Crafting a Jewish School System for Soviet Ukraine: Interwar Nationality Policies and Yiddish Pedagogical Writing

by

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the educational intelligentsia in the Yiddish secular school system in Ukraine during the five transformative years from 1918 to 1923. It shows how the Jewish secular school system was crafted on the examples of the two Yiddish journals, *Shul un Lebn* (*School and Life*) 1918-1920, and *Pedagogisher Biuleten* (*Pedagogical Newsletter*) 1922-1923. The thesis describes how the Jewish intelligentsia benefited from the political situation in Ukraine during the Central Rada in 1918 by having their own Ministry of Jewish Affairs and de-facto cultural autonomy and supervision of the Yiddish-language schools. In addition, it analyses the impact of the early Soviet power during the very beginning of *korenizatsiia* policy.

Jewish educators are discussed from two perspectives: as part of the Soviet teachers' collective and as committed followers of the international reform trends that characterize pedagogical thought and practice in the early decades of the twentieth century. The thesis emphasizes the special mediating role of the Jewish activist and the Bolshevik propagandist in Sovietizing the Jewish school.

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Introduction

1. The Research Question

My thesis deals with the educational intelligentsia in the Yiddish secular school system in Ukraine during the five transformative years from 1918 to 1923. Although the rise of Yiddish schooling starts years before the Bolshevik takeover of power in Ukraine, I shall in particular examine the impact of Soviet nationality policies toward Jews (mainly in the cultural sphere) during the Civil War and the early Soviet policy of *korenizatsiia* or "indigenization".

I shall analyze Jewish educators from three perspectives. Firstly, I shall contextualize the place and the role of Jewish activists in the Soviet system. Jewish educators were a part of the Soviet teachers' collective, and they were not isolated, but affected by all the educational changes which the Soviet state introduced regarding national minorities during *korenizatsiia*. Secondly, I shall consider them as committed followers of the international reform trends that characterize pedagogical thought and practice in the early decades of the twentieth century. Thirdly, I shall look at how "Jewish" the Jewish interwar education truly was in terms of content and school agenda.

The issues to be discussed in this thesis fall broadly in the field of the theory of education. This theory has a noble history, going back at least to Plato, in ancient times, and Rousseau and Herder, in modern times. Plato argued for a comprehensive education of citizens in his ideal state

in philosophical and factual matters, as well as in skills, gymnastics, and arts, all for the sake of building a just society with virtuous citizens.[1] Rousseau believed that the goal of "natural" education should serve the community as a whole; "make the citizen good by training", he claimed, "and everything else will follow".[2] On a similar romanticist line, Herder's idea was that education should correspond to the precepts of the *Volksgeist*.[3] What unites all these authors is the belief that, through general public education, citizens could become better but also make the community better.

This goal is similar to the one of building a Soviet citizen from different ethnic, national, and religious communities. That is why many issues Plato, Rousseau, and Herder first raised will reappear in the debates I shall discuss regarding the case of Jewish secular education in interwar and Soviet Ukraine. To be sure, the sources of the idea of Jewish secular education and the story of how it occurred in Russia and Ukraine are much more complex. But the central tenets of that idea are perennial tenets of educational philosophies.

Education, whether public or private, had to respond to the important demands of the society in which it existed. The most decisive question concerned the type of individual it would produce. The response given to this question obviously depends on the historical era and on its views of the state and society, as well as on the place of the individual in it. Unlike historical thought, the vector of education is directed to the future. However, this is true only about modern education which aimed to break with the traditional past. In traditional society, education was

[1] Plato, *The Republic*, Cha 2-3, http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.3.ii.html .
[2] Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1792, *Emile, or on Education*, https://archive.org/stream/rousseausemileor00rousiala/rousseausemileor00rousiala_djvu.txt .
[3] Johann Gottfried Herder, 1774, *From Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Mankind*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/herder/1774/history.html .

commonly associated with the principle of continuity where knowledge was transmitted from the older generation to the younger one. This was the 'chain of tradition' principle in Jewish learning.

Therefore, we should distinguish between the continuity which traditional education was about, and the changes which the Soviet revolutionary system wanted to bring by radically changing the societal mentality. Soviets aimed to change the old society by teaching the younger generation the most innovative things. The focus of attention of Soviet pedagogues was the child-reformator, child-innovator, who would change the old society from which he or she came. The old educational system was no longer valid.

There is a Soviet and an international horizon of innovation in pedagogy. Soviet pedagogues used ideas of American, Western European, and 'local' educators in their practices. They were implementing the latest findings of the age. Making a clear departure from the Tsarist regime, the Soviet period neglected the contributions of the previous regime.

The German school reform at the turn of the century had a great impact on Soviet pedagogy. Many study books were translated from German to Russian at the time.[4] German reformers in primary education from the last years of the German Empire until the early Third Reich developed the idea of universal schooling.[5] Before the First World War, leaders of the Teachers' Association in Germany argued for abolishing class and religious (Catholics and Protestant) distinctions in sending children to schools. Under the claim of school reform, teachers also pursued a hidden agenda to improve their own material status, as teachers in "elite" schools

[4] I shall provide examples of such literature, used in Jewish pedagogical journals, the majority of which came in Russian translation.
[5] Marjorie Lamberti, *The politics of Education: Teachers and School Reform in Imperial Germany*, New York, Berghann, 2002.

had better conditions and salaries than those in popular ones. Democratization of the school meant giving access to education for working class children.

All of these changes influenced the Soviet educational system, whose formation was occurring simultaneously. However, the Soviets were even more radical. First, they separated religion from the state and school. Second, they made education accessible to everyone.[6] Third, teachers were treated as equals. Finally, previously unprivileged classes received access to education which became an instrument of social and class mobility.

In these reforms, Soviets were influenced by the ideas John Dewey, especially the ideas about the methodic of "active learning".[7] Contrary to the traditional model of education, where the child is a passive learner of a subject, Dewey proposed an active and experiential model, where the child will be engaged in what he or she learns in communication with a teacher and where the content of the course will correspond to the child's prior experiences of the subject. Dewey was also a reformist in the way teachers ought to behave. Rather than striving to become narrow specialists in their fields, the teachers' obligation, Dewey argued, is to acquire love for working with the children, to become devoted to passing knowledge to them, as well as to inquire about the subjects, the methods, and the problems of the profession. As I shall explain in more details later, these and other ideas of Dewey's are visible in theories of Soviet pedagogues and the practice of secular schooling of the time.

[6] In the beginning of the 1920s, there were schools like Rabfak, designed only for workers, but later they disappeared.
[7] John Dewey, *Experience and Education: The 60th Anniversary Edition*, Indianapolis, Kappa Delta Pi, 1998, 156.

2. The Secondary Literature

I shall now give a brief overview of the state of research in the field. The topic of Jewish elites, or the Soviet Jewish teaching intelligentsia, stands at the crossroads of several time periods and issues. Among them are late Russian imperial history, Russian Civil War history, the history of the Russian Revolution, as well as Ukrainian history after the Revolution and before the Soviet power. Currently there is no scholarship which focuses exclusively on the Jewish teachers' intelligentsia and their relation to the pedagogical issues inside or the outside the "Jewish street" during the interwar period. Newly emerged Jewish elites were not only political activists but also contributors to Soviet pedagogy. They were Soviet teachers, representing a part of the system. For that reason, it is important to place them in the context of Soviet pedagogy. Here I present a couple of studies from different fields of history, which are related to my research on Soviet Jewish intelligentsia. The list is by no means exhaustive. The amount of publications on interwar Soviet history, as well as on the Ukrainian revolution, and Jewish interwar culture, is huge. My aim is not to cover all of them. Instead, I propose paying attention to some relevant publications which shed light on the problem from different aspects, cultural and political.

Yiddish schools have been a subject of minor consideration in the books on Soviet Jewish history.[8] Elias Schulman's *History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union* (Ktav Publishing House, New York, 1971), an overview of the system of Yiddish schools, was by the time of its publication the pioneering study in the field. Shulman's book is the analysis of the development of the school system from its rise to its decline. Despite the title, Schulman begins the story of the

[8] Example from Schulman, *History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union*. A. Zeltser in his encyclopedia entry of 2008 does not refer to any newer research literature either; http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Soviet_Yiddish-Language_Schools .

schools before the First World War by drawing a connection – structural and ideological – with Bundist schools. His book not only places Yiddish schools in the context of the Soviet education and school system, but also in the Jewish school system, with its traditional (heder and yeshiva), Zionist, and socialist branches (Poaley Tsionists, Diaspora Autonomists, etc.). Shulman claims that between the 1918 and 1936, the government permitted Jewish activity in cultural and educational spheres, but he does not say explicitly that it was, to a large extent, a conscious policy of the state imposed on the Jews. Schulman's story is a story of failure of the schools. He mourns the lost Jewish identity in the school system which was an instrument of being 'national only in form and Soviet in content'.

Another important study is Zvi Halevy's *Jewish Schools under Tsarism and Communism* (Springer Publishing Company, 1976). In terms of chronology and structure, the book resembles Schulman's. It starts from the analysis of the socioeconomic status and origins of Russian Jewry after the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and ends with the analysis of the last schools in the annexed areas of Poland, Lithuania, and Belorussia in 1939–1940. Like Schulman, Halevy approaches Soviet Yiddish education by connecting it with the traditional and secular Hebrew and Yiddish school movement. He stresses the temporary nature of the schools and their role in the conversion of children into Soviet ideology.

Neither of these books analyses the Jewish case in the context of the whole logic of the Soviet state and its policy towards minorities. Both neglect the local context (Ukraine, Russia, and Belorussia). [9] There is not much information about the teachers' and intelligentsia's response to Soviet Yiddish schools. This way it looks as if Soviet power granted schools as

[9] Here I am providing examples from Schulman, *History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union*: Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*, New York, Macmillan, 1964, Solomon Shwartz, *Jews in the Soviet Union*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1951, and others.

concessions and as a means of conversion. To find approaches to these questions, one has to turn to the larger field of Soviet Jewish history and culture.

The flourishing of Yiddish schools in the Soviet Union was not only a result of state-sponsored policy. They were a part of a larger process of the blossoming of Yiddish culture both inside and outside the Soviet Union. I want to lay stress on the helpful studies done by Anna Shternshis, David Fishman, and David Shneer.

Anna Shternshis' *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Indiana University Press, 2006) is a fascinating study on changes of Jewish everyday life and Yiddish folklore under Soviet power. Shternshis describes the transformation of Jewish Yiddish traditional folklore into Russian Jewish popular culture. She also analyzes the influence of antireligious propaganda on the transformation of Jewish society.

David E. Fishman's *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburg University Press, 2010) concentrates on Yiddish culture in interwar Poland and Russia. Fishman discusses the prehistory of Yiddish and Hebrew culture and publishing, and shows the development of Yiddish culture in the wider context of modern times. He also analyzes the modernization of the Yiddish language, and is not limited to the Soviet contribution in state-sponsoring Yiddish culture.

David Shneer's *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture: 1918-1930* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) is of particular importance for my research. In particular, I resort to his argument that a Jewish activist and a Bolshevik propagandist were the same person. While Shneer admits that in the late 1930s Soviet leadership disempowered the Yiddish intelligentsia, he emphasizes the role the latter had during the early 1920s. He says that the contribution, positive and negative, of the Jewish intellectuals who were granted power during the period of *korenizatsiia* had an enormous impact on shaping Yiddish culture and erasing the

Jewish component from it. In this respect, Shneer stresses, we should not distinguish between the Jewish cultural activist and the one who propagated Soviet values.

Silvia Fuks has published a very important analysis of Yiddish study books for primary schools (Silvia Fuks, "Tekhanim le'umiyim be-vet ha-sefer ha-yesodi be-yidish bi-Verit ha-Mo'atsot," *Beḥinot* 8–9 [1979]: 89–112). Fuks did her research on the Jewish content which was gradually eliminated from the study books. She disagrees with Shulman's statement that Soviet Yiddish culture was a mere form, the content of which had become entirely Communist. Based on study books, Fuks distinguishes between different periods according to the amount of 'Jewish content' present in study books: in 1921 the content of the study books had not changed very much, and even during the years 1924-1928, the books which were Communist in form and message, still contained a large Jewish component. According to her research, the complete elimination of the Jewish content happened only in the beginning of the 1930s.

There exist a number of scholarly studies on the history of the interwar Sovietization of Jewish cities and provinces. The best works on how towns and cities with Jewish populations looked before and after Sovietization are: Arkady Zeltser's *Evrei sovetskoy provintsii: Vitebsk i mestechki (1917-1941)* (ROSSPEN, 2006)/ *Jews of the Soviet Province: Vitebsk and the towns (1917-1941);* Elissa Bemporad's *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* (Indiana University Press, 2013); Jeffrey Veidlinger's *In the Shadow of a Shtetl: Small-Town Jewish Life in Soviet Ukraine* (Indiana University Press, 2013); and Mikhail Beyzer's *Evrei Leningrada. Natsionalnaja zizn' i sovietizatsiia, 1917-1939* (Mosty kultury-Gesharim, 1999)/ *Jews of Leningrad: National life and Sovietization, 1917-1939*. In addition, they provide to the reader an insight into a socially and politically heterogeneous Jewish society.

