

Toward the Jewish Revolution: Yiddish Anarchists in New York City, 1901-1906

By

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Abstract

In this thesis I argue that the Yiddish anarchist movement in New York City experienced a period of critical transition between 1901 and 1906 that saw the movement largely turn away from internationalist discourse, and become more deeply involved in Jewish politics. Using the main newspaper of the Yiddish anarchists, the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, I investigate two the effects of two events in particular: the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901 and the Russian Revolution of 1905. The assassination led to a wave of anti-anarchist sentiment and legislation that accelerated growing divisions within a mostly ambiguous Jewish radical movement made up of socialists and anarchists of all kind, atomizing different strains of radicals and leaving them more susceptible to ideological change. The Revolution of 1905 and its hundreds of pogroms brought that ideological change, shocking Jewish political movements everywhere and leading to the rapid growth of Jewish nationalism. Yiddish anarchists were some of the most fierce adherents of internationalism and the most estranged from Jewish politics, but they were nonetheless deeply affected by the shift and by nationalist discourse. The conjoined effects of the McKinley assassination and the 1905 Revolution were that Yiddish anarchism went from being a movement of Jews to a Jewish movement.

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Additionally, this thesis could not have been written if not for the digitization of periodicals done by Tel Aviv University's Historical Jewish Press, the Library of Congress's Chronicling America, the *New York Times*' Online Archive, and the Yiddish Book Center.

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Note on Yiddish Transliteration

Transliterations of Yiddish generally follow YIVO style, but I attempt to preserve *daytshmerish* and anglicized spellings of Yiddish words as I consider this an important linguistic feature of turn-of-the-century Yiddish publishing. I also try to conform to the English spellings of Yiddish names that historical actors used themselves. Thus, the newspaper the פרייע ארבייטער שטיממע is rendered in English as *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* rather than *Fraye Arbayer Stimme*, as the former was the Latinized version the editor of the paper chose to use during the period investigated in this study. Similarly, I use the more common Latinized names of historical actors that were used in the period. For instance, the editor of the paper שאול יאנאווסקי is written Saul Yanovsky rather than Shoyel Yanovski and הלל זאלאטארעווי is written Hillel Solotaroff rather than Hillel Zolotarov. The transliteration of article titles from Yiddish are also capitalized according to English conventions. I apologize to my friends at YIVO for my indiscretions in this regard.

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Introduction

“A Kindling Flame”: Encountering the East Side Anarchist Threat

In mid-August 1893, an anonymous *New York Times* reporter headed down to the Lower East Side of New York City (then just the “East Side”) to see first-hand the Jewish anarchists who were rumored to infest the district. He stepped off the tramcar at Grand Street Station into total chaos. He was instantly surrounded by “Hordes of pinched and frowsy foreigners, with [their] squat, swollen faces, the harsh beards, and the deep-set furtive eyes of Calmuck¹ admixture....” These were “the exiles of the Romanoff Pharaoh... knotted in uncomely groups, preparing... for the threatened demolition of the city at nightfall.” Mystified, the reporter pressed onward through this “insurgent quarter.” The street was brimming with foreign, arcane looking signs, “full of what seemed to be menaces in Hebrew characters, leveled against the peace and order of the community.” “Revolutionists” filled the streets, and almost every store he passed flaunted “what appeared to be a banner announcing infinite and sanguinary cause for alarm.” Seeing a nearby “linguist in police uniform” who apparently knew the Jewish “jargon”, the reporter asked what the signs meant. They were not “exhortations to riot and anarchy,” the officer explained, “but simple advertisements of ‘Wine and Spirit Distilleries.’” The reporter began to suspect the police were on the wrong side.²

This reporter’s experience among the Jews of the Lower East Side offers a perfect introduction to this study. Though ignorant of much of what he saw – and no doubt further blinded by his own prejudices against both Jews and anarchists – the reporter’s depiction of New York

¹ “Calmuck” probably refers to the Kalmyk people of Central Asia and is used to denote the Oriental appearance of the Lower East Side Jews. I would like to thank Adina Tulegenova for pointing this out.

² “Anarchy’s Dingy Stronghold,” *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1893.

Jewish society and its radical element was not entirely inaccurate. He set foot in the Jewish ghetto when it was on the brink of many great changes. Eastern European Jewish immigrants were surging into New York City and largely remaining there.³ Thrust into the factories and sweatshops at the heart of Gilded Age America, they were constructing a thriving labor movement, and the radical groups affiliated with it were dramatically altering the very nature of Jewish society and culture. Yiddish, once seen only as a jargon of mish-mashed languages, was being turned into a modern culture with its own literature, music, art, and press. Yiddish culture was even being pushed by some to become a proper European-styled “high culture” for the growing Jewish intelligentsia.⁴ The breadth of the Jewish Diaspora had spread as hundreds of thousands of Jews came to the New World in a wave of immigration beginning in the wake of violence and political upheaval in Eastern Europe in 1881. By the turn-of-the-century those new branches of the Diaspora had planted firm roots from Argentina to Canada, and were better connected with each other and Europe than ever before by telegrams, steamships, and a seemingly unending stream of Jewish immigrants. In step with the vibrant renaissance in Jewish culture, Jewish politics entered a new era of growth and influence as movements established in the late 19th century like Zionism and Bundism finally began to make headway in city and *shtetl* alike in the old world and new⁵ (though they increasingly came to a head over what modern Jewish culture should be).⁶ All of these forces and movements were at work in the Lower East Side when the reporter walked down its streets, but to him it just looked like anarchy.

³ Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920* (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 70.

⁴ Kenneth Moss, “1905 as a Jewish Cultural Revolution?” in *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia’s Jews*, edited by Stefani Hoffman and Ezra Mendelsohn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008): 185.

⁵ Though *shtetl* is often understood now among many Jews to mean Jewish villages in Eastern Europe, the original meaning of the word was “little city” and it could refer to a wide array of different sized settlements.

⁶ Moss, “1905,” 185-86.

Anarchism was but one of several strains of leftist radicalism taking hold of the Lower East Side. By no means were all the Jews the reporter encountered anarchists, but the radical Jews he did encounter would have then been a mixed group of people from anarchist, socialist, or more vaguely defined radical backgrounds with few clear boundaries between them. That the reporter nonetheless thought all Jews were anarchists is important, for it seemed to him that anarchism and Jewishness were practically synonymous. Within just over a decade fissures would grow among Jewish radicals over that very belief. Jewish radicals were then preparing for the social revolution, but the question of whether it would be a revolution *of Jews* or a *Jewish* revolution soon divided them. Originally the mainstream of Jewish anarchism was firmly of the former opinion (that they were only Jewish in so far as it was their particular job was to radicalize Jews) but in a short amount of time they moved much closer to the latter (that their movement and the revolution itself had to be Jewish).⁷ That transition from anarchist Jews to Jewish anarchists, still poorly understood in historiography, is the subject of this thesis.

⁷ This was true of Jewish radicalism broadly, and historians have mostly made this claim generally and not regarding anarchists in particular. Hadassa Kosak, *Cultures of Opposition: Jewish Immigrant Workers, New York City, 1881-1905* (New York City: SUNY Press, 2000), 134-35; Tony Michels, "Socialism with a Jewish Face: The Origins of the Yiddish-Speaking Communist Movement in the United States, 1907-1923," in *Yiddish and the Left*, ed. by Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2001), 30.



Figure 1 - The Jewish market on the corner of Orchard and Hester Street in 1898.⁸

The *New York Times* reporter's distrust of Jewish New Yorkers was a common sentiment in a city rapidly being consumed by immigrants. New York had always been a port home to people from many nations, but the sheer number of newcomers was unprecedented. By the mid-19th century, immigrants made up a majority of New Yorkers, and by 1900 seventy-five percent of the city's population were immigrants.⁹ The immigrants were changing too, as people came in massive numbers from Eastern and Southern Europe, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and elsewhere. About a third of the entire Jewish population of Eastern Europe emigrated in that time, and about eighty percent came to America.¹⁰ A total of two million Jews came from Eastern Europe to the United

⁸ Byron Company, "Street Vendors Orchard Street 1898 at Hester Street, Looking South," 1898. Gelatin silver print, 9 in by 7 in. Museum of the City of the New York Online Collection, <http://collections.mcny.org/Collection/Street-Vendors-Orchard-Street-1898-at-Hester-Street,-Looking-South.-2F3XC58HPKC0.html> (accessed May 30, 2018).

⁹ Sorin, 70.

¹⁰ Sorin, 12.

States between 1880 and 1920. Most came through New York and the growth of the Jewish population there was explosive. In 1850 there were 16,000 Jews in New York City, by 1920 there were over 1,600,000.¹¹ The East Side was experiencing a particular moment of overcrowding when the reporter visited. As the situation for Jews in Russia grew more dire, they emigrated *en masse*, and the vast majority came to the United States. Between 1891 and 1892, over 107,000 Jews arrived in the U.S. from Russia, and most remained in New York City.¹² Seventy-five percent of them settled in the Lower East Side alone.¹³ In 1895 certain blocks of the district contained almost one thousand people per acre, making it, by one scholar's estimate, the third most densely populated place in the world.¹⁴ The rapid growth of New York City's Jewish population was fast cementing Jews as more than just one of the numerous immigrant groups in New York City. They were becoming a permanent and defining feature of the city itself, a fact that many like our reporter met with alarm.

¹¹ Howard B. Rock, *Haven of Liberty: New York Jews in the New World, 1654-1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 155; Paul Ritterband, "Counting the Jews of New York, 1900-1991," in *Papers in Jewish Demography 1997: Selected Proceedings of the Demographic Sessions Held at the 12th World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2001), 222.

¹² In documents from the turn of the century Jews in New York City were usually divided into the subcategories of German and Russian Jews. In reality many Jews from either group actually had origins elsewhere; they were widely inaccurate labels. To some degree there were discernable sections of the Lower East Side that predominantly consisted of Hungarian Jews, Polish Jews, Russian Jews, etc. but generally all of them were called "Russian Jews" – the term being more linguistically bound to Yiddish-speakers than to geography. Many Jews in the U.S. formed geographic ties based on their home towns or cities, rather than countries or regions like other immigrant groups. Jewish associations based on such ties were called "landsmanshaften", and many of these groups were powerful organizations in American Jewish society at the time. However, the broad label "Russian Jew" was not entirely without warrant in terms of the homogeneity it implied. Historian Elias Tcherikower points out that geographic separations among Jews dissolved quickly in America, forming Eastern European Jews into "one broad social organism." "That there was no true or lasting culture and social differentiation," Tcherikower adds, "is indicated by the overwhelming number of marriages—and the total absence of cultural prohibition against them—between immigrants of different geographic origins." Tcherikower, 132-33; Sorin, 33.

¹³ Sorin, 70.

¹⁴ Sorin, 71.

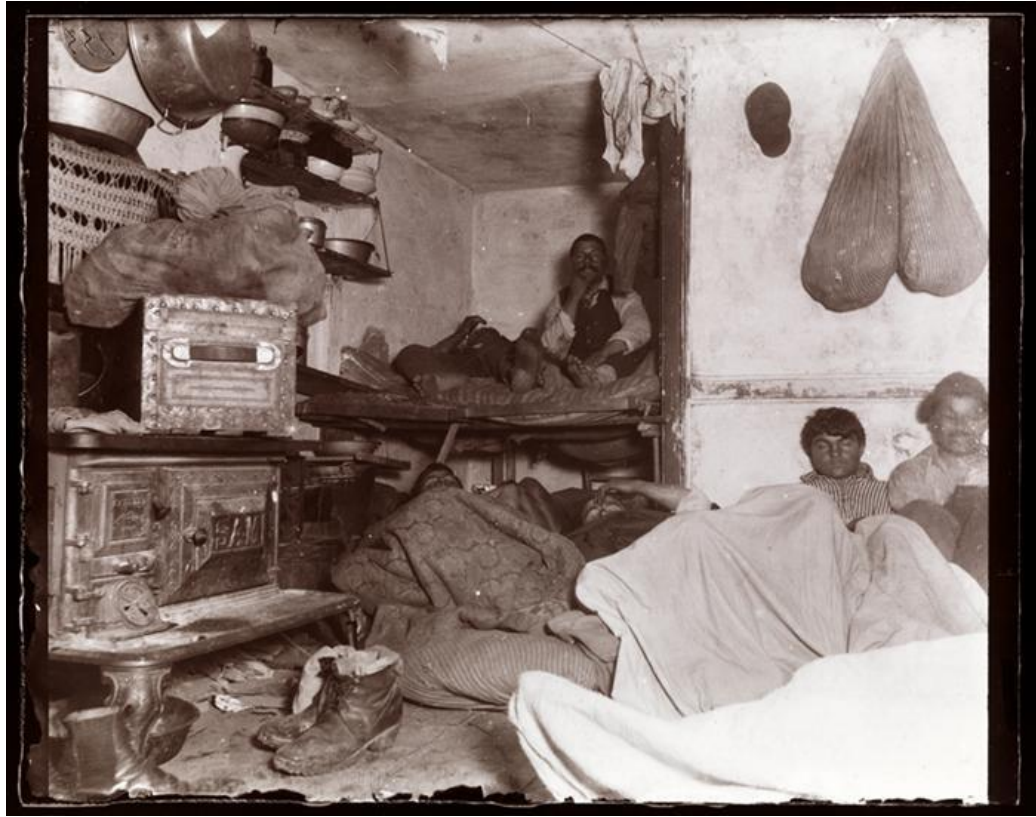


Figure 2 - A tenement room on Bayard St. in the Lower East Side, 1890.¹⁵

Though the Lower East Side was not completely filled with anarchists as the reporter thought, it was the perfect environment for anarchism to thrive. It was commonly thought around the turn-of-the-century that Jewish anarchists came as anarchists from Russia, but in fact most radicalized within the United States.¹⁶ The uncomfortable, cramped life in tenements and the horrific working environment of sweatshops and factories made New York City an ideal place for radical agitation. Anarchism and socialism grew hand-in-hand with labor unions in the United

¹⁵ Jacob Riis, "Lodgers in a crowded Bayard Street tenement – 'Five cents a spot,'" 1890. Gelatin silver print, 7 7/8 in by 5 in. City of the Museum of New York Online Collections, <http://collections.mcny.org/C.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&VBID=24UAYWL2CU4TV&SMLS=1&RW=766&RH=749> (accessed online May 30, 2018).

¹⁶ Zimmer, "'The Whole World Is Our Country': Immigration and Anarchism in the United States, 1885-1940." (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburg, 2012), iv-v, 2. Tony Michels makes a similar claim about American Jewish radicalism in general being native to the United States rather than to Europe. Michels, *A Fire in Their Heart*, 3. For belief about anarchists coming as anarchists from other countries see "The Reaction in the Press" in chapter one of this thesis.

States as workers sought to better their conditions. Earlier Jewish immigrants had experienced a similar situation in London and a small but important anarchist movement thrived there as well. Morris Winchevsky, an important socialist Yiddish poet, founded the world's first radical Yiddish paper *Der Poylisher Yidl* (The Little Polish Jew) in London in 1884, which was replaced by *Der Arbayer Fraynd* (The Worker's Friend) a year later (and eventually became solidly anarchist in orientation).¹⁷ London remained a significant center for the publication of anarchist propaganda in Yiddish, but New York City quickly emerged in the 1890s as the largest base of the Jewish anarchist movement.¹⁸ While I often refer to *American* Jewish anarchists without qualification throughout this thesis, the vast majority of my research focuses on New York City alone. This limitation prevents me making anything more than a suggestion of how the events investigated in this thesis affected other Jewish anarchist centers in the United States, by as early as the 1890s there were Jewish anarchist groups in Baltimore, Boston, New Haven, Providence, Paterson, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Louis.¹⁹ But the importance of New York City to Jewish anarchists should not be underrated. While Italian-American anarchists (the second largest anarchist group in the United States) had roughly eighty anarchist publications in twelve states, Yiddish-speaking anarchists had twenty, only three of which were outside of New York City.²⁰ New York, and the Lower East Side in particular, were the capital of Jewish anarchism in America. In the words of historian Kenyon Zimmer, "[t]o a large degree, the history of Yiddish anarchism in New York City is the history of Jewish anarchism in America."²¹

¹⁷ Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 48.

¹⁸ Zimmer, Kenyon. *Immigrants Against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America*. (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 20.

¹⁹ Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 50.

²⁰ Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 5.

²¹ Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 5.

New York's massive Jewish population was one reason for its penchant for anarchism,²² but the influence of the German anarchist movement was significant as well. The Lower East Side was previously known as *Kleindeutschland* (Little Germany) when it was still a largely German working-class neighborhood. It hosted a significant German anarchist movement there that was most active between the 1850s and 1880s. There was a good deal of intellectual exchange between the German anarchists and early Jewish anarchists, fostered by the linguistic proximity of Yiddish to German. Johann Most, a German anarchist notorious for his fiery speeches and strong advocacy for violent revolution, had a particularly strong influence on many early Jewish anarchists.²³ Though Jewish anarchists in America tended to have originated from Russia and frequently called upon the legacy of the Russian revolutionary movement, in the early days it was the German American anarchist movement that had far more influence over Jewish anarchism's development.²⁴

Gathering himself after his initial shock when entering the Jewish ghetto, the reporter continued onward from Grand Street Station toward Orchard Street where "the seeds of social revolution are said to be sprouting...." He passed masses of bickering "Hebrew peddlers" with their push carts crowded on the filthy sidewalk and was almost turned away by the growing stench of the "over-ripe lemons and under-ripe cucumbers" on the peddlers' carts and in the street gutters. The penny merchants were "[i]ncredibly seedy creatures, with droll little budding ram's horns of hair over their ears." They hocked their "Glash puddin!" and "last week's watermelons" without cutting even a "fraction of a shekel" off their inordinately high prices. The reporter was confronted

²² Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 7.

²³ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 20.

²⁴ Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 3-5. Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City; 1880-1914* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 83-84; Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 20; Tcherikower, 86-87, 219-23.

at every turn with “throes of rebellion against all forms of law and order.” It was a “commonplace, ordinary way in which east side social revolutions are apparently projected, organized, and carried out.”²⁵ Everything these people did was anarchy.

When the reporter made this trip to the Lower East Side in 1893 anarchists were mostly tabloid news.²⁶ The press usually painted them as dirty, petty criminals who ranted about their crazed ideas in the immigrant neighborhoods of industrial cities like New York and Chicago.²⁷ Only a few years earlier though, anarchism had seemed like a real threat. The most important anarchist event had been the Haymarket Affair in 1886 when a bomb exploded at an anarchist-led rally for the eight-hour workday. The explosion and the ensuing fight killed seven officers and four protesters. The following trial of the anarchist leaders who had led the rally (but who had not thrown the bomb) provoked displays of wide-spread support for the defendants around the world and brought much attention to the dire working conditions of industrial America. The defendants were found guilty. Four were executed (a fifth committed suicide in jail), and three were given lengthy prison sentences, making them martyrs among anarchists internationally. The execution of the Haymarket Anarchists convinced many Americans that the anarchist threat had been successfully stymied before it could take root. But, in fact, the anarchist movement rapidly

²⁵ “Anarchy’s Dingy Stronghold,” *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1893. It was the Hester street market (also called the “Pig Market”) that the reporter happened upon, the most famous open-air market in New York at the time and it was where the Jewish element of the Lower East Side was most visible. It was a densely packed mess of mostly Jewish peddlers hawking goods from their pushcarts. Moses Rischin estimates that there were 25,000 pushcart merchants in New York City by 1900. The vast majority were seasonally out of work Jews from the garment industry, but Italians and Greeks also plied their trade in the packed market alleys. Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York’s Jews, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977 [1962]), 56.

²⁶ See: “Struck by Emma Goldman: John Most Made Fun of Her and She Resented It,” *New York Times*, Dec. 20, 1892; Raynmond De L’Epee, “Its Triumph Is In Death,” *New York Times*, Aug. 26, 1894; “Ridiculed by Unbelievers: Anarchist Hebrews Made Sport of Yom Kippur with Dancing,” *New York Times*, Sep. 21, 1893; “Tried to Capture a Meeting: Anarchists Break in on United Hebrew Trades—An Appeal to the Mayor,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1893; “The Assassin Their Example,” *New York Times*, Aug. 15, 1900.

²⁷ Tcherikower, 226.

expanded in the following decade.²⁸ In July, 1892 anarchism was again in the news when Alexander Berkman, a Russian-Jewish anarchist intellectual based in the Lower East Side, attempted to assassinate industrialist Henry Clay Frick in retaliation for his brutal crackdown on the Homestead Strike.²⁹ The failed assassination made national news (and no doubt inspired this reporter's trip to the Lower East Side a year later), but in the eyes of many in the American press Berkman's failure only strengthened the belief that the anarchist threat was minimal.

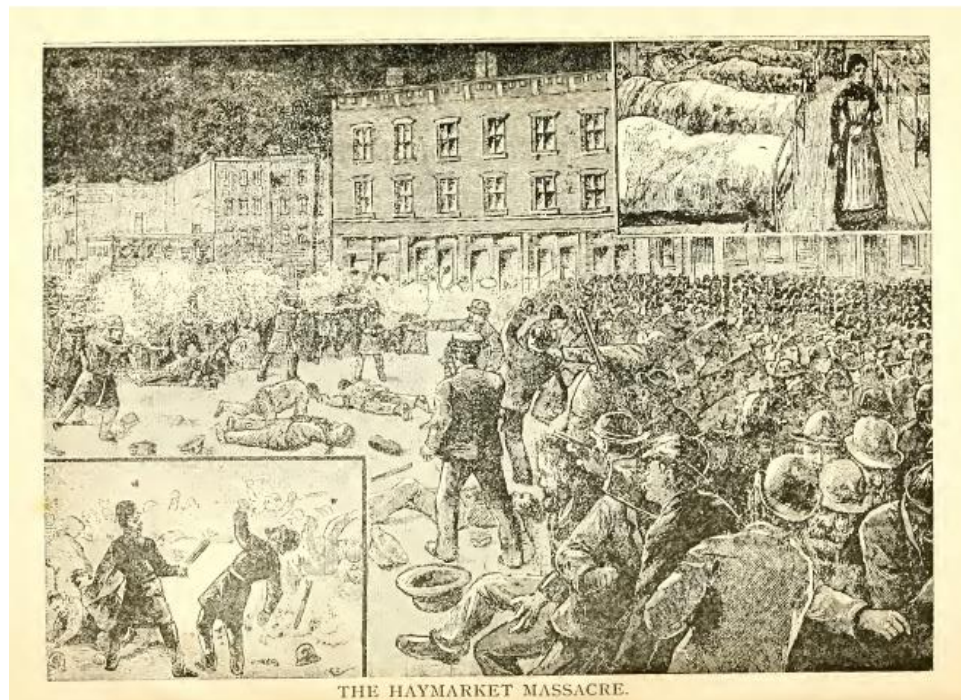


Figure 3 - An artist's rendering of the Haymarket Riot.³⁰

As the reporter continued onward he grew more confident, eventually reaching his destination: an anarchist rally at Covenant Hall, wherein “the most tremendous designs against the peace and dignity of the people of the State of New-York are being incubated.” Expecting a riot

²⁸ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 3; Paul Avrich and Karen Avrich, *Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 22.

²⁹ Avrich and Avrich, *Sasha and Emma*, 58-59, 61-79.

³⁰ Geo. N. McLean, *The Rise and Fall of Anarchy in America: From Its Incipient State to the First Bomb Thrown in Chicago* (Chicago and Philadelphia: R. G. Badoux and Co., 1888), 13.

inside, he found to his surprise “one of the most pacific and benignant spectacles upon which he had ever looked.” The hall was filled with 150 of the dirtiest of tenement-dwellers, mostly under twenty-one, and “distinctly of very recent importation.” There were even some young women in the crowd, “jocund” and “pretty,” but “of remote acquaintance with the bathtub....” More East Siders poured in from the neighboring beerhalls, “sodden Anarchists and starving laborers, any one of whom, when challenged to give the time of day, did not fail to pull out a gold or a silver watch and amiably respond with the right hour to a minute.” “Professors of anarchy” who were still in their teens delivered shrill and bitter speeches against capitalism in their harsh jargon that riled the audience’s “poisoned [but] by no means vivacious blood.” The speeches called for the total overthrow of society, but the speakers themselves seemed harmless. “No description can do justice to the inoffensive, tame, ratlike demeanor of these people,” the reporter noted. An older and noisy anarchist with a nose that “suggested the very ancientness of Old Jewry” called on the “Amerikanscher vorkingmen to shtep right vorwarts and shbreak for deir rights!” Five or six police officers yawned in the back.³¹

It is difficult to know how many of the people in the audience were actually anarchists (the reporter clearly had the habit of assumption), but at the time of the reporter’s visit in 1893 anarchism was still the dominant radical ideology among Jewish immigrants (although it would be surpassed in size by socialism within a few years).³² It is difficult to estimate the number of anarchists who would have been living in the United States in this period as they had no card-carrying political parties and few dues-collecting organizations that would have kept tallies of their

³¹ “Anarchy’s Dingy Stronghold,” *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1893.

³² Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 4. According to Zimmer, anarchism was also the most significant radical ideology among non-Jewish Russian immigrants and Asian immigrants until the 1920s, and among Spanish, Mexican, and Italian immigrants until the mid-1930s.

members.³³ Historian Kenyon Zimmer suggests that subscriptions to anarchist newspapers are the best way to gauge the size of the movement. There were about 2,500 subscribers to American Yiddish anarchist periodicals in 1893 at the time of the reporter's trip and a little over 50,000 subscribers to anarchist papers in all languages. Those numbers spiked in the following few years. At the height of the Jewish anarchist movement in 1914 there were about 30,000 subscribers to Yiddish anarchist periodicals (about 2% of the Jewish population of the United States).³⁴ Saul Yanovsky, the long-time editor of the most important Yiddish newspaper *Di Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (The Free Voice of Labor), claimed that the number was closer to 50,000.³⁵ The overall peak in anarchist publications in all languages in the United States was in 1910 with almost 120,000 subscribers.³⁶ The number of subscribers is only a suggestion of the members of the movement itself. People may have borrowed papers from others, or had they might have had more literate people read papers to them. When the Yiddish reporter Samuel Margoshes gave a statistical analysis of the New York Yiddish press in 1919 he stated confidently that he could triple the number of subscribers to find the size of the full readership "[k]nowing as we do that every paper bought is read by at least three people including the buyer..."³⁷ People who did not necessarily identify as anarchists may have subscribed to the paper as well. Whether we accept Zimmer or Yanovsky's estimation, it is clear that the Yiddish anarchist press had the largest circulation of any

³³ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 4.

³⁴ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 3-6. By comparison the Italian anarchist press peaked in 1915-16 and again in 1928-29 at around 20,000 subscribers, about 1% of the Italian population of the United States. Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 19.

³⁵ A reporter, Israel Shenker, optimistically estimated a circulation of 150,000, and a secretary for the paper, Bernard Fleaser, in the 1970s claimed it had peaked at 20,000 in 1912. Israel Shenker, "Anarchy's the Rule as Anarchists Gather for a Banquet in New York," *New York Times*, Jun. 5, 1977. Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 5; Bernard Fleaser to Comrade Souchy, Oct. 14, 1970, Freie Arbeiter Stimme Collection, 1946-77, YIVO Archive, Center for Jewish History, New York City, New York.

³⁶ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 1, 3-6.

