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C. BEZALEL SHERMAN

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GALUTH NATIONALISM,

YIDDISHISM



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HERZL INSTITUTE PAMPHLETS 6



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GALUTH NATIONALISM,  
YIDDISHISM**

*By C. BEZALEL SHERMAN*

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## **BUND, GALUTH NATIONALISM, YIDDISHISM**



Practically all of the social and political movements that have influenced contemporary Jewish life have come into being during the past 75 years. They coincided with the great changes the Jewish people had been undergoing since the last quarter of the nineteenth century; and they have all been both the cause and the effect of the renaissance which has found its highest expression in the establishment of the State of Israel. The various movements, frequently pulling at cross purposes and at war with each other, all flowed from the well-springs of an awakened Jewish people which, tired of waiting for supernatural deliverance, decided to bring about its own redemption. That awakening gave rise to Zionism as well as to the other national and social Jewish movements with which I shall deal tonight. To be sure, these latter movements have long since ceased to be an organized force, but at one time or another they rallied great masses of Jews behind

their banners, and the effect of their activities is still felt among us.

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The year 1897 was a particularly important one in the life of the Jewish people. It was the year in which the World Zionist movement was founded by Theodor Herzl. It was also the year in which the Bund, the first Jewish political party in the Diaspora, was born. And in the same year of 1897 a Russian-Jewish magazine began publishing a series of articles, written by the great Jewish historian Simon Dubnow, which introduced a new approach to the age-old Jewish question and stimulated the emergence of a new social movement, known as Galuth Nationalism.

Bund represented the first attempt to organize Jewish workers as a class. A Jewish labor movement emerged from the economic and social changes Russia was experiencing during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The rise of industrialism, even though it was slow and retarded in Russia, and the existence of a revolutionary movement which was directed against Czarist despotism and aimed to establish a constitutional form of government, shook the Russian Jewish settlement to its foundation. Industrialization accelerated social and economic differentiation and class division within the Jewish community; the revolutionary movement brought home to the Russian Jews the fact that their fate was inextricably interwoven with the

struggle for political freedom for the Russian nation. Jews realized that the discriminations and disabilities they had to suffer at the hands of a pogromist government would not be removed before the political system prevailing in Russia was radically changed. Bund was the first organized expression of this realization.

The founding of Bund constitutes one of the decisive turning points in contemporary Jewish history. Although it was organized on a class basis as a socialist party, it affected Jewish life generally by stimulating the participation of non-working Jewish groups in general political action.

From the beginning, Bund aspired to guide all efforts of the Jewish workers to consolidate themselves as a social and economic group within the Jewish community and as an identifiable entity among the anti-Czarist forces. It sought to link up the struggle for the improvement of the lot of the Jewish population with the general struggle for the democratization of the country.

Bund was at first uncertain as to the direction it was to take in specifically Jewish matters. Its initial steps were quite unsteady as regards Jewish interests; it even carried on most of its early propaganda activities in the Russian language. Only after the Bundist leaders realized that they were not really gaining the ear of the Jewish population did they turn to Yiddish, which, to them, was a means rather than an end, and a temporary tool rather than a permanent value. However, force of circumstances pushed the Bund, much against the

will of some of its leaders, to an increasing concern with Jewish affairs; but because the concern was at first more a matter of expediency than conviction or philosophy, it took Bund a long time to formulate a national program for the Jewish people to complement the class program it proposed for the Jewish proletariat.

The founders of Bund had divergent views regarding the Jewish question. Some of them negated the existence of a Jewish people; others took an opposite position. Bund tried to resolve the conflict by adopting a policy of neutrality and refusing to commit itself regarding Jewish peoplehood and Jewish group survival. When this position proved untenable, Bund finally made the plunge and recognized the Jewish community in Czarist Russia as a nationality which was entitled to enjoy autonomy in cultural matters. From then on, Bund called upon the socialist movement to fight for a social order that would assure the Jewish population of liberated Russia an opportunity to carry on as a community, and to regulate its cultural affairs in accordance with its own needs.

Bund did not originate the theory of cultural autonomy; it largely borrowed this theory from the socialist party of Austria-Hungary. As a synthetic country made up of a number of nationalities, Austria-Hungary was preoccupied with the problem of integrating the various national groups into its state fabric; and the socialist movement of that country, in its turn, felt impelled to offer proposals that would meet some of

the demands of the subjugated national minorities and yet keep them within the political organism of Austria-Hungary. These proposals crystallized into the theory of cultural autonomy. The most important theoreticians of cultural autonomy, including Otto Bauer, a Jew, did not feel, however, that their program applied to Jews, since they did not regard Jews as a people or a nationality. It remained for the Bund to extend the principle of cultural autonomy to the Jewish community of Czarist Russia, thus giving the party an ideological basis for maintaining its independence. The independent Jewish party would not only serve as a channel for Jewish participation in the struggle against political despotism, but would also be the instrument to achieve cultural autonomy for the Jewish community as a whole.