In viewing teachers as mediators between the Party and the state, the Jewish Section of the Party (Evsektsiia) played the crucial role. Zvi Gitelman's *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of CPSU, 1917-1930* (Princeton University Press, 1972) and Mordechai Altshuler's, *Ha-Yevsektsyah bi-Verit ha-Mo'atsot, 1918–1930* (Jerusalem, 1980) provide studies of the complicated relationship between the Communist Party leadership, the Evsektsiia, and ordinary Jews. These works explain the Evsektsiia's role in Sovietizing Jewish culture, and show why both the Jews and the Communists were suspicious towards it.

Since the Jewish teachers were also contributors to Soviet pedagogy, it is important to study them in this context. I use books on Soviet teaching and pedagogy. Matthew Pauly's *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1934* (University of Toronto Press, 2014) explores the new language of ideology which Soviet teachers had to learn in school by "breaking their tongues". It also provides interesting insights on the Jewish-Ukrainian relationship in their schooling experience during Ukrainization. Some stories about the Jewish-Ukrainian relationship (for example, mixed schools with anti-Semitic violence) show the intricacy of the state efforts to suppress the Anti-Semitism officially.[10] Pauly also argues that imposing Ukrainization on the Jews and forcing them to attend Ukrainian schools were measures done by authorities for Jewish assimilation into Russian culture.

The Teachers of Stalinism: Policy, Practice and Power in Soviet Schools of the 1930s (The University of Michigan, 2002), by E. Thomas Ewing, also emphasizes the important role of the teacher as a mediator of the regime, regardless of the fact that it was the least prestigious intellectual activity at the time. I also use Ewing's ideas on teachers as both instruments and

[10] Matthew Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1934*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2014, 330. Violence in Chernihiv mixed school.

independent actors ("third power") of the existing regime and Pauly's scholarship on mediating role of the teacher.

Finally, *Ostrova utopii: pedagogicheskoye i sotsial'noye proektirovaniye novoy shkoly (1940-1980-e)* [*The Islands of Utopia: Pedagogical and Social Projecting of a New School (1940-1980)*], edited by I. Kukulin (Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye, 2015) is a recent study devoted to the post-war history of education in the USSR, Hungary, Sweden, Yugoslavia, and the FRG. The group of authors discusses the schools of the delimited period in their continuity and rupture with the pedagogical traditions of 1900-1930 and the problems that pedagogues were facing.

There are hardly any precedents for the study of Yiddish pedagogical literature in light of international and especially Soviet educational reform.

3. The Sources

I shall mainly use the following sources: documents of the *Kultur-Lige* (1918-1925),[11] the periodical journals *Shul un Lebn* (Kiev: Kultur-Lige, 1918-1920), and *Pedagogisher Biuleten* (Kiev: *Kultur*-Lige Kooperativer Farlag, 1922-1923). In order to frame my analysis inside a larger chronological horizon, I shall also include articles from *Ratnbildung* (Kharkov-Kiev, 1928-1937).

[11] Mykhailo Oleksandrovych Rybakov, comp., *Pravda istorii: Diial'nist' ievreiskoi kul'turno-prosvitnyts'koi orhanizatsii 'Kul'turna Liha' u Kyievi, 1918–1925; Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv*, Kiev, 2001.

Documents of the *Kultur-Lige* is a collection of archival and published sources on Jewish secular organization by Kiev historian Mikhail Rybakov. There are two editions, one from 1999, and the other from 2001. I use the latest one. The story of the *Kultur-Lige* is inseparable from the story of the Yiddish school. The *Kultur-Lige* was a secular cultural organization in Kiev. It united the majority of the secular cultural institutions in Yiddish and it supervised Yiddish schools before the Soviets took power over it.

Despite the Civil War, changing powers, war violence and pogroms, Jewish intelligentsia started to work on the construction of secular Yiddish schools and published the first pedagogical periodical, *Shul un Lebn*. Two years later, in 1922, *Pedagogisher Biuleten* was released by the *Kultur-Lige* publishing house in Ukraine, which had already become Soviet. Although it is not possible to 'record' every moment of political change in the very limited time period, the impact of political regime on the periodicals' content is obvious.

Despite the fact that both educational periodicals belong to a very narrow and specific field of professional interest (namely, they circulated among the Yiddish activists, heads of the Yiddish schools, and teachers), they contain important information about the development of Yiddish secular schools in interwar Ukraine. My close reading of the journals in comparison with general studies on Soviet education and 'how *korenizatsiia* was done', which I described above, will provide more concrete and specific insight into 'how it was done in Ukraine' (mainly), and even 'how it was done in Berdichev, Korosten, etc.'.[12] Finally, by comparing the two journals I want to emphasize the specific role of its contributors in designing the Jewish school system and the change that took place during the five-year span that the two journals cover.

[12] Ukrainian towns with Jewish population where Yiddish schools were established.

4. The Thesis Roadmap

Traditionally Jews had their own system of education. At the beginning of the twentieth century, they created numerous reform schools or schools affiliated with different political and cultural movements. Therefore, in analyzing the "Jewish" part of the story, I shall look at the elements of Jewish education that existed before the Bolsheviks (and later Communists) came to Sovietize it. I shall then investigate the impact of Soviet educational policy during the 1920s-1930s on the Jewish schools, exploring how the Soviets modified and gradually eliminated the "Jewish" elements (curricula content) from the Jewish school. In particular, my aim is to look at Jewish educators and their ideas on schools during the Civil War and the early years of Soviet power. I claim that the role of the activists and their understanding of the Communist Party's nationality policy were crucial for the way its slogan "national in form, Soviet in content" was implemented into life. I aspire to answer the following questions: Was the new school really a break with the existing Tsarist tradition, as the Bolsheviks declared? To what extent did the Soviets have to rely on "former" experienced cadres from the previous regime, and what was their contribution? How can the debates on continuity and rupture in education influence our understanding of the nature of the interwar Soviet regime?

In the first chapter, I describe the historical conditions and the political situation that are important for understanding the Jewish education during the Civil War in Ukraine and the early Soviet regime. I also examine the impact of Uvarov's school reform on the Jewish population and its role in establishing a secular Russian-speaking intelligentsia. Later on, I show how graduates from Uvarov's schools became a part of the Soviet Yiddish intelligentsia. In addition,

I discuss the special status of Jews in the Russian Empire in comparison to their status in Western countries in order to understand the changes which Ukrainian governments and Bolsheviks offered to Jews.

In the second chapter, I analyze the impact of political changes during the Russian Civil War in Ukraine in the journal *Shul un Lebn.* I shall also focus on the reform pedagogy, and the Jewish content of the journal, including its reflection on the trauma left by the pogroms of 1918-1919.

In the third chapter, I focus on the changes which occurred after the Soviet regime was established and their expression in the journal *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, the successor of *Shul un Lebn*. My concern is Sovietization in the Ukrainian province, and especially the role and ideological position of the Yiddish teachers in implementing it.

My conclusion will include a brief overview of the changes which happened until the late 1930s on the example of Yiddish magazine *Ratnbildung*.

Chapter 1
Jewish Secular Education at the Turn of the Century: the Historical Context

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to contextualize the history of secular Jewish education during the Civil War, and the early Soviet *korenizatsiia* period. To understand the historical processes in Jewish society at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, it is useful to consider Jewish life and schooling in the Russian Empire and the formation of the first Jewish Russian intelligentsia in Uvarov's schools in the 1840s. The second part of the chapter discusses the issue of the autonomy regime regarding national minorities after the First World War. The question of autonomy is necessary in order to understand its impact on the Jewish community under Central Rada and establishing of the Yiddish school system.

1. The Russian Imperial Story

The Russian Empire received the majority of its Jewish population after the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1772–1795). Since then, the 'Jewish question' (incorporation of Jews into the state) emerged and became a long-lasting problem. Under imperial power, Jews

were regarded as a religious group, and were prevented from assimilating.[13] An insignificant percentage of them, like merchants of the first and the second guilds, were selectively integrated into the state.[14] Unlike the Jews of Western Europe, Russian Jews were not given full civil rights until the Revolution of 1917.[15]

The Jewish question played an important role in Russian imperial history. In the middle of the 19th century, the Tsar made efforts to incorporate some Jews into the state by making them learn the language of administration. The logic was practical, mainly to produce a loyal citizen out of a Jew, and to teach him the language of the Empire.[16] The schools that opened according to the project of Minister Uvarov, gave birth to the first generation of Russian Jewish intelligentsia. This would not have been possible if the state had not found allies in the *maskilim*, Enlightened Jews, who were not regarded positively by the traditional community but who tried to follow the innovations of their counterparts from the West.[17]

In the 1840s, Count Uvarov formulated a plan of state intervention in Jewish education.[18] Under the influence of Nicholas I, inspired by Western models, Count Kiselev developed a number of innovations towards the Jews. Jews should receive education in the language of the Empire, learn "useful" occupations, and become integrated in the economic and social life of the

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[13] Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2004, 107.
[14] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, Ibid.
[15] Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, 81.
[16] Aleksey Miller, *Imperiya Romanovikh i natsionalizm, Esse po metodologii istoricheskogo issledovaniia*, Moscow, Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye, 2008, 114. Only minority of the Jews had this opportunity.
[17] Miller, *Imperiya Romanovikh i natsionalizm*, Ibid. See also Jon Bloomberg, *The Jewish World in the Modern Age*, New York, Ktav Publishing House, 2004, 14.
[18] Miller, *Imperiya Romanovikh i natsionalizm*, 114.

surrounding society.[19] However, in reality, the efforts to make Jews loyal citizens were not very successful, as the union of *maskilim* with imperial authorities received suspicion and opposition both from Christian and traditional Jewish circles.[20]

Count Uvarov and Rabbi Max Lilienthal were the founders of the new schools. The schools opened up possibilities for young maskilim to find teaching positions.[21] Although new schools and the reformist rabbinical seminaries founded by the government were not numerous, they gave an opportunity to all Jews (including those from poor families) to receive education and continue it in the imperial gymnasiums and universities (*visshie uchebmie zavedeniya*).[22] Therefore, the 1850s-1860s were the time when the first generation of Russian Jewish intelligentsia was formed.[23] Later on, this layer of educated Jews became a core element of progressive educators in the empire and the Soviet Union. One of the characteristic features of the Jewish educational institutions in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century was their strong connection to political movements: Zionism, Yiddishism, Poaley-Tsionizm, etc.[24]

2. Jewish Ukrainian Civil War Story

The events of 1917–1922 radically changed Jewish life in Russia and Ukraine. Collapse of the Russian Empire, liquidation of the Pale of Settlement for the Jews, forceful resettlement from

[19] Miller, *Imperiya Romanovikh i natsionalizm*, 114-115.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid, 115.
[23] Ibid.
[24] See Dovid Katz, *Yiddish and the Power,* New York, Palgrave Macmillian, 2014.

front-line zones, and the wave of Civil War pogroms all, had major impacts on the Jewish lifestyle, social conditions, and political orientation.[25] After the Russian revolution, the Jews managed to establish secular schools under the short-lived Central Rada government in Ukraine. Granting the Jews autonomy resulted in the opening of the *Kultu-Lige*, a Jewish cultural organization in Kiev. The Kultur-Lige started to supervise Jewish secular schools.[26]

The uneasy situation of the Civil War forced Jews to balance between different powers. They acclaimed the autonomy regime of the Rada, but finally showed loyalty to Soviet power, which proved to protect them more effectively against anti-Jewish violence, in comparison to the Whites.[27] Leftist Jewish groups such as the "Bund" were also ideologically close to the Bolsheviks and they hoped that an alliance with the Soviets would facilitate the establishment of socialist secular education in Yiddish.[28]

3. The Soviet Jewish Story

In 1917–1922, Ukraine was a playground of different governments and powers – the Ukrainian People's Republic and Central Rada (Council), Skoropadsky's Hetmanate (a Ukrainian State pro-German Hetman State government), the Ukrainian National Republic (the Directorate,

[25] Oleg Budnitskii, *Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites, 1917-1920*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012, 34-68.
[26] Simon Rabinovitch, *Jewish Rights, National Rites: Nationalism and Autonomy in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2014, 256-257.
[27] See Budnitskii, *Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites.*
[28] Ibid, 358.

governed by Symon Petlura), the Ukrainian People's republic of Soviets, and the White Army.[29] It was a time contest of several competing national and socialist, state project, which the Soviets won.

In 1922, the Bolsheviks seized power in Kiev and incorporated Jewish institutions under their rule, including the biggest cultural Yiddish institution, the Kultur-Lige.[30] In 1923, the Communist Party officially promoted the policy of *korenizatsiia* (nativization) and started to support Yiddish cultural and educational institutions.[31] Yiddish schools became tools for Sovietizing Jews. Jewish history and the Hebrew language were prohibited, although some teachers continued to teach these subjects.[32] Generally, Jewish schools experienced serious financial hardships. They also met resistance from some Jewish parents who did not see them as promising ways to advance their children's careers.