³⁷ Margoshes, "The Jewish Press in New York City," in *The Jewish Communal Register of New York City, 1917-1918* (New York City: Kehillah of New York City, 1918), 613.

immigrant anarchist press in the United States, and for many years made up the largest anarchist group there.³⁸

The *New York Times* reporter left the anarchist rally unworried. These Jews were all talk it seemed. Even if they did act on their voracious calls to violence, Berkman had already proven how incompetent they were in this regard. The reporter described his adventure in an article published in the *New York Times* on August 22nd entitled “Anarchy’s Dingy Stronghold: Much Beer, Much Talk, but No Signs of Violence.” He concluded that he “[felt] comfortable in the conviction that, after all, there may be worse and more dangerous things than a Social revolution conducted by Polak peddlers and their kind....” The Hebrew anarchists downtown were no real threat.³⁹

It only took him one day to change his mind.

The same day the reporter’s article was published he returned to the East Side, perhaps unsatisfied with his initial observations of these repulsive but intriguing lunatics. He returned to find the same beerhalls—before filled with roaring, drunk anarchists—were now empty. The reporter was confused until he heard a rumor flitting about among the street’s “decayed-watermelon-cast-off-shoe-and-stale-fish bazaars” that Emma Goldman, the infamous anarchist firebrand, had borrowed \$5 from Herr Batt, a saloon owner. This was apparently monumental news on this side of town. The revolution, it seemed, was afoot.⁴⁰

³⁸ The Italian anarchist press had the next largest circulation reaching about 20,000 in 1915-16 and 1928-29. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 6.

³⁹ “Anarchy’s Dingy Stronghold,” *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1893.

⁴⁰ “Anarchists Mild As Lambs,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1893.



Figure 4 - Left: Emma Goldman circa 1890;⁴¹ Right: Emma Goldman's mugshot during her arrest in 1893.⁴²

In 1893 Goldman's long "career of destruction," as the anonymous reporter put it, was just at its beginnings. She had first gained national attention the previous year as the then lover of Alexander Berkman, but her own fame as a fiery orator and writer rapidly eclipsed his. The reporter had seen Emma Goldman, the "Louise Michel of East Broadway...",⁴³ speak briefly at the rally he had attended the first day, but had written her off as more "beerthirsty than bloodthirsty."⁴⁴ Yet, her name was on everyone's lips. The slightest rumor about her had set the Lower East Side ablaze with talk. To find Emma Goldman, the reporter mused, "was to find the very centre of the Social Revolution..." He searched all over the district and asked everyone on his "weary pilgrimage in pursuit of Our Lady of Universal Destruction and her untiring following, the Social Revolutionists," but without luck. He was impressed with the ability of Goldman's cadre to be

⁴¹ "1890 Portrait," *Anarchy Archives at Pitzer College*, http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/goldman/goldmangraphicstable.html (accessed online May 30, 2018).

⁴² "From the Police archives in Philadelphia," *Anarchy Archives at Pitzer College*, http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/goldman/goldmangraphicstable.html (accessed online May 30, 2018).

⁴³ Louise Michel (1830-1905) was a French anarchist and important figure in the Paris Commune of 1871.

⁴⁴ "Anarchy's Dingy Stronghold," *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1893.

seemingly everywhere and nowhere at once: “The mobility of the headquarters of the No-Government-at-all Party of the east side was even more remarkable than that of the administration of the Paris Commune. Wherever one went in search of it one was usually too late on the scent of its garlic-laden and mephitic breath.” The reporter began to think these anarchists were better coordinated than he had previously thought, though his opinion of their hygiene remained low.⁴⁵

As he continued his search he saw more of the intense poverty and despair in the Jewish Quarter:

there was something really pathetic in what may be called the homelessness of these poor, ignorant, unwashed, unkempt, childish semi-savages. The scared and cringing look of a frightened child sat upon all their greasy, sooty faces. At sight of a policeman they huddled together uneasily.... The education conveyed by the whips of Cossack sotnias⁴⁶ in their unpaternal fatherland had, clearly, been well beaten into the poor caitiffs.⁴⁷ The smart of cruel scourgings, continued through centuries had given to them hereditary and congenital traits which came into action at the very mention of the word “police”—that word made hateful, hideous, merciless in its meaning by immemorial floggings.⁴⁸

The long history of persecution against the Jews, their continued poverty, and their chaotic lifestyle seemed to make anarchism a natural tendency for them in the reporter’s eyes. This seemed to instill a little pity for the people he pursued, but also a great deal of fear for what these desperate exiles of a despotic land might accomplish.

⁴⁵ “Anarchists Mild As Lambs,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1893.

⁴⁶ A *sotnya* was a unit of Cossack soldiers in the Russian army.

⁴⁷ A caitiff is a contemptible or cowardly person. It fell in to disuse shortly after the turn of the century.

⁴⁸ “Anarchists Mild As Lambs,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1893.

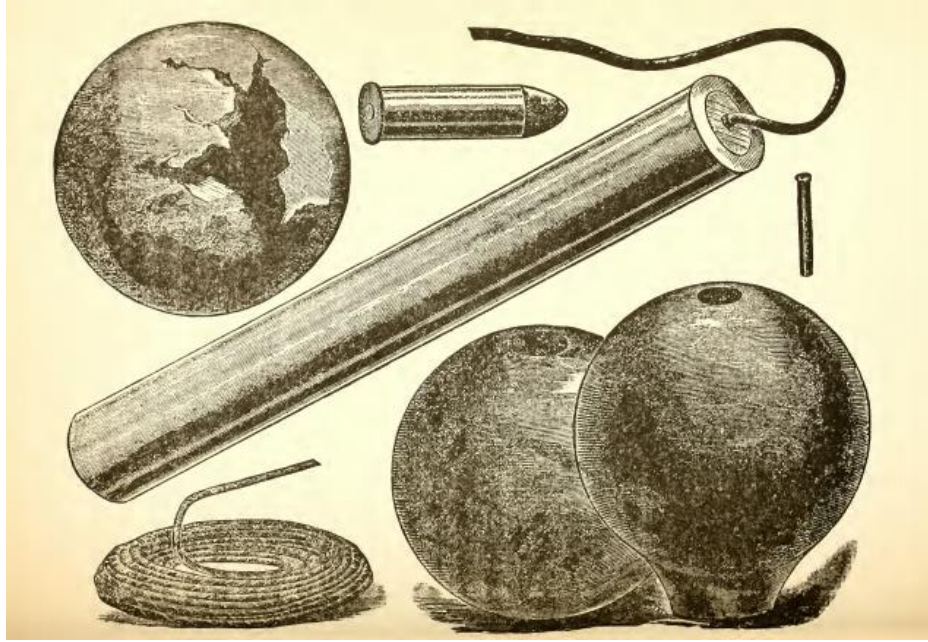


Figure 5 - The tools of an anarchist terrorist.⁴⁹

The reporter published his next article recounting this return to the Lower East Side the next day, on August 23rd. The anarchists of New York were still “Mild as Lambs” the title read, but all that could change.

The boys and callow youths of the Russian-Jewish quarter, weaned on the pestiferous milk of Nihilism and dynamite throwing, long insanely to demolish law and order and the police... Their ideal hero is the man who killed a Czar. Their ideal heroine is the Jewess who killed the Chief of the hated Third Section of the St. Petersburg police. The same craze which fortifies their murderous co-religionists for the gallows at home stirs a kindred impulse to assassinate and be famous in America.⁵⁰

This mass of desperate youths was growing quickly as more and more Jews came to New York City every day, packing into the already overcrowded slum of the East Side. Incendiaries like Emma Goldman, the reporter believed, would be the match to this power-keg: “On these depraved,

⁴⁹ McLean, 139.

⁵⁰ “Anarchists Mild As Lambs,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1893.

diseased, diabolical natures the appalling nonsense of creatures like Goldman falls like alcohol on a kindling flame.” For now, the “blood-curdling utterances of Goldman [make not] a single echo around the corner,” but they were growing louder. He concluded with a sharp warning completely different from his previous article’s conclusion: “Should a bomb ever be thrown in New York—and it may be thrown to-morrow—it will be thrown from an ambushade by one of these internationally-pestiferous young criminals.”⁵¹ In time the reporter’s words would prove prophetic. There was a fire in the ghetto, and it would spread.

Just as the Jewish anarchists eluded this keen reporter on his second trip to the ghetto in 1893, they have largely continued to elude historians since. Much of what we know of Jewish anarchism comes from the useful but somewhat biased history of American Jewish socialism from the 1940s and 1950s written mostly by socialists themselves who had been active in the labor movement and never quite forgave the anarchists for opposing them.⁵² To date, the only monograph on Jewish anarchism in America is Kenyon Zimmer’s invaluable *Immigrants Against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (2015). A few other articles and books deal with some particular aspects or individual Jewish anarchists, but Zimmer’s is the only comprehensive history of the movement.⁵³ He provides a wealth of information on Jewish

⁵¹ “Anarchists Mild As Lambs,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1893.

⁵² Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 120.

⁵³ The few other works specifically dedicated to Jewish anarchism include: Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*; Kelly Johnson, *Sholem Schwarzbard: Biography of a Jewish Assassin*; Mina Grauer, “Anarcho-Nationalism: Anarchist Attitudes towards Jewish Nationalism and Zionism,” *Modern Judaism* 14, no. 1 (1994): 1-19; Paul Knepper, “The Other Invisible Hand: Jews and Anarchists in London Before the First World War,” *Jewish History* 22 (2008); and Jose C. Moya, “The Positive Side of Stereotypes: Jewish anarchists in early-twentieth-century Buenos Aires” *Jewish History* 18, no. 1 (2004): 19-48. Some other important works that do not focus on Jewish anarchism but contain important information on it include: Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the U.S.A.: An Industrial, Political and Cultural History of the Jewish Labor Movement* (New York: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee, 1950-53); Paul Avrich, *Russian Anarchists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Laurence Veysey, *The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mystical Communities in Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978); William J. Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals: 1875-1914* (London: Duckworth, 1975); Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York’s Jews, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Jonathan

American anarchism expertly contextualized in the larger history of anarchism in the United States. Yet, much remains unclear about the Jewish anarchists in America in terms of how they fit into the complex spectrum of Jewish politics and culture.

In this thesis I focus on the Yiddish-speaking Jewish anarchists that centered around the weekly Yiddish newspaper the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* and its editor Saul Yanovsky. I find it helpful to see this group as the center of a spectrum of radical politics that was available to American Jews around the turn-of-the-century, one tied to both leftist ideology and radical brands of print culture.⁵⁴ On one extreme were people like the editor of the Socialist Yiddish paper the *Forverts*, Abraham Cahan, who represented a moderate brand of Social Democracy that was willing to adjust socialist ideas to better ingratiate them into Jewish society. The print culture that both enabled and resulted from this integration was the *Forverts*, which was a platform for a popular, working-class Yiddish culture that was entangled with socialist ideology, but certainly not the most dedicated to socialism. On the other extreme were anarchists like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman who were of Jewish origin, but emphatically rejected the idea of a *Jewish* anarchist movement. They maintained a non-ethnic, English-language anarchism, and meshed with radicals of other ethnic backgrounds to a much greater extent than other Jewish radicals. Their print culture was

Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Walter Roth and Joe Kraus, *An Accidental Anarchist* (San Francisco: Rudi Publishing, 1997); and Inna Shtakser, *The Making of Jewish Revolutionaries in the Pale of Settlement: Community and Identity during the Russian Revolution and Its Immediate Aftermath, 1905-07* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014);

⁵³ Which for Fishman meant the promotion and development of Yiddish culture, not the study of Yiddish culture as the term is now more often used.

⁵⁴ These were radical print cultures in that they were newspapers that reported from a radical perspective and that were viewed as the foundational institution of modern, urban Jewish culture. The content was not the only radical aspect of this print culture, to some extent the form was as well. The editors of these papers were experimental, trying to revolutionize how people interacted with newspapers and what kind of things newspapers published. This radical form of the papers was more tied to immigrant papers than it was to leftist papers specifically, and it was something that the English-speaking American press found almost as alarming as the radical ideas of the papers themselves. For a primary example see: "Its Triumph Is In Death: Satanic Journalism Has Had Its Double Sacrifice," *New York Times*, Aug. 26, 1894. For a secondary overview of how immigrant papers differed from non-immigrant papers in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th century see: Park, 69-79.

emblemized by various short-lived but influential monthly journals in English like *Mother Earth* (1906-17) and *The Blast* (1916-17), which were high-brow, literary, and intellectual. As English publications with quite sophisticated writing they appealed mostly to the intellectual elite among American anarchists, and not to the linguistically isolated immigrant working-class that made up the anarchist movement's base. Goldman and Berkman's publications were the complete opposite of Cahan's *Forverts*, which was firmly rooted in urban, Yiddish-speaking Jewry. Thus, the spectrum was on one hand Yiddish, socialist, and moderate, and on the other hand English, anarchist, and extremely radical. Oscillating somewhere between them were the Yiddish anarchists,⁵⁵ centered around Yanovsky and his *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*.

⁵⁵ I make a distinction between "Jewish anarchist" and the subcategory of "Yiddish anarchist" which I explain in the framework chapter below.

פארוערט

Vol. IX. No. 3192

New York & Philadelphia, Wednesday, January 31, 1906

Price One Cent.

עמינירנס נים נאך אמעריקא

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קענען זיין אדער קענען
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דער מיניסטער-קאבינעט אין
פראנצאזישע אדער נאך רעפארמען?

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Figure 6 - Front cover of the Vorwarts on Jan. 31, 1906.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Forverts, Jan. 31, 1906.



10c. A COPY

\$1 A YEAR

MOTHER EARTH

Monthly Magazine Devoted to Social Science and Literature
Published Every 15th of the Month

EMMA GOLDMAN, Publisher, 210 East Thirtieth Street, New York, N. Y.

Entered as second-class matter April 8, 1905, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

Vol. II

MAY, 1907

No. 3

THE SONG OF THE EARTH

By RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Merian, Flint,
Possessed the land which rendered to their toil
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool and wood.
Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,
Saying, "'Tis mine, my children's and my name's.
How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!
How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!
I fancy these pure waters and the flags
Know me, as does my dog: we sympathize;
And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil."

Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds;
And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough.
Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;
Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet
Clear of the grave.
They added ridge to valley, brook to pond,
And sighed for all that bounded their domain;
"This suits me for a pasture; that's my park;
We must have clay, lime, gravel, granite-ledge,
And misty lowland, where to go for peat.
The land is well,—lies fairly to the south.
'Tis good, when you have crossed the sea and back,
To find the sit-fast acres where you left them."

Figure 7 – Left: The cover image on the first issue of *Mother Earth*.⁵⁷ Right: The opening poem on the first page of *Mother Earth*.⁵⁸

Ideologically speaking Yiddish anarchists held similar views to Emma Goldman or to other immigrant anarchist movements in the United States, particularly the Italians, but in terms of how they agitated they were much more similar to Yiddish socialists. Yiddish naturally bound their propaganda, agitation, and labor organizing more to other radicals who also used Yiddish, more than to other anarchists who shared only their political beliefs. The Yiddish anarchist print culture, however, was influenced by both ends of the radical spectrum. The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, which I describe in greater length in the following framework chapter, was in many ways a synthesis of

⁵⁷ Cover photo, *Mother Earth*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Mar. 1906).

⁵⁸ *Mother Earth*, Vol. II, No. 3 (May 1907).

the *Forverts* and *Mother Earth*. As a weekly newspaper it was able to strike a balance between reporting on the news and radical literature, which the other two papers struggled with. It was a Yiddish paper and thus its audience was almost exclusively Jewish, but its editors refused (at least in the early days) to make it an explicitly Jewish paper. On this spectrum it was both an intermediate and an intermediary between either extreme. Though an explicitly anarchist paper, socialists certainly had a presence in it as contributors and readers, and though it was a Yiddish paper, there were many essays and literary pieces from leftist, non-Yiddish sources that were translated into Yiddish. It was an institution where the many sides of Jewish radical discourse both conflicted and colluded.



Figure 8 - Front page of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* on December 12, 1912.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Dec. 12, 1912.

The most important element that defined this spectrum of Jewish radicalism was not disagreement over anarchist vs. socialist ideology but rather internationalism—a radical discourse popular in the late 19th century that foresaw the coming social revolution as facilitated by the dissolution of ethnic and linguistic barriers.⁶⁰ Early on, when Jewish radicalism was just starting to take off in the 1880s, internationalism was a near ubiquitous belief held by leftist Jewish political movements. They downplayed their own Jewishness, preferring to see themselves as radical labor movements devoted to the good of all working-class people everywhere. These internationalists, or as Jewish socialist thinker Chaim Zhitlovsky once referred to them the “anti-Jewish Jewish intelligentsia”,⁶¹ refused to “raise” Jewish culture as nationalist intellectuals of the same era would. If Jewish internationalists used Yiddish, it was a pragmatic choice to reach the Yiddish-speaking masses – their goal was just to use Yiddish, not to uphold Yiddish as *the* language of the Jews. A famous example of this position was the United Hebrew Trades in New York, an influential Jewish union, which famously had signs at its conferences that read, “We are not Jewish, but Yiddish-speaking, socialists.”⁶² Not by chance, the Jews that tended to be most dedicated to internationalism were also the ones with the least ties to Yiddish and the Jewish community. Both Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were from assimilated, middle-class, Russian-speaking families. Neither was raised speaking Yiddish; they both learned it while they were radicalizing in the in the United States because Yiddish was already the lingua franca of Eastern European Jewish radicalism.⁶³ Both were also fluent and literate in German and Russian because of their education, and both learned English relatively quickly (prison offered a good opportunity to do so). They

⁶⁰ Jonathan Frankel, “The Roots of ‘Jewish Socialism’ (1881-1892): From ‘Populism’ to ‘Cosmopolitanism’?” in *Essential Papers on the Jewish Left*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (New York; London: New York University Press, 1997), 58-59.

⁶¹ Chaim Zhitlovsky, “Dr. Hillel Zolotarov and His Nationalistic Anarchism,” in *Geklibene Shriften fun Hillel Zolotarov* Vol. 1, ed. by Joel Enteen (New York City: Dr. H. Solotaroff Publication Committee, 1924), 11.

⁶² Frankel, “Roots,” 59.

⁶³ Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 47-48.

were natural internationalists, while poor Jews who might struggle to read a Yiddish newspaper, let alone one in another language, were not.

Kenyon Zimmer argues that the “internationalism” that Yiddish-speaking anarchists adhered to could be better called “rooted cosmopolitanism,” a term borrowed from David Hollinger. Yiddish anarchists were “cosmopolitans” in that they “embraced human diversity without essentializing nationality or ethnoracial identity,” but “rooted” in that they were bound culturally and linguistically to Yiddish-speaking Jews.⁶⁴ I completely accept the “rooted” nature of the Yiddish anarchist movement, but Zimmer’s description of it as cosmopolitanism strikes me as only accurate for the latter part of the movement’s history. Regarding the relationship between Yiddish-speaking anarchists and internationalism, I assert that there were two distinct phases in the relationship between Yiddish anarchism and greater Jewish society in America, which can be surmised from the existing historiography. In the first phase, from the Haymarket Affair in 1886 to the turn-of-the-century, Yiddish anarchists were staunch advocates of internationalism. They published poetry, literature, and newspapers in Yiddish, but internationalist discourse dictated that this did not mean they were building Jewish culture. Jewish radicalism was still in its infant years, but growing rapidly. The divide then between Yiddish socialists and Yiddish anarchists was still fairly ambiguous and porous. Many socialists supported internationalism early on, and joined anarchists in attacking religion or traditional Jewish authority, but later many of them became more moderate in this regard in the late 1880s and 1890s, leaving anarchism to be the strongest advocate of internationalism among Jews. Despite this disagreement, Yiddish socialists and Yiddish anarchists remained close political movements in this phase. There were also disagreements among Jewish anarchists over what language the movement should be working in (Yiddish or English),

⁶⁴ Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 26-27; David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 84, 3-4.

but this disagreement did not yet have explicit cultural connotations. Both sides of that debate were still internationalists and remained more or less in the same group.

In the second phase, beginning sometime in the first decade of the 19th Century, the situation had changed considerably. Yiddish socialism and anarchism had taken off as significant mass movements with enormous influence among Jews (socialism particularly so) in many American cities like Baltimore, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco. By this time, Yiddish socialists and Yiddish anarchists were criticizing each other harshly and almost daily in their newspapers and in public debates. At the same time, the mainstream of Yiddish anarchism that organized itself around the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* moved farther away from internationalism, much like Yiddish socialists had done the previous decade. Some even went so far as to invent what they called “nationalist anarchism”, which imagined Jews united as a nation with their own territory in a radical, communalist society. Other Jewish anarchists less tied to Yiddish, like Goldman and Berkman, doubled-down on their internationalist beliefs, becoming some of the most important advocates of that radical discourse in the world.⁶⁵ They distanced themselves from Yiddish anarchists who were further isolating themselves in the Jewish community, rather than building ties with other anarchists in America.

Why then did so many Jewish anarchists turn away from internationalism after having been once its strongest advocates on the Jewish political scene? I argue that two events were critical: the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901 by Polish-American anarchist Leon Czolgosz, and the failed Russian Revolution of 1905-07.

⁶⁵ To my knowledge no scholar frames the Jewish anarchist movement in these two phases. I make this claim from gleaning secondary sources that speak of “turning points” and changes to the Jewish anarchist movement, or to Jewish radicalism generally. See: Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 116, 121; Zimmer, “The World Is Our Country,” 31, 78-83, 85, 89, 95, 101-02, 120; Jonathan Frankel, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews*, 59, 67, 71; Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 133, 150; Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 22-23, 62, 123-129, 138-143; Haddasa Kosak, *Cultures of Opposition*, 1-3, 134-35; Sorin, *A Time for Building*, 112, 121; Fishman, 302, Tcherikower, 266.

McKinley's assassination, the subject of chapter one, was a watershed in American history that resulted in a wave of hatred and persecution towards anarchists. The reaction of radicals was diverse. Emma Goldman, who was the one most blamed for fomenting the assassination, railed against every law, arrest, and crackdown made against anarchists with the deliberate intent of turning persecution into propaganda for the movement. Socialists like Abraham Cahan, who were received with surprising warmth in much of the American press as a preferable alternative to anarchists, took the opportunity to propagandize as well, advertising themselves as the exact antithesis of anarchism and its most fierce opponents. Yanovsky and the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* took neither course, instead Yanovsky tried to lay low and escape retaliation from both the government and an incensed Jewish community. I argue that this diversity of Jewish radical responses to the assassination atomized these branches of radicalism to a point they had never been before, opening them up to even more separate paths in the following years.

Then, in January of 1905, the first Russian Revolution broke out – one of the most important events for both radicals and for Jews in that decade. The chaos of the revolution brought horrific violence against Russian Jews in the form of pogroms. This apparent link between the revolution and pogroms presented an acute problem for Jewish anarchists in America as they struggled to reconcile their faith in the revolution with the overwhelming violence against Jews. Their doctrine of internationalism regarded excessive attention to the pogroms or to the Jewish role in the revolution as nationalistic and therefore inadmissible in a radical paper. Yanovsky adamantly refused to cover this at the beginning of the revolution, but the violence of the pogroms was so intense that it could not be ignored, and this eventually broke the internationalist spirit of many anarchists. Some were so moved that they insisted on reinventing anarchism and socialism to be Jewish nationalist movements. Yanovsky and many others rejected such nationalism, but by

the revolution's end the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* had fixated on the Jewish role in the revolution and the plight of Russian Jews in a way that would have previously been unacceptable for an anarchist paper, and Yanovsky and contributors to the paper were forced to engage and debate with Jewish nationalists in a way that they would have simply refused to do so before. This shift acted as a floodgate for the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* and the mainstream of Yiddish anarchists, moving them away from internationalism and toward a more explicitly Jewish phase of their movement.

Framework and Methodology

It is necessary to clarify my specific use of the term *Jewish* anarchist. Largely because of internationalist discourse, which was so embroiled in leftist radicalism, many “Jewish” radicals (not only anarchists) who had been born Jewish, distanced themselves from Jewish identity, if they did not outright criticize it. Many, particularly in the earlier days of radicalism, rejected the idea of a Jewish people.⁶⁶ This was a common position of Jewish radicals in the late-nineteenth century. For instance, the Hebrew Labor Federation—an early Jewish labor group that lasted only one year and was made up of both socialists and anarchists—claimed in a declaration of principles that,

We have no Jewish question in America. The only Jewish question recognized by us is the question of how to keep Jewish questions out of this country; and because only we, Yiddish-speaking citizens, are able to work among Jewish immigrants, only because we speak their language and are acquainted with their lives, solely for that reason are we creating this particular Jewish body. The Yiddish language is our tool; to erase all borderlines between Jew and non-Jew in the world of labor is one of our aims.⁶⁷

Similarly, many prominent “Jewish” anarchists adamantly refused to be labeled as such. Emma Goldman, undoubtedly the most famous anarchist of Jewish origins, identified alternatively as Russian, German, American, or simply as an internationalist. The only time she readily identified as Jewish was when she was being arrested, and notably this was always when she was pretending to be someone else.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 7-8, 15-16.

⁶⁷ H. Burgin, *History of the Jewish Labor Movement*, pg. 167 cited in Epstein, 183.

⁶⁸ Emma Goldman and many others in her close circle were of assimilated Jewish origins. They largely did not know Yiddish, or had learned it when they radicalized. For instance, the anarchist physician and sometimes lover of Emma Goldman, Ben Reitman (called the “hobo doctor”) was born to Russian Jewish immigrants in the U.S. He recalled in an article in *Mother Earth* of the difficulties he had when he visited the Jewish anarchist community in London: “Although myself of Jewish extraction, I rarely manage to get close to Jewish radicals. No doubt it is my fault. I have never been much with Jews until I took up radical lecture work. Somehow I fail to grasp their psychology, and they mine.” He told of his somewhat awkward relationship with Rudolph Rocker, the German non-Jewish anarchist who

I use the label “Jewish anarchist” liberally to include anyone who was of Jewish origin and identified as an anarchist, whether or not they would have accepted the label “Jewish” themselves. But the focus of this thesis is more specifically Jewish anarchists whose main language when engaging in radical discourse was Yiddish, a subcategory of Jewish anarchists I refer to as Yiddish anarchists. Naturally, these are imprecise terms. Though Emma Goldman was a leader in English-language anarchist agitation, she was mostly active in Yiddish-speaking circles in the earlier part of her career. The distinction between “Jewish anarchist” and “Yiddish anarchist” is also an invented one that would not exist in Yiddish sources, because the language has no distinction between “Jewish” and “Yiddish.” But as a general term “Yiddish anarchist” suffices for purpose of this study.⁶⁹

The main reason for Jewish-born anarchists’ resistance to the term “Jewish” was the intense internationalism that was deeply embedded in anarchist ideology. But internationalism was always an aspiration they failed to meet. American anarchists were sharply divided along ethno-linguistic lines in the late 19th and early 20th century. Before the 1940s, the vast majority of anarchists in the U.S. were first and second-generation immigrants.⁷⁰ Anarchism was most attractive to poor, non-English speaking immigrants in urban America. They largely spoke the languages they brought with them, and thus these became the languages anarchists agitated in. One of the foremost scholars of anarchism in America, Paul Avrich, states plainly that “[anarchists’] rejection of nationalism and the nation-state did not entail a denial of nationality as such. —Anarchism, for all its international pretensions, for all its faith in the unity of mankind, has always been divided into

edited the Yiddish anarchist paper *Der Arbayer Fraynd*. Reitman felt so estranged from Jewish radicalism that he even found communication with a non-Jewish radical active in the Jewish anarchist movement arduous. Ben Reitman, “A Visit to London,” *Mother Earth*, Vol 5. 1910.

⁶⁹ Kenyon Zimmer similarly refers to “Yiddish anarchists” and “Yiddish anarchism.” Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 1-13.