It was in efforts to organize the Jewish workers as a group that the Bund has made its most important contribution to modern Jewish life. It cemented the Jewish working class, made it an integral part of a political struggle, and linked it up with an international movement. And it was precisely for this reason that Bund encountered the opposition of organized Russian socialism, particularly of that wing which subsequently came to be known as Bolshevism and Communism, and whose undisputed leader was Lenin. The latter realized that the very fact that Jewish workers were organizing themselves into a political party of their own retarded the process of Jewish assimilation. Whatever the sub-

jective views and intentions of the founders of the Bund, independent organization gave the Jewish working class an identity of its own and made it incumbent upon this class to concern itself with Jewish problems. This concern ran contrary to Lenin's conception, which was the conception of the entire Russian socialist movement at the time and of international Socialism as well, that the Jewish problem had only one revolutionary solution: the disappearance of Jews from the world arena.

Jewish survival, according to Lenin, was unnecessary and impossible because the Jews were no more than a historical hangover, held together by persecution from without. Remove the persecution—Lenin argued—and give the Jew the equality of individual treatment that he was entitled to as a person—and the Jewish group would dissolve. And Lenin made it mandatory for socialists—for Jewish socialists even more so than for non-Jews—to facilitate Jewish assimilation and to do everything possible to accelerate Jewish group disintegration. By its very existence—Lenin insisted, and the Menshevik leaders fully agreed with him—a Jewish labor party tended to undermine the implementation of the socialist program vis-a-vis the Jews. It followed, therefore, that Bund and the other Jewish parties represented a counter-revolutionary force which must be combatted with all the power at the disposal of the proletariat. International Socialism has in time arrived at a more sympathetic attitude toward

the struggle of the Jewish people for normal national survival; but the Communist movement has never relented in its violent opposition to all action aiming to strengthen Jewish group life. The rabid anti-Zionism of the Bund did not deter Lenin from making that party the target of his wrath in 1903, and did not save the Bund from liquidation at the hands of the Communists after they seized power in Russia in 1917.

What did Bund contribute in a positive way to the shaping of Jewish life as we know it today? By linking up the Jewish question with the international social and economic problems perplexing humanity as a whole, Bund fortified the will of the Jewish people to live, to fight for its own survival, and to make this survival serve mankind generally. Bund also impressed upon the masses of Jews the need for taking things into their own hands, not to be passive onlookers in the march of events, and not to wait for a supernatural redeemer. It gave the Jewish worker an appreciation of his own worth, and an awareness that he had a stake in the development of modern Jewish culture, particularly the Yiddish language. Bund regarded Yiddish as the basis of the future Jewish cultural autonomy and thus elevated, without originally intending it, the dignity of the language and Yiddish culture.

What were the negative aspects of Bund's activities? First, it was this wavering regarding the collective status of the Jews. When the Bundist leaders finally made up their minds that the Jews were a people, they conceived

of the problems of this people not as global in nature but as a localistic phenomenon. They saw a Jewish nationality in old Czarist Russia, but failed to see a Jewish national entity which embraced the totality of Jewish life and cut across geographic boundaries. They hardly concerned themselves with Jews outside their immediate vicinity, and tried to alleviate the plight of Jewish national minorities in Eastern Europe without understanding the strivings of the Jewish people to achieve national self-fulfillment. They also underestimated the value and relevance of the Jewish spiritual heritage. For them, Jewish history largely began with the rise of the Jewish labor movement at the end of the nineteenth century, and they were interested in Yiddish culture only in so far as it served that movement. Hebrew to them spelled reaction, and religion a means of keeping Jewish workers hitched to the bourgeois cart. No wonder Bund declared war, uncompromising war, war of destruction, on the Zionist movement, which, as we have seen, appeared on the scene at the time Bund did and was born out of the same well-springs of the Jewish renaissance. Bund denied that emigration played an important role in Jewish life and insisted that Jews must remain in their native lands and strive to reform them, no matter how oppressive those lands proved to be to their Jewish inhabitants. It ruled out any attempt at regulating Jewish wanderings and, of course, rejected territorialism as an answer to the Jewish question.