Since the schools were regarded as non-prestigious among Jewry, mostly poor Jews sent their children to these schools. There were no higher education institutions where instruction was conducted in Yiddish. Gradually, fewer and fewer children were enrolled in the schools. This process went hand in hand with Jewish acculturation into the Russian culture (despite official promotion of Ukrainization, big cities remained Russian speaking). Simultaneously, fewer people indicated Yiddish as their mother tongue.[33]

[29] See Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917-1920,* Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1999.
[30] *Pravda istorii*, 7-9.
[31] Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union*, Itaka, Cornell University Press, 2001, 9.
[32] *Pravda istorii,* 26-27.

[33] See Elias Schulman's *History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union,* Chapter 1.

In the mid–1930s, the authorities started closing Yiddish schools and shifted from the policy of *korenizatsiia* towards Russification.[34] In 1937, the last Yiddish schools were closed in the Soviet Union, and activists from the Jewish intelligentsia were repressed. To be sure, there was some effort to establish Yiddish schools in the annexed areas of Poland, Lithuania, and Belorussia in 1939–1941.[35] These did not last long and received strong resistance from the population, which did not want to Sovietize and had an alternative school system. There were some Yiddish schools in Birobidzhan, in the Jewish Autonomous Region. The last one was closed in 1951.[36] Although they were Soviet and Yiddish schools, I do not include them in my research. Notably, the schools in Birobidzan managed to exist after the *korenizatsiia* policy was officially shut down, but they nonetheless fall outside the scope of my research.

[34] Michael G. Smith, *Language and Power in the Creation of the USSR, 1917-1953*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter GmbH&Co, 1999, 144.
[35] Zvi Halevy, *Jewish Schools Under Csarizm and Communism*, New York, Springer Publishing Company, 1976, 258-267.
[36] Norah Levin, *The Soviet Government and the Jews Since 1917: Paradox of Survival*, Vol. 1, New York, New York University Press, 1990, 297.

4. Crafting Jewish Autonomy

4.1 Minority Rights after the First World War and the Jewish Case

The issue of minority' protection in modern states was initiated by the Treaty of Berlin, signed on July 13th, 1878, by seven Great Powers after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. The Treaty provided a special legal status for minority groups. The Treaty recognized independence for several states, including Romania. The issue of minority protection started with Romania and the territory of Bessarabia, whose sizable Jewish populations required protection.[37] Although the article stating that "the Jews of Romania who did not belong to any foreign nationality have the right to acquire Romanian citizenship" was missing from the final version of the document,[38] Jews considered it a victory even when brought to the level of discussion.

After the First World War, the League of Nations used the treaty of Berlin's framework as the model for its Minorities System. There was an international support for autonomy regimes in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The atrocities of the First World War were "a watershed of the history of nationalism" and they put the question of minorities' protection in other states on the agenda (e.g. the massacre of Armenians in 1915, decimation of the Jewish population in Ukraine during the events of 1918-1920 in Poland).[39]

[37] Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 28.
[38] Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others*, 29.
[39] Zara S. Shteiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919-1933*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, 362.

On the issue of minority rights, ideas had preceded the laws. Karl Renner, Chaim Zhitlovsky and others had developed the idea of personal and cultural autonomy that minorities are to enjoy in a given state.[40] At the beginning of the twentieth century, Karl Renner described nationality as a personal and not as a territorial category.[41] This idea became very appealing for East European Jewish intellectuals, since the Jews were an exterritorial minority. The socialist émigré Chaim Zhitlovsky applied the ideas of nationalism to the Jewish case. He argued that the Jews should be granted self-government and enjoy equal rights with other peoples. He also argued in favor of national-territorial autonomy for the Jews and emphasized the importance of cultural and linguistic factors rather than religion in maintaining Jewish identity.[42]

The treaties signed at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 sought to put these ideas into practice when they guaranteed civil rights to Jews and other minorities in the new East and Central European countries.[43] These rights were to come in addition to civil, religious, and political freedoms. The Council and the Secretariat of the League of Nations developed techniques in order to implement the treaty clauses, covering mandate territories and minority rights.[44] The League of Nations also tried to tackle the problem of dependent territories. The goal of the Commission was to create an effective mandate system, to demonstrate the protective role of the League, and to improve the living conditions of people in these territories.[45]

Not all states supported the idea of minorities' self-determination. Liberals feared that nationalism and national self-determination were dangerous for minorities. [46] While

[40] Ibid.
[41] See Oscar I. Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights, 1898-1919*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1933 (reedited New York 1966).
[42] Ibid.
[43] Jewish Virtual Library, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0014_0_13953.html .
[44] Janowsky, *The Lights that Failed*, 359-360.
[45] Ibid, 359.
[46] Janowsky, *The Lights that Failed*, 361.

representatives of the Great Powers were not anxious to strengthen autonomists, the successor states of the empires feared that protecting minority rights would endanger their sovereignty.

However, the international community hoped that, under the protection of international law, minorities would feel secure and eventually assimilate. The peacemakers provided some protective measures for minorities that feared the oppression of the majority. At the Paris Peace Conference, the East European and American Jews created the Committee of Jewish Delegations. Its aim was to struggle for the recognition of Jewish collective identity and, moreover, for Jewish autonomy. Against its will, the newly formed Polish government had to accept articles for minorities' protection as the price of being recognized. Poland's case became a model for the treaties that protected religious, racial, or linguistic minorities in other states.[47] These minorities were allowed to keep or develop their own social, religious, and educational institutions.

4.2 Minority Rights during the Civil War: the Ministry of Jewish Affairs and the Kultur-Lige

Soviet Russia did not make any declarations about the protection of minorities' rights during the Versailles Peace Conference.[48] Instead, it proclaimed minorities' rights in several decrees issued during the Revolution of 1917.

[47] Ibid, 362.
[48] Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*, Ibid.

Following the events of the February Revolution, the Tsar resigned and the Russian empire collapsed. The Provisional Government of Kerensky published a decree canceling all restrictions based on "religion, sect, or nationality".[49] Kerensky abolished the Pale of Settlement and other restrictions on the Jews. Jews were able to move freely outside the Pale, and they obtained full civil rights.[50] This decree influenced politically active Jews, who united in order to struggle for Jewish autonomy.

The Bolsheviks took power in Petrograd in October 1917, overthrowing the Provisional Government. On November 20th, 1917, the Central Rada was formed in Ukraine, using the political situation of the Tsar's abdication. It initially declared autonomy within Russia but later took on the course toward independence.[51] The Rada also proclaimed equal rights for national minorities. For the first time in history, a Ministry of Jewish Affairs was formed.

In 1917, an all-Russian conference of Jewish teachers took place in Petrograd. The result of the conference was the establishment of the Jewish Teachers Association. Its members shared ideas about free, obligatory, and secular education in Yiddish. They also proclaimed the importance of studying Hebrew in school as indispensable for Jewish folk education.[52]

In Ukraine, the Rada established a department for national minorities on July 1st, 1917.[53] On January 9th, 1918, the Rada recognized the right of Jews to their national-cultural autonomy. The Ministry of Jewish Affairs coordinated the work of the Jewish autonomy through local, newly elected Kehilahs.[54] In January 15th, 1918, the Kultur-Lige was created, and the Ukrainian

[49] Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, 21.
[50] Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, 84.
[51] January 25th, 1918.
[52] Shulman, *History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union*, 38-39.
[53] Ibid, 39.
[54] Ibid.

Democratic Union of Jewish (Yiddish) Teachers joined the Kultur-Lige as its school section.[55] During the events of 1917-1920s, Ministry of Jewish Affairs continued to exist, headed by other ministers including M. Zilberfarb, V. Latzki, A. Revutsky, and Krasny. [56]

The educational Department of the Ministry of Jewish Affairs administered the Kultur-Lige, which supervised Jewish secular schools in Yiddish.[57] Under the Skoropadsky Hetmanate, the Ministry of Jewish Affairs was abolished.[58]

From the Soviet side, this alliance was made to obtain popular support from Jewish socialist circles with which the Soviets planned to collaborate. Despite the fact that initially both Lenin and Stalin did not recognize the Jews as a separate nationality or even religious group and believed that they should assimilate, they had to make concessions later.[59]

When the Soviets finally established power in Ukraine, they took the Kultur-Lige under their supervision. The Soviets also took up supervision of the secular Hebrew schools of Tarbut, and of government and private Jewish schools in the Russian language. All of them were later incorporated into the Soviet educational system of secular Yiddish schools.[60]

[55] *Pravda istorii,* 15. Rybakov indicates the date with creation of Statute (Law) of the organization.
[56] Ibid, 40.
[57] Shulman, *History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union,* 41.
[58] Solomon Goldelman, *Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine 1917-1920,* Chicago, Ukrainian Research Institute, 1968, 74.
[59] Shulman, *History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union,* 44-45.
[60] Ibid.

Conclusion

The Jewish question, or integration of Jews into the state, goes back to Russian imperial history. Despite the long-lasting policies of preventive assimilation and selective integration, the Tsar introduced new schools in the second half of the 19th century. The project launched by Count Uvarov in a union with Jewish Enlighteners, or maskilim, followed the Western European logic of making citizens with full rights out of Jews by teaching them secular subjects and the language of administration. Despite the fact that the project was limited to the small group of *maskilim* Jews, it was successful in the sense of raising the first generation of the Russian Jewish intelligentsia.

The Revolution of 1917 liquidated all the restrictions connected to the Jews. Bolsheviks promised them full civil rights.[61] However, in Ukraine, Jews received cultural autonomy in 1918 from the Central Rada. This became possible because of the idea of autonomy which emerged as a product of the Versailles Treaty. The short period of cultural autonomy was interrupted because of the Civil War. The Soviets established power in Kiev in 1920, and took control over Jewish institutions, including secular Yiddish schools.

[61] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii,* 3-5.

Chapter 2
Jewish Education during the Russian Civil War: The Story of *Shul un Lebn* (1918-1920)

Introduction

In the chapter, I shall describe the story of the secular Jewish school movement at the turn of the century (from the late Russian Empire until the Civil War) which preceded the emergence of the Yiddish secular school. In particular, I shall argue that the role of the Bund and the Zionist secular school movement in paving the path for the secular Yiddish schools in the interwar Ukraine was decisive. I shall also outline the history of the Kultur-Lige, a head organization for supervising the Jewish secular schools in Kiev and the Ukrainian province.

I shall then use the pedagogical journal *Shul un Lebn* as a source, showing the political changes and pedagogical innovations of the time as reflected in it. I shall describe the school network, the curricula, the local context, and the biographies of the pedagogical activists and the contributors to the journal. I shall analyze how the authors implemented the newest European ideas of schooling in their practices, and dealt with wartime events such as pogroms.

1. Jewish Education before the Soviet Union

Unlike the other ethnic groups, Jews had elaborated their own system of schooling long before the modern era. Ukrainians and Russians did not have an analogous system. The first Jewish schools were traditional religious ones: *heders* and *yeshivas*. The heder provided general basic

education for children from the age 3 to 5.[62] Children learned the Hebrew alphabet and basic religious texts. There were community heders where children of poor parents went. Being a *melamed*, a teacher in a heder, was not a prestigious and a well-paid job. Yeshivas, on the other hand, were male-only. Men attended them for deepening their knowledge of the sacred texts or in order to make career as rabbis. Being a teacher in yeshivas was prestigious.

The Jewish secular schools in the beginning of the twentieth century raised from two oppositional movements, each of which had its own conception of secular schooling. The first was a Hebrew secular school movement, mainly represented in Zionism, and the second was a Yiddish secular movement, represented in Bundism.[63] Later on, the Bund became the largest political party supporting the Tsentrale Yidishe Shul Organizatsye school network (TSYSHO or CYSHO; Central Yiddish School Organization), which had facilities in more than a hundred communities and was supported by the Left Po'ale Tsiyon party.[64] Instruction was in Yiddish, with secular and socialist orientation guiding the values taught to the student.

A sudden expansion of secular Yiddish schooling,[65] as in general the expansion of the secular Yiddish culture, became a trend for the Jews of Eastern Europe. Influenced by nationalist movements and released from restrictions in the Russian Empire, Jews understood that they had an opportunity to fight for the recognition of their rights in Diaspora. The idea of modernizing Yiddish and making it a language of the Jews in 'exile' overlapped with the need for creating national literature and establishing tradition of Yiddish writers-classics.[66] Schooling became an

[62] Shulman, *History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union.*
[63] Ibid.
[64] Blatman, Daniel. 2010. Bund. YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe. http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bund (accessed June 8th, 2015).
[65] David E. Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture*, Pittsburg, Pittsburg University Press, 2010.
[66] Dan Miron, 'What is of Yiddish in Yiddish Classics?', lecture on Youtube.com https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yG12mwML0xA, (accessed: May 1st, 2005).

important part of that program. Secular Jewish schools, where children would study in their native language and learn practical skills became an embodiment of that idea.

The first experiments started from an illegal Yiddish school in Demievka, near Kiev, which was excluded from the Pale of Settlement and where the Jews could move freely.[67] In 1911, a socialist and Bundist activist Shimen Dobin opened the first Yiddish secular school there. The school was illegal, because it was prohibited to open secular educational institutions in Yiddish in the Empire. The school had 150 pupils and the five-year program.[68] In 1912, a second Yiddish school was found not far from Kiev, in Chernobyl. Founder, Yakov Reznik, was brother of Lipe Reznik, symbolist Yiddish poet.[69]

When in 1914, because of the First World War, the Jews were resettled from Western borderlands to many provinces of Russia, they started to form their own schools. Therefore, the Pale of Settlement was defacto abolished in 1914.[70] Jewish refugees who did not have the opportunity to send their children to the traditional schools organized Yiddish-language secular schools with the help of 'Ekopo', a war-relief organization of the Jews which organized their own Yiddish schools at the places Jews were resettled.[71]

Therefore, secular schools in Hebrew and in Yiddish established in Ukraine at the turn of the 20th century were a product of the political movements and the wartime conditions. These schools became a basis for the Yiddish secular school system established and supervised by the Kultur-Lige.

[67] Outskirts of Kiev, currently – one of the Kiev districts.
[68] Gennadii Estraikh, *In Harness: Yiddish Writers' Romance with Communism*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2005, 13.
[69] Ibid, 14.
[70] Shulman, *History of Jewish Education in the Soviet Union*, 27.
[71] Ibid, 28.

2. Gathering Jewish Intelligentsia: The Founders of the Kultur-Lige and its Structure

Before the Soviets came to power in 1920, the Kultur-Lige ruled over the majority of the schools in Yiddish in Kiev and regions. The aim of the Kultur-Lige was to develop and spread secular Jewish culture in Yiddish.[72] According to charter, it had to "support the building of new Jewish democratic school and of other educational organizations".[73] The Kulture-Lige was a cultural and an educational organization with socialist ideology, composed from different Jewish parties with socialist platforms. Among its founders were Moshe Zilberfarb, Dovid Bergelson, I. Dobrushin, Nachman Mayzel, and Moshe Litvakov (who later became a pious Communist Party activist).

The Kultur-Lige was composed of eight sections, including literature, musical, theatrical, art and sculpture sections, folk (*narodniye*) schools, preschool education, and education for adults. The Central Committee and Executive Bureau of the Communist Party governed it.

In 1918, a significant event happened – the Kultur-Lige established the Jewish People's University, first under the rule of Bron and later Zilberfarb.[74] The university became the first Jewish educational institution on the territory of the former Russian Empire.[75] Apart from the University, the Kultur-Lige kept many kinder gardens, gymnasiums, libraries, and had its own publishing house under the same name.

When Bolsheviks came to power, they incorporated the Kultur-Lige in their system. The Kultur-Lige, in turn, controlled almost all Jewish educational organizations. Gradually,

[72] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii*, 15, Statute.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid, 23-25, Document.
[75] Ibid, Introduction, 3-19.

Bolsheviks were making the Kultur-Lige less Jewish and more socialist. In 1925, they closed it because of financial and political reasons.

The years of 1918-1922 were the years of blossom for the Kulture-Lige. In addition to University, it organized Jewish pedagogical courses in Teachers Seminary, 3-months length courses for teachers, and a number of Jewish evening schools for adults. Most of the activists-members of the Kultur-Lige were at the same time prominent Jewish pedagogues and writers.[76]

The financial situation of the Kultur-Lige and its sections was hard. It is important to keep in mind that the official establishment of the Kultur-Lige overlapped with turbulent years of constantly changing powers in Kiev. Respectively, it had to balance between different powers. Even after the Bolsheviks consolidated power in Kiev, the Kultur-Lige had to find different ways to survive. If theaters and concerts were able to take more money offering several performances, schools were in a more difficult situation. Jewish People's University asked for money from the students who can pay for education. Some students had to drop the classes because they had to earn for living. Some schools were not able to work during winter period because of firewood shortage and absence of electricity.[77]

According to documents on the Kultur-Lige, we have general information about the curricula taught in Kiev schools.[78] Courses taught in Jewish schools usually included: Jewish language and history (Yiddish), Old Jewish language and history (Hebrew), hygiene. In 1922/23, Hebrew was officially forbidden for teaching in schools (document), although we can assume

[76] Ibid.
[77] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii*, 121.
[78] The Rybakov's documents are mainly about the central department of the Kultur-Lige, based in Kiev.

that the law was broken (document by the next year with Hebrew in curricula).[79] Not every school had enough study books. Teachers used to solve this problem by inventing "laboratory" method.[80]

3. *Shul un Lebn*: Pedagogical Pioneering During the Civil War

3.1 The Aims of *Shul un Lebn*

Shul un Lebn (School and Life) was a pedagogical periodical published between 1918-1920 by the Kultur-Lige in Kiev. Its main aim was to share the information about the situation in Jewish education, mainly in Kiev, but also in Moscow, suburbs, and even in Minsk. The magazine was a special pedagogical periodical addressed to problems of methodology. This is how in YIVO encyclopedia mentions it.[81] One could find in it the discussion of problems in and of education, schoolbooks, pedagogical innovations, and ongoing historical events. *Shul un Lebn* was released five times (December 1918, January-February 1919, March-April 1919, November-December 1919, January-February 1920, March-April 1920). The first number was issued before the Soviets, and under Central Rada. The second – when the Soviets took over power in Kiev for the short period, the third one – just after the pogroms of the Whites, and the last two – when the Soviets retook the power back and political situation stabilized.

[79] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii*, 93.
[80] According to the document, this means that teachers were working without textbooks and prepared assignments 'on the spot'.
[81] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii*, 53-54.

Jewish autonomy in Ukraine, established in 1918, opened up possibilities for the Yiddish schools to develop independently:

> "For a long time, we have been waiting for the organization of the institution of the Jewish autonomy. Now the true master will come – this is what we hoped – the organized Jewish community, which will liberate us from our poverty. We had been poor in people: 90 percent of our schools maintained themselves by the strained effort of single individuals or s small groups of community members, dispersed over the entire territory of the vast country"[82]

The major part of the school founders belonged to the middle class, and the schools were either "Zionist-clerical, or Russifying-assimilationist".[83] Financially, they depended on special contributions (*korobe-gelt*),[84] tuition fees or voluntary donations, so that they passed continuous financial hardships.

3.2 The Contributors to *Shul un Lebn*

A strict division between "Soviet" and "Jewish" activists would be too schematic. Many (though not all) former Bundists, Poaley-Tsionists, and other leftist cultural activists readily accepted the

[82] Kantor, "Shul un Lebn", *Shul un Lebn*, (2-3, January-February 1919), 45.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

Bolsheviks' protection. Not only ideological similarities, but financial interests were important. At the turn of the century, after the First World War, the Civil War, the resettlement of the Jews from the frontline, and the wave of pogroms, Jews were in an extremely difficult position. Jewish schools, in turn, had many problems.

The main contributors to the journal had different occupations. Many were "multiple task performers", that is, pedagogues who were at the same time theoreticians, fiction writers, school directors, state officials, etc. Their biographies, on the one hand, are very similar, but on the other, they show the ambiguity towards the Soviet policy: some of the educators survived the Stalinist purges, others were purged in the middle of their academic careers. Nonetheless, the common background knowledge of Judaism and the Yiddish culture, and political and civic activism, were the things which united them. However, their relationship with the Soviet power, as well as their views on the role and the future of the Yiddish culture differed significantly.

The Tsarist regime oppressed some of the intelligentsia members for political activism. They returned to it after the collapse of the Empire. Moshe Litvakov (1875/80–1939) was one of such figures. Litvakov[85] was one of the editors of *Dos yidishe vort* (The Jewish Word, 1910, Kiev) and *Der Emes* (The Truth, 1921, Moscow). He was also a leading theorist of Jewish national Marxism, Yiddish literary theoretician, and a critic.[86] Being a communist activist and a member of the Moscow Evsektsiia,[87] he had deep knowledge of Judaism.[88] As a member of the

[85] Gennadii Estraikh, *In Harness: Yiddish Writers' Romance with Communism*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2005, 13.
[86] Estraikh, Gennady, 2010. Id., "Litvakov, Moyshe," in: *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. Gershon D. Hundert, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008.
http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Litvakov_Moyshe (accessed April 16th, 2015).
[87] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii*, 172.
[88] Ibid, 171.

Central Committee of the Kultur-Lige,[89] he fought against Jewish religious traditions and studying Jewish heritage, convinced that all learning had to serve the revolutionary goals. At the same time, he was a professor of Jewish literature at the Moscow University, and a member of the Institute of the Jewish Culture at the Academy of Science of Ukraine.[90] Ironically, the Soviets repressed Litvakov because of the accusation of "Jewish nationalism" and separatism.[91]

Other activists like the founder of the first secular school in 1911 in the Demievke district of Kiev, Shimen-Shimoyni Dobin (1869-1944),[92] were as much involved in pedagogical and essayistic work as in politics. Dobin was a publicist, a pedagogue, and a civic activist.[93] He was a member of the city Council (Duma), representing the Bund party. After the 1917 Revolution, he became the editor of the Kultur-Lige publications. He worked in Jewish schools and in the Institute of Proletarian Culture in USSR.[94] Dobin was also the author of the brochure *Jewish Pogroms and Their Meaning*, and several publications on Sholem Aleichem and Mendele Moykher-Sforim.[95] The successor of Dobin, Reznik Yankel Borukhovich (1892-1952), who was a pedagogue, organized the second Yiddish school in Russia in Chernobyl.[96]

Activists' connection with abroad were very important because they were bringing and sharing the knowledge they received at Universities in Europe. For instance, Yekhezkl Dobrushin (1889-1953), literature critic, poet and prose writer, received education at the Department of Law of Sorbonne University.[97] Inversely, Yiddish intelligentsia from Ukraine also became involved

[89] Ibid, 172.
[90] Ibid, 172.
[91] Ibid, 172.
[92] Estraikh, *In Harness: Yiddish Writers' Romance with Communism*, 13-14.
[93] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii*, 169.
[94] Ibid, 169.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid, 173-174.
[97] Ibid, 169.

in spreading East European Yiddish culture abroad. After leaving the Soviet Union, Abraham Golomb,1888-1982, combined his teaching and pedagogical writings in Yiddish with tasks of the director of Vilna Teachers Seminary (from 1921 until 1931) and later of the school principal in Canada and Mexico.[98]

Thanks to Lipe Borukhovich Reznik (1890-1944), a Soviet Yiddish writer, an educator, and a symbolist Yiddish poet, and Elyohu Spivak (1890-1950),[99] a famous pedagogue, Yiddish audience enjoyed translations of Soviet Russian writers.[100] Spivak was one of the key figures in the history of the Soviet Yiddish school. He was an educator, a professor, and a scientist. He was known as author of 20 study books, and approximately 100 works on Yiddish, Russian, and Ukrainian. From 1936, Spivak worked as a director of the Institute of the Proletarian Culture. Spivak made a lot for the development of the Jewish-Ukrainian literature development.[101]

Another activist, Haym Kazdan, (1883-1979), served as director of the schools at the Department of Education in the Ministry of Jewish Affairs in Central Rada.[102] Very often, Yiddish poet and a leading literary critic, Nokhum Oyslender[103] appears among the journal contributors.

Noah Luriye (1885-1960),[104] the member of the central Committees of the Kultur-Lige (in 1918), a children writer and a pedagogue, was a contributor to the journal.[105] In 1921, Luriye became head of pedagogical courses in Kiev and gave lectures on literature and pedagogical

[98] Ibid, 170.
[99] *Spivak, Eliyohu*, *Electronic Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, 526-527, http://www.eleven.co.il/article/13921 (accessed June 17th, 2015)
[100] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii*, 173.
[101] Ibid, 174.
[102] Shulman, *History of Jewish Education*, 43-44.
[103] Estraikh, *In Harness: Yiddish Writers' Romance with Communism*, 14.
[104] Soviet Jewish writer in Hebrew and Yiddish. He wrote and translated a lot for children.
[105] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii*, 172-173.

topics.[106] Among other contributors to *Shul un Lebn* were Abraham Golomb,[107] R. Shniurson, B. Rubinshteyn, Sh. Nidinskaya, and others.

Translators, poets, critics, teachers, scientists, writers. It is hard to tell what the primary activity of the contributors to the *Shul un Lebn* was. The magazine was a product of new secular Yiddish culture, but it was not yet Soviet. The new emerging Yiddish intelligentsia, despite the difference in background and political views, was united by the desire to develop Yiddish school system.

3.4 School Organization in the Times of the Civil War

The main problems of the schools were the opposition to it from traditional Jewish circles, and opposition from the parents who wanted their children to assimilate and the Zionists.