⁷⁰ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 2.

national and ethnic groups.”⁷¹ This was undoubtedly true for Yiddish anarchists as well. Anarchism was propagated among American Jews almost entirely in Yiddish. For a brief period in the earliest days of radicalism among Jews in the 1880s, leftist agitation was done in Russian (largely by educated, Russian-speaking Jewish intellectuals), but this made little headway among the almost entirely Yiddish-speaking Jewish working class. It was a breakthrough for Jewish socialists and anarchists in the mid-1880s when they switched to Yiddish and from then on, the mainstream of Jewish socialism and anarchism worked almost entirely in Yiddish. As successful as this linguistic change was, it was also inevitably isolating. As Jewish anarchists increasingly bound themselves to Yiddish, they found communication with other anarchist groups (who were going through their own processes of isolation) more difficult.⁷² “Yiddish became the foundation on which Jewish anarchism was built,” writes Kenyon Zimmer, “but it simultaneously walled off this movement from the world outside the Jewish ghetto.”⁷³

At first, Jewish radicals who used Yiddish saw the language as a pragmatic choice—it was simply the best way to spread radicalism among the Jewish masses. But by using Yiddish, Jewish radicals helped create a powerful, vibrant Jewish culture that, paradoxically, they had first set out to dissolve. Tony Michels, a historian of American Jewish socialism (which in his definition includes anarchism) gives the best explanation of this process:

The early Jewish socialists viewed themselves not as building a new Jewish culture in Yiddish (they denied such a thing was possible) but as preparing the masses to transcend their own

⁷¹ Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 315.

⁷² This isolating way of engaging with politics and culture was not unique to Jewish anarchists, or even Jews. In “Americanization from the Bottom Up,” Historian James Barret argues that this is an essential part of how immigrants radicalized in the U.S., calling it “ethnocultural or segmented class formation.” James Barret, “Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930,” *The Journal of American History* 79, No. 3 (Dec. 1992): 999-1000.

⁷³ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 16.

allegedly parochial culture.... And yet, in their efforts to organize and educate ('enlighten') immigrant Jews, socialists built—in spite of themselves—a distinct Jewish labor movement and a new kind of Yiddish culture that was secular, politically radical, and universalistic. Internationalist in principle but based in a particular minority group, the Jewish labor movement contained a basic contradiction that would never be resolved. The early Jewish socialists created a labor movement they hoped to dissolve eventually and a Yiddish culture they denied could exist. They assumed a dual challenge: to transform both immigrant Jews and American society so that they could dissolve into it on their own terms.⁷⁴

This paradox between creating Yiddish culture while attempting to dissolve it is crucial to understanding the complexity of Jewish radicalism. It was a paradox that was particularly evident among Yiddish anarchists, for they were particularly dedicated to internationalism among radicals, but also well-known for things that were inescapably Jewish, like publishing Yiddish literature and staging Yiddish plays. Even the first Yiddish dictionary was published by the Yiddish anarchist Alexander Harkavy.⁷⁵ They were at the center of the modern, secular Yiddish cultural renaissance in New York, but refused to acknowledge that was the case. Thus, the transition between 1901-1906 that I investigate in this thesis was in part a turn of Yiddish anarchists away from internationalism, and in part simply a realization that they had never been good internationalists.

⁷⁴ Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 22-23. Zimmer makes the same argument referring specifically to Jewish anarchists in the U.S.: "Anarchists who opposed nationalism paradoxically helped foster an insular Jewish culture, illustrating the difficulties inherent in navigating a 'rooted cosmopolitanism' that simultaneously exalted Jewish identity and professed a radical cultural pluralism." Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 16.

⁷⁵ Harkavy's politics were a little difficult to pin down. Though he nominally identified as an anarchist, this may be too strong a label for him. He was a member of Am-Oylam (Eternal People), a Russian Jewish radical group in the 1880s that wanted to build communalist colonies in the United States. The group's exact politics were also non-specific, but many of its members went on to be influential Yiddish anarchists. He later joined the Yiddish anarchist group the Pioneers of Freedom. Kenyon Zimmer writes that Harkavy "was a Jewish nationalist and proto-Zionist, a freethinking anarchist and internationalist, a proponent of Yiddish, and an advocate of Americanization—all at the same time." Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 79.

Where I differ from Michels is in dealing with the spectrum of radical Jewish political movements. He defines socialism as broadly including “Marxian social democrats, anarchists, communists, and so on.”⁷⁶ For Michels, all these strains of radical thought participated in the same building-up of Yiddish culture together. Certainly there was much overlap between these movements, and in terms of culture any dividing lines would have been even more unclear. The political makeup of Jewish radicals in America in the late 19th century was described by one participant as an “Ethical-Anarchist-Positivist Stew” of many ill-defined types of radicals.⁷⁷ Another Jewish radical, J. Kopeloff, said of those early days: “Socialism, communism, collectivism, positivism, anarchism, state-socialism and terrorism—in almost everybody’s mind was a potpourri of a little of each of these.”⁷⁸ Given this “stew” or “potpourri” of Jewish radicalism Michel’s broad terming of all Jewish radicals as “socialists” is quite logical, but I argue that more granular studies are needed to understand how these different types of Jewish radicals may have participated in that cultural movement differently. Though socialism and anarchism often had an ambiguous and porous relationship, this was less true of the institutions that enabled their cultural uplifting. Newspapers were the site where much of the Yiddish literary world reached much of its audience, and where basically all other forms of culture were organized and discussed. Their editors had fierce disputes among themselves and significant disagreements about the nature of Jewish culture, Yiddish, and the existence of a Jewish people. Though Jewish socialism and anarchism shared many experiences, this study shows that at the very least their shift away from internationalism came at different times and for different reasons.

⁷⁶ Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 20.

⁷⁷ Epstein, 137. Historian Gerald Sorin described the period in almost the exact same language: “The majority of the intellectuals, whether experienced revolutionaries or not, embraced socialism and anarchism and combinations of the two. Some moved back and forth in their ideologies or cooked up an eclectic stew of European ideas strongly flavored with ethical and moral ingredients.” Sorin, 110.

⁷⁸ Epstein, 137.

The meaning of anarchism also needs to be thoroughly dissected. Scholars have given many different definitions of anarchism that conflict over the fundamentals of the movement, when it began and ended (if it ended), and who its key theorists were. Recent scholars of anarchism have been more or less divided into two camps: one that seeks a more refined, coherent definition of anarchism that is distinct from the fog of diverse political ideologies that have claimed to be part of anarchism (for instance, anarcho-capitalism). The other camp aims for a more heterogeneous definition of anarchism that is diachronic, pays credence to the complex cultural and social elements tied to anarchism, and resists the sole focus on “canonical” anarchist thinkers. The former camp, represented by the work of scholars like Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, is perhaps most suited to those who want to revive anarchist theory and purge it of the paradoxical branches of thought that have sometimes been categorized as “anarchist” to make anarchism more understandable and usable by people today.⁷⁹ The second camp, best represented by Matthew Adams and Nathan Jun, appeals to historians who wish to properly historicize anarchism and understand it as it was understood in the period of analysis.⁸⁰ Though I respect the utility of the former, I firmly side with the latter.

I define the anarchist movement as a constellation of many shifting and ill-defined radical groups comprised of individuals from a wide spectrum of political and ideological affiliations who espoused freedom from oppression, workers’ solidarity, anti-capitalism, abstained from conventional forms of politics (like voting or seeking election),⁸¹ and rejected the legitimacy and

⁷⁹ Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009).

⁸⁰ Matthew S. Adams and Nathan J. Jun, “Political Theory and History: The Case of Anarchism,” *Journal Of Political Ideologies* 20, no. 3 (2015): 244-262.

⁸¹ This rejection of typical methods of political engagement is perhaps what made the anarchist movement most unique. Julian Casanova argues that anarchist antipolicism was the “authentic trade mark of the movement—the feature that was responsible for its break with a series of travelling companions, from federalists to socialists, as well as republicans.” Julian Casanova, “Terror and Violence: The Dark Face of Spanish Anarchism,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 67 (Spring 2005), 80-81.

usefulness of the state. On all other matters anarchists disagreed. Factions within the anarchist movement either promoted or disapproved of communalism, violence, nationalism, and religion.⁸²

In their 2015 essay “Political Theory and History: The Case of Anarchism”—a call for scholars “to scrutinize the nuances and ambiguities of [anarchism’s] past”—Adams and Jun outline three useful principles for analyzing anarchism. First, they incorporate the work of Michael Freeden, who argues that political ideologies like anarchism “should not be viewed as fixed, invariable ‘belief systems’ so much as languages whose core concepts evolve and change over time.”⁸³ I incorporate this diachronic perspective by following how Yiddish anarchists turned away from internationalism, one of anarchism’s early core concepts, and how they attempted to justify that shift. Simultaneously, it is important to note that the term “anarchist” itself was in constant flux due to forces from in and outside of the Jewish radical sphere. Though polemical figures like Marx and Bakunin stressed how at odds socialism and anarchism were, a closer look shows this often was not true. In the late-19th century many radicals used labels like “socialist,” “communist,” “communalist,” “nihilist,” “freethinker,” and “anarchist” fairly interchangeably.⁸⁴ For instance, the first formally anarchist political group in the U.S., formed in 1881, was called the “Revolutionary Socialistic Party.”⁸⁵ These were groups and ideologies in constant flux, which

⁸² Tom Goyens makes a similar claim about German American anarchists in particular: “The German anarchist movement in greater New York—small as it was—did not constitute an ideologically homogenous community. The movement was an amalgam of revolutionaries united in their opposition to the state, church, and the moneyed class but otherwise in disagreement over methods of action and a vision of how an anarchist society should function. Anarchist convictions were constantly subjected to new ideas and cannot be studied, let alone judged, as a monolithic doctrine, as some contemporary and modern observers have done. Ideological divisiveness was an illustration not only of anarchism’s versatility but also of the transatlantic character of the movement during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.” Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 125.

⁸³ Adams and Jun, 246

⁸⁴ Schmidt and van der Walt, *Black Flame*, 46-47.

⁸⁵ Tcherikover, 89. Two years later at the party’s convention it changed its name to the “International Working People’s Association” or Anarchist International.

oscillated closer to and away from each other, and differed widely across the many regions of the world to which they spread. The terminology used to describe them is naturally imprecise.

Throughout this thesis I try to avoid making generalizations about Jewish anarchism as a whole because of the fluid boundaries anarchism had with other strands of radical thought, and by acknowledging the diversity of opinion within the Jewish anarchist movement. Some generalizations do have to be made, despite their imprecision, in order to gauge how Jewish anarchists grappled with a discourse as vague but encompassing as internationalism. The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, which I describe in more detail shortly, offers an approximation of what I refer to as the “mainstream” of Yiddish-speaking anarchists. Its importance to the Jewish anarchists and its ability to reflect (however imperfectly) the opinions of its readers lets us observe how belief in a discourse like internationalism changed diachronically.

Adams and Jun also argue that anarchism should not merely be seen as a political theory, but more broadly as a “complex and dynamic social, political and cultural movement.”⁸⁶ Anarchists organized choirs, dances, picnics, drinking clubs, theaters, literary societies and more. For anarchists these activities were both cultural and political. Anarchism emphasized more than other leftist political ideologies that social revolution was a transition that needed to take place on all levels of life, including culture. One did not just *practice* anarchism, one had to *live* anarchism. Because American anarchists often eschewed conventional forms of political activism and because by the mid-1890s many (though not all) anarchists also eschewed violence there was no pressing reason to join forces with other anarchist movements because there was little need for greater numbers.⁸⁷ Labor activism was the only place greater numbers were needed and in that arena socialists were rapidly overtaking anarchists anyways. Without militant or political goals

⁸⁶ Adams and Jun, 245.

⁸⁷ Goyens, 132.

American anarchists turned to cultural institutions like theater and literature, which because of their linguistic isolation further excluded other ethnicities. American Yiddish anarchism became a way of life rather than just a political creed built on anarchist principles and ethnic particularities. This shift helps explain why the turn away of a fairly abstract concept like internationalism was an important transition for many Jewish radicals. As culture was not separate from politics, the movement's recognition of its unavoidable Jewishness entailed a different world-view that was also itself Jewish.

Finally, Adams and Jun also call for an end to the “canonical approach” of many scholars to anarchism that renders it inaccurately “as a single, uniform system of political thought knitted together piecemeal from the writers of a handful of ‘canonical’ anarchist writers from the 19th century—most notably Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin.” This overly narrow perspective “fails to take into account the broader social, political and cultural history of the anarchist movement and, by extension, the wide variety of sources, printed or otherwise, through which anarchist ideas were developed and disseminated.”⁸⁸ I share this criticism of scholarship on anarchism and attempt to avoid the “canonical approach” by contextualizing how the major thinkers important to the Jewish anarchist movement were understood by and how they interacted with the “everyday” members of the movement. Newspapers offer the best route to do this by giving us a glimpse of the relationship between the intellectual elites of the movement and the workers who made up the vast majority of the movement's membership. As it happens, the unique format of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* facilitated dialogue between the movement's leaders and its everyday members. It is to this feature of the newspaper and the greater context of Yiddish newspapers at the turn-of-the-century to which I now turn.

⁸⁸ Adams and Jun, 245.

The Yiddish Press and the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* as a Dialogic Newspaper

In 1922, Robert Park (later a founding figure of American sociology) published what would be one of his lesser known books: *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*.⁸⁹ It was a remarkably ambitious study for its time with massive amounts of both statistical information and cultural analysis on seemingly every linguistic branch of the American immigrant press.⁹⁰ “In America, above all, the immigrants organize,” Park explained, and “practically every immigrant organization publishes some sort of paper.”⁹¹ While Park nominally aspired to an even-handed scientific perspective, he could not help but be fascinated with one immigrant press over all others: the Yiddish press.⁹²

In the Yiddish press the foreign-language newspaper may be said to have achieved form. All the tendencies and all the motives, which other divisions of the immigrant press exhibit imperfectly, are here outstanding; and manifest. No other press has attained so complete a simplification of the racial language, nor created so large a reading public. No other foreign-language press has succeeded in reflecting so much of the intimate life of the people which it represents, or reacted so powerfully upon the opinion, thought, and aspiration of the public for which it exists.⁹³

The Yiddish press was indeed then a monumentally successful institution. Between 1872 and 1917 there were around 150 Yiddish periodicals published in New York alone.⁹⁴ In the rest of New

⁸⁹ Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922).

⁹⁰ In New York City alone Park lists these groups as having their own newspapers: “Albanians, Armenians, Bulgarians, Chinese, Czechs, Croatians, Danes, Finns, French, Germans, Greeks, Italians, Japanese, Jews, Levantine Jews, Letts, Lithuanians, Magyars, Persians, Poles, Portuguese, Rumanians, Russians, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenians, Spanish, the Swabians of Germany, the Swedes, Swiss, [and] Syrians...” Park, 7.

⁹¹ Park, 10.

⁹² Park’s clear bias towards the Yiddish press might be explained if he was himself Jewish, but I have not found any conclusive evidence of his ethnicity nor does he ever admit such a connection to the Yiddish press.

⁹³ Park, 89.

⁹⁴ S. Margoshes, 600.

York's history before 1917 there was only a handful of English papers, four Ladino papers, around twenty Hebrew papers, and five German papers.⁹⁵ In 1917 the circulation of daily Yiddish papers printed in New York city was around 411,000 (down from over half a million the previous year). That year New York Jews spent an estimated \$2.1 million just buying the daily Yiddish papers.⁹⁶

One explanation Park offered for the disproportionate success of Yiddish papers was the compact nature of Jewish settlement in the United States compared to other immigrant groups. Eastern European Jews overwhelmingly moved to cities, and mostly remained in incredibly densely populated neighborhoods like the Lower East Side, so the distribution of newspapers was fairly easy.⁹⁷ The sociological makeup of the Jewish immigrant community was also more diverse than other immigrant groups according to Park. Jews, unlike other immigrants, came from all classes including the intelligentsia. "Other language groups have to create their intellectuals from the second generation of peasant parents," Park explained. "Other language groups bring to this country the cultures of peasant peoples. The Jew brings with him a civilization."⁹⁸ The more diverse make-up of the Jewish immigrant community meant, in theory, that Yiddish-speaking Jews of all socioeconomic backgrounds participated in the same public culture of Yiddish newspapers, which was made more vibrant and healthy by that heterogenous readership.

⁹⁵ Margoshes, 596-600, 611.

⁹⁶ Margoshes, 614.

⁹⁷ Park, 90.

⁹⁸ Park, 92-93.



Figure 9 - Sketch of a paper boy selling Yiddish newspapers.⁹⁹

It was in America that Yiddish had first taken off as a written language (earlier Yiddish papers in Eastern Europe, though significant, had been very short-lived).¹⁰⁰ As the first experience many Yiddish-speaking Jews had with mass media, it was often said that the Yiddish press created its readers. Samuel Margoshes wrote that, “the Yiddish papers taught the Eastern European Jew in America to read newspapers by coming out every day for his special benefit.”¹⁰¹ Rather than simply reporting the news, “the Yiddish paper must also be a literary journal, printing short stories, novels, articles on popular science, theology and politics.”¹⁰² Yiddish literature, which had struggled in Eastern Europe for several decades, finally flourished in America, as authors had their work printed serially in the press.¹⁰³ Yiddish literature “was born and bred in the daily and weekly

⁹⁹ Hutchins Hapgood. *Spirit of the Ghetto: Studies of the Jewish Quarter in New York* (New York; London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1902), 186.

¹⁰⁰ Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 3-7.

¹⁰¹ Margoshes, 612.

¹⁰² Margoshes, 612.

¹⁰³ Joel Enteen, a Yiddish translator and veteran of the Marxist-Zionist group Poale Zion declared unambiguously in 1918 that “first of all it was America, i.e., the American Yiddish press that led some of the greatest Yiddish writers forth into the world. Some twenty-five years ago, there being no Yiddish press in Russia and hardly any publishers of

press,” Yiddish translator Joel Enteen claimed, “with the cheap dime-novel for its crib-fellow and the loudly palpitating daily article for its godfather.”¹⁰⁴ Few readers of the Yiddish papers had read any other journal since coming to America, he added. “The Yiddish newspaper, therefore, is their only education and their chief educative influence.... No other press in the world exercises such a monopoly on the mental content of its readers.”¹⁰⁵ American Yiddish papers brought an “intellectual awakening” to the Jews, Park claimed, one on par with the *Haskalah* (the Jewish Enlightenment).¹⁰⁶



Figure 10 - Sketches of Yiddish newspaper offices.¹⁰⁷

The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* was the main newspaper of the Yiddish-speaking anarchists in the United States, and an influential institution in the Yiddish press for decades. Founded in 1890, it continued (albeit with a break between the years 1893 and 1900) until 1977.¹⁰⁸ At the time of its

sterling Yiddish literature, Peretz was still brooding in obscurity. But then he began to write for the *Arbeiter Zeitung* and the *Zukunft*, published by the New York Socialists. It was here that many of his best sketches and symbolic tales first saw the light. We may say, without vanity, that we Americans discovered Peretz for Russia.” Joel Enteen, “Yiddish Literature (in the Old World and New)” in *Jewish Communal Register*, 592.

¹⁰⁴ Enteen, 594.

¹⁰⁵ Margoshes, 612.

¹⁰⁶ Park, 33, 38.

¹⁰⁷ Hapgood, 183, 190.

¹⁰⁸ It went through a series of editors in its first issues, but eventually landed on David Edelstadt, one of the Yiddish “Sweatshop Poets” and a staunch anarchist. The paper had moderate success, circulating about 2,000-4,000 copies a week. The paper did not last long, however, as Edelstadt died at the age of 26 in 1892 due to tuberculosis and an economic downturn in the United States crushed the paper’s finances in 1893. It folded the next year. Zimmer, *Immigrants*, 23,30.

final closure it was the oldest Yiddish paper in the world and the oldest anarchist periodical in any language. No other anarchist Yiddish paper in the United States lasted more than five years.¹⁰⁹ The Jewish anarchists were most famous for their anti-religious activities, particularly their Yom Kippur balls, in which raucous singing and dancing to revolutionary songs were accompanied by fiery speeches from particularly atheistic anarchists like Johann Most and Emma Goldman.¹¹⁰ Anarchists also wrote revolutionary Yiddish theater, poetry, and literature.¹¹¹ But the institution at the core of the Yiddish anarchist movement that facilitated all these other elements was the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. It was not only the organ the anarchists used to organize and propagandize, it was also a place where they heatedly debated the meaning of anarchism and its future. The paper was highly dialogic, with large sections of each edition dedicated to discussions between the editor, writers, and readers of the paper. Unlike some other leftist movements, there was no “party line” in anarchism for the paper to promote. Rather, the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* promoted argument itself as the ideological core of the movement.

The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* was a weekly paper, usually six pages long, with a minuscule print that filled the paper from edge to edge with barely any wasted space. Money was never plentiful so corners had to be cut everywhere. Pictures were exceptionally rare, as were large, eye-catching headlines. The paper most often reported on strikes, labor rallies, political upheaval abroad, events in New York City, and American politics, but only the cover page typically dealt with that sort of “news”. The rest of the paper mostly consisted of essays and books from anarchist theorists or other radicals published serially, Yanovsky’s quite lengthy opinion column “On the

¹⁰⁹ Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 5.

¹¹⁰ The first Yom Kippur ball was held in London in 1888 and the practice quickly spread to the United States the following year. They became a hallmark of the Jewish anarchists there, particularly in New York City. The very first ball attracted 2,000 party-goers, about 1% of the Jewish population of the city at the time. In similarly militant atheist style the Pioneers of Liberty published satirical prayer books for Jewish holidays. Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 72-3; Tcheriower, 253.

¹¹¹ Park, 100; Epstein, 207; Hapgood, 190-94.

Watch”, Yiddish poetry (mostly in the style of the so-called “Sweatshop Poets”¹¹²), realist sketches, scenes from plays, letters to the editors, and a wealth of advertisements. The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* was particularly international in the range of its contributors and scope of topics. Some of its more famous contributors included Peter Kropotkin, H. Leivick, Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Alexander Harkavy, Maxim Gorky, George Bernard Shaw, and Jean Grave.



Figure 11 – A notice in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* for a weavers’ strike at Madison Square Garden in New York City, organized by the I.W.W. in 1913.¹¹³

The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* dedicated a large section of the paper to write-in segments. One segment was letters to the editor, where readers could voice their opinion on debates going on in the movement. Usually these letters were written in response to the essays published serially in the

¹¹² The Sweatshop Poets were a group of poets active in New York City in the late 19th century and into the 20th. The most notable were Morris Rosenfeld (1862-1923), Morris Winchevsky (1856-1932), Joseph Bovshover (1873-1915), and David Edelshtat (1866-1962). They were the first “school” of Yiddish poetry anywhere in the world and all were of a socialist and/or anarchist milieu. Their poetry dealt with the terrible working-conditions of many Jews in New York City and was widely popular among Jewish radicals of their day.

¹¹³ *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jun. 7, 1913.

paper or even in response to other responses. Another write-in section was the “Briefkasten,” a sort of catch-all section of the paper where readers could address questions to the paper’s staff and have them publicly answered and, more infamously, where Yanovsky would publish scathing rejections of articles and poetry submitted to the paper.¹¹⁴ Yanovsky also usually debated whatever controversy the paper was currently going in his weekly column, and often directly responded to letters to the editor and essays that had been published recently. All told, easily half of a single issue of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* could be dedicated to direct discussion between Yanovsky, the theorists of the anarchist movement, and its everyday members. Park observed that in “propagandist papers,” like the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, editorials and the debates they inspired in the journal were more important than the actual news itself.¹¹⁵

Since he was brought from London in 1900 to rebuild the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Yanovsky had been the paper’s main architect. He was born in 1864 in Pinsk (modern-day Belarus) as the son of a cantor and *shokhet* (ritual butcher) and was given both a religious and modest secular education. He moved to New York City in 1885 and became an anarchist the following year after the Haymarket Affair. He became known as a polemicist and speaker over the next few years while working for the short-lived Yiddish anarchist paper *Di Varhayt* (The Truth) and was invited to London in 1890 to become editor of the struggling *Arbayter Fraynd*. After cutting his teeth as an editor in London, he was again brought back to New York a few years later to resurrect the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. In addition to being renowned as a publisher of Yiddish fiction and poetry, he was an accomplished Yiddish translator. He translated works from Mikhail Bakunin, Henrik Ibsen,

¹¹⁴ Some other Yiddish papers had “Briefkasten” (Letter-Box) columns, notably *Der Tog* and *Forverts*, but were not as institutionalized or as well-known as the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*’s.

¹¹⁵ Park, 331-332.

Victor Hugo, Leo Tolstoy, and Pytor Kropotkin among many others.¹¹⁶ Though not a particularly gifted theorist, he was an expert propagandist. His articles were fiery and rabble-rousing, but were also written in a fairly readable Yiddish, a rarity among the heavily *Daytshmerish* (Germanized) Yiddish newspapers of his day.¹¹⁷ Another Jewish anarchist, Joseph Cohen, wrote that Yanovsky “singlehandedly had to do all of the hard physical labor that the newspaper required. He was editor, manager, bookkeeper, errand boy and peddler (*pakn-treger*) all in one.”¹¹⁸ The left-leaning reporter Hutchins Hapgood wrote in his book on the Lower East Side *Spirit of the Ghetto* (1902) that though the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* had a circulation of around 7,000, Yanovsky was its only paid employee. Hapgood was fascinated with the Jewish anarchists and socialists of New York, and Yanovsky stood out to him as a unique figure. Where other Jewish anarchists, like the editors of the Yiddish monthly the *Freie Gesellschaft*, were generally “philosophical” and “pacific”, Yanovsky was a fierce agitator and fully dedicated to the more popular strategy of weekly papers.¹¹⁹ The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* grew quickly under Yanovsky’s editorship. Within the first year of its republication its circulation reached 8,000, and by 1910 it had was between 15,000-20,000, a third the size of the *Forverts*.¹²⁰ By 1914 it had a peak circulation of 30,000, making it the most successful anarchist newspaper ever printed in the United States.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Borekh Tshubinksi, “Shoyel-Yoysef Yanovski (Saul Joseph Janovsky),” *Yiddish Leksikon*.

<http://yleksikon.blogspot.com/2016/11/shoyel-yoysef-yanovski-saul-joseph.html>

¹¹⁷ Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 63.

¹¹⁸ Joseph J. Cohen, *Di Yidishe-anarkhistishe bavegung*, 167-68, quoted in Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 64.

¹¹⁹ Hapgood, 190-194.

¹²⁰ Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 65.

¹²¹ Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 66.

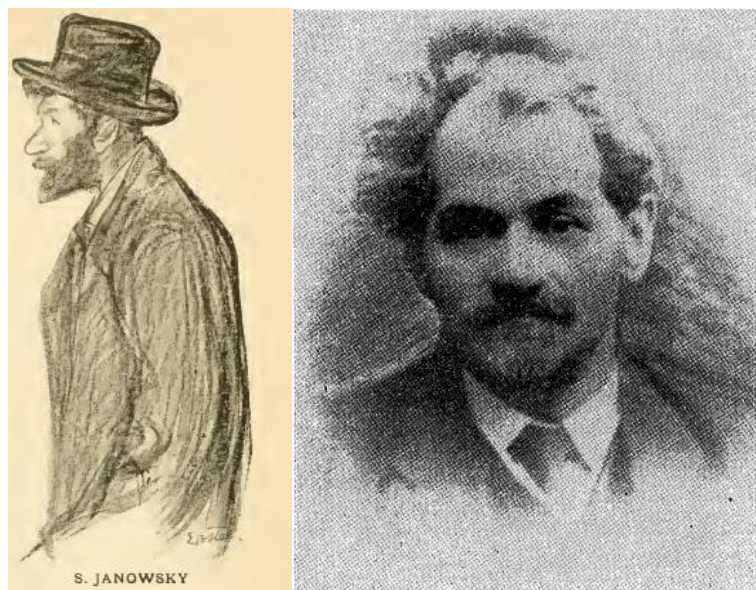


Figure 12 – Left: A sketch of Saul Yanovsky from 1902.¹²² Right: A portrait of Yanovsky in Abba Gordin's biography of him published in 1957.¹²³

By examining the coverage and essays published in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* in context of what its readers thought about both, we can better infer the opinions of the Jewish anarchist movement more broadly. Of course, the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* is not a perfect representation of its readers. Saul Yanovsky was known for his authoritarian style of running the paper (Emma Goldman once derogatorily referred to him as the “Jewish Pope”¹²⁴) and the paper was known for its fierce dedication to intellectualism, which made it famous as a publisher of Yiddish literature, but perhaps also alienated some of its readers.