Because of these failings, Bund, despite its great con-

tributions, proved in the main to be a negative factor in Jewish life. This is not the place to assess the harm it has caused the Jewish people, but it should be pointed out that Bund could function only in a climate of political oppression, and only in countries where Jews were recognized as a national minority. To the Jews of the democratic countries it had nothing to say. Tens of thousands of Bundists came to this country since the turn of the century, but at no time did they even attempt to present a Bundist program for the Jews of the United States. They had nothing to offer to the American Jew, who was not engaged in struggles against a political tyrant, did not face the danger of pogroms, and enjoyed full political equality. To be sure, Bundists contributed much to the rise and development of the Jewish labor movement in America, but they have never evolved a philosophy of American Jewish living. It never occurred to them to suggest cultural autonomy as a basis for Jewish group life in this country, and they have for a long time prevented the Jewish labor movement from taking its rightful place in the Jewish community.

Bund operated in Russia until it was suppressed, with all other Jewish organizations, by the Bolsheviks. After World War I, it became a very powerful organization in Poland and gained much influence among the Jewish masses of that country, who were impressed by the manner in which Bund reacted to their immediate needs. A great number of Jews who did not share its



views on such general Jewish problems as religion or Zionism, largely followed Bundist leadership in the struggle for political reforms, the right to work, and against economic discrimination.

Beyond the borders of Poland Bund could never establish itself as a serious force. There were Bundist groups in some countries in Western Europe, but these were merely foreign importations made up of immigrants. In the United States they have never formed an independent movement; and their anti-Zionism frequently brought them into coalition with the leaders of Jewish Big Business regarding Jewish affairs. In the opposition to the convocation of an American Jewish Congress during World War I, there existed an informal united front between Bund-oriented Jewish socialists and the American Jewish Committee, or, as Nachman Syrkin termed it at the time, between Wall Street and Hester Street.

At the time Bund was destroyed, together with the three million Jews of Poland, it was at the height of its power and influence. It was practically the largest Jewish political party in Poland, having polled a plurality of votes cast by Jews in the elections to city councils in cities with the largest Jewish communities. No one knows what course Bund would have taken had not Hitler and Stalin cut its life short; but it is a tragic fact that its surviving leaders tried, without much success, to convert the remnants of their scattered groups into a world organization after World War II. The activities

of the World Coordinating Committee they have established revolve around efforts to keep anti-Zionism alive among Jewish socialist groups.

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Moving away from the Bund, we find the year 1897 giving birth to another movement which also has left a considerable impact on Jewish thought and action. In that year, Simon Dubnow began publishing his letters on old and new Jewish life, in which he crystallized the platform for the Jewish *Folkspartay*—a Jewish populist organization. Dubnow in a sense made a virtue out of necessity. He was, of course, aware that Jews were living an abnormal life; but he tried to present this abnormality as a factor enhancing the moral stature of the Jewish people. According to Dubnow, there were three types of group structure in human society. There was first the tribal group; then there was the political nation, and, finally, the spiritual people. The last form represented the highest stage of national development, and only the Jewish people has thus far attained this highest stage. Its ex-territoriality, far from being an unmitigated tragedy, represented a challenge to the Jewish people to measure up to its lofty capacities as a spiritual nation. "The source of vitality of the Jewish people consists in this," Dubnow wrote, "that this people, after it had passed through the stages of its tribal nationalism, ancient culture and political territory, was able to establish itself and fortify itself in the highest stage,

the spiritual and historical-cultural, and succeeded in crystallizing itself as a spiritual people that draws the sap of its existence from a natural or intellectual 'will to live.' " \*

Dubnow's greatness lies primarily in his historical works, and his theories of Galuth Nationalism flow logically from his conceptions of Jewish history. He saw Jewish development as a struggle for spiritual fulfillment amidst a perpetual conflict between positive and negative forces. The Jewish people has been resolving this conflict by forever creating new centers of cultural and communal activity. Whenever catastrophe had befallen a Jewish community in one part of the world, there had emerged a new center in some other part of the world which not only sustained the group within its own confines, but was also able to come to the aid of Jewish settlements in other lands. Jewish history is thus a chain of centers, the links of which Jews have themselves forged out of their struggles for creative survival. "The Jewish nation," wrote Dubnow, "passed through a variety of stages: prosperity and stagnation, progress and mere survival, full and retarded growth. The nation as a whole, however, lived and developed as one, as a definite national personality in all parts of the Diaspora."