Saturday schools functioned as part of popular education.[108] Some secular Yiddish schools were run without a program,[109] while others were established on the base of community Talmud-Torahs. Around 80 percent of all the schools were private, which determined difficulties for Yiddish activists to struggle for community schools. They accused capitalist system which made people egoistic:

[106] *Luriye Noakh, Electronic Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, 973-974, http://www.eleven.co.il/article/12514, (accessed April 17th, 2015).
[107] 1888, Lithuania - 1982, Los Angeles. AYiddishist teacher and writer.
[108] Sh. Kazdan, "Vegn dem limud fun yidish in undzer folks-shul", *Shul un Lebn,* 1 (December 1918), 3-4.
[109] Ibid. See also Shulman, *History of Jewish Education*, 37.

> "The school must strive as much as possible to develop the social instincts and feelings. After the capitalist system has worked on them so much to make people become egotists, and after the war in particular has made all of us so wild and barbarous, one must stress in the first place the school's humanitarian task. The school must become a protector of humanity in the full sense of the word".[110]

3.5 Schools in the Province

After the establishment of the Kultur-Lige, its educational section took power over Kiev and the provincial schools. Local departments of the Kultur-Lige supervised the provincial schools. The school themselves were established at the places there old schools (heders) used to work. Many of the children came to the Yiddish schools from Talmud-Torahs.[111]

Shul un Lebn gives detailed reports about the foundation, character and difficulties of particular Yiddish schools in various cities of Ukraine, showing their lack of resources, teaching plans, and acceptance". I shall now give two examples of provincial schools, in Berdichev and in Chernobyl.

[110] Kantor, "Shul un Lebn", *Shul un Lebn*, 2-3, (January-February 1919), 48.
[111] A.A. Yudles, "Fun tog tsu tog", *Shul un Lebn*, 4-5 (March-April 1919), 67-69.

In Berdichev, the Jewish Ministry founded the Yiddish school, and the town council assumed responsibilities over it. A library and living room were opened with the funds provided by the Kultur-Lige. An article from the late 1919 states that the library was successful and already had "a circle of permanent readers".[112] During the first half of the school year, the section organized every Saturday discussions on pedagogical and methodological problems of modern schools.[113] One of the debated issues was how to transform the former state schools (*kazenniye shkoly*). The issue of working day of the school was also discussed.[114]

The Chernobyl school consisted only of one room. 205 children were enrolled; they mostly came from *Talmud-Torahs* and *heders*, which was the usual practice of the time. *Talmud-Torahs* and *heders* had been closed, and this was the way for the new school to receive its pupils. The children formed 6 groups in 4 rooms, one group went after another. The school had two libraries: one for the children, and the other, called "pedagogical library", for the professional purposes. There was a cabinet for experiments of natural sciences, cabinet for chemistry and physics.[115] The Chernobil school experienced big problems with hygiene.[116] Not everyone in the 'Jewish street' appreciated the new school. In particular, the school met strong opposition from the Hasidic circles.[117]

[112] Y. A-s., "2. Vegn dere yiddisher folks-bildung in Berdichev in 1918-1919 yor," *Shul un Lebn*, 6-7 (November-December, 1919), 112.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid, 110.
[115] Ibid, 114.
[116] Ibid, 113.
[117] Ibid, 112.

3.6 The Reformed Pedagogy

In modern Yiddish schools in Ukraine, new tendencies were of two categories: new subjects and pioneer practices. One very common practice, which distinguished modern Heder, Zionist, and Yiddish schools, from traditional heder, were coeducation of boys and girls.[118] This practice was widely used in the Yiddish secular schools according to Shul un Lebn.

Other novelties were curricula and the division of children into age groups. Traditional Jewish heder did not have written curricula. Children at the age of four and five went there for learning basic Hebrew and praying, and only boys continued education in yeshivas. Unlike the Yiddish secular schools, headers were not schools in the modern sense.[119]

Finally, there innovations in practical activities. Teachers adopted and developed the idea of taking children close to nature. Outdoor walks and group games supposed to unite a group and develop a sense of collective. Taking children outside classrooms was regarded as innovational. One of such walks children had in Pusha-Voditsa, forest area not far from Kiev.[120]

[118] A. Golomb, "Naturlimud in der yiddisher folk-shul (tsveyter kontsentr)", *Shul un Lebn,* 6-7, (November-December 1919), 3-5.
[119] Halevy, *Jewish Schools under Csarizm and Communism,* Chapter 2, Traditional Jewish Education, 36-52.
[120] Golomb, "Naturlimud in der yiddisher folk-shul (tsveyter kontsentr), Ibid.

3.7 Courses Taught

According to *Shul un Lebn*, new subjects included natural and exact sciences (secular subjects), geography, hygiene, classic fiction.

Natural sciences, such as physics, biology, zoology, anatomy, but also mathematics, were mainly studied from translations with commentaries from Russian.

There was a division on physical and psychological hygiene. The former included things such as discussion with children about the importance of washing hands, etc.[121] The latter was about discussion of nervous-psychological problems but also natural and social catastrophes such as pogroms, and a kind of homework or assignment a teacher should give to a children affected with such problems.[122] One of the solutions proposed in the article "Instructions for teacher" is to use a heuristic method: "You should not forbid such child to talk, write, or draw about pogrom-experience, when he is in such mood and tight by various fears"[123], and: "[…] one should avoid everything which can provoke child's memories about the catastrophe".[124] The article proposes that, if a child is tighten with fear, it will not last long and could be overcame by games. It is also proposed that a child is to be observed systematically,[125] and that a teacher can assign to the child

[121] B. S., "Khronik," *Shul un Lebn*, 4-5 (March-April 1919), 94.
[122] Ibid, 95.
[123] Ibid, 97.
[124] Ibid, 96.
[125] Ibid, 97.

to write a fantastic story in order to develop the ability to think, and investigate how much in her or her mind the experience of pogrom is preserved.[126]

This shows that teachers discussed new approaches in psychology and pedagogy. There is even evidence that they used hypnosis techniques in pedagogical practice.[127]

3.8 What is "Jewish" in the new Jewish School?: The Pedagogy of Pogroms as an Example

The time of *Shul un Lebn* is a period when the Jewish religion did not yet vanish from the school. If not in curricula, it appeared in practices. For example, an article reports on the children and the teacher who celebrated Hanuka and other religious *yom-toyvim* (holidays) at school.[128] Children enjoyed reading Leyb Kvitko's poems, which, as the author states, "were accepted with the great enthusiasm".[129] The 'Jewish classics', such as Mendele Sforim and Yitzchak Peretz, were also included in the school program.[130]

[126] Dovid Shneyerson, "Instrukcie far lerer", *Shul un Lebn*, 4-5 , (March-April 1919), 96.
[127] Dr. V. Lazerson, "Hypnosis and Suggestion in Pedagogics", *Shul un Lebn*, 2-3, (January-February 1919), 26.
[128] Sokolov, "Funem tog-bukh fun a lerer (tsu der praktik fun der nayer shul", *Shul un Lebn*, 6-7, (November-December 1919), 9.
[129] Shneyerson, "Instrukcie far lerer", 115.
[130] Ibid, 118.

The 'Jewish aspects' were present in *Shul un Lebn* not only in the references to the curriculum and the community environment, but also in the form of traumatic experiences linked to the political turmoil of the time.

In the article, "Catastrophic events and their influence on the child's psychic", Shniurson provides long reflections about the importance of talking with a child about pogroms and other catastrophic events. Noticeably, the article was published in the same year when more than three big pogroms happened in the Kiev region, by White Volunteer Army Troops.

What is interesting about the journal is that, in the context of aesthetic education, one author also speaks about pogroms. The topic of pogroms, the author claims, is to be avoided for the reason that such terrifying knowledge can harm child's aesthetic feelings, not to mention fear and sorrow.

Shniurson accuses adults of preventing children from such information and criticizes the aesthetic argument. He rejects the notion that children are more harmed by trauma than adults. He states that the fear comes mainly from witnessing the event. So the children who had less experience than adults cannot be harmed more.[131]

Shniurson was an not an immediate participant in the events he discussed. For example, he describes a concentration camp for the war[132] prisoners, in German town R., where he used to be in 1914.[133] This camp kept six hundred people from Russia. Apart from adults, there were five children in the cam Shniurson was observing these children systematically. In the camp, except for being "terrorized by orders and penetrated by cruel treatment", captives experienced several

[131] Ibid.
[132] The First World War (1914-1918).
[133] Shniurson, "Katastrofale geshekhenishn un zeyer virkung oyf der psikhik funem kind", *Shul un Lebn*, 6-7, (November-December 1919), 22.

other unhappy events, like fire and ruining of the roof in the building.[134] Unlike adults, children were not affected psychologically by the sad situations.[135] They embraced "captivity" as a game; they asked parents many questions. The word "captivity" was interesting for the children, which they have heard many times from adults, but it provoked only curiosity in them.[136]

The other issue which Shniurson describes is how the children react to the death of their parents.[137] He talks about one man who lost his mother when he was a child. According to him, he did not remember much from that time except his mourning father.[138] One vital remembrance, which he had, was a man "with goat beard", who looked so funny that the child wanted to laugh.[139] His reaction on the mother's burial was neutral.[140] He admitted that only after several years had passed, he really understood the loss.[141] This situation supported Shniurson's argument that, for the children, the perception of the hard events is less traumatic, because they have less life experience than adults.[142] The other explanation is that children perceive certain bad events as a game.[143]

Shniurson concludes that a teacher ought to talk with children about the catastrophic events, with the regarding of the children who were affected hardly by the war events.[144] In these cases, the intervention of professional doctor and psychiatrist is required.[145]

[134] Ibid, 22.
[135] Ibid, 22-24.
[136] Ibid, 23.
[137] Ibid, 22-24.
[138] Ibid, 23.
[139] Ibid, 23.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid, 23.
[144] Ibid, 26-29.
[145] Ibid, 29.

The second article, "Influence of pogroms on the children"[146], by Rusin Beyzin, deals with Zhitomir pogrom, which happened in May 1905. Interestingly, the time of publication almost overlaps with the program happened in 1919 in the same city. [147] Before the retreat of Kiev by Red Army, Ukrainian Army units conducted military pogroms in Zhitomir, Berdichev, and the surrounding towns.[148]

Neither the first nor the second article deals with the issue of responsibility for the massacres. War and pogroms are disastrous for Jewish people, and the authors believed that they should become a part of Jewish memory and that it is, therefore, impossible to avoid these topics as a part of Jewish education. Probably, that is why Rusin-Beyzin refers to the pogrom as "the 1st Zhitomir pogrom".[149]

Rusin-Beyzin talks about the children's soul as of a "tabula rasa". His opinion is close to Shniurson's; according to Rusin-Beyzin, war in child's mind is not only mirrored as "craziness" and "blood bathhouse", but a provoking excitement.[150] He claims that education of a child about the war should contain something "better than rationalized upbringing". Children can receive the information about pogroms by being eye-witnesses of the events, but also from Russian inhabitants of the village and their peers, whom the author refers as "Christian friends". As Shniurson, he raises the problem of harmed children, but leaves it unanswered.

Jewish educators did not leave the problem of pogroms and their traumatic impact out of the journal. On the contrary, the extreme situation of hardship reinforced their knowledge about the pedagogical importance of talking about such events.

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[146] Y. Rusin-Beyzin, "Di virkung fun pogromen oyf di kinder", *Shul un Lebn*, 4-5, (March-April, 1919), 69-72.
[147] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, The Gale Group, 2008, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/pogroms.html (accessed April 18th, 2015).
[148] Ibid.
[149] Rusin-Beyzin, "Di virkung fun pogromen oyf di kinder", Ibid.
[150] Rusin-Beyzin, "Di virkung fun pogromen oyf di kinder", 71-72.

Conclusion

After the collapse of the Russian Empire and during the years of the Civil War Jewish education in Yiddish was in its reformative stage. Jewish pedagogues faced difficulties having to do with the war and the complicated political situation. Not all governments cared about the "Jewish question".

Under support of Central Rada, new center of the Jewish culture in Yiddish, the Kultur-Lige was opened in 1917.[151] It facilitated the establishment of the secular Yiddish education (which illegally existed from 1911 with the first school in Demievke), and its educational section published the journal *Shul un Lebn*. Since the majority of the *Shul un Lebn* contributors and school teachers were the activists of the Jewish leftist parties (mainly, the BUND), their political outlook was quite prominent in the journal.

Despite the turbulent war years, the unstable political situation, pogroms, and the short life of the journal, huge progress was made. New schools began to emerge with the financial support of the Kultur-Lige. New secular school offered new subjects (natural sciences, physics, mathematics) and approaches to education (self-education, games, sport activities). The schools tried to deal effectively with children harmed in pogroms using the newest achievements in psychological theory and science.

[151] Rybakov, *Pravda istorii*, 3.

Despite being secular, the new school did not neglect the "Jewish culture" in its curricula. Apart from the talk about the pogroms, the "Jewish content" was shrunk to the presence of the Jewish writers (Sholem-Aleichem, Peretz, Moycher Sforim) and folk songs lessons, but it was still quite prominent in schools. The state did not intervene a lot.

Shul un Lebn became a place for Yiddish intelligentsia to exchange their practical and theoretical ideas about education. Cultural and intellectual exchange of the time, reflected in Russian, German, and other avantgarde literature, signified the fact that Jewish pedagogy was quite progressive for its time. Jewish Yiddish intelligentsia educated in the West became a core of these innovations and they played crucial role in functioning Jewish Yiddish school under the Soviet regime.

The Civil War period was an important time when Jewish intelligentsia was created. "The first generation of the Soviet Yiddish intelligentsia"[152] was made up from the people with strong traditionalist Jewish background. Political activists with different, sometimes opposite, views – from Bundists to Zionists – became a backbone of the Soviet Yiddish intelligentsia when the state offered them power positions.[153] I agree that these, as Shneer calls them, "former rabbis, Zionists, and socialist nationalists" were bringing their own vision of the Jewish culture with them and became mediators between the power and traditional Jewish society.[154] However, I disagree with Shneer who claimed that the formation of this intelligentsia started from the Soviet Union. In Ukraine, the process of creating Yiddish Soviet intelligentsia started even before the SU, during the Civil War with support of Ukrainian governments. These people, as I shall argue in the next chapter, became important mediators when the Soviets came to power.

[152] Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture*, 28.
[153] Ibid, 28.
[154] Ibid, 29.

Chapter 3
On a Way of Becoming Soviet: The Story of Pedagogisher Biuleten (1922-1923)

Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the Jewish schooling policy during the Russian Civil War in Kiev. I argued that the Jewish autonomy, which was established under short-lived Ukrainian regimes, opened up opportunities for the development of the Yiddish schools. In hard conditions of war, pogroms, and unstable power in Kiev, Jewish intellectuals gathered around the Kultur-Lige started to publish the first pedagogical periodical, *Shul un Lebn*. I claimed that *Shul un Lebn* was a cutting-edge pedagogical journal of its time. I also claimed that this journal's contributors became a core of later Soviet Jewish intelligentsia.

In this chapter, I shall continue the story of Jewish pedagogy under the early Soviet regime once the *korenizatsiia* policy was launched. I shall analyze how this change of regime is reflected in the content of the successor of *Shul un Lebn*, titled *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, and published in five numbers, between August 1922 and December 1923. I shall also try to fit the Jews into the context of Soviet and Soviet-Ukrainian schooling.

Today, talking to a person from post-Soviet country about pros and cons of general public education which most of them still receive in schools and universities, one might assume that it was a common thing 70 years ago. But it was not. At the beginning of the 20th century, education was a heavily debated subject. Questions were raised such as follows: Should a child receive basic education in all the subjects, or should he or she obtain practical skills for the future life?

Whom are we raising up: a conscious individual with the ability of self-education, or a devoted member of the collective? Education was a technology, open for innovations both from inside and outside. Early Soviet education very much corresponded to this model.

1. Overview of the Political and the Economic Situation

1.1 The Political Reforms in the Soviet Union

Despite the fact that the Red Army occupied Kharkov and proclaimed Ukrainian Soviet Republic in January 6th, 1919, Bolsheviks seized power in Kiev only from the third time, in June 1920.[155] This is important because the Jewish center was Kiev, and not Kharkov.[156] From that time, Bolsheviks started to establish their institutions in Ukraine.

The Tenth Party Congress in March 1921 launched the New Economic Policy (NEP), that would until 1924 allow private economic initiative within certain limits. This was also a period of formation of small national territories (soviets and districts), which were suitable for exterritorial minorities, like Jews. The NEP increased ethnic conflict over the territory.[157]

[155] See Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
[156] Kharkov was more reliable because it was not an epicenter of Ukrainian nationalistic movement and the Civil War events. Therefore, Kharkov became and remained the capital of the Soviet state until January, 1935.
[157] Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 25.

The Soviet Union was formed on December 30th, 1922. Soon after, in 1923, the official policy on the problem of nationalities was established.[158] At the Twelfth Party Congress in April that year, the Central Committee (TsK) in Moscow approved two resolutions on the nationality issue.[159] The resolutions reflected the cease of public debates between protagonists of Lenin and Stalin.[160] The documents stated the state support for the "forms" of nationhood that were not seen as threating the unity of the central state.[161] The new policy supported different national forms: territories, languages, elites, and cultures.[162]

The name of the policy, *korenizatsiia*, was derived from the word indigenous (*korennoi*) and it fitted the decolonizing rhetoric of favoring indigenous people over "newly arrived elements" (*prishlye elementy*).[163] At the beginning, the term *natsionalizatssia* was preferred, in the sense of the politics that emphasizes the project of national construction.[164] The latter term dropped out of use due to its bourgeois connotations. A peculiar instance of korenizatsiia was on the Jewish case for the number of reasons.

[158] Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, Chapter 1.
[159] Ibid, 9. See also Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union*, 66-68.
[160] Ibid, Chapter 1.
[161] Ibid, 9-10.
[162] Ibid, 9.
[163] Ibid, 9-10.
[164] Ibid, 12.

1.2 Jews in the Soviet Nationality Policy

Jews lacked national territory. Therefore, they did not correspond to Stalin's famous definition of a nation. Neither Lenin nor Stalin initially believed that Jews should be granted national rights.[165] They were convinced that Jews will later assimilate into the dominant (Russian) culture, and, therefore, that they did not require special attention. The need for the support among the Jewish population forced Bolsheviks to change their minds.

In general, the literature on the Jewish life in the early Soviet Union describes the state as an authoritarian oppressor of the Jewish culture. As with other nationalities, Soviets promoted secularization and separated religion from the state.[166] In Jewish case, that meant demonizing Judaism.[167] However, it would be misleading to perceive the situation as of a clear division between the "Bolshevik propagandist" and the "Jewish activist".[168] In majority of the cases, Jewish leaders performed both roles.

Jewish activists closed cheders and synagogues.[169] Their adherence to the Soviet power was not the only reason for behaving that way. Before the Soviets, various political groups

[165] Zvi Halevy, *Jewish Schools Under Csarizm and Communism*, New York, Springer Publishing Company, 150-153.
[166] Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust: A Social and Demographic Profile*, Jerusalem, Ahva Press, 1998, 98.
[167] Robert Weinberg, "Demonizing Judaism in the Soviet Union during the 1920s," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1, (Spring, 2008), 120-153.
[168] Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture*, See Introduction.
[169] On the suppression of heder, see Zvi Halevy, *Jewish Schools Under Czarizm and Communism*, 162-164.

(Bundists, Zionists, etc.) were competing for the popular support among the Jewish population. Many of them were anti-religious, and often challenged religious authority. When the Soviets started supporting the secular Yiddish culture, Bundists (and some other smaller parties) became their allies. They closed the traditional schools (heders) and opened the new ones in Yiddish.

However, as we shall see later from the journal *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, while the Soviet state promoted anti-religious campaigns and closed religious schools very soon after it ceased power,[170] that did not mean that the "Jewish" content from the school curricula immediately dropped out. Children were studying elements of the Jewish culture at schools for a long time after the campaign started.[171]

The NEP enabled considerable progress of linguistic korenizatsiia and relative economic freedom (such as encouraging entrepreneurship, small-scale private trade).[172] Therefore, the NEP was more favorable towards the Jews than the war communism.[173] In the publishing sphere, introducing system of self-sufficiency (*khozraschet*) had bad influence on the press.[174] Publishers had to introduce subscriptions to the journals and newspapers. Overall, despite the difficulties NEP was a period of cultural and political debate.

[170] Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 103.

[171] However, one might distinguish between studying religious texts and elements of the folk culture, like songs and writers. At the same time, later on elements of the folk Yiddish culture also disappeared from the school curricula as "dangerous, and nationalistic".

2. Pedagogisher Biuleten: Educational Reform under the Soviets

2.1 The Aims and Contributors

I shall now use citations from the journal *Pedagogisher Biuleten* (Pedagogical Newsletter, 1922-1923)[175] as a reference point and the illustration of the "Jewish story" of educational system under the Soviets.

Pedagogisher Biuleten was a successor of *Shul un Lebn*, a journal published during the Civil War by the Kultur-Lige Kooperativer Farlag (this is how Soviets renamed the *Kultur-Lige* publishing house). There was also continuity in terms of contributors to the two journals. Among them were Abraham Golomb,[176] Yankel and Lipe Reznik.[177] At the same time, many new authors, such as Ayzek Zaretsky,[178] Y. Yakhinson,[179] Noah Luriye,[180],[181] and Burganski[182] appeared.

Ayzek Zaretsky was a Jewish linguist (1891, Pinsk, – 1956, Kursk), a member of Evsektsiia, member of Moscow and Kharkov philological commissions. Following the anti-religious policy of Evsektsiia, he excluded from the school curricula Hebrew and Bible lessons.

[175] In the text, I shall refer to it as *Pedagogisher Biuleten* and *Biuleten* which is the same.
[176] Berl Kagan, *Lexicon fun yidish-shraybers*, Amherst, National Yiddish Book Center, 1986, col. 126-130.
[177] For more information about them, see Chapter 1.
[178] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, http://www.eleven.co.il/article/11601 (accessed April 20th, 2015).
[179] *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, col. 526-527, http://www.eleven.co.il/article/13921, (accessed April 20th, 2015). See also Alfred Greenbaum, *Jewish Scholarship and Scholarly Institutions in Soviet Russia*, 1918-1953, Jerusalem, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1978, 99, 156.
[180] Writer, member of Antenna writers' group. Antenna rejected the idea that literature has to satisfy the mass readership. Estraikh, *In Harness*, 114.
[181] *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, col. 973-974.
[182] Author of the Yiddish textbooks.

Zaretsky also participated in reform of the Yiddish language. Y. Yakhinson (1887-1937) was a well-known writer and the author of Yiddish schoolbooks. Burganski was also known as author of textbooks for schools in Yiddish. Noah Luriye (1885-1960) was a Soviet Jewish writer from Minsk, a member of the Kultur-Lige. He was known as a translator of numerous literature in Yiddish. In 1921, Luriye worked as a lecturer on pedagogical courses in Yiddish.

More frequently than in *Shul un Lebn*, female authors contributed. Among them were Leah Shabad, Tsitsile Brik, and Mani Grinberg.[183] It is clear from the biographies that most of these people lived long lives, few of them were purged after the end of korenizatsiia in 1930s,[184] and a number were evacuated to the interior of the Soviet Union and survived the Holocaust. I shall return to this question later. As in the case with *Shul un Lebn*, contributors to the *Biuleten* combined a role in maintaining a pedagogical periodical with being teachers/editors/local party officials, etc. It is important to remember this, as I called it earlier, "multifunctioning" when asking the question who were the people who Sovietized the Jewish masses. Some of the authors were former members of the 'Bund' or other left-oriented Jewish Parties. This partially explains their cooperation with the Soviet power.

Biuleten was mostly about the latest innovations in education. However, despite the limited audience (presumably, only heads of the schools and some teachers had access to it), it was a "meeting point" of various teachers who exchanged information about the schooling practices and who shared other news from Kiev to Ukrainian and Russian provinces (the famous Malakhovke colony). In situation, when mass printing was not cheap and affordable, this journal still served as an important source of information for the educators on central and local levels.

[183] Unfortunately, I am not able to identify them.
[184] 'Great Purges' under Stalin, 1936-1938.

However, local teaching staff criticized the *Biuleten* for not responding to the needs of the local audience. At the beginning of January 1923, the cultural activists from Belaya Tserkov[185] organized the Teachers' Conference, whose aim was to discuss the content of *Biuleten*.[186] The first question on the agenda was whether there is a need to have other pedagogical journals besides *Biuleten*. The local teachers' claim was that the publication of journals such as the Russian *Put prosveshcheniya* (Path of Enlightenment)[187] undermine the Jewish circle. Such journals, they argued, were not familiar with the concrete needs of provincial activists.[188] Pedagogical work in a Jewish circle is unique, and, therefore, requires special attention, they claimed.

I assume that there were several reasons for the local teachers to be concerned: scarcity and expensiveness of printing materials, the desire to make the journal more locally oriented, and, very likely, the competition with the press published in Russian. This overshadowed ideological (the desire to have the press in Yiddish) and financial reasons.

The second issue on the Conference's agenda was the degree to which the journal had been dedicated to local affairs. Activists stated that pedagogical magazine had to "serve local interests"[189] and had more concrete articles on "life-questions about our concrete school"[190] and about teachers' work.

[185] Town near Kiev. It was not in the Pale of Settlement.
[186] Y. Loybinski, "Belotserkov", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5, (January 1923), col. 124.
[187] Pedagogical journal published monthly by Narkompros of Ukraine, initially in Russian, and after in Russian and Ukrainian, 1922-1930.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid, col. 125.
[190] Ibid, col 126.

2.2 The Material Conditions

Yet past was not far away. Bad conditions in schools were blamed on "Denikin's horrible nightmare" of 1920.[191] The chaos of 1919-1920s was juxtaposed to present-day situation.[192] Yiddish schools, which had worked illegally under the Tsarist regime, now received financial support and had an opportunity to work openly. This was the case with the famous Demievke school, opened in 1911.[193] The school changed its purpose, and under the Soviets, it started functioning as a "professional school for girls".[194] The times when Demievke was the only place where Jews could settle was long gone.[195]

2.2.1 The Second Home

School became the second home, and for some children it substituted home. "Shul-heym" (school-home) or "shul-hoyz" (schoolhouse) are common names for schools in *Biuleten*. Such titles show two things. First, the school-home was an outcome of the pedagogical reforms, and a desire of teachers to create a favorable and home-like atmosphere in the schools. They believed

[191] M. Zingerman, Tsu der geshikhte af der shul-heym", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 4, (November-December 1922), col. 49.
[192] Biuleten, "Praktik fun muziker dertsiung in Malakhovker kolonie", col. 61.
[193] Burganski, "Demievke yidishe shul", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5, (January 1923), col. 121.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid, 121.

that giving children a positive attitude and encouraging them to pursue personal and collective initiatives would result in better productivity. Second, the 'school-home' is a precise description of the Jewish Yiddish school at the turn of the century. For homeless children, it was the place where they spent not only a daytime.[196] It might have also referred to the size of the school in the ironical sense, as one confined home for all. Often, the schools were just one or two rooms over packed with children.[197] Children literally lived there all day long. Reports on dirtiness and bad sanitary conditions are not rare.[198] For example, in the school at Khorevaya street, 38 out of one hundred children had to study in anti-sanitary conditions, and some were starving.[199] In Demievke school, 52 percent out of 250 children were homeless.

Obviously, the primary goal of the school was to provide children with basic literacy skills. The data on the children's literacy are interesting. 50 percent were entirely or half-literate, 20 percent knew either Yiddish or Russian, and only 30 percent were literate in both languages. The school also became a harbor for unemployed and illiterate adults: 45 percent of adult attendants were unemployed, 28 percent consisted of small entrepreneurs (*balmelokhes*), 12 were peddlers (*hendlekh*), and workers shared the rest 15 percent.[200]

2.2.2 Reforms and Reality

At the beginning of the 1920s, the reformist pedagogy occupied a minor space in comparison to work on children houses (*detskiie doma*). The main concern of Narkompros was for homeless

[196] Burganski, "Demievke yidishe shul", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5, (January 1923), col. 121.
[197] M. Zingerman, Tsu der geshikhte af der shul-heym", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 4, (November-December 1922), col. 49.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Zingerman,"Tsu der geshikhte af der shul-heym", Ibid.
[200] Burganski, "Demievke yidishe shul", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5, (January 1923), col. 122.

children hurt in the Civil War and for the victims of hunger in Volga basin in 1921-1922.[201] In 1923, there were 114 000 homeless children in Ukraine.[202] Majority of the teachers experienced hardships as well. They were ill prepared and had low salaries. However, education depended on them. The reason for that was that Narkompros left the task of reforming the schools to local sections responsible for education.[203]

Small provincial towns with overwhelmingly Jewish populations that survived after the Civil War faced economic changes caused by NE Educational workers in Belotserkov province complained on "horrible moral and material crisis" compared to 1921-1922 year.[204] School funding was also unsatisfactory and limited.[205] Activists complained that they had received only 25 percent from the promised normal budget. They criticized Soviet power for the little positive changes in the local community of Belotserkov.[206] "Currently at our school are present seven groups with nine teachers, who administer about two hundred children", says an article on Belotserkov.

We should accept these criticisms with caution. The fact that local Yiddish schools experienced financial hardships and had to overcome crisis after the Civil War does not necessarily mean that the school lived worse "under the Reds" than before. Criticism could have been a means of attacking the Soviet policy which had its own vision on Yiddish school. At the same time, financial issues (despite the criticism), distinguished the Soviet power not only from other regimes, but also from the Civil War governments. Central Rada allowed Jewish autonomy

[201] Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, 45.
[202] Ibid, 46.
[203] Ibid, 341.
[204] A. F., "Belotserkov", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5, (January 1923), col. 127.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.

for the short period, but it supported them financially (In contrast, the Soviet power financed Jewish Yiddish institutions, but established its own rules).

2.3 Bolshevik Education as the Break with the Imperial Past

Bolsheviks perceived the pre-revolutionary education as a traditional prerogative of the privileged class. That is why, after taking power in October 1917, they decided that the state should provide the masses with basic education and create new elites, or "proletarian intelligentsia".[207] In theory, this elite should have emerged from the process of upward social mobility. However, Bolsheviks faced difficulties since the majority of workers and peasants were uneducated. They then had to rely on experienced "bourgeois" cadres from the former regime.[208] This is true about the Jewish population as well despite the fact that class stratification in the Jewish case was different that of the Ukrainian population.[209]

In terms of teaching, Bolsheviks declared a break with the traditional orientation on "pure academism" of the Tsarist school. The break with tradition signified new ways of writing and teaching history and the history of the society (*obshestvovedenie*, literally, knowledge of society). History should be directed towards the future, and its goal should be to change the future.

[207] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia,* Ithaka and London, Cornell University Press, 1992, 3.
[208] Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, 4.
[209] For more on the Jewish issue in the interwar period see Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust: A Social and Demographic Profile*, Jerusalem, Ktav Publishing House, 1998.

Instead of pure academism, Bolsheviks developed the idea of "polytechnical" education with Marxist legacy.[210] The new school had to be professionally oriented. It had to equip a person with a variety of necessary skills for the demand of the time.[211] However, there was no agreement among the educators (in theory or practice) about which activities should be given priority – individual inclinations or societal demands.[212] For example, teachers in the Jewish school emphasized the importance of child's self-education.[213] At the same time, collective walks and other outdoor activities, ranging from gymnastics to gardening, and farming to natural science experimentation, became an inherent part of the curricula. Teachers took children to Pusha-Voditsa (which is 30 minutes by train from the Podol district of Kiev) where a kind of summer camp was formed. Despite the initial anxiety of some of the parents, children loved walks in the forests, and self-management trainings. The problem was to take them back to the school environment.[214]

Despite the hardships of the time, the Soviet school system brought innovative features in comparison to the Tsarist system. First, it gave access to students from all classes and it made education equally obligatory to all. Second, it offered innovative curricula and teaching methods. Third, it put emphasis on technical and industrial-oriented education. Practical value of the skills became of primary importance.[215] Children learned the newest technical innovations of the time

[210] Fitzpatrick,*The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, 5.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Engels was not sure about that prioritization, see *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, 6.
[213] Dovid Reytnbarg, "Di arbetn fun Malahovken pedagogishn kreyz farn 1922 yor," *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5 (May 1923), col. 60.
[214] M. Zingerman, "Tsu der geshikhte fun a shul-heym", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5 (May 1923), col. 54.
[215] Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, 6.

(for example, after class work on basics of electro techniques and radio mechanics, they had tours on telegraph).[216]

The Communist Party used progressive pedagogy and the language of modernization for the sake of transforming the society. At the beginning of the 1920s, Soviet educators were opened to ideas developed in the West, especially in the United States. Some scholars think that the ideas of John Dewey and other Western educators (mostly German)[217] played more important role in creating new Soviet school than the ideas of Marx and Engels.

Leaders of Narkompros (*Narodnii Komisariat Prosvesheniya*, or Peoples Commissariat of Enlightenment) traveled to Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia in search for new ideas for the Soviet school. In Ukraine, Narkom of Enlightenment, Hrygoriy Hrynko published a journal *Shlakh Osvity (*Education Path), which reported on Western innovations.[218]

Developing the child's individuality, merging mathematics with humanities, and teaching without a strict curricula and schoolbooks were Dewey's ideas. They became extremely popular among the Soviet teachers in the time of bad financial situation and lack of the teaching materials. Imposing Dalton plan of universal curricula allowed individual instruction which was based on the knowledge of a child.[219] Regarding methods of teaching, teachers adopted ideas of reflexology of Russian scientists Ivan Pavlov[220] and Vladimir Bekhterev.[221]

[216] Y.Yakhinson, "Naturlimud un elektrificatsie", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, no. 5 (May 1923), col. 37-38.
[217] Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, 45.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid, 45-46.
[220] Ivan Pavlov (1849 – 1936), Russian scholar-physiologist, Nobel laureate. Pavlov developed idea about conditional and unconditional reflexes, and created teaching about higher nervous activity. Vladimir Bekhterev (1857 – 1927), famous Russian psychiatrist, physiologist, founder of reflexology and psychopathology.
[221] Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, 45-46.

2.4 Features of the Curricula

2.4.1 Emotions and Psychology

Educators in early 1920s emphasized the emotional attachment of a child to the subject and the role of inspiration. Teacher had to discuss with a child common questions on organizing the library, book choice, etc.[222] Later on, this was used as an effective tool of propaganda. Nevertheless, already after the revolution, children were receiving assignments to collect the material about their parents' activity during the Revolution. In their talks with children, teachers had to emphasize that peasants and workers movement was a basis of the revolution.[223] Not the last place in pedagogy was the integration of psychoanalysis. It became a popular thing in new schools. Dr. Moshe Wolf, a famous psychoanalyst, included in his teachings his thoughts about the formation of life inclinations of a child. He believed that at the age of 5 the personality is already formed.[224] Therefore, we should conclude that readers of the *Biuleten* tried to integrate the new methods of teaching in their practices, or, at the minimum, they were aware of the newest practices of their colleagues from abroad.

[222] Y. Atlas, "Kinder-klub", *Pedagogisher Biuleten* 5 (May 1923), col. 44.
[223] Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, 115.
[224] Dr. M[oshe] W. Wolf, "Pzikhoanaliz un pedagogik", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5, (January 1923), col. 5-6.

2.4.2 Nature and Body

Kraievznavstvo (local studies) became one of the tools for social upbringing.[225] It had two purposes. First, Agitprop (Department of Agitation and Propaganda) sent the most successful urban youth of *Molodniak*[226] to rural areas. In this way, young people learned life of rural peasantry, and tried to gain authority over them.[227] This also raised subscriptions among the workers to Ukrainian press during Ukrainization policy.[228] Making these "cultural exchanges", they tried to minimize the difference between the rural and urban areas. The other aim, I think, was to make citizens of the new state learn more about it and to start to think in new categories about the space they lived in. Finally, it also corresponded to the pedagogic idea of bringing a child "close to nature", which was popular at the time.[229] Teachers tried to conduct summer classes outside the tiny classrooms.

2.4.3 Music and Gymnastics

One of the brand-new things of the time was introducing musical classes to the school curricula. Although classes and spare time musical learning were very informal (for example, one child reports that he brought a friend (*hevre*) and mother to the class), apart from pure listening,

[225] Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, 113.
[226] Molodniak – a name for cultural evenings organized by youth and supervised by the Department of Agitation and Propaganda.
[227] Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, 198.
[228] Ibid, 115.
[229] Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, 7. The idea of bringing school "closer to life" belongs to Lev Tolstoi.

teachers made children learned musical theory and basic music alphabet.[230] Children colony near Moscow, in Malakhovke, reports on that.[231] Classical music was studied together with national folk songs.[232] Music became also a 'good friend' of gymnastics. In Malakhovke school, teachers introduced different types of rhythmic exercises with fortepiano accompaniment.[233]

2.4.4 Extra-School Learning Circles

The schools had many extra-school activities, like musical, drawing, and reading circle. The aim of the circles was not only to expand knowledge on a given subject, but also to help weak pupils improve their skills. For instance, in 'reading circle', teachers helped students by using rehearsing technique in reading.[234] Library became the central place for gathering and discussions. Library at school "…occupies central place in children club" and "it is very important to club-activist to be familiar with library work".[235] Therefore, activists' aim was to administer library work and to help child orientate himself or herself in "treasures of books".[236]

[230] Ibid.
[231] "Praktik fun muziker dertsiung in malakhovker kolonie;" Y. Atlas, "Kinder-klub", *Pedagogisher Biuleten* 5 (May 1923), col. 46.
[232] I shall mention it in "Jewish part" of the story. See below.
[233] Tsitsile Brik, "Ritmishe gimnastik in Malakhovke", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5 (May 1923), col. 68-72.
[234] Y. Atlas, "Kinder-klub", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 5 (May 1923), col. 46.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.

2.6 Jewish Content in Soviet form or Vice Versa?

Children came to the new schools were taken out from the heders.[237] Agitation and effective work of Evsektsiia facilitated the process: "Thanks to bigger agitation, which was conducted by Evsektsiia, together with liquidation of heders, the renovations in of the Yiddish started".[238]

As we can read in *Shul un Lebn*, Yiddish activists used to take children from heders under their initiative. But now, reeducation became an affair of the Soviet state, and the members of Evsektsiia became its "right hand". No doubt, some of them were former members of other Yiddish parties, but the difference in school supervision was significant in comparison to the Civil War period. From the narrow Jewish case and Jewish autonomous structures now, it became a part of the prescribed state policy.