Yet, the paper can still tell us much about the movement it was attached to. The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* went above and beyond being the basis of an Andersonian “imagined community” – in which individuals of common origin identified with one another as a distinct group through

¹²² Hapgood, 193.

¹²³ Abba Gordin, *S. Yanovsky: Zayn Lebn, Kemfn un Shafn (1864-1939)* (Los Angeles: S. Yanovsky Memorial-Committee, 1957), 1.

¹²⁴ Correspondence from Emma Goldman to unnamed “Comrade”, Apr. 9, 1929, ARCH00520, Folder 64, Emma Goldman Papers, *International Institute of Social History*, Amsterdam, Netherlands. Online.

the communal reading of a paper,¹²⁵ because Yiddish papers were exceptionally important for Eastern European Jews and newspapers exceptionally important for anarchists. Throughout this thesis, I attempt to contextualize the events and debates that the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* published on through these write-in sections. Though the paper was not a perfect mirror of its readers' opinions, I propose that analyzing it in this way lets us follow the opinions of the Yiddish anarchist movement more broadly.

This methodology builds on long established ones in Jewish historiography. In his seminal book *Prophecy and Politics* (1981) historian Jonathan Frankel proposed that the political party had become the central organizing element of modern Jewish society, as religious authority and tradition lost control over Jews in the wake of modernity.¹²⁶ Scott Ury has since expanded on this, arguing that modern Jewish political movements provided “discourses of order” for Jews to negotiate urban life and the transformation of traditional Jewish society.¹²⁷ The Yiddish newspaper, Ury argues, was the most important institution in this new “discourse of order” that political movements provided, which “laid the foundations for the construction of a specifically Jewish public sphere.”¹²⁸ This particular importance of newspapers for Jews was accented in the case of Jewish anarchists by the particular importance of newspapers to anarchist organization. Kenyon Zimmer argues that anarchists' affiliation with the movement “often rested on attachments to specific periodicals rather than formal organizations.”¹²⁹ Because anarchists did not have the structural benefit of a political party their newspapers played a much more crucial role in organizing the movement and Jewish anarchist society than a socialist party would have. Thus,

¹²⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006 [1983]), 35.

¹²⁶ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 168-69. I would like to thank Israel Bartal for this point.

¹²⁷ Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 4.

¹²⁸ Ury, 163-64.

¹²⁹ Zimmer, *Immigrants*, 4.

newspapers served as the primary “discourse of order” for Jewish anarchists in a double sense, as the main way they publicly negotiated both their particularly brands of Jewishness and of anarchism.

In summary, this thesis investigates the Yiddish anarchist movement in New York City in a period of critical transition between 1901-1906 by following its central institution, the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. The double importance of newspapers for anarchists and Yiddish newspapers to Eastern European Jews made the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* incredibly influential among Yiddish anarchists in New York. Though the paper’s editor Yanovsky had the most sway over the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*’s politics, the highly conversational format of the paper makes it possible to see the diversity of thought among Yiddish anarchists more broadly.

I argue that the Yiddish anarchist movement’s transition made in 1901-1906 was primarily a turn away from internationalism—a change other Jewish political movements had gone through or were still going through at that time. Leaving behind internationalism meant reconceiving the nature of their movement as one that was intrinsically Jewish. Yiddish anarchists had already been at the heart of an intense conflict among American Jews for decades over the future of the Jewish community, agitating against capitalism, religion, tradition, or insufficiently radical socialists. It was a conflict waged by rabbis, atheists, factory owners, sweatshop workers, police, criminals, socialists, anarchists, and all other types of Jews in the noisy, overflowing, and erupting Lower East Side. It was a war of words, shouted by soap-box speakers, inscribed by poets, and fought on newspaper pages. Initially, Yiddish anarchists largely saw this struggle as a preparation for a social revolution among Jews, but after turning away internationalism, they came to see it as a conflict of different ideas of Jewishness: one radical, one reactionary. It ceased to be simply a struggle among Jews and became one fought by Jews, against Jews, in Yiddish, on the Jewish street. In

short, by turning away from internationalism the came to no longer worked toward revolution, but toward a Jewish revolution.

Chapter One

“She Set Me On Fire”: Jewish Anarchists and the McKinley Assassination

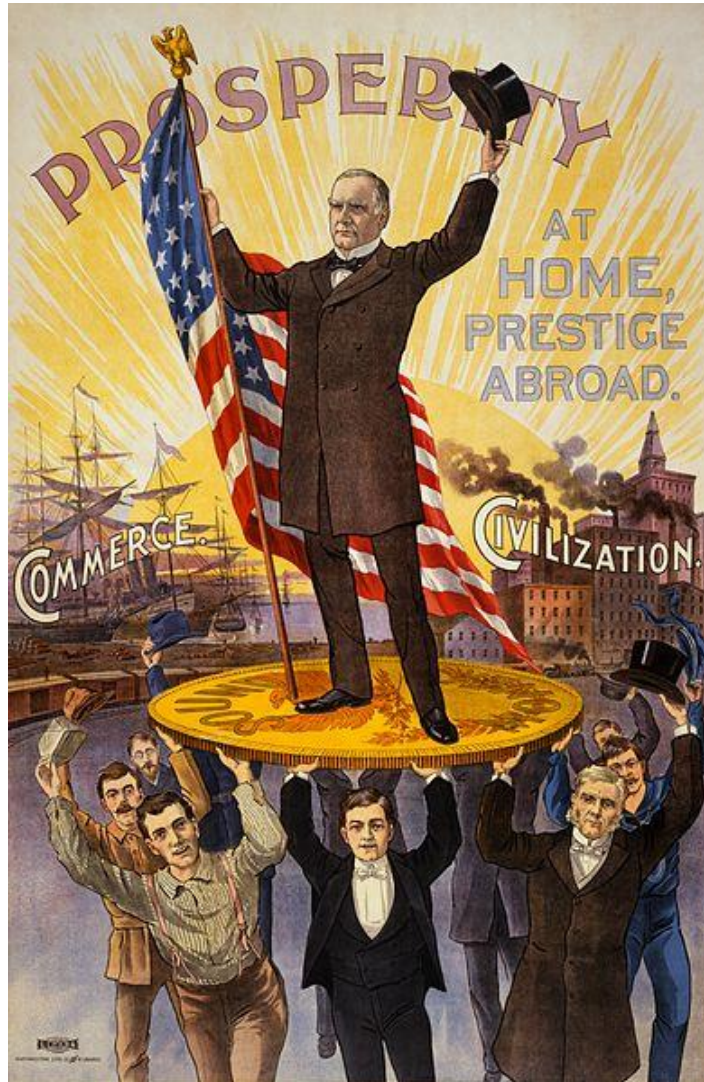


Figure 13 - An election poster for William McKinley.¹³⁰

William McKinley stood proud and resolute on a massive gold coin, supported by working-men, soldiers, and wealthy elites, with a brilliant rising sun behind him unmarred by the smog of

¹³⁰ Northwestern Litho. Co, Milwaukee, “McKinley Prosperity,” 1895-1900. *Wikimedia Commons*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:McKinley_Prosperty.jpg (accessed May 30, 2018).

American industry (which through juxtaposition melded with “Civilization”). McKinley seemed to be turn-of-the-century American capitalism incarnate. The United States was booming under McKinley’s presidency and the horizon promised only more success. America was becoming a new sort of empire, just as many European empires were beginning to fade. One apparent difference between the United States and Europe that assured many in the American press that their country was on the right course under McKinley was that Europe was plagued by anarchist terrorism and America was not.

Between the Haymarket Affair in 1886 and the turn-of-the-century, many Americans thought that anarchism had been defeated and was in decline. George McLean published an optimistically titled history of the American anarchist movement in 1888: *The Rise and Fall of Anarchy: From Its Incipient Stage to the First Bomb Thrown in Chicago. A Comprehensive Account of the Great Conspiracy Culminating in the Haymarket Massacre, May 4th, 1886*. The anarchist conspiracy had “culminated” and been dealt with, it seemed. The execution of the Haymarket anarchists and Berkman’s failed assassination of Henry Clay Frick convinced many in the American press that the anarchist movement in the United States had been stymied before it could really begin.¹³¹ The Jewish anarchist movement, however, grew rapidly in the wake of the Haymarket Affair,¹³² but few outside of the movement noticed.

Meanwhile, Europe was crumbling into disarray. The past ten years had been a period of intense terrorist activity across Europe with the murder of six heads of state, numerous government officials, and hundreds of civilians.¹³³ The victims of this “Decade of Regicide” included the prime

¹³¹ Richard B. Jensen, “The United States, International Policing and the War against Anarchist Terrorism, 1900-1914,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no.1 (2001): 17.

¹³² Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 6.

¹³³ Mary S. Barton, “The Global War on Anarchism: The United States and International Anarchist Terrorism, 1898-1904,” *Diplomatic History* 39, no. 2 (2015): 303.

minister of Spain, the president of France, the empress of Austria-Hungary, and the king of Italy. The rise of anarchist terrorism in Europe was seen by many in the American press as symptomatic of the illiberal conditions of European governments. One journalist in *The New York Times* wrote that “Anarchists are a group of international fanatics, a very little group of parasitic animals, almost everywhere foreigners in the community they infest.” It was despotism that produced them, the journalist explained, “they exist and bud out just in proportion to the stringency of repressive measures in their native country.... Where speech is freest and the right of public meeting most unrestricted, Anarchists are fewest.”¹³⁴ America was indisputably free (at least according to liberal journalists in papers like *The New York Times*), thus anarchism would never manifest as a serious problem in America.

In contrast to an increasingly unstable Europe, the United States seemed to be in firm standing, as was President McKinley. He had overseen the country’s speedy economic recovery after the Panic of 1896 and the victory in the Spanish-American War of 1898 in which the U.S. had acquired Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, and had brought Cuba into its sphere of influence—all almost bloodlessly. America was finally entering the world stage in the 20th century as a great power equal to the European Empires of the 19th century. McKinley had been soundly reelected in 1900, winning for the second time against his firebrand Democratic opponent William Jennings Bryan, and for the second time not leaving his front porch to do it. He ran with the slogan “Prosperity at Home, Prestige Abroad” and above all represented a new period of American stability after a long century of turmoil. In a speech given at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York in September of 1901 McKinley touted the tremendous economic and industrial success of the United States. America was leading the Western Hemisphere in

¹³⁴ “The Hotbeds for Anarchists,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1894.

humanity's great "march of civilization". Man's innate "quest for trade" and capitalist competition had brought us away from the "clumsy and antiquated process of farming and manufacture and the methods of business of long ago." The electric telegraph and steam train were closing the distances between mankind and necessitated the end of American isolationism. Finally, the country could participate in "friendly rivalry" with the great powers of the world in global pursuit of human progress. This competition could only benefit the working-class, according to McKinley. The "unexampled prosperity" of America meant that "we are furnishing profitable employment to the millions of workingmen throughout the United States, bringing comfort and happiness to their homes, and making it possible to lay by savings for old age and disability."¹³⁵

After giving his speech, McKinley walked out of the exposition and was shot on the steps by an unemployed steelworker with the alias Nieman ("Nobody").¹³⁶ Less than a month before a journalist had claimed that freedom in America was so great that no anarchist would ever shoot the president.¹³⁷ McKinley spent a week in agonizing pain, then—just as he was appearing to recover—died. He was replaced by Theodore Roosevelt, the Age of Progressivism, Gunboat Diplomacy, rampant industrial growth, a rapidly expanding American Empire, and much more that soon eclipsed McKinley and the man who shot him, but for a brief time all of that was uncertain. For a moment, anarchy reigned.

¹³⁵ "Last Speech of William McKinley: Delivered at the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo September 5, 1901," (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 3-7.

¹³⁶ Avrich and Avrich, *Odyssey*, 159.

¹³⁷ Francis Nichols, "The Anarchists in America," *Outlook*, Aug. 10, 1901, quoted in Jenson, 17.



Figure 14 - An artist's depiction of the McKinley shooting the day after. From: *The San Francisco Call*, Sept. 7th, 1901

The assassin soon revealed himself to be Leon Czolgosz, a young, working-class man born to Polish immigrants in Michigan. His confession was published in *The New York Times* two days after the shooting. He said that he had converted from socialism to anarchism over the past five years, while working mostly in steel mills and moving around the Midwest, growing more and more bitter with his situation. "I never had much luck at anything," he explained, "and this preyed upon me. It made me morose and envious." Then he heard Emma Goldman speak at a rally in Cleveland and everything changed for him. It was Goldman's "doctrine that all rulers should be exterminated [that] set me to thinking so that my head nearly split with the pain. Miss Goldman's words went through me, and when I left the lecture I had made up my mind that I would have to

do something heroic for the cause I loved.” When asked why he shot the president his answer was simple: “I am an Anarchist. I am a disciple of Emma Goldman. Her words set me on fire.”¹³⁸ This mantra left little doubt who was to blame.



Figure 15 - Cover stories on Emma Goldman and Leon Czolgosz;¹³⁹ Chicago Daily Tribune, Sept. 8, 1901.¹⁴⁰

In this chapter I describe the public backlash against anarchists in the English-speaking press and how the intensely racist, anti-immigrant tone it had led to the anti-anarchist legislation that followed in 1902 and 1903.¹⁴¹ The assassination struck just as the anarchist movement was

¹³⁸ “The Assassin Makes a Full Confession,” *New York Times*, Sep. 8, 1901.

¹³⁹ *The San Francisco Call*, Sep. 11, 1901.

¹⁴⁰ “Emma Goldman,” *Jewish Women’s Archive*, <https://jwa.org/womenofvalor/Goldman> (accessed May 30, 2018).

¹⁴¹ Because of lack of access to sources I restrict myself to the *New York Times* when talking about the English-language press in this chapter.

in a critical point of development: Emma Goldman was becoming ever more famous as an anarchist speaker, and finally starting to make major waves outside of the Jewish anarchist sphere, while Saul Yanovsky was fast making the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* one of the most influential newspapers in the Yiddish-speaking world, finally cementing anarchism as a significant strain of mass Jewish politics. His response to the wave of anti-anarchist sentiment in 1901 was appeasement, discretion, and perseverance—trying to give the paper as low a profile as possible to ensure it survived the year. Goldman went the exact opposite course, railing against every anti-anarchist law and police crackdown to bring attention to the anarchist movement. She, unlike almost every other anarchist leader at the time including Yanovsky, refused to reject Czolgosz as an anarchist.¹⁴² The assassination's effect on Yiddish socialism is also relevant here as it divided them from Yiddish anarchists much more than they had been in the past. The press took a sharp turn in how it treated socialists as opposed to anarchists. Before both socialism and anarchism were generally seen as two parts to a single insidiously radical immigrant whole, but the assassination caused many in the press to suddenly prefer socialism as an acceptable (or almost acceptable) type of radicalism. This gave socialists more freedom to agitate than they had previously, and many jumped on the opportunity to capitalize on that advantage by openly distancing themselves from anarchists.

The response among Jewish radicals to the wave of anti-anarchist persecution was diverse. These distinct responses to the assassination atomized these branches of Jewish radicalism much more than they had in the past, as they gained different valences in the eyes of the general American public. In regard to internationalist discourse among Jewish radicals the assassination did not have a major direct impact, but it divided radicals to such an extent that they were more able to

¹⁴² Avrich and Avrich, *Odyssey*, 165.

ideologically develop independently of one another afterward. The period pushed Yiddish anarchists and Jewish anarchists less bound to Yiddish away from each other, allowing them to develop differently in the coming years regarding internationalism. This helps explain why their reactions to the 1905 Revolution, which centered on internationalist discourse, were so varied.

The Reaction in the American Press

McKinley's assassination electrified the country. Within an hour the news hit New York City and thousands gathered in the streets to wait for the newspaper extras. Gossip and outrage spread quickly and soon the crowd's attention turned to the anarchists. One man, *The New York Times* reported, urged a crowd to murder 10,000 anarchists in Paterson, New Jersey (a known stronghold of Italian anarchists) in retaliation for the assassination.¹⁴³ Another demanded that Czolgosz be burned at the stake.¹⁴⁴ Henry Titus, a detective sergeant in Paterson at the time, wrote an article declaring that "The only proper way for the police to deal with these fellows is to go to their meetings with a sawed off gun and shoot the speakers when they begin to rant."¹⁴⁵ Public anger was stoked by reports that anarchists in New Jersey, New York, and Chicago were toasting Czolgosz's name,¹⁴⁶ and that dynamite had been found buried near the Haymarket Monument.¹⁴⁷ Vigilante retaliation against the anarchists seemed possible. One reporter claimed that people "are

¹⁴³ "Paterson Anarchists Rejoice at the Shooting," *New York Times*, Sep. 7, 1901.

¹⁴⁴ "How the News Was Received in New York," *New York Times*, Sep. 7, 1901.

¹⁴⁵ "Paterson Police Aroused," *New York Times*, Sep. 9, 1901 cited in Jensen, "The United States, International Policing and the War against Anarchist Terrorism," 18.

¹⁴⁶ "Paterson Anarchists Rejoice at the Shooting," *New York Times*, Sep. 7, 1901; "Czolgosz's Name Cheered," *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1901. One particularly descriptive report read: "Over in the Russian and Polish quarter of the East Side the socialist and anarchist sentiment is all for Czolgosz. The men there gather in dark, dirty iltle [sic] saloons and holes in the wall where liquor is sold, and talk and gesticulate and wag their scraggy beards with gusto. Czolgosz is a hero with them. As they talk of the attempted assassination, their eyes glisten and their thin teeth shine cruelly between their lips, drawn tightly over their gums. The women nod approval and encouragement, and their shrill voices take part in the denunciation of law." "Roosevelt Too, Says Most," *New-York Daily Tribune*, 10 Sep. 1901.

¹⁴⁷ "Plot Hatched in Chicago?" *New York Times*, Sep. 7, 1901.

tired of the supineness of the authorities and will demand that this blot upon Paterson be wiped out. If the present authorities cannot do it, there will be a change. The general verdict seems to be that the Anarchists must go.”¹⁴⁸

The newspapers were filled with demands for anti-anarchist legislation. In a *New York Times* article published on September 8th, local magistrates, judges, and one supreme court justice gave their opinions on what should be done. One magistrate called for a ban on firearms, another suggested extending capital punishment to include anarchists, and a judge said that all the “Reds” should “be swept out of the country.” Most argued for a ban on anarchists coming to the US, and in the coming months this became the most common demand in the press.¹⁴⁹ One woman in a letter to the editor described the general sentiment well, writing that there should be law to stop anarchists from coming to the U.S. just as there are laws to prevent the spread of cholera and yellow fever: “Shall the Anarchist, who menaces openly and defiantly our Nation’s peace, progress, and happiness, be dealt with less severely than a scourge that brings death?”¹⁵⁰ The general consensus was no.

¹⁴⁸ “Paterson Anarchists Rejoice at the Shooting,” *New York Times*, Sep. 7, 1901.

¹⁴⁹ “Judge’s View of Acts of Anarchists,” *New York Times*, Sep. 8, 1901.

¹⁵⁰ An American Woman, “Traitors and Anarchists,” *New York Times*, Sep. 11, 1901.



Figure 16 – A depiction of an anarchist terrorist inspired by Czolgosz published in the newspaper the *San Francisco Call* on September 13th, 1901.¹⁵¹

This demand for a ban on anarchist immigration the United States combined outrage against radicalism with already widespread anti-immigrant sentiment. Police Magistrate Brann of Yorkville, Manhattan called for an anarchist immigration ban, declaring that “American citizens rarely become Anarchists, and when they do it is because they are densely ignorant and have imbibed the malign teachings of Anarchists of foreign birth.”¹⁵² Harold Carlenius Petersen wrote

¹⁵¹ “Is America an Asylum for Him?” *San Francisco Call*, Sep. 13, 1901.

¹⁵² “For Preventive Measures,” *New York Times*, Sep. 10, 1901.

an article in *The New York Times* on September 15th, the day after McKinley's death, explaining that "The Slavic and the Latin mind—especially the latter—seems peculiarly susceptible to that strange mode of rectifying imaginary abuses" pinned on government authorities. The Italian or Pole "once gripped by the delusions of his sect, [rises] above the ethics and considerations which dominate the sane man. He is no longer a reasoning individual, a person responsible to society, but blindly performs what the 'high priest' of his organization tells him." Pointing to organizations like the Mafia, Carbonari, and the "great assassins" of medieval history, Peterson argued that the "Italian temperament seems to be particularly adapted to intrigue and conspiracy."¹⁵³

This harsh and racist depiction of anarchists was not new to the American press, it just greatly intensified after the assassination. In an study of American magazines published between 1888 and 1903, Nathaniel Hong has shown how the "Anarchist Beast" was rendered in Nativist tone as a "genetic tragedy of evolution," brought to the U.S. by racially inferior immigrants.¹⁵⁴ That anarchism thrived among immigrant populations in the United States only strengthened the belief that many Eastern European and Southern European immigrants were of a race incompatible with Americanization.¹⁵⁵ One magazine writer claimed that "despite the fact that the assassin of

¹⁵³ "Anarchy and Assassins," *New York Times*, Sep. 15, 1901.

¹⁵⁴ Nathaniel Hong, "Constructing the Anarchist Beast in American Periodical Literature, 1880-1903," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 9, (1992): 110-130.

¹⁵⁵ Though the press took a severely Nativist turn after the assassination, and though Emma Goldman the alleged grand conspirator of the shooting was Jewish, surprisingly few explicit mentions of Jews appeared in the press coverage. Unlike in previous years, *The New York Times* and many other newspapers avoided mentioning Jewish anarchists in the days following the assassination and even defended Jews against accusations of anarchism. Instead of talking about anarchist Jews they frequently cast Jews as antithetical to anarchists. There were several articles describing the great grief of New York Jews for McKinley in which rabbis firmly denounced anarchists. *The New York Times* did quote a speech from Pope Leo XIII who expressed his sorrow at the passing of McKinley and called for retaliation against "Freemasonry, Judaism, and anarchism," but the correspondent covering the speech rejected the Pope's accusation, writing that "the coupling of Freemasonry and Judaism with the social scourge of anarchism is... un-Christian and uncharitable." He implied some hypocrisy on the part of the Pope, as the majority of anarchists came from Catholic countries: "Italy heads the list; then come France and Spain. Most Anarchist crimes are committed by Italians and Frenchmen. The United Kingdom and the United States, both Protestant countries, have the smallest number of Anarchists" ("Pope Leo's Views on Anti-Social Crime," *New York Times*, Sep. 21, 1901). The stark lack of explicit anti-Semitism after the McKinley assassination might have been due to the greater number of Jews that had entered the American press in recent years, or perhaps Jews were simply much lower on the list of possible immigrant threats at the time given the well-known penchant of Italian anarchists for assassination. Regardless, the assassination

our President was born on our soil, he was to all intents and purposes alien; he was of alien birth and alien stock; his whole mind was alien.”¹⁵⁶

This widespread belief that anarchism came to the United States with immigrants was largely unfounded. Scholars have shown that while the majority of American anarchists in this period were immigrants or from immigrant backgrounds, most radicalized in the United States in response to conditions there rather than Europe.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, some of the most infamous anarchist assassinations in Europe were performed by anarchists based in the United States, like Gaetano Bresci who assassinated King Humbert of Italy in 1900. Even if people were not aware just how much anarchism had become an American phenomenon, they should have noted that Czolgosz was born in the U.S. and was an American citizen. No immigration law could have stopped him, but this fact did nothing to waylay people’s demand for an immigration ban.

As the press continued to cover the assassination reporters turned to the subject of Czolgosz’s sanity – a discourse that was deeply tied to racist notions of foreignness in turn-of-the-century America. Czolgosz was often described as mentally depraved, even syphilitic. One article in the *New York Daily Tribune* said that he was a generally intelligent looking, unsuspecting person with features “straight and regular.” This seemingly healthy man, however, had been driven mad by anarchist doctrine. Emma Goldman—the infamous “anarchist product of the East Side slums”—had incited a “fever in his brain” that “burn[ed] deeper and deeper into his mind.” One of her most famous speeches was quoted that she had given in 1893 that had landed her in prison for a year: “You want bread, but who will give it to you? No one will give it to you. If you want it

stoked a great deal of conflict *within* the Jewish community, even if word of it did not make it outside. For rabbis denouncing anarchists see: “Sorrowing Jews Pray for the Dead,” *New York Times*, Sep. 15, 1901; “Meetings in Synagogues,” *New York Times*, Sep. 20, 1901; “The Educational Alliance: Louis Marshall Says that No Jew Can Be an Anarchist,” *New York Times*, Sep. 20, 1901.

¹⁵⁶ R. H. Newton, “Anarchism,” *Arena*, Jan. 1902, 8, cited in Hong, “Constructing the Anarchist Beast,” 125.

¹⁵⁷ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 1, 19; Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 3-5.

you must take it. If you do not get it on your own demand take it by force. Go out into the social revolution.” Goldman herself was an immigrant of the worst type:

Emma Goldman is now about thirty-five years old. When she came to America, a girl, she was rather pretty. She had a wealth of dark hair and flashing eyes. Her figure was good, even when poorly dressed. The life she has been leading, however, has blotted out all of her youthful charms. Her eyes still gleam, but it is the unnatural gleam put there by liquor. Her face and figure are bloated from the same cause. She lives on the cheap fame which has come to her from anarchistic speeches.

Despite her evidently degenerate personality Goldman was an incredible, fiery speaker, and could easily inculcate the poor, uneducated immigrant masses. “She always advises violence, no matter what the evil,” the paper stated and “seems to have great power over her ignorant audiences, and soon has everything about her boiling over.”¹⁵⁸ This dichotomy between “ignorant” working-class immigrants like Czolgosz and the insidious immigrant intellectuals who manipulated them like Goldman were common, but regardless both were definably non-American. One interviewer noted when Goldman was interviewed about the assassination, “the woman pronounced the name [Czolgosz] with the greatest ease...”¹⁵⁹ It did not matter what their specific backgrounds were, both anarchists were of the same strange, foreign mold.

Doctors, neurologists, and alienists (scientists who study immigrant psychology) were brought into test Czolgosz’s sanity and concluded that he was not insane, but that he and immigrants like him were of a mentally inferior type prone to suggestion.¹⁶⁰ One neurologist Dr. J. Leonard Corning agreed when asked by a reporter from the *Tribune* that laws should be enacted

¹⁵⁸ “Anarchists Scared,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, 8 Sep. 1901.

¹⁵⁹ “Emma Goldman Caught,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, 11 Sep. 1901.