Jewish religion was the greatest expression of the Jewish genius, but there were other products of Jewish

\* Most of the quotations from *Dubnow—Nationalism and History*, edited by Koppel S. Pinson; Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1958.

creativity which, in their totality, shaped the Jewish trek through the ages. The Hebrew language was one of those products. Yiddish was another, although of lesser importance. Hebrew and Yiddish, Dubnow said, were like the two legs of a person; except that Hebrew was a natural leg, while Yiddish was a wooden leg, grafted on the Jewish body after one of its natural legs was amputated. Yiddish was reinforcing Hebrew, because no people could stand, let alone move forward, on one leg.

Dubnow was never an opponent of Zionism, but he was at first rather skeptical as to its realizability. Although he accepted in part Ahad Haam's concept of a spiritual center in Eretz Yisrael, he felt that the Jewish people could get along without a land of its own if it would really rise to its destiny. Later, under the impact of increasing Jewish misery, he came to view efforts in Palestine in a more sympathetic and cooperative spirit. In the mid-1930's he made the statement that the progress the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael was making since the Balfour Declaration was probably the greatest miracle in contemporary Jewish history. "Notwithstanding my severe objection to political Zionism,"—he stated in the preface to the Hebrew edition of his letters which appeared in 1937—"I was never opposed to its positive and practical side, the rebuilding of Palestine, but only to its negative aspect, the rejection of the Galuth." He was then on the fringe of the Zionist movement, but he never entered it in an organizational sense. You

know how his life ended. He died, *al kiddush hashem*, of a Nazi bullet at the time the ghetto in Riga, where he resided during the last years of his life, was liquidated.

But how did Dubnow envisage Jewish collective life structurally? He knew that even a spiritual nation was in need of a framework to hold it together, and he conceived of this framework as a net of autonomous Jewish communities spanning the Jewish world. "Autonomy, as a historical postulate," he wrote, "is . . . the inviolable right of every national individuality. The forms and degrees of this autonomy will, however, vary widely, depending upon the political and social conditions in which the given nation within a multi-national state finds itself. . . . How then should Jewish autonomism assert itself? It must, of course, be in full agreement with the character of the Jewish national idea. Jewry, as a spiritual or cultural nation, cannot in the Diaspora seek territorial or political separatism, but only a social or a national-cultural autonomy."

Dubnow's program included autonomy in all affairs of the Jewish community, and not merely in matters of culture, as Bund suggested. "The basis of our national idea," he wrote, "consists in the fact that all the scattered parts of the Jewish Diaspora constitute one indivisible people, united by common interests. In all periods of our history, there was a clear awareness or a confused feeling of the need for a general Jewish or-

ganization which could integrate the forces and protect the interests of the entire Diaspora."

The difficulty, of course, was that Jews were not a territorially concentrated minority, and were, in addition to being dispersed internationally, also scattered within the lands of their habitation. It was, therefore, necessary to base Jewish autonomy on personal identification and to include every Jew, declaring himself as such, as a member of the Jewish community, regardless of his place of residence. To be effective, Jewish autonomy must be based on "communal self-government and freedom in the use of its language in its schools and communal institutions." Dubnow proposed that a General Jewish Congress be organized to serve as the executive organ of the autonomy "and to encompass all aspects of self-government."

In 1907 Dubnow founded the *Folkspartay*. Its program was based on two principles which Dubnow formulated in the following words: 1) "the recognition of the common needs of all sections of Jewry in the political, civic and national-cultural fields; 2) the recognition that the Jews must carry on their fight for existence as members of one indivisible nationality, which, in the Diaspora, is divided into parts of different states, but not into parts of other nationalities." The *Folkspartay* could not compete with the older, strongly entrenched, Zionist organizations or the Bund. The Bolshevik revolution ended all talk of Jewish autonomy in Russia. The *Folkspartay* was revived, under different leadership and

with a drastically revised program, after World War I in Poland. It carried on for several years without ever attaining great popularity or mass-following. Nevertheless, its influence was not inconsiderable.

Dubnow's ideas have penetrated the ideologies of other Jewish organizations and caused Zionism to pay greater heed to Jewish life in the Diaspora. In assessing the role of spiritual factors in the regeneration of the Jewish people, Dubnow came close to the views of Ahad Haam; in some respects he went beyond Ahad Haam, in other respects he did not go as far as the latter. He was more optimistic in his appraisal of the Jewish creative potentialities in the Golah. I see a good deal of similarity between Dubnow's philosophy and the program of American Reconstructionism as formulated by Professor Mordecai M. Kaplan, although the centrality of Jewish statehood is a much more basic plank in Kaplan's platform than in Dubnow's original proposals.

