing party directions. If one (how can one put it?) grants credence to the Zionists of the extreme left or right, then Yiddish is a loathsome *jargon*, a repulsive hodgepodge of the most diverse language fragments, a faithful image of *"golus"* shame, a language without national dignity, without a national future, a sad makeshift. If one listens to the most extreme Russo-Jewish *Bundists*, then modern Hebrew is the hot-house plant of bourgeois romanticism, a

*"Hebräisch und Jüdisch," *Ost und West*. 1902, 2, no. 7. July.

language without reference to real life, a language with no social future, an unnecessary luxury item.

That the so called *"Jargon"* sounds unpleasant to the ears of most non-Yiddish speaking people is a fact which, however, means little in itself. Aside from the fact that we are dealing here, more or less, with a question of personal taste, it is hard to see how the esthetic verdict of non-interested parties should have a bearing on the real power relationships of those concerned. Thus, surely, English sounds very ugly to non-English ears, and yet is the language of two mighty cultural nations. Even more, in the immortal poetry of Shakespeare and Byron, it rises to acknowledged luxurious sound and beauty. Of weightier consideration is the "hodgepodge" reproach, since a real hodge-podge—i.e. an artificial patchwork without inner unity—possesses no living reality, no development potential. But Yiddish, while it derives its flow from many language sources—again, very much like English—is similarly not in the least a hodge-podge. True, the largest portion of the words stem from German, and the inflection is German; virtually all the remaining vocabulary, specifically, almost all the expressions for concepts of higher spiritual life are Hebrew; even the sentence structure is partly Hebrew. Finally, words and idioms from Slavic, Romance, and other languages occupy considerable space. Yet all these rivers and rivulets which have flowed down from diverse world regions, unite into one mighty unified stream. The language image of Yiddish is uniquely its own, previously non-existent; the spirit of Yiddish is a new and unitary one.

Yes, but the very image and spirit of national indignity, of the *golus*, will, perhaps, be granted to me in order more properly to refute me. Well, I cannot help it. I have long ceased to regard the word *golus* with the old, pious fright; I submit to it only as much as my common sense and my Jewish cultural sensibility demand.* But even if I were still to acknowledge the absolute *golus*, I could, nevertheless, not see how the spirit of this *golus* could negate the living reality and the development potential of the Yiddish

---

*See my article "The 'Solutions' to the Jewish Problem" in the previous issue of *East and West*. [1902, 2, June]

language, how this could hinder it from being charged with a non-*galutic* spirit in an eventual post-*galutic* era. In the same way, the entire pre-*galutic* tradition has not revived modern Hebrew in the ghetto although Hebrew will and must soon penetrate into it to a greater or lesser degree.

For it is, on the other hand, not true that modern Hebrew has no connection with real life—though it may be less obviously the case than with Yiddish. The very fact that there are a number of large Hebrew newspapers which command a combined readership of over hundreds of thousands is a good indication (while, for example, in the Latin language there is only one newspaper, which, I believe, appears secretly in Rome). Good, one will say, but the Hebrew language is doomed to a speedy downfall. It was and is nothing more than the instrument of the "cultured" Jewish-national idealogues through whose help it influences the Eastern-Jewish bourgeoisie; it is the idle creation of romantic brains and will collapse upon itself as soon as these brains will sober up.

The fact is that modern Hebrew today has its connoisseurs and readers (one can hardly talk of speakers) among the middle class, and that its most eager apostles are the "cultured" members of the middle class. But from this one cannot draw premature conclusions. The Jewish people of the East surely consisted, until a relatively short time ago, almost exclusively of the middle class, if one counts also the millions of beggars and the beggar proletariat as part of the bourgeoisie (which, of course, in cultural hindsight, is unthinkable). For this reason, the developing middle class of the whole people, the great intellects of the people—who have arisen from among all classes—have poured the pre-existent Hebrew (which, by the way, had behind it a long, never completely interrupted development) into modern forms, raising it to capability for European expression. With this demand, they satisfied two deep needs of the people, to one of which, we will first direct our attention—the need for an easily accessible means of enlightenment. That the great multitude of people of small intellect then made their appearance, to also play around with this great accomplishment, is not the fault of the former; that is indeed the fate of the intellectual kings of all peoples, even though they are not all blessed with as many draymen as the Jews.

Now, however, the people, specifically its new and most hopeful stratum, the laboring proletariat, have likewise, through the classless leaders of the masses, found a new means of enlightenment, which for them is still more accessible—their own colloquial language—Yiddish. Why now the need for Hebrew? Has it not really now become a useless luxury item? Should not the language which is understood by all and which suffices for all cultural needs, as a matter of natural course, replace the other which, though it answers all requirements, is understood by only a small minority?

In this objection, a correct impulse is combined with an incorrect one. It is justified insofar as it disputes the monopoly of a language on the basis of its fulfillment of cultural needs, but it errs in that it makes the unconscious choice of language much too dependent on grounds of expediency, and excessively underrates the tenacity of the minority in the use of the language, as well as the power of the language itself. The error becomes not less, but rather greater, in that this minority cultivates the language as a second language and that even the majority, in actuality, can never completely tear itself away from it. This then proves that for the continued existence of the Hebrew language, aside from the law of inertia and aside from its diminished necessity as a means of enlightenment, a still deeper need continues to be operative.

This need can also be identified. It rests on the fact that the Jewish community, in spite of the great majority of its Yiddish-speaking members, extends beyond this circle in various directions. From this point of view, the task of Hebrew presents itself as a consequence of the drive for linguistic expressions of racial unity of East and West, of the past and the future. This drive is just as natural and powerful as the drive to develop and enable one's own colloquial language. Out of both drives, which surely have their origin in the unique history of Israel, ensues the unique parallelism of the development of two languages in one people.

For the forseeable future, no deviation from this dualism is to be expected. A monopoly of Hebrew is certainly out of the question—even in the eventuality that the hopes of the Zionists were to be completely fulfilled—indeed in this case, perhaps more than otherwise. For especially in a closed state, Yiddish, as the

language of the overwhelming majority of the population, would become more dominant than it is today. Hebrew would then be left in the near danger of sinking to the level of an ethnonational showpiece which one must not wholly neglect out of consideration for non-Yiddish-speaking fellow Jews.

How ironic, that with as much realistic appraisal as this kind of future phantasy permits, the romantically pampered Hebrew appears as the language of the *"golus"* and the much reviled *"Jargon"* as that of the *"ex-golus"!* But as interesting as the thought may be, it is not worth much more, practically speaking, than all other prophesies which are made regarding any indefinite future situation. It is surely much more sensible to deal with the present and to show what one can do in the course of its development. The main part of this activity the people accomplishes, completely without intention, in that it speaks and reads, and the poets and writers, equally without intention, in that they write. Yet for this reason, certain measures undertaken with a conscious purpose need not be superfluous. One such, I would like to propose in—what I feel to be—a somewhat unexpected addition to my above remarks, namely: the introduction of Latin script for Hebrew as well as for Yiddish.

For Hebrew, I already made this demand in conversations with experts many years ago, when I was still an opponent of the *"Jargon."* I maintain it today and raise it with tenfold emphasis for the much more modern and mightier Yiddish.* And even though I must admit that the suggestion today meets with no friendlier reception than it did at that time, I remain firmly persuaded to plead a case which hangs in the air and which will come to be, whether people fight against it or not.

Especially for Hebrew, the feasibility of the reform will be disputed, first of, all from a linguistic point of view. I cannot meet this objection here without exceeding the scope of this essay. Suffice it to say, that it seems to me no more valid than the

---

*While writing this article, I learned that a Yiddish journal printed in Latin letters will appear, or has already appeared, in Rumania. I do not have any further details.

grounds that are customarily raised by pedants against every change in orthography.

The ethnonational concerns do not move me at all. In the first place, our "Hebrew" alphabet, as is well known, is not Hebrew, but Assyrian. In general, script has long ceased to be a cultural asset upon which untold generations of the nation have labored; rather, it is an independently invented segment of civilization. And finally, the so-called Latin script (the German Gothic is merely a slight variation) has become a symbol of the civilized community of European nations. It is no accident that in Europe only the backward nations obstinately hold fast to their non-Latin alphabets.

With this, I come to the third type of objection—that the whole matter is much too petty to pay it much attention. Whoever makes this claim, has simply not yet renounced the completely ultra-nationalistic ideology of a new Oriental Judaism, has not yet grasped the truth, that the Jewish people will be part of European civilization, or none at all. Hebrew and Yiddish, written in European letters, may also be able to represent an autonomous Jewish cultural nationality to the non-Jewish nationalities and to do so more forcibly and vigorously than all these hundreds of Zionist journals are able to do. It will also tie the Jewish masses and their spiritual advisors with invisible (but iron-strong) links to its Jewish nationhood, as well as to the great European-civilization community. And that, I would say, is no petty thing for the language as well as for the nationality.



Jewish Autonomy*

MOVEMENTS ONLY SEEM to follow each other in succession. In actual fact, the beginnings of the succeeding movement are already present at a time when the movement whose place it will be taking is still in *its* presumed beginnings. Thus, for example, the resurgent beginnings of the Jewish ethnonational intellectual movement (indeed, basically, its existence never ceased) coincided with assimilation in its infancy. Already at that time emancipation was greeted, here and there, with a call (muffled by the bustle of the multitude) for ethnonational self-determination. Nevertheless, it took a long time for the scattered voices to build into something like a chorus. It happened only about twenty-five years ago. And only then there began the struggle to achieve its reality—the setting and pursuit of goals.

With regard to the idea of the rebirth of a state, one soon arrived at clearly delineated images of the goal; and this steadily gave the movement renewed energy. But the matter immediately took a more unfavorable turn as soon as it came to making life creatively Jewish, of elevating Jewish creativity where it already existed. For this there were no goals; there could not be any. Then an action framework became necessary. And that failed to develop—failed until now. For now a great hope beckons: the idea of so-called ethnonational autonomy, which now engages the minds of intellects in Austria, and raises many hopes.

---

*"Jüdische Autonomie," *Ost und West*. 1906, 6, no. 1, January.

Those who perhaps are ready to prejudge everything that comes out of Austria may be reassured. We are dealing not with the idle invention of some initiator of projects but with the end-product of specific facts and developments.

Austria does not exist, as so many tend to believe, for the sake of its dynasty but for the sake of its nationalities. Insofar as they live within their own boundaries, they are usually too small to make independent economies possible. And what is more important, the intermingling of nationalities has proceeded so far that their national common interest is a necessity. Finally, almost all politicians who can be taken seriously have understood this. At the same time, however, a clearer concept of the idea of nationality has gradually permeated wider circles. Thought has also been given to the nature of nationality as cultural individualism and to no longer misusing it for power politics.

Out of these assumptions, the idea of ethnonational autonomy was born. It consists essentially of the following: the nationalities today fill Austrian politics with their clamor precisely because as such they possess no rights. Because each nationality is forced to achieve the satisfaction of its cultural needs in the *Reichsrat* and the provincial legislatures, the result is a battle of each one against all. For this reason, nationality as well as religious affairs must cease being a common matter on which all can have a say and must become a matter solely for each individual nationality. Each should administer its own cultural affairs, especially its schools. Imperial associations, provincial associations and communities of the various nationalities should take over these concerns and receive the appropriate taxing authority. To supplement and guarantee these systems, there should be representatives of the individual nationalities—in the government, in national civil service contingents, in the election of delegates for the nationalities to the *Reichsrat* and to the provincial legislatures.

Though known to only a few supporters a short time ago, ethnonational autonomy is now on everyone's lips. Even the Minister President, in his last important suffrage address, spoke of its future. Its nature and its scope are, of course, still little understood; generally, people are concerned only with its

applications to the elections. In Moravia it has, in this respect, already become a statutory reality in part. But precisely as a result of this it quickly became familiar to all nationality groups, and precisely as a result of this it has suddenly exposed the problem of the Jewish people.

If the fundamental ethnonational rights of all Austrian nationalities are to be guaranteed, why not also those of the Jews, who need this guarantee most urgently? This question, raised until now in small circles by only a few, is now suddenly being voiced everywhere. It was raised in the Parliament from the Jewish side (Dr. Straucher) and from the Ruthenian side (Professor Romanchuk). Action was initiated at a Jewish mass-meeting in Vienna at which the writer of this essay spoke. A committee, constituted of members of various Jewish parties and groups—and of personalities who earned early or special merits in the service of the Jewish nationality-cause—is, for the time being, concerning itself with taking the necessary steps. An efficient organization has yet to be created.

One can easily claim that these events have universal significance, because for the first time there beckons to the Jewish people (for a not insignificant portion of its totality and in the not too distant future) official legal recognition of its cultural individuality and consequent rights.This is bound to have the most far-reaching effect on the general as well as on the Jewish public.

Certain people with one-track minds have nothing more urgent to do than to proclaim ethnonational autonomy of Austrian Jews (which will be granted sooner or later) as a victory for anti-Semitism. Actually, autonomy can only weaken anti-Semitism, since for the first time it will establish the granting of equal rights as an absolute principle independent of all pre-conditions, even that of assimilation. This is what one must keep in mind, not the completely irrelevant agreement of anti-Semites with Jewish demands for autonomy. What else could be expected of them? They would not be anti-Semites, i.e. people who completely misjudge the direction of developments, if in promising the inevitable (the recognition of Jewish nationality) they would not promise the capricious (the isolation of Jews). It is

not they who are the prophets of what is to be, but those non-Jewish friends of autonomy who are beyond all suspicion of anti-Semitism and among whom there are very many of the highest intellectual standing.

Ethnonational autonomy establishes the granting of equal rights upon unshakeable foundations. It creates clear relationships between Jews and non-Jews, which in time must lead to friendly neighborly relations. It renders possible for the first time a true-to-life picture of the nature of the Jewish people, ranking it among the nationalities of civilized mankind. Who then could fail to see what a blessing this signifies? For humanity, it widens its outlook by gradually paralyzing anti-Semitism, one of the most effective organizational forces of reaction. For the Jews, it opens not only this doubly worthwhile prospect, but also completely different, deeper, internal vistas.

In the West, ethnonational autonomy faces its greatest task. Here the Jewish community lacks an ethnonational language of its own. Now this is surely not part of the essence of nationality, but rather an expression of the same, which naturally and superbly organizes the national spirit, thereby qualifying it for greater accomplishments and independent action. It is, then, not the language as such but its organizational power that is creative and culturally enhancing. If one could only succeed, at least to some extent, in replacing this natural organizing power with one that is socially willed, then a new current would be bound to enter the Western Jewish ethnonational soul. And what could serve this purpose better than ethnonational autonomy? First of all, nationality elections will instill in the voters, and in the elected of all parties, a feeling of cultural responsibility, and, which would be the principal and lasting effect, they would, through a national school system and the concentration of Jewish intellects, necessarily lead to ethnonational cultural results. And we need not believe that only the Western Jews of Austria will be affected by this wholesome change of affairs. Ethnonational autonomy is not an Austrian, but a new ethnonational principle of mankind and it is not at all impossible that wherever the pre-conditions exist, Jews elsewhere will also achieve a breakthrough. Surely this is true of the United States, whose Jewry is already showing quite

remarkable and (for nationalist Jews) favorable tendencies. In other respects, for those Western lands in which Jewish autonomy is not practical because of local conditions, its influence should be valuable enough. A greater vitality of Jewish character will constantly accrue to the life of the Jews of these areas.

For the East, Jewish autonomy does not have this outright creative function. It will prove itself there with much more immediate logic than in the West. Language, which is not lacking there, will be an additional means of cultural preservation. There it can work to its fullest. There it is not a future yet wanting to be born, but a living present wanting to continue to live, in order to blossom out in richer, more brilliant, more magnificent form. It is a present in which eight million Jews participate. Because here we are dealing not just with the Galician and Bukovinian Jews alone, but also with all of Russian Jewry who have long been familiar with the autonomy question.

To sum up, with the idea of ethnonational autonomy a new, more fortunate star seems to have arisen for the Jewish people. And what is most promising is that all nationalist minded groups, regardless of their goals, have recognized this, while those on the fringes sense it in stunned surprise.



Opening Address At The Conference for The Yiddish Language*,**

Honored Guests and Conference Participants:

The public enjoys mocking people who desire to venture on new paths, yet this does not affect those hearty souls in the least. Nor does the derisive smile undo them. They possess a unique power to slough off the mockers and stop the jabbering mouths of fools and to shed light on benighted minds. They do not tire in making known their thoughts and criticisms until all become convinced and it becomes clear to the whole world that it is not they who are the fools but rather their tireless scoffers.

Think, for example, of the movement for the Yiddish language. It began decades ago. At that time, there awoke the question in certain minds: why is it that when other nations jumble several languages together and derive from this mélange a

---

*"Efenungs-rede af der konferents far der yidisher shprakh," *D"r birnboyms vokhnblat.* 1908, no. 1, 8 Elul.

**The Russian-Jewish publication, *Razsvet,* in reporting N. Birnbaum's opening remarks preceeded them with the following introductory comment: "A quarter past ten in the morning [Sunday, August 30, 1908] there walked onto the stage Dr. N. Birnbaum in the company of Y. L. Perets, S. Ash, Dr. Kh. Zhitlovski and other distinguished guests. Dr. N. Birnbaum opens the conference, reading his first speech in Yiddish fluently from his notes. His expressions—pure Yiddish. Recognizable on occasion are pedantries of speech and a polished style. He reads his speech in the Galician dialect."

separate tongue with its unique soul, it is accorded the legitimacy of a separate language and the due respect of nations? Why then when Jews have done the same with the German, Hebrew and Slavic languages is it disparaged as a jargon and sneered at? At that time, assimilation was still powerful and the ethnonational movement had scarcely come into being. There were probably few people who were informed with respect to the new language question, and those that were, reacted to it with peals of uproarious laughter. Nevertheless, the idea did not wither away, and one of its first pioneers, if not the first, Aleksander Harkavi, lives till this very day in New York and has joyously lived to see the realization of his ideal.

When Jewish intellectuals became ethnonationally conscious, it must be admitted that they looked askance at the Yiddish language. They viewed it as a nuisance which must be suffered patiently but which must not became the object of dedication. It never dawned on them that the nationalist intellectual must not only be bound closely by ties of the heart and will to his people but must, first of all, live in their midst. He must breathe the same cultural atmosphere, and his spiritual life must grow out of the folk-soul. Furthermore, he must be able to infuse into it the simple and unpretentious strength of the people. It never entered his mind that to speak any language other than his very own—the language of his people, the language of their innermost thoughts and feelings, of joys and sorrows, of tears and of laughter—is tantamount to leaving his people and going off into the desert-wilderness without friend or mentor, to follow the winding road into a chaotic world, to turn oneself into a rambler, a lost wanderer, torn from home and nationality.

When the intellectuals were approached about this matter—when the attempt was made to convince them of the legitimacy of Yiddish—they laughed and jeered. "What, you want us, cultivated people, to stoop to the level of using your jargon, your most ugly jargon? You can be certain that you will not have your way with us. Better not make fools of yourselves." So they proclaimed arrogantly and considered those who spoke to them of Yiddish to be crazy, pure and simple.

The Yiddish language took no notice of their laughing scorn

and ugly disparagement. With quiet but firm tread, it pursued the road which the new age and the old nationality had diligently paved for it. The new age found it, the language, necessary in order to open the eyes of the common people so that they could at last see, voice their demands and carve a place for themselves in a hostile world. The old nationality, wakening from an age-old dream and as if longing for a major task, could not avoid the Yiddish language. Slowly, there blossomed forth new intellectuals (even nationalist intellectuals) who viewed Yiddish with a brighter and newer vision than their predecessors. They were seized by the powerful feeling that this language is the very soul of our people—its very heart, the very center of our life. Why do we weep that we lack self-esteem? Where should we derive this strength from, when we have spent our entire lives sunk in self-abasement? From which source can we draw on, when we demonstrate greater fidelity to the Hottentots than to ourselves, when we elevate the speech of others to the rank of dignified languages and when we invidiously belittle our own as nothing more than gibberish, as jargon; our language into which we have infused and secreted hundreds of years of our spirit, our heart, our humor and our deepest joys and sorrows? How can a nationality that suffers such supreme denigration ever, of its own accord, recover a modicum of feeling of self-respect and a sentiment for ethnonational sovereignty? Let us shed these garments of shame in which our language is swaddled—with which our weak and sickly *yidishkayt* has permitted it to be clothed—and our people will once more shine forth and bask in the warm glow of a long neglected self-respect.

Why do we shed tears that we possess too dim an appreciation of beauty, or that Yiddish life has banished beauty? Is beauty not that which we extract from our minds and hearts and offer up to the world? Is beauty not the reflection of our inner beauty, or our deeper harmony? Could we not have already begun to perceive with true aesthetic sense, to see with eyes sensitized to beauty, and realize that the paltry bit of German and Polish speechifying has not elevated our inner beauty but only completely spoiled that trifling sum found among us? Only then would we comprehend that any unsightliness of Yiddish derives from our inner ugliness

and discern what a guarantee of luster and beauty a language can afford us, a language that is held in high estimation and adorned by love. If we would understand, then let us make the effort to do so! Let us remove the opprobrium from our language and permit a new Jewish beauty to come forth from our midst and illuminate our lives.

Why do we cry that we do not possess sufficient strength in the world? Do we endeavor to tap new wellsprings of strength and power? Have we not heard of what a language can do for a people? That it shelters and screens its culture and enables a people to unlock the door of ethnonational equality? Is this not a large dose of strength and power, and is it not found very near us, in our very mouths and on our own lips? We have only to reach out and grasp it and make it our own.

These and similar claims have been given greater voice ever so gradually. Meanwhile, Yiddish literature has steadily developed. The first generation of poets were followed closely by a second, then a third generation, and, bit by bit, Yiddish was being widely used, entering into the general stream of life, and people were increasingly becoming sensitive to the inescapable obligation of helping it develop and prosper. This was efficaciously executed by the establishment of rules and systems, codes of grammar and the regulation of spelling. The call was burgeoning for the recognition of Yiddish as a separate language.

Today, Jews from different lands have come together to proudly reacquaint themselves with our language and to discuss what can be done for our beloved Yiddish. We have the good fortune to have with us those great writers who evoke pride and command the deepest respect, even among the opponents and deriders of our language.

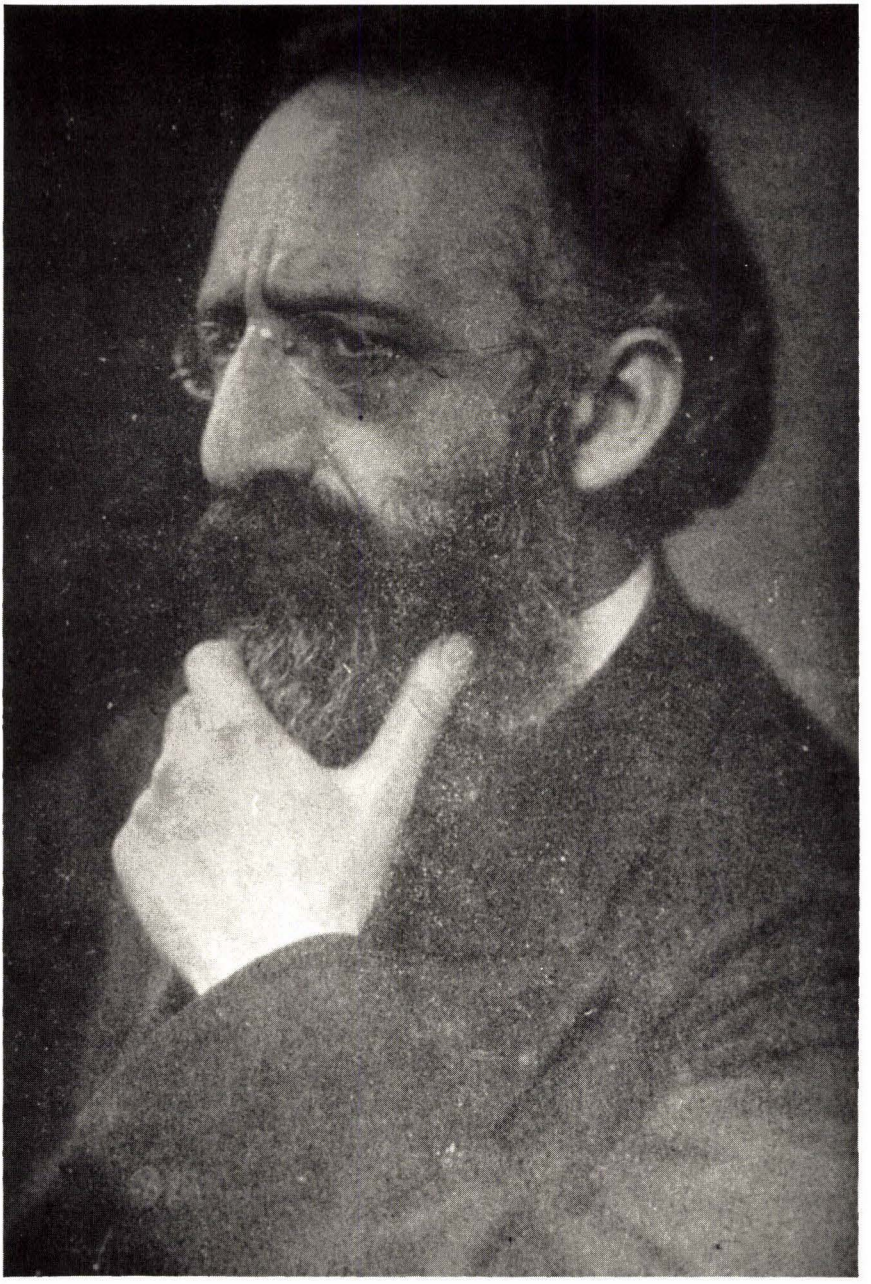
You see, my dear guests and members of the conference, that ridicule has not foiled us; it has left us untouched and in the future it will not hurt us. As long as our struggle was an individual one, there existed the faint possibility that our strength would weaken and our spirit and patience falter. Now that we are gathered in strength from all over the world, we have nothing to fear.

We are not spoiling for a fight with anyone. If fanatical adversaries will waylay us, they will find us steady and

imperturbable. They cannot harm us in the least. Honest opponents who demonstrate propriety in their dealings with us will be answered with the utmost respect. The essence lies in work—quiet, tireless and devoted work.

The following five days can be the start of our endeavors, but we remain cognizant that every beginning is connected with enormous responsibilities.

I hereby declare to be opened the first Conference of the Yiddish language.



Americanism and the Jews*

ZANGWILL'S NEW DRAMA, *The Melting Pot,* which deals with the American problem, was recently performed in Washington in the presence of Roosevelt. The former president of the United States showed and declared himself to be delighted. This is not surprising, for Roosevelt is precisely the embodiment of the tendency which this piece is about.

The melting pot refers to America itself: human beings of all races and nations who are thrown together in order to be fused into one nationality. And so efficient, so terrible and inexorable does this nationality-forge seem to Zangwill that he risks the ultimate in order to portray it symbolically. He presents to us a young Jew who has lost his parents and siblings back in Kishinev, which does not deter him, however, from marrying a Russian girl whose father he recognizes as the instigator of the pogrom. There is only a short crisis of conscience, which the young man quickly overcomes with a reminder of America's mission as the melting pot of nationalities.

It is remarkable that the Jewish public is so little edified by Zangwill's offering. Now that he so crassly blurts out the terrible word, "die!," suddenly no one wants to die. And yet in essence, on the crucial points, he has said nothing more than what one has always had to listen to in a variety of ways, daily and hourly to the point of exhaustion, in Jewish, indeed in the most Jewish circles. I speak from experience. I have never been able to discuss the topic

---

*"Der Amerikanismus und die Jüden," *Die Welt.* 1909, 13, no. 2, 1 and 8 January.

of America for more than two minutes, nor read more than two lines about it without coming up against the melting pot theory and its truly fanatical espousal.

Of course, many are not aware of the implication that this theory holds for life. They feel that their Jewish consciousness need not thereby be compromised. They simply set down everything that is irreconcilable side by side with a few amiable words. Persuasive testimony of how this can happen is provided by an article which appeared shortly before the performance of the Zanwillian play in a conservatively religious and quite nationalist-minded paper. There, in a discussion of the American public school, one reads verbatim: "The schools take in foreigners and turn out finished Americans. They accept children of different nationalities, different languages, different natures, different inclinations and produce children that form a single people, an American people with American ideals and American customs. The schools do not deprive anyone of his religion; they do not disturb anyone's national feelings. The Jew, the Catholic, the Protestant remain with their faith, with everything that is holy to them and merely become citizens of one nation." Thousands of people over there constantly speak in this manner, contradictory to the point of absurdity, stumbling over all logic and facts. Every ship brings hundreds of candidates for this most insipid shallowness.

Truly one can only be thankful to Zangwill for presenting the old "melting pot" theory in its true and full face upon the floodlit stage of Washington. He has accomplished what no one from the other side has succeeded in doing. He has stunned American Jewry.

Americanism is basically nothing new. In Europe we have had and still have similar phenomena: within the territory of one state, several peoples live together. One of these has developed, through certain not necessarily superior qualities, or as a result of certain historical advantages, into a nation-state par excellence. There arises the fiction of a nation-state; there develops a kind of nation-state idea and a nation-state fanaticism which does not know or is not permitted to know what it wants. In time, however, the other nationalities, disturbed in their evolution, learn to copy

and begin to resist. The whole national structure is ever more exposed as such. And as for the supposed nation-state, the whole unnatural expansion finally ends with nothing more than its true natural energy denuded and depleted.

Americanism differs, however, from its European counterparts in several factors: first in the grandiosity of its occurrence as expressed in the higher nationality and population figures; then in the fact that the process of commingling and intermingling of the nationalities, now in full and rapid movement, has not by any means been concluded. Also, the historical background for individual ethnonational development is lacking. Another difference is caused by the lack of historical territories for the various peoples. Finally, here, supposedly, we are dealing not with a ready-made nationality but with a new one yet to be built out of all these peoples, or one that is already in the process of such establishment.

The first factor is obviously only of a pedantic nature and, therefore, does not affect our analogy at all. The second loses its significance as soon as one holds only to the old biased viewpoint of ethnonational sovereignty. The same development that in the end strips the ruling nationality of even its historical perogatives justifies, if need be, the individual right to life of every nationality without having to base it on historical precedents.

The second factor is a favorite argument of believers in Americanism: one can surely not compare America with Austria, Hungary, or Turkey! In these states, the various nationalities are, after all, separated by national boundaries; and it is supposedly this factor which guarantees a minimum of administrative authority for the nationality and which finally overcomes the desire for exclusive rule of the representative nation-state. In America, however, the nationality groups do not live in their own territories but in colorful intermixture. There, not even a minimum of ethnonational autonomy is warranted and the nationwide preponderance of a single nationality group is an absolute cultural and economic necessity.

In this line of argument, the factual elements are not entirely right and the conclusion is simply wrong. It is not entirely correct that in the European nation-states the individual nationalities live

entirely in separated territories. It is true of the great majority, but substantial portions of the individual nationality groups live fragmentally intermingled and pushed together in stratified fashion. And since even these fragments and strata are increasingly demanding the right to lead their own ethnonational lives and the practice of this right is increasingly prevalent, the inference drawn for application in America is not quite correct even on European soil. Today one would not expect a nationality group that lacks a territory, therefore, simply to allow itself to be denied its right to an ethnonational life. And especially in America, where the concept of an ethnonational territory is completely absent and even the English nucleus commands no specific territory, one would be even less able to deny it.

A really substantial difference between Americanism and the aspirations of ruling nationalities as they were and still are found in Europe, lies in the fact that the latter emanate from existing nationalities whereas the former appears in the name of a nationality in the process of development. Of this there can be no doubt even though the stock phrase in America speaks of the American people as a finished product. This is only due to a confusion between the concept of a nationality and that of a state, perhaps also due to political reasons. If, however, Americanism wishes to establish itself on theoretical foundations, if it wishes to view itself apart from any great historical background, there appears clearly and without reservation the view that in America a tremendous process is taking place—the transformation of all the masses of people of various languages and nationalities from across the ocean into an English-speaking, though not into an English, but into an entirely new American nationality. And this image of Americanism is so strong that its champions have undertaken to organize its supposedly necessary development through goal-oriented activity. It is the American public school which has been tailored to turn the children of all immigrants into English-speaking and American-feeling human beings. And it deserves to be mentioned as an interesting detail that the changes in dialect which English in America has undergone have consciously been incorporated by the schools into the official grammar of the English language. This means that there is a trend

toward preserving, widening, and deepening the emerging differences between the English of Englishmen and that of Americans.

Now all this is quite interesting and as a program, if you will, even grandiose. But it need not necessarily be right or promising. In the first place, it is doubtful whether a nationality in the process of developing has already achieved a sufficiently advanced stage to want to appeal for and to demand this or that form of behavior. From where should it take the perception of what it is to be? Someone in the process of development can, after all reconstruct his process of growth only in retrospect. If among the few individuals who would accept this challenge, one would recognize outside observers who would be able to observe and ascertain the process of development fairly well, there would still remain the question of whether these outsiders should be permitted to speak in the name of the developing nationality. Who gives them legitimacy for this?

And how can someone who, for example, regards the full Americanization of Germans as a future certainty, guarantee that the Slavs or Jews will also merge into this new nationality? Is it not already an established fact that the various nationalities have an unequal rate of assimilation? And does not the history of the past hundred years prove that, with the growth of individualism, this rate is becoming weaker and weaker for all nationalities, in other words, that their tenacity for life is ever increasing? And whereas in the past even those with a more pliant will to life were often able enough to successfully withstand the assimilationist power of a strong, vibrant, young, or mature nationality, is the increased desire for life of today supposed to capitulate to a nationality still in the developing or unborn stage? That is improbability itself, and he who observes and carefully examines what is going on in America will nowhere perceive durable beginnings of this alleged nationality-building process.

To be sure, many foreign elements have been assimilated in the course of time. But first of all, this came at a time when a mass inflow into America did not exist, and in which, secondly, nationality consciousness and the desire of nationalities for resistance had not yet crossed the Atlantic. Thirdly, at the time,

there was a genuine Anglicization which today has already become impossible.

Americanism really has no connection at all with nationality. Nor is it the expression of even the germ of such. Americanism certainly exists as a fact, but it is not an ethnonational but a multinational form of civilization. It is a grotesquely distorted Europeanism and the distortion is magnified by the grandiose nature of the American environment and the American expanse. It is, however, brought about by the simultaneous mass immigration of the most heterogeneous elements, all of which are motivated by a strong personal drive for success and dominated by an entrepreneurial nature lacking any internal restraint, playing a role stripped of any sign of intellectual or cultural dignity. In Europe, strong ethnonational cultural motives protect social, political and economic life from skyscraperism. In Europe, even the most intense industrialism and capitalism cannot produce those frightening or comically grotesque forms of collective human labor that arise one after another with sinister rapidity in America. There are, perhaps, one or two attempts here and there. On the whole, however, the intrinsic value of the ethnonational culture has proven strong enough not to allow the horrendous blasts and excesses of human existence to develop as they have in America.

Fundamentally, the idea of an American nationality is a kind of recognition of this multinational and anational nature of Americanism. It is the instinctive search for a way out of this modern Babylon, in which ethnonational souls are destroyed and human souls are devastated, toward a new composition, a new beauty, a new character. But it is the wrong way. For while one works for the new nationality, so to speak, the old cultures deteriorate more and more, while the American social psychosis proliferates in the wake of their deterioration, and the prospect that a new ethnonational culture can be introduced into this sick communal soul sinks to zero.

If at least the English nationality could withstand this cultural debacle, if it could remain the healthy kernel around which the new American world could perhaps crystallize. But that is not the case either. On the contrary, Americanism threatens and damages

Englishness just as much as other nationalities—not so much through previous conscious stance in opposition to old England, but as a result of the fact that its nature dictates opposition to everything that is ethnonational. And what is most depressing is the fact that the Anglo-Americans are too dazed by the general whirl to be able to see how their deepest essence, which they wish to transplant in new American form, is threatened by foreign idols.

Yes, indeed, foreign. For that is the most terrible irony of this deliberate ethnonational-murder in the name of a phantom; that this phantom is not at all supported, at least at present, by those from whom one would in the first instance expect it, by Americans of English ancestry, but by foreigners. Even Zangwill notices this. Only he views it with skewed vision. The relative standoffishness of the old English element from the humanly degrading, and, in the most basic way, freedom-bare whirl, this unconscious final resistance of the deeper identity of Anglo-Americans against Americanism, he declares as reaction and satiation. And the directionless and senseless din of those who have just arrived and have immediately succumbed, seems to him to be a singular mighty hymn of freedom sung in honor of Mater America, ostensibly engaged in the process of birth.

No, what has become "American" in the immigrants, presents little for us to admire or glorify. On the contrary, only with the remnants of what they have brought with them do they gain our sympathy. Though enervated by Americanism, they have not yet lost all feeling in their ethnonational souls. Why would they otherwise settle in their own ethnonational enclaves? A tiny spark of a soul has remained, and this tiny spark perhaps awaits a new enflaming power. Indeed, he who happens not to share the blindness of today's mob, clearly sees the growing indications of a reconsideration of nationalism. They can be noticed in almost every nationality represented in America. Perhaps not all will be successful. Perhaps one or the other will languish further and perhaps yet dissolve into Anglicism (not the legendary Americanism). But, for the majority, an ethnonational recovery should be possible. It is unthinkable what would otherwise become of America. For this blessed land, which one day will take in half of

mankind, there is no way other than ethnonational cultures to mute the tone of Americanism, to rid it of its worst distortions. These they can attain only through the determined renunciation of its melting pot ideal.

The relevance of all these observations and conclusions for American Jews is self-evident, though it should be pointed out in advance that for this I have in mind particularly the Jews of East European ancestry and Yiddish colloquial language. For the others are of special interest only from the point of view that they are an example of groups that already abide in their second assimilationist environment. Essentially, however, they represent the same type of nationality, stripped of any potentially active life-function, as is true of the German Jews. In the question of the preservation of the Jewish nationality in America, therefore, the latter play an unimportant role, quite aside from the fact that their numbers are comparatively small. Indisputably, the decision lies with the East European Jewish masses, whether they will here assert their strong Jewish individuality or whether they will forfeit it and sink to the low standards of their Western Jewish brothers.

With respect to this most "favorable" eventuality, not too much hope should be garnered from the fact that the Eastern Jewish masses have shown a strongly developed drive to remain geographically together. For were they to accept a Western Jewish orientation, this drive would surely abate and their tendency to separate from each other would grow stronger from day to day. The relaxed loyalty to religious law of the bourgeois-minded and the neglect of the Yiddish colloquial language on the part of the intelligentsia and the proletariat would definitely be as destructive as explosives.

Of much greater importance is the fact that, as the natural outcome of all this streaming together and living together, a quite strongly developed and richly tinted ethnonational cultural life in both ancient and modern forms has emerged. Whoever comes from Europe, even from the Eastern part, and wanders through the Jewish streets of New York for the first time is astounded and occasionally enthralled by this powerful Jewish affirmation of life, with scarcely a thought in his mind that this might perhaps be only

a temporary phenomenon. It is almost impossible for his admiration to wane enough to cease to believe in the further unfolding of these auspicious beginnings. He who perchance hears Zangwill's doctrine immediately after receiving these impressions, can do nothing but deny its validity at least with respect to the Jews. Surely there is nothing here that has melted, nothing amalgamated. Here are Jewish and only Jewish prototypes; indeed living Jewish prototypes as anywhere else in the world.

Yet after a time, certain dark spots emerge within this bright picture. Above all it is the youth, indeed, the youngest among the youth who attend or leave school, whose behavior arouses concern. The fact that they participate in the general shallowness and wildness of American youth would not by itself weigh so heavily, were it not that a complete estrangement from parents and ancestry are connected with it. Were it not that these frivolous little fools with their public school wisdom, their bit of English-speaking ability and their "Americanhood," find sufficient reason to look down upon the deep and ancient wisdom of their parental milieu, upon the language and customs of their elders, and finally upon their "greenness" with droll as well as sad disdain. That is bad, very bad indeed. Once I noticed it, I did not hesitate for one minute to draw the picture publicly just as I saw it. And it is remarkable that on these occasions there was never a voice raised against me; in fact, in most cases, those assembled informed me to what extent I addressed their souls, how I touched the wounded spot in their hearts. Only when I repeated my description in Europe did a few organs of the press in America represent matters as if I had stated something entirely different in America. I will not try to delve into why they did this. I will assume to their credit that they unjustifiably felt their American or American-Jewish patriotism insulted. But I would like to point out that in all these papers, whether they represent a conservative or a radical point of view, one can, from time to time, read very similar complaints, either in their "Voices of the Public" or in their editorial columns. It is only that these papers either are not able to or are not ready to draw the necessary theoretically and practical conclusions.

Jewish youth is foundering before their eyes. They see it, they know it, they admit it; but they cannot refrain from adulation of

the system that is at fault. Though already half-way on the right path, they still turn back to their idols, as for example, the authority cited in the first part of this article who holds the streets responsible for the dejudaizing of American youth, only to want to rescue them for the "public school," that pampered child of Americanism.

And so they lead the people, perhaps more out of incompetence than ill will, to try things out and to form opinions, going ever more deeply into a morass, and they can do this all the more easily since, in any case, it anticipates their doctrine. For it must be said, and I did indeed say it in America, that the same elders and parents who sigh over their children and would give so much to see them become more Jewish, themselves basically yield to the scourge. If one wishes to learn with what frantic speed the instinct of deception, or rather of allowing oneself to be deceived on American streets, brings about the loss of cultural judgement and results in ridiculous megalomania in order to get ahead, then one should go among the cream of the crop, the truest of the true, and observe them. What childish delight they show when they succeed—not in learning English, for which they don't strain themselves at all, but in mixing some English words into their Yiddish; how pleased they are when one pronounces their name in English and of course, how they make fun of "greenhorns," those unfortunates who have not been in America long enough to forfeit their European and Jewish culture and dignity.

If one has observed all this, one stops blaming the children who would certainly not fall by the wayside if they did not daily feel the agreement of their elders, unconscious and unadmitted, but conveyed with a thousand minor actions, words and gestures. Why should they not regard as acceptable such behavior for which, at most, they receive severe reprimands, but never wholehearted intervention? Why should they not develop an aversion to Judaism, when their young sagacity senses the secret shame present even in those who endeavor to be "good Jews"?

However one approaches it, whether one traces it back to the press whose mind-transforming cleverness only deepens the shame, or to the youth who acquire it in the schools, or to the impressionable masses, one always returns to the same basic

cause: the devastation of minds through the so-called American idea, the unfortunate melting pot ideal.

A decided change for the better is hardly to be expected without a complete turnabout in public opinion taking place, which surely is not likely soon and which would need to be expressed at least initially by the Jews as a political demand. They would, thereby, only make themselves look ridiculous. There remains, therefore, for the time being nothing left for them but an apolitical effort on behalf of oneself, an internal effort in the form of cultural mass countermeasures against assimilation, against the transformation of hundreds of thousands of East European Jews into Jews with weakened religious cohesion.

I have spoken about this with many people in America and, from some, received the answer: "What do you want? You are badly misinformed! We have completely different conditions here. You have assimilationists, we have none. With us assimilation comes completely by itself, a purely automatic result of life and school. Nothing can be done." At first, I was taken aback by the remark; but on closer examination I soon learned how inappropriate it was. For in the first place, it is not true that our European assimilation, or whatever goes by that name, does not come by itself as a result of life and school. One cannot, after all, simply manufacture an intellectual movement. No matter how strongly it later passes into consciousness, it must have its origin somewhere in the flow of events. Secondly, one can certainly and quite justifiably label people who view the progress of assimilation with obvious satisfaction, who indeed even consciously do much to support its progress and prevent its halt, as assimilationists. And if they represent themselves only as witnesses and guiltless instruments of assimilation, then this has a deeper meaning: that they, for the most part unconsciously, serve the very opposite of their stated ideology: the continued life of their people. And involved in this is also the third and most essential error of the above assertion. Despite everything, it is not true that assimilation in America must increase to the point at which we must abandon all hope for an intensive distinctive life. It is not true that resistance against the trend of assimilation is futile and that there is no hope for survival. It is not true, for the reason that within

American Judaism there is an opposing trend plainly in evidence, specifically, not only the old ancestral power of the perseverance of the Jewish people, but one that will supplement it, a new rising energetic trend, a trend flowing from the new interpretations of nationality in general, and out of the lands of the Jewish renaissance movement in particular, but even out of the newly established, unusually massive Jewish milieu in America. True, out of American schools and American streets there emerges a youth which for the most part signifies a most painful renunciation of Judaism. It is also true, as we have seen, that the old generation is at fault. But on the basis of the newer national facts-of-life created during the last decades in Europe and America, and manifestly also in unconscious anticipation of the expected turnabout in America, a new generation of younger elders is gradually emerging. It arises with new leaders and demands, new desires and instincts, and they will, of course, have the ability to send another generation into the world that will not necessarily abandon Judaism. New ideas, combining the realistic and the ideal, new plans for the education of children and the masses are turning up and will lead almost inexorably to this new kind of youth.

In any case, all this refutes those who assert the inevitability of assimilation and demand that the course followed up to now must absolutely be maintained. As far as is humanly foreseeable, there is ample capital available to enable the Jews to brace themselves in opposition and to avert the apparent fate of destruction. It is certainly not impossible that a general reversal of ideas in America will be long delayed, and it is also possible that the new will to life will run aground on the universal degeneracy of American communal life. No one can calculate exactly how strong this new will to life is and how long it will endure. But only those who are unfamiliar with the forces that live within the Jewish people will underrate them. . . . May they really attain fulfillment! They will certainly not be detrimental for America, for a genuinely free, for a more refined America, for the national refuge of the future. And what they would mean for the Jewish people . . . needs hardly to be spelled out.


Fahrverbot.

Struggle for the Recognition of the Jewish People: The Census in Galicia*

THE AUSTRIAN LAW still knows nothing of nationalities, that is to say: in Austrian law there are at present no assigned rights of nationhood *per se*, for only the principle of power determines the strength of nationality rights. The more strength a nationality can demonstrate vis-à-vis the government, the more rights can it wrest from it.

Understandably, this state of affairs has prompted the wish in every nationality to acquire as much power as possible. Indeed, a nationality will employ artificial means to accomplish that which it cannot attain via natural means. In this regard, nothing is as efficacious as the census. The more people a nationality can ascribe to itself, the more claims it can present to the government in demanding legislative action on behalf of its economic and cultural interests.

There are several measures which can be utilized to cause the statistical questionnaire not to truly reflect factual numbers but, rather, to make one's own figures appear inflated and those of the others abnormally small. The crux is that the ignorance and the economic dependency of the masses are exploited. In addition,

---

*"Kamf farn anerkenen di yidishe natsyon," *Der fraynd.* 1911, 20 January.

there are instances where other measures are employed, particularly against Jews.

Generally, the ordinary measures would not do such harm if the method now used for determining the nationality of an individual were not so inequitable and dishonest. At present, as mentioned above, there are no actual nationality rights. Just a few decades ago, before the introduction of the census, no attention was paid to this entire issue. And since the census law was promulgated purely in the interest of the dominant peoples, it makes no mention of nationality languages or of mother tongues, but rather of "languages of daily use."

It is precisely this expression that allows the strong to impose their power. Through this expression, languages are torn away from their peoples and the cultural significance of languages is erased, leaving in its wake only the husk of its purely technical character. It is just this expression that makes it possible for everyone to have his own language, the language of his own people, and yet simultaneously be assigned to another language—that which is spoken with the landlord, at work or in stores where daily commerce involves a language other than one's own, or in the halls of the judicial system where the people in power do not permit one to speak one's own language.

Understandably, such measures are not powerful enough to wipe out the nationalities entirely. Nevertheless, there are people who do not depend on strangers who would impose on them the yoke of a foreign language. There can be found people who are deliberately adamant and do not permit themselves to capitulate, no matter what pressures are brought to bear. Life is thus invested with hope and circumstances change, so that economic and cultural forces develop and bring about an increase in numbers of would-be mother-tongue claimants.

Even Jews need not lose every scrap of hope. It is true that Jewish dependency is greater than that of other weak nationalities. Their political masters can terrorize them through the threat of economic measures (as has happened more than once in Galicia). But fundamentally the difference between Jews and non-Jews lies only in the amount of time and in the quantity of energy needed. That is to say, Jews require the investment of more

time and greater energy until they attain better circumstances and greater numbers. This, concomitantly, will achieve the realization of greater rights as well.

Alas, the situation is such that Yiddish does not find itself enumerated in the census. The law mentions eight languages which have been officially recognized as valid in Austria (German, Czech, Polish, Ruthenian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovene, Italian and Rumanian), but there is not even a trace of Yiddish. At the time of the original implementation of this law, Jews did not have the faintest idea that they too ought to have some right to their own language. And if they did not sense its importance for themselves, who should have done so? The non-Jews, perhaps? Actually, a people that is to this very day of the greatest importance to the Jews in Austria, the Poles, have begun to glimpse the significance to them that Yiddish remain unrecognized. They have not been remiss in exploiting this situation. Hardly had the authority of the Germans begun to diminish in Austria when the Poles became powerful in Galicia. They remained blind to the fact that the entire eastern section of Galicia is inhabited by Ruthenians (Little Russians) and lorded it over them as if the entire region was thoroughly Polish.

However, the Ruthenians stood up immediately to this challenge. At the outset, a quiet, hardly noticeable struggle began, which has since grown more intense, since the Ruthenians are as numerous as the Poles in Galicia (in Austria as a whole they figure even more prominently because nearly half of the population of Bukovina is Ruthenian and there are hardly any Poles there). Understandably, the Poles seek out all and sundry means to make the census as advantageous for themselves as possible.

Previously, before the Ruthenian movement became quite as powerful as it is today, the Poles were able to entice some Ruthenians to support their own [Polish] national language category, a situation that is still countenanced by a few Ruthenians today. But the strongest measure used by the Poles against the Ruthenians is the support they receive from the Jews. For example, in the census prior to the last [1900], over 620,000 Jews were assigned to the Polish language, causing the Ruthenians to appear to be far, far fewer than the Poles.

There is no justice in politics. The Poles remained indifferent to the fact that of the 620,000 Jews assigned to the Polish language, a mere 50,000 could speak the language and hardly 20,000 employed it as their language of daily association. They were equally unmoved by the fact that of these 620,000 Jews, 400,000 lived in Eastern Galicia, i.e. among the Ruthenians. If they were to be compelled to declare a foreign language as their own, then Ruthenian, in any case, would be closer to them than Polish. The Poles were unconcerned. They proceeded with their own plans, never for a moment fearing interference from the outside, especially not from the Jews. Actually, a goodly number of Jews were found who stated that their language of daily use was Yiddish. This was done entirely without conscious intention on their part; it was completely an act of political innocence. Therefore, they were unconcerned as to what was being done with their responses, and they never realized that their reply of "Yiddish" was erased and in its place "Polish" was substituted. If some Jews did discover the truth, they turned a deaf ear to it, blithely ignoring the issue.

However, in the last ten years, the Yiddish nationality-movement has become considerably stronger in Galicia. As the census (December 31, 1910) approached ever closer—every ten years there is a nationwide census in Austria—there developed a strong movement to step forth with a loud protest against the fallacy of forcing people to write lies and to do so despite the fact that lies are punishable by law, particularly as they pertain to the census. A storm arose that Jews should be permitted to register as Yiddish-speakers. In view of this development, the government, supported by the Poles and Germans to whom it is constantly beholden, gave battle to this new Jewish resistance.

For the Germans themselves, it is entirely immaterial whether Jews register Yiddish as their language. It is an interesting fact that the rector of the University of Vienna, Professor Bernatzik, is a strong supporter of the Yiddish language and its valid rights. But first of all, the Germans want to keep up with the Poles. Secondly, they are still somewhat influenced by the "Jewish Germans" in the western provinces of Austria, among whom not a word of Yiddish is spoken and who regard it with

frightful contempt. Thirdly, in Bukovina, where 60,000 Germans are found among a population of 700,000, the administration remains overwhelmingly German. This is a carry-over, a legacy of the past when the Germans controlled all of Austria. However, as the nationality movements proliferating among the major ethnic groups of the region, the Rumanians (Wallachians) and Ruthenians, have become ever stronger, the power of the Germans has become concomitantly weaker in Bukovina. Therefore, the Germans have begun to utilize every means to hold on to every shred of power. What easier way than to simply add the 100,000 Jews of Bukovina to the figure of 60,000 Germans? They remain comfortably oblivious to the fact that only a mile away, in Galicia, Jews register themselves as "Polish." They are equally indifferent to those Jews who, while residing in Galicia, were compelled to register as Polish and now, residing in Bukovina, are required to register as German. They are totally impervious to any sense of justice.

However, neither the Germans, nor the Poles, nor the government got their way as easily as before. They were actually overwhelmed by surprise, for they generally did not expect this struggle. Suddenly, in both areas, there erupted a tremendous agitation, rallies multiplied and meetings were held. In cities and towns, offices were established; in the larger cities, numerous offices were opened where census forms were completed for the public. Agitators went from door to door, from house to house, and explained to the people what their duty was and what they should do about it.

The parties that concentrated above all on Galicia were the Zionists, Poyaley Tsiyen and ZPS. Each party issued a separate proclamation; each had its own assemblies, headquarters and branch offices. In Bukovina, a general committee was formed in which delegates of the various Jewish parties and groups were represented. This committee, of which I was chairman, conducted its work in the entire region. The impression made by the demonstration, which the committee called together in the capital, Tshernovits, was nothing short of tremendous. More than 3,000 people were assembled. Powerful and pointed speeches were presented, and after the gathering, the 3,000 people marched to

the state government building, where there took place a grand demonstration for the Yiddish language and for the rights of the Jewish people.

In Galicia, the registration offices advised that only the word "Yiddish" be written on the census form. In Bukovina, the committee recommended that in reply to the question of "language of daily use," the answer be given "none of those enumerated in the instructions, but rather only Yiddish."

So far it remains unknown how many Jews in all of Galicia and Bukovina registered "Yiddish" as their language or attempted to register "Yiddish" and did not succeed, only because of the threats and castigations of the authorities. Placed under duress, many Jews had to provide a different entry, falsifying their true identity. In Galicia, the full truth will never be known. In Bukovina, there still remains a possibility for full disclosure because the committee maintained separate lists of the people who registered "Yiddish."

It is certain that, at this time, no immediate practical resolution of the problem will be achieved. The authorities will simply erase the word "Yiddish" and in its place substitute "Polish" or "German." Even were the committee to appeal to the highest court—and you can be sure that it will—precious little will result from it. At the very most, it will succeed in annulling the fines that were inflicted upon those who wrote the truth and not the official lies.

Nevertheless, the effort was not made in vain. In truth, only a segment of the Jews registered "Yiddish" and even their entries will be erased. However, one must understand how difficult it is to overcome the mental sloth of a people, its fears, and the external restraints fettering it. Ends are not achieved overnight but slowly, step by step. Each victory in the life of a nation is the sum of its so-called defeats.

Truly, the whole struggle around the census amounted to a great victory. A light dawned in the minds of the Jews. Even those who registered as "Polish" or "German" did not do so quite as readily as before, but felt sharply the duress under which they were laboring, conscious that an injustice was being perpetrated. There awoke, both in those who suffered the injustice and in those who inflicted it, a deeper sense of awareness. The government has

encountered difficulties here which will require its utmost attention and serious consideration. A new force has begun to take powerful shape and awaits new circumstances in order to create a new fait accompli.


Joseph Barondess 3/V 12
1/13rd Ed.

The Absolute Idea of Judaism and the Yiddish Language*

ALL THE CLAIMS made against Yiddish by its opponents have for the longest time left me unimpressed. Such old, lifeless charges! I have heard it said a thousand times that Yiddish is not a language but simply a version of German—moreover, that it is an ugly language and even that Yiddish is not truly Jewish. It serves no purpose to attempt to answer these charges, for there are none so deaf as those that stop their ears from hearing.

However, there are those opponents of Yiddish who are not quite so boorish and appear with seemingly profounder criticisms. Yiddish, they assert, is opposed to the absolute idea of Judaism and, as a result, the very idea of elevating it to a position of importance annoys them exceedingly.

In view of the fact that I too am (and have long been) a convinced believer in the absolute idea of Judaism, and since I believe that the supreme majesty of the Jewish people—both its past and future—is contained in this very idea, I do believe that this criticism deserves some attention. Naturally, the absolute idea itself must be analyzed first of all.

* * * *

*"Di absolute ideye fun yidntum un di yidishe shprakh," *Di yidishe velt.* 1912, March.

Culture is the unique way, the particular method, that a people utilizes to proceed along the road of human civilization in general. There are no by-products of civilization which have not been influenced in some fashion by one culture or another. However, we find instances of oeuvres where such an imprinting is not significant, because their value does not derive from the people that has created them but, rather, from the general human worth of the things, i.e. of the level of civilization these works and their creators achieve. Such works, in which economic, social, political and scientific innovations are inclusive, may well be termed works of civilization.

On the other hand, we find works that have upon themselves the mark of individuality. Their individual uniqueness is derived from the method according to which they were created. Remove the method and nothing remains of them. They truly become inconceivable at that point. These works, including all religious, philosophical and artistic creativity, may be termed works of culture.

In the final analysis, however, the distinction is in name only. In truth, individuality has no content. The content of cultural works is only a general human civilizational content, and cultures differ only in form. It may happen, however, that a people chooses a special field of civilization in which it invests and from which it draws forth so much creative labor that scarcely anything remains for other nations in that connection. It is then that a people creates a chapter of general civilization and imprints itself upon it, creating a work of culture, a cultural idea, that then imprints all the ethnic creativity of that people thereafter. Through such a work a people becomes a discernible entity, increasingly separated and clearly demarcated from other peoples, and at all times exposed to its own absolute idea and the governing power of its own uniqueness.

Not all governing ideas are alike. Much depends on the essence of the absolute idea of a people and, specifically, on what portion of general human civilization it colonizes. If it carves out an artistic or jurisprudential cultural essence, the culture, to be sure, will have an enormous impact on the entire development of its people, but it will not have a monopoly in that respect. It can, on

occasion, lead a people to its decline if it is an idea that saps it of its vital ethnonational energy. It may also lead to national maturation. However, the future may bring an external culture, stronger in its impact, which will annihilate the total ethnonational organism. And why? Because its particular idea *per se* is not really absolute but, rather, relative. It does not regulate the whole life of the individual or of the community, but does so only in part, and must itself draw from some higher absolute idea.

Entirely different is the case when a people possesses an absolute cultural idea, one that reflects the idea of eternity, the idea of reality and, finally, the idea of God. Only a people with such an eternal, absolute cultural idea—a people that has taken upon itself to realize this very idea in practice, in the general course of its daily life—has taken upon itself an absolute and omnipotent ruler. Furthermore, only such a people becomes eternal, just as the idea itself, to which the people has bent its will, is eternal.

There is one people which has selected an absolute idea for its cultural content, or better yet, was selected to be chosen—namely the Jews. The absolute idea lords it over them but does not permit their dissolution.

But how, in fact, does the Jewish cultural idea attain its influence? How does it succeed in forcing an entire people—old and young, wise and foolish, men of genius and simpletons, poor and rich everywhere—to place themselves under its influence for many thousands of years?

The crux of the matter is that the absolute idea has discovered its own psychological and disciplinary means for this purpose, namely, the Jewish religion. There is no limit to the power that this means has demonstrated in the course of thousands of years, since it first appeared on earth. It has torn the bond between the Jewish people and its land and created the diaspora. Through its disciples, it has brought about the birth of Christianity and, later, the socialist movement. To my mind, the future holds out a unique, immediate opportunity for organized and vital Jewish folk religion to demonstrate new paths toward the idea of absoluteness and eternity and, furthermore, paths that permit and draw closer to the absolute, to the eternal and to God.

Aside from its direct method and unique organization, the

absolute idea of Judaism has an indirect way of affecting the Jewish people: to wit, by infiltrating other life-forms of the people, the very creations of Jewish civilization and formal culture, and by permeating every furthest corner therein. It does not pose the question as to what forms these are or whence they derive. It does not declare one form to be acceptable and another to be unacceptable. The only thing that matters is for it to permeate all those forms in which life goes on, both in its relative and its timely dimensions, and to breathe its own spirit into them.

Therefore, the criticisms of Yiddish made by those who argue from the standpoint of the absolute idea of Judaism are incorrect. The language and the absolute idea are not interdependent. It does not need a particular language; all it needs is that it be the people's own language.

Why the need for a language that is the people's own? Won't any language do just as well, we may ask. Well, the truth is that the absolute idea can enter any language. But what happens then? The absolute idea attempts to make that language into is own, but if this process fails, then it must be a sign that the absolute idea itself has ceased influencing the language with all of its power. As a result, the absolute idea must dismiss the language entirely or begin to effect a new "jargon," as some currently call the Jewish fusion languages, thinking that they discredit them entirely in so doing.

In regard to Eastern European Jews, the question is superfluous because they have their own language. It cannot be gainsaid that their own language is more suitable for the expression of the absolute idea than are foreign languages which obviously expose the people of the absolute idea to other peoples with foreign cultural forms and cultural content. Although this is obvious, there are among us those who proffer the view that only Hebrew can and ought to be the language of the people that has taken upon itself the heritage of the absolute idea.

In a certain sense they are correct. Hebrew has become a very special vehicle, not for the absolute idea *per se* but for the unique form in which it has been organized and crystallized, i.e. for the Jewish religion. Hebrew has left the quotidian and has entered the eternal. It has become the only language that serves the absolute

Jewish idea from very special positions: in the synagogue, in the house of study and in the Hebrew school. But it cannot be heard on the lips of all and sundry or at any and every minute.

The truth is that modern Hebrew literature has no connection at all with the special task that the absolute idea of Judaism has imposed on Hebrew. Modern Hebrew literature is a separate chapter unto itself. To be sure, a language of such significant ancestry, which, moreover, has remained the only eternal language in the world, has and will always have—and should have—the power of attracting certain Jewish figures who may wish to use it for literary purposes. However, the simple fact of writing in Hebrew does not yet make it a spoken language. Quite understandably, this lack should pose no hindrance nor stand in the way of Hebrew, a language which shall always remain eternal.

It is not inconceivable that in the Land of Israel Hebrew will once again become a living language. This too will not result from the power of the absolute Jewish idea but, rather, from the pragmatic demands of daily life, just as in other lands these same practical issues of daily life do not permit Hebrew to become a spoken language. Spoken Hebrew will be no more than one more language among several spoken Jewish languages. The Jews of the Land of Israel will maintain Hebrew not because of its spoken nature but, rather, because Hebrew is and will be the eternal language of all Israel, wherever its members may be found. It is very possible that there may even come into being a linguistic distinction between two types of Hebrew of the Jews of the Land of Israel, the spoken and the eternal.

Quite obviously, the role of Hebrew with respect to the absolute idea of Judaism cannot be compared to the role which a living, spoken language must, perforce, have for this very idea or, more felicitously, for the work that the absolute idea must realize through the spoken language. The Yiddish language plays a tremendous role in the work-economy of the absolute Jewish idea. Yiddish has already had ample opportunities to demonstrate how effective it has been in this role. Jewish women have expressed their most tender and most gentle feelings to God through the delicate instrument of the Yiddish language. In Yiddish they

consecrated the Sabbath and the Jewish festivals. Through Yiddish translations God's Torah was transmitted to them from one generation to the next. The Rabbis preached and Bar Mitzvah boys intoned their speeches in Yiddish. In Yiddish the legends and tales were repeated which are truly part and parcel of the absolute Jewish idea. All this can continue and will continue through the use of Yiddish. However, if our people will be deserving of that which so many Jews fervently hope and yearn for today, namely a new warm, creative religious epoch, then Yiddish will be able to display fully the wealth of riches it possesses. It will then be able to demonstrate its entire religious content and feeling, which has been accumulating throughout hundreds of years. The absolute idea of Judaism will continue to quietly send forth its divine spark into the Yiddish language. Then, even Hebrew will not take umbrage, but remain steadfast in its great eternal task: to be an everlasting witness to the eternity of our people.


תרכ"ד - תרע"ד
1864 — 1914
50
50
Jüdische Seele in jüdischen Lebensformen ist jüdische Kraft
די יודישע נשמה און דאס יודישע לעבען, אש פון
וואנען ס׳נעמט זיך דער יודישער כח
הנשמה היהודית והחיים היהודים הנה הם הכח היהודי
Collection de Michel Berlin

"Havaraaaa Ssephardiiiit"*

IT HAS BECOME imperative, by this time, to say something about *"havaraaaa ssephardiiiit,"* meaning, certainly not the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew itself, but merely the mischief of certain fanatics who want to make it into the only recognized uniform pronunciation among the Jewish people.

Now to begin with, it is hard to understand why a uniform pronunciation is necessary at all, especially in the lands of the so-called *golus.* But even assuming its truly urgent necessity, why specifically the Sephardic pronunciation? Would it not be simpler to convert the one-third million Sephardim to the Ashkenazic instead of the eleven million Ashkenazim to the Sephardic pronunciation? Or, if uniformity of pronunciation, in accordance with a certain ideology, is perhaps desired only with regard to Palestinian needs and conditions—would one not even in Palestine surely have to count on a growing Ashkenazic majority?

But *"havara sephardit,"* the pronunciation of the Sephardim is supposedly the only correct pronunciation of Hebrew. In what sense? That our ancestors pronounced their Hebrew in today's *"havara sephardit"* or a close approximation thereof? Does that really make sense, or is it, in fact, nonsense? Even assuming that it were indeed undisputed scientific fact, as is actually claimed, that the Hebrews throughout ancient times spoke in the Sephardic pronunciation, how can one make oneself so ridiculous as to wish to decree historical accuracy to be eternal truth? Can one really be

Die Freistatt, 1913, 1, no. 8, November.

so naive as to believe that a nationality, at any one time, is capable of speaking or pronouncing "inaccurately"?

The Sephardic pronunciation is also supposed to sound more pleasing than the Ashkenazic. But even if this were true, can this do away with today's facts of life and living vitality? And can one, in general, so easily trust such esthetic judgements? Are they not always subjective and often also clouded by prejudices and biases? If someone, by his nature, is bothered with everything in his heritage of real and historical Judaism, would he not find the Ashkenazic pronunciation no uglier than the Sephardic—especially if puffed-up sympathies for the "Oriental" sound of the Sephardic are added? And if one wants to relinquish sovereign ethnonational realities for questions of taste in these matters, is it not preferable to favor the even more genuine judgement based on the taste of many educated Jews of East and West? A perfect example is a proselyte, the well-known Nahida Ruth Lazarus, certainly a neutral witness, who has expressed herself in the following words:

"I have chosen the so-called Ashkenazic, i.e. Polish pronunciation, as the richer, preferring the sonorous o-vowel, in contrast to the Sephardic, i.e. Spanish-Portugese, with its prevailing a-sound. Although the latter seemed more dignified, literary, and superior, this was a matter of indifference to me; I preferred the finer sound."

No, there is no objective esthetics, no eternal accuracy, no necessity for uniformity to legitimize the boisterous agitation by the *"havaraaaa ssephardiiiit"* fanatics against the Ashkenazic pronunciation of eleven million Jews and on behalf of the universal introduction of the pronunciation of a third of a million. No, it is only their own mentality that dominates them, the same leaky mentality that leads the assault against the Yiddish language of nine million Jews. It is only their own fantasy that drives them, the same arid fantasy that takes delight in a Hebrew-speaking nationality of the future. It is only their own caprice which incites them, this trifling caprice that covers their small, very very ordinary, very very limited, very very utilitarian goals with the much-borrowed mantel of absolutism.

Those, however, who are concerned with the living soul and the intellectual life of the Jewish people, may well remain

indifferent. For one need only to comprehend the smile upon Jewish lips in order to see that the good Hebraists, with their "havaraaaa" Don Quixotade, have found the best means to make it impossible for others to take them seriously.



Oppressed by Fellow Jews*

Light and Darkness

When Jewish minds first conceived the notion that utter brightness exists in the outside, non-Jewish world, and that Jews live in utter darkness—moreover, that one should introduce this light into that darkness—at that point our oppression by fellow Jews began.

In the beginning, our enlighteners still pitied us, as if we were unfortunate idlers. But soon their pity changed to anger. Can you imagine? *They* want to transform us into "proper human beings": into doctors, salesmen, specialists in innkeeping, movie theaters and saloons—and *we* have the nerve to resist!

The fact is that we intuitively resist this. The fact is that our feelings, our sensitivities will not allow it. The fact is that our ancient faith refuses any credence of these new "triumphs." The fact is that the gentile peoples are also beginning to tire gradually of these "enlightened" folk with their obscuring "enlightenment."

Such contentions do not suffice for our wholesale and retail merchants of "light." The Jews of the Enlightenment are not to be trifled with; they sit haughtily and give themselves airs, until a veritable cloud of arrogance surrounds them. After all, haven't they revealed all the secrets of the universe, unravelled all its puzzles? We, however, who are we?: merely paupers who wait

---

**In goles bay yidn.* Zurich, Agudes yisroel tsentral-byuro, 1919. The present abridged version appeared, in Yiddish, in *Dos yidishe vort.* 1963, Kheshvn. October. 76–77.

emptyhanded before some purported heavenly throne. They have concluded that one must "go with the times," even run with the times, even sin with the times. But we, however, who are we? We are no more than backward folk who subordinate the thought of all generations to the Almighty's commandments. They are modern people, aware of progress. More machines, more politics, more entertainment, more theories, more hypotheses will be the salvation of the world. We, however, who are we? Strange idlers whose souls ask strange questions: how does one spiritually elevate oneself from one level to the next?; how does one become that which God commanded?

Their "Innovations"

It did not suffice to present us with the benefits of their enlightenment; they also felt compelled to bring us other gifts, more "innovations." The first was Justice and Law. The world is all entangled in problems and must be straightened out. There must be no difference between one person and another, between rich and poor. What is yours is mine and, perhaps, just possibly, what is mine is yours.

Apparently, were it not for them, we would never have heard of Justice and Law. Apparently it is not written in the Torah, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Apparently the Torah pays no attention to the obligations of people toward one another. Apparently the prophets either never lived or never stepped forward against human injustices, never demanded Justice and Law. Apparently there is no ancient Jewish longing, a longing for renewed humanity, with renewed virtuous feelings and renewed consecrated deeds. Apparently there is no ancient Jewish belief, a belief that on Judgement Day, the Messiah will arrive and redeem not only the Jewish people but all peoples and will implant new hearts into one and all.

As for them, not only do they fail to see with whom they are dealing, with whom they are going to renew the world. They do not even look at themselves—at what has become of them. They confront violence with violence. They would build their new wonders on lawlessness, on unchastity and on the infantile

megalomania of mortal men. Instead of pulling us out of the mire, they sink us deeper and deeper into it.

We are not deceived, however. We have not forgotten that "the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing." We do not make uncertain deals with peoples and nations that are not trustworthy. We know that violence cannot erase violence; that lawlessness, unchastity and megalomania cannot rectify the world; that only faith in God leads to sanctity. Consequently, we remain with our way—with our Torah which has rooted out the violent nature within us and directed us to become a people of peace and understanding. Consequently, we remain with our Torah, on whose foundation we will continue to seek self-improvement and spiritual elevation, from one level to another, until the Almighty ordains that the world be filled with understanding, Justice and Law.

The Concepts of People, Land and Language

They have brought us a third gift, a third tiding, a third discovery: that we are a people. Apparently, if not for them, we would never have become aware of this. It would seem that in the Torah we are never referred to as a nationality, a people, an ethnonational entity. It seems that, until now, we have considered ourselves Tartars, Turks, Germans and Russians.

So what *is* the difference between their view and ours?

To them a people is a community of individuals who differentiate themselves from other communities only in that they have historically developed a worldliness of a different color. "It is the same woman, but differently veiled." To them, the Jewish people is a people like all other peoples; we must be as foolish as they: learn their ways, their insolence, their materialistic ideals.

We are aware, however, of a higher level of nationhood than that of being merely a "differently veiled woman." A people can and should be a unique creation, with a unique soul and unique content to comprise its peoplehood. And there is no gainsaying that the Jewish people is such a people with a unique nature, with a unique soul, chosen from among all other peoples.

According to them, the Land of Israel is an enlarged city of

refuge, a place to which one flees. To them, Israel is terra incognita that, on one fine morning, they declared to be their "fatherland"—and where they want to settle in accord with the usual approach of the nations of the world to their fatherlands—with the maximum "light" possible: enlightened theaters, enlightened cabarets, enlightened conflicts and violence—and without the Jewish religion, without God and without the holy Torah.

For us, Israel is not some terra incognita that only now, in order to rescue ourselves, have we been reminded of our connection to. It had never left our thoughts. We have never ceased to love and to long for it. We want to fulfill the commandment of settling in the Land of Israel and to do so with all our power and love, because of the holiness of sanctity, because of the holiness of that land which must not be desecrated, God forbid.

Hebrew, Yiddish and the Holy Tongue

For them, peoplehood depends primarily on language. Whoever speaks Hebrew or Yiddish is a Jew, in the same way that anyone who speaks Turkish is a Turk. For them, language is a toy. They play with Hebrew in a haughty way and with Yiddish in playboy fashion.

For us, Hebrew is the holy tongue. Our attitude toward the holy tongue is one of amazement and of great love and respect. We regard the Holy Tongue as the tongue in which God's word is written, as the tongue in which the prophets wrote and warned, as the tongue which has become as eternal as the Jewish people—and will never die. Therefore, we want this tongue to remain the Holy Tongue, to remain free of any and all impurity or defilement.

Yiddish is loved and cherished by us because it is the language of our fathers and mothers, the language that the Jews of Eastern Europe have spoken for hundreds of years and into which they have infused their Jewish souls and which they have permeated with their Jewishness.

We love both languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, each with a different love. But we also realize that before this love comes the love of "You shall love the Lord, your God." We realize that "He

has lifted us above all languages," indeed, that He has made us higher than language *per se.*

The Dangerous Oppression

They approach us with friendly words and with palpable lies, with their temptations to evil, in order to set us upon the European way of life, to transform us into "decent people." They search for slogans by means of which to reach our children, to seize and try to take away our holy Torah and our Jewish way of life for themselves and for their ideologies, for their lawless world. Can there be any greater and more dangerous oppression than this?

And when they seek to enrich the various nationalities with various "riches"—one with "free spirit," another with brilliant state plans, or perhaps social projects, or even with rebellions and revolutions—and the Jewish people will be the ones to suffer—what shall we call this if not oppression?

And what about when they feel the urge, or rather: feel the obligation, to do us the favor of encircling us until we cannot place one foot firmly in front of the other, cannot lift our hands by ourselves, and even our mouths have not sufficient room to open? When someone should speak, they speak; when something is to be divided, they divide it; when something should be arranged, they arrange it. They are the contributors, the suppliers; we accept the hand-outs, we are the helpless, the pitiful. Is there any doubt that this is oppression?

It seems that we are more knowledgeable about our oppression by the gentile peoples than about our oppression by our own brothers, those estranged from the Torah and the Law. When the gentiles persecute us, interfere in our affairs, prevent us from following our ways, we protest and though we are among them as a dust-particle among mountains, we try to help one another as much as possible. But our estranged brothers, who are dust-particles compared to us, they not only persecute us themselves, but they cause the gentiles to persecute us as well. Not only do they interfere in our affairs, but they also take them out of our hands. Not only do they not allow us to follow our ways, but they attempt to block the way forever. And in response to all this,

we do not lament; we do not prevent them and we do not try to help ourselves.

Why Do We Allow it?

Why has it come to this? Why, if they seek positions of honor from us and through us, do we not rid ourselves of them? Why, if they want to be our patrons, do we not emancipate ourselves? If they do the unallowable, why do we continue to deal with them? If they want to be political and social bunglers, why do we allow them to speak in our name? But most importantly, if they are leading us astray and captivate our children, why do we not give them the kind of "reception" that will cause them not to come anymore? Why do we not rescue ourselves and our children from their hands?

An End to Religious Egoism

Do you want to know why? Then let us begin by being aware of the sigh that is usually expressed while asking ourselves these questions. A sigh which supposedly reveals faith in God: "It probably was fated to be this way. The Almighty will help us in his own good time!" Beware of this sigh for the following reason: we have forgotten that the Almighty demands that we act with faith and not await His action with folded arms.

Because we have fallen into a kind of religious egoism, each of us is concerned only for himself, each for his share in this material existence; therefore, we have fallen into the hands of the impious, the atheists, and the lawless. The only way to rescue ourselves from today's destruction of Judaism is to renounce this smug pseudo-faith in God, this religious egoism, to put an end to our inactivity and to become activists, independent activists.

To the extent that we have been active, we have been active mostly within the community. We have not examined its boundaries. It has not occurred to us that no matter how important the community is for Judaism, each individual representing a brick from among the bricks that build the House of Israel, it is nevertheless absurd for each individual to think only of

his own brick and not of the whole structure, nor whether the bricks can hold together, nor whether they will be able to withstand the outside storm. This has not yet occurred to us, but we must begin to concern ourselves with this. We must look at the whole Jewish people, at the fate of Jewishness worldwide. We must extricate ourselves from the unfortunate condition in which we now find ourselves, where the pious Jews of different countries and even those within one country are not aware of each other. We must become true partners, gather our forces and defend ourselves against our estranged brothers.

Our Responsibilities

It is true that we have other commitments and responsibilities than those concerning them. We must remain that which we have been until now—those who do not voluntarily open their souls to temptations of evil, but who combat it in order to conquer it—those who prefer the unobtrusive holiness of the house of study and synagogue to the modern political and party hustle and bustle. And we must also attempt to ascend, to strive for spiritual improvement. Yes, that is the honest truth!

And if we are reminded of this truth by those who remain distant from unobtrusive holiness and who are drenched in falsehood and partiality up to their necks—then we must be on our guard.

What would happen if their political hustle and bustle were to score a total victory over our people and the destruction, already so great, were to grow and multiply, and the unobtrusive holiness were to be totally wiped out as a result?

And what would happen if there were no people left among whom our most dedicated could work on behalf of spiritual uplift and improvement, including the very best among us, with the highest apolitical strivings? Is it possible that by maintaining Jewishness as our only treasure, we will ever be able to become expert demagogues, such as they are?

Should we try to attain their perfection in banging and noise making? Is it necessary? We are, after all, the mountains, and they the particles of dust. We merely need to collect our forces into a

worldwide organization of the religious. Only in this way, and without grand political trickery, will we be able to prevent that which must be prevented and to accomplish that which must be accomplished. And such a worldwide organization of religious Jews need not first be formed at this time. It already exists and its name is well known. It is called *Agudes Yisroel.*



Then and Now*

IT WAS THE first of January in 1908 when I arrived in New York on my first trip to America. In the lectures I gave there, I declared my support for a diaspora cultural nationalism and underlined the essential importance of the Yiddish language for the survival of the Jewish people. American Jews were very reluctant and disinclined at that time to accept such a program, a fact that became clearly evident in the pages of the newspapers. I was received cordially enough, but that did not prevent my being thoroughly attacked. The humorous papers, in particular, set upon me with a vengeance. But to tell the truth, I played right into their hands in that I held my lectures in German.

All this scarcely disturbed me—on the contrary, it made me more resolute in my opinions. I felt that something of great moment must be accomplished on behalf of Yiddish, a kind of public proclamation of its linguistic legitimacy and of its linguistic rights. Since I was, nevertheless, able to find a few kindred spirits there, well-known figures, we finally came to the decision to call into being a Yiddish-language conference which would encompass all the issues which touch upon the interests of Yiddish writers and the language they employ. We selected Tshernovits, in Bukovina (then a part of Austria, now in Rumania)** as the conference site. The Conference set the little world of Yiddish astir. It was not a mere trifle. The most acclaimed Yiddish writers

---

*"Demolt un atsind," in *Di ershte yidishe shprakh-konferents: barikhtn, faktn, opklangen fun der tshernovitser konferents.* Vilne, Yiddish Scientific Institute-Yivo, 1931.

**Editor's note: Since 1945, Tshernovits is in the Ukrainian Republic, USSR.

and poets of the era were present: Perets, Ash, Reyzn, Zhitlovski, Nomberg and others. Mendele Moykher Sforem and Sholem Aleykhem sent heartfelt greetings. Correspondents representing various publications, in particular those who had declared their fervent opposition to the conference, were on hand. These very journalists lost no time in penning articles and sending out news that sometimes did not adhere closely to the truth. For example, during the Conference there was a significant discussion whether to proclaim Yiddish as *the* ethnonational tongue or just *an* ethnonational language of the Jewish people. Those who advocated the latter point of view proved victorious. However, the newspapers reported differently, issuing statements contrary to the facts and directing their barbed attacks on "fanatical Yiddishists." To note just another fact: I was the only one at the entire Conference who eschewed strong words, opposed radicalism and demanded practical results. Even "*an* ethnonational language" did not strike me as of overwhelming importance. The media drummed up the story that I showed myself to be unequivocally for "*the* ethnonational language" and an incendiary opponent of the Holy Tongue. In truth, it was the renowned Bundist, Esther, who took the most radical stance. Throughout the Conference, there was a running war between the two of us. Most other Conference delegates were generally more closely aligned with her than with me.

The papers also made heavy use of irony in their descriptions of my introductory speech to the Conference, concentrating on the fact that I did not deliver it extemporaneously but followed a prepared text. My use of German during all the debates did not escape their notice, and with these charges they convinced themselves that they had thoroughly negated the value of the Conference. But whom did it disturb? Who did not understand that the power and rights of Yiddish were unrelated to the fact that a certain man raised in Western Europe had learned the language late in life and that at the time of the Conference he could not, as yet, speak it freely?

A notable impression was made in Tshernovits itself by the huge public meeting which was convened there for the Conference and by the speeches given at the meeting by Perets,

Ash, Zhitlovski, Reyzn, Nomberg and others concerning the significance of Yiddish for the Jewish people and the aims of the Conference. Rarely, if ever, has a city had such an opportunity to see and hear, assembled in one place and at one time, the great and renowned Jewish writers and poets of the age.

At the time of their departure, those assembled at the Conference thought that in all probability they would be meeting each other again, at a second conference. However, they did not meet again. It appears that a second meeting was not of such pressing importance. The first conference had accomplished more than enough. It had strengthened the energies of those to whom the Yiddish language was very dear. It turned them into diligent laborers in the Yiddish vineyard. There is, however, one thing I fear, namely, that these workers have veered onto a wrong path. At the time of the Conference, I did not foresee (nor could I have foreseen) this. But today, as a result of my return to the Torah and to the Jews who cannot live without it, I observe with mounting apprehension how the radical parties attempt to monopolize the Yiddish language for their own purposes. In so doing, they have driven a wedge between Yiddish and the mass of religious Jews—the original and truthful creators of Yiddish—and, thereby, they have placed Yiddish in jeopardy of being sundered from its life-giving sources, of losing its own linguistic authenticity, its true Jewish nature, its vivid colors. Ultimately it may become a mere ghost of its former self—a dessicated artifact, just another European tongue, a mere language.

Would that this danger pass, with no untoward results, and permit Yiddish to remain the Jewish treasure on behalf of which it was so eminently worthwhile to have convened the Tshernovits Yiddish Language Conference.



A Few Words About Yiddish*

IT IS TRUE: there are Jews who advocate Yiddish, and, at the same time, they betray the God of Israel. However, one must not conclude therefrom that Yiddish is unimportant for *yidishkayt*. For there are also—and even more numerous—"Hebraist" atheists and obviously no one would say that the Holy Tongue, therefore, has no importance for *yidishkayt*. Or even if Jewish scholars become non-believers, can one conclude therefrom that the study of Torah makes no worthwhile contribution to *yidishkayt?* No, what must be concluded from all of the foregoing is that there are dark forces that are so strong, under certain circumstances, that they overcome the shining influence of Yiddish, of the Holy Tongue and even of Torah study. So one must wage war against these dark forces, but never forego Yiddish, nor the Holy Tongue, much less Torah study. And precisely for this war, Yiddish itself is a mighty weapon; not simply because the masses understand it, but even more: because it is saturated with the very essence of the Jewish soul.

Furthermore, what a difference between their Yiddish and our Yiddish, the Yiddish that is saturated with Jewish soul! Without *yidishkayt* the very flavor of Yiddish is lost, just as the holiness of the Holy Tongue evaporates.

---

*"A por verter vegn yidish," *Beys yankev*, 1931, 8, p. 2.

Glossary

Names, Technical Terms and Non-English (German, Hebrew and Yiddish) Words*

AASEN, IVAR: Norwegian linguist (1813–1896), father of Landsmaal, a variety of standard modern Norwegian based upon old Norse and rural dialects relatively uncontaminated by Danish and, thereby, differing from the Dano-Norwegian (Riksmaal) generally preferred in Norway's urban centers. Aasen's work is a model of language planning (q.v.) in pursuit of authenticity. For ample detail see Einar Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning, The Case of Modern Norwegian.* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1966.

ABSTAND LANGUAGE: Any language that is obviously and consensually distant from another with which it is being compared in structural (phonological, grammatical and lexico-semantic) respects. The distinction between Abstand and Ausbau (q.v.) languages is a relative, rather than an absolute, one and depends on changing political and sociocultural circumstances, particularly on the more general goals and ideologies of those making the distinction. Thus, Afrikaans, once considered to be an uncultivated Dutch dialect, is now, after many years of Ausbau

*Common abbreviations: G = German; Y = Yiddish; MH = Modern [Israeli] Hebrew. The transliteration system for Yiddish and Hebrew names and words follows that of the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research and the Library of Congress.

efforts and of sociopolitical acceptance in prestige functions, widely viewed as a fully independent, self-regulating language, with ample abstand from Dutch. Yiddish advocates hope(d) for and predict(ed) just such a transformation for Yiddish vis-à-vis German.

AGNES JORDAN: The title of a play by the German-Jewish playwright Georg Hirschfeld (1873–1942). *Agnes Jordan* was his second work and was published in 1898 (Berlin: Fischer Verlag). As was the case with his first (and more highly regarded) drama, *Die Muetter* (1896), it deals with Berlin's Jewish society and its struggles between bourgeois respectability and artistic yearnings, between obligations to others and loyalty to one's own personality. Although Hirschfield's plays bring to life characters drawn from the Jewish bourgeoisie, and, as such, may provide us today with a naturalistic picture of its life and strivings, his plays are generally considered to be sentimental, sensational and entertaining rather than great works of theatre. Birnbaum compared *Agnes Jordan* unfavorably to the Yiddish musical comedy *Di kaprizne moyd* (q.v.), both of these plays being performed in Vienna at roughly the same time.

AGNO'N, SHMUE'L YOSE'F (MH; Y: A'gnon, Shmu'el Yoy'sef): Hebrew (and, briefly, also Yiddish) short story writer (1888–1970). Agnon settled in Palestine in 1907 (soon after Birnbaum's unsuccessful attempt to run for the seat in the Austrian Reichsrat (q.v.) from Bitshutsh, Agnon's home town) and, except for the period 1914–1924, lived there continuously thereafter. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1966. His tales often deal with Jewish life in Galicia and contain many "folksy" and hasidic (q.v.) story-telling features.

AGU'DES YISRO'EL (Y; MH: Aguda't Yisrae'l): An international organization of ultra-Orthodox Jews, launched in 1912 in Katowicz (then in Prussia, now in Poland) whose goal is "to solve all problems in the spirit of the Torah." Originally strongly anti-Zionist, the Israeli branch of the organization (referred to, in abbreviated fashion, as Agu'de/Aguda'), now participates in Israeli political processes and is represented in the Israeli Kne'set

(Parliament). Birnbaum became the Agude's first Secretary General, upon its reorganization after the close of World War I (1919), and remained its strong supporter even after resigning from this position in 1921.

AKHA'D HA-A'M (MH; Y: A'khed Ho-o'm). A Hebrew writer (1856–1927) who strongly stressed the need for ethnocultural awakening (=spiritual Zionism) as distinct from political-territorial Zionism. He advocated developing Palestine as a cultural center devoted to the strengthening of Judaism/Jewishness throughout the world, rather than as the physical center of the Jewish people. A strong advocate of Hebrew and an accomplished stylist in that language, he allocated to Yiddish only temporary, practical (adult educational) functions, at best. Birnbaum admired him, but, in his Yiddishist stage, attacked Akhed Ho-om's views concerning Yiddish.

ASCH, SHO'LEM (1880–1957): Polish born Yiddish author (primarily: novelist), many of whose later works attained worldwide recognition via translation into English, German and other languages. A controversial figure, his most famous writings (e.g., *The Nazarene*) deal with the origins of Christianity among Jews in Roman-occupied Palestine. He attended the Tshernovits Conference, where he advocated translating the major sanctified texts of the Jewish people from Hebrew into Yiddish, as a means of strengthening the traditional functions and the eternal values of Yiddish.

ASHKENA'ZEM (Y; MH: Ashkenazi'm): Jews of Central and Eastern Europe, or their descendants who have resettled elsewhere, usually as distinguished from Sephardim (q.v.) by their liturgy (rite), customs, Jewish vernacular and pronunciation of Hebrew. Singular: Ashkenazi; English adjectival form: Ashkenazi(c). Ashkenaz was originally a biblical place-name, referring to a Middle-Eastern locale; in post-Talmudic days this name was revived and applied to the Germanic lands. Accordingly, Jews living in and stemming from those lands came to be known as Ashkenazem and their rite as Ashkenazi(c).

AUSBAU LANGUAGE: Any language that is structurally (i.e., phonologically, gramatically and lexico-semantically) so similar to a stronger, societally more secure language that the former is often considered, both by outsiders and insiders, to be a "mere dialect" of the latter. Accordingly, in order to foster a greater degree of perceived autonomy for Ausbau languages, their advocates undertake corpus-planning (q.v.) in order to increase the apparent differences between these languages and their "big brothers," i.e., they attempt to "build away" [=Ausbau] their own language from the more powerful language with which it is always being unfavorably compared in terms of purported lack of autonomy. See footnote 20, Chapter 4. Also see ABSTAND LANGUAGE.

BAL-TSHU'VE (Y; MH: Baa'l-Tshuva'): Literally: one who returns (to the [Jewish] religious fold). Tshuve/tshuva *per se* is also repentance. Accordingly, a bal-tshuve's return to the religious fold is, simultaneously, an act and a state of repentance, just as repentance is viewed as an indication of returning to one's true and proper obligations and identity.

BEACONSFIELD, LORD: Title granted to the famous British statesman, novelist and Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881). Disraeli always acknowledged that he was Jewish "by race," although his parents had arranged for him to be converted to Anglicanism during his childhood. His full title was First Earl of Beaconsfield.

BEN YEHU'DA, ELIEZER (1858–1922): Father of the "revival" (=revernacularization) of Hebrew in Palestine, contributing to this process as an ideologist, linguist and activist. Born in Lithuania, he spent most of his years in Palestine, after training as a linguist in Paris. See Jack Fellman. *The Revival of a Classical Tongue.* The Hague, Mouton, 1973.

BILDUNG (G): Modern, secular (as opposed to traditional, Jewish) education, and, by extension, in the view of most Germanized Jews during the latter half of the 19th and the pre-World War I

years of the 20th century, the attainment of such refinement of taste, thought and behavior as would tend to prove to their Christian neighbors that anti-Semitism was unjustified and that Germanized Jews deserved social acceptance and full civil rights.

BJORNSON, BJORNSTERNE: Norwegian writer (1832–1910), famous for crystallizing (in 1899) the *opposition* to recognizing Landsmaal, a variety of modern Norwegian based upon rural dialects and least influenced by Danish, and for providing a new and widely adopted name for urban, Dano-Norwegian (henceforth: Riksmaal or "national language"). Birnbaum quoted with approval Bjornson's view that the number of speakers of a language was more important than its so called purity, since this pro-Riksmaal view was in line with Birnbaum's defense of Yiddish (rather than other, purportedly "purer" languages favored by various Jewish intellectuals). In reality, had Bjornson been transported to the Jewish scene, he might very well have favored Hebrew or German, rather than Yiddish, since he was a strong supporter of the linguistic and intellectual status-quo, rather than of "uncultured upstarts."

BUKOVINA (Y: Bukovi'ne): Now a region in the Ukrainian SSR and in adjoining North-Eastern Rumania and the Moldavian SSR, Bukovina was administratively a part of Galicia (q.v.) during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It had appreciable Jewish, German and Ruthenian (Ukrainian) populations. Its major city was, and is, Tshernovits (see Chapter 4, footnote 8), now in the Ukrainian SSR. A Jew born in (or living in) Bukovina is referred to in Yiddish as "a bukoviner." See Chapter 2, footnote 2.

BUND: Abbreviated name of the "Jewish Workers Alliance [=Bund] of Russia, Lithuania and Poland," founded in Vilne in 1897 by the unification of several pre-existing Jewish socialist groups. The Bund adopted its ethno-cultural program in 1905, going beyond its previous opposition to anti-Jewish discrimination and advocating Jewish cultural autonomy based upon secular Yiddish culture and opposing both assimilation within the co-territorial proletariat or emigration to Palestine or elsewhere as

solutions to Jewish problems. Socialism was viewed as the only solution to anti-Semitism and Jewish poverty and urban, commercial overconcentration, just as cultural autonomy was viewed as the only means of safeguarding Jewish ethnonational distinctiveness and creativity within modern, democratic society. The Bund did not spread significantly outside of the confines of the western provinces of the Czarist Empire (although small counterpart Jewish socialist parties did come into existence elsewhere) and, accordingly, it was not a force in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy during Birnbaum's second (cultural autonomist and Yiddishist) phase. See Ezra Mendelsohn. *Class Struggle in the Pale.* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970.

CIVILIZATION: In 19th and early 20th century German usage, the biproduct of urban life-styles: inauthentic, commercialized and devoid of kultur (q.v.). See Chapter 7.

CODIFICATION: A subdivision of corpus planning (which is itself an aspect of language planning [q.v.]). Codification consists of authoritatively defining the rules of proper usage (e.g., spelling, grammar, punctuation). In Birnbaum's days, particularly prior to World War I, Yiddish was much criticized (in comparison to German, Polish, Russian or Hebrew) for being largely uncodified. The accomplishment of this goal was one of Birnbaum's major objectives in conjunction with the Tshernovits Conference of 1908. Although that Conference was substantially side-tracked to more popular, status planning issues, authoritative grammars, dictionaries and orthographic guides for Yiddish were subsequently prepared by various scholars, agencies and organizations, particularly after World War I.

DIGLOSSIA: Widespread and stable within-group bilingualism, such that the languages utilized are, on the one hand, consensually functionally differentiated and, on the other hand, consensually accepted as culturally legitimate. For further discussion, see my "Bilingualism and biculturism as individual and as societal phenomena" in J.A. Fishman, et al. *The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival.* Berlin,, Mouton, 1985. pp. 39–56. Adjectival form: diglossic.

DI KAPRI'ZNE MOYD(Y): Literally, "The Capricious Lass." A musical comedy, also known as "Kabtsnzon et Hungerman" (= "Pauperson and Hungerman"), with both words and music written by Avro[he]m Goldfaden (q.v.). A melodrama in four acts, this play was first published in New York in 1893 and was probably first performed a few years earlier. Birnbaum first saw it performed in Vienna by a visiting Yiddish theater-troupe in 1891.

DREYFUS, ALFRED (1859–1935): French army officer of Jewish descent. He was unjustly convicted of treason in 1894 and 1899, in an effort to cover-up pro-German espionage in higher echelons of the French army. Dreyfus was acquitted in 1906, after having been imprisoned on Devil's Island (a former penal colony off the coast of French Guiana), thanks to the evidence and protests of his supporters in France, the Dreyfusards. The blatant anti-Semitism that accompanied the accusations against Dreyfus was instrumental in Theodore Herzl's (q.v.) formulation of political Zionism (q.v.).

DUBNO'V, SHI'MEN (1860–1941): Jewish historian, formulator of the view that legally guaranteed ethnonational autonomy is historically the means of creative Jewish cultural survival during two millennia of dispersion. Dubnov initially wrote and published his works in Russian, German and Hebrew, but, subsequently strongly supported Yiddish as an authentic language of Jewish cultural autonomy. Co-founder of the Folkist Party (q.v.) in 1906. Perished in the Holocaust during the annihilation of the Jews of Riga (Latvia).

ELABORATION: A subdivision of corpus planning (which is itself an aspect of language planning [q.v.]). Elaboration consists of authoritatively adding to the resources, particularly the lexical resources, of a language, e.g., by devising nomenclatures for all areas of modern technology and science. In Birnbaum's day, Yiddish was much criticized (in comparison with German, Polish and Russian) for being insufficiently elaborated for these and other modern functions. Although Birnbaum failed in his goal of having this problem discussed at the Tshernovits Conference of

1908 it has, since then, been substantially addressed by Jewish scholars, agencies and organizations, particularly after World War I.

ERROR VARIANCE: Variation present in overt behavioral or in subjective attitudinal data due to factors other than those of immediate interest to the investigator in conjunction with any particular analysis. What is considered error variance on one analytic occasion may be focussed upon (i.e., may become the object of inquiry) of subsequent analyses. The analysis of variance, i.e., the determination of the possible reasons or causes of variation in human behavior (=variance) is a major goal in social science research. Since all of the reasons for variation in human behavior cannot be determined in any one analysis, the unexplained variance at any particular juncture is termed error variance.

FIRST WORLD CONGRESS/CONFERENCE FOR THE YIDDISH LANGUAGE: see Tshernovits Conference of 1908 in Chapter 4, passim.

FOLKIST PARTY (also: Folkspartey, Folkistn[Y]): Originally founded in Czarist Russia in 1906, its basic position was that Jews were and would remain an internationally dispersed people that should seek ethnocultural autonomy in all countries in which they resided in sufficiently large numbers. Reorganized in 1916 in Poland, the party supported Yiddish cultural efforts of all kinds, founded a network of Yiddish day schools and succeeded in electing a few delegates to the Polish Sejm (Parliament) and to various city councils. As a result of internal fractionization the Party's influence became negligible after 1926.

FO'RVERTS: A major Yiddish periodic publication in the USA since its founding in 1897. It began as a daily and converted to weekly bilingual status (Yiddish with an English supplement) more than 80 years later. Originally vociferously socialist, secularist and non-Zionist in orientation, with a marked ambivalence toward the ultimate value and longevity of Yiddish, it has matured over the

years into a more generally accepting posture toward Jewish traditional life and Zionism, while becoming a major supporter and advocate of modern Yiddish culture. Its Germanized name (literal meaning: forward) was never part of spoken Yiddish (with the possible exception of certain socialist circles). Rather, it represents a 19th century view among the modernizing Jewish intelligentsia that a German named implied greater worldly sophistication, and, in the case of the Forverts, identification with the international proletariat.

FRANTS-YO'ZEFS MEDI'NE (Y): Literally, the realm of Frants Yozef. Francis Josef I (1830–1916), Emperor of Austria (1848–1916) and King of Hungary (1867–1916), ruled for such a long time and was so generally admired by the Jewish public for his humane attitude toward his Jewish subjects that Yiddish speakers, within and without the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, often referred to it colloquially in conjunction with his name.

FRU'MKAYT (Y): Orthodox piety and scrupulous observance of the minutia of halakhic (q.v.) requirements.

GALICIA (Y: Gali'tsye): A province of the pre-World War I Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. See Chapter 2, footnote 2. Jews born in or living in Galicia are referred to in Yiddish as galitsiya'ner.

GALU'TIC: English adjectival form derived from go'les (Y)/galu't (MH) (q.v.).

GEGENWARTSARBEIT (G, also utilized briefly in Y): Work on behalf of the here and now, i.e., efforts on behalf of Jewish social, cultural and political goals in the diaspora, rather than concentrating all Zionist efforts exclusively on building the hoped-for future Jewish homeland in Palestine. A goal of influential segments of almost all Zionist parties after the 1906 Zionist World Congress in Helsinki and particularly characteristic of Labor-Zionism (Poyaley Tsiyen) in Galicia.

GE'RER RE'BE (Y): Literally, the Rabbi of Ger [Polish: Gur]. The scion of a hasidic "dynasty" (gerer khsi'dem; also see Hasidism, below), founded in 1859. Prior to World War I, and even more so during the interwar period, the Gerer Rebe (R' Avro'[he]m A'lter Mo'rdkhe) was the most prominent figure in Eastern European ultra-Orthodoxy and one of the founders of Agudes Yisroel (q.v.). The current Gerer Rebe, who maintains his "court" in Jerusalem, remains a major power in the Agude and in ultra-Orthodox life in Israel and throughout the world.

GO'LDFADEN, AVRO'[HE]M: "Father of the Yiddish theater" 1840–1908). Dramatist, organizer of Yiddish theater groups in Europe and in the United States, he authored many of the most popular Yiddish musical comedies and operettas, several of which are based upon classical (i.e., ancient Israel) themes. Some of his comedies continue to be adapted for the modern Yiddish and Hebrew repertoire, including film versions, to this very day.

GO'LES (In Birnbaum's writings, usually golus) (Y; MH: Galu't): Exile, dispersion. In geographic terms this refers to all areas outside of Palestine/Israel. In psychological terms, conscious or unconscious fear, being ill at ease, a sense of subjugation and resignation resulting from what non-Jews (may) think, say or do to Jews, particularly, but not only, to those who observe yidishkayt (q.v.) fully and openly. Birnbaum extended the meaning one step further by claiming that Orthodox Jews often manifested the psychological characteristics of being in goles even when they were in the midst of non-Orthodox Jews.

GRAETZ, HEINRICH: Famous Jewish historian (1817–1891) who lived and wrote within the orbit of Germanized Jewry. In addition to his major work, *Geschichte der Juden von den altestn Zeiten bis auf die Gengenwart* ("The History of the Jews from Olden Times up to the Present"), eleven volumes published between 1853 and 1875, he also co-edited and published literally hundreds of articles in the scholarly journal *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums.* Although he was attacked by many German Jewish spokesmen as being too nationalistic, he declined to support the

early (pre-Herzlian) Zionist groups and was considered insufficiently nationalistic by Birnbaum and many Eastern European Jewish spokesmen.

HALA'(K)HIC: See Halo'khe/Halakha', below.

H FUNCTIONS: In a diglossic setting (see "Diglossia," above) the "higher" (i.e., more prestigeful) functions, usually those associated with literacy (government, religion, higher education). The language utilized in these functions is often generally referred to by sociolinguists as the H language (as distinct from the L language [q.v.]). In Birnbaum's time, many Central and Eastern European Jews viewed German and Hebrew as co-H languages for internal, Jewish affairs. See Chapter 4.

HALBASIEN (G): Literally, Half (i.e., almost) Asia. A derogatory designation applied by Germanized Jews to the area east of Vienna, particularly to Eastern and South Eastern Europe, where Ostjuden (q.v.) and other non-Westernized Jews, the majority of world Jewry, resided.

HALO'KHE (Y; MH: halakha'): The entire body of Jewish law and tradition, comprising the laws explicitly recorded in the Bible, the initially Oral Laws as transcribed in the Talmud (q.v.) and the subsequent rabbinic interpretations applying traditional hala'khic (English adjectival form) precepts to contemporary conditions.

HAMEY'LITS (Y,H): Hebrew daily, 1860–1904. Founded in St. Petersburg as a weekly, its name means "advocate." Although it long published articles by the most renowned Hebrew writers of its time and was pro-Zionist in general orientation, it came to be viewed as overly cautious and insufficiently attuned to the spirit of the times and of the more politically active younger generation.

HARKA'VI, ALEKSA'NDER (1833–1939): Yiddish lexicographer and author of popular textbooks for Yiddish speaking adult learners of English. An early advocate of Yiddish and of Jewish ethnocultural modernization via Yiddish, he emigrated to the

United States in 1882. He translated books on popular science into Yiddish, Graetz's "History of the Jews," the Bible and works on American history and government for an adult auto-didactic readership. Various of his Yiddish-English and Yiddish-English-Hebrew dictionaries are still in print. During his Yiddishist stage Birnbaum admired him greatly and remained in touch with him thereafter as well.

HASIDISM: Currently a very influential segment of Jewish ultra-Orthodoxy (q.v.). Initiated in 18th century Poland by R'Yisroelbal-shem-tov (c. 1700–1760, hasidism is characterized by its emphasis on mysticism, religious zeal and joy. Its members are referred to as khsi'dem (Y; MH: khasidi'm; sing.: kho'sed/khasi'd) and owe allegiance to rabbis (often known by the names of the towns from which they stem) who are regarded as having particular powers of intercession with God on behalf of Jews in general and their followers in particular. Orthodox Jews who are not khasidim are known as misna'gdem/mitna'gdim (=opponents [of hasidism]), a term, which, like the term "Protestant," derives from the altercations which marked the period of the establishment of the hasidic movement. Hasi'dic: English adjectival form pertaining to hasidism.

HASKO'LE (Y; MH: Haskala'): An 18th and 19th century Jewish modernization movement fostered by scholars, writers and other intellectuals, first in Central and then in Eastern Europe. Whereas the haskole in Central Europe, particularly in Germany, criticized Jewish particularism and separatism as reflected in traditional sources and practices, the haskole in Eastern Europe was ultimately largely transformed into modern Jewish nationalism and contributed to the philosophies of modern Jewish cultural autonomy that developed there. See Chapter 4, footnote 5. An advocate of haskole was termed a ma'skl (Y; MH: maski'l; plural: maski'lem/maskili'm). English adjectival form: maski'lic.

HAVARA' SEPHARDI'T: Literally "Sephardi pronunciation." Although the standard variety of spoken Israeli Hebrew is *not* totally identical with that initially current among the Sephardim

(q.v.) at the time of Ben Yehuda (q.v.), it has been so designated in common parlance, in order to stress its departure from the Ashkenazi (and, therefore, from the Yiddish sounding) pronunciation of Hebrew and to symbolize the collective effort to move modern Israeli Hebrew in the direction of its "true oriental nature." One of the main features of this pronunciation (a feature which is not shared by all "oriental" varieties of Hebrew, counter to popular assumptions with respect to this issue) is its usual (but far from universal) ultimate stress. Birnbaum poked fun at this feature (one often overgeneralized by those not familiar with the exceptions to the ultimate stress rule) by entitling his 1913 article dealing with the Ashkenazi vs. Sephardi pronunciation: "Havaraaaa Ssephardiiiit."

HEBRAISM: A modern Jewish ideology and movement, with early roots in the mid-19th century, advocating and pursuing the re-vernacularization of scriptual and prayerbook Hebrew, making it once again the unifying, daily spoken language of the Jews throughout the world and the symbol and vehicle of modern Jewish creativity and identity. The re-vernacularization goal was first attained among early 20th century Zionist-inspired settlers in Palestine. Although almost all of them stemmed from Central and Eastern Europe (particularly the Czarist Empire) and were Yiddish speaking, Yiddish was associated in their minds with diaspora subjugation and backwardness and did not have any immediate functional value for communication with all the small Judeo-Arabic (Mugrabi and Yahudic) and Judeo-Spanish (Judezmo) communities already resident in Palestine (although some of the members of the latter communities had already learned Yiddish by dint of daily interaction with the pre-Zionist Ashkenazi settlements in Ottoman Palestine). Hebraism has yet to register any substantial revernacularization gains in the diaspora, notwithstanding considerable Zionist funded and inspired effort on its behalf.

HERDER, JOHANN GOTTFRIED von (1744–1803): German philosopher and poet, advocate of ethnic authenticity and of the worldwide benefits of a multilingual and multicultural humanity.

Herder viewed the authentic language of any ethnocultural collectivity as the dynamo that provided its volksgeist (=ethnic spirit/soul) with the creative power to enrich the life of its own people and, by extension, of the world at large. Herder was a major early spokesman of ethnonational romanticism and a major opponent of the ethnolinguistic assimilation of the weak by the strong. See my "Positive pluralism: some overlooked rationales and forefathers," in J.A. Fishman et al. *The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival.* Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 1985, pp. 445–455.

HERZL, THEODORE (1860–1904): Founder of modern political Zionism. While reporting on the Dreyfus (q.v.) affair for the Viennese "Neue Freie Presse," the widespread and vicious folk and official anti-Semitism attending these trials and the public debate that surrounded them prompted Herzl to formulate his Zionist program for an internationally recognized and legally guaranteed Jewish homeland in Palestine. His books, *Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) and *Altneuland* (Old-New Land) present his rationale and vision for a new Jewish society to be created in the ancient Jewish homeland.

HESS, MOSES (1892–1975): The originator of modern Zionist socialism. Because of his socialist radicalism he was forced to flee Germany and to settle in Paris. His Jewish thought is permeated with Romantic appreciation of folk-traditions, hasidism (q.v.) and the "revival" of Hebrew. His most famous work, *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862), calls for the re-establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, to be based on the prophetic ideals of social justice.

HIGH CULTURE: That part of total culture associated with the institutions of higher education, government, religion, literacy and the arts. Often contrasted with "low culture" (q.v.).

HOCHDEUTSCH (G): Standard, literary German. Literally: High German, indicating the originally regional and topographic implications of the designation, i.e., Hochdeutsch was the collective name for the German varieties indigenous to the southern, more mountainous parts of Germany, as distinct from

Low German, indigenous to the northern lowlands near the sea. Ultimately, the topographic designation also came to have status implications, i.e., topographically "high" came to be associated with "high" status after this variety was utilized by Luther in his German translation of the Bible.

HOLY TONGUE: See Loshn Koydesh.

JARGON' (G,Y and also Russian): Generally, a term of linguistic derogation, designating "unintelligible or meaningless talk, gibberish," this appellation has also become widely accepted as the common name for non-prestigious language varieties throughout the world. Yiddish came to be so commonly designated by this term during the 19th century that for many (including many Yiddish writers with a very positive attitude toward the language, Sholem Aleykhem [q.v.] among them) it lost its negative implications and came to be regarded as simply the name of the language. This name for Yiddish came to be decreasingly employed after World War I, and, indeed, has almost completely been replaced by the designation "Yiddish," which first came into use in the 17th century. Pronounced "zhargo'n" in Yiddish and in Russian.

JEWISH CALENDAR: An ancient, traditional calendar, still in use today among Orthodox Jews, and also among the non-Orthodox, in establishing the dates of Jewish festivals and in observing the anniversary of the death of departed family members and/or famous rabbis. The calendar purports to number the years from the creation of the world (e.g., 1987=5747) and consists of 12 lunar months (or 13 lunar months during leap years, i.e., in 7 out of every 19 years).

JUDELN (G): "Corrupted" German, spoken in the manner of Jews. This was a derogatory term applied to Western Yiddish, particularly in the 19th century, when it was under attack by both German and German-Jewish spokesmen and when it was increasingly being abandoned by upwardly mobile or mobility-aspiring Central European Jews.

JUDENDEUTSCH (G): "Jews' German": an invidious designation for Yiddish, particularly the Western Yiddish still spoken among Central European Jews in the 19th century, implying that it was not proper, standard German, i.e., not the Hochdeutsch (q.v.) spoken among "real Germans."

KADI'MA(H) (MH): Literally: forward; eastward. The first university-linked Jewish student organization. Founded by Birnbaum in 1883, in Vienna, it soon became the model for other such organizations at other universities. See Chapter 2, footnote 10.

KAPO'TE(Y): The traditional long black kaftan of Eastern European Orthodox Jewish males. Today, worn only by the ultra-Orthodox.

KI'SHINEV: Capital of Bessarabia, a province of the Russian Empire until the end of World War I. (During the interwar years Bessarabia was part of Rumania. Since the end of World War II, it constitutes the major part of the Moldavian People's SSR). Kishinev is famous among Jews as the cite of a major pogrom (1903) that elicited worldwide protest.

KLAL-YISRO'EL (Y; MH: klal-yisrae'l): Jews in general, i.e., all Jews rather than particular Jewish groups or individuals. Adj. (Y): *klal yisro'eldik,* favoring the well-being or the interests of Jews in general; being all-inclusive rather than partisan with respect to Jewish interests. The term has positive or negative implications, depending on whether general or particular Jewish interests are considered more advantageous in order to attain a particular goal. Ethnoculturally positive Jewish socialists (see Bund, above), e.g., criticized the Tshernovits Conference of 1908 as being overly "klal-yisroeldik," because it did not adopt a more extreme, pro-Yiddish resolution, in accord with what they believed the Jewish proletariat was then willing to support.

KOYHA'NEM (Y; MH: kohani'm; sing.: Koy'en/Kohe'n): Members of the traditional Jewish priestly caste, assigned to performing sacrifices in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. One of the few

remaining privileges of this patrilineally descended male status is to bless assembled worshippers during certain services. Koyha'nem are prohibited from marrying divorcees and from coming into contact with the Jewish dead. The latter prohibition is relevant to the jest told in connection with the Austro-Hungarian election of 1907 in which Birnbaum was fraudulently declared to be the loser (see Chapter 3).

KOHEN: See Koyha'nem/Kohani'm, above.

KORAIS, ADAMANTIOS (1748–1833): Greek scholar who established the norms of Katharevousa, a religious and academic variety of modern Greek that, nevertheless, retained substantial amounts of New Testament vocabulary and grammar. Korais's ideal was the restoration of Classical Greek, free of modern "impurities" and borrowings from other European and Near Eastern languages. Katharevousa remained official in Greek governmental and educational use, to the growing consternation of ordinary citizens and students, until 1976, when a form of demotic (i.e., spoken) Greek was declared official.

KULTUR (G): Literally, culture. In German this term implies authentic, historically deep and unique ethnonational qualities of heart, mind and spirit. Often contrasted with civilization (q.v.). See Chapter 7.

KULTURJUDEN (G): Literally, Jews of culture. In the usage of Germanized Jews of the 19th and early 20th centuries this implied being Westernized, educated in modern and secular studies, refined, well-bred and good mannered, and, in general, acceptable to co-territorial gentiles, as contrasted with Ostjuden (Eastern European Jews). See Chapter 2.

L FUNCTIONS: In a diglossic setting (see "diglossia," above) the "lower," i.e., less prestigeful, functions, often those popularly associated with intimacy and ordinary, daily, spoken pursuits. The language of these functions is generally referred to by sociolinguists as the L language, as distinct from the H language

(q.v.). In Birnbaum's time, many Central and Eastern European Jews viewed Yiddish as L and some sought to displace it even from that plebian status. See Chapter 4.

LANGUAGE PLANNING: Efforts to either alter the *status* or societal functions of any given language (e.g., to recognize it for use in public schools or in the courts) and/or to change the *corpus* of the language *per se* in some way (e.g., to standardize its spelling or enrich its natural science lexicon). Optimally, both status planning and corpus planning are engaged in simultaneously and kept closely aligned one with the other, so that the language will have an appropriate corpus for any new functions to which it may attain access and so that new corpus characteristics that have been developed for it can be put to societal use, rather than merely remaining academic curiosities.

LO'SHN KOY'DESH (Y; MH; Lasho'n Kode'sh): The traditional designation for both Hebrew and Judeo-Aramaic (=Aramic), the languages of the Bible and the Talmud (q.v.). Modern Hebrew is referred to as I'vris/Ivri't, a designation that distinguishes it as a language of secular life from its sanctified predecessor/companion.

LOW CULTURE: That part of total culture associated with the daily life of ordinary people and with the artifacts, attitudes and values of ordinary folk. Often contrasted with "high culture" (q.v.).

MASKI'LIC: English adjectival form derived from hasko'le/haskala' (q.v.). The term has positive or negative overtones, depending on one's view of the haskole and of Jewish modernization and secularization more generally. See Chapter 4, footnote 5.

MAUSCHELEN (G): "Corrupted" German, spoken in the manner of Mausches (=Moseses, Moy'shes), i.e. Jews. Also see "Judelen," above.

ME'NDELE MOY'KHER SFO'REM: Famous Hebrew and Yiddish author (1889–1917), dubbed the "grandfather of modern Yiddish literature." Creator of modern Hebrew stylistics, combining lexical and grammatical elements from all stages of the language, he, Sholem Aleykhem (q.v.) and Perets (q.v.) are referred to as the "classicists of modern Yiddish literature." He did not reply to the invitation to attend the 1908 Tshernovitz Conference, presumably because he feared that it might adopt extreme resolutions of a political (and possible anti-Hebrew) nature rather than keep to its announced agenda.

MESSIANISM: Pious Jewish concern for foretelling or hastening the coming of the Messianic Age, when not only will the Jewish people be gathered in from their dispersion (returning them to the Land of Israel), but peace, justice and freedom will reign throughout the world, the righteous deceased of all nations and of all times will come to life and the supremacy of God will be recognized by all. The hastening of the coming of the Messianic Age, via the adoption and propagation of particular efficacious prayers, formulas and practices, has repeatedly preoccupied a small segment of Jewish thinkers throughout Jewish history, usually without traditional Rabbinic approval.

MISNA'GDIC: English adjectival form derived from misna'gdes (Y) or mitnagdut' (MH), the opposition to hasidic/hasidism (q.v.). The rabbis (and their followers) who opposed hasidism referred to themselves as misnagdem (Y), i.e., "opponents." The stress of misnagdes is on observance and study, rather than on emotion and motivation, as the primary desiderata of Orthodoxy.

MI'ZES, MA'TES [or MATESYO'HU]/ Mieses, Matthias (1885–1945): At the Tshernovits Conference, Mieses was a 23 year old, Viennese University student with an active interest in linguistics. His paper at the Conference, sharply critical of Hebrew, caused an uproar, but was declared by Perets (q.v.) to be "the first scientific paper in Yiddish." His *Die Entstehungsursachen der judischen Dialekte* [Causal Factors in the Genesis of Jewish Dialects], 1915, is a pioneer work in Jewish inter-linguistics and is still of sufficient

interest to have been reprinted in 1979 (published by Helmut Buske Verlag, Hamburg, with an introduction by Peter Freimark). Mieses perished, during the Holocaust, in Auschwitz.

MOSAIC CONFESSION: "Germans (or Poles, Hungarians, etc.) of the Mosaic confession" was the preferred self-designation of Reform and assimilationist oriented European Jews, beginning in mid-19th century and up to the Second World War, stressing thereby that they were of the same nationality as their Christian neighbors, differing from the latter only in religion. This self designation went hand-in-hand with the rejection of Yiddish and most other ethnocultural differences between Jews and co-territorial non-Jews.

NEUE FREIE PRESSE (G): Famous Viennese daily. Its name means "New Free Press." This was the daily for which Theodore Herzl, the "father of political Zionism," served as correspondent in Paris when Captain Alfred Dreyfus (q.v.) was falsely accused of spying for Germany (1894). The newspaper had a large liberal and educated readership.

NIBELUNGENLIED (G): A Middle High German epic poem (c. 1200), telling of the life of Siegfried, his marriage to Kriemhild, his wooing of Brunhilde on behalf of Gunther, his murder by Hagen at the behest of Brunhilde and avengement by Kriemhild. This saga became a force in modern German nationalism with the operatic tetralogy of Richard Wagner (Ring of the Nibelungen, completed 1870), proclaiming the eternal, undiluted, uncorrupted, pre-Christian Germanic virtues.

NO'MBERG, HERSH-DO'VED (1876–1927). Yiddish and Hebrew writer and journalist, deputy in the Polish Sejm (Parliament), founder of the renewed Jewish Folkist party (q.v.) in 1916, active supporter of Yiddish. A "centrist" or moderate at the Tshernovits Conference (1908), he opposed underestimating or overestimating the value of Yiddish vis-à-vis Hebrew. Nomberg may well have been the formulator of the key resolution of the Conference, namely, that Yiddish is *a* (rather than *the*) Jewish ethnonational language.

ORIENTAL JEWRY: To distinguish between Eastern European Jewry and the Jews of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula, the latter were referred to (by 19th century Germanized Jews, residing to the West of both of these major Jewish concentrations) as "Oriental" and the former, as "Eastern." Subsequently, the designation "Oriental" became part of a more general Ashkenazi (q.v.)/non-Ashkenazi dichotomy. "Oriental" then came to refer to non-Ashkenazi Jews or to non-European or non-European-origin Jews and, accordingly, to include the Sephardim of North-Africa and other non-Western Sephardim. Although the term "Oriental" often had invidious connotations, this was not always the case. Ben Yehuda, e.g., advocated the modernization of Hebrew in such a way as to retain its "true Oriental nature." Whereas Germanized Jews often wanted to stress their Westernized character, Ben Yehuda and early Zionism wanted to stress their rejection of Europe (where Jews continued to live instead of opting for resettlement in Palestine) and their return to the "Oriental" cradle of the Jewish people.

ORTHODOX: With respect to Jews, a relative designation, implying different degrees and kinds of observance at different points in time and in different parts of the world, but generally implying faithful adherence to the practices and beliefs of halakhic Judaism, as evidenced chiefly by devotion to and study of the Torah, daily synagogue attendance and strict observance of the Sabbath (on Saturdays), festivals and dietary laws. See *halokhe, ultra-Orthodox.*

OSTJUDEN (G): Literally, Eastern (-European) Jews. The popular view of Ostjuden, subscribed to by Germanized Jews during the 19th and early 20th centuries perceived them to be poor, dirty, ignorant of modern, Western secular knowledge, persecuted, fanatically religious and totally manipulated by an unyielding, self-seeking and obscurantist rabbinic leadership. Compare with Kulturjuden (q.v.) = Westjuden. See Chapter 2.

OY'LEM (Y; MH: Oli'm): Literally, "Ascenders." An organization founded and inspired by Birnbaum, in his Orthodox phase, to de-

routinize Orthodox piety and to inspire Orthodox Jews to lift themselves up, above the hum-drum, and pursue elevated lives dedicated to *das* (informed and deeply experienced worship), *ra'khmem* (mutual assistance and good deeds) and *tife'res* (beauty in all aspects of worship and of life). See Chapter 5. In Zionist circles, this same term was (and is) the designation for those who resettle in Palestine/Israel, based upon biblical imagery which designates any movement from outside of The Holy Land into the Holy land as one of physically, and, by extension, spiritually, "going up."

PALE OF SETTLEMENT: Under Czarist rule, the Westernmost provinces of the Russian Empire. Jews were permitted to live throughout this area (although usually not to own land there), whereas elsewhere, including such major cities as St. Petersburg and Moscow, they required special permits and were generally prohibited.

PI'NSKI, DO'VED (1872–1959): Yiddish novelist, playwright, editor and Labor Zionist leader. Pinski was a co-signator, with Birnbaum, Zhitlovski and two others, in a joint call (1907, Bronx, N.Y.) for the Tshernovits Conference of 1908. In his last years, Pinski fulfilled his Zionist aspirations by settling in Israel (1950).

POYA'LEY-TSI'YEN (Y; MH: Poale'y tsiyo'n). Literally: "Workers of Zion." A Zionist-socialist party, the Galician and the left-wing branches of which were long particularly positive toward Yiddish. Actively campaigned for Jewish candidates to the Austrian Reichsrat (q.v.) in 1907 and for the recognition of Yiddish in the Austro-Hungarian census of 1910. The party subsequently split into separate right- and left-wing parties in 1920. The right-wing was by far the larger of the two and remains the major base of the Israeli Labor Party (Mapai). The left-wing was long active on behalf of Yiddish in Palestine. See: Arye Leyb Pilovski, *Tsvishn yo un neyn*. Tel Aviv, Veltrat far yidish un yidisher kultur, 1985.

REICHSRAT: The legislature or parliament in the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The Reichsrat met at the seat of government, in Vienna. Literally: council of the realm.

REY'ZN, AVRO'[HE]M: (1876–1953): Yiddish poet and writer of short stories. Active in the Bund (q.v.) and as a Yiddishist activist. Along with Asch and Nomberg, one of the major disciples of Perets (q.v.). An early beneficiary of Birnbaum's "Yiddish Evenings" in Vienna, by means of which he and his poetry were introduced to large audiences of young Germanized Jewish intellectuals who had come to admire modern Yiddish literature. Participated vigorously in the Tshernovits Conference. Resettled in the United States in 1914.

RIKSMAAL: A widely accepted name for Dano-Norwegian, also subsequently known as Bokmaal, one of the two official norms for writing Norwegian, being the one more substantially influenced by Danish and more common in urban centers, as distinct from Landsmal (now also known as Nynorsk), a literary variety based on Western Norwegian dialects and Old Norse and adopted in 1885 as one of the two official varieties of Norwegian.

ROMANCHUCK, IULIAN (1842–1932): Initially a teacher in the Gymnasium in Lemberg (L'viv), 1863 to 1900, from which affiliation he retained the title of Professor, Romanchuk was elected to the Reichsrat and became leader of the Ruthenian Club there as well as leader of the Ukrainian National Democratic party in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. He was the first speaker to declare for Jewish ethnonational autonomy in a famous debate in the Reichsrat (1905), when this topic was discussed for the first time. Advised various Jewish groups on how to organize themselves in connection with the 1907 elections, when Birnbaum unsuccessfully campaigned for a seat in the Reichsrat (q.v.). Birnbaum thanked him and the Ruthenian leadership more generally for recognizing Jews as a nationality in "a modern, non-anti-Semitic way."

ROSH HASHONA' (MH; Y: Rosh-hasho'ne): The Jewish New Year, celebrated on the first and second day of the month of Tishre. Literally, head or beginning of the year, this holiday comes in the Fall, between early September and early October.

RO'ZNFELD, MO'RES (1862–1923): Yiddish poet and, at times, also journalist, with strong socialist emphases. His Yiddish poems, often set to music, were extremely popular both in Eastern Europe and in the United States. Several of them, particularly *Mayn yingele* (My Little Boy) were translated into English and attracted wide critical acclaim.

RUTHENIAN(S): During most of Birnbaum's life this was the most common name for the Ukrainians in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, particularly in Galicia. Other, more local names were also employed at the time, almost all of which, including "Ruthenian," have tended to be displaced by the more encompassing identity of Ukrainians. For further discussion see the Magocsi (1978) and Markovits and Sysyn (1982) reference in the bibliography to Chapter 2. Birnbaum frequently espoused Ruthenian ethnonational rights (since they too, like the Jews, were often represented by Polish rather than by their own preferred representatives), advocated Jewish cooperation with them, and received their support both in his 1907 candidacy for the Reichsrat and during his stay in Tshernovits.

SECULARISM: Within the Jewish fold, the view that Jewish culture is definable in terms of language (Hebrew and/or Yiddish), literature (Hebrew and/or Yiddish), affiliation with one or another modern Jewish political party, the study of Jewish vernaculars and vernacular literatures, history, sociology, philosophy and linguistics, the cultivation of the Jewish arts (music, song, dance, theatre) and mass media (press, film, radio-television), and either opposing halakhic desiderata as antiquated and contra-productive for the participation of Jews in modern life, or viewing religion as entirely a "private matter" of no collective or institutional significance for Jewish survival and creativity. Although secularism is usually viewed as diametrically opposed to religion or traditionalism, interstitial syncretistic varieties (e.g., "secular Judaism") also have come into being between the extremes of secularism and rabbinic Judaism.

SELBST-EMANCIPATION!: (G) Literally: self-liberation. The name of the influential publication founded, published and edited by Birnbaum (1885–1895, with interruptions) in order to propagate his views that Jews constituted a separate people with ethnocultural interests of their own, with the potential to resettle in their ancient homeland in Palestine and, thereby, to return to the true source of their cultural creativity and moral leadership. For further details, see Chapter 2.

SEPHA'RDIM (Y: sfa'rdem; MH; Sefardi'm): Jews of Spain and Portugal, or their descendants elsewhere, usually as distinguished from Ashkena'zim (q.v.) by their liturgy (rite), customs, Jewish vernacular and pronunciation of Hebrew. Singular: Sephardi. English adjectival form: Sephardi(c). Sepharad was originally a biblical place name, possibly referring to Spain (where Jewish settlements trace back to the 7th century B.C.E.). Accordingly, Jews living in or stemming from the Iberian Peninsula were and are referred to as Sephardim and their rite, customs, etc., as Sephardi(c).

SHO'LEM ALEY'KHEM (1859–1916): Probably the most widely read Yiddish writer, both in the original and in translation, and one of the major pillars, along with Perets (q.v.) and Mendele (q.v.) of modern Yiddish literature. Like the others, he began his literary career in Hebrew but, like Perets, he ultimately wrote only in Yiddish. Wrote novels and short stories in a captivatingly humorous vein, as well as dramas and some poetry. Settled in the United States in 1914. Claimed illness as the reason for not attending the Tshernovits Conference. Also transliterated: Sho'lem Alei'chem.

SHOY'FER (Y; MH: shofa'r): A ram's horn blown as a wind-instrument. In biblical times, sounded chiefly in battle or to announce certain religious occasions. Subsequently, and in modern times, sounded chiefly at synagogue services during the High Holidays that begin the traditional Jewish year.

SIX HUNDRED THIRTEEN OBLIGATIONS: Obligations implemented by scrupulously observant Orthodox Jews, consisting of

248 positive obligations and 365 negative obligations, in order to completely satisfy the requirements that the Talmud (q.v.) stipulates that God set for the Jews as an expression of his special expectations for His people.

SMOLE'NSKIN, PE'RETS (1840–1885): Hebrew writer and journalist, advocate of the "revival" of Hebrew and theoretician of the modern Jewish ethnonational renaissance. His journal *Hashakha'r* (The Dawn) served as a vehicle for simultaneously advocating Westernization and rejecting assimilation. It had as frequent collaborators many of the best known nationalist spokesmen among Central and Eastern European Jewry. Smolenskin inspired Birnbaum to name his university-affiliated Zionist youth organization: Kadima (q.v.).

SOCIOLINGUISTICS: The study of social variation in language use, in language attitudes and in behaviors toward language. For four introductory formulations of the field, some more linguistic, some more social-psychological and some more sociological in orientation, see my *Advances in the Sociology of Language*, v. I. The Hague, Mouton, 1976 (second edition).

SO'KOLOV, NO'KHEM (MH: Nakhu'm) (1859–1936): Journalist, writer, editor and Zionist leader. Became General Secretary of the World Zionist Organization in 1905. In 1919 he served as President of the Jewish Delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference and, from 1931–1935, as President of the Jewish Agency in Palestine (under the British Mandate). Strongly pro-Hebrew and an influential stylist in that language, he also wrote in Yiddish and advocated its cultivation for the purposes of Zionist consciousness-raising among Eastern European Jews.

SPENGLER, OSWALD: German philosopher (1880–1936) who foretold the decline of the West, and whose name has become widely associated with critiques of various purportedly dislocative and destructive developments in modern Western life, such as urbanization, commercialization, democratization, neglect of pristine ethnocultural traditions and intermarriage across

ethnocultural lines. Such views (i.e. impending dire consequences for Western civilization) are referred to as Spenglerian.

STRAUCHER, BENNO (1854–1934): Attorney, President of the Jewish Community of Tshernovits and Deputy in the Austrian Reichsrat (q.v.), in the Diet of the Austrian Crownland of Bukovina and, after World War I, briefly, in the Rumanian Parliament. In the Reichsrat, he advocated Jewish ethnonational rights at the very first debate on this topic, i.e., long before the established Jewish parties had adopted a definite program in this connection. Although not a Zionist himself, he endorsed the *Gegenwartsarbeit* (q.v.) policy of the Galician Zionist organization, and in 1907 (after the very election to the Reichsrat in which Birnbaum was fraudulently defeated), he was elected President of the so-called Jewish Club of the Reichsrat, consisting of four members. When, in the election of 1911, the other three members of the Jewish Club were defeated, Straucher remained the only Jewish representative in the Reichsrat, the last to be elected before the outbreak of World War I and the resultant dismemberment of Austria.

TABULA RASA: Literally, in Latin, clean slate, scraped tablet. Refers to a mind not yet affected by experiences, impressions or education.

TAGEBLAT (also known as "Yiddishes Tageblatt"): The first Yiddish daily in New York (1885–1928), the *Tageblat* was Orthodox, Zionist and politically conservative in orientation. It came into being much before the Yiddish dailies of Eastern Europe (e.g., the first Yiddish daily in Czarist Russia, *Der fraynd* [St. Petersburg] did not begin publishing until 1903) and continued to be influential through to the mid-twenties in competition with the socialist Jewish Daily Forward (*Forverts*), with whom it shared the 19th century convention of Germanized names for Yiddish periodicals (supposedly an indication, to readers, of worldly sophistication).

TALMUD: The definitive collection of initially orally transmitted Jewish laws and traditions, being either the version produced by the sages in Palestine, c. 400 B.C.E., or the larger, more important one produced by the sages in Babylonia, c. 500 B.C.E. Its texts and interpretations are the main subject of traditional Jewish study to this very day. They also constitute the basis for ongoing rabbinic re-interpretations of these ancient laws and traditions in order to render them applicable to modern circumstances.

TERRITORIALISM: A movement, initially a schism within Zionist ranks (1905), that favors planned, concentrated Jewish settlement in one or another underpopulated area permitting democratic, culturally autonomous temporary or permanent self-government for Jewish settlers. Since Palestine/Israel did not meet all of these desiderata, it was rejected by Territorialists as the only or even the most desirable area for Jewish concentrated settlement. Whereas some Zionists accepted the notion of temporary Jewish resettlement elsewhere, given the practical and political barriers to resettlement in Palestine, the Zionist movement as a whole rejected this approach as tactically counter-productive. See Chapter 4, footnote 9. In his final years, in The Netherlands, Birnbaum became a supporter of Territorialism, in order to resettle Jews, in small agricultural and handicraft villages, thereby enabling them to escape the Nazi onslaught (that he predicted would come), and to lead elevated, Jewish lives without settling in Palestine. Such settlement was frowned upon by the ultra-Orthodox as an unseemly human usurpation of the Messianic promise.

TIFE'RES (Y; MH: Tife'ret): Beauty, splendor, magnificence, grandeur, glory, frequently as applied to God, to the righteous and God-fearing, or to the Holy Temple. In Birnbaum's Orthodox stage, tiferes was one of the qualities that he felt oy'lem (q.v.) should cultivate in themselves and foster in Jewish society, in order to lead loftier, more elevated, more orderly, more aesthetic, and even physically cleaner lives.

TORAH (Y; Toy're: MH: Tora'): The Pentateuch (=first five books of the Bible). Within a synagogue, the Torah is kept in a Holy Ark and is in the form of a parchment scroll that has been hand-lettered by a specially trained scribe. The Torah is removed from its Ark and designated portions of it are read aloud (by a trained reader) on Saturdays (the Jewish Sabbath) and on all major holidays (as well as, more briefly, on Mondays and Thursdays), normally during morning services.

TSHERNOVITS CONFERENCE OF 1908: See Chapter 4, passim. Other versions of the same city name are Chernovtsy (Russian/Ukrainian), Cernauti (Rumanian) and Czernowitz (German).

UNVERFALSCHTEN DEUTSCHEN WORTE (G): Antisemitic and vociferously nationalistic Viennese newspaper during Birnbaum's student years. Its name means "Unfalsified German Word." Birnbaum and other Jewish nationalists found themselves agreeing with its view that complete and creative transethnification were impossible, even though they completely rejected its anti-Semitic views.

ULTRA-ORTHODOX: With respect to Jews, a relative designation, implying different degrees of observance at different points in time and in different parts of the world, but implying more punctilious, unusual or extensive observance than that current, then and there, among the generality of the Orthodox ("main-line" Orthodox), particularly more so than among the "central" or "modern Orthodox." Thus, although Birnbaum's third phase strikes many observers *today* as conforming to *ultra*-Orthodox views and behaviors, in his own time and ambiance he was probably not so considered. The designation *ultra* changes, therefore, as the general practice of main-line, central or modern-Orthodoxy changes, in order to imply a position to the right of the latter. Similarly, the former designations may undergo changes as the general practices and attitudes of the ultra-Orthodox undergo change, to imply a position to the left of the latter.

VINER (Y): A Jew born in or living in Vienna. For several years prior to World War I, Vienna was a center of Eastern European Jewish immigration. Recent Jewish immigrants to Vienna were quick to call themselves *viner*, although they were not regarded as such by Jews whose Viennese origins dated back to earlier years.

WELTANSCHAUUNG (G): Literally: view of the world, outlook on the world. One's all-encompassing philosophy or comprehensive conception of fundamental issues, e.g., concerning the purpose of life, of man's relation to the universe, of the role of one's people (e.g., the Jews) in God's grand scheme, of the priority to be given to ethnocultural continuity in the totality of values, etc.

WESTJUDEN (G): Literally, Western Jews, as distinguished from Ostjuden (q.v.). Also see Kulturjuden.

WHORF, BENJAMIN LEE (1897–1941): An American anthropological linguist, most famous for his view that different languages forced their speakers to perceive the world in different ways. This view is referred to as "relative linguistic determinism" or as "Whorfianism." See my "Whorfianism of the third kind: ethnolinguistic diversity as a worldwide societal asset," in J.A. Fishman, et al. *The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival.* Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 1985, pp. 473–487.

YA'RMELKE (Y): A skullcap worn, especially during prayer, religious study, when pronouncing a blessing and when eating, by Orthodox Jewish males. Some of the latter (not only the ultra-Orthodox) wear a yarmelke during all of their waking hours.

YEHU'DEM (Y; MH: Yehudi'm): Initially, a Hebrew term for Jews, this designation was also applied by Eastern European Jews to German Jews (referred to as "Yahu'dem"), implying the greater (and somewhat unseemly) self-pride of the latter, relative to the ordinary folksiness of simple *yidn* (the usual Yiddish word for "Jews").

YI'DISHE KULTU'R (Y): Literally, Yiddish/Jewish culture. The name of the university-affiliated student organization on behalf of Yiddish, the very first of its kind, initiated by Birnbaum at the University of Vienna in 1905. Its members, several of whom stemmed from Tshernovits, later served as the executive committee for the Tshernovits Conference of 1908. See photograph no. 8.

YIDDISHISM: A modern Jewish ideology and movement, beginning in the latter part of the 19th century in Eastern Europe and reaching its apogee there prior to World War II, generally strongly secular and socialist in orientation. It viewed Yiddish as the primary ethnonational language of the Jewish people and as the major vehicle and symbol of modern Jewishness. See Emmanuel Goldsmith. *Architects of Yiddishism.* Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickenson Press, 1976.

YI'DISHKAYT (Also transliterated: Yiddishkeit): Literally: Jewishness. This concept stresses the daily and ritual behavioral obligations and observances of Jewish ethnocultural membership, rather than the theological or philosophical emphases implied by the term "Judaism." In ordinary Orthodox usage, *yidishkayt* is the leitmotiv of individual and collective concern.

YO'RTSAYT (Y): The anniversary of the death of close kin or of famous rabbis or public figures, as calculated on the traditional Jewish calendar. The present volume commemorates Nathan Birnbaum's fiftieth *yortsayt.*

ZANGWILL, ISRAEL (1864–1926): Anglo-Jewish writer, best known for his *Children of the Ghetto* (1892) and *Dreamers of the Ghetto* (1898). Initially an associate of Herzl and active in various Zionist organizations, he then became a Territorialist (q.v.) and the first President of the Jewish Territorialist Organization. After the proclamation of the Balfour Declaration (q.v.) in 1917, he again supported Zionism, but remained sharply critical of its leadership and policies. Thoroughly bi-cultural, he both glorified ancient and traditional Jewish life as well as poked fun at its parochialism and poverty.

ZEITGEIST (G): Spirit of the times: The general mood, widely accepted views and uncritically held assumptions that are prevalent in a particular period of history and function as the points of departure for specific attitudes, behaviors or policies.

ZHARGON': See Jargon', above.

Z.P.S.: A Jewish socialist group (a counterpart to the Jewish Socialist Workers Alliance [=Bund] in the Czarist Empire) that opposed the Poyaley Tsiyen (q.v.) in the crucial 1907 elections to the Austrian Reichsrat (q.v.). See M. Lozynskyj. "Die judische Frage und die Osterreichische Sozialdemokratie," *Ukrainische Rundschau.* 1906. no. 6, 208–214. The Z.P.S. was also active on behalf of claiming Yiddish as the language of the Jews in the census of 1911.

ZHITLO'VSKI, KHA'YEM (1865–1942): Yiddish writer on a variety of philosophical themes and ideologist of Jewish socialism, Yiddishism, and, at varying times, Cultural Autonomy, Territorialism (q.v.) and Zionism. Zhitlovski settled permanently in the New World in 1908, after the Tshernovits Conference, of which he had been one of the original five conveners, together with Birnbaum and Pinski. He was instrumental in founding the Labor-Zionist Hebrew-Yiddish schools, both in the USA and in Canada. Toward the very end of his life he also identified with Soviet, and particularly with Soviet Jewish causes.

ZIONISM: A worldwide Jewish movement for the establishment, development and defense of a renewed homeland for the Jews in Palestine/Israel, i.e., on the cite of their ancestral and God-given homeland. This movement, whose first International Congress convened in Basel, 1897, has developed various factions emphasizing socialism, Orthodoxy or other more specific approaches as to the desired nature of Jewish society in Palestine/Israel. See Agudes Yisroel, Herzl, Poyaley-Tsiyen, above.

Index

Aasen, Ivar, 5, 247
Aberystwyth, 4
Abstand language, 247–48
Acher, Mathias, 81, 84 n. 27
Aesthetic judgment re: language, 67 n. 13
Agnes Jordan, 175, 248
Agno'n, Shmue'l Yose'f, 31, 248
A'gnon, Shmu'el Yoy'sef. *See* Ango'n Shmeu'l Yose'f
Agu'de / Aguda'. *See* Agu'des Yisro'el
Aguda't Yisrae'l. *See* Agu'des Yisro'el
Agu'des Yisro'el
  Birnbaum and, 75–76, 79, 231–38, 249
  defined, 77, 82 n. 9, 248–49
  founder of, 256
  Zionism, 278
Akha'd Ha-a'm
  biographical note, 249
  Tshernovits Conference, 55
A'khed Ho-o'm. *See* Akha'd Ha-a'm
America
  reaction to Tshernovits Conference, 52–54
Americanism, 197–208
Anti-Semitism
  and Bund, 251–52
  Dreyfus Affair, 253
  under cultural autonomy, 121, 187–88
  varities, 86–87
Asch, Sho'lem
  biographical note, 249
  disciple of Perets, 269
  at First World Conference for the Yiddish Language, 3, 48, 241, 249
Ashkena'zem
  attitudes towards Yiddish, 38–39, 267
  defined, 249
  pronunciation of Hebrew differs from Sephardi, 259
Ashkenazi'm. *See* Ashkena'zem
Ausbau Language
  defined, 68 n. 20, 250
  derivation of, 61
  problems of, 63
  See also Abstand Language
Austro-Hungarian Monarchy
  autonomy in, 120–21
  and Birnbaum, 89, 112–15
  Eastern European Jewry and, 66 n. 11, 117
  generally, 12, 44, 52
  post World War I, 57, 122
  See also Frants-Yo'zefs Medi'ne
Authenticity (ethnic revival roots)
  Hebrew, 129, 130
  loss of, 122
Autonomy—cultural, 120–21, 122, 126, 185–89
Avro'(he)m A'lter Mo'rdkhe, R', 256

Baa'l-Tshuva. *See* Baltshu've
Baltshu've
  Birnbaum and, 127–28
  defined, 127–28, 250
Beaconsfield, Lord. *See* Benjamin Disraeli
Ben Yehu'da, Eliezer
  biographical note 5, 250
  modernization of Hebrew, 267
Beys-Me'dresh, 50
Bildung, 14, 98, 250–51
Bilingualism
  and diglossia, 252
  publications, 254–55
Biographer, 1, 2, 3
Biographical research, 1, 2
Biography, 1, 2, 9
Birnbaum
  and aesthetics, 99–101

and Agu'des Yisro'el, 75–76
biographical note, 112–15, 241
critiques status quo, 105–7
Kadi'ma(h), 262
as leader, 123–25
1907 election, 263
and Orthodoxy, 72–76
Oy'lem, 267–68
pseudonym, 81, 84 n. 27
territorialism and, 77–78, 92–94, 274
Bjornson, Bjornstern, 251
Bokmaal. *See* Riksmaal
Bukovina
Bukoviner, 11, 22 n. 2, 46, 65 n. 8, 215, 216, 241,251
defined, 251
voting in, 30
Bukovi'ne. *See* Bukovina
Bund
and anti-Semitism, 251
Declaration of 1950, 54
defined, 66–67 n. 12, 251–52
participants, 269
politics, 61
and Tshernovits Conference, 46, 50, 56, 262

Civilization
and culture, 97–99
defined, 252
Class. *See* Social class
Codification, 252
Communists, 4
Conference for the Yiddish Language, 191–95

Di kapri'zne moyd, 175, 253
Diglossia
defined, 63 n. 1, 252
and language movements, 59
and language spread, 40
in literary titles, 68 n. 19
and spread of L Functions, 59–60, 263–64
Disraeli, Benjamin
biographical note, 250
national character defined by, 90, 148
Dreyfus, Alfred
biographical note, 253
Dreyfus Affair, 17, 260
Neue Freie Presse, 266
Dubno'v Shi'men, 253

Eastern European Jewry. *See* Jewry, Eastern European

Elaboration, 253–54
Error variance, 2, 6–7, 254
Ethnic movement, 64 n. 7
Ethnographer, 2
Europeanization, 103–4

First World Congress / Conference for the Yiddish Language
(Tshernovits Conference of 1908)
administration of, 33
American reaction to, 52–54
analysis of , 57–59
archival information on, 3–4
attendees of, 47–49, 241–42, 249, 265, 266, 268, 269, 278
Bund, 262
codification, 252
contents of, 49–52
Eastern European reaction to, 52–54
and elaboration, 253–54
planning of, 41–44, 278
reasons, 55, 215–216, 241–43
theoretical recapitulation of, 59–63
Folkist Party
defined, 254
Dubno'v Shi'men, 253
No'mberg, Hersh-do'ved, 266
Folkspartey, Folksistn. *See* Folkist Party
Fo'rverts
competitor with Tageblat, 273
history, 254–55
and Tshernovits Conference, 53
Francis Josef I. *See* Frants-Yo'zefs Medi'ne
Frants-Yo'sefs Medi'ne, 255
Fru'mkayt
and Birnbaum, 74
defined, 255

Galicia
autonomy in, 189
defined, 255
Jews from, 12, 14, 15, 22 n. 3, 211–17
Ruthenians, 213, 270
voting in, 30, 31, 36 n. 12
Zionism in, 30, 255, 268
Gali'tsye. *See* Galicia
Galu't. *See* Go'les
Gegenwartsarbeit, 255
Ge'rer Re'be, 256
Germanness, 14, 22 n. 5, 46
Germanized Jewry. *See* Jewry, Germanized
Goldfaden, Avro(he)m
biographical note, 256
Di kapri'zne moyd, 175, 253
dramatist, 173–75

Go'les
  defined, 256
  and Sephardic pronunciation, 227
  and Yiddish, 178–79, 181
  defined, 256
Golus. *See* Go'les
Graetz, Heinrich
  biographical note, 256–57
  Jewish aversion to, 164
  work translated to Yiddish, 258

H Functions
  and diglossia, 63 n. 1
  of language, 38–40
  for Yiddish, 45–46, 49–50, 52–54, 58, 60, 62
Hasidism, 68 n. 19, 258
Hala'(k)hic. *See* Halo'khe / Halakha'
Halbasien, 14, 257
Halo'khe / Halakha'
  defined, 63 n. 4, 257
  and Yiddish, 40
Hamey'lits, 258
Harka'vi, Aleksa'nder
  biographical note, 257–58
  proponent of Yiddish, 192
Haskalo'. *See* Hasko'le
Hasko'le
  Birnbaum's rejection of, 74
  in Europe, 64 n. 5, 258
Havara' Sephardi't
  defined, 258–59
  pronounciation, 227–29
Hebraism, 259
Hebrew
  language, 18–21, 87–89, 120, 122–23, 129, 223–24, 258–59
  literature, 166–67, 223
  modern, 20, 223
  Yiddish and, 177–82, 223–24
Herder, Johann Gottfried von
  biographical note, 259–60
  and Birnbaum, 120
Herzl, Theodore
  biographical note, 260
  and Dreyfus Affair, 253, 266
  Neue Freie Presse, 266
  political activity of, 19, 27
  and territorialism, 65 n. 9
  and Yiddish, 64 n. 6
  Zionism and, 278
Hess, Moses
  biographical note, 16, 270
  Rome and Jerusalem, 16, 260
  High culture, 13, 260
Hochdeutch
  defined, 260–61
  described by Birnbaum, 157–58
Holy Tongue. *See* Lo'shn Ko'ydesh

Ideology
  change, 7
  elites, 5, 110, 126, 129–31
  functions, 110–12
  Zionist, 116–22
Israel
  agriculture, 96–97
  Land of, 3, 16, 17, 18, 92–94, 233–34
Israel bal-shem-tov, R', 258

Jargo'n
  Birnbaum on, 157–60
  defined, 261
  nationalism and, 148, 192
  Yiddish, 177–78, 181
  Zhargo'nishe komite'tn, 64 n. 6
Jewish
  archives, 4
  assimilation, 18, 28, 29
  immigration, 15
  nationalist, 3, 16, 169–70
  nationalist movement, 17, 27–30, 35 n. 8
  priests, 3
  See also Koyhe'nem
Viennese, 14
Jewish calendar, 261
Jewish contribution to anti-Semitism, 231–38
Jewry
  European (Western), 11–21, 22 n. 6, 29–35, 101–2, 204
  European (Eastern), 11–21, 22 n. 6, 27–35, 57, 101–2, 119, 204
  Germanized, 13–21, 22 n. 5–6, 24 n. 23, 36 n. 22, 119, 177, 214
Judeln
  defined, 261
  Mauschelen, 14, 119, 264
Jeudendeutch
  defined, 262
  described by Birnbaum, 157–58

Kadi'ma(h), 17, 23 n. 10, 262
Kapo'te, 50
Ki'shinev, 262
Klal-Yisrae'l. *See* Klal-Yisro'el
Klal-Yisro'el, 262
Kne'set, 248–49
Kohani'm. *See* Koyha'nem
Kohe'n. *See* Koyha'nem

Korais, Adamantios, 5, 263
Korais, 5
Koy'en. *See* Koyha'nem
Koyha'nem, 3, 30, 262–63
Kultur, 14, 263
Kulturjuden, 263

L Functions
  defined, 263–64
  diglossia, 63
  of language, 38–39
  spreading to H functions, 59
  for Yiddish, 49, 52, 62
Language attitudes, 1
Language and nationality, 147–49, 182, 212, 213
Language centeredness, 111, 118, 121, 129, 130
Language elites/ideologists
  elites, 4–5, 110, 129–31
  ideologists, 5, 110–12, 116–18, 126–29
Language planning
  defined, 264
  elaboration, 253–54
  process of, 66 n. 10
  Tshernovits Conference, 60
Language movement, 59
Language shift, 7
Language spread, 4, 7
Language variety, 130–31
Lasho'n Kode'sh. *See* Lo'shn Koy'desh
Lo'shn Koy'desh
  definition, 63 n. 2, 234
  and the Tageblat, 33
  titles in Yiddish literature, 68 n. 18
  and Yiddish, 39–40, 50, 61–62, 122–23, 234–35
Low culture, 264

Maski'lic
  defined, 63 n. 5, 264
  Yiddish and Maskilic views, 41
  See also Hasko'le
Mauschelen, 14, 119, 264
  See also Judeln
Me'ndele Moy'kher Sfo'rem
  biographical note, 256
  Tshernovits Conference, 47
Messianism
  Birnbaum's writings and, 74, 139–41
  defined, 265
  orthodoxy and, 74–75, 91
Mieses, Matthias. *See* Mi'zes, Ma'tes
Minority groups, 44–47
Misna'gdic, 65 n. 18, 265
Mi'zes, Ma'tes/Matesyo'hu
  biographical note, 265–66
  at Tshernovits Conference, 47, 50, 265
Mosaic Confession
  defined, 266
  and popular literature, 163

Nationalism, 151–55, 165–66
Nazi, 4
Nueu Freie Presse, 266
Nibelungenlied
  defined, 266
  and nationalistic characteristics, 148
No'mberg, Hersh-Do'ved
  biographical note, 266
  disciple of Perets, 269
  at Tshernovits Conference, 242, 266

Oriental Jewry, 267
Orthodox
  defined, 267
  ultra-Orthodox, 275, 276
  yarmelke, 276
  See also Halokhe
Orthodoxy
  and Birnbaum, 27, 51, 65 n. 7, 72–78, 267–68
  neo-, 14
  obligations, 271–72
  opposition to Hasidism, 265
  and the Tageblat, 53, 64
  ultra-, 6, 256, 258
  and Yiddish, 40, 122–23
  youth groups influenced by Birnbaum, 78
Ostjuden
  compared to Kulturjuden, 263
  defined, 24 n. 21, 267
  migration of, 15
  sociological group, 14
  and Zionism, 19, 21, 101–2
Oli'm. *See* Oy'lem
Oy'lem, 96, 267–68

Pale of Settlement
  defined, 268
  post-World War I, 57
  Tshernovits Conference, 44
Pe'rets, I. L.
  and Birnbaum, 82 n. 4
  disciples of, 269
  literary works, 25 n. 28, 271
  at the Tshernovits Conference, 3–4, 47, 242

Pi'nski, Do'ved
  biographical note, 59, 268
  and Tshernovits Conference, 42, 268
Planned emigration
  Balfour Declaration, 68 n. 16
  Jewish, 65 n. 9
  Zionist, 94–96
Poaley' Tsiyo'n. *See* Poya'ley-Tsi'yen
Posen, 15
Poya'ley-Tsi'yen
  history, 268
  Zionism, 278
Poznan. *See* Posen

Racism, 28
Rebe, 2, 256
Rabbi, 75, 140, 157, 258, 261, 265
Reichsrat
  defined, 268
  national autonomy and, 186
Resettlement. *See* Planned emigration
Rey'zn, Avro'(he)m
  biographical note, 269
  at Tshernovits Conference, 48, 242, 269
Riksmaal, 269
Romanchuck, Iulian
  biographical note, 269
  ethnonational rights, 187
Roots, 65 n. 7
Rosh Hashona', 269
Rosh-hasho'ne. *See* Rosh Hashona
Ro'znfeld, Mo'res
  biographical note, 270
  Tshernovits Conference, 53
Russia, 15
Ruthenians
  defined, 270
  language of, 45, 213–14
  politics of, 30, 37 n. 30, 101–2

Secularism, 270
Sefardi'm. *See* Sepha'rdim
Selbst-Emancipation!
  Birnbaum and, 17, 24 n. 11, 147–49, 151–55, 157–60, 271
  history, 271
Sepha'rdim
  definition, 271
  pronunciation, 227–29
Sfa'rdem. *See* Sepha'rdim
Shofa'r. *See* Shoy'fer
Sholem Aleykhem
  biographical note, 271
  and language, 261
  and literature, 265
  Tshernovits Conference, 47
Shoy'fer, 50, 271
Six Hundred Thirteen Obligations, 271–72
Smole'nskin, Pe'rets, 23 n. 10, 272
Social class, 7
Social psychology, 1
Social research, 1, 2
Social science, 6
Socio-biography, 8
Sociolinguistics
  Birnbaum and, 1, 5, 6, 129
  defined, 272
Sociology, 1, 5
So'kolov, No'khem
  biographical note, 272
  and Yiddish, 64 n. 6
Spengler, Oswald, 272–73
Straucher, Benno
  biographical note, 273
  ethnonational rights, 187

Tabula Rasa, 273
Tageblat
  history, 273
  Tshernovits Conference, 53
Talmud
  defined, 274
  and Halakha, 63 n. 4
Territorialism
  Birnbaum and, 77–78
  defined, 65 n. 9, 83 n. 14, 274
Tife'res, 274
Tife'ret. *See* Tife'res
Tora. *See* Torah
Torah, 275
Toy're. *See* Torah
Tshernovits Conference of 1908. *See* First World Congress/Conference for the Yiddish Language

Unverfalschten Deutschen Worte, 275
Ultra-Orthodox. *See* Orthodox

Variance, 2, 6
Viner, 276

Weltanschauung
  and Birnbaum, 14, 75
  defined, 276
Westjuden
  defined, 276
  term, 24 n. 21

and Zionism, 101–2
See also Ostjuden, Kulturjuden
Whorf, Benjamin Lee, 276
World War I, 15
World Wars, 3

Ya'rmelke, 50, 276
Yehu'dem, 31, 276
Yehudi'm. *See* Yehu'dem
Yiddish
aesthetic value of, 67 n. 13
in Austro-Hungary, status of, 31, 120–21
Birnbaum's attitude towards, 19–21, 29–34, 79, 119, 125–26, 129, 152
and Hebrew, 177–82
language, 1, 14, 26–35, 79–80, 87–89, 120–21, 129, 169–75, 191–95, 204–5, 219–24, 241, 268
literary endeavors, 3, 36 n. 22, 194, 257–58, 265, 269, 271, 273
national movement, 214–15
support for, 253
theater, 32, 172–73
and Tshernovits Conference, 28, 38–63, 252, 253–54
Yiddishism, 6, 43, 57–78
Yiddishes Tageblatt. *See* Tageblat
Yiddishkeit. *See* Yi'dishkayt
Yi'dishe Kultu'r, 33, 57
Yi'dishkayt, 193, 256

Zamenhof, 5
Zangwill, Israel, 197–98, 203, 205
Zeitgeist
and Birnbaum, 73
defined, 277
Zhargo'n. *See* Jargo'n
Zhitlo'vski, Kha'yem
biographical note, 278
advocate of Yiddishist organization, 56
in old age, 59
Tshernovits Conference, 42, 47–51, 242
Zionism
coining of, 17, 23 n. 9
conversion of Martin Buber to, 24 n. 20
as a cultural movement, 18–21, 26–30
defined, 278
Galician, 30
Germanized, 26, 34, 116
goals of, 24 n. 23
Herzl, 260
history, 278
and language attitudes, 67 n. 15
and Tshernovits Conference, 41–47, 54–58
Zionist (noun)
Germanized, 19–20
pre-Herzlian, 17, 116
publications, 254–55, 257
Zionist (adj.)
movement, 16
World Congress, 11, 19, 255
Z.P.S.
in Galicia, 215
history, 278

Joshua A. Fishman



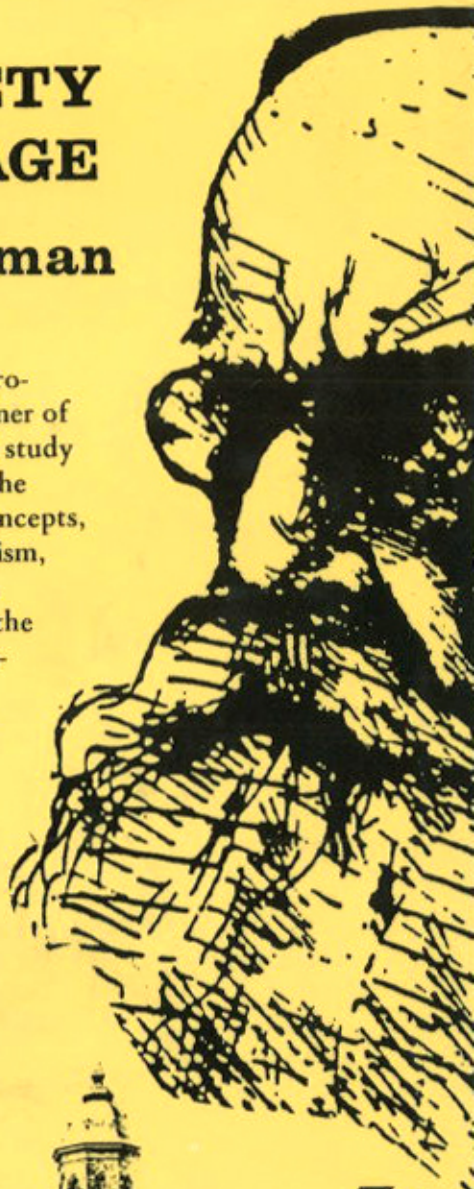
.... was born in Philadelphia (1926) and is currently Distinguished Research Professor, Social Sciences, Yeshiva University. He received his doctorate from Columbia University and holds honorary degrees from Yeshiva University and the University of Brussels. A leading sociolinguist and long-time observer of and commentator on Jewish life and letters, he is the author of more than three hundred scholarly books and articles, as well as reviews. A noted authority on bilingualism and language planning, Professor Fishman has been a fellow at the following centers: Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto; Institute for Advanced Projects, the East-West Center, Honolulu; The Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton; Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study; and the Israel Institute for Advanced Study in Jerusalem. He has been a visiting professor at numerous universities, among them Harvard University, Stanford University, The University of New Mexico, and Hebrew University (Jerusalem). As a member of various soholarly organizations, he has had extensive editorial experience, including *Yivo Bleter* and *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*.

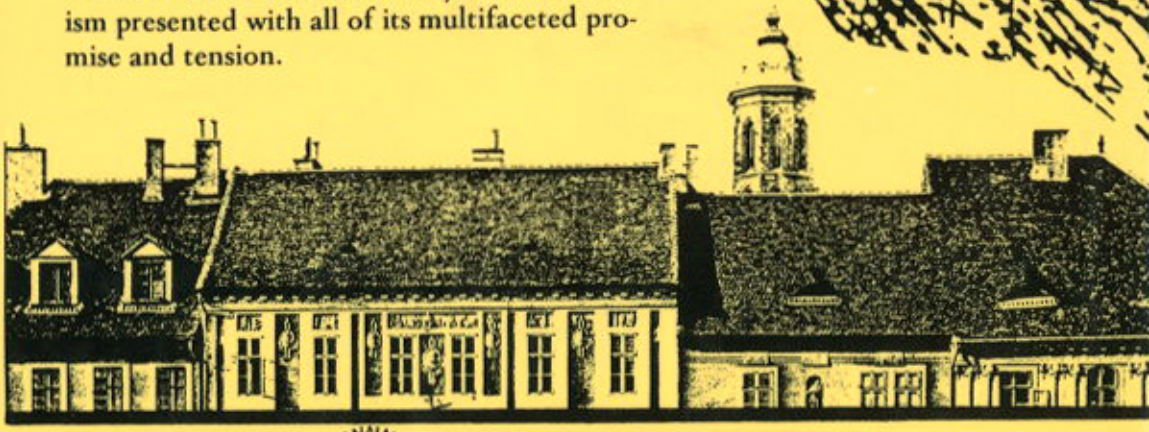
IDEOLOGY, SOCIETY & LANGUAGE

Joshua A. Fishman

The Odyssey of NATHAN BIRNBAUM

This is the life story of a leading proponent of Yidishkayt and the coiner of the word "Zionism," the detailed study of a key figure in understanding the complex history of Jewish self-concepts, religious interpretations, nationalism, and questions of language choice. Nathan Birnbaum was central to the most extraordinary--and contradictory--language events of modern times; the emergence of Yiddish as a literary language and, simultaneously, the revival of Hebrew as the national language that replaced it. Here, we find the pre-Holocaust Jewish experience in Central and Eastern Europe, the cradle of such momentuous Jewish social events as Zionism, Diaspora Cultural Autonomy, the return to traditional orthodoxy, and Yiddishism presented with all of its multifaceted promise and tension.





KAROMA PUBLISHERS, INC.

ANN ARBOR MICHIGAN
ISBN 0-89720-082-9