¹⁶⁰ Eric Rauchway, “Killer Anarchism,” in *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Theodore Roosevelt’s America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 83-112.

to stop “the circulation of inflammatory and criminal literature” that manipulated “weak minded and criminally disposed persons.” Corning added,

It is precisely here that a portentous hiatus is discernible in the psychical outfit of these anarchistic criminals. Too warped intellectually and too immoral to look at any large problem either intellectually or disinterestedly, they cast their lot with any scheme, no matter how quixotic, no matter how evil, which promises to confer a large place upon presumptuous covetousness and small endowment. Many are the flabby witted dupes who, unsuccessful in the arena of civilized society, seek the delusive solace of this synthetized knavery of anarchy, *and here is the great danger to society—the systematic mental and moral inoculation of the inefficient members of the race.*¹⁶¹

The “inflammatory and criminal literature” were declared by many to be immigrant newspapers and the yellow press (a term that usually meant sensationalist and untrustworthy newspapers). One column over from this article the mayor of Paterson, New Jersey was quoted saying that “If [anarchists] publish anything in the anarchist organ that will give us a hold on them, we will send them to State prison.”¹⁶² The Merchant’s Association similarly declared that they “set [their] face strongly against all newspapers or publications of any and every kind which advocate the taking of life as a remedy for alleged social, political or economic conditions...”¹⁶³ That an apparently sane immigrant like Czolgosz was driven to kill the president spoke to the immense persuasive power of anarchists over other immigrants. Thus, not only did anarchists have to be stopped at the borders, they had to be prevented from agitating among the immigrant masses in America waiting for their radical prophets. Their newspapers, it was decided, had to go.

¹⁶¹ “Does Not Show Insanity,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, 10 Sep. 1901. Emphasis mine.

¹⁶² “Paterson’s Mayor Talks Vigorously,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, 10 Sep. 1901.

¹⁶³ “Would Punish It By Death,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, 10 Sep. 1901.

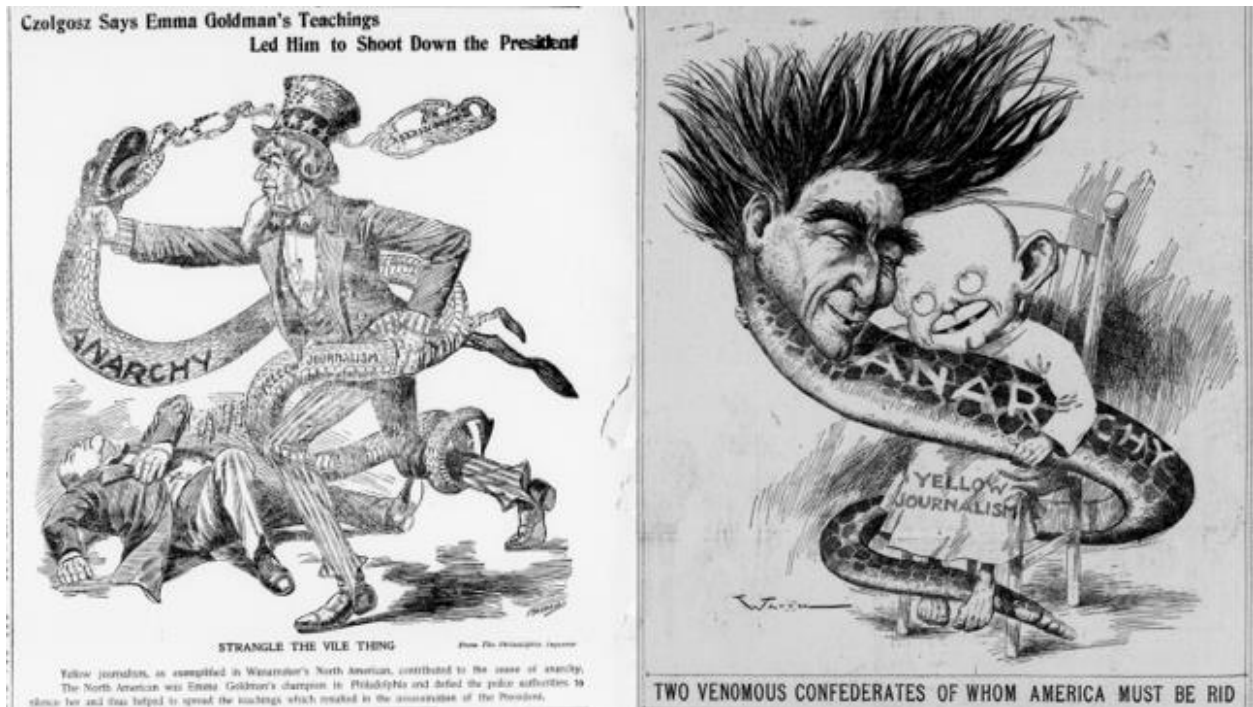


Figure 17 – Two political cartoons showing the conjoined images of anarchism and yellow journalism in September of 1901. Note that “Yellow Journalism” is written in smaller print on the lower part of the snake in the left image. The child that the anthropomorphic rattlesnake is curled around in the right image is the “Yellow Kid”, a common representation of yellow journalism around the turn-of-the-century.¹⁶⁴

Jews and the McKinley Assassination

The intense criticism of the anarchist press meant that anarchist editors had to tread very carefully to avoid further provoking public ire. The opening article of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* the week after the assassination began:

Teetering between life and death, lies a fallen hero in Buffalo. The bullet of a cowardly murderer struck the crown of the free republic, the greatest wise man, the greatest statesman, the greatest war-leader that the free republic of the United States has ever had.

His mighty hand blessed and brought prosperity everywhere. He brought light, luck and satisfaction to the poorest and most miserable of his subjects. With his impressive intellect he

¹⁶⁴ *The Pacific Commerical Advertiser*, Sep. 20, 1901. *The San Francisco Call*, Sep. 11, 1901.

commanded the army and navy in Cuba and in the Philippines where our cannons have fired so beautifully. He is the great friend of Cuba, the might civilizer of the half-wild Philippines.... Short and good, this great man, this hero, this amiable leader of society, the ideal father who lies now on his death bed, struck down by the bullet of a tramp who calls himself an anarchist, -- the most wretched creature that has ever lived on Earth!¹⁶⁵

The article was a clear attempt to placate a hostile public. Yanovsky would have never referred to an ardent capitalist like McKinley in such a positive light under normal circumstances. Unlike Goldman, Yanovsky completely denounced both the assassination and Czolgosz, referring to him as a “wild beast” and the “one who calls himself an anarchist.”¹⁶⁶ In his weekly opinion column, “On the Watch,” Yanovsky declared that “Propaganda by the Deed” (the anarchist belief in propaganda through violent action) were too “problematic” for the anarchist movement and would certainly harm it.¹⁶⁷ Debate over the use of violence had long been growing among anarchists, but Yanovsky had been a firm opponent of it since the 1890s when he was the editor of *Der Arbayer Fraynd* in London. Back then it had been a much more controversial stance to take and garnered him a great deal of criticism in the London Yiddish anarchist community.¹⁶⁸ The resounding endorsement of the “greatest statesman” McKinley may have been faked for the sake of good public relations, but Yanovsky’s denouncement of violence was at least genuine. Otherwise that edition of the paper had nothing more to say on the assassination, and most of it was dedicated to the serial publication of books and essays that had already been ongoing. “I’ll have more to say on this matter soon,” Yanovsky curtly ended his column, “for today this is enough.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ “Der Held un der Feygling,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Sep. 13, 1901.

¹⁶⁶ “Der Held un der Feygling,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Sep. 13, 1901; Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 34.

¹⁶⁷ “Oyf der Vakh,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Sep. 13, 1901.

¹⁶⁸ Abba Gordin, *Sh. Yanovski*, 258-260.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Few were placated by such attempts, to say the least. Retaliation against anarchists grew rapidly. Vigilantes drove anarchist families out of small industrial towns in Pennsylvania and Illinois, once hotbeds of anarchist labor activism. Johann Most, the infamous German American anarchist speaker who had been a longtime advocate of propaganda by the deed, was arrested and sentenced to a year in prison for publishing an 1849 article by German radical Karl Heinzen “Murder Against Murder” that called for the assassination of despots. In Pittsburgh one anarchist was dragged into the street and almost lynched, only saved because someone called out that he was a union man. Even Alexander Berkman, who had been in prison for nine years, was moved to solitary confinement after the assassination.¹⁷⁰

The assassination also caused much turmoil within the Jewish community of New York City. Seeing the vitriolic anti-immigrant tone the American press had taken, many Jews attempted to diminish the public’s awareness of the anarchist movement in the Lower East Side, completely denying its existence and declaring Jewishness to be antithetical to anarchism. On September 20th the *New York Times* quoted a speech from Louis Marshall, a Jew and Chairman of the Educational Alliance’s Committee on Moral Culture, where he claimed that there has never been a single Jewish anarchist and the very idea of one was impossible:

Thank God that the charge that [McKinley’s] assassin is a son of Israel has been disproved. No Jewish father ever reared that wretch; no Jewish mother ever nurtured him. Judaism and anarchy are as incompatible as light and darkness. The Ten Commandments have been the most enduring laws. The Talmud is a collection of judicial utterances. A race or nation thus educated will not look with favor upon anarchy.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Avrich and Avrich, *Odyssey*, 163-64.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in “The Educational Alliance: Louis Marshall Says that No Jew Can Be an Anarchist,” *New York Times*, Sep. 20, 1901.

In a more violent tone a rabbi in Harlem called for McKinley's murder to be avenged against the "dangerous reptile" that is Anarchy. "Let us stand together," he declared, "to crush the common foe of society."¹⁷² Many others agreed. A mob of some 500 Jews broke into the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* offices, smashing the windows and printing machines, and beating up the six workers that were there.¹⁷³ They were searching for the *meshumed* ("convert") Yanovsky and one newspaper even reported that the mob had murdered him, but he had not been there at the time.¹⁷⁴

In response to the severe Jewish attack on the press, Yanovsky moved the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*'s office to a secret basement and began the next "On the Watch" declaring that "Nothing is more dear and holy for the anarchist than human life." The anarchists mourn McKinley's death, "not as a president, but as a man," and called on anarchists to instill love and respect for all humanity in their children. Just as he was writing the column a group of Jewish children threw stones through the windows of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* office. Yet Yanovsky had a surprisingly sympathetic response in a rare moment of Jewish solidarity:

Jews, who have been eternally the accused, suffer as a community if but one of them is a scoundrel. Thus, they are the first to persecute and stone one of their own, [even one] who has never committed any evil... But they should not be ashamed of this. They are pushed to this by terrifying scoundrels for whom anarchists are a true threat because anarchists educate the people and make them open their eyes....¹⁷⁵

McKinley's assassination marked a new period for the Jewish anarchist movement. It was clear that anarchists were on shaky ground among other Jews. To push their tolerance too far would mean violence. The New York Jewish community's backlash against the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*

¹⁷² "Meetings in Synagogues," *New York Times*, Sep. 20, 1901.

¹⁷³ I would suspect this number is exaggerated.

¹⁷⁴ Saul Yanovsky, "A Ligen!," *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Sep. 20, 1901. The quote is from Abba Gordin's biography of Saul Yanovsky: Gordin, *Sh. Yanovski*, 258.

¹⁷⁵ "Oyf Der Vakh," *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Sep. 20, 1901.

had been harsh, and Yanovsky barely managed to keep the paper running. In the opening article on Sept. 27th Yanovsky celebrated the two-year anniversary of the paper having been reestablished, but the way forward seemed dire: “But now, now – oh all is poor, so grim and dark, such desperation surrounds us.... While I write this 104th issue, I could not stop myself from wondering, will I in a year’s time be able to write the 156th?”¹⁷⁶ He was able to keep the paper running, but it cost much of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*’s credentials as a radical paper.

Emma Goldman was particularly outraged by Yanovsky’s denunciation of Czolgosz and attitude of appeasement. Years later she recalled that “no capitalist paper in America was a vicious, or as lacking in human understanding towards Czolgosz as Yanovsky showed himself to be in his articles in that paper.”¹⁷⁷ She said his attitude had made the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* even more conservative than the *Forverts*.¹⁷⁸

Meanwhile the public’s demands for anti-anarchist immigration laws eventually led the newly inaugurated President Theodore Roosevelt to call for a ban on anarchists entering the country in his first annual address on December 3rd, 1901. He told Congress to consider the danger of “anarchists or persons professing principles hostile to all government and justifying the murder of those placed in authority” entering the United States. He also denounced the radical press that had seduced Czolgosz: “This criminal was a professed anarchist, inflamed by the teachings of professed anarchists, and probably also by the reckless utterances of those who, on the stump and in the public press, appeal to the dark and evil spirits of malice and greed, envy and sullen

¹⁷⁶ “Numer 104,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Sep. 27, 1901.

¹⁷⁷ Correspondence from Emma Goldman to unnamed “Comrade”, Apr. 9, 1929, ARCH00520, Folder 64, Emma Goldman Papers, *International Institute of Social History*, Amsterdam, Netherlands. Online.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

hatred.”¹⁷⁹ These two concerns, the endorsement of violence and the danger of the insidious radical immigrant press, formed the basis of anti-anarchist legislation in the coming years.



Figure 18 - Theodore Roosevelt is sworn in as the “ruler” of the United States.¹⁸⁰

New York State Criminal Anarchy Law of 1902

New York State was the first to react legislatively to the assassination. In 1902 the New York Criminal Anarchy Act established that “Criminal anarchy is the doctrine that organized

¹⁷⁹ Theodore Roosevelt: "First Annual Message," Dec. 3, 1901, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

¹⁸⁰ *San Francisco Call*, Sept. 14, 1901.

government should be overthrown by force or violence, or by assassination of the executive head or of any of the executive officials of government, or by any unlawful means. The advocacy of such doctrine either by word of mouth or writing is a felony.” The act also made it illegal to publish materials that advocated criminal anarchy or for two or more people to meet and discuss them. Punishment for breaking the law was up to ten years in prison and up to \$5,000.¹⁸¹ Even the proprietor of a hall that hosted an anarchist lecture that advocated criminal anarchy could be given two years in prison and a \$2,000 fine.¹⁸² New Jersey, Washington, and Wisconsin enacted similarly anti-anarchist laws by 1903.¹⁸³

The law targeted the two most important means of anarchist propaganda: public lectures and newspapers. This made things quite difficult for anarchists in New York especially.¹⁸⁴ Goldman’s lectures were shut down constantly by police. Yanovsky had to remove the subtitle “Anarchist Communist Organ” that had previously been there in both English and Yiddish.¹⁸⁵ But the law’s effect was ultimately quite limited. In an article entitled “It Will Not Help!” Yanovsky wrote of the law:

It has happened. The axe, which since Albany has been aimed at cutting off anarchism by the neck, has finally been let loose and struck only air.... It is a really terrifying law. Something worse one cannot imagine. But remarkably I don’t feel the slightest fear.... A sweet peacefulness rules my heart. I am sure, that this terrible law will pose not the slightest harm to anarchism....

¹⁸¹ “Article XIV: Anarchy, Section § 160-166,” *Annotated Consolidated Laws of the State of New York*, edited by Robert C. Cumming and Frank B. Gilbert, vol. 5 (New York: The Banks Law Publishing Company: 1918): 5611-5613.

¹⁸² Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 191.

¹⁸³ Linda Cobb-Riley, “Aliens and Alien Ideas: The Suppression of Anarchists and the Anarchist Press in America, 1901-1914,” *Journalism History* 15, no. 2-3 (Summer/Autumn 1988): 53; Barton, “The Global War on Anarchism,” 319; Jensen, “The United States, International Policing and the War against Anarchist Terrorism,” 20.

¹⁸⁴ Zimmer, “The Whole World Is Our Country,” 65.

¹⁸⁵ Yanovsky reassured his readers that the dropping of the anarchist subtitle did not mean the publishers were any less dedicated to the anarchist cause: As long as the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* exists it will preach no other idea than that which it now does...” Saul Yanovsky, “An Erkl rung,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Apr. 11, 1902.

People can be put in prison, people can be martyred, tormented, driven to suicide, even murdered. Newspapers can be shut down, oppressed, and sued, but there is nothing in the world that can kill an idea.... You can silence one voice that proclaims an idea, but then one voice will become one thousand voices.¹⁸⁶

Yanovsky's dramatism aside, he proved largely correct about the ineffectiveness of the law. It was fairly easy to avoid advocating for "criminal anarchy" as the law stated, and this fit with Yanovsky's preexisting opposition to violent methods anyways.

Immigration Act of 1903

A year later federal anti-anarchist legislation came in the form of the Immigration Act of 1903, colloquially called the Anarchist Exclusion Act. The law barred any "persons who believe in or advocate the overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the United States or of all government or of all forms of law, or the assassination of public officials" from entering the US.¹⁸⁷ Though the law may have deterred some anarchists from trying to come to the U.S., in terms of actually stopping them it was almost completely useless. As some critics of the law pointed out at the time, anarchists could simply lie about being anarchists when entering the country.¹⁸⁸ There was no international information service yet that could have helped with this. The act also only allowed the expulsion of anarchists already in the US within three years of them entering the country, which did not include almost all of the anarchist leaders like Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and Johann Most, who were the law's primary targets. Another law in 1906 prevented anarchist immigrants from become citizens of the US, but this also proved ineffective. By 1919

¹⁸⁶ Saul Yanovsky, "Es Vet Nit Helfen!," *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Apr. 11, 1902.

¹⁸⁷ "Chap. 1012.—An Act To regulate the immigration of aliens into the United States," Mar. 3, 1903.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

only 38 anarchists had been prevented from entering the country and less than half that number had been deported.¹⁸⁹ Though not effective themselves, the immigration act laid the groundwork for the deportations of radicals during the Red Scare (1917-1921) and led to the foundation of the Bureau of Investigation in 1908, the predecessor of the FBI.¹⁹⁰

The Immigration Act of 1903 did affect one anarchist leader, the English anarchist John Turner, who was arrested on charges of criminal anarchy while he visited the US on a lecture tour in October of 1903. Anarchists responded pragmatically, immediately turning the arrest in their favor. In an article in *Free Society*, an anarchist journal, Goldman called on anarchists to “make the most of this opportunity for propaganda, and agitate.”¹⁹¹ In a letter to Jewish anarchist Abe Isaak in early December, Goldman described a meeting that had been held in support of Turner:

Those who have worked hard to make the meeting such a tremendous success... feel a hundredfold rewarded; for the meeting was the grandest held in years, and some of the remarks—as glowing a tribute to anarchism, and as fair an analysis—as ever was made by conservative men. For you must not forget that although radicals arranged the meeting, the speakers... were Governmentalists. Is that not in itself a wonderful result to have representatives of Government intelligently discuss Anarchism and denounce the Anti Anarchist law as despotic and barbarous? And is it not worth all the money we can raise, and all our efforts? Yes—I am convinced that the right step was taken by appealing to the Supreme Court, and that no matter what that body will decide, John Turner’s detention on Ellis Island must inevitably (*sic*) result in the great revival of our movement.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 10.

¹⁹⁰ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 10.

¹⁹¹ “To *Free Society*: New York, 1 November 1903 – The New Inquisition” in Candace Falk, Barry Pateman, Jessica M. Moran, *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 115-16.

¹⁹² “To ABE ISAAK: New York, 4 December 1903” in Candace Falk, et al., *Making Speech Free*, 124-25.

The outrage against Turner's persecution was widespread and anarchists were quick to unite with socialists and even a few "Governmentalists" in Turner's defense. His case was highly controversial and raised perennial questions about freedom of speech. It went all the way to the Supreme Court, which unanimously upheld Turner's deportation. It was the first time the Supreme Court decided deportation for political orientation was constitutional.¹⁹³

One article from Emma Goldman published in the Italian anarchist paper *Cronaca Sovversiva* suggests that Turner may have even intentionally violated the law so that anarchists could propagandize his arrest. She wrote,

We should add at this point that, throughout, and as always, our comrade [Turner] has, in this particular case, acted in the sole interest of our propaganda, rather than upon concern with personal advantages or hardships. He has chosen without hesitation to spend four long months imprisoned in the fetid dungeons of Ellis Island, confident that, from this new tyranny of which he is the victim, the comrades will be able to draw the inspiration and strength for a righteous battle against the reactionary violence of the established authorities.¹⁹⁴

After Turner's appeal was rejected by the Supreme Court Goldman wrote to Berkman that "we gained what we tried for, namely, publicity and agitation."¹⁹⁵ The Turner Incident popularized a new method of propagandizing among anarchists in which they used persecution against them to advertise and strengthen their movement. Every shutdown lecture was proof of tyranny, every arrest of an anarchist leader was a reason to hold a rally, and every anti-anarchist law became proof that all laws were unjust.

¹⁹³ Barton, "The Global War on Anarchism," 323-24.

¹⁹⁴ Emma Goldman, "For Freedom," [Nov. 29, 1903] Candace Falk, Barry Pateman, and Jessica M. Moran, *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 121-123.

¹⁹⁵ Avrich and Avrich, *Odyssey*, 173-74.

Some in the government shared this belief that the Immigration Act would only aid anarchist propaganda. The Secretary of Commerce and Labor Oscar Straus, who headed the Bureau of Immigration, noted in a 1907 memorandum that deporting Emma Goldman would be difficult given the restrictive and vague terms of the 1903 Immigration Act. He remarked that “the general opinion of the officers who have been following her up is that she will welcome arrest; that it will not only advertise her and add to her prestige, but will be the means of bringing her in considerable sums in the way of contributions.”¹⁹⁶ In her extensive documentary history of Emma Goldman, Candace Falk has collected numerous reports from the police and government officials who hounded Goldman for decades. The writers of many reports note the growing fervor among the anarchists due to their persecution.¹⁹⁷ Despite this recognition of the gains anarchists were making, the government continued to hound them relentlessly. With each arrest, their fame only grew.

The Press Distinguishes Between Anarchists and Socialists

While the government was scrambling to find ways to suppress the anarchists, the press set out to figure out who they really were. After the assassination people of all sorts wrote in *The New York Times* to explain the true nature of anarchists.¹⁹⁸ They reviewed anarchist books and criticized Kropotkin’s theories.¹⁹⁹ One article a few days after McKinley was shot claimed that anarchists

¹⁹⁶ “Excerpt from OSCAR S. STRAUS to Bureau of Immigration: New York, 17 November 1907” in Candace Falk, et al., *Making Speech Free*, 256.

¹⁹⁷ Candace Falk, Barry Pateman, Jessica M. Moran, *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

¹⁹⁸ For the best examples see “The Sources of the Anarchist Disease,” *New York Times*, Sep. 13, 1901; “Johann Most Arrested,” *New York Times*, Sep. 13, 1901; “Anarchy and Assassins,” *New York Times*, Sep. 15, 1901; “The Principles of the Anarchists,” *New York Times*, Sep. 19, 1901; John R. Dos Passos, “Anarchy and How to Repress It,” *New York Times*, Sep. 22, 1901.

¹⁹⁹ “Kishineff Visitor Back from Russia,” *New York Times*, Jul. 8, 1903; “Prince Kropotkin,” *New York Times*, Jun. 27, 1903.

were completely incapable of reason. As immigrants or the children of immigrants they bore the “stigmata of degeneration.” The author claimed that “If we scan the pages of history that tell of the oppression of the ancestors of these men... we might be able to trace the progressive physical and mental degradation in which the true source of their monstrous delusions is to be found.” Anarchists differed, however, from socialists and “labor agitators,” on whom anarchists looked “with pity and contempt.” The author explained,

The purpose of the labor organization... is to better the condition of the workingman by securing higher wages, shorter hours, and increased privileges. The Socialist dreams of a happier human society, to be created by the adoption of his nostrums. But both recognize the necessity of a Government, of laws, of Legislatures, of courts and juries. They would like to shape these organs of the civil system to their own liking, or to control them. The Anarchist would destroy them utterly. Socialist and organized labor do not breed Anarchists any more than thistles yield figs.

The unlikeness forbids that any relation should subsist.²⁰⁰

Similarly, in a speech entitled “What Shall We Do With Anarchy and Anarchists?” held by the Nineteenth Century Club, three lecturers attempted to demonstrate what the fundamental ideas of anarchism were and why they were incorrect. One speaker Reverend Lyman W. Abbot said that socialism “is often confused with anarchy. The platform, the pulpit, and the press have been in error on this differentiation. I assert in reality that Anarchism is antagonistic to Socialism. Anarchy cries ‘No government,’ while Socialism cries ‘No freedom of government.’”²⁰¹ One Arthur C. Pleydell responded to a review of “Prince” Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid* in the *New York Times* Book Review, to correct the reviewer for labeling Kropotkin a socialist. He explained that

²⁰⁰ “The Sources of the Anarchist Disease,” *New York Times*, Sep. 13, 1901.

²⁰¹ “Anarchy and Anarchists,” *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1902.

in the original sense of the term any one who seeks to change the social order so as to benefit all persons is a 'Socialist.' But this meaning has been departed from long since, and by the average reader, and in most reform literature, Socialist is understood to mean State Socialist—that is, one who advocates government ownership of tools of production. Kropotkin's beliefs are the antipodes of those held by the State Socialists of the present day. They are based upon diametrically opposite views of the relation of the individual to society. The Anarchist believes society to be merely an aggregate of individuals having no right superior to the right of any individual composing it. The Socialist believes the individual to be only an atom of the social organism and to have no inherent rights.²⁰²

Anarchists had not been particularly distinguished from socialists in the press in earlier years. Most of what readers saw about them were in short, humorous snippets about socialists and anarchists quarreling at labor meetings.²⁰³ The claims that socialism and anarchism were opposites were largely new, and they grew in number in the few years after McKinley's assassination.

Socialists took the opportunity to distance themselves from anarchists as well. The Jewish socialist leader Morris Winchevsky wrote an article in the *Forverts* a few days after the shooting explaining that the foundational principles of socialism and anarchism were similar in their support for working-men, but they differed on tactics, the socialists having forsworn terrorist action long ago.²⁰⁴ A reader responded to the article in the following week in a much harsher tone, declaring Winchevsky to be completely incorrect; anarchism and socialism were completely incompatible – to lump them together was to “mix fire and water.”²⁰⁵

²⁰² Arthur C. Pleydell, “Prince Kropotkin,” *New York Times*, Jun. 27, 1903.

²⁰³ For one example see: “Tried to Capture a Meeting,” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1893.

²⁰⁴ M. Winchevsky, “Theorie un Taktik,” *Forverts*, Sep. 15, 1903.

²⁰⁵ William Edlin, “Sotsializmus un Anarkhizmus,” *Forverts*, Sep. 24, 1903.

McKinley's Wake

For all the uproar caused by the assassination, the memory of Czolgosz and McKinley was quick to fade. An article in *The New York Times* reviewing the major events of 1901 remarked that “the recovery of this Nation from the shock and disturbance incident to the death of President MCKINLEY was remarkably rapid and complete. Public confidence was promptly restored by the wise and sober words of President ROOSEVELT on taking office, and his annual message and the course of his Administration during its first three months have strengthened and confirmed the trust of the people.”²⁰⁶ It had been less than fourth months since McKinley's death. His assassination was soon overshadowed by the rapidly changing events of the early-20th century that saw the meteoric rise of Theodore Roosevelt and Progressivism.

Yet, among radical circles the effect of Czolgosz's bullet only grew in the coming years. Jewish radicalism was beginning to leave its first phase, the “ethical-anarchist-positivist stew,”²⁰⁷ described in the introduction. Prior to 1901 there had been some disagreements among Jewish intellectual elites, but for the most part Jewish radicals of all varieties were a part of the same loosely conglomerated movement. McKinley's assassination forced apart Jewish radicals into very different trajectories. The new depictions of socialists after 1901 ranged from full support for their movement to being simply less despicable than the anarchists, but regardless this improved coverage of them allowed socialists to slowly enter the mainstream press themselves, which only a few years earlier would have been thought impossible.