Dubnow was basically a nineteenth century liberal. He was influenced by the Haskalah and nineteenth century nationalism. As a historian, he had a full realization of the determining role religion played in preserving the Jewish people; as an ideologue of Galuth Nationalism, he was at first strongly anti-traditionalist. The Hitler holocaust, following in the wake of the assimilationist waves that swept through Western European Jewry, did not shake his faith in the Emancipation. "In our epoch of counter-emancipation," he wrote,

"we dare not pose the ironic question: 'Well, what has emancipation brought us?' True, it brought assimilation, but also freedom and human dignity. It revived the free person in the Jew."

\* \* \*

At the end of the nineteenth century another theory of Galuth Nationalism appeared on the Jewish scene. It both paralleled and deviated from Dubnow's. That theory is identified with the name of Dr. Chaim Zhitlovsky who considered himself, and with some justification, the father of the Galuth Nationalist movement because he introduced the basic conceptions upon which that movement was founded as early as 1887. While Dubnow and Zhitlovsky had much in common, there was fundamentally more on which they disagreed than agreed. To begin with, Dubnow, as I pointed out, believed that a people achieved spiritual fulfillment only in proportion as it transcended the mere normality of territorial nations. He was looking for a super-normality, as it were, for something higher than normality. Zhitlovsky, on the other hand, was primarily concerned with equating the status of the Jewish people with that of normal nations. He wanted the Jewish people to constitute itself as a nation even in the Diaspora, and to acquire the characteristics that were usually attributed to normal peoples. In other words, he wanted Jews in the Dispersion to conduct themselves socially and culturally as if they had already achieved normal

nationhood. It was Zhitlovsky's contention that the normalization of Jewish life presupposed the complete re-vamping of the Jewish economic structure, and that it was therefore imperative for the Jews not only to alter their mode of living, but to change radically their manner of making a livelihood as well. He insisted that the Jews were a non-productive element—even a parasitic one—from an economic point of view; a minority that lived off the manual labor of the non-Jewish majority in the lands of their abode. Jews were a people of the brain rather than the brawn; and this was the fundamental cause of anti-Semitism. Gentiles simply resented the non-participation of Jews in agriculture and heavy industry—occupations which, to Zhitlovsky, represented the basis of a balanced and useful economy. Concentration in trade, in the professions, and in white-collar occupations gave the Jewish economic structure the appearance of a reversed pyramid, with a small body sustaining a large head. But the small body consumed proportionately as much goods as a normal body—and the goods were produced by others; hence, the parasitism of the Jewish economy.

Zhitlovsky was convinced that it was necessary, and also possible, to make agricultural workers and farmers out of the Jews who for centuries have been conditioned by city living. He advocated this economic shift for the American Jewish population, too; and this at a time when the trend in the country as a whole was increasingly from farm to city. Zhitlovsky vigorously

championed a program which called for the reversal of this trend by taking Jews out of the city and settling them on land.

Unlike the Bundists, who discarded their theories of Jewish cultural autonomy the minute they struck roots in American soil, Zhitlovsky tried hard for nearly a half-century to translate his theories into a program of action which he hoped would strengthen Jewish group life in this country. The fact that that program in no real sense differed from the original platform he proposed for Russian Jewry as early as 1887 is eloquent testimony of his failure to come to grips with the new elements America has introduced into Jewish historical experience.

Zhitlovsky's great contribution to the Jewish renaissance—a contribution that has won for him a prominent place in modern Jewish history—was his relentless struggle against the assimilatory policies and practices which distorted the class conceptions of the early Jewish socialists and made them oblivious of their responsibilities as members of the Jewish community. Mankind, he stressed, was divided into nations as well as into classes. Class interests and national interests intertwined and crossed each other like the black and red squares of a checkerboard. One set of interests could not be ignored without injury being inflicted on the other set of interests. Nations were not created artificially; they were the result of immutable social and cultural processes. These processes cannot be halted,

but they can be diverted to either progressive or reactionary channels. Hence, there was nothing intrinsically bad in nationalism. On the contrary, when harnessed to serve liberal causes, nationalism was a creative and constructive force which made for the spiritual and cultural elevation of the human spirit; utilized for reactionary purposes, nationalism inclined to turn into chauvinism and become a menace. It was the mission of the socialist movement to guide nationalism along progressive lines.