There were no Hebrew lessons and Bible studies (at least, officially) at school, but other elements of the 'Jewish' curricula were present. At musical classes, children learned Jewish and Russian folk songs together with the classical music.[239] Yiddish classics (such as Y. L. Peretz, Sholem Aleychem, Mendele Moycher Sforim) were present in the program together with Soviet Yiddish writers (e.g. Leib Kvitko).[240] In Cherniakhiv Jewish school courses named in honor of

[237] Depending on parent's desire, I assume. Local population reacted with resistance, or at least, suspicion, to the new school, not to speak about the opposition from traditional religious (especially Hasidic) and Zionist circles.
[238] A. F., "Belotserkov," *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 6, (December 1923), col. 127.
[239] Dovid Raytnbarg,"Praktik fun muzikaler dertsiung in Malakhovker Koloniye (Der kreyz af hern muzik)", *Pedagogisher Biuleten* 6 (December 1923), col. 59-61.
[240] M. Goldberg, "In kinder-bibliotek", *Pedagogisher Biuleten* 4, (November-December 1922), col. 21-22.

Y. L. Peretz took place.[241] In Kiev school at Khorevaya street, 38, discussions of Peretz' work were conducted.[242]

In Korosten, there was not a single Jewish school in the entire district: **"**There is nobody who can understand how the school should be, not even the old one, with heder and melamed".[243] Before the Evsektsiia took power over the existing schools half year ago, "…the leader was a notorious Zionist, who for a time also administered the social education (*sots-dertsiung*)".[244] The activist, Motl Kotlar, reported on his efforts to establish an experimental kindergarden with Russian and Jewish children. He met great resistance from the traditional circles – the 'Russian' and the 'Jewish street'. Kotlar complains that ""it was because of objective conditions, that even these small achievements are in danger of being liquidated"[245], and accuses 'petty-bourgeois opposition' in active resistance towards the Educational Department in establishing the kindergarten.

From *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, we know that in the beginning of the 1920s, many children were very poorly educated, and some of them had slow progress in reading and writing. Therefore, teacher's task was to make individual lessons and to help weak children[246] which were lagging behind.[247]

[241] "Provints: Cherniakhovker yidishe shul (shul-kursn in nomen fun Y. L. Peretz)", *Pedagogisher Biuleten* 6 (December 1923), col. 139-142.
[242] M. Zingerman, "Tsu der geshikhte fun a shul-heym", *Pedagogisher Biuleten* 5 (May 1923), col. 47-58, col. 51.
[243] Motl Kotlar, "Korosten", *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, 1, (August 1922), col. 125.
[244] Ibid, col. 126.
[245] Ibid, col. 127.
[246] I think that the term weak pupils should be understood in a wider sense, counting the factors of the Civil War (there children did not have time/opportunity to study), and psychological factors (it is orphans, homeless children, or traumatized in any way during the Civil War). This is why on the pages of *Shul un Lebn*, and *Pedagogisher Biuleten* we often meet discussions of psychology. The other obvious reason was the popularity of ideas of Pavlov and Bekhterev that modern pedagogues widely applied.
[247] Ibid, 127.

2.7 Language of New Schools

As a tool of transformation of the society, Communists also used language. Language itself has two aspects. The first is the language of ideology, phrases, constructs, certain words with hidden or explicit messages in which people express their identification with a political agenda. Imposing this discourse is what Matthew Pauly called "breaking the tongue" of teachers who had to learn the language of propaganda and apply it at schools.[248] The second is language in the philological sense, or the native language. Both conceptions were not randomly related, but considered as interdependent propaganda instruments for building the new socialist society. The concept of native language was very popular among educators, who believed that the effective education would work only if a child receives education in his or her mother tongue.

In the Soviet Union, this came in tandem with the principle of "the affirmative action empire".[249] The principle states that nationalities should be given an opportunity to develop their language and culture in order to serve the newly formed Soviet Union. Narkompros maintained that the instruction in native languages is necessary for creating the Soviet citizen and for transforming the whole society.[250] In the 1920s, unlike the 1930s decade of "high Stalinism", socialism and nation building were seen as compatible projects, and their alliance did not provoke much debate.[251]

[248] Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*.
[249] Terry Martin introduced the principle of "Affirmative Action Empire" regarding the *korenizatsiia* policy in the Soviet Union, in 1920s-1930s.
[250] Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, 340.
[251] Ibid, 342.

For the Yiddish language, the period of 1920s became the time of standardization. Soviet standardization preceded YIVO standard which was only published in 1937.[252] Prusman believed that "literary language functions as an Esperanto between different dialects in a given language". He launched a discussion on the unification of vowels and consonants: "The proper orthography and proper grammar have to be based on literary language and on the Litvak dialect.[253]

Problems of language development of a child were in the sphere of interests of pedagogues and linguists. Although language which child speaks contains phonetical misspellings, and is different from adult's "literature language", they are normal for the child's development.[254] From the journal it is clear that the child's native language education became a subject of particular attention of pedagogues and psychologists of the time.

Conclusion

The policy of *korenizatsiia,* launched in 1923, granted the Jews minority rights in recompense of political conformism. Some of the contributors to the *Pedagogisher Biuleten* (Zaretski, Luriye) became members of the Jewish section of the Communist Party and developed into the protagonists of excluding Jewish subjects from the school curricula. At the same time, as it is

[252] Joshua Fishman, Language: Planning and Standardization of Yiddish. *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2011, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Language/Planning_and_Standardization_of_Yiddish (accessed June 7, 2015).
[253] L. Prusman, "Lerer-tribune: di frage vegn undzer ortografie", *Pedagogisher Biuleten* 5 (May 1923), 82.
[254] Leah Shabad, "Fun der moskver pruv-stantsie. Di kinder-shprakh", *Pedagogisher Biuleten* 5 (May 1923), col. 29-35.

clear from the same journal, the 1920s were the time of a large-scale modernization of the Soviet Jewish school system in terms of subjects, teaching techniques, and the reform of Yiddish.

This was also a period of plurality of opinions about the form and the content of the Jewish school. However, Evsektsiia appeared on the historical scene. Its members combined pedagogical activity with the state service. Freedom in school policy was limited to people who made decisions about it.

In terms of finances, Soviet power became an official (and the only) sponsor of the Jewish culture in Yiddish in the world. It was an ambiguous relationship, but at the same time, it gave Jewish cultural activists more opportunities than they had in Poland, for example. Despite being socialist, Yiddish Soviet culture was a part of wider processes of blossoming of the Yiddish culture in the interwar Eastern Europe.

Schooling in towns and villages became a new world with all of its encompassing infrastructure. Schools supplied children with libraries; they opened clubs, circles, organized extra-curricular activities, and summer camps. This happened to be entirely different in comparison to schooling in the traditional Jewish society, which primarily served religious needs (whereas extra knowledge was acquired in the life practice), and from Bundist schooling (or any other Jewish school system narrowly affiliated with a political party). The Soviet school served the interests of the state, and it started to prepare its citizens (although in a language which a majority of the shtetl Jews still spoke and understood) to the practical needs of the socialist society. School, whether voluntary or compulsory, united all the layers of the Jewish society, and became free and mandatory for everyone. Although Jews were traditionally more literate than

their surrounding, many of them were half-literate at best. The Soviet literacy campaign was nowhere more successful than among the Jews.[255]

[255] For more information and statistics on the issue, see Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust.*

Conclusion

In the thesis, I analyzed the Jewish pedagogical intelligentsia from 1918 until 1923 in Ukraine. These five years played an important role in establishing the Soviet school system. My narrow research focused on two periodicals, aiming to track the transformations that happened with modern Yiddish secular education from the times of the Civil War (on the example of *Shul un Lebn*) until the times of the early Soviet regime and the beginning of *korenizatsiia* policy (on the example of *Pedagogisher Biuleten*), and to compare them. Last but not the least, I examined the role of secular Jewish (later Soviet) intelligentsia in establishing the secular school system in Ukraine, their backgrounds and political views. However, the most important concern was about their work under different regimes.

In the first chapter, I provided an overview of the history of the Jews in the Russian Empire, which, I claimed, is important to understand the changes that happened with the Jewish population and their schooling tradition later. I stated that the Uvarov school project, despite the resistance from traditional Jewish circles, gave birth to the first generation of Russian-speaking Jewish intelligentsia. In addition, I showed how the Jewish intelligentsia benefited from the political situation in Ukraine during the Central Rada in 1918 by having their own Ministry of Jewish Affairs and de-facto cultural autonomy. I described how the international context after the First World War made the existence of the autonomy regime for national minorities possible.

In the second chapter, I analyzed the content of the journal *Shul un Lebn* from three perspectives: the impact of the political situation, the reform pedagogy, and the presence of the Jewish content. I found that the content of the journal depended on the time when it was issued

(under the Central Rada, or under the Soviets). But even before the Soviets, many voices of activists stated their leftist orientation without neglecting the Jewish elements of culture in the school (it should be noted that this does not apply to subjects on Judaism and Hebrew language to which they were strictly opposed). Yiddish Jewish intelligentsia that started to emerge and gather in Kiev widely used the newest pedagogical achievements of the time. This is obviously visible on the example of the literature that contributors to *Shul un Lebn* used, which was German or translated in Russian from German, as well as the books of or containing the ideas of Dewey, Bekhterev, and Pavlov. Finally, the Jewish content of the journal is widely present. The tragic pogrom events reflected in *Shul un Lebn* are perhaps the most striking example of that kind. At the same time, opposition to the new schools, both traditionalist, Zionist, and assimilationist, was heavily criticized.

In the third chapter, I analyzed the content of the *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, an early Soviet Yiddish pedagogical journal, whose many contributors became Communist Party and Evsektsiia members. The journal represented the official line of the state, which sometimes differed from that of the local pedagogues. I showed that excluding the Jewish content from the curricula became an affair of the Soviet state, which was the official sponsor of the Soviet Yiddish culture. I also claimed that the educational reforms launched in the previous period continued and had positive impact 'under the new master'.

Some remarks on the future perspective of the Yiddish schools and fate of intelligentsia are in order here. The pedagogical story continued with *Ratnbildung* (*Soviet Education*), published in Kharkov, and later in Kiev from 1928 until 1937, by the Peoples' Commissariat of Enlightenment of the USSR. The print run of the magazine was from 1200 to 1600 exemplars, depending on the year.

Religious observance of the shtetl Jews was not more tolerated, and the active anti-Pesakh campaign started. Comparing it to the polemics in *Shul un Lebn* and even in *Pedagogisher Biuleten*, which described the traditional Jews mainly as competitors in terms of schooling, in *Ratnbildung*, the state intervened in the personal lives of the Jews. The same was true of the state intervention in the textbooks. In the 1924-1928s textbooks, children read stories about the Jewish workers being exploited by rabbis.[256] Textbooks polemicized against the Jewish faith, and the heders. At the same time, a lot of effort was done to eliminate Jewish-gentile enmity, and in 1924, 'goyim' (gentiles) were changed to 'poyerim' (peasants).[257] Furthermore, the Soviet state intervened heavily in the curricula and purified the content of the textbooks from the 'Jewish elements'.[258] The ideological talk of internationalism appeared at schools as well.

The concept of the 'class enemy' is introduced in *Ratnbildung*. The definition of class enemy was broad, containing Bundists, Zionists, any traditional Jews, or teachers who had not followed the Party line. *Ratnbildung* violently fought against the "religious fanaticism":

> "We have to say it clearly, that not everything is going well on our anti-religious front. Religious ideology shows the signs of liveliness. The clerical parasites conduct wide religious agitation. […] In every town, in new and old collectives, the communication with rabbis, cantors, preachers, shoykhets, and shamuses renewed. […] The youth does not receive enough anti-religious education at school. The teacher […] had to explain the absurdity of the Pesakh customs".[259]

[256] Fuks, Tekhanim le'umiyim be-vet ha-sefer ha-yesodi be-yidish bi-Verit ha-Mo'atsot, *Beḥinot* 8–9 [1979]: 89–112, 98.
[257] Ibid., 100.
[258] Ibid., 100.
[259] Khadoshevich, "Anti-religiez propagande in dem shul", *Ratnbildung*, number 3, 1928, p 54-55.

Did the 'Jewish content' entirely disappear from the magazine? I would claim that. In the late numbers of *Ratnbildung* (1935-1936), Peretz, Mendele Moycher Sforim, and Sholem-Aleychem were mentioned in the school curricula, but I assume that they appeared in a censored version.

The end of *Ratnbildung* marks the sad story of the wave of Stalin's Great Purge of 1936-1938. Was that the end of the Yiddish schools and the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia? This is a debatable question, and the answer depends on what we count as the end. David Shneer claims it was not: Yiddish plays were staged, Yiddish schools operated, and Yiddish books had been published in a great amount.[260] However, these were mere remnants of a culture that flourished in the 1920s. Once the Soviets reached their goal of delivering the ideological message to Jewish masses in their native language, they abandoned supporting the Yiddish culture. The campaign of Russification and internationalism commenced.

[260] Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture*, Conclusion.

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