The divide struck by the American press between socialism and anarchism proved not just to be one of theoretical definition. The fissure between these previously close branches of

²⁰⁶ “The Record of the Year,” *New York Times*, Jan. 1, 1902.

²⁰⁷ Epstein, 137.

radicalism allowed a certain leeway for socialist agitation after 1901, while greatly restricting that of anarchists. Both movements continued to increase in size after 1901,²⁰⁸ but the growth of anarchism paled with the meteoric rise of socialism on the Jewish street. Goldman chose an aggressive response to the government persecution that helped propagandize the anarchist movement, but came at great risk. Yanovsky did not follow Goldman's lead in this regard, instead paying lip service to McKinley and the government that tarnished the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme's* reputation among other anarchists like Goldman.

Though the anti-anarchist laws passed after the McKinley assassination were not as effective as they could have been, 1901-03 was still a period of crisis for Yiddish anarchism. Isolated from both socialist and more radical anarchists, Yiddish anarchism was left as a sort of confused intermediate within in a diverging world of Jewish radicalism. This proved to be an unstable position within only a few years. The transition to the second phase of the Jewish anarchist movement was half way complete. What solidified it was ideological change, which would come in only a few years during the Revolution of 1905.

²⁰⁸ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 6.

Chapter Two

The Storm of Revolution: The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* Reports on the Russian Revolution of 1905

“In the foreground emerged the Jewish question, confronting me like a Sphinx: Solve my riddle or I will devour you.”

- Chaim Zhitlovsky²⁰⁹

“It was a terrifying and dark time... The struggle for freedom went through a dangerous sickness... And when it began to thunder and lightning it cut only the smallest shreds of light in the densest of clouds. And where? Where else but Russia, where they waited like no one else for the coming of a storm.”

- X. Y. Z. (Hillel Solotaroff), in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*²¹⁰

In the first decade of the twentieth century Jewish radicals saw incredible hope and incredible horror. From wherever Eastern European Jews had gone on their ever-widening diaspora, they looked back and saw a hated Russian Empire crumbling, but crushing as it did its Jews with poverty, terror, and violence. For Jewish radicals of all sorts the only answer to the plight of Russian Jews was revolution. Opportunity presented itself in the midst of the Russo-Japanese War (Feb. 1904 – Sep. 1905), which an over-confident Russia was fast losing. It was the first time in modern history that an Asian country had defeated a European one, and it made immediately evident the fragility of the Russian Empire. After almost a year of economic depression, harsh

²⁰⁹ Chaim Zhitlovsky, “The Jewish Factor in My Socialism,” in Lucy S. Dawidowicz, ed., *The Golden Tradition. Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1996), 417.

²¹⁰ X. Y. Z., “1905,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Dec. 30, 1905. “X. Y. Z.” was the pseudonym of Hillel Solotaroff. Borekh Tshubinski, “Hillel Zolotarov (Hillel Solotaroff),” *Yiddish Leksikon*, <http://yleksikon.blogspot.hu/2016/07/hillel-zolotarov-hillel-solotaroff.html>.

drafting quotas, and the brutal suppression of workers, the revolution finally began on “Bloody Sunday” January 22nd of 1905 when soldiers fired on a workers’ strike in St. Petersburg, killing at least 130 protestors.²¹¹ Rebellion broke out across the empire as a result, and Jewish newspapers across the world printed headlines everyday announcing each victory, defeat, telegram, and rumor that made its way from Russia. It was a confusing conflict, with dozens of parties and factions and few clear outcomes. Rashes of pogroms broke out across the Jewish Pale of Settlement during the revolution that eclipsed the pogroms of 1881-82 in scale.²¹² What became increasingly clear was that as the revolution marched on pogroms increased and intensified. It was rarely clear how they began or who started them (the Government, Cossacks, anarchists, children, and even other Jews²¹³ the headlines declared), but regardless the link between the pogroms and the revolution seemed ever stronger.

The Revolution of 1905 was often described as a storm. Though not a rare depiction of revolutionary conflict, it is remarkable how ubiquitous this metaphor was for 1905. Pogroms had likewise been described as storms since they first appeared in 1881.²¹⁴ The origin of the word

²¹¹ Scholars debate when the Revolution of 1905 began. Many have argued that 1904-1907 is a more accurate timeframe. Regardless, Bloody Sunday was when the revolution was perceived to have begun internationally. As I will argue shortly the perception of the revolution is more important to this chapter than the revolution itself. See: Abraham Ascher, “The Russian Revolution of 1905,” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Russian_Revolution_of_1905.

²¹² There had been 33 anti-Jewish riots in 1904, many of which begun by Russian soldiers, but historian Abraham Ascher distinguishes these events from the pogroms that broke out in 1905. Abraham Ascher, “The Russian Revolution of 1905.”

²¹³ All but the last claim were fairly common. For one example see: “Yidn Fayten Yidn,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 27, 1905. The Jewish press almost ubiquitously claimed that the Russian Government was fomenting the pogroms, if not actually carrying them out itself. The scholarly consensus now opposes this view. However, the Tsar was openly hostile toward Jews, particularly during 1905. He wrote to his mother on October 25th, 1905 that “nine-tenths of the trouble makers are Jews.” He also sympathized with the extreme right-wing and anti-Semitic group the Union of the Russian People who fomented many pogroms and he pardoned many of its members who were convicted for participating in such violence. According to R. Wortman, “the pogroms represented another sign of the tsar and people” to Nicholas II. Abraham Ascher, “The Russian Revolution of 1905;” R. Wortman, “Nicholas II and the Revolution,” in *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia’s Jews*, 41.

²¹⁴ Though the word “pogrom” is often instilled with medieval connotations, it first originated to describe the anti-Jewish violence in Russia in 1881-82. John Klier, “Pogroms,” *YIVO Encyclopedia*, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Pogroms> (accessed May 6, 2018). This period of pogroms was called the “storms of the south” and the storm metaphor became common when describing pogroms afterward. See: Israel

pogrom is disputed, but the explanation prevalent at the turn of the century was that it came from *grom*, the Russian word for thunder.²¹⁵ Radicals had also long described the future social revolution as a storm that would wipe away the oppressive hegemonies of the world. Jewish radicals thus faced a terrifying question: what kind of storm would 1905 bring? Would it be a storm of revolution or a storm of violence against Jews? If it was both, then would it mean that the future social revolution would come at the cost of Jewish blood? It soon became clear that no matter who emerged victorious in the storm of 1905, it was the Jews that would suffer most its thunder.

The revolution was a failure. The rebels' early success forced Tsar Nicholas II to release the October Manifesto on October 30th,²¹⁶ which promised to establish the empire's first constitution, modeled on the German one, and the first parliament, the Duma, but many of the reforms were soon rescinded and the revolution dissipated over months of bloody skirmishes with the military. Both Lenin and Trotsky saw the 1905 revolution as a "dress rehearsal" for 1917, and this became the standard interpretation in Soviet historiography.²¹⁷ For Russian Jews, however, the revolution held great significance, and Jewish historians see it as a major turning point in modern Jewish history.²¹⁸ One of the most eminent historians of Russian Jewry, Jonathan Frankel, wrote that it changed the very "structure, balance, and mood of Jewish politics."²¹⁹ Partly this was due to some modest reforms regarding Jews that came after the revolution. Publishing in Yiddish

Bartal, "Chapter 13: 'Storms in the South,' 1881-1882," in *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2005), 145.

²¹⁵ Steven J. Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York; London: Liveright Published Co., 2018), 14.

²¹⁶ This is the Gregorian date, rather than the Julian one that would have been used in Russia at the time. All the dates in this paper are in Gregorian.

²¹⁷ Abraham Ascher provides a good overview of the various interpretations of 1905 historically, particularly among communists. See: Ascher, "Interpreting 1905," in *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia's Jews*, 15-30.

²¹⁸ For instance, Benjamin Nathans, "Introduction," in *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia's Jews*, 1; Ury, 16; Shtakser, 2.

²¹⁹ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 143.

became much less restricted and Yiddish newspapers flourished in the years following the revolution.²²⁰ But the pogroms that coincided with the revolution had a more palpable effect. Outraged by the mass violence against Jews, Jewish political movements entered a more nationalist period as older groups like the General Jewish Labor Bund supplemented socialist agitation with calls for Jewish cultural and political autonomy, and newer, more explicitly nationalist groups like the Labor Zionist Party *Po'ale Tsiyon* emerged.²²¹

One effect of the Revolution of 1905 that many scholars agree on is that it led to the large-scale abandonment of internationalism by many radical Jewish political movements (most notably the Bund) as they moved toward more nationalist positions, but scholars rarely consider the revolution's influence on the anarchist movement, seeing it as mostly peripheral to Jewish politics.²²² I argue in this chapter that the Yiddish anarchist community of New York not only *did* conform to the larger move away from internationalism among Jewish political movements, but that this change caused intense turmoil within the Yiddish anarchist movement there—perhaps more than for any other radical Jewish political group given the earlier fierce commitment of Yiddish anarchists to internationalism. Jewish historians have been somewhat justified in not including Yiddish anarchism within their analysis of the 1905 Revolution, because Yiddish anarchists had generally not been seen as participating in a Jewish movement. But this is precisely why the 1905 Revolution was important for Yiddish anarchists, for it made them begrudgingly but irrevocably *into* a Jewish movement.

²²⁰ Benjamin Nathans, "Introduction," 7.

²²¹ Benjamin Nathans, "Introduction," 3.

²²² What has been discussed in brief is Hillel Solotaroff's anarchist nationalism (discussed later in this chapter) in response to Kishinev. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 38-40. See also Steven Zipperstein's claim that the Kishinev pogrom in 1903 "was the rare—perhaps the only—item on the Jewish communal agenda embraced by all." Zipperstein, 24.

In this chapter I follow how the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* covered the major events and pogroms of the 1905 Revolution, but rather than begin with Bloody Sunday in 1905 I begin with the Kishinev Pogrom in 1903. I deliberately extend my timeline to include Kishinev, which was well before the revolution, for two reasons. One, though Kishinev was not strictly speaking part of the revolution, once the revolution began it was *seen* as a part of it. Kishinev became the pogrom to which all other pogroms were compared, and all were thought to be bound to the fate of the revolution.²²³ The second reason is that Kishinev serves as a better first point of comparison between Yiddish anarchists and Yiddish socialists, who covered the event completely differently. Initially, anarchists refused to privilege anti-Jewish violence as any more important than violence against other oppressed groups—a symptom of their anti-chauvinistic, internationalist creed that always led them to oppose anything that even resembled Jewish nationalism. By the end of the revolution, however, they had completely reversed this attitude and they reported on the pogroms with the same horror and obsession as socialists did. This shift signaled a larger one in the character of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* and the Yiddish anarchist movement the paper represented. After the revolution the paper became more moderate and more open about its own Jewishness. It moved closer in character to the Socialist Yiddish paper the *Forverts* and farther away the publications of Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and other Jewish anarchists whose trajectory was completely non-Jewish, English-language anarchism. Some Yiddish anarchists even turned to a new Jewish *nationalist* form of anarchism that would have only a few years before been impossible to imagine.

²²³ There is much scholarly debate on the use and history of the word “pogrom”. This essay, however, is not about the pogroms themselves and whether they should be called pogroms. Rather it is about how anarchists covered the anti-Jewish violence during the 1905 Revolution, and they, like most of the Jewish press at the time, used the word to refer to many sorts of violence (including occasionally against non-Jews).

What actually happened in the revolution is not all that important here. My aim is not to investigate the revolution itself, but rather its *perception*.²²⁴ The issue here is how anarchists perceived the pogroms and the revolution because they threw Yiddish anarchists into a crisis over how they perceived themselves. Were they building a *Jewish* movement or simply a movement made up of Jews? It was a question that had been toyed around with before, but the pogroms demanded an answer. The pogroms had ceased by the Fall of 1906 and would not begin again until 1914, but the threat of them took much longer to fade.²²⁵ The editors of *Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History* write that the incredible violence of 1905 against the Jews meant that afterwards they “lived with a sword hanging over their heads.” The pogroms made every radical Jewish group struggle with their own revolutionary politics and their long endorsement of assimilation.²²⁶ If Jewish blood was the cost of revolution, then Yiddish anarchists would have to decide how they *as Jews* would deal with the coming storm.²²⁷

Easter Sunday, Kishinev – April 19th, 1903

Around noon on Easter Sunday, children in the city of Kishinev, the capital of the Bessarabian province of the Russian Empire (modern-day Moldova), began to harass Jews in Chuflynskii Square. The townsfolk had become incensed with the Jews over the past two months, egged on by

²²⁴ It was also commonly claimed in the American press, both Jewish and non-Jewish, that pogroms were retaliations against the activity of Jewish anarchists (who were sometimes surprisingly painted in a quite positive light), but there is little evidence to substantiate these claims and as far as I have seen the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* never responded to these accusations. Though Jewish anarchist activity in Russia during the 1905 Revolution is still in need of study, I do not deal with it here.

²²⁵ Vladimir Levin, “Preventing Pogroms: Patterns in Jewish Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Russia,” in Jonathon Dekel-Chen, et al., *Rethinking the Pogrom*, 95.

²²⁶ Jonathon Dekel-Chen, et al., *Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, 10, 13.

²²⁷ My interest in how Jewish anarchists reacted to the pogroms is partly inspired by the editors of *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, who claim in their introduction that there is a lacuna in Jewish historiography for the “diverse array of Jewish responses to violence” before the Holocaust. Jonathon Dekel-Chen, et al., *Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, 5.

a Moldavian nationalist and vicious anti-Semite, Pavolachi Krushevan, who claimed that the Jews had committed a blood libel by murdering a young Christian boy and girl who had died mysteriously earlier in February. By the late afternoon the children harassing the Jews were replaced by roaming bands of students, laborers, and artisans armed with axes who began to loot Jewish property. Seeing that the police and military would make no effort to stop them, the looters set upon the 50,000 Jews of the city.²²⁸



Figure 19 - Front page of the major socialist Yiddish paper in New York City, *Forverts* ("Forward"). The headline reads "Rivers of Jewish Blood in Kishinev: The Most Dreadful and Bloody of All Pogroms."

The editors of the *Forverts* reacted with immediate alarm when word of the riot reached them. The pogromists had "broken into the Jewish homes, slashing and shooting, hacking off heads, stomping their feet on weak women and small children." 25 Jews had been murdered in Kishinev and 275 had been seriously wounded, the paper reported.²²⁹ The Russian government, they claimed, was entirely responsible for the pogrom, having sent agents among the Christian

²²⁸ Monty Noam Penkower, "The Kishinev Pogrom of 1903: A Turning Point in Jewish History," *Modern Judaism* 24, No. 3 (2004): 187-189.

²²⁹ There were reports of much higher numbers. A telegram from St. Petersburg published in the *New York Times* claimed 120 Jews had been killed and 500 wounded. "Jewish Massacre Denounced," *New York Times*, Apr. 28, 1903. Historian Monty Noam Penkower gives the numbers that were recorded in a memorial album published by Kishinev Jews in 1903: 41 killed (more than the total number of Jews killed in the pogroms of 1881), 495 wounded, and 2,000 left homeless. Monty Noam Penkower, "The Kishinev Pogrom of 1903," 188.

population to incite violence against the Jews. Such rumors that the Russian government had secretly engineered pogroms was common to much reporting on them since the first rash of pogroms in 1881, but among Jewish papers this charge was almost ubiquitous and widely considered a fact.²³⁰ Kishinev, the *Forverts* concluded, “was more daring, more wild, more terrifying, and more dreadful than all the pogroms of 1881.”²³¹

The pogrom also made it into the non-Jewish American press, and this was when the word “pogrom” first entered the English language.²³² One telegram from Russia published in the *New York Times* said that “The scenes of horror attending this massacre are beyond description. Babes were literally torn to pieces by the frenzied and blood-thirsty mob. The local police made no attempt to check the reign of terror. At sunset the streets were piled with corpses and wounded. Those who could make their escape fled in terror, and the city is now practically deserted of Jews.”²³³ A survivor said that “They snatched my one-year-old girl from my arms. One took it by the leg, another by the other, and tore it in twain. I begged them to kill me. Then they caught up my boy, eight years old, and chopped him to pieces.”²³⁴

²³⁰ Jonathon Dekel-Chen, et al., *Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, 4, 5.

²³¹ “Taykhen Idish Blut In Kishinev,” *Forverts*, Apr. 24, 1903. Interestingly there was a short, paragraph long snippet about a pogrom against Jews in Algeria in which 45 Jews were killed just below this article, but it got no headline.

²³² In “Uses and Abuses: ‘Pogrom’ in the Anglo-American Imagination, 1881-1919” Sam Johnson writes that the word pogrom didn’t enter English until after the pogrom in Gomel, Minsk province on September 9th, 1903, but in fact the word was used before this to describe the Kishinev pogrom, though Johnson is correct that it didn’t gain popularity for a few months. See: “How shall I begin my writing to you. My head is still turning from the storm and torture of the ‘pogrom’ we have undergone.” “Another Page from Kishinev’s Story,” *The Washington Times*, Jun. 14, 1903; “The pogrom of Kishineff deserves and well receive the execration of mankind, but the innocent blood poured out in darkest Russia will not have been shed in vain if it shall unite Jew and Christian all over the civilized world in condemnation of savage cruelties which shame the tortures of Torquenda and the Spanish Inquisition.” “Money For Sufferers: Wichita Contributed to Flood and Massacre Victims,” *Wichita Daily Eagle*, Jul. 9, 1903; “Under Such Conditions the recurrence of ‘pogroms’ are inevitable! No sane man can hope for a cessation of those shocking outrages.” “B’nai B’rith Petition to the Czar of Russia: Views of the Rabbi of the Adath Israel Congregation,” *The Washington Times*, Jul. 12, 1903.

²³³ “Jewish Massacre Denounced,” *New York Times*, Apr. 28, 1903.

²³⁴ “Jews in Roumania and Poland Alarmed,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1903.

A month later, the *New York Times* published a compilation of letters from across Eastern Europe that told of worsening Jewish-Christian relations. In Kishinev Jewish survivors were in a financial crisis: “there is distress and poverty in the whole land such as was never before known. Wealthy men have become poor; poor men are now beggars, and those who were beggars are starving to death.” In Warsaw Jews had armed themselves with revolvers and stationed guards in the streets. In Romania one correspondent claimed that “The Christians of Derlay, Bakau, Galaz, Tulcha, and many other places proclaim openly that they will massacre all the Jews,” and that soldiers had said they will help the pillaging and murder once it starts.²³⁵ The Kishinev pogrom had thrown Russian Jews into a state of crisis, their worst since the Khmelnytsky Massacres almost 250 years before, and Jewish papers everywhere reported on the rising sense of dread.

That is, all Jewish papers reported on Kishinev except the anarchists’. The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* took a whole two weeks to report on the pogrom, and then it was only in a small article in the paper’s back pages. It began,

It is a little too early to say for sure what occurred in this unfortunate city [Kishinev] because all the telegrams, still coming now, are very sparse in words and, as one can see in the many columns all across the Jewish daily papers, there is much to thank for the artistry of these fine writers, who only try to add some color [to the reports], but also add many details according to their own opinion – though surely it was a terrifying massacre that took place there.²³⁶

After accusing reporters of sensationalizing the pogroms, the writer went on to say that the massacre was terrible not because it had been of Jews, but that because it symbolized the “wild, barbaric time [we live in] in which men can be so cruel.” The Jews suffer in Russia but so do many others, the writer added. Indeed, maybe the “beasts” who committed the pogrom are really the

²³⁵ “Jews in Roumania and Poland Alarmed,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1903.

²³⁶ “Blut-bad in Kishinev,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 2, 1903.

greatest sufferers, for in their desperation they were incensed by their “demon” oppressors, who drew out the terrible beasts from within them. The Jews should defend themselves, the writer proclaimed, to learn to fight “like one who lives between two tigers.” The only thing that would ultimately save them and end Tsarist rule of Russia was revolution.²³⁷ In classical, internationalist fashion the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* essentially claimed that anti-Semitism, no matter how severe, was subordinate to the oppression of the working-class and could only be solved through class struggle.



Figure 20 - Page four of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* where the first article on Kishinev was published. The article is entitled “Blut-Bad in Kishinev” (Blood-Bath in Kishinev) and begins on the third column from the left.

Two weeks later, as more and more accounts of the atrocities in Kishinev came in, Yanovsky ceded some ground with a front-page article detailing some of the horrors of the

²³⁷ “Blut-bad in Kishinev,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 2, 1903.

violence in a much more even-handed tone.²³⁸ But his position overall remained the same and he was deeply annoyed by the continued apocalyptic attitude of other Jewish newspapers toward the pogrom and Russia in general. He refused to privilege anti-Jewish violence over any other type of violence. He wrote in his weekly opinion column that 9000 Christians had been slaughtered in Bosnia, but not a word of it made into the Jewish press.²³⁹ He also criticized the demonstrations organized by Jews to get the American government to intervene in Russia: “Let’s not be foolish; the American government cannot act against the barbarism of the Russian government, because its hands are also not free of blood.”²⁴⁰ Disgusted with some Jewish radicals willingness to side with bourgeois Jewish philanthropists like Jacob Schiff and capitalist demagogues like President Roosevelt against the Russian threat, Yanovsky continually drew attention to violent oppression going on in the United States, much closer than Russia. For instance, the subtitle of one article on the forceful suppression of a strike in Pittsburg read: “The following did not happen in Russia, but in the highly civilized United States. Russia has nothing to be ashamed of.”²⁴¹ Yanovsky was not alone in his criticism of the Jewish press’s coverage of Kishinev. In a letter to the editor published in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* on May 23rd, one Yakov Milkh agreed with Yanovsky, calling the *Forverts* a “jingoistic troupe” of “Jewish demagogues” who were taking advantage of Jews and exaggerating their misfortune to sell papers. Milkh wrote that the *Forverts*’ petition to call on Roosevelt to intervene in Russia “the greatest scandal in the world” and a slap in the face to the Jews of Kishinev.²⁴²

²³⁸ “Shoyderlikh!” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 16, 1903.

²³⁹ “Oyf Der Vakh,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 16, 1903.

²⁴⁰ “Oyf Der Vakh,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 9, 1903.

²⁴¹ “Amerikaner,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jun.6, 1903.

²⁴² Jakov Milkh, “Brief Tsum Redakhtor,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 23, 1903.

However, Yanovsky and other Jewish anarchists' strong resistance to privileging Jewish oppression was not the only response to the Kishinev pogrom among Jewish anarchists. Hillel Solotaroff, a prominent speaker and theorist among Yiddish anarchists in the United States, who had been with the movement since its early days in America, was completely distraught by the pogrom.²⁴³ It made him question internationalism, which was then a doctrinal part of anarchism. Solotaroff began his essay "Serious Questions" in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* by bemoaning the tragic rise of modern anti-Semitism (in a way Yanovsky had emphatically refused to):

Deep are the wounds, I say, and greater is the pain, when [a Jew] looks a little closer at the entirely bloody history of Jewish persecution and pogroms, unlike Jew-baiters and disreputable anti-Semites, who astoundingly increase more and more in the almost all of the civilized countries of the world. And so deep will that wounded feeling be for [the Jew] when he considers all the Jew-baiters and tormentors and all the inhumane and gruesome deaths and pogroms that have passed before the eyes of the civilized world, a world that boasts of its wonderful progress of knowledge and light, of humanitarian ideas and brotherhood, of internationalist sentiment and sparkling social ideals.²⁴⁴

He went on to say that the modern spread of progress (including internationalism, socialism, and anarchism) had turned all nations against the Jews. And whether internationalist radicals wanted to see themselves as non-Jews was irrelevant because the anti-Semites will always see them only as Jews— "And when they strike and persecute and torture and murder the Jewish people *as Jews*, we would inevitably die *as Jews*..."²⁴⁵ There could only be one result of the rising anti-Semitism: "as time goes by the enormous storm of persecution pushes, more and more, all the Jewish folk

²⁴³ Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 38.

²⁴⁴ Hillel Solotaroff, "Ernste Fragen," in *Dr. Hillel Solotaroff: Geglibene Shriften* Vol 3, ed. Joel Enteen (New York City: Dr. H. Solotaroff Publication Committee, 1924), 300. The original serial publication: Hillel Solotaroff, "Ernste Fragen," *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 23-30, 1903.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 301. Emphasis mine.

together into one, great national mass...”²⁴⁶ Internationalism, the motto of all radicals up until then, would only lead to the assimilation and disappearance of the Jewish people, and it would not help them against the growing violence: “to preach the internationalist spirit to the Jewish folk is the same as preaching its own destruction.”²⁴⁷ The real solution was what Solotaroff called Jewish “nationalist anarchism”, a new form of nationalism that would not contradict radical ideas, but rather serve as a tool to spread them among the Jewish masses and to protect those Jews from an increasingly hostile world.

Solotaroff’s declaration was—at the time—an entirely un-anarchist thing to say. Though radicals of many stripes denounced nationalism, anarchists typically saw themselves as its extreme antithesis. To go far beyond “chauvinistic” ideas about the Jewish folk, like that which the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* criticized in the *Forverts*’ coverage of Kishinev, and fully endorse nationalism came as a shock to Jewish anarchists. It provoked debate in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* that lasted for several months.²⁴⁸ While there was some endorsement of Solotaroff’s ideas, most writers were critical of them—though it is unclear whether this reflects the majority opinion of Yiddish anarchists or just that Yanovsky may have preferred to publish those who agreed with him. Solotaroff never called for the creation of a Jewish state in his “Serious Questions,” but most critics in the paper argued that any kind of nationalism would eventually mean the creation of a state, and ultimately this was irreconcilable with anarchism.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 303.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 306.

²⁴⁸ See, “Anarchism and Nationalism,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jun. 6, 1903; “A Ernste Frage,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jun. 13, 1903; “Gen. H. Solotaroff’s Ernste Fragen,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jun. 13, 1903; letters to the editor on Jun. 13, 20, and 27, 1903; Ab. Goldberg, “Anarchism and Nationalism,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jun. 20, 1903; L. Finkelshtayn, “Anarchism and Nationalism,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jul. 4, 1903; H. Solotaroff, “Tsu Mayne Kritiker,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jul. 4, 1903; a series of essays entitled “Nationalizmus, Internatsionalizmus un Anarchizmus,” that began Jul. 11, 1903; and L. Finkelshtayn, “Naitonalizmus un Klasen-Kampf,” Jul. 18, 1903.

²⁴⁹ Zimmer, 38-39.

Solotaroff became increasingly alienated from the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* because of his nationalist ideas and became close with the Jewish socialist theorist Chaim Zhitlovsky. Solotaroff and Zhitlovsky were remarkably similar figures (though the former has not seen nearly as much attention in historiography). Zhitlovsky was a Russian Jewish socialist who had been a strong advocate of radical internationalism and assimilation until he witnessed the pogroms of 1881. After seeing the terrible violence of the pogroms he pioneered “Diaspora Nationalism,” which asserted that the Jewish people were a nation with a common language (Yiddish) and culture, that it was the duty of Jewish intellectuals to elevate that culture, and that in order for Jews to survive they have to maintain some sort of socialist autonomy within the diaspora.²⁵⁰ He visited the United States on an eighteen-month tour beginning in 1904 to raise money for the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party in which he gave a series of popular lectures and debates on his Diaspora Nationalism that elevated him to a near celebrity status among American Jews.²⁵¹ Historian Tony Michels claimed that Zhitlovsky “sparked something of a revolution in American Jewish life.”²⁵² While correct, Solotaroff’s “Ernste Fragen” demonstrates that similar ideas had already made some impact when Zhitlovsky arrived in the United States, and that Diaspora nationalism was as original to America as it was to Russia.

In mid-September there was another pogrom in Gomel (now South-Eastern Belarus), but it did not provoke as intense a reaction from Jews internationally.²⁵³ In covering the pogrom, the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* claimed that it was not as severe because the Jews had learned from Kishinev and were now prepared to fight back. Interest in Russia faded for a time in the *Freie*

²⁵⁰ Zimmer, 39.

²⁵¹ Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 126-27.; “Guide to the Papers of Chaim Zhitlovsky,” *YIVO Institute for Jewish Research*, <http://digifindingaids.cjh.org/?pID=1278442>.

²⁵² Michels, *Fire in Their Hearts*, 126-27.

²⁵³ Gomel is often “Homel” in Yiddish.

Arbeiter Stimme. There were 43 pogroms in Russia in 1904, in part caused by the tumult of conscription campaigns during the Russo-Japanese War, but they caused few headlines.²⁵⁴ Conditions in Russia seemed stagnant, and the anarchists became busy dealing with the anti-anarchist laws provoked by the assassination of President McKinley in 1901. Then at the beginning of 1905, like a bolt of lightning, the revolution came.

Winter – The Revolution Begins

“The Russian Folk Awakens!” read the headline of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* on the 28th of January 1905, six days after the Bloody Sunday massacre. “Finally,” the article declared, “the long-wished for and hotly-anticipated revolution has broken out in the land of slavery and darkness.”²⁵⁵ Another article in the same issue, “Is this the Revolution?”, had a more precarious tone, questioning whether the poor of Russia would ever be able to unite with the soldiers against the government, and whether this revolution would be both a social and political revolution, if such a thing was even possible.²⁵⁶ Even Hillel Solotaroff (who was apparently acceptable again to Yanovsky a year and half after the “nationalist anarchism” debate had died down) wrote a dramatic article about the coming of the revolution.²⁵⁷ None of the articles mentioned Jews. At this point the revolution was divorced from the Jewish question, at least for the anarchists.

²⁵⁴ Levin, “Preventing Pogroms,” in *Rethinking the Pogrom*, 95.

²⁵⁵ “Dos Rusishe Folk Ervakht!” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jan. 28, 1905.

²⁵⁶ “Is Dos Di Revolutsion?” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jan. 28, 1905.

²⁵⁷ H. Solotaroff, “Di Revolutsion in Rusland,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jan. 28, 1905.



Figure 21 - The Freie Arbeiter Stimme's headlining article on January 28th 1905 on the start of the Russian revolution after Bloody Sunday.

For the next couple of months most articles published about the revolution in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* were exuberant and completely confident in its soon success. Headlines like “And the Revolution Marches On!”, “Always Onward!”, and “The Last Gasp [of the Tsar]” were brandished across the paper’s front page every week.²⁵⁸ And each issue brought new excitement. Yanovsky and Solotaroff organized a collective fund to aid the revolutionaries, and articles were published explaining the innovative techniques of the revolution like the general strike.²⁵⁹ The infamous German anarchist Johann Most threw an elaborate ball in the Lower East Side celebrating the assassination of the Tsar’s uncle, with over 1,200 attendees.²⁶⁰ Peter Kropotkin, who shared frequent correspondence with Yanovsky, had a number of letters published in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (some of which were published in both Yiddish and English, a first for the paper) in which he made instructive and exciting proclamations about the coming of the social revolution:

²⁵⁸ “Un di Revolutsion geht vayter on!” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Feb. 4, 1905; “Immer Forverts!”, *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Apr. 15, 1905; “Di Gesise,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Apr. 1, 1905.

²⁵⁹ For the first announcement of the fund see “Far Di Rusishe Revolutsion,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, 4 Feb. 1905. Updates on the fund were regularly announced in the back of the paper and a regular column was implemented listing the names of people and organizations that had donated to the cause. For once such article on the general strike see “Der Algemeyner Strayk,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Feb. 11, 1905.

²⁶⁰ “Sergius Not The Last, Herr Most Tells Reds,” *New York Times*, Feb. 23, 1905.

“But remember, friends, that *all nations* are closely interdependent now, and that a social movement *in Russia alone* will not give the results it would if similar popular movements broke out in all civilized nations. The best way to aid Revolution in Russia is to stir the Social Revolution in all civilized countries.”²⁶¹ The overall feeling was that the victory of the revolution was inevitable, and the end of Tsardom was near. One satirical article asked people to pity Tsar Nicholas, saying “*a rakhmones nebekh*” – a uniquely Yiddish phrase that could only be rendered blandly in English as “pity on the unfortunate one.”²⁶²

But as Winter turned to Spring stories of horrific violence against Jews seeped into the pages of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*.²⁶³ Most of the reports of violence were quite general, and not particularly linked to Jews, except for one somewhat panicked article published in mid-March: “Niholai Meshuge?” (Is [Tsar] Nicholas Crazy?). “The situation in Russia is at its worst,” the subtitle read, “New conspiracies in the Tsar’s Palace, from which comes the old method of pogrom.” The writer claimed that for the Tsar only one method remains to keep his power: “to again provoke the oppressed elements of the people to make pogroms against the Jews.” The Bund was doing its best to fight the pogroms and arm Jews against their attackers, but still the article said mournfully, “It is certain the Jews will suffer much.” In an almost pleading tone the writer concluded, “The revolution grows, it must grow. Until it reaches its final goal, until Russia is liberated of its plague, the plague called Tsarism.”²⁶⁴

The writer’s fear proved justified. Less than two months later the Zhitomir pogrom broke out. In addition to being particularly deadly, it was surprising for two reasons. First, it was the first

²⁶¹ Peter Kropotkin, “Brief fun Peter Kropotkin,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Feb. 18, 1905.

²⁶² “Tsar-Shvekhling,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Feb. 18, 1905.

²⁶³ “Blut un Blut,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Feb. 25, 1905; “Der Yunger Meydlikher Toyd Fun Der Rusisher Somardezshevie,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Mar. 4, 1905; “Tsvay Pogromen,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Mar. 4, 1905; “Nikolai Meshuge?” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Mar. 18, 1905; “Rusland Blutet,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 6, 1905.

²⁶⁴ “Nikolai Meshuge?” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Mar. 18, 1905.

large offense against the Jews by the Black Hundreds (an infamous extreme right-wing, Tsarist irregular group), and second because it was the first pogrom where Jews resisted with violence.²⁶⁵ Twenty-nine Jews were murdered and, according to some observers, more Christians died than Jews.²⁶⁶ It was one of the bloodiest pogroms yet. Russians Jews were, as the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* had earlier suggested, learning to fight “like one who lives between two tigers,”²⁶⁷ but this seemed to only further provoke the *pogromshchiki*.

Summer – The Burning Struggle

By the time of the Zhitmoir pogrom the Yiddish anarchist perspective on the situation of Russian Jews had in many ways reversed. One article on May 13th criticized the *Jewish Chronicle*, an English-language paper in London, for claiming that salvation was finally coming to Russian Jews because of European criticism of the Tsarist violence against Jews. The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* called this claim ridiculous and again stated that only the revolution could save the Jews. This was different, however, from the first time the paper had claimed this after Kishinev. Anti-Jewish violence was no longer an unremarkable facet of class struggle in Russia, rather the pogroms made the revolution about anti-Jewish violence and about stopping it. “What the government wants,” the article stated, “is for the Jewish workers to abstain from the general revolutionary movement. The Kishinev pogrom did not do this, and the Zhitomir pogrom will not do it either.” Jews were no longer but one player in the revolution; now the revolution was *for* the Jews and the Jews had

²⁶⁵ Sergei, Kan, *Lev Shternberg: Anthropologist, Russian Socialist, Jewish Activist* (Lincoln, Nebraska; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 156;

²⁶⁶ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988), 130.

²⁶⁷ “Blut-bad in Kishinev,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 2, 1903.

to be entirely for the revolution. “The Jewish workers in Russia will not give up their work,” the article declared, “their mighty labor for the revolution.”²⁶⁸

The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*’s interest in the Jewish aspect of the revolution only increased in the coming months. An article, “Brenender Kampf,” (Burning Struggle) in early August read:

The revolutionary spirit is stronger because of [the Tsar’s] fortresses, prisons, and Cossack whips that perform his wonderful work. And the best thing for us, born of Jews, is the news that... the Jewish workers play there such a mighty role in the struggle as leaders, because of the terrible Kishinev pogrom.

This is the greatest sign for us, that the Jewish workers make up the greatest portion [of the revolutionaries], that they are the leading spirit of the revolutionary uprising. And that this is the best answer to the bloodbath that von Plehve [the Russian Minister of Interior] and the Tsar wrought in Kishinev...

The Jews understand that von Plehve’s politics are an attempt to hurt them, and the result is, that they have become more united and now lead the struggle with good organization and planning, which until now has never happened in Russia.²⁶⁹

The article stated proudly that the majority of revolutionaries arrested in Russia were Jews. All criticism of the Jewish chauvinism that the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* had lodged against the *Forverts* only two years before was gone, replaced by pride for the revolutionary character of Russia’s Jews. The Kishinev pogrom was no longer presented as a minor, sensationalized tragedy, but as the terrible “bloodbath” that marked the beginning of a genuine radical Jewish uprising. Before Jews were simply part of the revolution. The pogroms had made it a Jewish revolution.

²⁶⁸ “A Yeshua Far Iden?” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, May 13, 1905.

²⁶⁹ “Brenender Kampf [Burning Struggle],” *Freie Arbeiter Shtimme*, Aug. 8, 1905.

This conceptual change in how the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* reported on the revolution also brought broader changes to the paper itself. Perhaps the best symbol of the stark shift in the paper's tone was an article—almost a poem really—published on August 1st, that had so much religious imagery Yanovsky actually apologized in a note beneath it. The article, “A Kishinever Judges” began,

A terrible kaddish [funeral prayer] is being said, a horrifying memory rises from the thousands of mourners. A kaddish, resounding from thousands of blooded hearts. Spoken over the ripped off limbs of their best and beloved. A kaddish, each word drenched in blood. A kaddish, a terrible scream, a heart wrenching echo from thousands of unfortunate, empty, oppressed, beaten-down creatures. A kaddish, each letter a sea of tears. Each word a flood of blood.²⁷⁰

Such an explicitly *Jewish* passage could never have been printed in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* before.

By October there had been fifty-some pogroms since the beginning of the revolution in January.²⁷¹ Just as the darkness and terror of the revolution seemed at its worst, hope came in the October Manifesto when the Tsar finally relented and promised sweeping reforms. Yet, for the Jews the hope was short-lived – the day after the manifesto the “flood of blood” turned into a “sea”.²⁷² The worst wave of pogroms yet seen swept over the Pale of Settlement in an instant as reactionary forces across the Empire retaliated against the manifesto's reforms. Jonathan Frankel described it as the most contradictory time of the revolution, when revolutionary energy was most stimulated by the manifesto, but at its most fragmented and polarized – “It was a time of both

²⁷⁰ M. Shmoylzojn, “Kishinever Mishpet,” *Freie Arbeiter Shtimme*, Aug. 1, 1905.

²⁷¹ Levin, “Preventing Pogroms,” in *Rethinking the Pogrom*, 95.

²⁷² “Nikolai Oyf Di Knie? Shoynd Badt Zikh in a Yam fun Blut,” (Nicholai On His Knees? He Already Baths in a Sea of Blood) *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Nov. 4, 1905. A “sea of Jewish blood” was a commonly used phrase in the Jewish press during this period.

spreading confusion and limitless hope.”²⁷³ The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* aptly called it the “Shturm-Tsayten” – the time of storms.

Autumn – The Time of Storms

The October Manifesto provoked the worst violence against Jews yet seen under the Romanov Dynasty. Between October 1905 and September 1906 there were approximately 650 pogroms in Russia, killing an estimated 3,000 Jews.²⁷⁴ The last major pogrom took place from June 1-3 of 1906 in Białystok. The violence there turned into a full battle when Jewish self-defense groups retaliated against the pogromists, leaving some 200 Jews dead and 700 wounded.²⁷⁵ The revolution continued on into 1907, but for many in the Yiddish press, even the most radical, the Białystok pogrom signaled the end of the revolution for Jews.²⁷⁶ In a lengthy article published a few days after the release of the October Manifesto the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* made its position clear. The Tsar would have to stop the violence against Jews to prove his manifesto was earnest:

Take the Cossacks out of the streets of the cities, for freedom given by Cossacks is a mournful joke, and the fight for freedom will only continue. For here Nicholai has taken to the old method: to drown the revolution in a sea of Jewish blood. The terrible blood-bath in Odessa, in Kiev, and in many other cities is the work of Trepov’s [the Russian Prime Minister] agents and tricksters! Terrible and dreadful are the bloody scenes. Jewish women and children are cut into pieces. The Kishinev massacre is child’s play compared to them [the current pogroms] that the bestial

²⁷³ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 150.

²⁷⁴ Johnson, “Uses and Abuses,” 162.

²⁷⁵ Rebecca Kobrin, “Białystok.” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bia%C5%82ystok>. Abraham Ascher offers the much more conservative figure of 82 Jews and six non-Jews killed, and about 700 people (Jewish and non-Jewish) wounded. Abraham Ascher, “The Russian Revolution of 1905.”

²⁷⁶ Sarah Stein, *Making Jews Modern: The Yiddish and Ladino Press in the Russian and Ottoman Empires* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 115.

Russian government provokes against the Jews.... Freedom with a Nicholai, with a Trepov, with Cossacks, with whips – this is impossible.²⁷⁷

The incredible burden of anti-Jewish violence made the manifesto an inadequate end to the revolution. The paper called resoundingly for their death of the Tsar as the only way to end the struggle. The revolution's success no longer meant the overthrow of government, or anything really associated with the anarchist understanding of a revolution. It now only meant the safety of the Jews. It was a stance that could not have taken in the paper only a few years before—the hardline internationalism that the paper had so emblemized was broken.

Though internationalism no longer held such sway over the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, it was still a dedicated anarchist paper. The yearning for the revolution expressed on its pages was more evident than ever, but Jewish anarchists were rapidly losing faith in the classical idea of a revolution. In the article “Shturm-Tsayten,” published on November 25th, the author said plainly that “It won’t be long until the Russian revolution has disintegrated.” The attitude had been grim among many radicals, the writer noted, particularly in the bloody weeks since the October Manifesto. Even in the most esteemed radical circles people had asked pessimistically, “Revolution? What effect has it had? Who won something in all previous revolutions? Revolution? How is it possible? What can workers do when armed with revolvers against cannons that kill hundreds with a single shot?” So many of the already oppressed had been sapped of their courage, whipped, terrorized, and murdered, and won nothing it seemed, the writer stated, but he added pessimism was what the rulers wanted and it was misplaced. For the revolution in Russia would fail, but the thunderclouds of the revolution were spreading. In England, Germany, Austria, and

²⁷⁷ “Nikolai Oyf Di Knie? Shoyt Badt Zikh in a Yam fun Blut,” (Nicholai On His Knees? He Already Baths in a Sea of Blood) *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Nov. 4, 1905.

even in America there were great stirrings of revolt – “many feel the coming of a storm.” “This is the Autumn of revolution,” the author declared, “and it will be strong.”²⁷⁸

Revolution’s End

The spreading of the storm of revolution entailed a reimagining of what anarchism and the revolution should be. As internationalism waned, Jewish nationalism seemed ever more attractive. As hope for the revolution rapidly began to fade in early 1906, Hillel Solotaroff and Chaim Zhitlovsky’s ideas of radical Jewish nationalism began to work their way back into the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. Yanovsky published the speech of the well-known Yiddish journalist and translator Jacob A. Merison from his public debate with Zhitlovsky in February of 1906. Merison held to a staunchly anarchist anti-nationalist position, attacking Zhitlovsky’s belief that Jews could be a “folk”. The fundamental requirement of a folk, the basis of the nationalism Zhitlovsky wanted to build, was land above all else according to Merison. He drew a comparison to Lithuanians, who like the Jews only had a “jargon” and had not won a war for centuries, but had at the very least their own native land. That requirement was so untenable for Jews, Merison said, that to ask the very question “Are Jews a folk?” was itself lethal. Echoing the internationalist positions of the 1880s and 1890s he called out to Zhitlovsky “How can one speak of a special Jewish question? For us there was never a Jewish question!”²⁷⁹

Opinions among the subscribers to the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* were mixed. In a letter to the editor one Bundist, Joseph Kahan, dismissed the idea of Jews as a folk. He said in classical Marxist fashion that Jews occupied a parasitic role in society, nothing but “swindlers and penny dealers.”

²⁷⁸ “Shturm-Tsayten,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Nov. 25, 1905.

²⁷⁹ “Dr. Merison’s Rede Iber Teritorialismus in Der Debate Tsvishin Im un Dr. Zhitlovsky,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Feb. 10, 1906. See also: “A Por Beterkungen Vegen Mayn Debate mit Dr. Zhitlovsky,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Mar. 3, 1906.

Another reader responded that it was insulting to refer to the Jewish people in this way when Jews had spilt so much blood for the revolution. He was no chauvinist, the writer claimed, nor did he believe that Jews are the best in the world or that they do not have any problems, but how could one deny the incredible sacrifice Jews had made? For “as if going to a dance, our youth go to the barricades.”²⁸⁰

Around the same time, Solotaroff and Yanovsky viciously debated each other in a series of articles in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. Responding to the criticism he had received after Kishinev, Solotaroff presented a more moderate version of his nationalist anarchism, calling himself an “ideal nationalist” rather than a bonified nationalist. The mission of nationalist anarchism, he wrote, was to give Jews land and freedom either in socialist or anarchist conditions, the specifics did not matter. This goal had to be accomplished because assimilation had proven to be a failure. Non-Jews would always be strangers to them, Solotaroff claimed.²⁸¹ Yanovsky was incensed by Solotaroff, and compared his movement to the vitriol and racism of American Nativism.²⁸² Solotaroff responded by founding a Yiddish monthly paper with Zhitlovsky called *Dos Folk* dedicated to socialist Territorialism.²⁸³ Though the paper lasted less than a year its existence shows that there was significant support for Solotaroff and Zhitlovsky’s new concepts of radical Jewish nationalism.

²⁸⁰ “Di Yidn Als Folk,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Jan. 27, 1906. The previous letter to the editor by Joseph Kahan is paraphrased in this letter.

²⁸¹ Hillel Solotaroff, “Gen. Solotaroff’s Tenur,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Feb. 3, 1906.

²⁸² “Vegen Genose Solotaroff’s Taynes,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Feb. 10, 1906.

²⁸³ Abraham Cahan and the *Forverts* also took an anti-nationalist stance and dealt with precisely the same issue as Yanovsky. Louis E. Miller, a staffer of the *Forverts* left in 1905 to form a daily nationalist socialist paper *Di Warheit* (The Truth), which lasted until 1914.



Figure 22 - The front cover of the second issue of *Dos Folk* in December 12th, 1907.²⁸⁴

Scholars still struggle to understand what the impact of Solotaroff's anarchist nationalism. In a 1994 essay Mina Grauer's surveys a variety of anarchist thought on Jewish nationalism from Mikhail Bakunin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Pyotr Kropotkin, Bernard Lazare, Gustav Landeur, Rudolph Rocker, and Hillel Solotaroff. Bakunin and Proudhon, two of the most important early pioneers of anarchism and unabashedly anti-Semitic, completely rejected any kind of Jewish nationalism and Jews generally. Kropotkin, who had a long relationship with the Jewish anarchists of London, had a much more sympathetic view toward Jews. He rejected Zionism, but encouraged Jews to grow their own culture within the diaspora as other stateless peoples were doing. Landeur

²⁸⁴ *Dos Folk*, Dec. 12, 1907.

was a German Jewish anarchist who argued that the nation was a natural entity appropriated by the state, and that people could have many overlapping national identities, but he did not call for nationalism.²⁸⁵ Rudolph Rocker was a German anarchist who was not Jewish, but lived among the Yiddish anarchists in London for many years and even edited their Yiddish paper *Der Arbayer Fraynd*. In his 1937 book *Nationalism and Culture* he argued that both the nation and the state are artificial entities. The “folk” was a real concept that bound people by language and geography, but Jews were not a folk in his definition. Bernard Lazare was a French Jew and a well-known Dreyfusard with some anarchist convictions. He argued that intellectual and working-class Jews should develop their own nationalism with Hebrew as a common language based on the double solidarity of being poor and Jewish. Within a few years he had morphed his ideas into fully-fledged Zionism.²⁸⁶

Within this survey of anarchist thought, Solotaroff’s nationalist anarchism seems like an aberrant. He called for Jews to build a nationalism as a diasporic Yiddish culture with their own territory in anarchist or socialist conditions. Yet, Solotaroff only seems so out of place because Grauer is making an unnatural comparison. All of the people she compares him to are anarchists, but Solotaroff was the only one that was both a Jew and in a Yiddish-speaking radical milieu. The discourse on nationalism he was closest to was the broad Jewish radical one, not the specifically anarchist. His nationalist anarchism seems much more logical within the spectrum of Jewish politics and its reaction to the Revolution of 1905, not the anarchist one.

The revolution brought new and vigorous forms of Jewish radicalism to Russia. Three new Jewish political parties were established during the revolution: the Zionist Socialist Party (1905),

²⁸⁵ Though Landauer was a very proud of his Jewish identity, he was not part of a Jewish anarchist movement per se.

²⁸⁶ Mina Grauer, “Anarcho-Nationalism: Anarchist Attitudes towards Jewish Nationalism and Zionism,” *Modern Judaism* 14, No. 1 (1994): 1-14.

the Jewish Socialist Labor Party (1906), and the Labor Zionist Party *Po'ale Tsiyon* (1906), all of which took more militant and more nationalist positions than the Bund.²⁸⁷ The Bund itself switched to a stronger position on Jewish national-cultural autonomy than it had maintained previously.²⁸⁸ The Tsar's renewed suppression of leftists after the revolution also caused a mass migration of radicals to the United States. They came with the honor of having been real revolutionaries and many looked down on the much more pacifist politics of Yanovsky and the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*.²⁸⁹ The Bund came to America as well, founding a satellite organization there that would have increasing sway over Jewish politics in the coming years and held a much stronger anti-assimilationist stance than had been seen in American Jewish radicalism before.²⁹⁰ All were reacting to the pogroms and the violence, and pioneering new forms of Jewish nationalism more tailored to the nature of the Jewish diaspora. These new movements and transformed older movements pushed Jewish socialism in a more nationalist direction. Solotaroff's nationalism anarchism was an attempt to do precisely the same.

Grauer deems Solotaroff's anarchist nationalism to have been "the gravest breach with anarchist principles,"²⁹¹ but this was only partly true. Solotaroff did break with the long-standing convention that anarchism was antithetical to nationalism, but anarchism has always a highly flexible and evolving strain of radical thought. The nationalism Solotaroff advocated for was distant from the typical use of the term in which a state is built on the belief that a particular people constitute a nation. Solotaroff did not call for a state, rather he wanted Jews to occupy their own territory, apart from non-Jews, where they could foster their own Yiddish culture in anarchist or

²⁸⁷ Abraham Ascher, "The Russian Revolution of 1905."

²⁸⁸ Daniel Blatman, "Bund," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*
<http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bund>.

²⁸⁹ Zimmer, 116.

²⁹⁰ Sorin, 121; Fishman, 6.

²⁹¹ Grauer, 4.

socialist conditions. It was an anti-assimilationist stance built on the idea that the integration of Jews with non-Jews was doomed to failure. To Solotaroff, the pogroms had proven that Jews and gentiles would always be strangers unable to live in harmony.

Though Solotaroff's anarchist nationalism became one of the many paths untaken in modern Jewish politics (alongside Zhitlovsky's Diaspora nationalism), it was hardly a demand for the impossible. Essentially, Solotaroff asked Jewish anarchists to recognize that they had already embarked on an anti-internationalist path. Yiddish as both the language and culture of their radicalism was not a path for Jews to a utopian, internationalist society, but something that bound them forever to the Jewish ghetto. After recognizing they had never been good internationalists, the Yiddish anarchists only needed to formalize it, to call what they were already doing nationalism. That this also required a territory was less significant, radical communes had already been attempted before by Jewish anarchists.²⁹² The only breach with anarchist principles that Solotaroff demanded was against internationalism, and this was in reality something the Yiddish anarchists had already begun.

Though Solotaroff's anarchist nationalism never took off it forced even the most anti-nationalist of Yiddish anarchists to engage with Jewish nationalism to a level they had not before. Prior to the Revolution of 1905, Yiddish anarchists could have dismissed nationalism as simply antithetical to anarchism, but now they had to prove this. For instance, one article in February of 1907 criticized Zionism for not including Karaite, Moroccan, or "Asiatic" Jews, and for having an archaic understanding of assimilation that had not changed since Moses Mendelsohn and the beginning of the Haskalah.²⁹³ Zionism was wrong, the writer argued, not because it was

²⁹² The organization *Am-Oylam* (Eternal People) being the most significant here. Tcherikower, 49-50.

²⁹³ "Zionister Kholem," *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Feb. 16, 1907.

nationalism (which before would have sufficed for an anarchist critique), but because it was nationalism only for Ashkenazi Jews.

Even more remarkably, the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* published an essay by Max Nordau, the Zionist leader who co-founded the World Zionist Organization with Theodore Herzl in 1897. In his essay “The European Conscience” Nordau criticized self-righteous Europeans who invoked humanitarianism when it suited them politically, but did nothing to stop the murder of Russian Jews.²⁹⁴ It appeared in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* in December of 1905, less than a year since the start of the Russian Revolution. Publishing the article was not an outright endorsement of Zionism, but it marked a dramatic shift in the papers politics. Where before the revolution the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* was so internationalist that Yanovsky refused to publicize violence against Jews because it was too nationalistic, after the revolution the paper was deeply engaged with debates about anti-Jewish violence *within* the discourse of Jewish nationalism, even with non-radical nationalists like Nordau.

While Yanovsky and the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, were moving (however begrudgingly) into a more Jewish sphere, Emma Goldman and her English-language anarchists were doubling down on internationalist anarchism, openly criticizing the Yiddish anarchists for their new chauvinistic attitude. Goldman published an essay entitled “National Atavism” written by someone with the apt pseudonym “The Internationalist” in the very first issue of Goldman’s monthly anarchist magazine *Mother Earth* (1906-1917). The Internationalist decried Jewish nationalists among anarchists as “retrogressed from a universal view of things to a philosophy of boundary lines; from the glorious conception that ‘the world is my country’ to the conception of exclusiveness.” This

²⁹⁴ Max Nordau, “Der Eyropeisher Gevisen,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Dec. 16, 1906. Henk de Smaele, “Covering the Ottoman Empire: Orientalism and the Mass Media,” in *To Kill a Sultan: A Transnational History of the Attempt on Abdülhamid II (1905)*, ed. Houssine Alloul, Edhem Eldem, Henk de Smaele (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 210.

new brand of radicals-turned-nationalists were even worse than Zionists, the writer claimed, for Zionism “never was more than a sentimental sport for the well-to-do in the ranks of the Jews.” These new nationalists were hell-bent on converting Jews of all classes and were endangering the success of the Russian revolution with their nationalistic agitation.” But how could they ever hope to unite the Jewish bankers in their Fifth Avenue mansions with the Jewish factory workers in the tenements of the ghetto? Class solidarity had to come before national solidarity. The new Jewish nationalists blamed the pogroms of 1905 on the Russian people, but it was an “undisputed fact” that the violence was fomented by the Russian government and ruling class. Thus, overthrowing the government and not separating from non-Jews, could be the only answer to the violence. Jewish nationalism may be a response to prejudice, but it was only another form of bigotry. “Were the retrogressive ideas of the Jewish Nationalists ever to materialize,” the writer warned, “the world would witness, after a few years, that one Jew is being persecuted by another.”²⁹⁵

Though the essay was an adamant internationalist response to Jewish nationalism, even it had a heavy chauvinistic tone toward Jews rarely found in *Mother Earth*. The Jews really were a “chosen people”, the Internationalist claimed, not chosen by God but by prejudice:

Repeated persecution has put the stamp of sorrow on the Jews; they have grown big in their endurance, in their comprehension of human suffering, and in their sympathy with the struggles and longings of the human soul.

Driven from country to country, they avenged themselves by producing great thinkers, able theoreticians, heroic leaders of progress. All governments lament the fact that the Jewish people have contributed the bravest fighters to the armies for every liberating war of mankind.

²⁹⁵ The Internationalist, “National Atavism,” *Mother Earth*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1906): 49-55.

Owing to the lack of a country of their own, they developed, crystallized and idealized their cosmopolitan reasoning faculty. True, they have not their own empire, but many of them are working for the great moment when the earth will become the home for all, without distinction of ancestry or race. That is certainly a greater, nobler and sounder ideal to strive for than a petty nationality.

It was this sentiment that Jews are natural internationalists, the writer argued, that would prevail against the nationalists. Their movement “will be swept away by the storm that precedes the birth of the new era—mankind clasped in universal brotherhood.”²⁹⁶

In summary, the Kishinev pogrom, the first of the twentieth century, caused a rift among Yiddish anarchists over their internationalist, anti-chauvinistic ideology that had long been a foundational tenant of anarchist thought. Some Yiddish anarchists turned toward nationalism, while others maintained their firm internationalist position. That rift was never fully reconciled, but the sheer, apocalyptic weight of pogroms during the 1905 Revolution did eventually forced the hardline anarchist purists like Yanovsky to treat the anti-Jewish violence much in the same way that the *Forverts* did, and led to a much greater openness and even pride in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* about the Jewishness of their anarchist movement. The nationalist contingent now with anarchism also forced the newspaper to engage with Jewish nationalist thought to an extent it had not done before. More staunchly internationalist Jewish anarchists, represented so pointedly by “The Internationalist” in *Mother Earth*, firmly rejected all of these developments within Yiddish anarchism, though even that writer too displayed an uncharacteristic chauvinistic flourish. The pogroms of 1903-1906 cut Yiddish anarchism to its core, disintegrating its prior internationalist perspective, and reforming it as openly and inescapably Jewish.

²⁹⁶ The Internationalist, “National Atavism,” 49-55.

Conclusion

The short period from 1901-1906 was a time of rapid change for Yiddish anarchists in New York. Events near and far—the assassination of President McKinley in 1901 and the pogroms of 1903-1906 greatly altered Jewish radicalism and the anarchist role within it.

The persecution of anarchists after the McKinley assassination accentuated the growing differences among Jewish radicals in New York, dividing Yiddish socialists from Yiddish anarchists, and Yiddish anarchists from more internationalist Jewish anarchists. The American press reacted to the assassination by differentiating between socialists and anarchists, portraying the former as an acceptable, more moderate form of radicalism, and the latter as seditious terrorists who were completely oppositional to socialists. It was an opposition some socialists were more than willing to exploit at the expense of anarchists. The attack on anarchists the American press called for was largely toward newspapers and public speakers, and it was made more persuasive by the press's racialized ideas about the intellectual inferiority of immigrants that made them susceptible to anarchist agitation. Some of the press's demands were made law in the 1902 state criminal anarchy acts and the 1903 anti-anarchist immigration act, but these laws were only partially effective. Physical threats against anarchists from the public itself, like the raid of the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* office by a mob of Jews, may have been more effective.

Though the anti-anarchist laws had limited success, anarchists were also divided by how they opposed them and the government generally after the McKinley assassination. Emma Goldman took a fierce retaliatory stance against these laws, even deliberately breaking them as with the John Turner case, to appropriate the government persecution for the purposes of propaganda. Meanwhile, Saul Yanovsky, who had a newspaper to protect, did his best to appease the American government and the public, and to hide the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*'s presence as

much as possible. Goldman and others took serious issue with Yanovsky's decision in this regard, and this pushed them farther apart.

Thus, the assassination brought forward two seemingly antagonistic forces among Jewish radicals: the moderate, Jewish face of socialism emblemized by Abraham Cahan that was more acceptable to the American public, and on the other a fiercely combative, firmly internationalist branch of anarchism represented by Emma Goldman. Yiddish-speaking anarchists—in the middle of that spectrum—were isolated and thrown into a period of crisis.

Yiddish anarchists could not remain for long in that interstice between the continually diverging worlds of Yiddish- and English-language radicalism among Jews. If the assassination stifled Yiddish anarchists for a time, the pogroms of 1903-1906 demanded that they make a choice between Jewishness and internationalism, between the paths Cahan and Goldman had already been advocating for. Saul Yanovsky first maintained the internationalist path after the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, but the sheer number of pogroms and their horror were simply too terrible to ignore. The *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* went from at first framing the Revolution of 1905 as a Russian revolution, not specifically about the Jews, to framing it as a revolution led by Jews, and for the salvation of Jews.

When Yanovsky began to report on the pogroms and to take a more explicitly Jewish perspective on the revolution, he may not have been aware that he was making such a choice, or that such a decision would be pivotal in shaping the future of Jewish anarchism in America. Conceivably the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* could have reverted to its earlier internationalist attitude, but this was not the case. The newspaper's turn away from internationalism was perpetuated by Yanovsky's continued populist attitude toward anarchism and anarchist propaganda. Agitating among Jews on a wide-scale meant using Yiddish, publishing Yiddish literature and poetry, and

further engaging in debate within the Jewish community, rather than with a more ethnically mixed anarchist one. Thus, the ideological decision made in 1905 to treat the anti-Jewish violence of pogroms as other Jewish political movements were, may have been reinforced by practical decisions about Yiddish agitation in the years to come.

Moving further into a Yiddish milieu brought the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* and the Yiddish anarchists into a deeper and more complex relationship with Yiddish socialists. Historians of radicalism often speak about the relationship between socialism and anarchism as antagonistic and marred by periods of great argument and conflict, usually due to ideological disputes. My research, however, suggests a much more nuanced relationship between Yiddish anarchists and socialists. Their responses to the McKinley assassination had been quite different, and the assassination instilled totally antagonistic images of socialism and anarchism in the American public, but this may have not been as deep a divide as it first appeared. Though disputes between the *Forverts* and *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* increased, this may have been due to their growing proximity rather than distance. One salient example of this came in the Spring of 1906 as the Russian revolution was nearing its end when Yanovsky began a new daily Yiddish paper *Die Abend Zeitung* (The Evening Times).²⁹⁷ The paper was radical, but not as explicitly anarchist as the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*. It seemed to aim for the more popular style of the *Forverts* by serving as a general paper for its readership, while subtly pushing a radical perspective. Though the paper lasted just under two months, its founding speaks to the success of the Yiddish anarchists in this period, and their attempt after turning away from internationalism to forge deeper into the Jewish community and compete with the Yiddish socialists like Abraham Cahan on their own terms. Rather than framing Yiddish

²⁹⁷ The transliteration I use here is the Germanized one (the YIVO transliteration would be *Di Abend Tsaytung*), which is what was printed on the paper above the Hebrew-lettered title. The literal translation would be “The Evening Newspaper,” but again I refer to the translation that Yanovsky chose. See the first issue: *Die Abend Zeitung*, Mar. 18, 1906.

anarchists and Yiddish socialists as increasingly distant enemies, it may be more appropriate to characterize them after 1906 as increasingly related rivals.



Figure 23 - Fourth Issue of Die Abend Zeitung.²⁹⁸

The turn away from internationalism and toward Jewishness may explain the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* and the Yiddish anarchist movements growth after the 1905 Revolution. By 1914 the paper had reached a circulation of 30,000 subscribers.²⁹⁹ Internationalism undoubtedly

²⁹⁸ *Die Abend Zeitung*, Mar. 21, 1906.

²⁹⁹ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 6.

benefited more assimilated intellectuals who had the ability to learn more languages and to move out of a Jewish community so restricted by Yiddish. As a more distinctly Jewish paper it may have found a more receptive Jewish audience. Perhaps the turn toward Jewishness also explains the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme's* remarkable longevity. Not long after the paper turned away from internationalism, Yiddish anarchists increasingly retreated from “legitimate” politics (like voting or running for election) and took a back seat in labor organizing (where socialists were rapidly gaining ground). Their movement became increasingly introverted as they became more deeply rooted in Yiddish and in the Jewish street, in a way much less true than for other ethnic anarchist groups in the United States.³⁰⁰

The longevity of Yiddish anarchism may also be explained by the greatly improved attitude of many in the American press toward Jewish anarchists. The depiction of Jewish anarchists in the American press changed dramatically after the 1905 Revolution, in somewhat contradictory ways. Some in the press expressed concerns for a few years that Jewish terrorism might spread to the United States from Russia.³⁰¹ In 1908 there were reports of an anarchist plot to blow up American navy ships (which later turned out to be a hoax),³⁰² Roosevelt called for more and harsher legislation against anarchism (which was not passed),³⁰³ and the assistant commissioner of Ellis Island revealed in an interview that only one single anarchist (John Turner) had been stopped by the anti-anarchist immigration law, as there was simply no way to enforce it.³⁰⁴ In March of 1908 a Jewish anarchist named Lazarus Averbuch died while reportedly trying to kill the Chicago Chief of Police,³⁰⁵ and another named Selig Silverstein tried to throw a bomb at the police at a socialist

³⁰⁰ Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 29.

³⁰¹ For instance, see: “Anarchists Not What They Were,” *New York Times*, Mar. 8, 1908.

³⁰² “That Anarchist Plot,” *New York Times*, Jan. 1, 1908; “Paris, Jan. 20—,” *New York Times*, Jan. 21, 1908.

³⁰³ “Roosevelt Demands Action on Anarchy,” *New York Times*, Apr. 10, 1908.

³⁰⁴ “No Anarchist Immigrants,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1908.

³⁰⁵ “Police Chief Kills Anarchist in Fight,” *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1908; “Eleven Anarchists Arrested,” *New York Times*, Mar. 4, 1908.

rally at Union Square in New York a few weeks later, but mistakenly killed a bystander and mortally wounded himself. While these incidents made some in the press worry about a growing anarchist threat, many others seemed unconcerned, even forgiving, toward Jewish anarchists. Overall the press's attitude was surprisingly moderate. Reporters often stressed that both men had allegedly been radicalized by pogroms (Averbuch in Kishinev and Silverstein in Bialystok).³⁰⁶ The anarchist tendencies of Jews seemed to be an understandable symptom of their oppressive conditions in Russia. This softened attitude toward Jewish anarchist terrorism was not unique to Averbuch and Silverstein. A series of comic strips mostly published in 1907 about the adventures of "Fizzboonski" the hapless and ineffective anarchist terrorist demonstrated just how harmless Jewish anarchists, even violent ones, were rendered in the American press after the revolution.³⁰⁷ Fizzboonski was a silly and adorable terrorist whose attempts to blow-up Russian officials always backfired. Though there was an apparent increase in terrorism by Jewish anarchists, the still fresh tragedy of the Revolution of 1905 seemed almost to excuse them.

³⁰⁶ Whether or not either one was actually radicalized by the pogroms is not clear, but regardless that was insinuated in the press. "Eleven Anarchists Arrested," *New York Times*, Mar. 4, 1908; "Bombmaker Was an Anarchist Crank," *New York Times*, Mar. 29, 1908. See many quoted documents in Roth and Kraus, *An Accidental Anarchist*, particularly 169-185.

³⁰⁷ In the Fizzboonski comics I have found it is never made totally clear if Fizzboonski is Jewish, but the term "Jewish anarchist" was usually synonymous with "Russian anarchist" in the American press around the turn of the century, and Fizzboonski's jargon speech ("I am full of dynamite-o-vitch!") and appearance seemed to imply his Jewishness. See comic strips on following page.

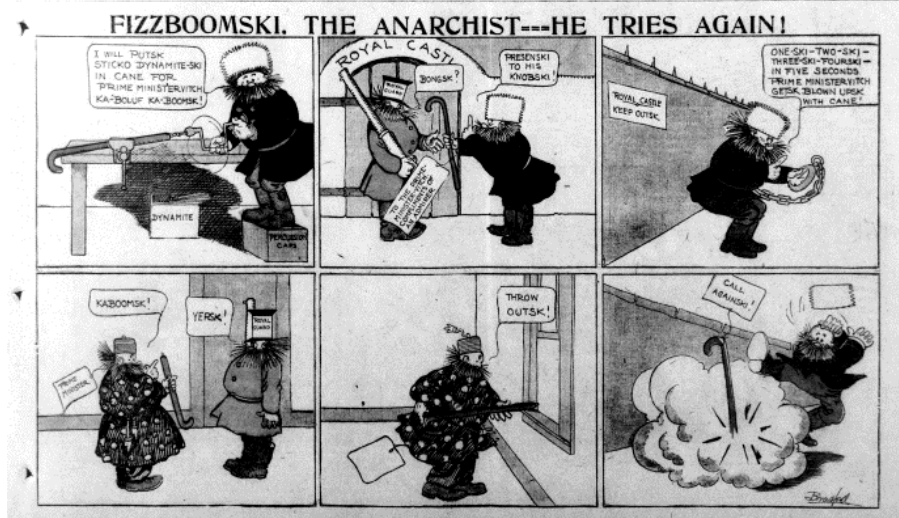
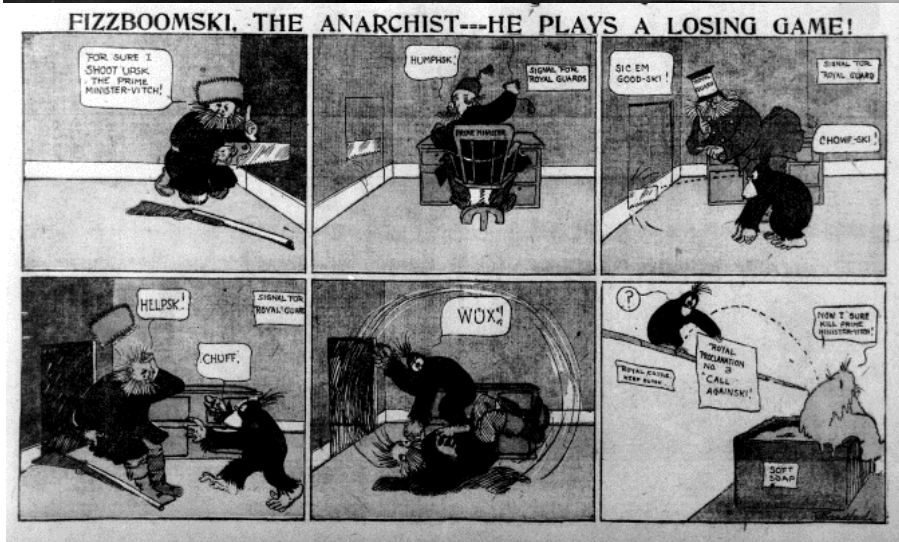
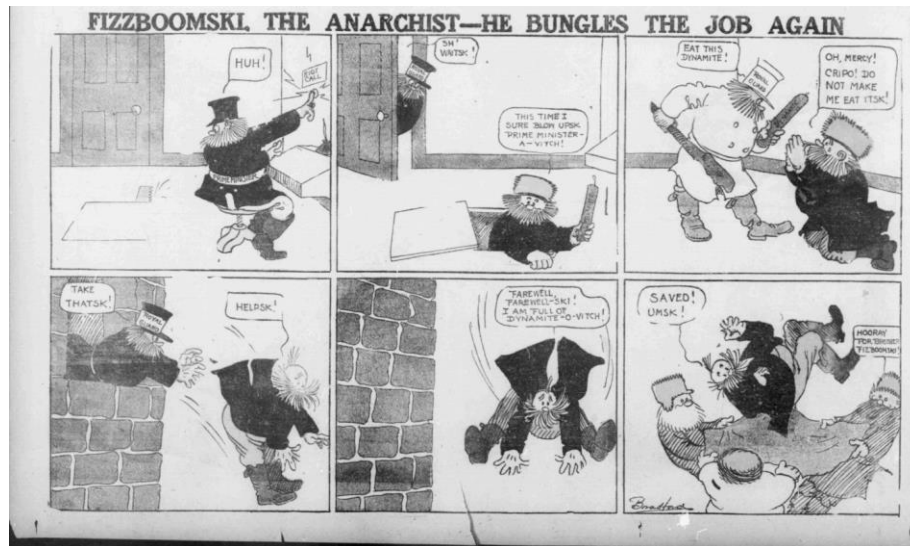


Figure 24 - A selection of comic strips from 1907 on Fizzboonski, the woefully incompetent anarchist terrorist.³⁰⁸

Many in the American press also increasingly expressed interest and even support for “philosophic” or “intellectual” anarchists – almost all of whom were Jewish.³⁰⁹ One reporter in 1909 wrote of an Emma Goldman lecture he attended in New York where the audience was mostly Russian Jews, and surprisingly “there was not a low-brow in the crowd.... Every man there was a potential doctor or lawyer.”³¹⁰ A full page interview with Emma Goldman in *The New York Times* in the same year said that she was not what the press had depicted her as in the past: “a red spectre, a wild-eyed inciter of violence, shrieking madly against government, and getting weak-minded folks to kill Kings.” Rather she was a “well-read, intellectual woman with a theory of society not very different from that entertained by a lot of college professors.” The reporter quoted an editor in St. Louis who had stated even more positively that Goldman’s aspirations are for “the perfection of humanity” and that “She is about 8,000 years ahead of her age. Her vision is the vision of every truly great-minded man or woman who has ever lived.”³¹¹ Another reporter in *The New York Times* wrote that Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were holding hands while sitting on a bench in Lincoln Park. When he asked if they were married Goldman responded,

We are Anarchists and don’t believe in marriage, because marriage means the tyranny of government, and government means force... the basis of living together is a true spiritual love that leave free scope for individuality. That means companionship. But whenever one Anarchist ceases to love another more than any one else in the world, then he is free to go his way.

³⁰⁸ From top to bottom: *Washington Times*, Jan. 2, 1907; *San Francisco Call*, Jan. 2, 1907; *San Francisco Call*, Mar. 02, 1907.

³⁰⁹ See also: “Police Suppress ‘Red’ Gatherings,” *New York Times*, Mar. 30, 1908; “Berkmann’s Partner Abuses the Police: Cheers When Emma Goldman Says They’re Not Worth Power to Blow Them Up,” *New York Times*, Sep. 14, 1908; “Good Advertising in Anarchist Row,” *New York Times*, Sep. 21, 1908; “An Interview with Emma Goldman,” *New York Times*, Mar. 30, 1909; “Miss Goldman Talks in Freeman’s Barn,” *New York Times*, Jun. 9, 1909; “Emma Goldman Speaks That Piece,” *New York Times*, Jul. 3, 1909; “Emma Goldman Defiant,” *New York Times*, Aug. 13, 1909; “Anarchists Here Enraged,” *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1909.

³¹⁰ “Goldman Champions Win The East Side,” *New York Times*, Jul. 1, 1909.

³¹¹ “An Interview with Emma Goldman,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1909.

Berkman “smiled fondly,” the reporter noted, as she spoke.³¹² One could hardly imagine from the article that only five years ago the same paper alleged that Goldman was public enemy number one in the United States and had planned the assassination of the president. Anarchists had again become tabloid news.

Other stories ran that portrayed Jewish anarchists in New York as curious, looney theorists rather than bomb throwers. One article on radical soap-box speakers said that the practice was particularly common among Jews:

Any Jew has to struggle hard to keep from being a philosopher, and for Russian Jews the effort is impossible.... The Anarchists [among them] are always interesting. None need be bored in their company. Their talk runs to such abstract questions as they affect—the Anarchists are pre-eminently the dreamers among the peripatetics, and the topics they discuss are all remote from present-day life.³¹³

Another article was on anarchist Sunday schools founded by Jews all over New York City. The reporter was shocked to see that

the Sunday school teacher in the Anarchist class takes care that even with children he gives no impression that he himself is entitled to exert authority over them. If any Anarchist child does not agree with what teacher says he may arise in his little might of independence and say so. If he shows reason power in his expression of view he is a likely scholar, for it is the aim of the Anarchist to bring children up with absolute independence of the long-established restrictions on free thinking.³¹⁴

³¹² “An Anarchist Honeymoon: Emma Goldman and Berkman Hold Hands on a Park Bench,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1906.

³¹³ “Peripatetic Philosophers of this Many-Sided Town,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1910.

³¹⁴ “Sunday Schools That Teach Children Anarchy,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1910.

Anarchists had made good press before because they appeared violent and exciting, even depraved. Now Jewish anarchists made good press because of their bizarre beliefs on sex, free love, suicide, birth control, pacifism, religion, and education.

People increasingly noted the rise of Italian anarchism in the United States, and press coverage of Italian anarchists tended to be far more vitriolic and racist than toward Jewish anarchists.³¹⁵ One article claimed that the Italian anarchists were crowding out the older German and Russian anarchists. The older and more respectable “aristocratic” anarchists like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were being replaced by anarchists “lacking in the traditions and a certain distinction.” Those anarchists like Goldman had been justified in New York, the author claimed, so long as their weapons “were turned exclusively against the Autocrat of All the Russias.”³¹⁶ Under the long shadow of the 1905 Revolution Jewish anarchists looked more like victims than terrorists. So long as they were *Jewish* anarchists, they seemed benign. Thus, the general turn of Yiddish anarchists away from internationalism towards a more explicitly Jewish movement also offered a degree of security, at least for the decade between the Revolution of 1905 and the Red Scare. And even anarchists like Goldman who still maintained a staunch dedication to internationalism, found they could not escape their Jewish label.

³¹⁵ See: “Transplanted Malefactors,” *New York Times*, Sep. 2, 1908.

³¹⁶ “Underground New York ‘Sees Red’ Once More,” *New York Times*, Mar. 15, 1908.



Figure 25 – Left: An article on radical soap-box “philosophers” in New York City.³¹⁷ Right: An article on anarchist schools.

Images from left to right are of Ben Reitman, Emma Goldman, and Alexander Berkman, all Jewish anarchists.³¹⁸



Figure 26 – Left: An article in *The New York Times* about Jewish anarchists being replaced by more violent Italian, Catalan, and Spanish anarchists.³¹⁹ Right: An interview with Emma Goldman from 1909.³²⁰

Finally, I turn to the Yiddish anarchist movement’s relationship with the wider Jewish community after the turn away from internationalism. Radical Jews had not been the only ones to reconceive of their place in society because of the Revolution of 1905. Many Jews in America saw the horror of the revolution as proof that Russia was doomed, and that the United States would be the new center of the Jewish Diaspora. To them, Russia represented all the tragedy and oppression of the Jewish experience in Europe stubbornly refusing to give way to a more enlightened

³¹⁷ “Peripatetic Philosophers of this Many-Sided Town,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1910.

³¹⁸ “Sunday Schools That Teach Children Anarchy,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1910.

³¹⁹ “Underground New York ‘Sees Red’ Once More,” *New York Times*, Mar. 15, 1908.

³²⁰ “An Interview with Emma Goldman,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1909.

modernity. On Nov. 30th, 1905, Thanksgiving Day, a celebration was held by American Jews for the 250th anniversary of Jews living in America. It was a momentous affair that took place in several cities. The largest and most grand was in Carnegie Hall in New York City, overseen by the well-known Jewish philanthropist Jacob Schiff. Choral music and Hebrew hymns were sung alongside “My Country! ‘tis of thee”, former President Glover Cleveland spoke of the enormous contribution of Jews to the United States as did other notables, and letters of great praise for Jews from President Roosevelt and Vice-President Fairbanks were read aloud.³²¹ But the shadow of the Russian pogroms lingered over the celebration. Schiff, who gave the first speech, said mournfully,

our gladness has received a shock, our hopes and expectations have for the time being become dispelled. The brotherhood of man, our prophets have taught us to look forward to, still remains a dream, the realization of which the events of this very month have once more removed into the distant future. Racial prejudice and hatred are still rampant; the Jews still remains the martyr, whose life must be sacrificed, so that freedom and enlightenment, for which he has ever battled, shall triumph even in darkest Russia.³²²

But just as Russia caused this despair of near biblical proportions, the United States stood as its antithesis. The Jews, Schiff intoned, should be ever mindful of the blessing bestowed on them by the “beacon light of human liberty and freedom [which] is kept burning brightly by the people of the United States...” Even Russian Jews still suffering in Russia felt its light: “Because of this great blessing the United States is bestowing upon mankind, the Jew everywhere is an ardent admirer of America and her people, and everywhere his face is set longingly and hopefully toward

³²¹ The event was widely publicized. See for instance the almost full-page article: “Jewish Celebration Full of Enthusiasm,” *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1905.

³²² “Introduction by Jacob H. Schiff,” in *The Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Settlement of the Jews in the United States* (New York: New York Co-operative Society, 1906), 8.

these shores.”³²³ Schiff’s words set the tone for the rest of the speeches that night. Almost all the speakers drew this dichotomy between a despotic Russia and a liberal utopian America.³²⁴

The Mayor of New York, George McClellan, also articulated that dichotomy, but he added a strange comment that seemed to half forgive Jews for their radical tendencies and to half condemn them:

We members of the Caucasian family are very much like one another, without regard to what branch of that family we may belong. Deny a man the ordinary human rights of life, liberty, and happiness, forbid him to worship God in his own way, deprive him of the possibility of an education, harry him, worry him, oppress him, persecute him, and it is small wonder if the brute in him dominates the man. Can you blame him if, upon his first taste of freedom, he confounds license with liberty? Can we blame him if, upon his first glimpse of freedom, he is inclined to follow the teachings of the first demagogue who preaches *anarchy*, and who promises Utopia at the expense of existing law and order? Hunger and ignorance cover a multitude of sins.³²⁵

Whether or not this was intended as a back-handed compliment, the crowd’s reaction was enthusiastic. A front-page article in *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* criticized the anniversary the following week. Its writer shamed McClellan particularly for his speech denigrating anarchism, and noted the audience’s enthusiasm. “And why so?” the writer asked, “because simply none of *our Jews* [*yidn*] were there, only *those Jews* [*yehudim*]. No Jewish workers, only Jewish bloodsuckers, the bosses. There they were, the real Americans.”³²⁶ This quote reflects the new perspective of Yiddish anarchism after they had turned away internationalism. For the opposition that the writer stressed was not the classical anarchist stance of the radical working-class against the conservative elite,

³²³ “Introduction by Jacob H. Schiff,” 9-10.

³²⁴ *Anniversary of the Settlement of the Jews*, 1-62.

³²⁵ “Address by Mayor McClellan,” in *The Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Settlement of the Jews in the United States* (New York: New York Co-operative Society, 1906), 26-27. Emphasis mine.

³²⁶ “Oykh a Yidishe Simkhe,” *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, Dec. 2, 1905. Emphasis mine.

but the radical *Jewish* working-class against the conservative *Jewish* elite. And both types of Jews had an implied cultural opposition. *Yidn*, the Yiddish word for Jews, invoked the Yiddish culture of Eastern European Jews in Downtown New York, while *yehudim*, the Hebrew word, implied a snobby, assimilated Jewishness of wealthy Uptown Jews. The conflict, as the writer now framed it, was between two antagonistic types of Jews, which intersected with two antagonistic social classes. The anarchist struggle against them was not only political now but cultural. It was no longer simply a struggle among Jews. It was the Jewish Revolution.

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