As against the policy of cosmopolitanism, theoretically envisaging a society in which all national differentiation was obliterated and, in its concrete implications, fostering assimilationism, Zhitlovsky propounded the principle of internationalism which conceived of mankind as a family of independent nations with each free to develop to the fullest extent the individuality of its national genius. The Jews of the world were entitled to a dignified place at the table of this family of nations.

The creativeness of modern nationalism, Zhitlovsky argued, resided in the cultural values of a people rather than in its religious traditions. The Jewish religion which sustained the Jewish people for thousands of years has lost its cementing power. In a sense, it has even become a disintegrating force in that it tended to divide Jews into denominational sects and into professing and non-professing groups.

The fallacy of Zhitlovsky's reasoning consisted in his persistent employment, vis-à-vis the Jewish people, of

criteria that may have been applicable—even that was questionable—to normal nations of a specific kind, living in certain lands and at certain times. He was schematic in his thinking, inclined to oversimplification, and he overlooked the characteristics that distinguished Jews from other peoples. He insisted that it was theoretically possible, although inconceivable from a practical point of view, for one to be a Christian by faith and a Jew by nationality, even as it was possible for one to be a Frenchman by nationality and Moslem by religion. Should a democratic Jewish community ever be organized in the United States, it would have to provide for the religious requirements of its Christian members out of community funds, as well as for its Jewish religious members. As a matter of principle, such a community would not only have to supply its needy members with matza for Passover, but would have to see to it that none of its Christian members went without pork on Easter.

Compare this with what Dubnow wrote: "If we wish to preserve Judaism as a cultural-historical type of nation, we must realize that the religion of Judaism is one of the integral foundations of national culture . . ." And further: ". . . a Jew may be a son of the Jewish faith potentially or actually, or he may be without religion at all; but exit from Judaism by acceptance of the Christian religion means exit from the Jewish nation."

Modern Jewish culture, centered about the Yiddish language, is the power that holds Jews together and

makes for their creative continuity as a people, according to Zhitlovsky. The cultivation and spread of Yiddish is, therefore, the cornerstone of Jewish survival. Yiddish is not a temporary tool, but a vital instrument for Jewish self-expression and national salvation. Yiddish to Zhitlovsky was a substitute for territory and religion; it was the unifying force which cemented Jews from all over the world into one people. No wonder Zhitlovsky was the father of the Yiddishist movement.

There is no need to go into a lengthy analysis of Yiddishism, which has also affected modern Jewish life, except to point out that, from a social and cultural point of view, it was probably the most sterile of all the movements that have come into being during the period under discussion. The Yiddish language was a tremendous force in Jewish life. It created values of inestimable significance which will forever figure prominently in the Jewish heritage; but Yiddishism as a movement produced practically nothing constructive. It has become a refuge for all anti-Zionist non-assimilationist Jews. To the extent that Bund offered any kind of a program in this country, it was a Yiddishist program. Insofar as the Territorialists ever constituted an organized group in America, it was Yiddishism that gave that group its ideological base. Scratch an ideological Yiddishist and an anti-Zionist will emerge.

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One brief word about Communism. There is no,

and there never has been, such a thing as a Jewish Communist movement, but Communism profoundly affected Jewish life nevertheless—and not only in the Soviet Union and its satellites. Communism has attracted Jews outside the Soviet orbit in even larger proportions than non-Jews. Yiddishists flocked to the Communist banner as a result of the fraudulent claims that in the Soviet Union Yiddish finally came into its own as a legally recognized and state-supported language. Others were attracted by the illusion that Jewish cultural autonomy would be achieved in the Soviet Union; and still others were attracted by the Birobidjan project.

I am not concerned here with those for whom Communism spelled social salvation, but with those whose interest in Communism had Jewish overtones. These latter were even more cruelly deceived than those who looked to Communism as the realization of socialist aspirations. Communism has proved to be totally incompatible with Jewish interests. Wherever Communism came into power, Jewish collective life was extinguished; and wherever a Jewish group fell under the influence of Communism, that Jewish group, to all intents and purposes, was lost to the Jewish people. Some positive features may be found even in the fallacious theories of Bund, Galuth, Nationalism and Yiddishism, but the record of Communism vis-à-vis Jewish interests is totally destructive. With the exception of Nazism, no greater disaster has befallen the Jewish

people in modern times. That the Jewish people has been able to survive the Hitlerite and Communist catastrophes is in no small measure due to the renewed vigor the modern social movements have brought into Jewish life.

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