YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture

SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE YIDDISH NATION

CECILE ESTHER KUZNITZ

YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture

This book is the first history of YIVO, the original center for Yiddish scholarship. Founded by a group of Eastern European intellectuals after World War I, YIVO became both the apex of secular Yiddish culture and the premier institution of Diaspora Nationalism, which fought for Jewish rights throughout the world. From its headquarters in Vilna (then Poland and now Lithuania), YIVO tried to balance scholarly objectivity with its commitment to the Jewish masses. Using newly recovered documents that were believed destroyed by Hitler and Stalin, Cecile Esther Kuznitz tells for the first time the compelling story of how these scholars built a world-renowned institution despite dire poverty and antisemitism. She raises new questions about the relationship between Jewish cultural and political work and analyzes how nationalism arises outside of state power.

Cecile Esther Kuznitz is an associate professor of history and the director of Jewish Studies at Bard College. A *magna cum laude* graduate of Harvard University, she received her Ph.D. from Stanford University. Her articles have been published in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (2008), *The Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), *The Worlds of S. An-sky* (2006), *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (2002), and *Yiddish Language and Culture: Then and Now* (1998). She previously taught at Georgetown University and has held fellowships at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, and the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

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In memory of my father, Isidore Kuznitz זכרונו לברכה

and

In honor of my mother, Betty Kuznitz איר צו לאַנגע יאָרן

We collect all that is dear to us
On our long path until now;
A page from then, a book from today, –
Let us guard it all with love.
(Abraham Reisen, “We Collect”)

מיר זאַמלען אַלץ וואָס אונדז איז טײַער
אין אונדזער לאַנגן וועג ביז איצט;
אַ בלאַט פֿון דאַן, אַ בוך פֿון הײַיאָר, –
זאָל אַלץ מיט ליבע זײַן געשיצט.
(אבֿרהם רייזען, ״מיר זאַמלען״)

Hoops are rolling, one after the other,
The yesterdays, todays, and tomorrows
To Vilna, to YIVO, to the brick safe,
Where the treasure of our people lies hidden.
(Daniel Charney, “Hoops Are Rolling”)

ס׳קײַקלען זיך רייפֿן, אַ רייף נאָך אַ רייף,
די נעכטנס, די הײַנטס און די מאָרגנס
צו ווילנע, צום ייוואָ, צום ציגלנעם סייף,
ווו ס׳ווערט אונדזער פֿאָלקסגוטס פֿאַרבאָרגן.
(דניאל טשאַרני, ״ס׳קײַקלען זיך רייפֿן״)

I thrust my hands in the pyre
And rejoice: the essential remains!
I still possess Amsterdam, Worms,
Livorno, Madrid, and YIVO.
(Abraham Sutzkever, “Kernels of Wheat”)

שטרעק אינעם שײַטער די אָרעמס
און פֿריי זיך: דער עיקר איז דאָ!
מײַנס איז נאָך אַמסטערדאַם, וואָרעמס,
ליוואָרנע, מאַדריד און ייוואָ.
(אבֿרהם סוצקעווער, ״קערנדלעך ווייץ״)

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Acknowledgments

I first entered the YIVO building as a recent college graduate on a job interview. I remember only one question that the Chief Archivist, Marek Web, asked that day: "Do you mind working in dust?" Little did I know that my answer in the negative would open the door to a corner of Yiddishland on Fifth Avenue and set me on a path culminating in the present volume.

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I humbly recall the countless YIVO scholars, students, and supporters whose lives were brutally cut short by Hitler and Stalin *yemakh shemom*.

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Note on Spelling, Transliteration, and Translation

Typically for the region and context, most personal and place names that appear in this study have multiple variants. In most cases I spell personal names as they appear in *The Guide to the YIVO Archives* or, for those not appearing there, *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Following the *Guide* I usually prefer the most common spelling of first names that have English-language equivalents, hence Elias (rather than Eliyahu or Elye) Tcherikower. However, when retaining the Hebrew or Yiddish form of names, I give preference to the Ashkenazi pronunciation, hence Shloyme (rather than Shlomo) Mendelsohn and Nokhem (rather than Nahum) Shtif.

For cities and towns I usually employ the names by which locales were known in the national language of the country in which they fell in the period under discussion, hence interwar (Polish) Lwów rather than (Yiddish) Lemberg or (present-day Ukrainian) L'viv. Where the common Yiddish name differs significantly I add the alternate in parentheses, hence Kaunas (Kovno). I use variants common in English where they exist, hence Warsaw rather than Warszawa. I refer to the seat of YIVO's headquarters as Vilna, the most common English variant of the Yiddish Vilne.

Yiddish transliteration follows YIVO standards. Hebrew and Russian transliteration follow the guidelines of the Library of Congress. However, I omit diacritical marks in Hebrew and render the letter *sof* as "s" in the body of the text when that seems appropriate in context, hence *Agudas* (rather than *Agudat*) *Israel*.

In referring to YIVO, its divisions and bodies, I prefer the most accurate English equivalent even when this differs from the version in YIVO's own documents. Thus I translate *Tsentrale farvaltung* as "Central Board" rather than (as on YIVO letterhead) "General Board" or "General Executive," *sektsye* as "Section" rather than "Department," and *komisye* as "Commission" rather than "Committee." While I follow the institute's own practice and render its

proper name in English as the "Yiddish Scientific Institute," elsewhere I translate *visnshaft* and *visnshaftlekh* as "scholarship" and "scholarly" rather than "science" and "scientific," as this seems to me to better capture their meaning in English.

All translations are the author's unless otherwise noted, and all emphases are original.

Introduction

At first glance Aron Mark might seem to have been little more than a teacher in a provincial Polish city, yet his career was typical of a certain type of Jewish intellectual in interwar Eastern Europe. Born in Łomża in 1904, he attended both a traditional yeshiva and a Polish gymnasium before studying Slavic language and literature at the University of Warsaw. While teaching in the Yiddish secular schools he was also active in the Jewish labor movement. He began writing for the Yiddish press while still a student and went on to publish poetry and short fiction. His book-length works include annotated editions of the Yiddish writers I. L. Peretz and Sholem Asch, a Polish-Yiddish dictionary, and Yiddish translations of writers such as Romain Roland and Knut Hamson. He eventually became a literature instructor in Vilna's Real-gimnazye (academic high school for the sciences), the leading institution of the Yiddish school network.

In many ways Mark was ideally situated to appreciate the work of YIVO, the center for Yiddish scholarship founded in 1925. He came of age in the period after World War I, when Jews looked forward hopefully to the possibilities accorded them in the newly revived Polish state. An eclectic education familiarized him with both traditional Jewish texts and European culture. He lived in the *kresy* [borderlands] of Eastern Poland, where enthusiasm for YIVO was strongest, and was involved in the Yiddish schools, also a bastion of YIVO's support. A connoisseur of Yiddish literature and himself a Yiddish writer – and thus both a consumer and producer of serious Yiddish culture – he was just the audience that the institute's leaders envisioned for their publications. As a pedagogue he was also perfectly poised to convey the fruits of YIVO's scholarship to a broader audience of young Jewish students, the first to receive a systematic education in their mother tongue. Finally, his translation work suggests that he shared YIVO's goal of making world culture accessible to Jews in their own language. Yet if Mark's support for the institute was typical of those of his generation and career path, his level of devotion was extraordinary: when he and his wife welcomed their first child they named him Yivo Mark.[1]

This book examines the history of Yiddish scholarship and specifically that of its foremost exponent, the Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut [Yiddish Scientific Institute], known by its Yiddish acronym YIVO and today in English as the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. From its origins among a group of East European émigrés in Berlin in 1924 to the establishment of its headquarters in Vilna (then Wilno, Poland, and now Vilnius, Lithuania) until the outbreak of World War II, YIVO pioneered the study of Yiddish-speaking Jewry as well as the use of Yiddish for scholarly research. As the most authoritative body for Yiddish, YIVO set out to raise that language from a spoken vernacular to a modern tongue of high culture. As a central gathering point for Jewish scholars, it provided a haven where they could carry out their research, disseminated their findings, and trained a young generation of researchers and teachers. Moreover, as the preeminent institution of Yiddish culture YIVO played a central role in both modern Jewish scholarship and Jewish national identity in the Diaspora.

Despite its modest size and specialized work, YIVO loomed large in the landscape of Jewish Eastern Europe and inspired tremendous loyalty. Writers celebrated it in verse[2] and regularly described it in superlative terms as "a palace, a temple, a tower that will light far, far around it," and "the symbol and ornament of our highest cultural achievements in the entire world."[3] Its significance also went beyond the realm of culture to take on political resonance. It served "the dispersed Jewish people," supporters claimed, "instead of a government."[4] Nor was it only a handful of scholars and intellectuals who shared such sentiments. While its strongest support was in Eastern Europe, YIVO boasted a global network of members in Yiddish-speaking communities from North America to South Africa. Many were ordinary, often extremely poor Jews like a correspondent from Piosk, Poland, who wrote, "With joy I proclaim myself a porter of clay, sand, and brick for the palace of the people called the Yiddish Scientific Institute."[5] Such supporters went to great lengths to contribute to YIVO's work, both financially and by gathering the books, artifacts, and data that still today comprise the world's leading research collection on East European Jewry and Yiddish culture.

What inspired this dedication? What led thousands of Jews around the world to care so deeply about a body devoted to such seemingly rarified matters as Yiddish grammar? And how did they come to see this small academic institution as a substitute for national sovereignty? To answer these questions, we must consider that YIVO served not only as a research center but also as the flagship institution of Diaspora Nationalism, a movement that fought for the rights of Jews as a minority within their countries of residence. In these dual roles YIVO produced work for an elite audience of scholars while stressing its ties to the *folk*, the masses of Yiddish-speaking Jews. It was thus enmeshed in constant battles over how closely to involve itself in raging debates over Hebraism versus Yiddishism and socialism versus *klal-yisroel politik* [Jewish political solidarity]. And while YIVO's headquarters served as the crown jewel

of the renowned cultural institutions of interwar Vilna, it was also the center of a transnational Diasporic movement whose supporters struggled over the role of place for a stateless, widely dispersed nation. It was this vision that inspired individuals such as Aron Mark, who devoted their lives to building Yiddish culture: that a scattered people, divided by fractured religious, linguistic, and political allegiances, could use scholarship as a means to construct a modern identity.

Language and Nation

At the time YIVO was founded in 1925 Yiddish was the native language of approximately 11 million people – roughly three-quarters of the world's Jewish population – and was nearly one thousand years old.[6] As the vernacular of European Jewry it had traditionally been spoken by all but considered unsuitable for serious works of scholarship and philosophy, its literature denigrated as the domain of women and the uneducated masses. High-culture functions were reserved for the sacred tongue, Hebrew, the province of a learned and almost exclusively male elite, while knowledge of non–Jewish languages was extremely limited.[7] In the late eighteenth century the *Haskalah* [Jewish Enlightenment movement] brought about a fundamental shift, as *maskilim* [adherents of Haskalah] advocated the modernization of Jewish society and a rapprochement with European culture. These reformers considered Yiddish not a language in its own right but as *zshargon* [jargon], a corrupt form of German. They encouraged their fellow Jews to abandon the tongue, which they derided as a sign of ignorance of and isolation from European culture, in favor of the language of the non–Jewish majority. Indeed, in the course of the nineteenth century most West European Jews ceased to use the Jewish vernacular. Yet in Eastern Europe, instead of simply abandoning Yiddish Jews transformed it into the vehicle of a modern culture and the touchstone of a new, secular identity.[8]

Ironically, the maskilim themselves set this process in motion with their realization that only in Yiddish could they make their ideas known to the vast majority of Jews who were fluent neither in Hebrew nor in European tongues. By the 1860s popular publications designed to spread the message of Haskalah led to the first modern literary works in Yiddish. Similarly, as radical political movements developed in Eastern Europe their leaders recognized that to build a mass following they would have to address the Jewish working class in the only language it understood. By the 1890s Jewish socialists had turned to propaganda in Yiddish to garner support despite their own stated goal of ultimately assimilating into the worldwide proletariat.

As nationalism grew in nineteenth-century Europe and the maskilim's goal of full integration proved elusive, some – particularly in the East – rejected the traditional conception of Jewishness based in religion in favor of a secular definition of Jews as a national group. In this they followed a larger trend toward growing national consciousness among the many ethnic minorities of Central

and Eastern Europe. These groups drew on a tradition of romantic nationalism originating with the German thinker Johann Gottfried von Herder, who lauded the common people, the *Volk*, for preserving traditional folkways untainted by modernization. In his view the Volk was the most authentic bearer of an ethnic group's character, and thus he valued vernacular traditions as the most authentic expression of the *Volksgeist* [national spirit].[9]

Language played a central role in this conception of nationalism as a concrete, daily expression of a group's unique culture. The so-called small peoples of the region began to see their local tongues not as mere dialects or shameful "jargons" but as badges of national distinctiveness. By the late nineteenth century many had turned to researching their own vernacular languages, as well as folklore and history, as a means of building collective identity. By deeming their cultures a worthy object of study, they hoped to promote their groups' sense of importance and self-respect. Moreover, as the subject peoples of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires developed aspirations to national independence, these movements took on direct political implications. Leaders of groups such as the Czechs and Ukrainians sought to demonstrate that their peoples possessed their own unique traditions that distinguished them from their neighbors and rulers. In linguistic terms, they argued against those who disparaged their vernaculars as merely variants of more established tongues. These cultural distinctions lent weight to political claims: those who saw Ukrainian, for example, as a dialect of Russian often believed that its speakers rightly found their home within the Russian Empire. Those who argued that it was a separate tongue usually believed that Ukrainians constituted a distinct nationality deserving its own state, with Ukrainian as its national language.[10]

When Jews adopted such ideas they faced a unique dilemma: European Jewry possessed not one but two languages of its own. Thus a myriad of national movements developed to compete for the allegiance of the Jewish masses. Most scholars have focused their attention on Zionism, which advocated a Jewish homeland in Palestine and the revival of Hebrew as its spoken tongue.[11] Zionists' ultimate success in creating a Jewish state has often overshadowed the work of Diaspora Nationalists, who shared Zionism's definition of the Jews in secular, nationalist terms but advocated building Jewish life in the lands of their residence and a modern culture in the Yiddish language. The movement's leading theoretician, Simon Dubnow, promoted a program of national cultural autonomy, whereby governments would recognize the rights of all national minorities – including Jews – to educational and cultural work in their own languages. Dubnow saw statelessness in positive terms, as a higher stage of national development, but believed that legal guarantees were needed for minorities to flourish in the Diaspora.[12] This principle became a cornerstone of the platforms of political parties such as the liberal Folkspartey [People's Party], which Dubnow cofounded, and the socialist Jewish Labor Bund.

Yiddishists such as Chaim Zhitlowsky went one step further, viewing the language itself as the basis of Jewish identity. For Zhitlowsky support for

Yiddish was tied to the socialist principles that led him to defend the Jewish working class and its culture. Paradoxically, Zhitlowsky's concern for the common people spurred his advocacy of elite literature in Yiddish, including philosophical and scholarly writing as well as translations of classics from other languages. He sought to develop the tongue into a suitable medium for all topics and forms of expression, for only in this way, he argued, could ordinary Jews have access to world culture and all Jews live a fully Jewish life without the need to turn to "foreign" sources. And only in this way could they raise the status of their national language and, by implication, of themselves as a national group.[13]

The founders, scholars, and supporters of YIVO saw their work as the culmination of this effort to elevate Yiddish from a lowly "jargon" to a modern language, the equal of any European tongue and a fitting vehicle for a sophisticated high culture. They thus set out to radically remake the distinctions between high and low in Jewish life. By undertaking such seemingly arcane tasks as standardizing Yiddish spelling and documenting variants of Yiddish folk songs, they were not only winning respect for the language itself; they were fighting for the dignity of millions of ordinary Yiddish-speaking Jews.

As World War I drew to a close the prospects for realizing this dream had never seemed brighter. As the multiethnic empires of Central and Eastern Europe crumbled, their successor states were compelled to sign a series of Minorities Treaties obligating them to grant a degree of national cultural autonomy to their respective minority populations. The Jewish communities of the region – the largest of which was the approximately 3 million Jewish citizens of newly revived Poland – were recognized as such a group, with Yiddish as a national tongue. At the same time, to the East the Soviet Union granted government recognition and funding to schools, press, theater, and book publishing in Yiddish, a level of state support for the language unmatched before or since. Thus Diaspora Nationalists began the interwar period in a mood of great optimism, believing that they had finally secured the rights of Yiddish-speaking Jewry and the prestige of its language and culture.

Folk and Elite

Because of the larger import of its work, YIVO necessarily carried out its scholarship in a symbiotic relationship with the broad Jewish public as it repeatedly proclaimed its desire to "serve the folk." This was in part a legacy of the Haskalah, with its stress on the obligation of intellectuals to educate the rest of the Jewish community who had yet to enjoy the benefits of modern culture. The influence of Russian radical movements contributed the notion of "going to the people" to bring enlightenment directly to the lower stratum of society. In this model, elites would help the masses on their path to intellectual and cultural growth.

Later in the nineteenth century, efforts to develop the Jewish vernacular achieved the goal of "serving the folk" by boosting the pride of ordinary Yiddish speakers. Meanwhile, the institute's research documented the folk's past and present. Thus YIVO's Philological Section – which included the study of Yiddish language, literature, and folklore – examined humble genres including proverbs, folk songs, and folktales. Its Historical Section focused not on the achievements of renowned leaders or scholars but on developments that reflected the experiences of ordinary men and women such as the origins of the Jewish labor movement. The Economic-Statistical and Psychological-Pedagogical Sections concerned themselves with the daily living and working conditions of contemporary, usually impoverished, Jewish communities. As YIVO pursued its work in the interwar period it produced groundbreaking studies on themes that earlier scholars had ignored and that later scholars would find impossible to reconstruct, ranging from Yiddish terminology for various crafts and trades to the inner life of Jewish adolescents.

By taking as their subject the collective actions of large numbers of ordinary people, YIVO's scholarship implicitly asserted the importance and agency of the Jewish masses.[14] At the same time YIVO "served the folk" by disseminating its research findings to a wide audience. In all these ways the institute benefited the entire Jewish public that it claimed to represent. Thus it simultaneously drew on the culture of the masses, elevated it, and returned it to the people, fulfilling Dubnow's mandate to create scholarship both "about the folk and for the folk."[15] Tsemakh Szabad, a Vilna communal leader and major YIVO supporter (as well as a physician), used an anatomical image to describe this relationship to the broad Jewish public: "[There] will flow intellectual juices from the folk to the center and from the center back to the folk."[16]

Yet despite their deep ties to the masses, movements such as Yiddishism were often led by a small cadre of intellectuals far removed from the common people. While the majority of the non–Jewish East European population was composed of illiterate peasants, most of its nationalist leaders were better-educated urban dwellers sometimes not even fluent in the vernacular tongues they championed. Such tensions were particularly acute in the case of academic work, necessarily an elite pursuit. Even as scholars set about studying folk traditions they sometimes showed ambivalence toward the same masses they idealized, seeing them as unfit guardians of the precious culture they carried.[17] In 1930 the folklorist Y. L. Cahan journeyed from New York to Vilna to evaluate the materials that YIVO *zamlers* [collectors] had painstakingly recorded in the *shtetls* [small towns] of Eastern Europe. He later corrected many of the texts, insisting that uneducated informants could not be relied on to accurately relate these songs and tales.[18]

Actions such as Cahan's, some scholars maintain, show that claims to speak on behalf of the folk were more rhetorical strategies than reflections of a true mass movement. The theorist Miroslav Hroch posits that national movements of Central and Eastern Europe began with "a passionate concern on the part of

a group of individuals, usually intellectuals, for the study of the language, the culture, and the history of the oppressed nationality."[19] The nationalist agenda then spread from a few isolated scholars to a wider cadre among the elite. Only in the third and final stage did the masses take up the call of nationalism. Similarly, more recent work argues that leaders in the Austro-Hungarian Empire deliberately politicized language use in order to impose a nationalist agenda to which the populace was largely indifferent. Ordinary Czech and German speakers, on the other hand, took a more fluid and pragmatic attitude toward language loyalty.[20]

The case of Yiddish-speaking Jewry, however, presents an alternate model of the relationship of national elites and masses. Unlike the other groups of the region the Jews of Eastern Europe were concentrated in urban centers and small towns, making them more mobile, easier to organize, and more familiar with modern means of communication such as the press. The great majority of both women and men knew the Hebrew alphabet, which meant that they were potential – if not actual – readers of newspapers and books in their spoken language, Yiddish. These factors presented highly favorable conditions for the creation of a mass movement based in the vernacular tongue. Such a movement, in fact, had its roots in the second half of the nineteenth century, when maskilim and their ideological descendants began creating a modern Yiddish press and literature. By the early years of the twentieth century, when activists reached out to the masses in the name of Diaspora Nationalist principles, the membership of political parties with a Yiddishist platform such as the Jewish Labor Bund and the circulation of daily Yiddish newspapers stood in the tens of thousands.[21]

When research in and about Yiddish began in earnest approximately a decade later, just prior to World War I, belletristic writing had already achieved a high degree of sophistication. The war years saw the establishment of the first schools with Yiddish as the language of instruction. By the time YIVO was founded in 1925, it represented one of the last areas of the culture to reach maturity. For East European Jews, then, scholarship served as the culmination rather than the advance guard of national revival. For other peoples of the region it may have remained the province of a handful of intellectuals, but for Yiddish-speaking Jewry it became the apex of a mass movement, "the crown of the building of Yiddish secular culture."[22]

In fact, while the idea of a Yiddish academic institute originated with a narrow circle of scholars, its work was enthusiastically supported by poor, uneducated Jews as well as a nationally minded elite. The core of YIVO's support was among the impoverished populace of Eastern Europe, where a network of dedicated zamlers gathered funds, folk songs, terminology, and historic documents. A Warsaw paper wrote that "ninety-nine percent" of the institute's supporters were "simple, barely educated or entirely uneducated workers" who through their collection activities "wring out of their lives of hunger a wonderful crown of Yiddish scholarship."[23] Despite the hyperbole of this statement,

thousands of letters preserved today in the YIVO Archives, sent from across the region and from as far away as Canada, Palestine, and Argentina, attest to the popular resonance of YIVO's work. The physical condition of these documents – often filled with spelling mistakes and composed on scraps of paper by correspondents who could ill afford a spare sheet of stationery – offer concrete evidence that Yiddish scholarship did indeed touch the lives of the folk.

Past and Present

This change in the role of Jewish scholarship was part of a larger transformation dating to the Haskalah.[24] The traditional Jewish worldview was essentially theological, interpreting historical events as manifestations of God's will. Only sacred texts, considered the product of divine revelation or inspiration, were deemed worthy of intensive study. Maskilim first brought Enlightenment ideas of objectivity and empiricism to research on Jewish life, paving the way for the Wissenschaft des Judentums [Science of Judaism] movement and its critical approach to Jewish scholarship. In early nineteenth-century Germany Wissenschaft scholars began looking at canonical writings as human compositions and Jewish history as the product of material forces. Some, particularly in the movement's first phase, regarded many aspects of Judaism as rooted in outdated superstition and sought historical or textual justifications for reforms that would promote integration into the surrounding society. This position would lead later academics, including those affiliated with YIVO, to deride the movement for its apologetic tone and pessimistic view of the future of the Jewish people.[25] Yet East European intellectuals would draw on the innovations of the Wissenschaft school in developing their own approach to scholarship.

Here too Dubnow played a central role as a pioneer of modern Jewish history. Dubnow emphasized the ongoing vitality of the Jewish people, in contrast to the more detached and less sanguine view of Wissenschaft scholars. Rather than focusing on the travails of antisemitism or the achievements of great Jewish thinkers, as past writers had done, he stressed the agency of ordinary Jews as the fundamental actors of history. His methodology went hand in hand with his Diaspora Nationalist philosophy, for both asserted the importance of the Jewish masses. Moreover, Dubnow saw historical study – like the use of a national language – as a tool for strengthening Jewish identity in the modern age. As he wrote, "The general Jewish national idea is based primarily on historical consciousness."[26]

Dubnow's work was part of a broader movement, for in the 1880s, the same decade that he began his career, Jewish historical societies were founded in France, Germany, England, and the United States.[27] Moreover, the period between the two World Wars saw the establishment of a number of institutions whose work would closely parallel – and sometimes rival – that of YIVO. Only a few months before the creation of YIVO in 1925, scholars in Palestine laid

the cornerstone of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.[28] The same decade inaugurated Soviet academies for Jewish research in Minsk and Kiev, the Polish-language Instytut Nauk Judaistycznych [Institute for Jewish Studies] in Warsaw, and the modernized Yeshivas Hakhme Lublin [Yeshiva of the Scholars of Lublin], as well as the first chairs of Jewish studies at American universities.[29] Thus YIVO with its Yiddishist underpinnings developed in tandem with other institutions rooted in Zionist, communist, liberal, and Orthodox movements. These diverse efforts to study Jewish life and culture, crossing as they did boundaries of geography and ideology, show the central role of scholarship in helping Western Jewry face the modern era.

In recent years this flourishing of modern Jewish scholarship has itself attracted increasing scholarly attention.[30] While some work has concentrated on the social sciences or literary studies, most has examined changing attitudes toward the Jewish past – a perhaps unsurprising focus, since most has been produced by historians.[31] In addition, interest in commemorative practices and sites has led to a growing body of work on the relationship between Jewish history and memory.[32] In the case of Eastern Europe, some writers have emphasized efforts to preserve historical records or to document aspects of Jewish culture such as folklore that were viewed as remnants of a premodern way of life rapidly fading in an era of modernization and secularization.[33]

Indeed, YIVO built on the work of pioneering figures such as Dubnow and the folklorist and writer S. An-ski who wished to record Jewish traditions that they feared might soon vanish. Yet YIVO's activists, like Dubnow and An-ski before them, sought not only to safeguard the past but also to use it to build a vibrant, modern culture that would speak to the needs of contemporary Jews. YIVO's precursors included not only efforts to create archives and museums but also centers for research, publishing, and teaching. One of the institute's very first initiatives was to create a Bibliographic Commission to collect current Jewish publications from around the world; only later did it establish an archive for older material. Of YIVO's four academic sections – for History, Philology, Economics-Statistics, and Psychology-Pedagogy – only the first was primarily concerned with the past.

Thus YIVO's mandate blended a deep concern for earlier eras with a firm commitment to studying contemporary Jewish society. By demonstrating the continuing vitality of Jewish culture YIVO hoped to strengthen Jewish pride and nationalist claims, while its mission to "serve the folk" demanded that it address issues of immediate relevance to a wide public. As the interwar period wore on, economic depression and rising antisemitism intensified debates over the extent to which YIVO's academic priorities should be influenced by the urgent concerns of the day. Yet its leaders only grew more convinced of the importance of their work, since such conditions made it "pressing and current to the highest degree" to take "a scholarly approach to the problems of Jewish reality."[34]

Objectivity and Engagement

Where YIVO's scholars did disagree – sometimes vehemently – was over the role of political commitment in their work. The majority eschewed membership in a particular political camp as inconsistent with their scholarly standards. In addition, like all those rooted in the Enlightenment tradition, they hewed to the Rankean ideal of uncovering reality "as it really was." They thus regarded empiricism and objectivity as the cornerstones of their methodology. Yet at the same time their research often served manifestly nationalist ends, while their populist commitments shaped their scholarly agenda.

A vocal minority, however, rejected this balance between academics and ideology. Members of the Jewish Labor Bund and the left wing of the Poale Zion [Workers of Zion] – socialist parties committed to Diaspora Nationalism and Zionism, respectively – called repeatedly for the institute to declare openly its political allegiances and to embrace a class-conscious approach in its research. A majority of YIVO's leaders doggedly insisted that their scholarly ideals demanded that they remain aloof from politics. Yet as political and economic conditions worsened, the pursuit of pure knowledge seemed to some a luxury the beleaguered Jews of Eastern Europe could ill afford. The institute's history was thus marked by ongoing controversy over whether political neutrality represented the sine qua non of intellectual integrity or a cowardly evasion of the hour's most burning questions.

Following such debates, some observers have portrayed YIVO's history as a battle between the champions of disinterested research and those who would degrade academic work by harnessing it to a political, particularly socialist, agenda.[35] Yet because both modern Hebrew and Yiddish culture developed in a highly politicized context, from the start political and cultural work were closely intertwined and their relationship hotly contested. It was this milieu that produced the first generation of scholars of modern East European Jewish history, including those affiliated with YIVO, whose research gave primacy to the myriad political movements that flourished on the Jewish street. Literary and educational activities – which often developed later than and as an extension of party work – were frequently read as a function of their creators' political ideology. Later historians have likewise most often focused on political movements, with cultural developments a secondary concern.[36]

Yet with the last generation raised amid the ferment of Jewish Eastern Europe passing from the scene, observers have begun to take a fresh look at these issues. As I have noted elsewhere,

> As the urgency of ideological rivalries recedes, scholars can look past the dichotomies of Yiddishists versus Zionists, pro- versus anti-Communists, and *frume* [religious] versus *fraye* [secular] that for so long marked Jewish society. Only now, two generations after the events of 1939–1945 and 1948, are young scholars at a sufficient remove from these once-burning debates that Yiddish studies may be said to be entering its post-ideological phase.… As Yiddish studies grows more accepted within the academy and more distant

from its roots in Diaspora Nationalism, it is also better suited to examine the ideological ground from which it sprung.[37]

Thus, a number of recent studies have reexamined key figures active in both Yiddish scholarship and various political circles, providing a more nuanced picture of attempts to balance academic interests and communal commitments.[38] Another shows how the years of the Russian revolution produced a cohort of activists committed to creating a Jewish cultural sphere independent of politics.[39] If it was difficult to disentangle politics and culture in Jewish Eastern Europe, neither could they be neatly mapped onto each other.

In fact, ivory-tower scholarship – like pure art for art's sake – was never truly an option for Yiddish activists in the interwar period. All those involved in YIVO's work shared certain assumptions: that the Jews were a nation with Yiddish as their national language, and that scholarly work could and should bolster their struggle for rights in the Diaspora. Yet precisely because those on both sides of the debate – the champions of scholarly objectivity as well as the advocates of political engagement – accepted these premises, neither saw them as compromising their cherished neutrality. Ultimately, all agreed that Yiddish scholarship must serve the folk. The essential conflict between the two camps was over means, not ends: whether a class-conscious or *klal-yisroel* [pan-Jewish] stance could best achieve Diaspora Nationalist goals.

Diaspora and State

The attempt to build a nationalist movement in a Diaspora context was itself far from simple. Many of the peoples of Eastern Europe were spread over a broad geographic area, crossing local and national boundaries. Yet even in this heterogeneous context Yiddish-speaking Jewry was unique: not only did its heartland encompass several countries of the region, but nowhere did it constitute the majority. Moreover, by the time of YIVO's founding mass emigration had created significant émigré communities on four continents. It thus constituted a transnational community par excellence.[40]

In this, of course, the Jews of Eastern Europe merely replicated a two-thousand-year-old pattern. The term *Diaspora* was coined in antiquity to describe the experience of the Jewish people, widely dispersed and without a homeland of its own. In recent years this concept has gained currency as a way to discuss groups whose members are not limited to a clearly defined area of settlement.[41] Little attention has been paid to Yiddish-speaking Jewry in this context, yet it exemplifies the dilemmas facing a stateless and scattered people. While many of the Jews' neighbors in Eastern Europe lacked political sovereignty, they focused their hopes on reestablishing a state of their own (such as the Poles) or creating independent states on their historic homelands (such as the Latvians). Diaspora Nationalists' rivals on the Jewish street, the Zionists, could draw on an ancient religious tradition of return to the Holy Land as well as their contemporary

territorial aspirations in Palestine. Supporters of Yiddish culture, however, had neither the concrete geography of modern nationalism nor the imperatives of traditional Judaism to reinforce their movement.

Given their wide dispersal and lack of tangible symbols of group consciousness, touchstones such as a common history and language became paramount in Diaspora Nationalists' attempts to build a collective identity. Their efforts thus provide an especially apt illustration of recent theories of nationalism, which stress how modern cultural innovations such as the growth of a press and educational system in vernacular tongues have bolstered national movements.[42] In fact, such theories echo Dubnow's argument that while Jews had been united in ancient times by political sovereignty and later by religious belief, in the modern period an awareness of a common history and culture had become the essential element defining the Jewish collective. According to Dubnow, the Jewish people had evolved to a stage at which it no longer needed the trappings of land or political power; rather, it could maintain its identity in the Diaspora through such intangible factors alone. For Diaspora Nationalists, Yiddish thus came to serve as a marker of national distinctiveness that could substitute for both religious faith and physical territory. By privileging language in this way, they set themselves apart from traditional Jewry as well as from other secular national movements. They thus fundamentally redefined the Jewish people – in the apt phrase of several recent scholars – as the Yiddish nation.[43]

As the central institution of Yiddish culture, YIVO became the focal point for Jewish identity in the Diaspora. And as the most authoritative body for the national language it represented, in the words of YIVO leader and linguist Zalman Reisen, "a point of connection for all the dispersed parts of our people, the intellectual ingathering of the exiles for the international Yiddish nation."[44] Thus supporters saw YIVO not simply as part of a nationalist movement but as a proxy for national sovereignty itself, an institution that served Jews "instead of a government."[45]

If, as the linguist Noah Prylucki claimed, "Yiddish itself is recognized as a territory,"[46] then its capital was undoubtedly Vilna. Renowned as a home of rabbinic scholars and later of maskilim, in the nineteenth century Vilna became a center of both Yiddish and Hebrew literature as well as a hotbed of Jewish political activity. Moreover, in the interwar period the city served as the center of a flourishing network of institutions devoted to building a modern, secular culture in Yiddish. YIVO's founders originally envisioned Berlin as their seat and long debated the most auspicious locale for their work. When they decided to erect a building of their own in Vilna – a spacious, modern facility devoted exclusively to Yiddish scholarship – it quickly became preeminent among the city's famed array of Jewish landmarks.

In Vilna, in the heart of the Yiddish Diaspora, the YIVO headquarters was not a lone icon but part of a mutually interdependent cultural web. There Yiddish teachers and writers relied on YIVO's work for curricular standards

and creative inspiration; students of the local Yiddish secular schools, in turn, provided an audience for its publications and exhibits. It was in this setting that YIVO sought to "serve the folk" by linking the intellectual elite and the Yiddish-speaking masses, facilitating both the production and consumption of high Yiddish culture.

All this was undertaken without government support, for East European Jews had to contend not only with a lack of territory but also a lack of resources. While at first Diaspora Nationalists placed great confidence in the Minorities Treaties, the governments of the region – most significantly Poland – soon failed to fulfill their treaty obligations. As their dreams of a stable funding base crumbled YIVO leaders struggled to finance their work, a task made all the more difficult by the general economic crisis of the early 1930s. Invoking the principles of national cultural autonomy, they argued that YIVO was a public institution – the equivalent of the Académie Française, the Library of Congress, and a state university rolled into one – and thus deserved public funding. Yiddish-speaking Jews, however, had no state with the power to levy taxes on their behalf. As the sociolinguist Joshua Fishman notes, efforts at corpus planning (codifying a language by promulgating rules for spelling, grammar, and usage) cannot be successful without status planning (marshaling resources and power to support the development of a language).[47] YIVO arrogated the authority to standardize the Yiddish language but could not compel compliance with its demands.

YIVO leaders embraced these challenges but always struggled to fulfill the conflicting demands of their ambitious mandate. By choosing a location in impoverished Eastern Europe, in the midst of the Yiddish-speaking masses, they undertook to serve at the same time the intellectuals and the folk, to remain communally engaged but politically neutral – and to do so under severe financial constraints. And by making Vilna their headquarters, they committed themselves to building an institution deeply imbricated in the effort to develop a national culture in the Yiddish language.

Sources and Organization

The enormity of the Holocaust has cast a long shadow over the study of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, focusing attention on the death – rather than the vibrant life – of this community. It also obliterated much of the historical record of this chapter of Jewish history, while many of the sources that survived were closed to Western scholars until the fall of the Soviet Union. YIVO is exceptional as a key institution of prewar Jewish culture for which there exists extensive documentation. From the time of its founding YIVO maintained a large institutional archive, approximately half of which was recovered after World War II and moved to New York, where the institute carries out its activities today. In addition, a major portion of YIVO's prewar holdings, long believed destroyed

during the Nazi and Soviet periods, was discovered in Vilna in 1988.[48] In the course of my research I was privileged to be one of the first individuals since World War II to examine these documents.

Much of this source material has gone virtually untouched by historians, for the institute has never before been the subject of a sustained scholarly work. The writing on YIVO that has appeared to date has generally been either broadly synoptic or impressionistic.[49] Many early pieces composed by supporters of the institute are laudatory in tone and lack academic rigor. As a new generation of scholars has come of age in the postwar period they have begun to examine this story with a more analytic eye. Some articles on specific aspects of YIVO's history have appeared,[50] as well as translations of materials from the YIVO Archives,[51] but none provide an overview of the institute's genesis and development.

Given these lacunae, in this book I set out to tell a compelling tale: how a group of dedicated scholars built an international center of Jewish culture with the help of thousands of ordinary, often desperately poor supporters. Yet while providing an overall narrative account, I also wished to explore the many larger issues raised by YIVO's story that could best be dealt with thematically. As a result this study combines a chronological and a topical approach, highlighting in turn various aspects of YIVO's institutional, intellectual, and cultural history as well as their larger social and political contexts.

The book's first chapter surveys the development of Yiddish scholarship prior to YIVO's founding, including projects to collect, research, publish, and teach the history and culture of Yiddish-speaking Jewry. These remained isolated undertakings until World War I and its aftermath – including the Russian Revolution and Ukrainian pogroms, as well as the promulgation of the Minorities Treaties at the Paris Peace Conference – set the stage for an unprecedented flowering of Yiddish culture in the two decades that followed. The turmoil of this period also led to years of wandering by a group of Jewish intellectuals seeking a haven to pursue Diaspora Nationalist goals. Foremost among these was the linguist and literary scholar Nokhem Shtif, soon to be the key figure in YIVO's founding.

The following chapter portrays Shtif's tireless efforts to create a Yiddish academic institute in 1924 and 1925 and the reception of his ideas in Jewish communities around the world, including Berlin, Vilna, and New York. The enthusiastic response he received in Vilna, led by the scholars Max Weinreich and Zalman Reisen, marked the turning point toward realizing Shtif's dream. As they laid their plans, supporters in the émigré community of Berlin and the Yiddish cultural capital of Vilna debated whether to focus on research or teaching, on work for an elite or a popular audience. Further discussions ensued over the mission and scope of Yiddish scholarship as YIVO began its organizational and academic work in the fall of 1925.

The next two chapters concentrate on the years when the institute gained increasing momentum only to see its financial base collapse in the early 1930s. Chapter 3 discusses YIVO's *zamling* [collection] initiatives as well as the major

academic projects of its four research sections. As the institute's scholars sought to put their mandate to "serve the folk" into practice, this phrase took on a myriad of meanings that impacted their collection efforts, research topics, and strategies for disseminating the fruits of their work. It also led to often contentious disputes over the role of politics and popularization. While the majority of YIVO leaders hewed to a stance of political neutrality, their ideological assumptions are underscored by considering their relations with Jewish scholars and institutions rooted in competing worldviews.

Chapter 4 examines the lengthy discussions over the seat of the YIVO headquarters and the eventual selection of Vilna. This location – chosen over the more affluent Berlin – enabled the institute to win a mass following among Yiddish-speaking Jews but demonstrated the difficulties of financing Yiddish cultural activity in the absence of a state. As YIVO leaders employed various strategies to raise funds in North America and Western and Eastern Europe, their varying success illuminates the regional differences in the institute's base of support. By 1929, confident that it had finally found reliable sources of income, YIVO began construction of its own building in Vilna. Even as the onset of worldwide economic depression brought the institute to the verge of bankruptcy, the completed headquarters became a potent symbol for Yiddish-speaking Jews around the world.

The final chapter focuses on YIVO's response to the worsening political and economic conditions of the mid- and late 1930s. The institute managed to rebuild after its financial collapse but found its apolitical stance increasingly under attack. Led by Max Weinreich, its most eminent scholar, YIVO responded with fresh intellectual energy. Weinreich brought cutting-edge social science methodology to the new Division of Youth Research, using an innovative interdisciplinary approach to address the problems of contemporary Jewish adolescents and young adults. YIVO also renewed its commitment to popular work, forging closer ties with the Yiddish secular schools and finally establishing its long-planned teaching component. In the final years of the interwar period, the institute debated its response to a growing sense of crisis while reaffirming the relevance of Yiddish scholarship.

An epilogue takes this story into World War II, when YIVO staff strove to continue their work under Lithuanian and communist rule, then risked their lives to save Vilna's treasures from the Nazis. I then describe how the institute became one of the few East European Jewish institutions to reestablish itself in the wake of the Holocaust. Led by Max Weinreich, YIVO struggled to adjust its work and its mission to the vastly changed landscape of the postwar United States. The institute continues this effort today in its New York home, where it remains the preeminent center for research on East European Jewry and Yiddish language and culture.

YIVO's history in the years between the two World Wars constitutes a key chapter in the development of Jewish scholarship. Yet it also provides insights

into both the possibilities and pitfalls of combining academia and nationalism, culture and politics, objectivity and engagement. Its achievement was to negotiate these competing demands to produce work that served not only as an intellectual milestone but also as a central element of an effort to fundamentally remake Jewish life.

1

"Language Raised to the Level of a Political Factor"

Yiddish Scholarship before YIVO

Introduction: Setting the Stage

In the late nineteenth century Diaspora Nationalists set about building a modern, secular culture in the Yiddish language. By the turn of the twentieth century they could boast a growing press, theater, and, above all, a serious literature that had developed well beyond its roots in didactic socialist propaganda. Yet the vernacular tongue of East European Jewry was still trammeled by its prevailing stereotype as a "jargon" ill suited to the functions of high culture. Moreover, Yiddish-speaking Jews lived as a minority without political power, most under the repressive tsarist regime with its official antisemitism and government censorship. Under such conditions they lacked both the freedom and the resources to support the institutions they envisioned.

As Diaspora Nationalists discussed their plans to develop further Yiddish culture, they saw scholarship as a crucial part of their efforts. By the eve of World War I they had undertaken several documentation, research, and publishing projects related to the historical experience and contemporary life of Yiddish-speaking Jewry. These were isolated efforts, initiated by writers and intellectuals who sought support and collaboration from like-minded individuals across Eastern Europe. One of the most persistent, Nokhem Shtif, spent nearly two decades seeking to establish a career as an expert in Yiddish language and literature before formulating the first detailed plan for a Yiddish academic institute. Shtif was part of a cohort of aspiring scholars who led a peripatetic life, settling temporarily in several European cities that seemed to offer the chance to pursue unhindered the advancement of Yiddish scholarship.

In the years following the outbreak of World War I the landscape of Europe was radically transformed through war, revolution, and mass violence. The destruction made more urgent efforts to preserve the Jewish historical record, while changed political circumstances gave new weight to questions of language

and culture. Diaspora Nationalists resumed their work with renewed optimism and energy as they contemplated for the first time the prospect of government support. Instead of a few individuals working under their own initiative, activists could now imagine an ongoing, collective effort to advance Yiddish culture. In 1924, when he composed a detailed memorandum outlining the current state of the field, Nokhem Shtif believed that the time was finally ripe to create an institutional base for Yiddish scholarship.

By this time Yiddish letters was producing a sophisticated modernist literature as well as its first academic journals. With the help of the newly created Yiddish secular schools, Diaspora Nationalists hoped that such works of high culture could be disseminated to a wide audience of Yiddish-speaking Jews. In this way, they believed, serious work in Yiddish could become the concern not only of a small group of intellectuals but also of a broad segment of the people as a whole. In the more favorable postwar conditions they looked forward to building a network of institutions that would serve, entertain, and educate a mass audience while strengthening a national identity centered on the Yiddish language.

Precursors: Collection, Publishing, and Teaching

The interest of Yiddish-speaking Jews in their own past can be traced to the pioneering work of the historian and theoretician of Diaspora Nationalism, Simon Dubnow. In 1891 Dubnow published an essay in the Russian journal *Voskhod* [Dawn], in which he argued that East European Jews were woefully ignorant of their own heritage.[1] There was virtually no historical writing on the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe, Dubnow complained, and the sources that could serve as the basis of such scholarship were neglected and inaccessible. He appealed to the public to collect and preserve historical materials so that they would be available to future scholars. Dubnow's Russian article and a revised Hebrew version, published the following year, inspired numerous readers to send him valuable books and records.[2]

Dubnow's essay not only led individuals to collect historic material but also led to the creation of an institutional basis for Jewish scholarship in Eastern Europe. In 1892 the Hevrah Mefitse Haskalah [Society for the Spread of Enlightenment], also known by its Russian acronym OPE, founded a Historic-Ethnographic Commission, which in 1908 became the Jewish Historic-Ethnographic Society of St. Petersburg.[3] From 1909 to 1918 the society published *Evreiskaia starina* [The Jewish Past], a journal of Russian Jewish history that Dubnow edited. Dubnow's call was thus a clear precursor to YIVO's collection as well as publishing initiatives, establishing the importance of preserving the Jewish past.

As the name of the Jewish Historic-Ethnographic Society implied, the interest in documenting history extended to the preservation of folklore as well. The dominant European theories of nationalism of the period looked to the

folk as the bearer of authentic culture, and so each ethnic group sought to document its own distinct folk traditions to bolster its nationalist claims. In the Jewish case, interest in Yiddish folklore dated to the turn of the twentieth century, when Saul Ginsburg and Pesakh Marek published their pioneering collection of folk songs.[4] Prior to World War I work also appeared on *purim-shpiln* [Purim plays], proverbs, jokes, and other forms of folklore.[5]

The Jewish Historic-Ethnographic Society of St. Petersburg played a crucial role in such work, sponsoring a landmark effort to document Jewish folk culture in the Pale of Settlement. Beginning in 1912 the writer and ethnographer S. An-ski led a series of expeditions named in honor of Baron Horace (Naftali Herz) Günzburg. Along with the musicologists Joel Engel and Zusman Kisselgof, the artist Solomon Yudovin, and the ethnographer Abraham Rechtman, An-ski traveled to dozens of shtetls throughout the provinces of Kiev, Volhynia, and Podolia. There they recorded thousands of examples of Yiddish folk songs, folktales, and proverbs; took two thousand photographs; and gathered hundreds of historical documents and examples of Jewish material culture including clothing, religious articles, and even food. Their work was halted in 1914 by the outbreak of World War I.[6]

As part of his efforts, An-ski also prepared a guide for folklore collecting, a series of more than two thousand questions organized around the human life cycle that would be a model for later scholars.[7] The most famous use to which his ethnographic ventures would be put, however, was in the realm of literature. An-ski himself used elements from his own collections to compose his expressionist drama *The Dybbuk*, which became the best-known play in the Yiddish repertory. An-ski's work thus illustrated not only the importance of documenting traditional Jewish life but also the way in which those traditions could be employed to construct a distinctly modern Jewish culture.[8]

Thus, one of the crucial ways that Dubnow and An-ski helped lay the foundation for Yiddish scholarship was through their pioneering collection initiatives. This process, known in Yiddish as *zamlen* [to collect], was seen as the crucial first step to any further scholarly work. First, the sources necessary for the study of Jewish life had to be gathered, preserved, and made accessible in a central location. Only then could scholars begin to analyze them and eventually disseminate their findings.

Dubnow and An-ski concentrated their energies on rescuing evidence of the Jewish past, for they wished to safeguard the physical traces of a culture they feared was rapidly vanishing. By the late nineteenth century the processes of modernization, urbanization, and secularization had led to a concern that traditional ways of life were on the decline. Thus they saw their work as a means to preserve customs on the verge of disappearing. In his memorandum on the creation of a Yiddish academic institute, Nokhem Shtif remarked with satisfaction that these efforts had resulted in much valuable material being "saved from oblivion and entered into intellectual discourse."[9] Nevertheless, Yiddish scholars were just as concerned – if not more so – with the contemporary life of

Yiddish-speaking Jewry. And just as An-ski made use of time-honored folklore to compose literature suited to the tastes of modern audiences, so too did the founders of Yiddish scholarship base their work on the needs of the day, particularly the effort to secure rights for Jews as a national minority in Eastern Europe.

This interest in contemporary issues led Diaspora Nationalists to place great importance on the discipline of philology – which included the study of folklore as well as language and literature – for nationalist thinkers of the period considered a people's native tongue to embody its essential character. By researching the vernacular of a particular group, scholars hoped to demonstrate its unique qualities and hence bolster its claim to a distinct identity. In addition to this descriptive task, they sought to develop prescriptive rules for spelling, grammar, and usage, for they believed that a people could only win respect once its spoken vernacular had been standardized and raised to the level of a modern, written language.

The Yiddish scholar and theorist of Labor Zionism Ber Borochov applied these ideas to the Jewish context, arguing that Yiddish scholarship, and in particular Yiddish philology, was necessary for the development of Jewish nationalism.[10] Borochov began his landmark essay of 1913, "Di oyfgabn fun der yidisher filologye" [The Tasks of Yiddish Philology] by stating, "Of all the scholarly disciplines, philology plays the greatest role in the national revival of oppressed peoples."[11] Borochov argued that language was the basis of national culture and thus an essential ingredient of any nationalist movement. Researching a people's vernacular tongue was therefore a fundamental step in fostering national consciousness. "The first thing for an awakening people is: to become lord over one's own language," he wrote. "As long as a people remains 'illiterate' in its own language, one cannot speak of a nationalist culture."[12]

While the study of Yiddish language and literature had a long history, according to Borochov's criteria the work done heretofore had "practically no national worth" because of its "purely 'academic' character." These earlier studies were for the most part written in Latin or German by Christian scholars, whom Borochov considered "foreign to the Jewish people." Moreover, they treated the topic as a novelty, a tool for proselytizing, or at best as an adjunct to the study of German.[13] Shtif cited approvingly Borochov's view of philology as serving nationalist ends and criticized earlier scholars who treated the study of Yiddish as a "historical discipline … like Latin."[14] These he contrasted to the new generation of Yiddish scholars who wrote in as well as about the language and who sought to develop Yiddish philology as an independent field at the center of a modern secular culture: "We should begin to research the Yiddish language *for itself*, as an organic development, not as an aid for German studies."[15]

Philology was the focus of the first major attempt not merely to record Yiddish culture but to analyze it and disseminate the fruits of this research. A milestone in the history of Yiddish scholarship was *Der pinkes* [The Record

Book], published in Vilna in 1912/3 and edited by the literary critic Shmuel Niger.[16] This pioneering volume included articles on Yiddish linguistics and literary history, folklore, and the history of the Yiddish press and theater by authors such as Niger, Borochov, Shtif, and Dubnow. Particularly important were Borochov's essay, which appeared in *Der pinkes*, and his groundbreaking 500-item bibliography that established Yiddish philology as a field with an extensive literature.[17]

As the first scholarly publication in Yiddish, the *Pinkes* represented a major step toward developing the language into a suitable tool for academic discourse. Shtif had lamented in 1910, "In Yiddish we still don't have the complex sentence, the exactness and precision of a scholarly style." Such a volume helped accomplish his goal of "work[ing] out a flexible, artfully constructed modern literary language for serious thought, just as our poetry and belles lettres has already accomplished for deep, fine feeling."[18] Thus both the medium and the content of this work were landmark achievements.

In a lengthy review, Shtif praised the *Pinkes* as an "attempt to create a refuge [*mokem miklet*] for scholarly research on language and literature in Yiddish."[19] Shtif wrote that the appearance of such a volume confirmed that the time was ripe for the development of Yiddish academic literature: "We are beginning to deserve a purely scholarly publication, which would be directed at a smaller audience with more knowledge and thirst for scholarship. … And I believe that we not only deserve it, but that we can already carry it out. Our scholarly powers are growing." Shtif called for the founding of a regular journal in Yiddish that would publish articles on language, literature, folklore, and history. He declared that "we already now possess the small circle and the individuals – true, [only] a few – who will know [enough] to value and support such a Yiddish scholarly publication."[20] With such a journal not only would the evidence of Jewish culture be collected and preserved, but scholars studying that culture could make their conclusions widely known through the printed page.

While the *Pinkes* was particularly notable for its size and scope, other works on Yiddish philology also began to appear in the years just prior to World War I. Although the war interrupted such publishing activity, some work continued even during the conflict and resumed with renewed vigor after the end of hostilities. Many of the authors of these studies would later be closely affiliated with YIVO, including Max Weinreich, Zalman Reisen, Zelig Kalmanovitch, Noah Prylucki, and Shtif himself.[21] Shtif stressed that what distinguished this new generation of researchers was its approach to Yiddish not as a historical artifact or a curious variation of German but as "the living Jewish language of the people [*yidishe folkshprakh*]."[22]

Shtif suggested that future volumes of the *Pinkes* publish primary sources as a way to make essential documents accessible in the absence of a central Yiddish library or archive.[23] Yet both Borochov and Shtif agreed that ideally this function would be performed by an organization created to care for such collections. In 1913 Borochov wrote that "what is needed is … a permanent academy

or society for *all* general philological purposes. *Only* such an organization will have the necessary authority" to institute needed language reforms.[24] He ended his essay, "The Tasks of Yiddish Philology," with the following appeal: "Only a communal institution can organize philological work in its entire breadth … as long as there is no degree-granting national organization for philological purposes, Yiddish philology will not be able to fulfill its tasks properly."[25] Thus, by the eve of World War I scholars had not only established Yiddish scholarship as a viable field but had begun to see an institutional base as a necessary step for its further development. Shtif and Borochov identified many key aspects of such a future academic center: it would be a national body with the scope and clout to facilitate research, set rules for the Yiddish language, and foster the further growth of Yiddish scholarship.

While Borochov spoke of creating a "degree-granting national organization" in "The Tasks of Yiddish Philology," in fact the idea of a Jewish university dated to the very founding of modern Jewish nationalism. In 1898, only a year after the creation of the Jewish Labor Bund, Chaim Zhitlowsky discussed the necessity of developing Yiddish culture, including education and scholarship, within the framework of Jewish socialism. In his pioneering article, "Tsionizm oder sotsializm?" [Zionism or Socialism?], he argued that the natural development of pedagogy in Yiddish would lead to the creation of a complete educational network including high schools and, eventually, universities in the language. "If three million Swiss can support ten universities," he wrote, "then the seven to eight million Yiddish-speaking Jews can certainly support twenty-five." Zhitlowsky maintained that the opportunity for advanced study in Yiddish would attract Jewish youth and bind them to the Jewish people, so that they would not be tempted to turn to European sources to fulfill their educational needs. In this way, the young generation would both benefit from the products of Yiddish scholarship and be imbued with Jewish national consciousness.[26]

Zhitlowsky was likely responding to a proposal for a Jewish university put forth at the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, as well as a series of articles on the topic by the Hebrew writer Reuben Brainin beginning the same year.[27] Zhitlowsky criticized Zionists who envisioned a Jewish university primarily as a means to avoid quotas at Russian institutes of higher learning, just as he dismissed those who would create a Jewish homeland merely to escape antisemitism.[28] Its graduates, he wrote, would seek education only to enrich themselves without the obstacle of anti-Jewish prejudice, not to contribute to the Jewish people as a whole.[29] Yet in 1898 the idea of promoting Yiddish culture for its own sake, rather than as a tool for spreading socialist dogma, was still ahead of its time. When the Jewish Labor Bund reprinted Zhitlowsky's article, it omitted his discussion of a Yiddish university.[30]

Ten years later, attitudes toward the language had changed sufficiently that leading Jewish cultural figures – including Zhitlowsky as well as members of the Bund – came together in Czernowitz, then part of the Austro-Hungarian

Empire, to discuss ways to raise the status of Yiddish and promote its development. The First Yiddish Language Conference called for the creation of a central body that would, in the words of writer I. L. Peretz, "serve as an authority in questions of Yiddish orthography, grammar, and other language questions."[31] This organization would also foster the growth of Yiddish culture by supporting publishing, education, and artistic endeavors in the language. Conference delegates realized that as champions of the vernacular tongue of a stateless people, Diaspora Nationalists had few financial or organizational resources on which to draw. They believed that to accomplish their goals they needed an institutional base that would provide ongoing support for Yiddish cultural activity.[32] Discussions, however, came to be dominated by theoretical debates on the status of Yiddish as "a" or "the" national language of the Jewish people. The participants ended their meetings with few concrete plans and failed to create a permanent organization.

Discussions of a Jewish university were revived at the Eleventh Zionist Congress in September 1913, when Chaim Weizmann renewed calls for an institution at which Jewish students could pursue their studies "free from hindrances."[33] This event may have been the impetus for the first substantial treatment of the topic in Yiddish – Shmuel Niger's April 1914 article, "Vegen dem rayen tsu shafen a yudishe universitet" [On the Idea of Creating a Jewish University].[34] Echoing Zhitlowsky's 1898 essay, Niger harshly attacked the Zionist conception of a Jewish institute of higher learning. If Jews created an institution simply in response to external factors such as quotas, he argued, "it will certainly be no *Jewish university*, but a *university for Jews*, no center for national Jewish forms dressed in general humanist culture, but a diploma factory."[35] Niger dismissed "the idea of a 'Jewish university' that is built not because of the collective needs of the Jewish community, but only to satisfy the needs of individuals."[36] Such a place, he complained, would produce only assimilated doctors and lawyers who would contribute nothing to the Jewish people collectively.

Further, an institution in distant Palestine such as Zionists wished to build could only poorly serve the vast majority of the Jewish population. Niger wrote that such a body must be "appropriate to the needs of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, and it will be appropriate to those needs only when it itself will be in the Diaspora."[37] "A modern university is with a thousand threads connected to the place where it is located," he added, "otherwise its work cannot be lively and productive."[38] Thus, Niger saw the proposed institute as intimately linked to contemporary Jewish society, not only through physical proximity but also through its content and concerns. Not merely a structural response to antisemitism, it would create a class of young intellectuals who would contribute to the burgeoning Jewish nationalist movements. As he wrote in the conclusion of his essay, "The Jewish university, which will demand so much strength and sacrifice, should be … a true intellectual center of the Jewish people … a natural reflection of the people's needs, a living ferment of the people's intellectual development."[39]

Niger had identified what would become one of the central tenets of YIVO's work: even an institute devoted to such seemingly rarefied pursuits as advanced research and study could not be isolated from current developments on the Jewish street; indeed, its very raison d'être would be bound up with the pressing issues of the day.

World War I and Its Aftermath

New possibilities for Jewish cultural work opened up in 1905, when revolution in Russia brought about reforms including a brief respite from tsarist censorship. This liberal interlude was soon cut short, yet in its wake disillusioned Jewish activists turned increasingly from the political to the cultural sphere. In the same year the Jewish Labor Bund, which had heretofore used the Jewish vernacular as a vehicle for its propaganda, adopted the Diaspora Nationalist principle of support for Yiddish as an independent element of its program.[40] While these developments attest to the growing interest in the further development of the language, it was the tumultuous events of the period from 1914 to 1921 that changed these plans from a distant dream to something seemingly within reach. As the map of Europe was transformed – both literally and figuratively – through war, revolution, and reconstruction, new political realities suddenly opened up broader horizons for the development of Yiddish culture.

If concern about the vanishing evidence of Jewish history and folkways began in the late nineteenth century, it was galvanized by the experience of World War I. The war caused widespread destruction in Eastern Europe, where the sites of prolonged armed conflict often coincided with the areas of densest Jewish settlement. These events spurred the growth of a new genre of writing, as Jewish leaders sensed that they were living through a historical turning point.[41] This phenomenon was particularly notable in Vilna, a long-time center of Jewish scholarship known as "the Jerusalem of Lithuania," which boasted its own tradition of historical writing.[42] Beginning while fighting still raged around them and continuing into the 1930s, Vilna Jews produced a series of publications chronicling the course of the conflict and its effects on their community.[43] Writers made a conscious effort to document everyday life during the war, citing the "social [and] psychological value" of sources that reflected the quotidian experiences of the folk.[44] In 1919 S. An-ski, who had settled in the city, founded a Historic-Ethnographic Society that would later be named in his honor. It was a propitious time to do so, according to one of the society's members, because the war represented "a new period, when every event has a historical significance." By collecting material now, he argued, the Historic-Ethnographic Society assured that future researchers who wished to "ascertain the traces of the past … will find all the material ready and waiting."[45]

Such writers felt compelled to record the events taking place around them because of both their intrinsic historical importance and a sense that they were hastening the end of a society already in decline. In 1918 Khaykel Lunski, the

librarian of Vilna's famed Strashun Library, wrote *Fun vilner geto, geshtaltn un bilder, geshribn in shvere tsaytn* [From the Vilna Ghetto, Portraits and Pictures Written in Difficult Times], an elegy to "the old, traditional life of the Vilna *shulhoyf* [synagogue courtyard]" on the verge of its extinction.[46] Another writer urged the collection of material because "now, in the time of destruction," there was a "holy duty" to save "the remnants [*sheyres-hapleyte*]" of folk culture.[47] In their concern for protecting the record of the past as well for the fate of the common people, these projects clearly paved the way for the scholarly work of YIVO.

Yet in the very act of preserving Jewish tradition, these activists sought to pioneer a modern approach to historical scholarship. Moyshe Shalit, a leader of the Vilna Jewish Historic-Ethnographic Society, wrote that while the chroniclers of "old Vilna" memorialized only great rabbinical figures and great acts of charity, more recent work was democratic in its approach, treated contemporary social and political movements, and was written in Yiddish. He described this "New Historiography of Vilna" as "truly a historiography that proceeds right with the pulse of the time, a history that is written right with the tempo of the event itself."[48] Shalit and his Vilna colleagues thus echoed Nokhem Shtif, who called for "a collective historiography that follows in the footsteps of the time." Shtif noted that such historical work began "from the close [and] concrete and reckoned with the practical needs of the Yiddish cultural environment,"[49] often focusing on the recent past and on topics directly tied to current political questions such as the history of the Jewish labor movement.[50]

In this way Vilna's experience of World War I reinforced the two seemingly contradictory impulses that spurred the development of historical writing in Yiddish. On the one hand it convinced East European Jews that the need to preserve their vanishing past was more urgent than ever. At the same time, by underscoring the importance of contemporary events, it also prompted writers to choose topics related to the burning issues of the day, well aware that they held direct implications for the emerging political order of post–World War I Europe. This shared commitment to the past *and* present of Yiddish-speaking Jewry would ultimately help make the city a central address for Yiddish scholarship in the decades to come.

It became evident that the entire region would be radically transformed when, in the midst of the war, revolution suddenly brought an end to the Russian Empire and its repressive policies. Jewish activists had great expectations for the new democratic government that took power in February 1917 promising equal rights to all its citizens. While many were wary of the Bolshevik government that seized control that October, its policy of ensuring national rights for ethnic minorities won it much support among these formerly oppressed groups. Along with many territorially based peoples, the Jews were recognized as a nationality with Yiddish as its language. The new Soviet government granted Yiddish official status and provided state funds for scholarship, education, and publishing in the national tongue. Zionists and traditional

Jews protested the suppression of Hebrew and Jewish religious practice by the officially atheist Soviet state. Yet for many secular Diaspora Nationalists, this unprecedented level of respect and support for Yiddish seemed the fulfillment of their most grandiose dreams.

Hopes for building up Jewish life in Russia, however, dimmed with the chaos of the ensuing civil war. A lack of civil order and widespread famine impelled many to flee to Kiev, where newly independent Ukraine promised far-reaching cultural and political autonomy for its ethnic minorities, including Jews. This experiment in creating a democratic, pluralistic state proved short-lived but quickly became the subject of several studies in Yiddish.[51] More ominously, the mood of optimism turned to horror as a wave of pogroms swept Ukraine, claiming tens of thousands of victims.[52] Like World War I, this fresh violence galvanized a group of like-minded individuals to record a momentous historical event in the midst of the killing itself. In the spring of 1919, Elias Tcherikower, a historian who had come to Kiev from Saint Petersburg, formed the Editorial Board for Collecting and Investigating Material Pertaining to the Pogroms in the Ukraine.[53] For the first time, all the major figures who would later participate in the founding of YIVO in Berlin – including Tcherikower, Nokhem Shtif, Jacob Lestschinsky, Jacob Ze'ev Wolf (Velvl) Latzky-Bertholdi, and Nokhem Gergel – collaborated on an undertaking that they agreed was of the utmost urgency. Shtif wrote that the willingness to go to such lengths to collect and preserve materials, sometimes at the risk of their own lives, "shows a certain ripeness and feeling of responsibility for historical research."[54]

The archive these scholars and activists created served as the basis of several volumes on the pogroms that would be accounted among the earliest modern historical works in Yiddish.[55] Moreover, as was the case with wartime publications, their goal was not merely to record events for posterity but also to address contemporary issues. Tcherikower and his colleagues documented atrocities even as they were unfolding in the hope of publicizing them and eventually bringing the perpetrators to justice. In fact, the materials they gathered were used in the trial of Sholem Schwarzbard, who assassinated Ukrainian leader Simon Petlyura in Paris in 1926. Schwarzbard's acquittal seemed to confirm that Yiddish scholarship could at the same time be relevant to the past and present of East European Jewry.

As the years of international conflict, civil unrest, and antisemitic violence finally subsided, the new postwar order seemed to usher in a more hopeful era for European Jewry. Zionists rejoiced as Great Britain's promulgation of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 made the dream of a Jewish state appear within reach. Jewish activists were elated by the overthrow of the tsarist regime, yet in the wake of the failed attempts to create a democratic Russia and a pluralistic Ukraine, many abandoned politics and decided to devote their energies to cultural projects. Moreover, in the new landscape of postwar Europe, cultural work took on a new political importance. As the multiethnic empires of the region were divided up, formerly subject peoples pressed their claims in

accordance with the Wilsonian principle of self-determination. Demonstrating that a group possessed its own language and folk traditions bolstered its argument for national sovereignty or at least legally protected rights.

In this period, Yiddish activists felt a new sense of urgency as the war and its aftermath "raised the language to the level of a political factor," as Nokhem Shtif put it.[56] The linguist Zalman Reisen, long-time editor of the Vilna daily *Der Tog* [The Day] and soon to be one of YIVO's founders in Vilna, argued that by uniting behind Yiddish as their national tongue, East European Jews could present their strongest case for recognition.[57] In 1920, he raised the issue of creating a Jewish university, which would, he wrote, have "the greatest significance for our struggle for national equality. It will raise the prestige of our nation [and] of our language." With such an institution, he believed that Jews would "be accepted in the ranks of peoples whose right to self-determination is not denied."[58]

Diaspora Nationalists like Reisen were cheered in 1919 by the terms of the Paris Peace Conference. There the defeated and newly independent nation states of Eastern and Central Europe were made to accept a series of treaties regulating the treatment and status of their ethnic minority populations. These Minorities Treaties, although much diluted from original proposals, enshrined the principle of autonomy by guaranteeing the rights of these vulnerable communities. They stipulated not only that minorities would have the right to freely conduct cultural and religious activities in their own languages but also that these languages would be recognized in official government settings such as the courts. Moreover, a share of public funding would be provided to the schools and religious institutions established by each group.[59] Despite some opposition supporters successfully lobbied in Paris for Jews to be considered a protected minority under the treaties. With these safeguards in place, Jewish activists looked forward optimistically to a new era of cultural and political work. Their aspirations focused on the newly reconstituted Poland, which included nearly 3 million Jews among the minorities that comprised one-third of its population, as well as on the Baltic states.[60]

As Diaspora Nationalists set out with renewed energy to rebuild communities devastated by war, they hoped that the government funding promised by the Minorities Treaties would provide a solid foundation for Yiddish cultural work on a broad scale. In the immediate prewar years, An-ski, Borochov, and others had struggled to finance their groundbreaking projects while working in isolation or with a few like-minded colleagues. With a reliable financial base, institutions could be established that would continue the work of these pioneers in a ramified and consistent way. Yiddish scholarship thus could be transformed from the preoccupation of a few scattered and impoverished individuals to a stable and systematic enterprise.

As the interwar period wore on, the hopes of Diaspora Nationalists proved illusory. The states of Eastern and Central Europe rarely fulfilled the terms of the Minorities Treaties, and little of their promised funding was in fact

forthcoming. As they moved politically to the right, their governments sometimes formally abrogated the treaties, while the League of Nations, which was charged with safeguarding the rights of minorities, failed to take action.[61] In addition, economic as well as political constraints limited what could be accomplished in the interwar period. Yet despite these setbacks still to come, the optimism and enthusiasm of the immediate postwar years shaped both the expectations and the agenda of Diaspora Nationalists.

One of the first areas to which activists turned their attention was the founding of educational institutions in the European Jewish vernacular. Nokhem Shtif considered the existence of such schools a key indication of the maturity of Yiddish culture and a prerequisite for the creation of an academic center.[62] Zhitlowsky and Niger had proposed a Yiddish university in the years before World War I, yet such a project then seemed little more than a distant dream. Ironically, it was the war itself that made possible the creation of the first Yiddish schools. German occupation authorities, persuaded that promoting Yiddish culture would win them the support of the local Jewish population and bring it closer to the German language, permitted such institutions to operate in the areas under their control.[63]

In the postwar period, teachers took advantage of the Minorities Treaties to organize the first Yiddish educational networks. The Central Educational Committee [Tsentraler bildungs komitet or TSBK] was founded in Vilna as fighting continued in 1919, while the Warsaw-based Central Yiddish School Organization [Tsentrale yidishe shul organizatsye or TSYSHO] was created two years later.[64] Although pedagogy was one of the last fields to receive scholarly attention in Yiddish, a spate of journals was soon founded as a forum for these new projects, most notably *Di naye shul* [The New School] (1920–1930) and *Shul un lebn* [School and Life] (1921–1927).[65] In addition, a number of books appeared on such timely themes as the effect of wartime trauma on children's development.[66] Not strictly academic, these publications dealt both with theoretical pedagogical issues and with the day-to-day questions facing the emerging school network, its teachers, and pupils.

With the establishment of the school network came fresh calls for an institution of higher learning in Yiddish, this time from the ranks of educational activists. Both Shloyme Mendelsohn, a leader of the nascent TSYSHO in Poland, and the writer and pedagogue Abraham Golomb called for the creation of a Yiddish college [*hoykh-shul*]. Both argued that such a body was crucial to the healthy development of Yiddish pedagogy as a whole. Mendelsohn described it as a necessary complement to Yiddish elementary and middle schools, a resource "from which the [lower level] schools can draw sustenance." Golomb asked rhetorically, "Can Our Elementary Schools Develop without a College?" His answer was an emphatic "no."[67] Without a college, Golomb wrote, there was nowhere that future educators could receive proper training. The schools also created for the first time a demand for curricula in Yiddish for all subjects, both Jewish and general. They needed consistent rules for usage as well as new

terminology for the Yiddish-speaking classroom. Teachers hoped that a scholarly institute would fill these practical needs by providing teacher training in Yiddish; publishing textbooks in the language; and setting standard rules for Yiddish spelling, grammar, and vocabulary.

More broadly, both Mendelsohn and Golomb hoped that an academic center would provide a firm intellectual foundation for Yiddish pedagogy. Golomb maintained that without research in specifically Jewish fields such as Yiddish language and literature, elementary schools lacked the material from which to create a suitable curriculum. To develop an educational network that is truly Jewish, he argued, teachers must be able to draw on original scholarship and not merely translations from European sources. Golomb echoed Niger's 1914 call for a "*Jewish university*," not a "*university for Jews*"[68] when he wrote that without a college, "our lower school can be either a general (non–Jewish) school in Yiddish or one that is not entirely Jewish."[69]

As the schools developed, they would rely on scholarship to support their efforts in the classroom; eventually, students and graduates would turn to it to fill their extracurricular needs. Golomb described how education led inexorably to broader intellectual horizons in Yiddish:

> The entire contingent of our students in the upper classes looks for a cultural atmosphere outside of school, a book, a lecture … and what teacher in the upper classes has not felt great regret, grief, and sorrow, when his students turn to him for literature and he has nothing to tell them.[70]

What the schools hoped to create was a new type of Jewish youth, the first generation equipped with a modern education in its mother tongue. Imbued with an appreciation for Yiddish culture on a high level, it would comprise an eager audience for new scholarly work. Thus, scholarship and the schools would serve complementary functions. By "educat[ing] the new Jewish intellectual," the schools would create a demand for sophisticated reading matter in Yiddish. By producing Yiddish scholarship, the institute would fill that demand.[71] As Shtif described to Zhitlowsky, research work would produce Yiddish culture:

> Scholarly work in Yiddish has already given us a few people who are capable of working and thinking in a scholarly way. It attracts old and new scholarly powers. In short – here we have the reservoir that gives us the *creator* of scholarship in Yiddish.

The schools and their graduates, on the other hand, would be at the receiving end of that culture:

> The school system … creates for us the *consumers* of scholarly products. (We simply get people who can and want to read a scholarly book in Yiddish.)[72]

Thus, Yiddish activists envisioned a cycle of cultural production and consumption. The school network would play a crucial role in this process, linking the Jewish masses in whose name Yiddish culture was created with the

intellectuals who sought to further develop that culture. Mendelsohn wrote that teachers would translate Yiddish scholarship into popular terms for their students, who would in turn transmit it to a wider audience. Golomb described this process using a metaphor from human anatomy. He spoke of

> a circulation of culture: The life and thought of the folk is the source of culture. There it is born. From there it crosses over into universities, academies, conservatories, etc. It is worked over, refined, strengthened and multiplied. From there it goes back to the folk through schools, libraries, theaters and other cultural institutions. This cultural circulation is the intellectual blood with which a cultured people lives.[73]

In this way, the teachers and graduates of the schools would become intellectual trailblazers, helping disseminate high Yiddish culture broadly. When Zhitlowsky and Niger proposed a Yiddish university before World War I, they were concerned primarily with the dilemmas of would-be professionals frustrated in attempts to obtain a university degree. The new realities of the interwar period meant that Mendelsohn and Golomb could envision educational work that would reach not just a handful of intellectuals but thousands of pupils, and through them, the entire Yiddish-speaking public. With the joint efforts of scholarship and pedagogy, high Yiddish culture could become mass culture.

Those who called for a Yiddish academic center envisioned it as crucial not only to the schools but also to the intellectual life of the entire Jewish community. Golomb described the projected institute as filling "general national needs," the needs not only of professional scholars "seeking a career, but [of] the culture" as a whole.[74] Using an image that would often be repeated, he wrote that the network of elementary schools was only "the first level … of a broader and deeper modern folk culture" whose further development would require "modern *Yiddish scholarship*."[75] Similarly, Mendelsohn argued that such an institution was necessary to raise Yiddish culture to a higher level, encouraging activists while promoting seriousness of purpose. "Without pure scholarship," warned Mendelsohn, "we will be left only with emptiness."[76]

Wandering Scholars

In the tumultuous years of war, revolution, and pogroms, a group of Yiddish writers and activists migrated throughout Europe in search of a favorable locale for Jewish political and cultural work. The members of this cohort followed remarkably similar trajectories, most from Russia to Ukraine to Germany, some with sojourns in Lite, the area including the Vilna region and the Baltic states. They celebrated together, then fled together as the promise of the Russian Revolution turned into the horror of famine and pogroms. They were drawn and then disappointed by newly established governments that held out the prospect of autonomy for their national minorities. Nearly all began as active members of political movements, but as they became disillusioned with these

experiments in Diaspora Nationalism, they increasingly turned their attention to the cultural realm. This change mirrored a further geographic shift, as most abandoned the turmoil of Eastern Europe for the relative – and temporary – security of Berlin.

Throughout their wanderings, the members of this cohort collaborated on a number of pioneering projects in Yiddish scholarship. Their new initiatives, as well as the personal ties they forged, further laid the groundwork for the creation of a Yiddish academic institute. Nokhem Shtif wrote that in the years of World War I, this "new group of Yiddish scholars" had taken the lead in Jewish intellectual life. They,

> not the old intellectuals, collected [and] researched material about the pogroms, about the whole social-political situation of the Jews in the Ukraine [and] in Lithuania in the years 1917–1921, and published scholarly works [and] collections of material about them. That is to say, this group is now becoming *the heir and the carrier* of Yiddish scholarship among the Jews of Eastern Europe.[77]

In this new era, these individuals were well aware of their shared role in shaping Jewish culture, informed by the opportunities of the postwar period and their commitment to Yiddish.

Of all those who participated in this endeavor, it was Shtif who focused most single-mindedly on the dream of creating a Yiddish scholarly institute. His remarkable determination over the course of a decade was the direct catalyst for the founding of YIVO. With no formal training and no institutional support, he embarked on a career as a literary scholar. A tireless believer in the possibilities of Yiddish academic work, he persevered in his efforts even at the price of impoverishing his family and alienating his friends. Shtif could be a difficult character. As the linguist Yudel Mark wrote, he approached the causes he championed with a fanaticism that left small room for compromise. He had little sense of humor and little patience with his opponents, and he could be endlessly persistent in pursuing his goals.[78] Because of his directness and stubbornness, Shtif often came into conflict with fellow writers and editors. He feuded with Nachman Meisel, the editor of the journal *Literarishe bleter* [Literary Pages]; with Simon Dubnow, whose work he translated into Yiddish; and with his colleagues researching the Ukrainian pogroms, who ejected him from the group's governing committee.[79] Shtif himself was aware of his personality, writing in 1910 that "unfortunately, there is something in my character that prevents me from feeling more intimate with people."[80]

Born in 1879 in Rovno, Shtif was raised in a traditionally observant family that nonetheless placed great emphasis on modern education. As a boy he studied secular as well as religious subjects and read Haskalah literature. In 1894, he entered a Russian high school, where the assimilationist atmosphere only reinforced his commitment to Jewish culture. As he later recalled, it prompted him to found a Hebrew language club, his "first communal action."[81] Shtif went on to study engineering and chemistry in Kiev until his political activism

led to his arrest and emigration to Switzerland in 1904. Shtif, who had been attracted to Zionism in his youth, in 1903 helped found the socialist territorialist movement Vozrozhdenie [Rebirth], which later evolved into the Jewish Socialist Labor Party (known by its Russian acronym SERP and as the Sejmist party), and later the nonsocialist Diaspora Nationalist Folkspartey.

Shtif grew up in a Yiddish-speaking environment, but, like his friends, never thought of devoting serious attention to the language. Then in 1905, while in political exile in Switzerland, he met followers of An-ski and Zhitlowsky and learned of the ideology of the Jewish Labor Bund. Under these influences, he experienced an epiphany and was seized with "a vision, a lyrical dream" that he must write in his native tongue. "Pull[ing] the language from the memory of my mother's mouth," as he described it, Shtif worked feverishly to produce an essay in Yiddish. From that time on he resolved to pursue a career in Yiddish letters, conducting research in the libraries of Saint Petersburg after his return to Russia. He continued to pursue his interest while studying law in Jarosław from 1909 to 1913, and his first scholarly article appeared in the *Pinkes* in 1913.[82] From then on, Shtif struggled to make a living while engaging in his new passion, the study of Yiddish literature. This proved an endlessly frustrating enterprise, as he spent years trying in vain to find support for his work. As a result, he was often in desperate financial straits, barely able to support his wife and two daughters. He turned for help to everyone he could – from casual acquaintances to his aged father – trying to make ends meet with work for the Yiddish press or outright loans. Yudel Mark wrote wryly that even among impoverished Yiddish authors, "Nokhem Shtif always had the talent of being the poorest in his circle."[83] Yet despite these obstacles, his commitment to Yiddish scholarship never wavered.

If Nokhem Shtif was the individual most responsible for initiating a plan for a Yiddish academic institute, Max Weinreich did the most to make that plan a reality. As YIVO's most distinguished scholar and longest-serving administrator, no one made a larger impact on the work of the institute – or on Yiddish scholarship as a whole. Weinreich was the most junior of the "new group of Yiddish scholars" that Shtif described, yet he was admired by his older colleagues for his extraordinary talents.[84] Zalman Reisen remarked, "M. Weinreich is one of our youngest – but he has already secured a place at the very head of [our] movement." Reisen praised "not only his great qualifications as a scholar, but also his tremendous organizational talent, his rich initiative …"[85] Once the institute was established, he quickly became its guiding force, recognized as "the true leader of YIVO."[86] Elias Tcherikower wrote to Weinreich that his "rare devotion" made him "exceptionally suited to build our first Yiddish scholarly institution."[87]

To most observers, Weinreich's personality, like Shtif's, appeared rather severe. In many respects he embodied the quintessential Litvak qualities of sobriety, rationality, and intellectual rigor. Yet friends, family, and students recalled that he could become emotional and even sentimental in private

settings.[88] While Shtif and Weinreich shared an intense devotion to Yiddish scholarship, the latter ultimately proved much more skillful in achieving his goals. Unlike Shtif, whose inflexibility alienated many potential colleagues, Weinreich was an able administrator and inspiring teacher who made time to encourage others in their work. And while Shtif sought with little success to shape his writing for the lucrative American Yiddish press, Weinreich published hundreds of articles in the popular New York-based *Forverts* (*Jewish Daily Forward*) while remaining a prolific scholar in fields ranging from linguistics to psychology.[89]

Weinreich was born in 1894 as the youngest of ten children in a secularized, middle-class family in Goldingen, Courland.[90] In keeping with the strong influence of Baltic German culture in the region, his family preferred speaking German to Yiddish. Weinreich attended a "half-modernized" *kheyder* [traditional Jewish elementary school] and then a gymnasium catering to children of the local nobility, where the language of instruction was successively Russian and German. Like Shtif, Weinreich's interest in Jewish culture was sparked in his high school years by a negative experience in a predominantly non–Jewish environment. Although fifteen years separated them, both future scholars were exposed to the ideology of the Bund at the same time, in the wake of the failed Russian Revolution of 1905. The precocious Weinreich began his career in Yiddish letters shortly thereafter, at the age of thirteen, with articles in the Vilna Bundist newspaper *Di hofenung* [The Hope]. In the following years, he published pieces in the Yiddish, Russian, and German press as well as Yiddish translations of classical and European literature. In 1912, Weinreich left the Baltics to study philology and history at the university in Saint Petersburg. There he continued his journalism and political activity in Bundist student circles while embarking on an academic career.[91]

It was in Saint Petersburg that Shtif and Weinreich first crossed paths as members of a closely knit cohort of Russian Jewish intellectuals drawn to the capital city. Shtif arrived in 1915, three years after Weinreich enrolled in the university there. Yudel Mark, later one of YIVO's earliest and most enthusiastic supporters, was Weinreich's fellow student and shared an address with Shtif. Also resident in the same building were Israel Efroykin and Shtif's brother-in-law Moyshe Zilberfarb, both of whom had known Shtif since the days of Vozrozhdenie. Josef Czernichow and Jacob Ze'ev Wolf (Velvl) Latzky-Bertholdi, the latter also a fellow Vozrozhdenie member, were frequent visitors. According to Mark, when Shmuel Niger arrived in the city, this "students' circle" invited the literary critic to be its honorary head. Niger declined but suggested Zelig Kalmanovitch, the future YIVO leader, who in turn introduced the group to Shtif. Niger and Kalmanovitch, both of whom had worked with Shtif in the Yiddish press, eventually became Mark's neighbors as well his Yiddish instructors. Mark recalled that these student–teacher meetings later developed into "the most sincere friendly relationship" as Mark had occasion to work with the two elder scholars in future years.[92]

In February 1917, these friends and colleagues joined in celebrating the overthrow of the tsarist regime. That spring, the building residents and a few visitors gathered in the apartment of Israel Efroykin. As Yudel Mark recalled, there was a heady atmosphere in the aftermath of the revolution. The new democratic government had just lifted restrictions on Jews, and one member of their group, Josef Czernichow, now held a government post in the Ministry of the Interior.[93] As Mark put it, "The new possibilities swam before our eyes." The attendees joked about a future council of Jewish autonomy in Russia, choosing Efroykin as chairman and Dubnow as honorary head.

In the midst of the festivities, Shtif abruptly changed the tone of the evening:

> At such a party and in such an atmosphere Nokhem Shtif got up and gave a deeply serious speech. … [He said that] Yiddish elementary schools will spread over the entire country … and high schools will be set up above them. But we must not be satisfied even with high schools. Our outlook must be further. There must be established a Yiddish scholarly academy of the first rank for Yiddish, for Yiddish literature, and for Yiddish folklore as well as for all branches of scholarship that have a direct relationship to Jewish life. Certainly such a thing will not happen the day after tomorrow, but we must now set such an academy as a goal.

Shtif's impromptu lecture received an awkward and unenthusiastic response. No one applauded, and Efroykin jokingly nicknamed Shtif "our academic." Yet while the assembled guests seemed mildly annoyed that Shtif had interrupted a lighthearted gathering with a weighty speech, they appreciated the reflection he had given his plan. "The impression was that much earlier Shtif had thought about a Yiddish academy and shot something out at a not entirely appropriate minute," wrote Mark. "Later on it was absolutely clear that Shtif had lived for years with this idea."[94]

At this time, Shtif assumed that the institute he envisioned would be located in Saint Petersburg, the capital of a newly democratic Russia.[95] Yet after the Bolshevik Revolution in October, widespread famine and civil disorder dimmed hopes for Jewish cultural and political work. When the newly independent Ukrainian republic guaranteed far-reaching rights for its national minorities, most of the Saint Petersburg circle, "driven by hunger" and enticed by promises of Jewish autonomy, relocated to Kiev.[96] There Zilberfarb, Latzky-Bertholdi, and Czernichow briefly held high positions in the Ministry for Jewish Affairs of the Ukrainian government, as did another former Saint Petersburg colleague, Nokhem Gergel.[97] Shtif, Mark, Efroykin, Czernichow, and Latzky-Bertholdi established a new incarnation of the Folkspartey in Ukraine in 1918.[98] Other future YIVO founders such as the demographer Jacob Lestschinsky, Tcherikower, and Kalmanovitch also settled in Kiev at this time.[99] The formation in 1918 of the Kultur-lige [Culture League], an umbrella organization for Jewish cultural work, seemed to offer broad possibilities for Yiddish activists. Several Yiddish publishing houses were established in the city; the Folks-farlag [People's Press] in particular attracted the energies of many members of this

group including Shtif and Tcherikower.[100] In these years, Kiev also became the center of an active Yiddish literary scene circle with David Bergelson at its head.[101]

In this heady environment, Shtif continued his efforts to advance Yiddish scholarship, now focusing on compiling bibliography.[102] He wrote of the need "to create a Yiddish bibliographical institute, which will carry out a systematic work for Yiddish bibliography with a scholarly method."[103] With the fall of the Ukrainian state, these efforts were overtaken by a grimmer task as local Yiddish activists turned their energies to documenting the ensuing pogroms of 1918 and 1919. Elias Tcherikower, aided by Shtif, Lestschinsky, Latzky-Bertholdi, and Gergel, compiled the invaluable archive that would eventually be used in historical studies as well as contemporary legal proceedings.

Anti–Jewish violence, political unrest, and famine, coupled with a crackdown on the work of Yiddish cultural organizations, drove the Jewish émigré community in Kiev to disperse.[104] These would-be scholars and the materials they gathered were once again in search of a refuge. Lithuania, another newly independent state that still held out the promise of autonomy for its Jewish population, seemed a promising locale. In May 1921, Shtif moved to the capital city Kaunas (Kovno), where he wrote for the Folkist newspaper *Nayes* [News] alongside Czernichow and Kalmanovitch.[105] Yudel Mark was teaching at the Yiddish gymnasium in Ukmergė (known to Jews as Vilkomir) and offered to arrange a post for Shtif there. Shtif decided instead to follow a large cohort of his colleagues westward to another locale that seemed to offer favorable conditions for Yiddish cultural work. He left for Berlin in March 1922.[106]

By the early 1920s, Berlin had become a mecca for Russian intellectuals fleeing the turmoil of Eastern Europe and attracted by the political and artistic freedom of Weimar Germany. Max Weinreich, who had briefly settled in Vilna after the October Revolution, arrived in 1919 for graduate study in Berlin and Marburg. The relatively low cost of printing encouraged a number of presses to open in or relocate to Germany, and Berlin briefly became a leading center of Yiddish and Hebrew publishing, with its products primarily shipped to a readership in the East.[107] At least four new Yiddish presses were founded in these years, and some established German firms created divisions devoted solely to Yiddish letters. The Kiev Folks-farlag relocated to the city in 1921 and reopened as the Klal-farlag [Community Press], a new Yiddish affiliate of an older German house.[108] The flourishing publishing industry was one reason that Yiddish activists chose to settle in Berlin, because it provided employment for many including Latzky-Bertholdi and Tcherikower.[109] It also played a key role in disseminating the early products of Yiddish scholarship, producing books by Shtif, Weinreich, Tcherikower, and Lestschinsky.

The leading figure of the Berlin group was undoubtedly Simon Dubnow, who settled in the city in the fall of 1922. The Yiddishist émigrés held Dubnow in high regard as both a leading Jewish historian and theorist of Diaspora Nationalism; in addition, Tcherikower and Lestschinsky became his close

FIGURE 1. Yiddish activists at the Sholem Aleichem Club in Berlin, early 1920s. Standing from left: Elias Tcherikower, Deborah Shtif, and Rebecca Tcherikower; sixth, tenth, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth from left: Nokhem Gergel, Jacob Ze'ev Wolf (Velvl) Latzky-Bertholdi, Jacob Lestschinsky, Nokhem Shtif, and Ben-Adir (Abraham Rosin). From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

personal friends.[110] Virtually the entire circle of Yiddish fiction writers and artists relocated from Ukraine to Germany as well in this period.[111] This "Kiever" group, as it was called, made Romanisches Café its social center.[112] The presence of so many scholars and artists, as well as the opportunity for inexpensive publishing, combined to produce an atmosphere of intellectual ferment and literary experimentation. As one author has noted, it was in this lively milieu of a Jewish "international avant-garde" that YIVO was born.[113]

When those responsible for documenting the Ukrainian pogroms fled Kiev, they brought with them the archive they had created. In 1921, the materials arrived in Berlin via Moscow, and Tcherikower, Shtif, Lestschinsky, Latzky-Bertholdi, and Gergel resumed their work on the collection with Dubnow's support.[114] Soon the Berlin presses produced several volumes about the pogroms that became important early contributions to Yiddish scholarship.[115] Moreover, in this period original research in social science disciplines such as economics, statistics, and demography began to supplement the popular accounts and translations of socialist classics that had already appeared in the language.[116] Just as research on the pogroms appeared only a few years after the events themselves, so was much of modern Yiddish scholarship closely tied to contemporary issues. Nowhere was this clearer than in the social sciences, where researchers sought not only to document the upheavals of urbanization,

industrialization, and mass migration facing European Jewry but also to find means of alleviating poverty and antisemitism.

It is thus not surprising that when the first Yiddish scholarly journal was founded, its editors cited their goal "to study the great changes that occurred in [Jewish life] as a result of the revolution and wars."[117] In 1923, nearly a decade after Shtif called for the creation of an academic periodical, *Bleter far idisher demografye, statistik, un ekonomik* [Pages for Jewish Demography, Statistics, and Economics] began publishing in Berlin under the editorship of Jacob Lestschinsky, Dr. Jacob Segall, and Boris Brutskus.[118] In Germany, aspiring East European Jewish scholars could benefit from the accomplishments of their Western counterparts, and in this field they looked to the Berlin-based Bureau für Demographie und Statistik der Juden, founded in 1904. Segall was the editor of the Bureau's journal *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* [Journal for Jewish Demography and Statistics], to which both Lestschinsky and Brutskus contributed.[119] Thus the *Bleter* and its staff functioned as a link between the worlds of German- and Yiddish-language scholarship in Berlin.

While most Yiddish-speaking émigrés had only limited contact with the native German Jewish community, Lestschinsky was a notable exception. On several occasions he was able to secure support from local organizations for his projects, a skill that would later prove useful in his work as head of YIVO's Economic-Statistical Section.[120] Thus the progress of research in the Jewish social sciences mirrored the central dilemma that would face Yiddish scholarship in Berlin. On the one hand, a location in the capital of German culture opened up new opportunities for intellectual exchange and material support. Yet at the same time, Yiddish activists were geographically distant from the Jewish masses that were both the subject of and audience for their work. As long as these Russian Jewish intellectuals remained in Berlin, this paradox would haunt their efforts.

Meanwhile, others chose to return to the heart of Jewish Eastern Europe. After completing his doctorate at the University of Marburg in 1923, Max Weinreich departed Germany. Believing that "better than Charlottenburg ideas are Vilna ideas," as he wrote to Shtif, he "returned to the community" to participate in that city's unprecedented flowering of Yiddish culture.[121] Vilna's multiethnic population of Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, and Belorussians had traditionally discouraged the dominance of a single culture and encouraged Jewish distinctiveness. In the wake of World War I, Vilna found itself within the borders of the new Polish state, legally bound by the provisions of the Minorities Treaties to protect its large number of ethnic Ukrainians and Germans as well as Jews. In such a diverse setting, Jews could more plausibly argue for rights as one minority group among many.[122] As Zalman Reisen maintained, Jews' use of a distinct vernacular took on added political significance as evidence of their standing as a national group.[123] Thus, Yiddish was seen as a unifying factor rather than a source of division within the Jewish community. Unlike many

other cities, where the more affluent tended to assimilate linguistically and fervent Zionists insisted on Hebrew, in interwar Vilna, Jews of all orientations spoke Yiddish.[124]

While Reisen's plan to create a Jewish university in Vilna was not realized, the city did become an early center of the Yiddish secular school movement with the founding of the TSBK in 1919. On his return to the city, Weinreich taught at the Vilna Teachers Seminary, opened in 1921 to train personnel for the Yiddish schools. His wife Regina, the daughter of the distinguished communal leader Tsemakh Szabad, was also a beloved teacher in the city. Vilna would eventually boast a unique range of Yiddish-speaking institutions for advanced study, vocational training, care of the disabled, and adult education. The activists who built this network would be the mainstay of local efforts to establish a Yiddish academic institute. In this period, Vilna also became the site of a flourishing literary scene whose most distinguished representative, Abraham Sutzkever, would eventually play a key role in YIVO's history during the Holocaust.[125] With its rich communal, political, and cultural life conducted overwhelmingly in Yiddish, Vilna represented a focal point for the aspirations of Diaspora Nationalists.

In this promising setting, Weinreich and Reisen took the lead in formulating plans to further Yiddish scholarship. Long an important center of Jewish learning and publishing, Vilna had already produced many historical works as well as the pioneering collection *Der pinkes*. Yiddish philological research continued to develop in the years during and after World War I, with contributions from such future YIVO affiliates as Shtif, Weinreich, Reisen, Kalmanovitch, and Prylucki.[126] In 1923, Weinreich and Reisen took a further step by publishing an appeal for the establishment of an "institute for Yiddish linguistic research and literary scholarship whose first goal must be to create a permanent philological journal."[127] While such an institute would have to wait another two years, they did succeed in founding the second scholarly periodical in Yiddish, *Yidishe filologye* [Yiddish Philology].[128] Although it produced only three issues, *Yidishe filologye* had a symbolic import beyond its limited duration. Shtif likened its significance for Yiddish scholarship to that of *Das Kapital* for the socialist movement.[129] The project brought together all of the scholars who would soon head YIVO's Philological Section, establishing Vilna's leading role in the study of Yiddish language and literature.

Nokhem Shtif and the Dilemmas of Yiddish Scholarship

Nokhem Shtif's personal odyssey to Saint Petersburg, Kiev, Kaunas, and Berlin illustrates the dilemmas of Yiddish scholarship in the years before the founding of YIVO. As he struggled to support himself and his family, Shtif felt deeply discouraged by a perceived lack of respect for his chosen career. His sense of shame and anger at these twin problems – his personal poverty and the poverty of academic work in Yiddish – were inseparable, and Shtif formulated his plan for a scholarly institute as a means of addressing both. In his mind, such

a body would allow a select group of intellectuals to make a living devoting themselves to Yiddish research while simultaneously raising the status of the language and its culture.

To pursue his vocation, Shtif sought a secure source of income as well as a forum for publishing his work. One strategy – employed far more successfully by colleagues such as Weinreich, Reisen, and Lestschinsky – was to write for the Yiddish press.[130] Shtif actively sought out such assignments, often imploring friends to approach editors on his behalf.[131] In 1924, he asked Abraham Liessin, editor of the New York journal *Di tsukunft* [The Future], to print a series of articles based on his research. "It's lucky that recently we have gained a few scholars, people with knowledge and with a method," he wrote Liessin. "We must support them, so that they can and will work. We can't give them any university chairs … no living either; – so at least [we should give them] a place where they can publish."[132]

Shtif argued that a magazine such as the *Tsukunft* had an obligation to disseminate his findings because there were no journals specifically devoted to Yiddish scholarship.[133] Moreover, because Yiddish still lacked "the exactness and precision of a scholarly style," as he put it elsewhere, the press should play an active part in raising academic writing to the same level achieved by belles lettres:

> It's the greatest sign of the poverty of our conception of culture that literature means for us stories and songs; and scholarly work, especially about Yiddish language and literature … is something of a by-product.

Shtif ended his missive with a plea for an advance to pay the coming month's rent: "God knows how I need to have it! I will never forget your favor. Be well and strong, and for God's sake *an advance* soon."[134] This letter is typical in its tone as well as in its linkage of Shtif's hopes for Yiddish scholarship to his own professional aspirations. Also typical are the results it achieved: after taking twelve pages to plead his case, Shtif learned that Liessin declined to publish all but one of his articles.[135]

Given his limited success in journalism, Shtif pursued other avenues of support. He appealed to the leaders of the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union of New York, which would soon play a role in YIVO's founding. Shtif argued that just as the press had a duty to advance academic research in the absence of an institutional base, so too

> such an institution [as the Union] must support Yiddish scholarly work … Without such support on the side no scholarly work at all is possible (among respectable people universities and academies do this).[136]

In December 1923, as Shtif toiled on a study of Old Yiddish literature, he asked several acquaintances to intercede with the Union on his behalf, complaining, "I don't have even the barest minimum. And what do I do with my book?"[137] Shtif estimated that finishing this volume would require three to four months

of uninterrupted work. He would need $1,000 to live on during that time and requested a grant of half that sum. "I can only tell you: it would be a pity if a great scholarly work for Yiddish literature should come to nothing because of a few pennies," he wrote to the novelist Joseph Opatoshu, ignoring the fact that the sum he proposed was quite substantial."[138] Shtif also contacted the Education Department of the Jewish socialist fraternal order the Workmen's Circle, asking it to publish his study and requesting the sizable honorarium of $2,000.[139] Like his many appeals to the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union, this request met with no success.

In response to such rejections, Shtif decried the lack of concern for Yiddish scholarship. He asked why Jewish relief organizations such as the American Joint Distribution Committee, which readily helped Jewish craftsmen, would not do the same for a Jewish writer. He could more easily get aid, he wrote, "if I were a refugee from the Ukraine (that I truly am!) and had no shirt and no shoes (also not far from the truth), if I were a tailor, a shoemaker, and one had to give me an awl and thread, scissors and iron."[140] He complained, "They are not used to giving money for books … But [my work] has a lot to say for itself: after all, it's a book that will be used in the schools. The main thing however – it's the thing from which I live!"[141] To Shtif, this state of affairs was yet another indication that Yiddish culture, like those who produced it, was not properly valued by the Jewish community as a whole.

Shtif pursued other plans, for example attempting to secure a research post at the library of the Berlin Jewish community,[142] yet most of his hopes focused across the Atlantic. It was no coincidence that the Yiddish Writers' Union, the Workmen's Circle, and the Joint were all based in New York, as were the Yiddish publications Shtif contacted. As early as 1910, he wrote to the translator Jacob Mereson in New York, "Maybe [a publisher] would be found in America? People are not afraid of publishing a Yiddish book where you are."[143] Many European activists looked enviously to the large and relatively affluent American Jewish community, which also enjoyed guarantees of freedom of the press. Moreover, in the wake of the upheavals in Eastern Europe, many saw the United States as a potential oasis of stability. At the end of 1919, Shtif was among a group of nine Yiddish activists, including Tcherikower and Kalmanovitch, who appealed to American colleagues for help in emigrating.[144] At that time, Shtif considered the United States as a hospitable environment for his proposed institute.[145] As he wrote to his friend the writer and theater critic Alexander Mukdoni,

> I believe that great things can be accomplished in America.… In America there can be found, for example, bourgeois who will invest resources to found universities, institutes.… I want to tell you a secret: for a while already I have been carrying about the thought of founding a Yiddish scholarly institute [*yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut*]. I hope to realize this thought precisely in "boorish" America. And if I do not realize it, I know that I will be to blame, not America.… It may be that I am mistaken, but so I imagine the country.[146]

In the end, however, nothing came of Shtif's plans, probably because he could not afford tickets for the Atlantic crossing.

Meanwhile, as German economic policies shifted conditions were no longer favorable for the émigré community. Shtif's situation in Berlin became increasingly bleak as he faced the most difficult financial situation of his life.[147] In 1923, he wrote to Mukdoni in New York,

> I am now truly needy and times are bad… Living here now costs three times as much as before, some things are more expensive here than where you are, and the wages are like nothing.[148]

Nevertheless, Shtif was determined to continue his research. In 1922, he asked a friend to help him obtain copies of documents from British libraries:

> [The copies] should come to several pounds. This I don't have, probably you don't either. So do *what you will*, but do the thing for me. Knock on all the gates of mercy … I work for entire days in the State Library and the Community Library on the history of Old Yiddish literature, and usually get for it nothing more than a stake in the world to come. In the evening and the nights I do various translations and can't cover expenses from [what I earn].[149]

A year later he described his routine:

> Day and night I sit in the library. I have gathered together treasures from the entire world: manuscripts and antiquities from Hamburg, Munich, etc. I sit and torment myself, write a little, don't sleep through the nights and don't have the least hope of finishing my book, who speaks of publishing [it]? … the years are passing, I'm certainly no longer a boy. When will I accomplish something?[150]

Yet he persisted, for, as he wrote, "The only comfort is – to work!"[151]

In April 1925, Shtif once again appealed to the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union. His letter to Union president A. S. Sachs shows his growing desperation:

> I must now put aside all ceremonies and write to you simply: it's not good with me, indeed not good! … I survived the winter with miracles.… Now for the meantime I absolutely don't know what to do. What will be later – God knows! Maybe another miracle will occur. In the meantime however I still don't want to throw myself into the water, and to make it through the next few months there's nothing. And I have a family. You promised to try to arrange something for me in the I. L. Peretz Society. Do it *soon*. I would even say – send me something by telegraph, such is the situation.…

He added that his devotion to his research enabled him to continue in these dire circumstances:

> In the greatest situation of need not even one day goes by that I don't work on [my book] (That sustains me on my feet, by the way; if not I would have died long ago).

Shtif then went on to solicit Sachs's support for his new project: the creation of a Yiddish academic institution. As he continued, such an organization

represented the hope that intellectuals "will escape from the situation of tremendous need, [that] people will have bread, will be able to work, and will not have to beg or die altogether."[152] In this letter, as in his mind, Shtif's personal difficulties and the lack of institutional support for Yiddish research were inextricably intertwined. His many years of deprivation had convinced him of the need for a central organization that would help ease the financial burden of would-be Yiddish scholars, publish their academic studies, and earn respect for their work.

By the spring of 1926, a deeply embittered Shtif was yearning for professional prestige and financial security. His frustrations led him to undertake a final move, one that he shared with many of those whose wanderings paralleled his own. By this time, most of the writers who had migrated from Kiev to Berlin had returned to the Soviet Union, believing that the communist state offered the best opportunity for developing Yiddish culture.[153] While far fewer scholars chose this path, a notable exception was Shtif. When offered a post at the Department for Jewish Culture of the government-sponsored Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev, he accepted. Ironically, Shtif departed Berlin just as his decade-long effort to found a Yiddish academic institute finally bore fruit.

Shtif's decision was not driven by any ideological attraction to communism. He mocked attempts to "save the proletariat" and wrote that his politics were always more "populist [*folkstimlekh*]" than "comradely [*khaverish*]."[154] He was at least intermittently religiously observant, and Yudel Mark tried to dissuade his move by pointing out that in Kiev he would be forced to desecrate the Sabbath.[155] Yet whatever reservations he may have had, the Soviet offer seemed the fulfillment of Shtif's dearest dream: a salaried research post and government support for Yiddish culture.[156] As Mark put it, he was "driven by hunger and drawn by the hope of being able to find somewhere a refuge for scholarly work on behalf of Yiddish."[157] Another writer commented that the appointment "signified not only honor and recognition, but also, finally, a secure scholarly career."[158] In a final twist of fate, however, this choice turned out to be a tragic one. After a few highly productive years, Shtif fell victim to the increasing censorship of the Soviet regime. He was forced to renounce his earlier work and then demoted. Shtif died of natural causes in 1933, although most observers believed that the strain of living under totalitarian repression had cut short his life.[159]

Conclusion

Nokhem Shtif's personal journey – both literal and figurative – strikingly illustrates the dilemmas faced by aspiring Yiddish scholars before the founding of YIVO. Despite years of struggle and wandering, Shtif was unable to find a safe haven for academic research in Yiddish. He became convinced that only by creating an institutional base would scholars like himself be able to pursue their vocation. Ironically, Shtif abandoned his project at the moment of its

realization, believing that he had finally found a secure source of support in the Soviet Union. Yet that promise, too, proved illusory. In the end, neither Shtif nor his colleagues who remained in the West ever saw their vision of Yiddish culture put fully into practice.

In the last years of the nineteenth century, efforts began to further Yiddish scholarship through language planning, collection, research, publishing, and teaching. With the majority of Yiddish-speaking Jewry living under the oppressive regime of tsarist Russia, these ideas resulted in several significant but scattered projects undertaken without an organizational center. While conditions in postwar Europe were far from the aspirations of Diaspora Nationalists, they nevertheless made possible the creation of a scholarly institute. The dynamics of nationalist politics in the region gave Yiddish cultural work new importance, while the experience of war and pogroms impelled efforts to record Jewish life. The emergence of the Yiddish secular schools created a need as well as a potential audience for academic research, paving the way for a wide-ranging network of cultural institutions that would reach a mass audience. These developments set the stage for the founding of an institution that would finally provide a home for Yiddish scholarship.

2

"The Idea of the Institute Is Already Ripe"

The Founding and First Stages of YIVO, 1924–1925

Introduction: Rising Interest in a Yiddish Institute

Remarkably, just prior to YIVO's founding a number of unrelated proposals for a scholarly center sprang up almost simultaneously in various centers of Yiddish-speaking Jewry. In 1923 in Vilna Max Weinreich and Zalman Reisen proposed a "union of Yiddish philologists" that would support such projects as linguistic questionnaires, a dialect atlas, a dictionary, and an academic journal.[1] In his 1923 doctoral dissertation Weinreich mentioned the need for a central institution to further Yiddish research, and in April of the following year he spoke of a plan to found "a Yiddish scholarly society" in Vilna.[2] At the same time in Berlin, Simon Dubnow organized the Jüdische Wissenschaftliche Vereinigung [Jewish Scholarly Union], a group composed of both East European émigré intellectuals and native German Jewish scholars.[3] In 1924 the Polish-language Jewish press also discussed a proposal to create a Jewish university in Danzig (Gdańsk) under the auspices of the League of Nations.[4] Meanwhile, in New York plans were underway to found "the Folks Kval [People's Source] Union for Yiddish Folklore, Language Research, Folk Art, and Literary History."[5] Dr. Jacob Mereson and Abraham Kotik published a brochure calling for a Yiddish academic center

> that would collect everything that is created in Yiddish … Since we have in our possession no government apparatus … [we must] create first of all an academy of Yiddish philology and a Yiddish bibliographic institute.[6]

Here we see a number of themes that would soon recur in the discussions around YIVO: the desire for a centralized body to document, research, and standardize the language, particularly in the absence of a state authority that could perform these functions for Yiddish-speaking Jewry.

These proposals bore no direct fruit, yet they demonstrate that in the wake of World War I there were strikingly similar ideas in the air – in locations as diverse as Berlin, Vilna, and New York – for organizing and advancing

Yiddish scholarship. As we have seen, Nokhem Shtif first dreamed of founding a Yiddish academic institute in 1917 in Saint Petersburg in the wake of the Russian Revolution, and he carried his plan with him as he fled first to Kiev and then to Berlin. In the years of revolution and its aftermath Shtif had little opportunity to act, but by the mid-1920s the turmoil of the war years had subsided sufficiently to begin building for the postwar period. It was thus perhaps inevitable that the indefatigable Shtif would return to his aspirations, this time with greater success.

The Initial Plan and Reactions

Shtif's renewed efforts to create an academic institute were sparked indirectly by yet another plan, this one emanating from the United States. In July 1924 A. S. Sachs came from New York to Berlin to promote a scheme for establishing a Yiddish college [*hoykh-shul*].[7] Sachs was active in the Workmen's Circle and was the president of the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union. I. N. Steinberg hosted a meeting in honor of the American guest that drew about a dozen Yiddish activists from the Berlin circle, several of whom would soon be among the founders of YIVO.[8] Ironically, Sachs's vision of the institution he hoped to found, and of Yiddish culture as a whole, differed fundamentally from that of Shtif and the other European Yiddishists in his audience. Yet it rekindled Shtif's dream – put aside during his years of struggling to make a living in Berlin – of creating a center for Yiddish scholarship.

In his Berlin talk, Sachs described his primary concern as a "serious lack of scholarly work and handbooks in Yiddish on several general scholarly subjects," which he considered particularly pressing for teachers and those who worked for the "popularization of knowledge among the Jewish public." He concluded that "there must therefore be founded here [in Berlin] a *Yiddish academic institution* that will help publish general works in Yiddish about sociology, physics, chemistry, pedagogy, etc." Financial support for the project, Sachs assured his audience, could be found in America. Those present, however, gave their guest a lukewarm response. "The proposal was … received with a certain coldness," Elias Tcherikower later recalled. There was little discussion of Sachs's ideas, only a mood of wait and see.[9]

The gap between Sachs's point of view and that of his audience accounted for this lack of enthusiasm. Sachs never believed that the proposed institute should concentrate on Jewish subject matter, for his primary concern was with making general knowledge available in the vernacular. He argued that Jewish pedagogical research was no more important than a chemistry laboratory conducted in Yiddish; the latter was preferable, in fact, since it would be both more practical and more intellectually rigorous. This point of view was rooted in the Haskalah, with its emphasis on introducing Jews to Western culture. Moreover, Sachs echoed the ideas of Chaim Zhitlowsky, who argued that only when Jews could participate in all fields of human endeavor in their own language would

they be equal with other national groups. The ultimate goal of a Yiddish institute, Sachs stated, should be to raise the prestige of the language and thus discourage Jewish intellectuals from turning to other tongues. Thus he wished to demonstrate that Yiddish could be the vehicle for academic work in all fields. His highest hope, he wrote, was that "an Einstein would write his theory of relativity in Yiddish."[10]

Sachs's audience in Berlin, however, had a very different conception of the goals of Yiddish scholarship. While they also wished to enhance the status of the language, they hoped first and foremost to foster original work in Yiddish to bolster a distinctly Jewish culture, not to translate or promote work on general themes. It is thus not surprising that the assembled guests dismissed Sachs's proposal as "a kind of Haskalah with a national-radical and Yiddishist background. … The beauty of European knowledge [*yefeyfiso shel yefes*] in the field of scholarship."[11]

The exception to this general lack of enthusiasm was Nokhem Shtif, who "caught fire" after the July 1924 meeting with a renewed passion for his earlier plans.[12] Ignoring points of fundamental disagreement with Sachs, he seized on elements of the visitor's talk that resonated with him such as the plight of researchers working in Yiddish.[13] Shtif joined the committee chosen to follow up on Sachs's proposal, but when the group failed to meet over the course of the following summer and fall Shtif tried unsuccessfully to persuade several others to write "the necessary memorandum … about the project of an academic institute.[14] Shtif had a clear conception of what such a document should include:

> *What have we done in recent years in Yiddish with respect to scholarship?* … It must be shown that the need and the understanding for knowledge is awakening among us: Yiddish writers are carrying it on their own shoulders, without the slightest help.… Yiddish is the most important reservoir for knowledge in the Jewish people in general.… The Yiddish-speaking masses carry within them many still untapped powers and perforce a great thirst for knowledge …[15]

Here Shtif struck many of the themes that would become central to discussions around the founding of YIVO: the research done to date in Yiddish, the need for an organized body to support those working in the language, and the connection between scholarship and the Jewish masses.

Shtif eventually concluded that he himself would have to write the essay he envisioned, and in October 1924 he produced a lengthy memorandum entitled "Vegn a yidishn akademishn institut" [On a Yiddish Academic Institute].[16] In this document Shtif summarized the current state of Yiddish scholarly work, then made his case that a center for Yiddish research was a pressing need. He proposed an institution consisting of four research sections plus a library, anticipating the scheme that YIVO would eventually adopt. The section for philology, Shtif wrote, would include a commission for gathering and analyzing folklore as well as a bibliographic center to record Yiddish publications.[17]

The section for history would concentrate on the experience of Ashkenazic Jewry.[18] A section for "social-economic problems" would examine topics such as Jewish migration, colonization, and labor conditions as well as gather statistical information.[19] Finally, the pedagogical section, Shtif wrote, would lay the groundwork for a field as yet little explored by Jews.[20]

Shtif envisioned the institute organizing conferences and exhibits as well as creating an international network of "correspondents" to support its work. As for its location, he argued that such a body could only flourish in "a great European center" such as Berlin or Vienna. While acknowledging "all the drawbacks that present themselves from being severed from a large Jewish community," Shtif argued that Yiddish scholarship would best develop where it could draw on an established intellectual tradition.[21] The memorandum ended with a call for a convention in the fall of 1925 at which Yiddish scholars would present their original research and discuss plans for establishing the institute.[22] Like the memorandum itself, this gathering would have a twofold purpose: to show the strength of existing scholarship and to formulate concrete plans for the future. In this way, Shtif hoped to lay both the intellectual and organizational groundwork for the founding of the institute.

Shtif's memorandum described a many-faceted institution with a substantial annual budget of $22,000. Yet when he completed the document, he could not spare the money to pay a typist to duplicate it or postage to mail it to like-minded friends. It was several months before he and his wife were able to make several copies on a borrowed typewriter and began distributing them in February 1925.[23] Since Shtif could only afford to send out a limited number of mailings, it was critical that he reach those most likely to actively support the plan. He first contacted his closest colleague in Berlin, the presumed center of the institute, Elias Tcherikower. He also sent a copy to A. S. Sachs in New York, whose visit the previous July had inspired Shtif. Sachs's remarks had led Shtif to believe that "in America in general they take [the idea of an academic institute] seriously" and that Sachs would spearhead fundraising efforts there.[24] On the same day Shtif composed a letter to Max Weinreich, asking him to call a meeting in Vilna to discuss the proposal, but he lacked postage to mail it.[25] Nevertheless, Shtif's initial list of correspondents shows that he imagined Berlin, New York, and Vilna as the most important centers of Yiddish scholarship.

Shtif organized a committee in Berlin to publicize the project, but after watching its work proceed at a rate of "a few teaspoons a month" he decided to distribute the memorandum more widely on his own.[26] He then sent copies to Simon Dubnow in Berlin, Yudel Mark in Vilkomir, and Zelig Kalmanovitch in Riga. He also contacted sympathetic organizations in Warsaw including TSYSHO and the Kultur-lige as well as the Bundist newspaper *Folkstsaytung* [People's Newspaper] and the journal *Literarishe bleter*.[27] Shtif paid particular attention to the United States, which he hoped would be a major source of financial support for the institute. There he contacted the journalists Ben

Zion Goldberg and Tsivyon (Ben-Zion Hofman), hoping for publicity in the American Yiddish press, as well as the Education Department of the Workmen's Circle and the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute.[28] While awaiting responses to his appeals Shtif attempted to create an institutional base in Berlin. On March 5, 1925, he organized an Initiative Group drawn from the same familiar circle of Berlin Yiddish activists, and a month later he made the first public presentation of his plan at the local Sholem Aleichem Club.[29]

Despite his energetic efforts, Shtif's appeals did not meet with the kind of reaction for which he had hoped. Many of his initial correspondents responded cautiously at best, for even those who agreed in principle with the plan were skeptical that it could be realized. Tcherikower, Shtif's closest and earliest collaborator, recalled his reservations upon reading the document for the first time: "Interesting, nice, logical – but how will we achieve it with our poverty and contempt?"[30] A similar reaction came from Simon Dubnow, whom many of the Berlin group esteemed as both a personal friend and an intellectual mentor. As the pioneer of the nationally minded Jewish scholarship that Shtif championed, Shtif hoped that the elder historian would lend his considerable prestige to the fledgling institute. Dubnow's reply was prompt but discouraging in both tone and substance. Dubnow agreed that "such a research institute is necessary" but doubted its feasibility:

> It seems that we'll remain with [a meeting] and with several nice resolutions. First there must be found a wealthy man who will give several tens of thousands of dollars for the institute – we are after all a people of paupers and live from charity – and the second and third year we must pray to God that he (the wealthy man, that is) doesn't go bankrupt … I see no material basis for such an undertaking.

Dubnow added that he had no time to help with organizational work and advised Shtif to turn to "younger colleagues" for assistance. He added that "Later, when something concrete comes of the thought, you will also get me to do a little work."[31] Dubnow repeated similar sentiments a few months later when he declined to oversee the Historical Section.[32] Sixty-five years old and preoccupied with his own writing, Dubnow did not want the distraction of helping to found a new organization that, in his view, had little chance of success. Dubnow's reluctance to take an active role was certainly a blow to Shtif and his circle.

If Dubnow evinced a lack of enthusiasm, other correspondents were even less forthcoming. As the leading theoretician of Yiddishism, Chaim Zhitlowsky, like Dubnow, was a major Jewish intellectual whose active support Shtif both expected and considered crucial. Shtif sent Zhitlowsky a discursive twelve-page letter with a passionate plea for assistance, using a combination of cajoling and flattery. He portrayed the institute as the capstone to Zhitlowsky's own career:

> You were the first to say the word: "Yiddish," and you *saw it through*, especially among the intellectuals. Now you must say the second word: "Yiddish knowledge" … You

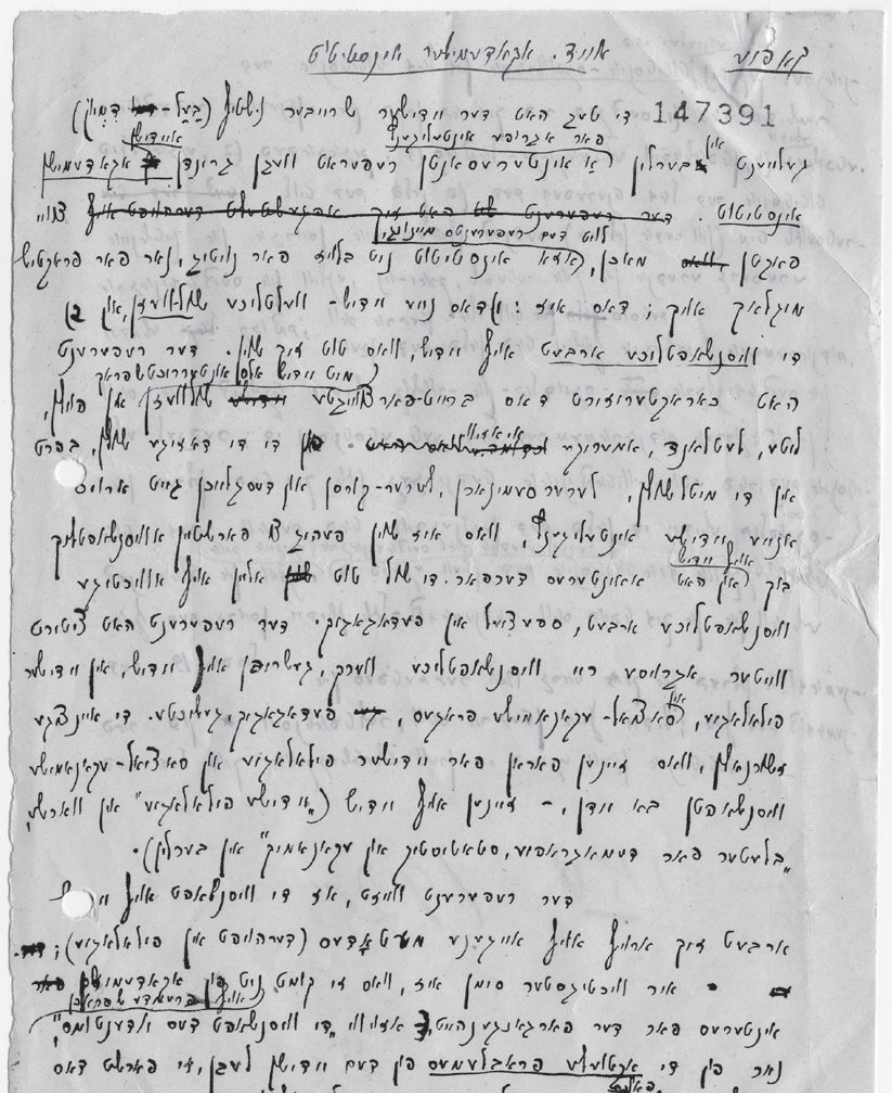


FIGURE 2. Memorandum by Nokhem Shtif on his lecture in Berlin describing plans for a Yiddish academic institute, May 1925. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

must crown your work, leave your life's work embodied in something real and tangible, in an institute that … would *carry* your work *further*.

Shtif presented himself as a loyal disciple whom Zhitlowsky was obligated to help:

You issued us a promissory note and we live in a practical world: pay, my dear Reb Chaim! … I faithfully followed you … Therefore you owe me something. … *You should make [the institute] your cause*. … you are the one for whom a deeper elevated Yiddish culture, especially a scholarly culture, is his life's work …. You have the *authority* and you must do it. … What do I want? In short: *your pen and your word!*[33]

Shtif's zeal was apparent, yet his manner, at the same time sycophantic and bullying, may have hurt as much as helped his cause. Zhitlowsky was initially silent, then responded with a hasty note.[34] After six months and four more earnest letters from Berlin, he finally sent a full reply with a discouraging assessment of fundraising possibilities in the United States.[35] Zhitlowsky's aloofness would prove prophetic. While Shtif looked eagerly across the Atlantic to a large and affluent base of potential support, American Jews indeed proved slow to respond to the idea of the institute.

Even more ominous in this regard was the reaction of A. S. Sachs. Ignoring the underlying tensions between their outlooks, Shtif assumed that Sachs would enthusiastically support a document that had originated with Sachs's own proposal. Moreover, Shtif expected that the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union would be a source of financial aid. When Sachs failed to answer Shtif's initial letter Shtif wrote again, explicitly linking his personal situation to his plan for the institute. He began by discussing his own poverty and asking Sachs's help in finding work, then went on to describe the proposed scholarly center as "a bit of hope that at least a few intellectuals will escape from the situation of tremendous need, [that] people will have bread, will be able to work, and will not have to beg or die altogether." Shtif expressed surprise at Sachs's silence and adopted a pleading tone:

Ach God, do we really have to wait for necrologies, set down beautiful eulogies and afterwards beat our breasts in repentance, meaning, meaning, that we saw such desolation and were silent? Are we truly all so poor and worthless that we can't help the living?[36]

Sachs took several months to reply to this impassioned entreaty, then sent a lengthy and animated private letter sharply criticizing Shtif's plan.[37] The gulf between Shtif's circle and Sachs's was confirmed when, after another long delay, the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union took up the question of the institute only to pass a resolution not to participate in its work.[38]

These early responses were a serious setback to Shtif's ambitions. Dubnow and Zhitlowsky, whom Shtif had hoped would lend their authority to the project, responded lukewarmly to what they regarded as an impractical plan. Sachs, whom Shtif envisioned as a key figure in raising funds, was openly hostile. It

was becoming apparent that Berlin and New York would not become the centers of the institute's support, as Shtif had originally thought.

There was one notable exception to this disheartening pattern: the energetic response from Vilna. As soon as the memorandum reached the city, Max Weinreich and Zalman Reisen began galvanizing local Yiddish activists. On March 24, 1925, two Vilna educational organizations, the TSBK and the Vilna Education Society [Vilner bildungs gezelshaft or VILBIG, which sponsored classes for adults], held a joint meeting to discuss the document. Most of the more than thirty people in attendance were affiliated with the Yiddish secular school network, a fact that would shape local reactions to Shtif's proposal. The presence of several prominent figures in the Bund – including Arkadi Kremer, Anna Rosental, and the evening's chairman, Borukh Kahan-Virgili – foreshadowed future tensions over the role of politics in YIVO's work.[39]

Those assembled voted their approval of Shtif's project and chose a committee to lead the effort in Poland to "work out the methods and plans" for an institute.[40] A group led by Weinreich drafted a formal written response to the memorandum titled "Vilner tezisn vegn a yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut" [Vilna Theses about a Yiddish Scholarly Institute].[41] This document was approved by a plenary meeting held in Vilna on April 15 as well as by the Second School Convention of TSYSHO in Warsaw later that month. The convention created a committee to promote the project and resolved "to support with all [our] powers the work for the institute."[42] Shtif wrote excitedly of the "great support that the plan thus received from the highest cultural platform and from the [most] far-reaching, extensive organization that Yiddish culture today possesses."[43] In the absence of a central authoritative body for Yiddish-speaking Jewry – the very lacuna that he hoped to fill – Shtif imagined the convention's resolution as the closest thing to an official endorsement of his plan.

From this time on Vilna took the lead in efforts to create a center for Yiddish scholarship. Publicity was provided by the Vilna daily *Tog*, edited by Zalman Reisen, which enthused after the March 24 meeting that "the Yiddish academic institute must and will without fail be created. Yiddish scholarship needs its redress [*tiken*]!"[44] Within a few weeks TSBK and VILBIG jointly published the memorandum together with the Vilna Theses under the title *Di organizatsye fun der yidisher visnshaft* [The Organization of Yiddish Scholarship].[45] While the Vilna activists took issue with some of Shtif's proposals, whatever reservations he may have had over such disagreements were overwhelmed by delight that his ideas had finally fallen on fertile ground. He believed that the support from Vilna transformed his plan from the dream of one individual into an institution in the making. As he wrote excitedly to Zhitlowsky, "in Vilna they take the matter very seriously. For me this is the surest barometer: Vilna idealists are great pragmatists, and they have shown how to make dreams come true …"[46]

Vilna hereafter played an increasingly prominent role in the effort to create a central body for Yiddish scholarship. In fact, as the plan for the institute was publicized throughout the Yiddish-speaking world and fundraising efforts

began, it was Eastern Europe – the largest Jewish center in the world but also one of the poorest – that responded with monetary as well as moral assistance. If Shtif had originally looked to Western Europe and the United States, this was for practical as well as intellectual reasons. In 1925, these Jewish communities were relatively affluent and secure. The eventual geography of the institute's support, very different from what Shtif had originally imagined, had far-reaching implications both for the institute's research program and for its finances.

Shtif's predicament when he composed the memorandum – which presented a "minimum" yearly budget of $22,000 at a time he could not afford postage – would prove prophetic of things to come.[47] In the following months a few small contributions began to arrive, yet the situation usually remained dire. In August 1925, the institute's leaders outlined a projected monthly budget of 2,200 German marks, approximately $625.[48] Yet at the time the Initiative Group had raised a total of 744 marks and after expenses had 4.10 marks, or a little more than one American dollar, remaining in the bank.[49] Shtif and Tcherikower were forced to send a telegram to Israel Efroykin in Paris stating that they were absolutely without funds and pleading with him to send $100 immediately.[50] As Shtif complained, the institute lacked even "change for necessary technical expenses": "For six months we have worked with pennies, and those we got with great difficulty, with an iron will …"[51]

The institute's founders initially pinned their greatest hopes on the United States, where a large Yiddish-speaking population had begun to work its way out of immigrant poverty while retaining ties to its East European roots. Shtif believed that American Jewish cultural and educational organizations sympathetic to Yiddish could easily provide $25,000 annually to maintain the institute.[52] On another occasion, he estimated that European sources could supply only $1,000 to $1,500 of the institute's yearly budget and that the rest would be covered from the United States.[53] However, as Zhitlowsky's and Sachs's letters had presaged, the response from across the Atlantic proved slow and unenthusiastic. Shtif's frustration was palpable, as he argued that potential American donors had a moral duty to provide funds in proportion to their means:

> Is it really possible that we have already worked for six months and our American colleagues have not even considered that they are also obligated to do something and help bear the burden?[54]

While visions of large subsidies from the United States were quickly disappointed, Western European sources initially seemed more promising. In particular, Shtif and his colleagues focused their hopes on Germany and its community of Russian Jewish émigrés. In its first months of activity, the largest sums the institute received were from the Berlin offices of the public health organization OSE (Obshchestvo Zdravookhraneniia Evreev [Society for the Protection of the Health of the Jews]); the vocational training organization

ORT (Obshchestvo Remeslennago i Zemledelecheskago Truda Sredi Evreev v Rossii [Society for Handicraft and Agricultural Work Among the Jews of Russia]); and the emigrant aid organization Emigdirect, which Tcherikower directed. These groups, all concerned with the practical needs of the Jewish public, saw the future research of the fledgling institute as a potential resource for their own work. Together their subsidies totaled 510 of the 744 marks received by August 1925.[55]

With this beginning, the institute appeared to be creating the financial base that Shtif envisioned in Western Europe. Yet these early successes would not prove typical, and the impression of widespread support in the region was deceptive. While the Initiative Group did receive positive responses from German cities including Hamburg, Munich, and Mannheim, these came from Russian enclaves, not native-born Jews.[56] Those who responded elsewhere in Western Europe were primarily Yiddish-speaking newcomers to cities such as Vienna, London, Brussels, and Antwerp.[57] Thus the institute's base of support in the West lay overwhelmingly among East European expatriates, who had limited financial resources and few ties to established local communities.

More representative would prove another contribution on the balance sheet, from Vilkomir. In October 1924, when Shtif had completed the memorandum but could not afford to mail it, he turned to Yudel Mark. Mark, then teaching at the Yiddish gymnasium in Vilkomir, delivered a lecture and donated his $24 honorarium to Shtif, thus proudly becoming "the very first donor to YIVO."[58] The following May Mark raised another $20 from students and teachers at his school.[59] The sums sent by Mark were followed by others from the Baltics, as activists in Kaunas, Riga, and Dorpat organized support groups on behalf of the institute.[60] Meanwhile, Vilna residents raised most of the funds necessary to publish *The Organization of Yiddish Scholarship*.[61] As these examples suggest, interest was particularly strong in the city of Vilna and the surrounding area as well as in the Baltics, the area known in Jewish cultural geography as Lite. Lite was historically an especially fertile ground for Jewish nationalist movements, and in the interwar period it became a flourishing center of modern Jewish culture.[62] It is thus not surprising that the earliest and most enthusiastic responses to Shtif's initial appeals came from this region, which quickly emerged as the center of the institute's support.[63]

The aid from Vilkomir was prophetic not only in its geographic origin but also in its basis among individuals with ties to the Yiddish schools. Just as in Vilna, where members of the TSBK and VILBIG spearheaded efforts, throughout Eastern Europe it was often educational activists who took the lead in galvanizing fundraising for the institute. Among the earliest contributions received were $60 from the Jewish Educational Society of Kaunas, $10 from a group of students in Nowy Sącz, and a small amount from TSYSHO in Poland.[64] As the Initiative Group put it, Yiddish scholarship looked "to the pocket of the same paupers who support the school system."[65]

As this quote suggests, these contributions shared a final characteristic: they were paltry sums raised with great difficulty among impoverished communities. In the 1920s, Poland and the Baltic lands were newly independent states struggling to establish national infrastructures and to recover from the devastation of World War I. Economic conditions often verged on the desperate. In one telling episode, Weinreich wrote to Shtif in October 1925 that the Vilna supporters could not afford to publish a new edition of *The Organization of Yiddish Scholarship*. Weinreich rejected appealing to the teachers of the city's Yiddish schools, since, as he wrote, "with the 10–15 złotys that could be torn out of the teachers one would commit a crime against people who haven't received any salary for 4–7 months …"[66] Shtif then turned for help to New York, his appeal based in a vivid description of the situation in Eastern Europe:

> [I]t's a wonder that we have been able to keep our head above water until now … [The work] was done with pennies, and they were also raised with bitter and difficult [effort]. … The crisis in Poland is indescribable: teachers receive no salary for months at a time.[67]

Yet no aid was forthcoming from the United States. The institute's leaders in Vilna eventually went into personal debt, paying the printer out of their own pockets.[68] As the Berlin activists commented at the time, "It's truly a wonder that our Vilna friends find the strength to do such work in the frightful situation in the hungry city!"[69]

As their exchange with New York suggests, supporters in Germany also tried to use the enthusiastic response from Eastern Europe as leverage to elicit aid from more prosperous Jewish centers. They argued that if groups of students and teachers in towns like Vilkomir and Nowy Sącz could do their part, certainly those in Western Europe and the United States could afford to be more generous.[70] As they wrote in one appeal to several groups in Berlin,

> It's a joy that we can say that poor cultural organizations in Poland [and] Lithuania that maintain schools etc., [which are] always struggling with the most bitter need [and] must themselves have recourse to outside support, already support the organizational work [of the institute] with their pennies. It's certainly a duty for the organizations in Western Europe, which are in a better situation, to help and certainly to a greater extent than a Vilna [or] a Vilkomir, etc.[71]

Nor was Shtif above appealing to his correspondents' possibly guilty consciences:

> Is it possible that poor Jewish youths in Lithuanian and Galician shtetls can send something and the American colleagues cannot? … [W]e have certainly merited that you should not leave the entire material burden on us, the poorest.[72]

The founders of YIVO were at first incredulous that they could rely on the support of the communities of Eastern Europe. As they wrote, "in Poland there is simply hunger among the broad Jewish masses. … of course, in such a situation it's out of the question that in Vilna they will get some means for the

institute."[73] Once funds began to arrive they deeply appreciated the aid they received and the sacrifice it represented, yet they were also keenly aware of its limitations. The Jews in this impoverished region might be truly devoted to the institute, but the monetary help they could offer was limited and uncertain. When they – rather than American or German Jewry – became the backbone of YIVO's support, it dramatically diminished the institute's financial prospects and thus the scope of what it could hope to accomplish. The sense of having the will and ability to do so much while laboring under severe economic constraints weighed heavily on Shtif and his colleagues. He expressed his frustrations in a letter to Zhitlowsky: "I want you to know our pain: we stand here on the verge of a serious, systematic work, with definite possibilities, and we are truly suffocating for a penny."[74]

The Mission of the Institute

As the institute gained momentum, a public discussion emerged over its mission and priorities. Virtually all those who rallied to the cause subscribed to a shared vision of the goals of Yiddish scholarship. How to best reach these goals, however, was the subject of some contention. It was Shtif who addressed these issues in the greatest detail, but the terms of debate were largely set by the Vilna activists. They advocated subtle yet significant modifications to the memorandum issued from Berlin, ultimately altering the shape of YIVO's work in fundamental ways.

Shtif opened the memorandum by arguing that the expansion of scholarship was the next logical step in the growth of Yiddish culture:

> There arrives the time when every people at a certain level of cultural development must and wishes to participate directly in the scholarly work of the entire intellectual world.[75]

For the Jewish people, Shtif implied, that time had arrived. He pointed to two recent innovations, "the beginnings of scholarly work" and "the new Yiddish school system," as proof of the culture's maturity. These two phenomena – the former beginning just prior to World War I and the latter during the war itself – were the necessary foundation on which an academic institute would be built.[76] The Vilna supporters adopted similar language, asserting that "the need for a center for Yiddish scholarship is already ripe and can be realized at the current level of our cultural development."[77] In an early article in support of the institute, the literary critic Shmuel Niger portrayed this evolution as an almost organic process: "The question of scholarly research in Yiddish is … for us a question of the further natural development of our intellectual life, of our intellectual powers."[78]

Such an institution would provide the final link in the growing network of Yiddish institutions. Supporters particularly stressed its role as the necessary complement to the Yiddish secular school system. "Those who build the

Yiddish schools must perforce also build a Yiddish academic institute," wrote Niger. "This is no caprice and no luxury," but "a pressing task of our cultural and educational work."[79] As educational activists in Riga put it, "In no corner of our cultural life is felt as much the lack of a scholarly center as in the school;" therefore "the survival of the Yiddish school depends to a large extent on the construction of the institute."[80] A scholarly academy would raise Yiddish education as a whole to new heights, filling a gap, as Shtif put it, in "the *higher rungs* in the pedagogic ladder."[81] Thus A. Litvak wrote that while the schools were the foundation of Yiddish culture, the institute would be its roof.[82] Such an organization would both secure this organizational web and mark its most august achievements, further demonstrating the maturity of the culture as a whole. A Latvian newspaper explained that the folk quickly grasped this important symbolic function: "Today everyone sees in the institute the crown of the building of Yiddish secular culture, and for just that reason the institute very quickly became popular in broad circles."[83]

Despite such rhetoric, it is not self-evident that the creation of an academic center would indeed be embraced by the Jewish masses, yet the connection between scholarship and folk was axiomatic in the eyes of the institute's founders. When discussing the mission of the institute, the most commonly used phrase – invoked literally hundreds of times – was the desire "to serve the folk," the millions of ordinary Yiddish-speaking Jews. Shtif began the memorandum by discussing "scholarly work in the language of the folk and with the tools of the folk for [the folk's] material and intellectual survival …"[84] The theme of the folk or its variant, the *folksmasn* [masses of the folk], permeated pronouncements about the institute. YIVO's supporters readily adopted this populist language, resolving that "the idea of the scholarly institute will become an idea of the folk and the building of our Yiddish academy will become a thing of the folk."[85]

The institute's founders therefore stressed that academic research must necessarily reflect the experiences of ordinary men and women. They saw the language, history, and contemporary problems of the Jewish public as the core of their scholarly concerns. Thus Abraham Golomb told his readers, "We must not separate ourselves from the broad masses … their culture is also ours …"[86] As Shtif wrote, he and his colleagues would "serve the living Yiddish folk culture" by "research[ing] the real material and intellectual life of the Jewish folk."[87] Moreover, the institute would look to the folk not only for its inspiration but also for its audience. Then, as its findings were disseminated more widely, Yiddish research would aid the Jewish masses by creating a foundation for their further development. As Shtif wrote to historian Jacob Shatzky, who would become the head of YIVO's American branch, "The most important thing, the kernel [is] that a folk culture must have a scholarly base."[88] In this way, academic work was seen as intimately tied to the broader Jewish public. The institute would "serve the folk" by drawing on the products of folk culture as the basis of its research. The fruits of its labors would eventually return

to the masses, uplifting them through its educational mission. In this way, as one of the institute's early correspondents put it, folk culture and scholarship would exist in a symbiosis that would produce "a modern scholarly literature that would have its sustenance from the life of the Jewish masses and would nourish that life."[89]

Shtif argued that, like Yiddish itself, the folk was ready for such a development because the changed conditions of the postwar period had led it to achieve a "mature cultural will."[90] Hungry for a new type of scholarship that would address their needs and aspirations, they would support the project and see its relevance to their lives. As Shtif reassured Shatzky, "There is nothing to fear from the people of the masses, that they will not understand" the goals of the institute.[91] Thus the very existence of a body devoted to Yiddish scholarship would attest to the progress both of the language and of its speakers. As Shatzky himself wrote, "a scholarly academy … [is] a sign of the cultivation [*kulturelkeyt*] of every people."[92]

By elevating the language in this way the institute's founders hoped to win it the respect that had so long eluded it. In the memorandum Shtif expressed outrage that no "'Tarbut'-schoolboy can keep himself from mouthing the silly ignorant phrase that Yiddish is a 'jargon,' a 'mutilated German,' thus defiling an entire culture that was and is created in Yiddish!"[93] A scholarly institute would not only combat such negative stereotypes among outsiders but also foster increased self-esteem among the tongue's speakers themselves. As Weinreich later wrote, YIVO "was born in [Shtif's] mind as a plan to raise the importance of the Yiddish language, which means in effect the respect of the Jew for himself and his faith in himself, his confidence."[94]

The proposed organization would accomplish these goals first of all by addressing the practical needs of those who used Yiddish in their professional work. "We know in what a lowly situation our language finds itself," continued Shtif. "But where should the Yiddish journalist learn the language?… Where is the authority to which one must listen?"[95] Teachers in the Yiddish schools such as Yudel Mark and Y. Radak cited their difficulties in the classroom because of the lack of a standard to teach their students.[96] Prefiguring many of the future tasks of the institute, A. Litvak wrote that "The schools have clearly brought to the fore the need for a unified orthography set by an authoritative institution, a scholarly terminology, an academic dictionary, a Yiddish encyclopedia."[97] Others called for an organization that would develop curricular materials.[98]

Shtif envisioned a body with the clout and expertise to address these lacunae. He wrote to Zhitlowsky of the need for an organization with "the internal *authority*" to "win *respect* for Yiddish culture …"[99] Michael Weichert described the institute as a "Sanhedrin of scholars" that would "*paskenen shayles* [rule on questions]" of Yiddish usage, "the highest agency in doubtful questions of grammar, orthography, terminology."[100] Not only would it solve the dilemmas faced by Yiddish writers and teachers, it was also an essential step in raising Yiddish from a spoken vernacular to a modern tongue capable

of expressing the most sophisticated ideas. Yudel Mark wrote that just as the Académie Française regulated the French language, so Yiddish needed an analogous body: "There must come ten Moseses for the Yiddish language, ten national philological lawgivers, then Yiddish will be suitable for respectable people!"[101] In this way, as a supporter in Riga put it, the "language of the folk" would become a "national language of culture."[102]

The institute would take the place not only of a state-sponsored language academy but of a national library as well. In the memorandum Shtif spoke from bitter personal experience of the difficulties of working without a central repository for books, journals, and documents in Yiddish. He described enviously the resources available for government-supported research, then concluded glumly, "We have none of this. Each of us who wants to devote himself seriously to scholarly work has to rely only on himself."[103] Shtif hoped that the institute would remedy this situation by making the necessary materials easily accessible and facilitating contact among scholars. Yet beyond these practical benefits for a few intellectuals, the institute's quasi-official role assumed tremendous symbolic importance. For, as the poet Aaron Glanz-Leieles wrote, "Among the nations of the world both individual scholars and academic institutions are supported by the state. We have no state."[104]

Yiddishists set out to build a nationalist movement among the Jews of Eastern Europe without government backing or even the unifying force of a compact territorial base. As cultural aspirations replaced hopes for political rights, they imagined a central authority for Yiddish culture as a substitute for state power, a kind of government in exile for Diaspora Jewry. Many early supporters made these underlying assumptions explicit in their writings. "I approach the tasks of the scholarly institute in the appropriate *national* measure," stated Yudel Mark.[105] Educational activists in the Baltics wrote of the "national-communal" and "great national-cultural significance" of the proposed body, while a supporter in South Africa referred to its "colossal national work."[106] As a Riga journalist put it, "The trouble is that Yiddish-speaking Jews are dispersed to the four corners of the earth. The[ir] language has no center and no government to support it." To remedy this situation will be "the most important task of the new scholarly institute," which "the dispersed Jewish people must set up for itself instead of a government."[107] Thus, the creation of an organization dedicated to Yiddish scholarship had far-reaching psychological and political as well as cultural implications. Its very creation would demonstrate the maturity of Yiddish, enhancing the status of the language and the self-respect of its speakers. And by creating a substitute for political authority, even on a symbolic level, the institute implicitly served the goals of Diaspora Nationalism.

Shtif and his Berlin colleagues, supporters in Vilna, and those who responded to the institute's appeals all shared this vision of Yiddish scholarship, yet they sometimes disagreed on how to translate these goals into concrete action. From the first a fundamental tension emerged between Shtif and the East European activists over the relative weight to place on the needs of

researchers, the Yiddish schools, and ordinary Jews. Speaking in terms that were clearly personal, in the memorandum's first sentence Shtif described the need for "institutions where a few capable and mature scholars have the possibility of doing scholarly work …"[108] He continued:

> When a scholar devotes himself to his vocation, he must be corrupted in need and loneliness … or he must look for 'temporary' employment and work a whole day somewhere in an office, in a newspaper workshop, and 'for himself' there remains the late night hours.… If [scholars] miraculously have ready larger works, who will publish them? Don't even ask who will pay them an honorarium![109]

In sum, he concluded, "scholarship in Yiddish sustains itself through the self-sacrifice and tremendous cultural will of its activists," but this was not enough to ensure its future. It required the secure foundation of a "*purely academic institute*," where scholars would have the necessary resources to devote themselves to their work.[110] In Shtif's proposed budget, by far the largest single item was the salaries of eight researchers, two affiliated with each section.[111] He also wrote that "scholarly work in Yiddish derives from the *current problems* of the life of the Jewish folk"[112] and alluded to "the practical needs of the work of the folk" such as research on economics and emigration.[113] Yet he portrayed the institute first of all as a haven in which a few individuals could pursue specialized scholarship unhindered.

From the time of their first meeting on March 24, the Vilna activists criticized Shtif's vision as elitist and divorced from the experience of the common people. As Weinreich argued in the Vilna Theses, "In our current position we cannot permit ourselves the luxury of taking into account *only* our scholarly tasks and forgetting about all other needs."[114] Tsemakh Szabad likened Shtif's idea of first creating a center in Berlin to constructing the roof of a building before the foundation. Szabad advocated instead founding local organizations in Vilna, Warsaw, and other cities in Eastern Europe, noting that research into pedagogy, language, and folklore could best be carried out in areas with large Yiddish-speaking populations. By emphasizing the need to build from the ground up, Szabad underlined the potential connection between the institute and the Jewish masses. The contrast between the two approaches was clear. While Szabad accused Shtif of wishing to build the institute's roof before its foundation, Shtif wrote unapologetically, "In our situation we must begin from the roof."[115]

While the Vilna activists viewed the connection to the folk as central to the institute's mission, they were also keenly aware of the dangers of popular work. At the March 24 meeting Weinreich suggested reversing the order of the sections as outlined by Shtif, placing more emphasis on pedagogical, social, and economic questions and less on history and philology. Weinreich, himself a scholar of Yiddish language and literature, wanted "the institute to hold an interest for a larger circle of people" and thus gave priority to subjects that would be relevant to a broad public. Yet at the same meeting Gershon Pludermakher suggested eliminating the Economic-Statistical Section altogether, fearing that

it would become too politicized.[116] The Vilna Theses adopted Pludermakher's position, citing "a danger that [the section] will venture too strongly into *current* social-political questions and will lose its scholarly character." They advocated combining it with the division for History to create a Historical-Social [*gezelshaftlekh*] Section. In addition to Jewish history in Central and Eastern Europe, this branch of the institute would research matters of Jewish economics, demographics, statistics, and social and political life – in fact, all the topics Shtif originally assigned to the Economic-Statistical Section.[117] This reorganization plan suggests that the Vilna activists were no less interested in research on contemporary issues but hoped to avoid controversy by making them less prominent in the institute's work.

These contrasting proposals for the Economic-Statistical Section reflect the difficult balancing act that the Vilna vision for the institute entailed. While supporters in both Berlin and Vilna acknowledged the need for work with popular relevance, this idea had much more resonance in the large Jewish communities of Eastern Europe than among the handful of émigré scholars in the West. In the midst of efforts to build a modern Jewish culture in the Yiddish language, the Vilna activists imagined an organization that would gather folklore in remote shtetls, support the Yiddish secular schools, and shed light on the economic problems faced by impoverished Jews in the region. At the same time, they were fully aware of the fierce political debates that characterized Jewish life in the interwar period. They feared that by directly engaging the pressing issues of the day, they risked bringing their academic work under the sway of one or another ideology. By ultimately rejecting Shtif's more rarefied vision in favor of the Vilna stance, the institute's founders faced a challenge that would persist throughout YIVO's history: to speak to contemporary problems and yet maintain its intellectual independence and integrity.

Such differing perspectives also informed the debate over the place of teaching in the institute's work. Shtif stated his view succinctly: "The institute should be a *research institute* for scholars, not a teaching institution for students."[118] Shtif did foresee a role for pedagogy, however. At the end of the memorandum he briefly discussed the creation of an *auditoria*, a program of thirty to forty students who would pursue advanced training in one of the institute's fields of study. The auditoria would enroll above all aspiring academics, "young talents … who want to devote themselves to this or that branch of scholarship."[119] This was in keeping with the Berlin activists' concern with "rearing the scholarly succession, which we are sorely lacking."[120] As a secondary function Shtif also planned the auditoria as a teacher training program. "The Yiddish school system demands teachers, educators with a thorough general and professional education" who would serve as instructors in high schools and teachers seminaries, he wrote.[121] Thus Shtif envisioned a pedagogical component serving a limited number of young scholars and educators, the equivalent of a graduate program, yet his relative lack of attention to this aspect of the institute's work shows that he considered it of secondary importance.

By contrast, "the needs of our school and educational system," as Weinreich put it, emerged as a fundamental concern of the Vilna supporters.[122] At their March 24 meeting several of those present – not coincidentally, all affiliated with the Yiddish school network – took issue with the priorities expressed in the memorandum. According to Szabad, "a pedagogic academy for teachers" was more important than a purely scholarly organization. Others echoed similar sentiments. Dr. Herts Kovarski spoke in favor of expanding the auditoria into a larger and more inclusive program. Anna Rosental remarked sarcastically that the far-reaching needs of Jewish culture could not be met by providing employment for eight scholars, as Shtif had proposed.[123] Those in Vilna preferred to speak of the institute as two integral parts, an "academy" for research and a "hoykh-shul," here defined as a place for advanced pedagogical training.[124]

Weinreich expanded on this theme in the Vilna Theses. At first he seemed to concur with Shtif: "We agree that the main task is to concentrate and support *independent* scholarly research work; teaching must be connected to the institute only inasmuch as it will not be an impediment to the principal thing." However, he then went on to argue that a purely academic institute would be of interest to only a small circle of intellectuals. Without a broader base of support, he predicted, it would share the fate of the journals *Yidishe filologye* and *Bleter far idishe demografye, statistik, un ekonomik*, which had closed because of financial difficulties. Weinreich concluded by stressing that the auditoria should be a central part of the institute and that the newly created body should have "two organic parts; it is an institution for *research* and *teaching*."[125] While couched as merely a disagreement over strategy, not substance, the Vilna Theses presented a significantly different view of the institute's mission.

Vilna supporters were so dedicated to the idea of a teaching program because they saw in it not only a means to educate a select group of students but a crucial point of connection to a wider audience, "a way … to link together the work of individual scholars with the needs of Jewish life."[126] Just as the Yiddish secular school system as a whole was "the natural connecting element between pure scholarship and the broad public," so too would be its crowning achievement, a Yiddish college.[127] Weinreich proposed that Yiddish educational and cultural organizations nominate candidates for the auditoria and sponsor scholarships to support them, thus further involving the public in the institute's work. At the same time, he wrote, the auditoria would help disseminate research findings: "What the institute will accomplish in the field of scholarship will through the teachers [and] students [of the auditoria] penetrate those circles for whose sake the institute is being created."[128] Thus, like the academic center as a whole, the teaching component would both draw from the folk and provide benefits to it.

Since Shtif was less concerned with the institute's pedagogical aspect, he was happy to leave the creation of the auditoria until "later, once the first and most important [components] are established …"[129] At the initial Vilna meeting,

some argued that the teaching program must be set up immediately while others were resigned to waiting, as Shtif proposed.[130] When they eventually agreed to a postponement, the Vilna activists regarded this measure as a temporary compromise. As Zalman Reisen later explained,

> There were two projects: [to] create a research institute and [to] create an institute that will train new researchers … For the latter, however, there were lacking the huge sums of money that [would be] necessary … and it was decided for the time being to be satisfied with the institute for research.[131]

As they grappled with the fact that no "huge sums of money" would be immediately forthcoming, supporters came to see that a teaching program would not soon be realized. Yet they maintained their commitment to training young scholars and in 1929 still spoke of a time when the hoykh-shul would operate alongside the academy.[132] In this way they reconciled their most ambitious aspirations for Yiddish scholarship with the reality of their limited financial prospects.

The Start of Scholarly Work

In the memorandum Shtif proposed convening a meeting of Yiddish scholars in the fall of 1925 to formally found the institute. To plan this event, supporters held a preliminary conference [*forbaratung*] in Berlin on August 7 to 12. Discussions at that time ranged far beyond preparations for a scholarly gathering in the fall, however, and became an important milestone in their own right. In fact, the decisions reached in August 1925 established the shape of YIVO's research and publishing programs as well as its organizational structure, creating the de facto blueprint for the work of the institute for years to come.

When the call for delegates to the preliminary conference was announced in the summer of 1925, reactions fell into a familiar pattern. From the first the Vilna activists favored the idea and signaled their participation.[133] Organizations in Lithuania also responded enthusiastically and sent a representative.[134] In contrast, the response from the United States was tardy and disappointing. At the last minute both the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union and the Workmen's Circle sent telegrams stating that they would not participate, the latter adding that it could not agree whether to support the institute in principle.[135] In the end, nine people gathered in Berlin: local residents Shtif, Tcherikower, Lestschinsky, Abraham Menes, and Aron Steinberg; Weinreich from Vilna; Moyshe Zilberfarb from Warsaw; Esther Eliashev from Kaunas; and Israel Efroykin from Paris[136]

In planning the agenda for the fall meeting Shtif and Weinreich once again betrayed their differing perspectives. In addition to discussing organizational matters Shtif wanted participants to present academic papers, for he felt one could not squander such an unprecedented opportunity for intellectual exchange among Yiddish scholars.[137] Moreover, he argued, such presentations would demonstrate the advanced level of the field and thus galvanize

support for the institute.[138] While Shtif emphasized the importance of research, Weinreich sought to tie the project to the larger sphere of Yiddish culture by inviting representatives of educational and cultural organizations to attend, a proposal that was adopted by the delegates at the preliminary conference.[139]

The founders originally anticipated beginning research in the fall of 1925, after the assembled scholars would determine the institute's organizational structure and "give the authoritative sanction to the whole plan."[140] In August they agreed, however, that the larger meeting must be postponed until spring 1926.[141] The delay convinced the delegates at the preliminary conference to establish four research sections – which would remain in place for the entire interwar period – and to begin "organized scholarly work" immediately.[142] The Philological Section was to be located in Vilna, the Pedagogical (later Psychological-Pedagogical) Section in Warsaw, and the Social-Economic (later Economic-Statistical) and Historical Sections in Berlin. Weinreich, Lestschinsky, and Tcherikower were chosen to head the Philological, Social-Economic, and Historical Sections, respectively, posts that all three would continue to fill for the next fourteen years.[143] Each section would prepare material for its own series of the journal *Shriftn fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* [Writings of the Yiddish Scientific Institute]. The institute also planned to publish full-length academic works and a bimonthly newsletter of Yiddish cultural, educational, and scholarly events.[144]

The delegates also adopted a new administrative scheme. The institute's central governing body would be an Organizational Committee, located in Berlin and comprising representatives of all countries with branches or support groups. Shtif and Tcherikower were chosen as the committee's German delegates, while Weinreich and Reisen were later elected to represent Poland at a joint meeting of TSBK and VILBIG.[145] While the Organizational Committee was supposed to include representatives of at least five countries, other lands never claimed their seats. Thus these scholars, two in Berlin and two in Vilna, became the key figures in the two key centers of the institute's work.

With the decision to begin scholarly work, attention turned to the contours of the institute's academic program. Shtif wrote of developing a distinct "methodology of our own" that would take as its model the philological work of Ber Borochov as epitomized by the *Pinkes*.[146] In historical studies it would follow the approach pioneered by Simon Dubnow, focusing on the experiences of average men and women rather than elites and on everyday social conditions rather than great intellectual achievements. One supporter wrote that while earlier scholars had looked only at the lives of important religious figures, the institute would seek to discover "the social-economic processes that shape the foundation of the historical development of Jewish life."[147] As it shed light on the culture of ordinary Jews, the populist thrust of the institute's work would reinforce the centrality of the notion of the folk. What Dubnow wrote of history could be equally applied to all disciplines of the institute's research: it would produce "scholarship about the people and for the people."[148]

To underscore their own innovations, the institute's founders contrasted their goals to those of scholars whom they characterized as rooted in assimilationist, religious, or Zionist ideologies. They often cast these rivals as elitist counterpoints to their own concern for the common people. In the memorandum Shtif wrote that Yiddish scholarship would address the needs of a new class of "folk intellectuals," a group distinct from earlier "assimilated" and "Torah intellectuals."[149] The institute's leaders complained bitterly of American donors who would support only Zionist or religious institutions and referred sarcastically to the "fine sirs in Warsaw" whose only interest was Judaic studies in Hebrew and Polish.[150] On another occasion they remarked, "The affluent and educated classes among Jews … have their 'Jewishness' and their 'scholarship' (the 'Wissenschaft des Judentums' and the rabbinical seminaries, etc.). They have nothing to do with the culture of the Jewish masses."[151]

Of all those whose work they disparaged the institute's founders were particularly critical of the German Wissenschaft school, which they associated with "the Jewish assimilated bourgeoisie." Shtif characterized its approach as "fundamentally hostile to the cultural interests of the Jewish masses, their language, [and] their living social and cultural creativity."[152] Wissenschaft scholars, he and his colleagues contended, viewed the study of Yiddish as an adjunct to other fields rather than a worthy subject in its own right. Moreover, they continued, their German counterparts regarded Jewish research as purely a matter of detached academic interest divorced from contemporary concerns. This bloodless approach was inevitable, Shtif maintained, for only "we Yiddish-speaking Jews, who carry the treasure with us as a living thing," could treat these topics as more than a static object of study.[153] As Weinreich put it, unlike the Wissenschaft school, "For the organizers [of YIVO] Yiddish scholarship is no historical discipline, but a living still-creative element of the present."[154] Shmuel Niger labeled the Jewish historians of Western Europe "gravediggers" and called for "scholars who are connected not only to the archives and cemeteries, but also to the life and future of the Jewish people." "Only those who believe in the present and believe in the future of the Jewish people can feel and understand its past," he wrote.[155]

In fact, as recent studies have shown, German Jewish scholars also responded to the issues of the day and sought to connect their academic work to the broader public. The YIVO founders' uniformly negative view of the Wissenschaft school might be attributed to prevailing stereotypes and a lack of familiarity with contemporary developments in German Jewish scholarship, given the limited contact between East European émigrés in Berlin and the local Jewish community. More relevant, however, was perhaps the need to construct an unsympathetic view of the previous generation of Jewish academics against whom they saw themselves as reacting. The earlier movement thus became something of a rhetorical straw man, a foil highlighting the innovations of YIVO's own work.[156]

At the same time, the YIVO founders criticized those whose pursuit of knowledge led them outside the Jewish fold. Shtif began the memorandum with a seemingly tangential discussion of the participation of Jews in the medical profession. This passage was deleted from later editions, yet it made an important point about his view of the role of Yiddish scholarship. Shtif wrote that many Jewish individuals had gained access to higher education and received medical degrees, but their careers as doctors had done nothing to help their fellow Jews. More broadly, "while the [Jewish] people has made many sacrifices to educate Jewish intellectuals and scholars," this new elite had not in turn contributed to the larger community.[157] In contrast stood the study of Jewish public health, which led to concrete improvements in the lives of ordinary men and women. This field presented a model of how general areas of knowledge that had absorbed the intellectual energy of talented young Jews could be made to contribute to the life of the people as a whole.[158] By taking Jewish society as the subject of its research, it would create scholarship truly Jewish in content. Here Shtif reaffirmed his support for Zhitlowsky's vision of building an intrinsically Jewish culture, rather than Sachs's goal of developing general fields of study in Yiddish. In 1914 Shmuel Niger had argued that what was needed was not "a *university for Jews*" but a "*Jewish university*."[159] A decade later, writing in support of the institute, he called for fewer "scholarly Jews" and more "Jewish scholars."[160] Just as the study of medicine could be transformed, so could other areas of research be made to produce "Jewish scholars" who would truly serve the folk.[161]

In this way, the institute would use existing academic work to create new research that would both draw from and give back to the Jewish public. As Shtif put it in a letter to Zhitlowsky, "*the folk* … should enjoy world knowledge. [It] is necessary to *transplant* that knowledge in Jewish soil, so it will be *cultivated* in the folk's language and with the folk's means and interests."[162] Thus, even as the institute's founders often denigrated their predecessors or competitors, they acknowledged the need to learn from better-developed European models as part of their quest to produce an authentically Jewish scholarship. Abraham Golomb put this relationship in Hegelian terms: Jewish folk culture represented the thesis, the Haskalah and European culture the antithesis. The task of the institute would be to combine the best of both to produce a synthesis of the two.[163]

Such a genuinely Jewish scholarship would benefit not only Jews. Extending his opening analogy in the memorandum, Shtif wrote that the study of Jewish public health could provide valuable insights for the general field of medicine.[164] Yiddish research was already playing such a role, he maintained, for the work of the Yiddish schools was beginning to contribute new findings to the discipline of pedagogy.[165] Here we see Dubnow's and Zhitlowsky's idea that a people must develop its own character to fulfill its intellectual potential. The Jews would never achieve full maturity as long as they sought to imitate other

nations. By cultivating their own scholarly tradition they would come to better understand their own history and contemporary needs. Only then, armed with this heightened self-knowledge, could they make an original contribution to world culture. Thus Jewish scholarship, rather than being parochial, was the only means by which Jews could participate fully in the advancement of human knowledge.

Ultimately, then, Shtif's goal was to break down the barriers between Jewish and European scholarship. He expressed this notion using a clever rhetorical device. Once again Shtif cast as villains the German Jewish Wissenschaft school:

> The scholarly work in Yiddish is principally … an *emancipation from the ghetto circle* of scholarly interests that the activists of "Wissenschaft des Judentums" cultivate as a special task for the Jewish collective. It obliterated the boundaries of "Jewish" and "general" knowledge, the conceit that "Jewish" knowledge is a special "national" thing that we must seek and find within our own borders and "general" knowledge is a thing for individuals …"[166]

Here Shtif reversed the usual association of Western Europe with the broader horizons of non–Jewish society, in contrast to the isolation of the Yiddish-speaking East. It was the Wissenschaft movement, with its narrow view of Jewish culture, that had placed Jewish scholarship in an intellectual ghetto. The institute would liberate Jewish knowledge, allowing it to both learn from and contribute to general society. Thus – in an often-repeated phrase – it would "serv[e] the Jewish masses in the struggle for their cultural emancipation."[167] By appropriating the banner of emancipation and intellectual freedom, Shtif contested the notion that the Yiddish sphere was somehow incompatible with the Jewish quest for full participation in the modern world.

Discussions of the scope of the institute's work reflected this complex view of the relationship between Jewish and non–Jewish culture. While there was a consensus among the institute's founders that their core concern would be original work that was both in and about the Yiddish language, some delegates at the preliminary conference advocated a more inclusive approach, believing it would widen the institute's base of support.[168] In the end the conference resolved to welcome scholars writing in Yiddish on general themes.[169] An even wider range was reflected in the institute's later decision to collect all material published in Yiddish as well as publications about Yiddish in all languages.[170] It eventually stated that it was devoted to helping those "who work in Yiddish on all [branches] of scholarship, or in other languages on Yiddish."[171]

The institute's founders also considered the question of translations into Yiddish. From the time of the Haskalah Jewish intellectuals had discussed the need to translate works of world literature in order to make non–Jewish culture accessible to those who knew no European tongues. As Zhitlowsky

argued, building a full and mature culture required Yiddish versions of the most important works of the general canon. Following Zhitlowsky, Diaspora Nationalists also saw this effort as part of the process of raising the status of Yiddish by demonstrating its ability to depict the full range of human ideas and experiences. Moreover, translation would serve as another means of bringing Jewish and non–Jewish culture into a fruitful dialogue. As a supporter in Kaunas put it, "good translations of a variety of foreign classical writers" were needed in order to create "a closer move to the great intellectuals of all peoples and times."[172] In years to come the institute's leaders discussed the translation of great works of world scholarship and eventually undertook such a project.[173] In practice, however, little was done that fell outside of the institute's core commitment to original work in Yiddish and about the history and culture of Yiddish-speaking Jews. In the coming years, the institute would publish brochures and abstracts of scholarly articles in translation and contemplated producing full-length works in European languages in order to reach a larger and more diverse audience.[174] Yet it was reluctant to devote resources to other tongues, even when Lestschinsky and Tcherikower complained that they had trouble finding contributors to their respective sections who were proficient in Yiddish.[175]

On the other hand, YIVO leaders reaffirmed their desire to treat all fields of research in the European Jewish vernacular. In the memorandum Shtif wrote that the institute could not yet encompass all disciplines since "We don't have the necessary means for it and we are not yet ripe enough for it." Therefore, he concluded,

> We must first of all limit ourselves: … For now we must be satisfied with those branches [of knowledge] in which we are the most backward, which we cannot learn somewhere else … which we can best use for the goals of our folk culture, [or] with which we are capable of accomplishing something for scholarship in general. In short, these are the so-called 'Jewish disciplines.'[176]

In a similar vein, Weinreich wrote that ideally the institute should include "all branches of human knowledge, and only [because of] the limitations that every beginning demands [should] the institute at the beginning set itself research tasks only in the field of Jewish scholarship."[177] Thus, both Shtif and Weinreich saw the focus on Jewish content not as a principled stance but a temporary compromise driven by financial constraints. Yet, like the emphasis on research over teaching, the lower priority placed on work on general topics meant that in reality the institute remained focused on Yiddish language and culture as both the object and medium of its research.

Similarly, plans to establish a firm financial base and then launch work with the conference of Yiddish scholars slated for the fall of 1925 fell victim to practical limitations. The institute's leaders originally hoped that this gathering would give the plan for the institute its imprimatur and map out a systematic program of collection, research, and teaching. As they resigned themselves to

the fact that large sums would not be immediately forthcoming, however, they decided at the preliminary conference in August to begin work immediately with the scant means at their disposal. They later described in a letter

> the new path of our work (after the preliminary conference). Our practical needs led us to … give up the scheme: first we will gather great sums, guaranteed yearly income, [and] afterwards we will build the institute. We must go in exactly an opposite path: without secure sums, nearly unknown in wider circles, we must begin to work, [to] carry out a practical program.[178]

Following this decision, in the fall of 1925 the institute's research sections took their first concrete steps. Most active was the Philological Section, which established several subdivisions known as commissions. By October it held its first meeting in Vilna, while the Historical and Pedagogical Sections convened in Berlin.[179] Also in October the institute's biweekly newsletter, *Yedies fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* [News of the Yiddish Scientific Institute], began to appear as a supplement to *Literarishe bleter*.[180] Meanwhile, with the seat of the Organizational Committee in Berlin, Vilna supporters created the Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute.[181] The society was intended as a temporary body whose primary goal was "to found the institute" itself, yet it soon was overseeing day-to-day work.[182]

The Society of Friends assumed this central role not because of any programmatic decision but because of the undeniable fact that Vilna had become the most active locus of the institute's activity. By the fall of 1925 the Vilna daily *Tog* – edited, not coincidentally, by Zalman Reisen – was a consistent source of publicity. As early as August it commented that the plan for an institute for Yiddish scholarship "can have the greatest significance for the development of our culture" and had "already won the sympathy of broad circles."[183] The following month, after Weinreich spoke about the preliminary conference to a "full-packed" "audience of cultural activists and student youth," Reisen commented that Vilna's positive response "is a sign that the idea of the institute is already ripe …"[184]

At the same time, the founders' many imploring letters to the United States finally bore fruit. As he first sought to rally support for his plan Shtif sent numerous appeals to both individuals and organizations across the Atlantic, yet was almost universally disappointed by a lack of response. By the fall, however, the American Yiddish press began to take note of the institute. Articles appeared in October and November in the New York newspapers the *Morgn zhurnal* and the *Forverts*, calling on the American Jewish public to lend its financial and moral support to the project.[185] More substantial pieces appeared in the New York *Tog*, where Shmuel Niger and the poet Aaron Glanz-Leieles discussed at length the role that the institute was to play in the development of Yiddish culture.[186]

Ironically, while prominent American Yiddish activists were initially unresponsive to Shtif's plan, it was a young historian only belatedly informed of the project who finally took up the cause in the United States. Jacob Shatzky, a

Warsaw native who received a doctorate in history before emigrating to New York in 1922, wrote to the Initiative Group in July 1925 expressing interest in its work.[187] On October 17 he organized a meeting of Yiddish cultural figures who founded an American Section of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, known as the Amopteyl (short for Amerikaner opteylung [American Section]).[188] Shatzky shared much of the pessimism of other American activists, suggesting that the institute was unlikely to win support in the United States until it had some concrete accomplishments to show.[189] Nevertheless, he became the Amopteyl's secretary and would long remain the driving force behind YIVO's work in the United States despite an often contentious relationship with the institute's European heads. Despite frequent clashes over such issues as fundraising strategy and scholarly methodology, leaders in Berlin and Vilna were glad to finally have an active partner across the Atlantic.

By the fall of 1925 the institute had established contacts throughout the Yiddish-speaking world, from Romania to England to the United States, and its circle of correspondents would soon expand to far-flung outposts of Ashkenazic emigration including Palestine, South America, and South Africa.[190] Moreover, it could claim significant grassroots popularity in the East European heartland of Yiddish culture. Its leaders decided to mark their growing success during the holiday of Succoth, when they asked friends in various countries to hold simultaneous drives to generate publicity and raise funds.[191] During this "Week for the Yiddish Scientific Institute" several hundred people gathered in Warsaw and in Vilna, while educational organizations in Riga and Kaunas published special broadsheets for the occasion.[192] The response to this appeal, YIVO's first international campaign, once again confirmed that its strongest base of support lay among the communities of Poland and the Baltics.

Conclusion

Within a year of Shtif's composition of his memorandum, many elements of his original plan had already proven untenable. There would be no institute backed by the affluent Jews of Western Europe and the United States, where a small group of scholars could find refuge from financial worries and the contentious issues of the Jewish street. Yet remarkably, by October most of the major elements that would characterize YIVO's work throughout the interwar period, organizational as well as scholarly, were in place. In addition, the resolutions reached that August became longstanding guidelines since the anticipated convention of scholars – and the formal founding of the institute – did not take place until 1929.[193] Observers defended this decision to begin with the modest resources at hand. A. Litvak wrote, "If we wait until we have the necessary scholarly powers in all their size and ripeness perhaps we will never open the institute."[194] As the *Yedies* conceded, "perhaps the [decision] of the preliminary conference [to begin work] was not a good one; however, there was no other way at all."[195]

Throughout YIVO's history this pattern would be repeated as its leaders set ambitious goals that they could not fulfill immediately, if ever. Instead projects were undertaken haphazardly, based on the limited funds available. The sweeping master plan of research and teaching, the creation of an academy and college, remained unrealized. Yet even as provisional measures remained in place for years the institute's activists clung to their more lofty objectives, writing on YIVO's second and then on its fourth anniversary that they were still only doing preparatory work, that their material basis was still not secure enough to found the institute itself.[196] They insisted that what they did achieve despite the limitations they faced vindicated this pragmatic approach. In 1935, Weinreich recalled that the institute's leaders had rejected advice to wait for significant donations before starting their activities: "Our path from the beginning was: *convince through deeds*.... We went forward feeling sure that we are doing great work, that our accomplishments demonstrated more than any declaration."[197] Their success ultimately proved the timeliness of their vision and its resonance with the broader Jewish public.

By the fall of 1925 it did seem to Shtif and Weinreich that their plans had taken on a momentum of their own. The seemingly rarefied project of producing Yiddish scholarship had struck a deep chord with the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe. Expressions of support came from cities and towns throughout Poland, the Baltics, and beyond, from students, teachers, and ordinary Jews who expected the institute to serve their needs and elevate their culture. YIVO's leaders pressed on despite their tenuous financial base, buoyed by a level of devotion that surprised even themselves. As they wrote to a supporter in New York,

> In need and in loneliness there grew up a strong thirst for knowledge, for scholarly work ... [that] looks to the institute as to a savior ... In short – we didn't call forth scholarly work, it's become a spontaneous movement, like "Yiddishism" in its years of flowering, with the same enthusiasm, with the same idealism ... and the movement is outgrowing us.[198]

3

"From the Folk, For the Folk, With the Folk"

Academic Work, 1925–1932

Introduction: To Serve the Folk

By the first anniversary of the institute's founding in March 1926, YIVO leaders felt vindicated in their decision to begin their academic projects immediately. As Shtif wrote on that occasion, "With a healthy instinct and a true thirst for culture, from the first minute on the leading parts of the Jewish masses *accepted* the institute and were ready to make it their cause."[1] The *Yedies* added a few months later,

> The cultural needs of the masses of the Jewish folk are already so mature that the creation of a central scholarly institution has truly become a vital question. Only this can explain how with negligible pennies in the course of barely a year there was accomplished so much great scholarly work of lasting value. … with the proclamation of the institute a fresh stream flowed in all Yiddish cultural work.[2]

Yet the institute now faced the challenge of realizing the ideals outlined by Shtif, Weinreich, and their colleagues in the initial discussions of a Yiddish scholarly institute. If they agreed in broad terms on their goals, translating these goals into concrete collection, research, and publishing efforts proved even thornier in practice than in their lengthy debates. In January 1926 supporters in Kaunas marked the start of the institute's activity by publishing a broadsheet entitled *Der veg tsu der yidisher visnshaft* [The Path to Yiddish Scholarship]. An article by early YIVO advocate Yudel Mark neatly explicated that path in relation to the paramount goal of serving the Jewish masses: the institute's work would proceed "From the Folk, For the Folk, With the Folk."[3]

All agreed on the first part of this formula, that Yiddish scholars should draw their inspiration "from the folk" by making the culture, history, and contemporary situation of ordinary Jews their object of study. First of all, then, material about the life of the folk needed to be gathered from widely dispersed Yiddish-speaking communities and conveyed to Vilna, where the institute's

affiliates would use it as the basis of their research. In carrying out this work, YIVO's scholars would emphasize topics relevant "for the folk" by addressing problems of broad interest to the community as a whole. This meant in particular balancing their concern for preserving the past with attention to contemporary issues facing interwar Jewry. Once their analysis was complete, for the folk to benefit from YIVO's scholarship it needed to be made accessible to ordinary Jews and disseminated as widely as possible. While YIVO was committed to research on themes of relevance to the entire Jewish public, conflicts arose over how much of the institute's scarce resources to allot for more popular projects designed for a broad audience.

Finally, Mark and others argued that YIVO should express solidarity "with the folk," avoiding the kind of ivory-tower elitism that would create distance between the scholar and the common people. Yet this seemingly laudable goal generated endless controversy, as "the folk" was often invoked yet never clearly defined. Did this term simply mean all Jews rather than a select group of intellectuals? Did it imply a special affinity for those who preserved traditional folkways? Or did it connote support for the Jewish working class, and thus for the modern political parties that championed their cause?[4] This last view led a minority of YIVO leaders to call repeatedly for political action to defend the interests of the folk, while the majority insisted with equal vehemence that such a move would compromise YIVO's scholarly integrity and thus its very raison d'être.

Such conflicting visions underlay the tensions that emerged as YIVO set about fulfilling its ambitious mandate. From the outset, its academic projects reflected the desire both to preserve the past of Yiddish-speaking Jewry and to demonstrate the vibrancy of contemporary Yiddish culture. The institute's leaders also sought to combine their commitment to rigorous scholarship with a responsiveness to communal issues and the needs of the common people. This sense of engagement was central to YIVO's mission but in practice was inseparable from the fraught question of political allegiances. The institute's four sections – for Philology, for History, for Economics and Statistics, and for Psychology and Pedagogy – had to balance these competing concerns as they embarked on their academic work in the impoverished and highly politicized milieu of interwar Eastern Europe.

Dos zamlen

As YIVO's scholars began planning their research programs in the fall of 1925, they faced the same dilemma identified in 1891 by Simon Dubnow: the lack of readily accessible sources for the study of East European Jewish life. Indeed, in the memorandum Shtif argued that one of the central functions of an institution for Yiddish scholarship would be to remedy this situation by finding such material and making it available in a central location while safeguarding it for future generations. Thus YIVO's founders quickly realized that their first

priority was to survey the available primary documents and research done to date in their areas of interest, a task begun by Borochov for the discipline of philology and continued by Shtif with a broader scope. After identifying the many gaps in the available source base, scholars would try to fill these lacunae by collecting the raw data needed for their work. Once they had assembled such material they could assess the current state of their fields and the possibilities for future scholarship. Only then, after these preliminary stages, could they turn their attention to a close examination of the collections thus generated and produce synthetic studies that would provide fresh insights into the Jewish experience. Thus, the process of gathering material – in Yiddish, *zamlen* [to collect] – was the crucial first step in YIVO's work before analytical research could begin. It was in this vein, for example, that Tcherikower argued that in its first years the primary task of the institute should be the collection rather than the interpretation of data.[5]

Following the model of An-ski's famous ethnographic expeditions, on a few occasions YIVO sent affiliates on documentation and collection trips such as a three-day outing to Lublin to examine Jewish antiquities.[6] Yet limited funds meant that the institute could not regularly plan such expensive undertakings, nor could it pay staff to obtain information systematically. Instead, it relied on zamlers, ordinary men and women who took it upon themselves to work on behalf of the institute in their hometowns. The rationale for involving YIVO's grassroots supporters in this endeavor was first articulated by Abraham Golomb. In October 1925 Golomb outlined two groups that would carry out the tasks of the Terminological Commission, which he headed: collector-assistants [*mithelfer-zamlers*] and colleagues [*mitarbeters*]. Golomb looked especially to the institute's base of support among the Yiddish schools, hoping to "attract teachers, secretaries of school organizations, educational organizations and other cultural activists as [collector-]assistants." The populist impulse behind YIVO's work was clearly expressed in Golomb's instructions to "collect from living people" who represented the common folk. Collectors would then send their material to the institute, where colleagues would analyze it.[7] Thus ordinary Jews would play a dual role: as a source of information and as a means of transmitting that information to scholars who would use it as the basis of their research.

With time, virtually every division of the institute enlisted the aid of zamlers. They collected vocabulary for the Terminological Commission, current publications for the Bibliographic Center, historical documents for the Historical Section and Archives, and data for the Psychological-Pedagogical and Economic-Statistical Sections.[8] At a 1928 meeting, Weinreich noted that "Daily we receive shipments for all branches of the institute from various friends from all over."[9] In methodological terms, YIVO's scholars had to begin by surveying and gathering information to build a firm foundation for their more analytical studies; in practical terms, they had to create the collections they needed to carry out their work. Thus for YIVO to produce scholarship

drawn from the life of the folk, the folk itself had to collaborate in documenting Jewish history and culture.

In keeping with the primacy of surveying existing resources for Yiddish scholarship, the project that consumed the most energy in YIVO's early days was the Bibliographic Commission, described as "the central work" of the institute.[10] This was one of several subsections established by the Philological Section in Vilna by October 1925, along with commissions for folklore, terminology, and orthography. Some were already making plans to distribute questionnaires, which became a favorite means of gathering data in many fields.[11] The Bibliographic Commission set out to collect all new books, newspapers, and journals appearing in Yiddish around the world, as well as material in other languages in the fields of YIVO's interest. Although initially few presses responded to its appeal for copies of their latest publications, it quickly developed a network of individuals who volunteered to record the output of Yiddish publishing houses in their respective locales.[12] In this way the commission was able to compile a current bibliography if not a complete library. By January 1926 it had correspondents in New York, Kaunas, and Buenos Aires and soon added Warsaw, Moscow, and other cities to the list.[13] Eventually increasing numbers of publishers complied with its requests for newspapers, although they were slower to send more expensive books.[14]

The commission's work was notable in quantity as well as in geographic scope. In its first six weeks of activity it collected 500 citations, and within a year it had recorded more than 10,000.[15] By 1929 it had registered more than 22,000 items and regularly received more than 300 newspapers in eleven languages, including 260 in Yiddish.[16] While the institute originally planned an annual devoted to Yiddish bibliography, only one volume of its *Bibliografishe yorbikher* [Bibliographic Yearbooks] ever appeared.[17] Nevertheless, YIVO's bibliographic work represented a landmark effort to document Yiddish culture. With this step toward creating the equivalent of a national library, scholars could assess the state of – and the state of knowledge about – Yiddish-speaking Jewry far more systematically than had previously been possible.

The Bibliographic Commission originally intended to record or collect everything produced in Yiddish, thus demonstrating the vitality and range of the printed Yiddish word, as well as Judaica in other languages. Yet as the dimensions of its work became clear it considered a more selective approach. If choices had to made, its leaders stated, the priority would be Yiddish-language materials.[18] Once Shatzky assumed responsibility for bibliographic work in New York, however, he took issue with the principle of cataloging all of the Yiddish press. In his typically blunt fashion, he wrote that the commission's rules would entail wasting much effort on "ignorance" and "simply garbage" that would be better spent producing a critical bibliography.[19]

In January 1926 the commission decided to register all books produced in Yiddish as well as the most important articles in the Yiddish press and works about Yiddish in other languages, yet members expressed confusion over how

FIGURE 3. The Press Archive and workroom of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section in a montage by Moshe Vorobeichic (Raviv), early 1930s. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Used by permission of the Raviv family.

to determine items worthy of inclusion.[20] Because of YIVO's commitment to the folk it could not easily dismiss what was arguably the purest manifestation of mass culture in Yiddish, the "ignorance" of the popular press. Yet as the commission chafed at expending its limited resources to catalog material that it felt lacked lasting value, a combination of intellectual discrimination and practicality led it to limit its scope.

While virtually all areas of YIVO's work benefited from the efforts of individual collectors, the activity of the Ethnographic Commission came to epitomize the zamler phenomenon. In the 1920s it became the most successful division of the Philological Section and arguably of the institute as a whole.[21] In September 1925 YIVO approached the Vilna Historic-Ethnographic Society, which had been founded by An-ski in 1919 and later named in his memory, with a plan to jointly sponsor a commission devoted to folklore.[22] While the resulting body was officially under the auspices of both the institute and the society, the former quickly took the lead in the commission's work and the partnership soon deteriorated.[23]

In October the commission developed a work plan and held its first meeting, and the following month it published its first questionnaire, on Yiddish legends.[24] By December it had already received donations of material from Vilna and Warsaw, as well as from smaller cities in Poland and from as far away as Tel Aviv.[25] Recognizing the need to provide guidelines for its volunteers, none of whom had any training in ethnographic fieldwork, as early as November 1925 the commission published a brief set of instructions in the *Yedies*. In 1929 YIVO brought out *Vos iz azoyns yidishe etnografye?* [Just What is Jewish Ethnography?], its first full explanation of the discipline for its supporters.[26]

As the commission continued to print appeals in the *Yedies* its network of zamlers grew rapidly, exceeding all expectations. By March 1926, 100 individuals had sent in 3,000 items of folklore.[27] The institute reported that new collectors were appearing daily and that "in many cities and shtetls we have devoted correspondents who send us mountains of material, above all for the Ethnographic Commission."[28] By September of that year 210 zamlers had donated 10,000 items, of which only 6,000 had been catalogued.[29] By the time of the institute's second anniversary supporters had organized 24 *zamlerkrayzn* [collectors' circles] in Poland alone and more material was still arriving daily.[30] In 1929 there were zamlerkrayzn in 163 cities, 139 of them in Poland, and the commission had accessioned 50,000 items of folklore.[31]

The correspondence of the zamlers conveys a palpable sense of their enthusiasm for their work.[32] One published a detective-like account of his pursuit of materials. Hearing of a valuable document in a neighboring town, he wrote, "My fantasies stir, I burn with impatience and dream all of the time of the treasure. I write to Vilna about it and the Vilna friends, although at other times not so nimble with the pen, don't leave me alone, constantly assault me with letters …" While in this case the "treasure" came to naught, on another occasion the author succeeded in acquiring a rare book for the institute.[33] A teacher

in Kaunas explained that the call of the Ethnographic Commission "awakened the neglected folklore collector in me." As soon as the school year ended, he recounted, he would "travel to a small shtetl and there put myself entirely in the service of the Ethnographic Commission of the Yiddish Scientific Institute."[34] A man from Grodno wrote, "it's so good and joyful in my heart to see the fruits of our labor. Not even three months have passed, and what results! Here we are surrounded with a circle of young colleagues who poke and rummage everywhere and in every corner."[35]

The An-ski Zamlerkrayz in Warsaw was formed in October 1926 by a dozen friends who "by accident and just from love of old moldy books" already collected rare printed items and folklore as a hobby. YIVO's creation spurred them to organize themselves formally and to systematize their efforts.[36] Although the circle could not always afford to mail its material to Vilna, it managed to publish at least five issues of its own newsletter, *Folklorist*.[37] In 1929 the Warsaw Friends of YIVO arranged office space for the group and provided it with a camera for its terminological work.[38]

As the experience of the An-ski Zamlerkrayz suggests, the dedication of the zamlers was all the more remarkable in light of the financial and other hardships that they faced. The *Yedies* noted collection efforts in Palestine carried out by "devoted zamlers who saved their last pennies in order to help the work of YIVO. People who live in great need nevertheless manage to send regularly very heavy packages with various materials …"[39] Collectors often asked to borrow publications that they could not afford to purchase and the institute had to warn that many shipments arrived in Vilna with insufficient postage.[40] Correspondents sometimes requested financial assistance, and despite its own lack of resources the institute usually tried to help in a modest way. In 1928 Chaim Sheskin, a zamler in Tel Aviv, explained that he had paid a dollar to an informant, a Yemenite Jew who performed the ceremony of *opsherenish*. "As my material situation is not good and it is difficult for me to bear the burden of the expenses … *I am forced* against my will to ask you to take part in the expense," he wrote. "I assure you that if my material situation were better I would not ask this."[41] The commission replied that it would send him a dollar but warned that it could not do so regularly.[42] When one correspondent wrote of his financial difficulties, the commission replied that it could not pay him for his work but nevertheless enclosed two stamps for his next shipment.[43] On another occasion it helped a leading zamler, Berl Verblunski of Grodno, purchase a bicycle so that he could travel from town to town to gather material.[44]

In addition to their poverty, the zamlers sometimes faced real dangers. As early as 1925 some began asking for certificates to help persuade those in authority to grant them access to materials.[45] One correspondent requested a stamp with the name of the institute since he feared the police.[46] Such concerns were not unwarranted. A zamler who was discovered in possession of publications critical of the Polish government was sentenced to two years in jail. The

sentence was overturned on appeal when his lawyer explained that "collecting material for the Scientific Institute in Vilna is very important work and very useful for the development of modern culture."[47]

While the institute's leaders often spoke of their connection to the broad masses, it was in the zamler phenomenon that the bond between the institute and the folk found its most concrete expression. Through the widespread popularity of its collection initiatives YIVO was able to enlist "the rank and file of the Jewish people" in its work, as one supporter put it.[48] The *Yedies* wrote that "hundreds of people of the folk from all corners of the earth carry sand and bricks for the building [of YIVO]. These devoted friends, who … quickly set to work at the first call, deserve the greatest part of [the credit for] the [institute's] accomplishments up to now."[49] A report published on YIVO's second anniversary noted, "Where else could one find another institute with purely scholarly tasks that hundreds and hundreds of common people, very often without jobs or bread, build with love and devotion?"[50] With the work of the "devoted saintly [*lamed-vovnike*] zamlers," as the press put it, YIVO "had created a true movement of the folk."[51]

The institute assumed that affiliates of the Yiddish schools, who had elsewhere taken the lead in working for YIVO, would be the core of its zamler network. It directed its initial appeal especially to "teachers and youth" such as those at the Yiddish gymnasium in Vilkomir, whom Weinreich invited in the fall of 1925 to participate in collection efforts.[52] Although they often played a significant role, the institute expressed surprise and frustration that pedagogues, pupils, and intellectuals were not more active in this regard. Of the twelve original members of the An-ski Zamlerkrayz, for example, four were students and the rest workers with little or no formal education.[53] The zamlerkrayz in Kołomyja complained that most of its members were workers and that the local intellectuals had no interest in its activities.[54] "The network of Yiddish schools is still small and where there are schools, our teachers do little for the cause. Both the teachers and the intellectuals still lack the necessary understanding of this work," the *Yedies* noted, concluding that the majority of zamlers were "simple people of the folk."[55] A 1929 survey bore out this impression, for it reported that students and teachers together comprised just less than a quarter of the zamlers, while manual laborers and merchants together made up over a third.[56]

Ironically, while the lack of response from Yiddish school activists and intellectuals may have disappointed YIVO's leaders, it bolstered their claim that the zamlers represented a true grassroots movement. A Warsaw paper wrote that "ninety-nine percent" of the institute's supporters were "simple, barely educated or entirely uneducated workers" who through their collection activities "wring out of their lives of hunger a wonderful crown of Yiddish scholarship."[57] Despite the element of exaggeration in such formulations, it is clear that thousands of zamlers believed that their efforts made a significant contribution to a great cultural undertaking. As Shtif wrote in March 1926,

"Moving letters arrive from workers, from people of the folk who want to help and who truly do help, for example with folklore collections, with terminology; they consider the institute their own cause …"[58] The *Yedies* described the collectors as "people of the folk in general who are close to the modern Yiddish cultural movement and who are happy that also they can lay a stone for the great edifice."[59] By taking part in YIVO's work, ordinary men and women felt that they could transcend the often bleak conditions of their daily existence. A zamler in Grodno "from the poor classes, where our parents only let us bend our necks," wrote to express his "joy that we can do something to repay Yiddish literature for the tenderness and comfort it brings us in our difficult lives." A correspondent from Piosk, Poland, sent 300 proverbs with a letter: "With joy I proclaim myself a porter of clay, sand, and brick for the palace of the folk called the Yiddish Scientific Institute."[60]

Proud of their contributions to advancing YIVO's mission, supporters expected a certain recognition in return. When eight unemployed zamlers in Warsaw were turned away from a talk by Zalman Reisen because they could not afford to purchase tickets, they wrote to the YIVO office about the offense. "We, who more than once saved our last pennies to send materials to Vilna or to buy a few pamphlets for the institute – we did not expect such treatment," they complained, adding that such behavior insulted not only "our honor … but the honor of – the Yiddish Scientific Institute!"[61] Conscious of the zamlers' sensibilities, YIVO was quick to assure them of the value of their work. As the Ethnographic Commission wrote in an appeal, "Everything is important for us: the smallest proverb, the smallest custom.… Everyone who holds Yiddish culture dear can help us."[62]

To show its appreciation the institute originally promised that all material received would be acknowledged in the *Yedies*, but this became impractical as its quantity grew. When Tcherikower suggested omitting the list of donors' names, the Vilna office responded that this information "creates a firm connection between the zamlers and the sections" and that the "the so-called dry receipts encourage the zamlers … One of the zamlers said explicitly, 'The *Yedies* reads like a novel.'"[63] At a December 1926 meeting, Weinreich and staff member Moyshe Shor argued that the lists were of great significance. Seeing their names in print strengthened supporters' ties to the institute, they maintained, which had to be nurtured at this early stage of YIVO's work.[64] When YIVO announced a few months later that it could no longer include all such names it encountered many protests.[65]

To recognize the work of the zamlers, many of whom were anxious to see their donations in print, the Ethnographic Commission began discussing a publication as early as 1926 and two years later announced plans for a volume based on its collections.[66] When *Yidisher folklor* [Yiddish Folklore] finally appeared in 1938, it included the names of 311 individuals and groups who had provided the published material.[67] YIVO naturally wished to cultivate the zamlers, for their work truly enabled the institute to create scholarship from

the folk. Moreover, by demonstrating the devotion of ordinary Jews to the institute, it made manifest YIVO's abstract claim that Yiddish scholarship was being created for the folk. YIVO leaders and supporters alike saw the zamlers as the ultimate expression of the institute's ties to the Jewish public.

Balancing Past and Present

Unlike Zionism, which emphasized the remaking of Jewish society in a new geographic center, Diaspora Nationalism was rooted in a millennium of Jewish life in Europe and of Jewish creativity in Yiddish. At the same time, it sought to fundamentally reformulate Jewish identity in modern, secular terms. Thus one of the central tensions in YIVO's work – as in Diaspora Nationalism as a whole – was the effort to balance historical and current concerns. From the beginning, it set out to answer both Dubnow's call to preserve Jewish history and Borochov's mandate to create a scholarship engaged in the issues of the day. In the Vilna Theses, Weinreich divided the future projects of the Philological Section into those pertaining to the past, such as the history of Old Yiddish literature, and the present, such as the dialectology of the contemporary language.[68]

The interest in the legacy of Yiddish-speaking Jewry came to the fore in the work of the Ethnographic Commission, which viewed the collection of folklore largely as an effort to document a way of life on the verge of disappearing. In January 1926 it published a "fervent appeal" that began, "*Help us gather together the treasures of Jewish folk creativity!*" It went on to portray traditional folkways in danger of extinction:

> In cities and shtetls throughout the entire world, wherever the Yiddish language lives, wherever Yiddish song rings out, wherever Yiddish stories are still told and Yiddish customs are not yet pushed aside, there are scattered the treasures of our folk creativity. Don't let them be lost!
>
> Gather them together, these remnants of the possessions that past generations have left us as an inheritance.[69]

A similar note was struck by Hirsz Abramowicz. Writing in the Vilna *Tog*, he argued that such efforts were especially pressing now, when "the old way of life is disappearing under the pressure of new forms of life." Abramowicz lamented that Jews had been slow to realize this danger and thus lagged in recording their own heritage. "The work is very pressing and important. Lose no time," he urged his readers.[70]

The wording of many of the commission's questionnaires reflected this sense of urgency about an endangered legacy. The one on folktales began, "Let's listen to what the folk tells in the old Jewish homes, in the Jewish alleyways of various cities and provincial shtetls." It advised readers to seek out stories that "grandmothers still know how to tell of years gone by" and that are related "in the *kloyzn* [prayer rooms] near a religious book or near the oven where the

simple people sit."[71] A survey on Purim began, "Old-timers say Purim isn't like it used to be," and went on to state the importance of recording what remained of fading customs.[72] Even a questionnaire on a more recent topic, the years of World War I, raised the specter of imminent loss when it encouraged zamlers to gather material while "it is fresh in our memories."[73]

It was no coincidence that the leaders of the Ethnographic Commission named "old Jewish homes," "provincial shtetls," and "prayer rooms" as loci of pristine folkways. They were concerned with preserving the remnants of a traditional way of life, which they equated with Jewish society before the impact of modernization, urbanization, and secularization. Thus, the elderly, the rural, and the religious were intermingled in their minds as signifiers of a vanishing past. This approach, however, betrayed the secular biases of the institute's founders. Many of the commission's questionnaires focused on customs rooted in religious observance, especially since they were organized around the annual cycle of Jewish holidays.[74] YIVO leaders tended to view these as dying remnants of an obsolete way of life. As one scholar has noted, by asking, "Does this custom still exist?" the commission created the impression that the practice in question was in danger of extinction even when referring to traditions that were still widespread.[75]

While the Ethnographic Commission saw its object of study as rooted in the past, other divisions of the Philological Section framed their work in more presentist terms. As we have seen the Bibliographic Commission's initial appeal in 1926 emphasized current publications, although it also asked in passing for flyers, posters, and other items with a "special cultural-historical worth."[76] By June of that year zamlers had sent in more than one thousand older items such as posters and newspapers. Bowing to this reality, the commission appealed for more historic material of all kinds.[77] In 1927 the renamed Bibliographic Center, now independent of the Philological Section, resolved to gather publications solely from the current year. At the same time, the YIVO Library and Archives were established as separate entities charged with collecting older materials.[78] In this way, the commission's original mission to document the Jewish present was broadened to include as well the Jewish past. Yet as another writer has noted, the fact that the Library and Archives arose with so little planning shows both the centrality of zamling – and hence its integration into YIVO's four main research sections – and the institute's focus on contemporary rather than historical source material.[79]

The Terminological Commission began its activity in October 1925 under the leadership of Abraham Golomb.[80] By the following spring it had established several subcommissions for geography, nature, and other fields and collected about 1,850 terms.[81] Its pace of work later slowed, however; members complained in 1927 and 1928 that it was barely active because it lacked a paid staff.[82] Still, by 1929 it had gathered approximately 6,000 items.[83] Like the Ethnographic Commission, the Terminological Commission drew its data from the common people, singling out such presumed bearers of tradition as

craftsmen and grandmothers as potential informants. Yet its work was not merely descriptive also but prescriptive, as it assumed the authority to set standards for contemporary users of the language. In establishing preferred vocabulary it gave primacy to terms drawn from the *folkshprakh* [language of the people], thus elevating above all the stature of the ordinary Yiddish speaker.[84]

With its language planning work the Terminological Commission sought not only to document and promote folk culture but also to address the practical needs of the Jewish public. Organizations such as ORT and OSE approached the commission on their own initiative, asking it to provide suitable vocabulary for their respective fields of vocational training and public health.[85] The press would also benefit from the commission's work if Yiddish writers would adopt approved terminology, wrote Golomb. In this case as in many others, the institute's initiatives were closely connected to the Yiddish schools.[86] In their hectic first days the schools could not be particular about the vocabulary they employed, the commission noted. As they expanded their work, the time had come to rectify this situation by providing a standard lexicon for the various subjects taught in Yiddish-speaking classrooms.[87] In this way, the Terminological Commission had the potential to address the immediate needs of all organizations conducting their work in Yiddish.

This desire to treat the current concerns of the broad public was also the impetus for the creation of the Linguistic Commission. At a June 1926 meeting Weinreich reiterated his call, first expressed in the Vilna Theses, for a "Language Commission that would fill the normative functions of the Yiddish language." Reisen concurred, stating that such "practical tasks" were the most pressing concern of the Philological Section.[88] A year later the institute resolved to found a Linguistic Commission to deal with issues of proper usage as well as a monthly journal for "the questions of practical language knowledge."[89] This body finally came into being and sent out its first questionnaire in the summer of 1928.[90] The plan for a popular journal took another decade to be realized, when *Yidish far ale* [Yiddish for All] began appearing under the editorship of Noah Prylucki.

In some cases the mandate for contemporary relevance led the Philological Section into politically charged terrain. Of all the section's language planning initiatives, it was the effort to standardize Yiddish spelling that proved the most contentious. In particular, controversy surrounded the question of introducing the phonetic spelling of words of Hebrew and Aramaic origin, known as the *loshn-koydesh* [holy tongue] component, a change that had been instituted in 1920 in the Soviet Union.[91] In 1927 the institute resolved to create an Orthographic Commission to formulate spelling rules and consider publishing an "orthographic dictionary" in conjunction with TSYSHO.[92] The following year Josef Czernichow reiterated the need for such a project, calling it the most pressing task before YIVO. Reisen disagreed, arguing that the time was not yet ripe to promulgate spelling reforms "because even now the institute is still not

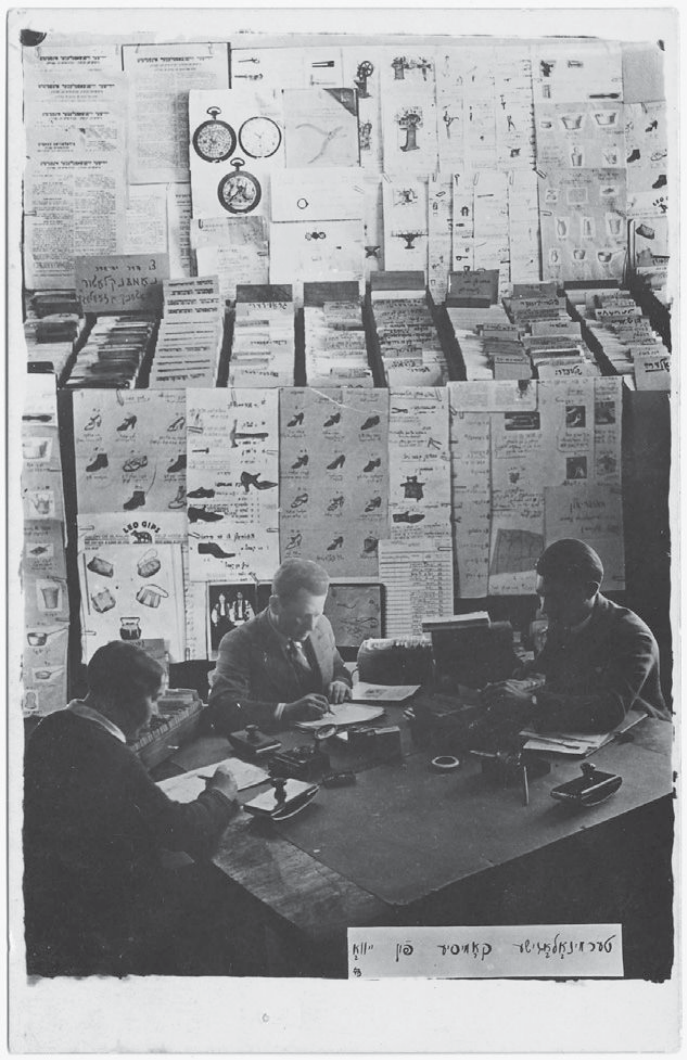


FIGURE 4. Members of the Terminological Commission at work in a montage by Moshe Vorobeichic (Raviv), early 1930s. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Used by permission of the Raviv family.

popular enough that it could influence everyone to submit [to its orthographic rules]." He added that even in the Soviet Union, where the government could simply decree such matters, the question was controversial.[93] Reisen's comments were prescient, for when the institute finally took up the question of orthography in the 1930s it generated extensive debate.

The Philological Section's effort to balance past and present was nowhere clearer than in its treatment of Yiddish literature. As Yiddish scholars first set out to establish their field as an independent area of study, they sought to situate their work by examining the origins of oral and written Yiddish culture. The interest in Old Yiddish literature was also part of the Diaspora Nationalist effort to boost the *yikhes* [lineage] of the language by demonstrating that it was not an improvised jargon but a tongue with a literary tradition extending back many hundreds of years. Several YIVO founders such as Shtif and Weinreich originally concentrated their attention on the premodern period, which was the subject of their earliest research. In this case, examining centuries-old texts could have powerful contemporary implications.[94]

In 1928 the institute considered founding a division devoted to modern Yiddish literature. Those in favor argued that it would attract "literati" to the institute and answer complaints that YIVO focused too much on writing from earlier periods. The institute's leaders approved the proposal but took no action.[95] Two years later Tcherikower called once again for the creation of a Literature Commission, yet such a body never came into being.[96] Discussion of the issue continued into the following decade, and as late as 1940 students at YIVO complained that their course of study lacked attention to contemporary belletristic writing.[97]

At the time of YIVO's founding, modern Yiddish literature was at the height of its flowering and many of its greatest talents were producing new work. Yet strikingly, in the 1920s the institute did not produce a single analytical article on a Yiddish writer active in the interwar period.[98] In fact, despite their ambivalent attitude to the Haskalah, YIVO's literary scholars published more frequently on that period than on any other.[99] Perhaps it was the very vitality of interwar Yiddish culture that discouraged critical attention as compared to the more distant Haskalah period. The institute's affiliates may have felt that they lacked the necessary distance to assess contemporary prose and poetry. Moreover, YIVO sought to establish itself as the final arbiter in matters of Yiddish language, yet as Reisen noted, its authority was still on shaky ground. As the institute worked to broaden its influence, it may have been reluctant to pass negative judgment on any living writer and thus jeopardize the goodwill of a segment of the Yiddish literary world.

While YIVO was still uncertain of its clout in the wider cultural sphere, its publications demonstrated the growth of the Yiddish academic community. By March 1926 the Philological Section had produced the institute's first scholarly publication, volume one of *Filologishe shriftn* [Philological Writings], also known as the *Landau Book* in honor of Yiddish philologist Dr. Alfred Landau. The section planned the book as a direct continuation of *Yidishe filologye*; indeed, it was able to publish so quickly because most of the articles had been previously submitted to the earlier journal. *Filologishe shriftn* was also conceived as the intellectual heir of the *Pinkes*, whose physical format it

deliberately duplicated.[100] While the pioneering *Pinkes* had laid the groundwork, the *Yedies* wrote, the *Landau Book* took the next step in developing the field.[101] One reviewer wrote that whereas the *Pinkes* was exceptional for its time, the *Landau Book* was "a product of a period that is becoming increasingly rich in living Yiddish scholarship."[102]

The section's leaders hoped that the regular appearance of *Filologishe shriftn* would show that their efforts had struck deep roots. They seemed vindicated with the relatively quick appearance of a second volume in January 1928.[103] Some authors responded to points made in the *Landau Book*, showing the beginning of the constructive dialogue among Yiddish scholars that YIVO's founders had envisioned. The editors noted proudly that many contributors were publishing in Yiddish for the first time, proving that "with the cultural ascent of Eastern Jewry the center of gravity of Yiddish research transferred to the Yiddish language."[104] They neglected to highlight, however, that nine of the articles were translated from other tongues, seven from German. With their next publication a year later the editors announced optimistically that the preparatory period of "gathering strength" had come to a close and the Philological Section was now ready to begin its mature work, yet the third volume of *Filologishe shriftn* proved to be the last.[105]

Of all of the institute's divisions the Historical Section was naturally most concerned with preserving the past, but its work equally shows the strength of the conviction that Yiddish scholarship should be relevant to the present. The founding meeting of the section took place on October 31, 1925, in the Berlin apartment of Simon Dubnow.[106] Dubnow played an important symbolic role by agreeing to host and chair the gathering but declined the offer to head the section. Citing his preoccupation with his own writing, he suggested turning to "our friends among the younger generation."[107] Leadership was assumed instead by Dubnow's friend Elias Tcherikower, who outlined future activities including surveying archival sources, compiling bibliographies, publishing a volume on Jewish history, and holding public lectures. The section agreed to invite the participation of a number of prominent scholars, including the Warsaw-based historians Majer Bałaban, Ignacy Schipper, and Moses Schorr as well as Saul Ginsburg, Israel Sosis, and Israel Zinberg in the Soviet Union.[108] It met again at Dubnow's home in April 1926, by which time it had sponsored a successful public lecture and begun to solicit material for its first publication.[109] Tcherikower complained, however, that only part of the initial plan had been realized because of limited funds.[110]

From the first Tcherikower and the Organizational Committee agreed that the section should emphasize *tsayt-geshikhte* [contemporary history] because it is "more closely tied to present Jewish realities."[111] As the *Yedies* wrote, "We've lived long enough with the thought that only that which carries the rust of centuries is important and great."[112] When Jacob Shatzky opposed studies of World War I, arguing that the event was too recent to be dealt with as history,[113]

Tcherikower responded that historical work was a question of one's approach to a topic rather than the date of the topic itself:

> I believe that it is a mistake [to hold] that history means only that which is centuries or many decades old. … We must carry out our work with a scholarly *method*, but not ban periods only because they are not very old. It is apparent that our institute is closely connected with the problems of our practical reality, and there in fact lies its strength.

Tcherikower admitted that studying truly contemporary events would be inappropriate and proposed "the period of war and revolution" as the most recent topic to fall within the section's domain. He added that the years before World War I were certainly ripe for historical treatment, as they were "for us already almost as much history as the history of the Haskalah."[114] This comment strikingly reflects the rapid changes in Jewish life in this period as well as Tcherikower's scholarly approach. Ultimately, the section defined its primary field of inquiry as the social, political, and cultural history of Jews in Eastern Europe in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries.[115]

Most of Tcherikower's energy in these years was spent editing the section's first publication, on which he began work in spring 1926. The American Section agreed to provide major funding for the project, in part because Shatzky believed that publishing was a necessary precondition to winning support in the United States.[116] This arrangement, however, led to prolonged conflict between fellow historians Tcherikower and Shatzky, as the project was delayed both by financial difficulties and by Tcherikower's lack of time to devote to the work.[117] When it finally appeared as the first volume of *Historishe shriftn* [Historical Writings] in August 1929, Tcherikower wrote jubilantly to Lestschinsky that he was unsure if he would be able to lift the weighty tome.[118] Despite the section's decision to emphasize relatively recent events, more than half of the publication's material pertained to periods prior to the nineteenth century, including several articles on the Middle Ages. Like the interest of the Philological Section in Old Yiddish literature, this reflected the effort to ground YIVO's research on less distant themes in a historical context. Tcherikower justified this chronological sweep as the era in which "there lies buried the roots of the living Jewish present."[119]

In his introduction Tcherikower noted that the book was the first of its kind in Yiddish. Yet unlike other areas of YIVO's research, Jewish historiography was "not virgin territory that still awaits the first iron plough" since much work had already been done in Russian and Polish. In fact, Tcherikower drew on the talents of historians such as Bałaban and Schipper, both of whom published in *Historishe shriftn*, despite YIVO's uneasy relationship with scholars working in Polish.[120] Yet precisely because the field had already been explored in other languages, Tcherikower argued, the task of the Historical Section was to develop a distinctive approach rooted in the folk and its tongue: "The language itself in which we work [and] the role that Yiddish plays in our social and cultural life, as a product and simultaneously a stimulus of our culture of

the masses, spurs on new themes, new evaluations, and even new sources of material."[121]

When the *Historishe shriftn* appeared Shatzky praised the final product, although he did not neglect to raise a few criticisms as well.[122] Shatzky's comments were notable for their vehemence and personal tone; nevertheless, they reflected a real debate about the scope of the section's work. While angrily defending his choices as editor, Tcherikower acceded to Shatzky's charge that not all the articles were "pure" history.[123] In fact, since the institute was often pioneering new fields of research, its disciplinary boundaries were rather porous and pieces submitted to one section for publication were sometimes forwarded to another deemed more appropriate. For example, the Vilna office debated which sections should have responsibility for the study of literary and economic history.[124] There was also disagreement over whether the *Shriftn* should publish primary sources such as historical documents, memoirs, and bibliography as well as analytical articles. In keeping with his stress on zamling Tcherikower favored including primary sources, although most members of the Organizational Committee did not.[125] Shatzky managed to disagree with everyone, supporting the inclusion of bibliography but opposing memoirs or documents.[126] In the end, the finished volume contained a great deal of archival material and some bibliography as well as analytical articles.

Despite this significant achievement, the section's activity in Berlin was sporadic. This was due in part to Tcherikower's sojourn in Paris in 1926–1927, where he participated in the legal defense of Sholem Schwarzbard, as well as his preoccupation with his work for the aid organization Emigdirect.[127] Dubnow had already signaled his unwillingness to shoulder day-to-day administrative work. The section made periodic efforts to renew its activities but admitted that such attempts were doomed because "there was no circle of people that could devote themselves to the work" in Tcherikower's absence.[128]

A solution to this dilemma emerged from Warsaw, where the section's founding was greeted with enthusiasm by a group of students among whom "there awakened the desire to research the history of the Jews in Poland."[129] The leader of this cohort was Emanuel Ringelblum, who had served on the committee to promote YIVO formed at the Second School Convention of TSYSHO in April 1925.[130] In March 1926 Ringelblum contacted YIVO, explaining that in 1923 he had organized a Seminar for Jewish History at the Jewish Academic Home in Warsaw. This seminar, led by Bałaban and Schipper, provided an opportunity to explore Jewish history in a university setting despite "the mood that reigns among Jewish academics (apathy, backwardness, etc.), the [poor Polish-Jewish] relations in the Polish universities, [and] the lack of experienced teachers." The participants, who also included Raphael Mahler and Jacob Berman, now looked eagerly to the Historical Section as an institutional base for their work and declared their readiness to collaborate with YIVO.[131] For their part, YIVO leaders eagerly greeted the initiative of the Warsaw students. At the time of Ringelblum's letter the Warsaw seminar members were preparing the first issue

FIGURE 5. Members of the Historical Section at the World Convention, 1935. Front row, fourth, fifth, and eighth from left: Elias Tcherikower, Simon Dubnow, and Jacob Shatzky. Back row, second and seventh from left: Emanuel Ringelblum and Raphael Mahler. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

of their journal *Yunger historiker* [Young Historian].[132] Jacob Lestschinsky wrote of the "welcome appearance" of this publication, "Yiddish is becoming the language of Jewish scholarship. This is truly the finger of God!"[133] By the time the second issue of the journal appeared in 1929, its subtitle noted the seminar's affiliation with YIVO.[134]

While Tcherikower was preoccupied in Berlin and Paris, Ringelblum and the other members of the Seminar for Jewish History were anxious to begin their research and writing projects. In the fall of 1926 the institute's Vilna leadership created a Historical Commission in Vilna, where Ringelblum had taken a teaching position.[135] This body could operate independently of Tcherikower's direct control.[136] This situation created tensions between the Historical Section, where Tcherikower sought to maintain his authority, and the Historical Commission, where Ringelblum wished to work with a minimum of bureaucratic oversight. In December 1926 Ringelblum proposed creating an autonomous Vilna-based commission that would deal solely with Polish-Jewish history. Although Reisen and Weinreich opposed the plan the Organizational Committee agreed to found such a body, giving the Historical Section responsibility for work on all other countries.[137] The section felt the need to periodically reassert its authority over the commission, which relocated to Warsaw when Ringelblum returned to the Polish capital.[138] For example, in 1929 the renamed Warsaw Historical Commission proposed creating a journal

of its own devoted to Polish-Jewish history and reiterated its plan even when faced with opposition from the YIVO leadership.[139] Following this episode the Historical Section drew up guidelines to clarify its relationship to the commission that were approved by both groups.[140]

While the disagreements between the section and the commission were largely rooted in issues of personality and territory, they also reflected greater tensions within Yiddish scholarship of the period. There was a certain gap between the cohort of scholars who founded the institute and the younger Warsaw-based group. Most of the older generation of Jewish historians affiliated with the Historical Section were autodidacts, a reflection of the period in which they had received their education.[141] In contrast, the members of the seminar had graduate-level training in Jewish history, however haphazard, and both Ringelblum and Mahler held doctoral degrees. As others have noted, most also hailed from Galicia and were shaped by its more liberal climate as compared to the YIVO founders' origins in the Russian Empire.[142] In addition, the historians in Berlin were East European émigrés without established roots there, a deficiency of which YIVO's leaders were acutely aware. This contrasted with the more active Warsaw colleagues, who were deeply grounded in their Polish setting.

Nevertheless, both groups largely shared a vision of their tasks as historians. In an article in the first issue of *Yunger historiker,* Ringelblum described the dilemmas of the aspiring Jewish academic in terms remarkably similar to those Shtif used in the memorandum. He lamented the lack of opportunities for young scholars to receive systematic training and for mature scholars to publish and make a living.[143] In the same publication, Jacob Berman discussed his vision of the Historical Section's work in terms of the primacy of collecting. Like Tcherikower, he argued that the section's first task should first be to sponsor monographs based on archival documents and critical editions of historical sources; only later would scholars be ready to use the assembled material to produce synthetic studies.[144]

Both also felt a sense of urgency in preserving an endangered legacy. This sentiment, so evident in the appeals of the Ethnographic Commission, was expressed as well in the Historical Section's questionnaires. The first, published in the *Yedies* in 1927, clearly echoed Dubnow's call of 1891:

> The history of Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe is still far from completely researched, and a whole range of materials that can have a first-class significance for Jewish history wander rootless and dispersed and do not reach the hands of Jewish historians and scholars of culture.

The questionnaire cited the many "treasures" lost during the years of World War I and concluded, "It is the duty of the Jewish public to collect and protect from destruction that which remains." It asked the institute's zamlers to gather material on their hometowns and to record any historical documents to be found there.[145] The following issue of the *Yedies* contained instructions for

zamlers on copying *pinkeysim* [communal record books] and other historical documents.[146]

The members of the Warsaw Historical Commission, with their interest in local history, showed a particular concern with the documentation and preservation of historic artifacts. This led it to create the Central Commission to Research Jewish Antiquities in Poland.[147] The body organized a course where Bałaban, Schipper, and the architect Szymon Zajczyk lectured to twenty-five participants on conservation, thus drawing on the established interest of senior scholars in this area.[148] It later carried out an expedition to Lublin where Raphael Mahler and two architects visited an old study house and cemetery to document rare books, ritual art, and significant gravestones.[149] It planned further expeditions, but their expense precluded any more such undertakings.[150] In the 1930s the commission revived its work with greater success, as its effort to collect pinkeysim finally bore fruit.

Scholarship for the People

Both the members of the Historical Section and Commission shared not only a commitment to documenting the past but also to speaking to the folk and its current concerns. Their trajectories illustrate both the possibilities and limits of a scholarship engaged with the Jewish public. When Tcherikower stated that he preferred topics of recent vintage, one reason he cited was their ability to attract "our broader cultural circles."[151] He noted that the *Historishe shriftn* devoted special attention to the history of the labor movement and the Yiddish language, subjects that resonated with contemporary audiences.[152] Such themes commanded popular interest because they reflected the experiences not only of elites but also of ordinary Jews. At a 1929 meeting, the Bundist leader Franz Kursky argued that the section should focus on Eastern Europe and on the recent past because with such topics the institute "connected itself to the *masses of the folk* and their culture, and it must not make any plans that are far from life." Dubnow concurred, stating that as a matter of scholarly methodology, "The Wissenschaft des Judentums researches Judaism, we – the folk."[153] Jacob Berman similarly argued for making historical work broadly relevant. "We must not seal ourselves within the four walls of our specialized research. We must have constant contact with the broad creative masses," he wrote.[154]

In addition to choosing subject matter that appealed to the folk, to ensure that the folk benefited from the work done on its behalf, the institute also needed to disseminate its scholarship widely. Thus Dubnow and Tcherikower proposed projects that would serve a popular as well as an academic audience, such as a four-volume survey of Jewish history that could be used as a textbook in Yiddish schools as well as a tool for self-education.[155] Berman concurred on the need to sponsor "popular historical literature." "Popularization

is a difficult and responsible task," he wrote, which now fell on the shoulders of the institute.[156] In fact, as in some other areas of YIVO's work, these plans were much discussed but never realized.

While popular publications were often delayed but supported in principle, more contentious was the relationship between scholarship and public service. While Tcherikower engaged in a variety of forms of communal activity – activity that frequently distracted him from YIVO business – he kept this largely separate from his scholarly career. The young Warsaw historians, by contrast, were explicit about their larger role within the Jewish community.[157] In the first issue of *Yunger historiker*, Ringelblum described himself and his colleagues as "doing communal work, a work that intends not simply to make known the Jewish past but which will serve as a support in the struggle that the Jewish community is carrying out in Poland for its national and social liberation." He cited as an example the ability of Jewish scholars to contribute to the improvement of Polish-Jewish relations: "When the Jewish academic presents completely objective work – even about the distant past – before Polish academics [and] future high school teachers, he thereby brings the Jewish and Polish communities closer together."[158]

Moreover, both Ringelblum and Mahler brought their political views to bear on their scholarly work. Both were active members of the left wing of Poale Zion, even as they disagreed on how to combine their political commitments and their scholarship.[159] Ringelblum insisted upon the contemporary import of historical research even as he maintained a distinction between his roles as a political activist and a historian. Jacob Berman and his fate, however, demonstrate the porous border between devotion to the folk and overt partisanship. In 1928 Berman joined the Polish Communist Party and the following year the Warsaw Historical Commission objected to his membership, calling him "an opponent in principle of YIVO."[160] As this example demonstrates, popular work, so central to YIVO's mission, was in practice often closely bound up with the thorny issue of political engagement.

All divisions of the institute had to balance the desire to address issues of broad concern with upholding their scholarly standards, yet this tension was at the very center of the Economic-Statistical Section's mandate. In this period, Zionists and Diaspora Nationalists argued over the preferred destination for Jewish migration, while socialists and nonsocialists debated the causes of widespread antisemitism and Jewish impoverishment. In dealing with such charged questions the section could hardly avoid venturing into highly politicized terrain. Moreover, section head Jacob Lestschinsky also served as the Berlin bureau chief of the *Forverts* and so was necessarily involved in discussions of such timely issues in the popular press.[161]

The Economic-Statistical Section composed a memorandum outlining its tasks in early 1926 and held its first meeting in Berlin on June 24.[162] Similar to the plans set forth by other sections, it hoped to establish a network of

individual and organizational supporters to collect economic and demographic data from government offices, *kehillahs* [Jewish communal authorities], and other sources; to amass a library and archive of such material; and to disseminate information to interested scholars and groups as well as to the press. The members of the Economic-Statistical Section included many of those affiliated with the earlier *Bleter far idisher demografye, statistik, un ekonomik*, which was also located in Berlin and which gave its archives to the newly founded section.[163] Indeed, when the section published its findings in its own series of the institute's *Shriftn,* the first volume of which appeared in 1928 and the second in 1932, it explicitly described the new journal as the successor to the *Bleter*. [164]

The members of the section did not shy away from addressing pressing questions, stating at the outset that "the priority at the present time must be research about current problems of Jewish life in various countries."[165] Yet from the start of their work they were also conscious of the potential for controversy. This was particularly true in Vilna, where such concerns were more immediate than in the émigré community of Berlin. At their first meeting to discuss Shtif's memorandum, we may recall, supporters in Vilna suggested eliminating the Economic-Statistical Section altogether, fearing that its work could not be sufficiently objective. Once the section was founded they warned their Berlin colleagues, "Economic questions are often connected to a certain political orientation, and one must avoid giving the publications of our institute any clear political orientation. We ask you to be very careful with work that touches on ticklish questions …"[166]

Despite such caveats the section did not shun politically sensitive projects, such as organizing a survey of several thousand young Jewish workers through the Bundist youth organization Tsukunft.[167] Nor did Lestschinsky later reject a contribution from New York's Jewish Socialist Farband.[168] Yet at the same time ongoing discussions bespoke a continuing uncertainty about the parameters of the section's work. When Lestschinsky planned a visit to Poland in 1926 to gather current data on selected Jewish communities, the *Yedies* felt the need to assure its readers that his methodology would be "absolutely objective and scholarly."[169] Three years later, Nokhem Gergel stated that the section should devote more attention to the "living present [and] current material and problems" such as the economic future of the Jewish masses. Boris Brutskus objected, arguing that it would be difficult to research such topics in a dispassionate manner, but Ben-Adir sided with Gergel. Since "the concept [of] scholarship is relative and elastic," he stated, "one can also have in mind the current living moment," but added that such work must of course be "very serious and without political tendencies."[170] Thus concerns about the scope of the Economic-Statistical Section's research persisted even four years after YIVO's founding.

Similar tensions were apparent in discussions of the section's publications. When the first volume of the section's *Shriftn* appeared, like the institute's other

compilations in these years it devoted much attention to historical topics; of the nineteen major articles in the volume eight dealt with periods ranging from antiquity to the mid-nineteenth century. Tcherikower charged that the publication sought to avoid controversy by focusing on historically distant themes. The section members concurred, resolving to limit the number of articles on past periods in future issues.[171] Yet for years they discussed a less academic complement to the *Shriftn* without results. At the time of the section's founding they considered producing a yearbook of current demographic and economic information but decided that such a publication would "not [be] completely in keeping with our scholarly aims."[172] In 1928 Lestschinsky called for the creation of a journal to "serve exclusively the practical need for objective statistical material about Jewish life"[173] and the following year the possibility was again raised of founding such a periodical, this time in conjunction with the vocational training organization ORT. The members of the section debated whether ORT was too closely associated with certain political movements and thus whether this joint venture would compromise the institute's neutrality.[174] Although the section approved the new publishing project, a popular journal was not founded until *Di yidishe ekonomik* [Jewish Economics] finally appeared in 1937.

While the section may have postponed a statistical yearbook because of its sensitive nature, such a publication also demanded greater resources than the institute possessed. Indeed, the Economic-Statistical Section faced particular challenges in obtaining the necessary sources for its work. Like YIVO's other divisions, it relied on the principle of zamling. Yet while a single individual might make a valuable contribution by sending a few proverbs to the Ethnographic Commission or a few books to the Library, obtaining statistically significant information on economic and demographic trends required gathering data on a larger scale. Plans for distributing questionnaires among the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe were limited by the difficulty of soliciting sufficiently detailed responses as well as a lack of funds.[175] The section's leaders lamented that research in their field was particularly backward, since as a stateless nation Jews could not rely on facts and figures systematically collected by governmental bodies. The section itself aspired to fill this gap, but "in the meantime it cannot pretend to such difficult undertakings as independently collecting statistical material or working over raw material from the statistical archives in various governments and countries, because that requires huge financial and organizational resources."[176] Thus the section felt with particular force the dilemmas of developing Yiddish scholarship in the absence of state support.

On the other hand, the members of the section did enjoy one significant advantage: while most of the institute's leaders in Berlin had only limited interaction with the native-born Jewish community, they benefited from extensive contacts with German Jewish scholars and communal organizations. The Economic-Statistical Section not only remained headquartered in Berlin longer than any

other, but several of its affiliates had been associated with the German-language *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden*.[177] In its role as a clearinghouse for current economic and demographic data, it sought the aid of local philanthropic and communal organizations that could provide such particulars. In most instances these groups complied, hoping in turn to benefit from the section's findings. It thus developed relationships with organizations such as the charitable association Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden [Aid Association of German Jews], which turned to the section for statistics on mixed marriages and conversions, and the scholarly Akademie für Wissenschaft des Judentums [Academy for the Science of Judaism], which donated funds to support the section's analysis of the German census of 1925.[178] By 1926 the Organizational Committee noted that the Economic-Statistical Section had established a reputation in Berlin as a reliable source of information on Jewish economics and demography, in the process winning publicity for the institute.[179] The following year the section's research on the size of the Jewish population of Berlin was published in the German Jewish press, sparking debate and familiarizing German Jews with YIVO and its work.[180] Thus whatever support the institute enjoyed in Germany was largely thanks to the work of Lestschinsky and his colleagues.

International groups such as OSE and Emigdirect also pledged to provide information and send representatives to the section, while the Joint Distribution Committee and the Alliance Israélite Universelle cooperated with its requests for material.[181] The section also regularly sent articles based on its work to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, which distributed them to the Jewish press internationally.[182] Meanwhile, Lestschinsky carried on a wide-ranging correspondence with individuals, Jewish organizations, and official bodies throughout Western and Eastern Europe and Palestine including the League of Nations, government offices, and universities.[183] His work for the *Forverts* provided him with important connections as well as a certain amount of clout.

Because of his extensive contacts and the timely nature of his work, Lestschinsky was able to generate funding from organizations such as the Joint specifically for the projects of his section.[184] These successes sometimes created tensions with the main office in Vilna, which felt that his efforts interfered with the fundraising appeals of the institute as a whole. In 1928 Lestschinsky raised money from several relief organizations in Berlin that were interested in receiving statistical information from the section. The Berlin office informed the Vilna leaders that it would keep 40 percent of the funds for the Economic-Statistical Section and 30 percent for the Historical Section, forwarding 30 percent to Vilna. YIVO's main office felt entitled to a greater share but did not quarrel with the unexpected windfall.[185] Thus while the section's focus on contemporary issues raised myriad difficulties, it also opened up possibilities for financial support and dialogue with the wider Jewish world. While it illustrated the dangers of political engagement more than any other division of YIVO, the Economic-Statistical Section also did more to build ties to a broad audience of scholars and communal activists.

The Pedagogical Section held the promise of collaboration with a different constituency, the teachers and students of the Yiddish secular schools. Of the institute's four sections, it was the last to establish its activities on a firm footing. The preliminary conference had resolved that the section be located in Warsaw and Chaim Shloyme Kazdan, a leading figure in the Warsaw Yiddish school system, drafted a work plan that included research on the history of Jewish schools; the methodology of teaching Jewish subjects; and the mental, physical, and linguistic development of the Jewish child.[186] Kazdan's document was not put into effect, however, and the section first met instead in Berlin in the fall of 1925 under the leadership of Roza Simkhovitsh.[187] It adopted an alternate plan composed by Simkhovitsh that stressed compiling existing research on Jewish pedagogy, determining a common agenda and methodology that would encourage objective research, and establishing connections among scholars in the field.[188] Largely absent from Simkhovitsh's agenda was any mention of linking its work to contemporary Jewish educational institutions. The Berlin section did establish some contacts in Western Europe, such as one supporter who attempted to organize Jewish students in several German cities to collect bibliographical data.[189] This project was in keeping with YIVO's early focus on recording sources in each field of its scholarly activity. Yet when the section wrote that Berlin was the best location for pedagogical research because the city "possesses the resources of a great center," it clearly referred to academic resources and not opportunities for collaboration with Jewish students and teachers.[190]

A few months after the section began meeting in Berlin, the institute's Vilna office organized a group to examine pedagogical questions. From the first, these Vilna colleagues imagined their work as closely tied to local educational institutions. In the Vilna Theses, Weinreich and his colleagues had stressed topics with practical applications to "living school work" over theoretical research.[191] In keeping with these priorities, the section's first initiatives in Vilna included appealing to educational activists for assistance and sending a representative to meet with instructors in the Vilna schools.[192] Abraham Golomb, director of the Vilna Teachers Seminary (as well as head of YIVO's Terminological Commission), organized students at his institution to collect bibliography.[193] As we shall see, the varying visions of the section's work mirrored debates about the relative merits of Berlin and Vilna as the institute's headquarters: one city an international hub of scholarship, the other a center of a vibrant Yiddish-speaking folk.

The Berlin and Vilna groups operated simultaneously for several months, then both became inactive. Even during this period of dormancy, however, YIVO maintained its connections to the Yiddish schools, which agreed to provide a monthly subsidy of $25 to the institute and invited Weinreich to speak at a TSYSHO teachers' conference.[194] In July 1927, the institute's leadership decided to reactivate the renamed Psychological-Pedagogical Section. The revived section, whose location was at first undetermined, began meeting in November 1927 under the leadership of Leibush Lehrer of New York, Roza

Simkhovitsh (now living in Warsaw), and Lyuba Konel of Białystok.[195] Yet it held its meetings in Vilna with a membership comprised primarily of individuals active in the Yiddish school system, even as Lehrer became the sole head in 1929.[196] The section now planned questionnaires, a Pedagogical Museum, and a volume of *Shriftn*, which eventually appeared in 1933 under Lehrer's editorship.[197]

From its first meeting in Vilna the section resolved to forge ties with a broad base of students, teachers, and pedagogical scholars throughout the world.[198] It actively sought the involvement of school personnel; for example, eighty-six teachers attended a meeting held at the institute in April 1929.[199] The section also worked with OSE, sending speakers to OSE conferences and planning to analyze that organization's medical records of Jewish children.[200] While its focus remained on the Yiddish secular schools and on Vilna, in 1929 it began an ambitious effort to gather statistics on all existing Jewish educational institutions – including schools, vocational training programs, and orphanages – throughout Eastern Europe and the United States.[201] The section thus stressed projects that would either draw on the existing school network as a source of data or yield findings with immediate application to educational work. As the section stated, its "entire work flows from pedagogical needs. Its goal is not theoretical but practical and utilitarian."[202]

Nevertheless, the Psychological-Pedagogical Section was not immune to the tension between purely academic concerns and the desire to serve the Jewish public. In May 1926 some members of the section proposed creating a "school encyclopedia" and a "handbook for Jewish teachers." Golomb objected despite his own role as a leading Yiddish pedagogue. As useful as such volumes might be, he argued, any publications sponsored by the institute should be scholarly in character. He proposed instead articles on topics such as Jewish pedagogical thought and the history of Jewish education.[203] Similarly, the section's effort to balance historical and contemporary themes was evident in the topics of its questionnaires. The first queried elderly adults on their memories of the kheyder, which was treated as an outmoded institution belonging to a fading past.[204] Later questionnaires dealt with children's sense of color and undisciplined and mentally disabled children, projects that obviously required close work with contemporary youngsters.[205]

While many YIVO divisions relied on questionnaires, the Psychological-Pedagogical Section also collected data through the direct observation of schoolchildren. This technique was developed by Roza Simkhovitsh, now working in Vilna as a leader of the Teachers Seminary, who trained instructors to make detailed reports on the development of individual children in more than half a dozen Vilna kindergartens.[206] On another occasion, seminary students were asked to record their observations in various elementary and middle schools in the city.[207] One of the section's leaders, Herts Kovarski, believed that these projects could result in the collection of a "colossal [amount

of] material on the physical and intellectual condition of the Jewish child."[208] Moreover, Simkhovitsh argued, they satisfied both aspects of the section's mission, for they had at the same time scholarly value and practical application for teachers.[209] Eventually, the section discussed the need for an affiliated laboratory school at which all of its research could be carried out.[210] Such endeavors, requiring extensive fieldwork over a sustained period of time, could only be undertaken in a locale with a well-developed Yiddish educational network. They thus exemplified the close relationship between YIVO and the Jewish community of Vilna and help explain why, despite plans to the contrary, that city became the seat of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section.

By bringing its research into the schools, the section also encouraged the children themselves to take the initiative in collecting data; thus it made them not simply objects of study but active partners in its work. It urged teachers to treat zamling as part of the learning process both inside and beyond the classroom. In one project on early language development, they were asked to explain the nature of the work in class, then have pupils record distinctive words and expressions used by younger siblings at home. This information would then be incorporated into lessons on language and folklore.[211]

With its sixth questionnaire the section requested instructors to have students gather material over the summer for the institute, promising prizes for the best submissions.[212] It later promoted the creation of zamlerkrayzn in the Vilna schools. When building the collections of its Pedagogical Museum it relied on the same technique, seeking to recruit at least one zamler from each institution in the city.[213] Sometimes these efforts sparked genuine enthusiasm among students, as when the fourth- and fifth-grade pupils at a school in Różana Poland, collected folklore, children's games, and other items for YIVO. Their teacher reported that the group of fifteen children were considering going door to door in a local shtetl to gather additional material.[214] Among the Ethnographic Commission's young correspondents was a boy who sent two folktales and signed his letter, "From me your best friend and colleague, Tuvye Yofe, pupil in the fifth grade."[215]

As these examples suggest, not only the Psychological-Pedagogical Section but the institute as a whole benefited from the cooperation of Jewish young people. While the schools looked to Yiddish scholarship to strengthen their work, YIVO looked to the schools to educate the next cohort of its supporters, those who would respond to its appeals and read its publications. On one occasion, it asked children to gather material with the help of their parents. Such an undertaking, the *Yedies* noted, would impress upon them early the value of participating in communal projects: "The work must accustom the children to socially useful work, accustom them from the school bench on to take an active part … in general cultural-social work."[216] By making students from a young age participants in both creating and consuming scholarship, YIVO hoped to instill in them a sense of responsibility for fostering the modern Yiddish culture

FIGURE 6. "The Mother's Curse," folktale told by Yehoshua Estrin and collected for the Ethnographic Commission by Leyb Tsimmer, fifth-grade student in the Jewish elementary school in Szarkowszczyzna, Poland, 1929. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

then in the making. With the schools' collaboration scholarship derived from the lives of young members of the folk, in partnership with the folk, could return to the folk to shape the coming generation.

The Dilemmas of Political Engagement

YIVO's close ties to the Yiddish secular schools were well established by 1928, when Tcherikower suggested conducting a fundraising campaign together with TSYSHO for a joint "cultural fund." This proposal would not seem controversial, particularly since TSYSHO had already provided financial support to the institute, yet several members of YIVO's leadership were quick to raise objections. Isaac Giterman, the director of the Joint in Poland, argued that the plan "would create complications and weaken the sympathy for the institute among such circles as we have drawn into the circle of our friends." Herts Kovarski concurred that such joint work would foster "antagonisms toward the institute."[217] On another occasion, the TSBK asked YIVO to join a protest against a recent attack on the Yiddish schools, which the institute declined to do. After considering several rationales for its decision, it informed the TSBK that such a step would have to be approved by the entire Organizational Committee, which was not possible in the available time.[218] For their part, supporters of the schools expressed frustration at YIVO's lack of action, which extended to its failure to create textbooks or terminology for the classroom.[219] While these incidents may seem surprising, they may be understood as products of YIVO's fear of politicizing its work. Since TSYSHO was closely connected to the socialist Bund and Poale Zion parties, the institute felt the need to keep its distance despite its clear sympathies for the Yiddish secular school movement. Although this stance often led to fierce criticism, YIVO leaders saw it as the price of the institute's neutrality.

Throughout its history YIVO sought to foster communal engagement, producing scholarship that, as the journalist Nachman Meisel put it, would "live with the masses."[220] Yet while remaining "with the folk" the institute avoided allying with any specific ideological camp, a step it feared would compromise its academic integrity. In virtually every area of its activity YIVO found this boundary difficult to negotiate, as it was often caught up in the fierce competition among the varied political movements of interwar Eastern Europe. Most of YIVO's supporters were drawn from one or another of the left-leaning Diaspora Nationalist movements on the Jewish political landscape. Many of its founders, including Nokhem Shtif and Jacob Lestschinsky, had been active in socialist territorialist parties such as the Jewish Socialist Labor Party and the Zionist Socialist Workers Party (known as the S.S.). Some, such as Shtif and Zelig Kalmanovitch, later moved toward nonsocialist Diaspora Nationalist parties such as the Folkspartey.[221] Other YIVO leaders had close ties to the socialist Diaspora Nationalist Jewish Labor Bund, which by the interwar period had become the strongest champion of and political influence on Yiddish culture.[222] In Vilna, Weinreich had been active in the Bund and Zalman Reisen was

sympathetic to the cause, while several prominent Bundists including Borukh Kahan-Virgili and Anna Rosental were leading YIVO supporters.[223] As we have seen, the Warsaw historians Raphael Mahler and Emanuel Ringelblum were adherents of the left wing of the Poale Zion, a socialist Zionist party supportive of the Yiddish language and Jewish life in the Diaspora.[224]

Given the backgrounds of its founders and activists, YIVO struggled from the outset to define how closely it should associate itself with particular political movements. This issue came to the fore on the first day of the preliminary conference in August 1925, when I. N. Steinberg – incidentally, both an observant Jew and a former member of Lenin's government – resigned from the Initiative Group to protest the invitation of representatives of the Soviet academies to the planned scholarly conference.[225] A month later, Shtif objected to the inclusion of Bundist A. Litvak on a list of supporters circulated by the Vilna office. Shtif wrote privately to Weinreich that those identified with the institute should include scholars and cultural figures "*but no political activists*." He predicted that the mention of Litvak would draw criticism: "Why not other [political] directions, why not this one, why not that one. … It will create suspicion and complaints and discontent without end; I see it clearly, we will have troubles because of this."[226] Indeed, these incidents were portents of future conflicts over the role of political affiliation in the work of the institute.

Such tensions were also manifest among grassroots supporters. The An-ski Zamlerkrayz in Warsaw was one of the institute's most active. It described its members as representing varied ideological orientations but complained as early as November 1926 of efforts by political parties to influence its work.[227] Two years later it blamed a local Hebraist Tarbut group when its program at the Peretz library in Radzymin, Poland, which was attended by sixty to seventy people "of both sexes," prompted an inquiry police looking for the "communist" visitors.[228] In 1929 it held talks on topics including "The Jewish Worker and YIVO," suggesting a socialist orientation.[229] Yet in 1931 the group voted to disband, informing the Vilna headquarters that "the majority of members of the circle do not agree with the current line of YIVO."[230]

It was perhaps no coincidence that the demise of the An-ski Zamlerkrayz unfolded in Warsaw, for the fraught relationship between politics and culture had a geographical dimension. In Vilna, a relatively broad stratum of the Jewish population spoke Yiddish and supported cultural work in the language. Yiddish culture in Warsaw, by contrast, was politicized to a much greater extent. It was both more closely associated with the Bund and Left Poale Zion and more hostile to Zionism. For example, in Warsaw the Yiddish schools were directly under the influence of these socialist parties and opposed the teaching of Hebrew, while in Vilna they were relatively catholic and included both Jewish tongues in their curriculum. Because of this political coloring, Yiddish cultural institutions in Warsaw appealed mainly to those committed to left-wing politics; hence, they drew their support from a narrower segment of the Jewish population. Thus while in Vilna Yiddish culture could serve as a

common ground uniting various segments of the Jewish community, in Warsaw it was often a divisive and partisan force.[231]

For these reasons – and to YIVO's great frustration – the institute's support was always relatively weak in the Polish capital despite its large Jewish community. In addition representatives from Warsaw, where socialists and TSYSHO affiliates dominated, were consistently YIVO's sharpest internal critics. Such tensions led Zalman Reisen to remark in 1927, "You know Warsaw, after all, it's missing the resonance, it's a different, polluted air."[232] In advance of the institute's first conference, held in Vilna on October 24–27, 1929, Lestschinsky confided to Tcherikower, "I'm afraid of Warsaw with its cold atmosphere and hot party conflicts. … The Bundists are cold and without them there is no one in Warsaw with whom to sit at the table."[233]

Lestschinsky's fears were well-founded. While thousands attended YIVO's first major international event to show their support for the institute and to celebrate its accomplishments, according to one account "a fearful storm erupted that could have destroyed the conference."[234] A group of Warsaw delegates affiliated with TSYSHO, led by Bundist Joseph Lestschinsky (the brother of Jacob) and Left Poale Zion member Jacob Zerubavel, attempted to move the institute toward an explicit embrace of socialism. According to Yudel Mark, this was the main topic of conversation in the hallways of the gathering.[235] Joseph Lestschinsky argued that since "Yiddish culture supports itself only on the working masses," if YIVO ceased to "fight for the culture of the Jewish masses" it would become no more than "a place for ice cold, dead written scholarship."[236] Zerubavel accused the institute of losing sight of its original mission to serve the workers and the Yiddish schools.[237] Raphael Mahler concurred, adding the Marxist principle that all academic work necessarily carries a class imprint. Therefore, not only should the institute express solidarity with the working class but its scholarship should also reflect a proletarian rather than a bourgeois perspective.[238] Mahler would prove one of the most vocal critics of YIVO's position of ideological neutrality, repeatedly advocating the use of Marxist methods of analysis in its research.

In response to these charges, Weinreich maintained that the institute's popularity among ordinary Jews was the clearest proof that it was on the right path. Its support came from "various directions and various [social] strata, but those who benefit from YIVO's work are truly to the greatest extent the workers and masses of the folk, whose language is Yiddish, the language of their head and heart." Directly opposing Mahler, Weinreich stated that individuals were entitled to their own political views but these had no place in YIVO's scholarship: "Each of the institute's activists can do whatever communal work he wants. But the institute as an institution must stay outside of political struggle."[239] One journalist reported, "There was a really serious moment when it seemed that not only the conference would explode but the entire institute would go up in smoke." Yet Weinreich's positions, which were shared by the majority of YIVO leaders, carried the day as "the national principle overcame the socialist."[240]

While these tensions erupted into open conflict at the 1929 conference, they were ever present in YIVO's work. One frequent complaint was that the institute was not sufficiently attentive to its grassroots supporters. While YIVO's defenders pointed to the success of its collection initiatives as evidence of its ties to the common people, others cautioned that more needed to be done. In 1927 a writer in the *Literarishe bleter* argued that "The institute is capable of becoming one of the most popular and beloved institutions of the folk" as long as it did not distance itself from the zamlers with a "*mekhitse* [partition]" of abstract academic discourse or bureaucracy.[241] At a meeting the following year Isaac Giterman stated that "in order not to lose its union with the broad masses, which creates the warm atmosphere around our work," the institute should give zamlers more guidance in matters such as recording local history and self-education.[242] In fact, YIVO discussed these and other similar projects yet demonstrated a degree of ambivalence about devoting scarce resources to work specifically for a popular audience. Some, such as a bureau to promote self-education, were approved but never came to fruition.[243] Others, such as the journals of the Philological and Economic-Statistical Sections, were realized in the late 1930s, a decade or more after they were conceived.

Beyond practical budgetary concerns lay an apprehension that such work could be imbued with socialist overtones. On a rhetorical level, the trope of serving the folk was easily transformed into the cause of the working class. At a 1932 meeting Giterman repeated his call for YIVO to renew its connection to the folk, adding that the institute's work must have a "mass character." Raphael Mahler concurred and then put the debate in class-based terms, declaring that "YIVO will soon have to decide if it stands for bourgeois culture or for proletarian culture."[244] Even those who did not support Mahler's position were not loathe to exploit the slipperiness of this distinction. In the memorandum Shtif spoke of the institute's constituency as "Jewish working people,"[245] and as he and his colleagues tried to build support they sometimes employed the language of class. For example, the Organizational Committee wrote to the Central Secretariat of Jewish Workers Cultural Societies in Leipzig "that Jewish workers are the closest supporters" of the institute, adding that it was in contact with the Soviet Jewish academy in Minsk.[246] The society then made this message explicitly political, passing a resolution that YIVO and the Yiddish schools "should be ruled by a true proletarian spirit and become the cells that will lay the foundations under the building of a true proletarian culture."[247] The fact that both YIVO leaders and supporters – socialist and nonsocialist alike – could so easily move from the populist rhetoric of the folk, via the masses and the workers, to the class-based language of the proletariat demonstrates how imbricated these categories were in interwar Eastern Europe, where political concerns permeated the cultural sphere.[248]

Ultimately, the source of disagreement was not whether the institute should serve a broad audience. The principle of conducting scholarship

"with the folk," with the participation of ordinary Jews and with their needs and concerns in mind, was a core tenet accepted by virtually everyone associated with YIVO. Rather, arguments arose over how best to carry out this shared vision. For those such as Joseph Lestschinsky, Zerubavel, and Mahler who defined the folk in Marxist terms, YIVO could only fulfill its mission by allying openly with the socialist political parties that championed the cause of the working class. Others defined the folk as the aggregate of all ordinary Jews, whatever their economic status or ideology. They called on YIVO to serve the broadest possible audience and therefore to avoid any political positions that might alienate one or another segment of the Jewish public. Thus, at the 1929 conference Weinreich rejected calls to affiliate with proletarian parties precisely because the institute wished to serve the "masses of the folk" and could best do so by drawing maximum support from all quarters.[249] Meisel agreed that because "our institute will always live with the masses," it should seek to attract not just workers but as broad a base as possible.[250] These differing viewpoints also underlay the dispute over how closely to ally with the Yiddish secular schools. School advocates saw cooperation with TSYSHO as the key to creating scholarship for the people, while Weinreich saw the same alliance as potentially antagonizing certain elements of the Jewish public: "among the people who support the institute are not only those who currently support the Yiddish secular schools. There is no basis for us to reject their support."[251] In contrast to Mahler, for whom socialism was the logical extension of serving the folk, Weinreich argued that concern for the masses precluded any stance that might betray political partisanship.

In fact, leftist critics such as Joseph Lestschinsky and Mahler claimed that they, too, wished YIVO to remain nonpartisan. While advocating socialist principles, they defined partisanship as an alliance with a particular party – in essence choosing between the Bund and Left Poale Zion – which they did not feel YIVO needed to do. Thus Mahler stated that "The institute does not have to be partisan but it must have a class character."[252] The majority of YIVO leaders, like Weinreich, understood nonpartisanship as rejecting ties to any particular political movement or ideology. The outcome of the 1929 conference vindicated Weinreich's view and "recognized the institute as pan-Jewish [*klal-yisroeldik*]" so that YIVO remained "above party conflict [*iberparteyish*]."[253] At the conference, Schipper argued that the institute's work should not be "partisan" but must rather be done from a suprapolitical "Yiddish-statist [*yidish-mlukhish*] standpoint."[254] This formulation reflected not only the commitment to neutrality but also the view of YIVO as a quasigovernmental body. Since it represented the entire Yiddish nation, YIVO could not side with any particular faction on the Jewish street.

Thus, in most cases supporters emphasized the vision of the institute as a catholic arena for collaboration among all types of Jews. While the American

Section posed the question, "Should our organizational work base itself only on the conscious Yiddishists, or should we try to attract as members also various other elements?" most emphatically supported the latter view.[255] Meisel wrote that "the institute, which has among its workers representatives of various groups and directions – from left to right – should become a matter of the entire Jewish people."[256] One journalist noted that the institute "follows no political tendency and will not expect in its activity this or that expressed political sympathy. In its scholarly activity the society and its contributors will expect the one and only criterion of scholarly objectivity."[257] A Canadian newspaper added that YIVO had a special role to play since "precisely through scholarship will it be possible to unite all forces that work for the Jewish renaissance."[258]

Indeed, some supporters argued that an institution devoted to academic research offered a unique opportunity to develop a cultural realm beyond the political battles that so often dominated Jewish life. Writing shortly after YIVO's founding, Shmuel Niger portrayed the growth of Yiddish scholarship as an organic process outside of ideology: "The question of scholarly research in Yiddish is not a question of nationalism, of Yiddishism, or of any other 'ism.' It is for us a question of the further natural development of our intellectual life, of our intellectual powers."[259] At the 1929 conference Schipper made a similar point, arguing that "If Yiddish is dear, no one should monopolize it. We should not make Yiddish scholarship into Yiddishist scholarship." [260]

Zelig Kalmanovitch gave the fullest elaboration of this vision of the institute as a neutral forum for cultural work above political strife. The Jewish community was more torn by factional rivalries than any other, he wrote, so that ideological conflict consumed energy that could be put to more productive ends. What was needed, Kalmanovitch argued, was "a bit of territory where the party holds no sway, where the man is a man and the Jew – a Jew."[261] YIVO would best help the working class, like the Jewish people as a whole, by fulfilling its distinctive function as an institution beyond partisan debate. Mixing his metaphors, Kalmanovitch said the institute should swim in the air like Noah's ark so that it would remain unaffected by the shifting political terrain underneath it.[262] It could play this crucial role by virtue of its "consistent nonpartisanship," he continued, since YIVO collected material from Zionist, Marxist, and Orthodox Jews without distinction. It thus represented, "perhaps for the first time since the great break of the Haskalah, the beginnings of an institution that really strives to include all of Jewry."[263]

In fact, however, the reality belied Kalmanovitch's harmonious vision. Even as they argued among themselves over the role of political ideology in their work, the institute's leaders also contended with a variety of external critics. They noted bitterly that Zionists contacted members of YIVO's honorary board of prominent Jewish figures, the Curatorium, asking them to withdraw their support.[264] At the same time communists sought to undermine the institute's standing among the left, leading one member of the Central Board to

complain that soon "YIVO will have one camp of enemies from Moscow to Warsaw."[265]

When the Organizational Committee noted in 1926 that it had received a positive response in Europe "from all sides," it added parenthetically that this of course did not include the Zionist press.[266] While YIVO leaders recognized underlying tensions with supporters of Zionism, they sought to avoid provoking conflict. On one occasion they declined to publish a resolution of support for YIVO that was critical of Zionism, explaining that they did not wish to antagonize potential friends in Palestine with "militant slogans."[267] As the institute's founders began their academic work they cast as wide a net as possible, seeking the cooperation of contacts in the Jewish homeland. As they wrote to one correspondent in Jerusalem, "only with the joint efforts of all interested [parties] will it be possible to lay a firm foundation for scholarly work in Yiddish."[268] YIVO did have some limited success in Zionist circles in Poland, for example when the socialist Zionist youth group Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsa'ir [The Young Guard] in Biała-Podlaska formed a zamlerkrayz.[269] Yet when they wrote to scholars in Palestine such as the historian Ben Zion Dinur, they got little response.[270]

Moreover, despite such overtures antagonisms soon appeared. If Diaspora Nationalists and Zionists were rivals, then YIVO was implicitly in competition with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which was founded only a few months earlier.[271] One of the first articles on the institute in the Vilna *Tog* ridiculed the newly founded Hebrew University as an organization that "promise[s] the imminent coming of the Messiah."[272] The *Tog* wrote that a Zionist university in Palestine could never become "the intellectual center of the Jewish people throughout the world" because it was "cut off from the entire people and does not nurture its creativity." This argument mirrored the Diaspora Nationalist critique of Zionism in general, which it accused of diverting scarce resources to a tiny settlement in distant Palestine while ignoring the plight of millions of Jews in Europe. The author used the equivalence of the terms "Yiddish" and "Jewish" in Yiddish to argue that Yiddishists represented the entire people, while "Hebraists are only a blindly fanatical sect." Thus a Hebrew University could never truly fulfill the Jews' national needs. "We must have a *Yiddish* [*yidish*] university," he wrote, "as long as we are a *Jewish* [*yidish*] people."[273]

From their side Zionists accused YIVO of presenting itself as a bastion of neutral scholarship when in fact it was a proponent of "militant" Yiddishism. On one occasion, members of the Vilna religious Zionist organization Mizrachi informed a correspondent in Lwów (Lemberg) "about the anti-Zionist and anti-Hebraist spirit that reigns in 'YIVO,'" where Hebrew was considered a foreign language.[274] A writer in the Polish-language Zionist-oriented newspaper *Nowy Dziennik* [New Daily] charged that YIVO functioned as an arm of the Bund, with all mention of Zionism or Hebrew culture virtually banned from its work. He called on Jewish organizations to stop their support of the institute until it changed its stance to include all streams of Jewish life.[275] Here

we see the reverse of the *Tog*'s argument, with YIVO cast as the representative of one narrow faction on the Jewish street.

If the Hebrew University was a tacit rival to YIVO, relations were closer – and therefore eventually more fraught – with the Jewish sections of the Soviet academies in Minsk and Kiev.[276] At these institutions Yiddish scholars carried out their work at government expense, thus seeming to fulfill the most grandiose dreams of Diaspora Nationalists. So it seemed to Nokhem Shtif, who left the fledgling YIVO in 1926 for a position at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev. There was a natural affinity between YIVO's research and that of the Soviets, since both worked in and on the Yiddish language. There was also overlap among their supporters on the left, as the institute sometimes appealed to procommunist Yiddish activists.[277] YIVO's relations with its Soviet counterparts began on a promising basis with friendly personal communications and plans for collaboration. The Historical Section extended invitations to the Soviet scholars Saul Ginsburg, Israel Sosis, and Israel Zinberg to participate in its work. YIVO also invited the director of a school in Kiev to speak about Jewish education in the Soviet Union and proposed an exchange of scholarly publications and bibliographic information with the Jewish Section of the Institute for Belorussian Culture in Minsk.[278] YIVO's leaders wrote proudly that "even in Russia, where Jewish scholarly work has great possibilities (the means of the state) and where they generally treat Jewish cultural work in other countries skeptically … they turn to us and propose creating contacts in scholarly work."[279]

Yet as Soviet authorities began to restrict intellectual freedom and exchange, this relationship soon became impossible to sustain. The situation began to sour as early as 1926, when Saul Ginsburg donated a manuscript by the classical Yiddish author Mendele Moykher Sforim to YIVO. The Moscow newspaper *Emes* [Truth] complained that "our Soviet treasures [are being] smuggled into Piłsudski's land" to the "Jewish Jews" in Vilna.[280] Soon after the institute discussed holding a joint conference with the Soviet academies but noted that since Minsk "does not relate too sympathetically to the institute" and Kiev "has an unfriendly attitude to that which is done in Poland," the project would have to be delayed until relations improved.[281] Instead, the situation progressively worsened until Soviet Yiddish scholars were compelled to denounce their former colleagues and their own work was reduced to little more than a form of political propaganda. While in 1928 Max Weinreich published in the Minsk journal *Tsaytshrift* [Periodical], by 1930 the same publication devoted an issue largely to attacking the "fascisized Yiddishism" of YIVO.[282] The fate of Yiddish scholarship in Minsk and Kiev stood as an object lesson of the dangers of unfettered political influence on cultural work.

YIVO's attitude toward Polish-language Jewish scholarship was paradoxical. While the institute's leaders were originally sympathetic to Soviet Yiddish research, they evinced no such goodwill toward scholars working primarily in Polish such as Moses Schorr and Majer Bałaban. They often derided these

figures, many of whom were affiliated with the Instytut Nauk Judaistycznych in Warsaw,[283] as having essentially abandoned the Jewish people in a setting in which language choice carried ideological weight. Weinreich, for example, stated that "it is useless to wait" for support from scholars such as Schorr who held an "assimilationist ideology.'"[284] The Vilna office opposed sending copies of the *Yedies* to Bałaban, claiming that "he has done nothing for the institute; moreover – he even organized a Judaic institute that is a bit of competition for us."[285]

In fact, however, YIVO often benefited from cooperation with historians writing in Polish. Not only did the Historical Section originally invite Schorr, Bałaban, and Ignacy Schipper to become members, but all three eventually published in YIVO journals. Bałaban and Schipper also worked closely with the Historical Commission, which was led by their former students. In addition, Schipper, who served as a mentor to Ringelblum, was an active member of YIVO's board.[286] Moreover, YIVO's characterization of these scholars as assimilationists was patently unfair. All three participated in Polish political life as representatives of the Jewish community and were active in the Zionist movement.[287] Bałaban was head of secular studies at the Tahkemoni Rabbinical School in Warsaw, which was affiliated with the Mizrachi; Schorr taught at the school.[288] YIVO leaders were more familiar with members of this circle than with scholars in Jerusalem, Kiev, or Minsk. Yet in the case of Schorr and Bałaban, their combination of Zionist and religious sympathies – together with their rejection of Yiddish as a key component of Jewish identity – seems to have bred a perfect storm of contempt.

If YIVO leaders could speak of the institute as enjoying support from all quarters despite obvious signs to the contrary, this was in part because their vision often elided groups that did not fit their conception of Jewish culture. One assumption held in common by everyone associated with YIVO, socialists and liberals alike, was a definition of the Jewish people based not in religion but in modern nationalism. Even their ideological opponents such as Zionists and communists shared this rejection of an identity rooted in traditional belief and practice. The exception was those in the Orthodox camp.

When the Psychological-Pedagogical Section began its effort to document all Jewish schools in Eastern Europe and the United States, it cast a wide net befitting its inclusive rhetoric. It sought data on educational institutions in the Baltic countries "independent of language of instruction or direction," and the Central Jewish School Organization of Latvia responded by collecting statistics from the Hebraist Tarbut and religious Zionist Yavneh schools along with Yiddish-language institutions.[289] The section also made a concerted effort to win the support of Aleksander Zysha Frydman, the head of the educational division of the Orthodox political party Agudas Israel [Union of Israel]. After being contacted by the section's representative, a wary Frydman requested more information before pledging his cooperation.[290] The section reassured Frydman that there was "no basis for any suspicion of ulterior motives" in its

work. "The institute does not permit itself cheap polemics and party disputes," it wrote, but seeks only to gather objective data.[291] Frydman replied that he was satisfied that "the Pedagogical Section will not become an advocate for a certain type of school but relate objectively to the entire Jewish communal school system," and he agreed to aid in its research.[292]

As these examples suggest, YIVO evinced no ill will toward Orthodox Jewry. Yet at the same time, the Psychological-Pedagogical Section planned its "meeting of teachers of the schools of all movements" on the Sabbath, effectively precluding the participation of religiously observant educators.[293] Similarly, the institute's leaders noted that the 1929 conference took place during the holiday of Succoth, but did not apparently feel that this timing presented a conflict.[294] In fact, both YIVO's solicitude toward Frydman and its unconcern about holding events on Jewish holy days were two sides of the same coin. The institute showed no rancor toward traditionally religious Jews because, unlike YIVO's other rivals, they seemed to pose no threat. Rather, secular Jewish nationalists regarded them as doomed by the inevitable march of progress and thus ultimately irrelevant to modern Jewish society. The institute's mission demanded that it include within its purview contemporary manifestations of traditional Jewish culture. Yet like the Ethnographic Commission's efforts to record folk customs, it saw these as remnants of a dying and thus marginal community.[295]

One of the few people to recognize this tension in YIVO's work – and one of the few Orthodox Jews to take part in it – was Solomon Birnbaum. Birnbaum was the son of Nathan Birnbaum, the organizer of the Czernowitz language conference in 1908 who later in life turned to Orthodox Judaism and became a supporter of Agudas Israel. Solomon Birnbaum followed his father's path, becoming a Yiddish linguist and a religiously observant Jew. The younger Birnbaum was one of the first scholars whom the nascent institute contacted. Yet he at first politely declined the request for collaboration, citing a lack of time.[296] He also abstained from offering his comments on Shtif's memorandum, writing that "if I begin to express my opinions, it will come out to a new booklet."[297] Pressed by Weinreich, Birnbaum answered at greater length in a personal letter. He admitted that his refusal was a matter of principle. YIVO's founders, he wrote

> all rest on another foundation than I do and in fact on a contradictory one … It seems to me that all the activists in the matter start from the principle of a secular Yiddish culture, and for me it is not possible to assist in such work. … In short, I do not see any possibility of neutral work with you.[298]

Weinreich persisted, arguing that matters such as Yiddish terminology were indeed neutral and independent of ideological orientation. Birnbaum agreed but replied that "for the majority of members of the institute that is about to be born scholarly work [is] a means of building up a secular culture … with a strong opposition to tradition."[299]

גראנדיעזע —:א:— אויסשטעלונג
פון די אוצרות פון
יידישן וויסנשאפטלעכן אינסטיטוט (ייוו"א)
144430 וועט פארקומען פון 5—11 אפריל 1928
אין די זאלן פון רעאל־גימנאזיע (רודניצקער 6)
אלע ביכער און צייטונגען פון 1926—1927 פון דער גארער וועלט; געשיכטע פון דער יידישער פרעסע פון דער גארער וועלט; געשיכטע פון דער יידישער ארבעטער־באוועגונג: יקר־המציאותן: ייד. טעאטער־מוזיי א"נ פון א.ר. קאמינסקי.
עפענונג: דאנערשטאג, דעם 5 אפריל (דעם ערשטן טאג פסח) 3½ נאכמיטאג.
אפן די גאנצע וואך פסח פון 12—6 נאכמ.
אריינגאנג: 40 גראשן, פאר שילער און יונגנטלעכע 30 גראשן, פאר אנטיילנעמער פון עקסקורסיעס צו 20 גראשן.
Komunikat o wystawie zbiorów Tow. Przyj. Żydowskiego Instytutu Naukowego, Wilno W. Pohulanka 18.
Drukarnia Sp. Wytw.-Handlowej, Wilno, ul. Trocka 7.

FIGURE 7. Announcement of a "Grandiose Exhibit of the Treasures of the Yiddish Scientific Institute" at the Vilna Real-gimnazye, Passover 1928. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

Birnbaum eventually published numerous articles in YIVO journals, but his initial reluctance shows his understanding of the larger role that the institute would play. As Birnbaum surmised, since Yiddish scholarship – like modern Yiddish culture as a whole – arose in a nationalist context it implicitly challenged religious definitions of Jewishness. Weinreich stood firm on his nonpartisan view of YIVO just as Niger insisted that YIVO's work "is not a question of nationalism, of Yiddishism, or of any other 'ism.'"[300] Yet as we have seen, Yiddish language planning efforts ultimately did serve Diaspora Nationalist ends. Weinreich and the institute's other founders took for granted their secular assumptions and thus did not see these goals as ideologically determined. Birnbaum, by standing outside of this consensus, made clear the limitations of their outlook.[301]

Perhaps Weinreich betrayed an awareness of this dynamic when he remarked at a 1929 meeting, "The work that I do today is a direct continuation of my former work in the Bund. Simultaneously with the first proclamation I thought about a Yiddish grammar, thought of it as a symbol."[302] Weinreich undoubtedly did not intend any simplistic equivalence between YIVO's scholarly publications and Bundist propaganda, yet his comment points to the way in which cultural and political concerns were inextricably linked in interwar Eastern Europe. In this context, a Yiddish grammar could indeed be as charged as a Bundist tract.

Conclusion

In the 1920s the institute made great strides in its collection, research, and publishing programs. The rapid growth of a widespread network of zamlers not only allowed YIVO to lay the crucial foundation for its work but also served as evidence that Yiddish scholarship was truly arising "from the folk." At the same time, its scholars strove to engage the Jewish public by addressing questions of broad interest, help[ing] to ensure that YIVO's efforts "for the folk" reached their intended audience.

YIVO's affiliates shared with other producers of high Yiddish culture the dilemma of how to bridge the gap between the intellectual and the masses. As David Shneer notes, in the same years Soviet Yiddish scholars also debated what it meant to create work for the ordinary Jew:

> Did it mean teaching him or her higher level reading and literacy skills to be able to approach high-brow literature? Or did it mean encouraging professional writers to write more accessibly? Or finally, did it mean giving a Jewish worker pen and paper and have her start writing?[303]

Kenneth B. Moss argues that in the era of the Russian Revolution, advocates of modern Jewish culture valued the occasional *folksmentsh* [member of the folk] who put pen to paper while roundly rejecting a two-tiered strategy of creating a popular literature alongside more rarefied works. Instead, they placed the emphasis firmly on what he terms the "elevationist ethos," the belief that the Jewish public as a whole could be transformed into a receptive audience for high culture.[304]

From the time of the institute's founding, YIVO leaders similarly argued for elevating the tastes and intellects of the masses to appreciate its research; the role of the Yiddish secular schools was crucial precisely because they were charged with that task. At the same time, their collection initiatives asked members of the folk to participate themselves in the creation of Yiddish scholarship, an approach that the institute would further develop in the coming decade. The final alternative, producing work specifically designed for a broad audience, was widely discussed but would largely have to wait for the late 1930s to be realized.

Despite its many internal critics and external competitors on the Jewish street, the institute's successes demonstrated both the maturation of Diaspora Nationalism as a cultural movement and the broader resonance of YIVO's academic work. Nevertheless, the institute faced continual difficulties in balancing the competing demands of its ambitious mandate. In its effort to preserve the Jewish past while building the Jewish future, it reflected a central tension of Yiddish culture. While it insisted on addressing questions relevant to ordinary Jews, it was ever wary of being drawn too directly into the ideological maelstrom of interwar Eastern Europe and thus compromising its intellectual

integrity. Yet its commitment to remain "with the folk" meant that it would also not be satisfied with academic research cut off from the needs of the Yiddish-speaking masses. The institute's achievement was to navigate between the Scylla of political partisanship and the Charybdis of the ivory tower to produce scholarship of both immediate import and lasting value.

4

"The Capital of Yiddishland"

The Geography of Jewish Culture, 1925–1933

Introduction: The Mystique of Vilna

Many observers, both in the interwar period and more recently, have argued that Vilna was the inevitable location for an institute devoted to Yiddish scholarship. In this way, YIVO's history became intimately bound up with the city in which it made its home. Writers insisted that nowhere else could YIVO have flourished but in the so-called Jerusalem of Lithuania, with its long tradition of learning and its leading role in modern Jewish cultural and political movements. "It was entirely natural that the first to respond [to the idea of the institute] was Vilna," stated Tcherikower in 1930. "It couldn't have been otherwise."[1] In 1935 Weinreich wrote, "Vilna is the only place where the institute could have grown to its present level," for while other cities were richer in talent and funds only Vilna possessed "'the genius of place.'"[2]

By the period between the two world wars, the city of Vilna had acquired an undeniable mystique. Observers often viewed it as the exemplar of an East European Jewish community, a place in which the rich traditions of the past served as the basis for an unprecedented flowering of modern Yiddish culture.[3] As Latzky-Bertholdi put it at YIVO's 1929 conference, "For us Vilna is not simply a city; it is an idea."[4] Vilna occupied such an exalted position that paradoxically even its most material aspects, its stones and its streets, were celebrated as symbols of the "idea" of Vilna. In his poem "Vilna," published in 1929, the Yiddish writer Moyshe Kulbak evoked the spirit of the city through its physical fabric:

> You are a Book of Psalms spelled out in clay and iron;
> Each stone is a prayer, each wall a hymn,
> When the moon trickles down in your mystical alleys …
> Each stone is a holy book, each wall a parchment.[5]

By no means was Kulbak alone in using such images. In the interwar years authors often turned to descriptions of the city itself as the embodiment of

the spirit of Vilna and its inhabitants. Weinreich wrote that "every wall in old Vilna, every stone in the shulhoyf, on Yidishe Street and on Glezer Street, tells of generations of Jews who lived there."[6] Others linked the city's structures to its vibrant cultural life. According to writer Daniel Charney, "Vilna Jews' exceptional love for and loyalty to Jewish folk culture stamped itself even on the walls and stones of the narrow Vilna streets and alleys …"[7] Weinreich argued that modern Jewish scholarship could only thrive in a city with as rich a past as Vilna, where even "the houses and the stones retain a memory" of Jewish history.[8]

Yet if Vilna was destined to become YIVO's center, this seemed obvious only in retrospect. When Shtif sent out the call from Germany to found the institute, he and his colleagues assumed that its headquarters would be in Berlin or another large West European city. They long resisted transferring their main office to Poland, even after the Berlin branch had effectively shut down and an active organization had been established in Vilna. At one point YIVO's founder in Berlin, Shtif, supported moving the headquarters to Vilna, while Weinreich, its leader in Vilna, advocated Berlin. The institute continued to debate the issue of its location for nearly three years.

One reason this decision was so fraught was that it was ultimately linked to the difficult question of finances. Lacking state power and disappointed in their expectations for the Minorities Treaties, Diaspora Nationalists realized that – outside of the Soviet Union – they could not rely on government funds for their work. YIVO leaders initially pinned great hopes on donors in the West, but after years of constant struggle for a stable income, they developed other strategies. Turning eastward, they employed the rhetoric of YIVO as a national institution to argue for support from both Jewish communities and Polish authorities. By the end of the 1920s YIVO leaders believed that they had finally established a secure, if modest, economic base. With a sense of great optimism they set about constructing a headquarters in Vilna, yet only days after laying the cornerstone the Wall Street crash set off a worldwide economic depression. In the following years the institute struggled to stay afloat, even as its building became an international symbol of the pinnacle of Yiddish culture.

Yiddish Scholarship between East and West

In the memorandum Nokhem Shtif insisted that an institute devoted to Yiddish scholarship must be located in "a great European center" such as his current place of residence, Berlin. Shtif argued that this nascent field would only flourish where it could draw on the resources of a major capital of Western culture. The countries of Eastern Europe, he maintained, lacked the necessary scholarly infrastructure such as libraries and laboratories as well as an established intellectual tradition. In addition, he feared that the political situation of the Jewish minority in Poland and the other new states of the region was still uncertain. While Shtif and his émigré colleagues spoke of the importance of serving the

common people, in Germany this was more an abstract ideal than a pressing need. As we have seen, their priority was rather to foster a small circle of academics that could benefit from the great cultural institutions of the West and create a dialogue with non–Jewish scholars. Anticipating criticism that Western Europe was distant from the heartland of Yiddish-speaking Jewry, Shtif duly noted "all the drawbacks that present themselves from being severed from a large Jewish community." He suggested that to overcome this difficulty, "The institute can quickly create *branches* that will connect it more closely with large Jewish settlements," particularly in Vilna.[9]

As his singling out of Vilna suggests, Shtif held in high regard the city he referred to as "the greatest center of Jewish culture."[10] When Shtif planned to send his memorandum to Max Weinreich, he wrote in his accompanying letter, "the aristocrat [*yakhsn*] Vilna (I mean that seriously) must not wait for Berlin resolutions … a positive word from you will encourage us here …"[11] Indeed, the enthusiastic reception that his plan received in Vilna cheered Shtif and made clear from the start that the city would be a major focus of the institute's work. In response Shtif amended the second edition of the memorandum to include a vivid description of the advantages of a Vilna location. There, he wrote, scholarly work

> would be able to draw sustenance from a living environment … there it would be able to support itself on extensive Yiddish school and educational work and directly and systematically influence that work. There it would also grow more quickly with the sympathy and devotion of broad Jewish circles, first of all of the Jewish working masses and the Jewish folk intellectuals …[12]

Shtif recognized the greater resonance YIVO's work would have in Vilna in the midst of efforts to build modern Yiddish culture. Activists there envisioned the institute equally as a center for research and as a body deeply engaged in projects such as the Yiddish secular school network that would serve a broad swath of the Jewish public.

Nevertheless, Shtif still maintained that the value of a West European setting outweighed the importance of proximity to the Yiddish-speaking folk. In Vilna, he concluded, YIVO could only become a local institution, not an international center of Jewish culture. Moreover, he also wrote presciently that the widespread political conflicts of Eastern Europe created a danger that "the institute [would] become an object of party strife." For these reasons, he reiterated his proposal that the institute have its center in the West and branches in other major Jewish cities.[13]

Surprisingly, Vilna activists agreed with Shtif that YIVO's headquarters should not be situated in Poland. In the Vilna Theses they hedged their bets, stating that "the institute must be – at least in the beginning – in a great West European center."[14] At the preliminary conference in August 1925 they were more forceful, arguing that Berlin "is the natural geographic center. From there it is easier to contact all Jewish settlements … Berlin is also the great scholarly

center."[15] By contrast, they painted a gloomy portrait of their hometown. Not only was the city remote, but some questioned whether there existed in the region "the appropriate scholars who would be able to direct an institute."[16] Weinreich argued that the growing secular school network was a liability as well as an advantage, for it absorbed all the energy available for Yiddish cultural initiatives. He believed that "the activists [in Vilna] are overburdened with work and with worrying about the existing institutions,"[17] adding that "The psychological state is such that it is difficult to think about broader plans." He pointed out that although "in Vilna we have interested a large circle of cultural activists," the response elsewhere in Poland had been less enthusiastic. Moyshe Zilberfarb added that potential supporters throughout Eastern Europe were all "frightfully poor."[18] Such early YIVO leaders, keenly aware of the constraints they faced, were wary of placing further demands on the city's limited resources.

Ironically, at the preliminary conference Shtif altered his position to support a headquarters in Vilna, which he now praised as "a great center of Jewish cultural work with established traditions." This change of heart can be linked to his increasingly pessimistic assessment of YIVO's base of support in Western Europe. The Berlin activists were concerned that their project had so far only attracted East European émigrés like themselves, not the native German Jewish community. In Berlin, they noted, "the intellectuals who have shown an active interest in the institute are cut off from [local] Jewish life, [and] are not even sure of remaining in the place."[19] As Shtif observed the following year, the founders in Germany "could not create a strong collective" because "no one is now standing behind [them], they are not connected to anything."[20] Shtif and his colleagues were hesitant to rely on such a transient – and similarly impoverished – population. They now preferred a location in Vilna, with its established Yiddish-speaking community, since "there one can be sure of the permanence of the work."[21] As a compromise the conference delegates chose Berlin as their headquarters and placed Vilna in charge of activities in Poland, the Baltics, and Romania. Despite their reservations about their prospects in Germany, ultimately the institute's leaders were reluctant to sacrifice the prestige of a location in the West. Thus when discussing plans for the upcoming scholarly conference all agreed that it was "absolutely necessary" for the "resonance" of the event that it take place in a "great West European cultural center" such as Berlin or Vienna.[22]

As YIVO began its work in the months following the preliminary conference, events bore out these early assessments of its bases of support. The native-born Jewish community in Germany remained largely indifferent, as Weinreich learned during a visit to Berlin in March 1926. At the suggestion of German Jewish historian Ismar Elbogen, Weinreich invited sixty-four local Jewish intellectuals to a lecture in German on the institute's goals. All but one of the invited guests failed to attend, including Elbogen himself, and Weinreich finally spoke in Yiddish to an overwhelmingly East European audience.[23] By contrast, the

institute rapidly gained popularity in the Vilna region and the Baltics; contributions from Riga and Dorpat were the largest it received from any of its support groups in its first year and a half of fundraising.[24]

Meanwhile, Vilna quickly became the institute's most active center. In January 1926, the staff there wrote deferentially, "without the Organizational Committee in Berlin we are a small local group, and we are still not firmly established."[25] Yet by that spring they had prepared YIVO's first scholarly publication as well as collected 1,800 bibliographic cards and 6,000 items of folklore, while Berlin could boast few concrete achievements.[26] On March 24 Shtif implicitly acknowledged Vilna's leading role when he declared that date, the anniversary of the meeting of Vilna educational leaders, as YIVO's birthday. That event, he wrote, "determined the entire future fate" of his project, for through their "energy, initiative and idealism" the Vilna activists had "laid the principal foundation" for the institute.[27] Vilna accepted the compliment, marking the occasion with a celebration attended by 500 people.[28]

If by this date activity in Vilna had overshadowed that in Berlin, the peregrinations of the institute's founders led to further difficulties for its work in Western Europe. Shtif's concerns for the rootedness of the Berlin activists proved prophetic, as he himself left the city in May 1926 for a post at the Department for Jewish Culture of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev. Three months later Tcherikower moved to Paris to participate in the legal defense of Sholem Schwarzbard. These departures suddenly deprived YIVO of its two main figures in Germany. The Berlin office remained open under the direction of Nokhem Gergel, but it had lost its driving force.[29]

Given the already tenuous situation in Berlin, these events might logically have precipitated the official transfer of the institute's seat to Vilna. In fact, YIVO leaders decided to keep their main office in the German capital and adhered to this policy long after work there had come to a virtual halt. In July 1926 Tcherikower proposed relocating the headquarters to Paris for the duration of his stay in France, while the Vilna activists considered taking over the reins for the same period.[30] YIVO administrators rejected both options, deciding to keep Berlin as the official headquarters for the sake of continuity while founding a new branch in Paris.[31] Once in France, however, Tcherikower was too busy to tend to YIVO affairs and lost touch with the institute's leadership for months at a time.[32] Yet Vilna still resisted officially becoming the main office. After an angry exchange of letters with Tcherikower over his long silence, the Vilna leaders wrote to him in November 1926,

> You will certainly not think that we had the slightest intention of … Vilna thinking of the institute for its exclusive thing … in the last few months we expressed often enough our helplessness that we might arrive at such a wild thought.[33]

The following month the question arose of where library and archival donations should be sent. While Tcherikower advocated Berlin, others pointed out that there was no one there to process the documents. The Vilna leaders resolved

to receive incoming shipments, since, as they wrote to Tcherikower, "It would be a great loss if the material were taken away to a foreign country where there is no circle of activists … and there is no living Jewish atmosphere that would stimulate work …"[34] Their description of Germany as a "foreign" land lacking a "living" Jewish community underscored their negative view of this locale distant from the Yiddish-speaking masses. Yet despite such acknowledged signs that, as Zalman Reisen put it, "the actual center is really in Vilna," Weinreich and others continued to resist efforts to relocate the headquarters. When one supporter argued that Vilna must play the leading role because "abroad the work has fallen on people who are not tied to the place," Weinreich responded, "Vilna cannot be a center of the work. The center must be abroad, in a great European center. In Vilna there are not even the necessary people to carry out the work."[35]

One reason that Vilna hesitated to assume the title of head office was its deference to Tcherikower, Shtif's earliest collaborator in the founding of the institute. Thus, in January 1927 the Vilna leadership resolved to create a "true center" for YIVO but to postpone discussion of its location until Tcherikower returned to Berlin.[36] Nevertheless, Tcherikower resented what he perceived as a lack of consideration during a particularly busy and unsettled time in his life. This sentiment may have been reinforced by the work of the enthusiastic young Warsaw historians, who implicitly challenged his leadership of the Historical Section. By concentrating the institute's work in Vilna, he felt his colleagues were further undermining his authority. As he later admitted,

> I was a little embittered against Vilna for its, in my opinion, unjust treatment of our work in Berlin and of me personally. It seemed to me that you undervalued our role in the work of the institute.… I felt, as you know, that the institute was becoming too much a Vilna institution.…[37]

In July 1927, however, a visit to Poland changed Tcherikower's perspective. Seeing the situation there in person, he realized that local activists had already surpassed what could be realized in the West. After his trip he wrote to Weinreich,

> Coming to you and seeing what all of you – and especially you personally – have achieved for the institute, I understood that … your accomplishments for the institute and for the organization of Yiddish scholarly work are inestimable. I don't know if there has ever been anywhere so much accomplished for Yiddish culture as you have managed to accomplish in such a short time with such miserable means. And all my earlier complaints have already long ago disappeared. I have now only the feeling of wonder and deep satisfaction.[38]

Following this change of heart, Tcherikower wrote, he "agreed and even proposed myself that for the time being Vilna should take over the entire work of directing the institute."[39] At a meeting held during his visit, a new organizational plan was drawn up whereby Vilna and Berlin would have equal representation on the institute's governing bodies. Its core administrative group, the Organizational Committee, would be located in Vilna.[40]

By the fall of 1927 Weinreich overcame his earlier skepticism and stated that while "other people still have doubts whether Vilna should be the center," he now believed that "Here the cause can only win. For various reasons the organizational center should remain in Vilna."[41] Yet even at this juncture YIVO leaders saw the move as temporary, writing that once Tcherikower returned to Germany "Berlin [should] get back the 'crown' that was taken from it," since "It is not fair the burden that fell on Vilna … should remain permanently on Vilna's shoulders."[42] Despite such qualifications, however, the momentum of the institute's work had shifted decisively to the East. By early 1928 Vilna activists were fundraising to purchase a building in the city, and debates over the location of the headquarters gave way to planning for the institute's permanent home.

If YIVO leaders resisted for so long a move that in retrospect seemed inevitable, this was certainly related to the issue of finances. Already struggling to maintain an array of cultural and educational institutions in the city, Vilna activists were wary of assuming primary responsibility for covering YIVO's ambitious budget. The decision in 1928 to construct a building of its own in Vilna demonstrated both a sense of rootedness in the city and a level of confidence about the institute's financial underpinnings. Yet to reach that point YIVO leaders went through years of uncertainty, endlessly frustrated in their attempts to fund their work. As they turned to various potential sources of income across the globe – both individuals and organizations, both Jewish and non–Jewish – they learned that the economics of Yiddish culture were closely bound up with questions of Jewish geography.

The Geography of Funding

The lack of funds that marked the founding of the institute did not abate in the following years, for as YIVO began its wide-ranging program of scholarly activity it struggled under constant financial pressures. As Weinreich put it, when YIVO's work would become known "the world will wonder at what can be accomplished with dedication, without a penny."[43] Even as support grew in Vilna the institute's budget remained tenuous. At one point in 1927 it had a mere $5 in the bank and no funds to cover salaries or daily expenses.[44] "One must be in Vilna, in our institute, to see the poverty that reigns there," wrote Tcherikower to Shatzky. "It's truly a wonder that in such poverty they do so much, but one can't pay the printer with wonder."[45]

With such discouraging reports from Poland and prospects fading that Yiddish scholarship would flourish on German soil, YIVO's founders increasingly focused their fundraising efforts across the Atlantic. The institute's leadership originally expected to fund much of its work, as Tcherikower put it, "on the rich man's tab (America)."[46] Yet as discussed previously, Shtif's early efforts to attract support from prominent New York–based Yiddish activists such

as A. S. Sachs and Chaim Zhitlowsky were unsuccessful. Optimism revived with Jacob Shatzky's initiative to found an American Section of the institute in October 1925. Soon the Amopteyl began to generate significant funds for the institute. Nevertheless, Zhitlowsky's pessimism was borne out by the overall lack of interest in high Yiddish culture among the majority of American Jewish individuals and organizations. YIVO's founders were frustrated that Yiddish speakers in the United States, relatively secure and affluent compared to their European counterparts, would not do more to actively support Yiddish scholarship. They often complained of the "inertia" of "*farbiznevet* [commercialized]" New York that "poisoned" the atmosphere for cultural work.[47]

Appeals to American Jewish organizations presumed sympathetic to their cause only confirmed this disappointing assessment. Shtif had originally insisted that YIVO not be satisfied with a mere $500 from the American Joint Distribution Committee, Vilna supporters reminded him bitterly in January 1926; the Joint eventually made a grant of $100.[48] When the institute asked the People's Relief Committee in New York for $10,000 and received instead $300, Tcherikower complained, "The results of our appeal are quite sad. What kind of serious work can we begin with such a sum? It will barely suffice for our small daily expenses."[49] After a subsequent request to the Joint was denied altogether in February 1927, he voiced a note of despair: "This decision again calls sharply into question our further existence. How will we continue? Can we carry on the work altogether with the methods and means [that we have used] up until now? I really throw up my hands."[50]

Such experiences led the Vilna office to turn increasingly to the Amopteyl for support. Yet as the New York branch became a crucial source of income, the gap between the expectations of YIVO's European leadership and the reality of the American environment sometimes led to strained relations.[51] Exacerbating these tensions was the often difficult personality of Jacob Shatzky, who criticized projects proposed by the YIVO headquarters as unsuitable for the United States. Stressing Americans' regard for *takhles* [practical results], he maintained that the institute would first of all need to produce something concrete to show potential supporters, since local philanthropists would not donate to a "paper project."[52] Shatzky proposed recruiting members who would pay $10 a year and in exchange receive the institute's publications for free or at a discount.[53] To advance this plan, in spring 1926 Shatzky agreed to help raise $300 for the first major publication of YIVO's Historical Section. When Tcherikower revised publication costs upward Shatzky took issue with his figures, eventually prompting Shatzky to withdraw his promise of funds.[54] Tcherikower replied desperately that there was no possibility of getting the sum in Vilna and that it would be a "disgrace [*khilel-hashem*] for the institute" if it could not meet its obligations to the publisher.[55]

These frustrations in dealing with both American Jewish organizations and its own New York branch led YIVO's European leaders to reconsider the role

of income from the United States. As early as 1926 the Vilna office wrote in despair to Berlin that the institute's very future would have to be reassessed

> because our hopes for America are as good as completely dissolved.... it appears that we were deceived in our former expectations of great national organizations of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, of great financial support, of a great resonance in the Jewish public through the press and through our organizations.[56]

By 1928 YIVO had relinquished its dream of a prominent, well-funded institution relying on substantial donations from wealthy individuals and Jewish charitable agencies. As it reluctantly abandoned its more grandiose plans for both Western Europe and the United States, it focused its attention closer to its new Vilna home.

In December 1925 Shtif received a handwritten postcard from Kybartai, Lithuania. The correspondent introduced himself: "I'm a simple man, have no connection to literary types, but cultural work in Yiddish is dear to me." The writer went on to suggest that the new institute recruit "passive members" or "subscribers" among ordinary Jews such as himself, who would make a yearly contribution and in exchange receive the institute's publications for free or a reduced price, a scheme similar to that proposed by Shatzky.[57] In fact, as the institute's leaders lowered their expectations of large sums from major donors they considered how best to turn such grassroots support among "simple" folk to their material benefit. As the *Yedies* wrote, "There is only one [type of] capital that the institute does possess: that is the loyalty of hundreds of activists and helpers. Let us mobilize that capital first of all."[58]

Declaring that "the popularity of the institute is not exhausted," YIVO leaders resolved to recruit more individual members, particularly in Eastern Europe.[59] Their efforts centered on the heartland of their support, the Vilna region, the kresy of Eastern Poland, and – as Shtif's correspondent suggests – the Baltic states. These initiatives for the most part met with an enthusiastic response despite the severely limited means of potential supporters. In 1929 the *Yedies* reported with satisfaction that "Even today a marked part of our budget is composed of contributions collected by our friends in remote corners, each according to his ability and not infrequently above his ability."[60] At the same time, YIVO sought to strengthen ties to Yiddish-speaking communities throughout the world by sending *shlikhim* [emissaries] on extended international fundraising campaigns. These tours generated substantial sums and became a mainstay of the institute's budget, but they were expensive to organize and deprived the headquarters of key personnel for months at a time. Weinreich embarked on a lengthy fundraising trip to North America in 1929, for example, and Reisen to South America two years later.[61] