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The Periodical Publications
of the
Jewish Labour and Revolutionary Movements
in Eastern and Southeastern Europe
1877-1916



המרכז לחקר תולדות ישראל ע"ש בן-ציון דינור

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Labour Movement

Avraham Greenbaum

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of the
Jewish Labour and Revolutionary Movements
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An Annotated Bibliography

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INTRODUCTION

This bibliography lists the periodical literature of the Jewish socialist and revolutionary movements in the Russian Empire, the Austrian Empire and the Balkans, from the beginnings in 1877 up to and including 1916. Perfection is usually beyond the bibliographer's reach, but the author hopes that very little relevant material has escaped his attention.

The importance of the periodical press for the study of the Jewish labor and revolutionary movements hardly needs stating. Whether under conditions of freedom, or under the conditions of oppression which usually prevailed in Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the pre-1918 period, periodicals were the chief means of informing adherents and sympathizers of what was happening. They also presented the party's or faction's platform to a wider public.

In this area publishing of periodicals which the authorities considered subversive was fraught with danger. This was especially true in the Russian Empire, where political parties were illegal per se until 1905. Even in later years, when periodicals were technically legal, the editors often hid behind the so-called "Sitzredaktor", the official editor who was willing to "sit" in prison if necessary. Another way of overcoming the obstacle of publishing in Russia and Russian-ruled Poland was smuggling in books and periodicals from abroad. Therefore our bibliography includes periodicals published in the West for the purpose of smuggling them into Eastern Europe.

In the Austrian Empire freedom of the press existed theoretically after 1867, but in practice this meant only freedom from pre-publication censorship. Newspapers and journals could readily be confiscated and steps would be taken against their editors and publishers.¹

In spite of the difficulties and dangers we found a surprisingly large number of periodicals (including newspapers) which fit our inclusion criteria — 250 items.

¹ On censorship in the area see Robert J. Goldstein, *Political Censorship of the Arts and the Press in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, London 1989; and for Austria also the pamphlet: Heinrich Kanner, *Zur Presseform in Oesterreich*, Vienna 1897.

A number of these were continuations of suppressed periodicals under a different title, others did not get beyond the first issue, and a one-time collection would occasionally appear where permission to publish a periodical could not be obtained. Yet we should be aware that even a periodical which ended after the first issue could wield considerable influence. A good example are the journals published by the pioneer of Zionist socialism Nahman Syrkin: *ha-Shahar* in Hebrew (192 in our list) and *Der Hamoyn* in Yiddish (86).

During the time with which we are dealing, the last quarter of the 19th century and the first of the twentieth, the Jews of Eastern and Southeastern Europe were swept up in a growing process of linguistic assimilation. As a result a number of the intellectuals were estranged from the Jewish vernacular, Yiddish (Ladino in some Balkan countries). Still and all the desire to influence large numbers meant that Yiddish or Ladino was usually favored over the co-territorial language, as a glance at our bibliography will show. Two leaders of Jewish socialist parties, Ber Borochof of "Poale Zion" and Vladimir Medem of the "Bund", even learned Yiddish in order to be able to communicate with the largely unassimilated Jewish working class. Among other languages Russian was used the most. There were some bilingual periodicals, and in the Ottoman Empire there was even a case of a multi-lingual publication (103).

As for Hebrew, there were a few early attempts, and indeed the very first Jewish socialist periodical, *ha-Emet* of 1877 (34) was in Hebrew and intended to influence Yeshiva students. *Ha-Emet* was followed by *Asefat Hakhamim* (20).² But the Hebrew trend ended early, as editors realized that the workers, whose Jewish education was usually rudimentary, could not understand the language. Those who persisted in Hebrew were ideologically motivated in that direction.

Most of the periodicals in our list were issued by some party or faction, not necessarily Jewish. In the entire area there was a growing struggle between those who saw the existence of a separate Jewish labor movement as unnecessary if not harmful, and those who disagreed. No one denied the "international" nature of the movement or the need for worker solidarity. But many Jewish socialists would argue the need for a separate Jewish organization either on practical grounds, such as the need to use Yiddish, or because they felt that the Jews were a nation like any other even without a contiguous territory. For the Zionist and territorialist socialists, who wanted to restore Jewish statehood, the need for

2 *Ha-Emet* and *Asefat Hakhamim* (1877-1878) were reprinted in the Hebrew University's "Kuntresim" — *Text and Studies Series* (distributed by Dinur Center): Jerusalem 1966, 1975 (Series B2); Jerusalem 1968 (Series B5).

separate Jewish parties was not even in question. But Jewish socialists who initially took part in the general parties of their area in Russia, Poland, and elsewhere, and felt that the Jews had special needs, soon found themselves in a struggle within their parties. These would issue periodicals of their own in Yiddish in order to fight Jewish "separatism", after many of their erstwhile Jewish members left to found independent Jewish socialist parties.

A need for socialist publications in Yiddish was felt as early as 1881, when some Jewish activists of "Narodnaia volia" ("People's Will"), known in those days as "nihilists", translated an issue of the group's paper into Yiddish (15). But Jewish revolutionary periodicals were sporadic until around 1895, when it was felt that a separate Jewish organization was needed as part of Russia's Social Democracy. In 1897 Jewish social democrats founded the General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, commonly known by the short form of its Yiddish name as the "Bund".³ For most of its pre-World War existence the Bund was an autonomous national unit within the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDRP), founded in 1898 with the active participation of Bund members. During the years of 1903-1906 the Bund — after some of its demands for greater autonomy were refused — left the parent party, but the Bund's position on the "national question", namely that the Jews were a nation entitled to national rights as well as civil rights, was a problem for the RSDRP after 1906 as well. In spite of numerous arrests of members, and a breakaway party with a brief existence (the Independent Jewish Workers Party, which believed in economic but not political struggle), the Bund solidified its hold on the Jewish workers and at its peak had about 30,000 members. The quick growth of the Bund's membership was the cause of a concomitant increase in Bundist periodicals, which appeared in Yiddish, Russian, and in a few cases in Polish. We should note here that the Bund's demands for national rights were largely limited to the right to use Yiddish and to autonomy in the area of education; the Bundists consistently rejected ideologies which advocated resettlement of the Jewish masses in Palestine (Zionism) or elsewhere (territorialism).

In neighboring Rumania and Galicia kindred parties to the Bund arose. In Rumania the "Lumina" ("Light") group broke with the country's socialists. The

3 On the rise of Jewish socialist parties in general and the Bund in particular see Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*, Cambridge 1981.

group believed that the systematic denial of elementary rights to the Jews by the authorities, simply by refusing to grant them citizenship, was not given attention by the Rumanian Social-Democratic Party, and a Jewish party was therefore necessary.⁴ The party published a journal in Rumanian, *Lumina* (136) beginning in 1895, and soon added a Yiddish journal, called *Veker* (221). But already in 1897 both journals ceased publication. A brief revival of *Veker* took place, this time with the support of the Rumanian Social-Democratic Party, in 1915, but the new *Veker* had to close when Rumania entered the World War the following year.

In Galicia, then under Austrian rule, the usual struggles against national separatism in Social Democracy took place. The call for worker solidarity did not prevent a "Jewish Workers Party" from organizing as early as 1892; but the party and its *Arbeyter-shtimme* (12) were short-lived. In 1897, when the Polish Social Democratic Party of Galicia and Silesia (PPSD) was founded, leading Jewish members such as Herman Diamand fought a proposal to organize a Jewish section on a federative basis. In the following years some Jewish socialists wanted to create a Jewish social democratic party as part of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party, which had accepted the principle of a federation of national parties. However, both in Austrian politics and in Austrian socialism the idea that the Jews were a nation met strong opposition. It was not till 1905, after hope for a change of attitude had been abandoned, that the Jewish Social-Democratic Party of Galicia (later renamed the Jewish Social-Democratic Party of Galicia and Bukovina), came into being. The leaders were influenced by the success of the Bund, and informally the new party was known as the "Galician Bund". The two parties merged after Poland was reunited at the end of World War I.

At the turn of the century the Russian and Galician Jewish socialists had to contend with a new opponent: Labor Zionism. Its rise was caused not only by the rapid spread of Zionism among the Jewish masses but also by the perception that the existing socialist parties were not improving the lot of the Jewish worker. In Russia the Labor Zionist movement, collectively named "Poale Zion", split in 1905/06 into three parties. The best-known was that of Ber Borochof, which retained the name "Poale Zion" in its official name ("Jewish

4 The party's Memorandum to the Congress of the International — London-1896 (Jassy 1896, in German) was reprinted with a Hebrew translation, Jerusalem 1969 ("Kuntresim" — Texts and Studies, Series B 13), distributed by Dinur Center.

Social-Democratic Workers Party Poale Zion”), and which advocated a socialist Jewish territorial center in Palestine. Competing with the Borochovist “Poale Zion” were the socialist territorialists, who did not see Palestine as a practical solution but sought a Jewish territory elsewhere. They were then called the “Zionist Socialist Workers Party”, and were known by the party’s Russian initials as “S. S.”. A smaller faction felt that the “Palestine or territory” question should be postponed until a Jewish parliament, or “sejm”, could decide this and other issues. They called themselves the “Jewish Socialist Workers Party” but were better known as “Sejmists”, and by their Russian initials as “E. S.” or “Serp”. All these parties published journals in both Yiddish and Russian.⁵

Socialist territorialism gave birth to some other parties: in Russia a short-lived Jewish Territorialist Workers Party, which in 1907 merged with S. S., and in the Austrian Empire a Socialist Territorialist Workers Party. In 1917, after the February revolution in Russia, S. S. and the “Sejmists” merged into the “United Jewish Socialist Workers Party”, but its history and publication are beyond the scope of this bibliography. Suffice it to say that the steep decline in Jewish territorialism after the Balfour Declaration of 1917 meant an early end for the “United” in independent Poland. Both “Poale Zion”, which had created a world-wide organization in 1907, and the Bund, survived till the Holocaust in Poland, but not in Russia, where the Communists soon suppressed all other parties, although the final suppression of “Poale Zion” did not come till 1928.

Parallel with the rise of Jewish socialism in Eastern and Southeastern Europe similar movements arose in the West. These movements, founded mainly in England and the U. S. by immigrants from Eastern Europe, maintained ties with the like-minded groups in the former home. This bibliography does not take in the Western socialist and related publications, except, as stated, those designed for smuggling into Eastern Europe.

5 The following relevant publications were reprinted in the “Kuntresim” — *Texts and Studies* series and are distributed by the Dinur Center: *The First Conference of the Zionist Worker’s Associations in Russia*, (Minsk 1901), Jerusalem 1975 (Series B 11). 2 documents, in Hebrew translation; *The Various Trends in Poale Zion*, (Minsk 1904), Jerusalem 1975 (Series B 15). Hebrew translation; *The “Vozrozhdenie” Movement and the “Jewish-Socialist Party”*, Jerusalem 1988 (Series B 21). Hebrew translation. Published by the Dinur Center.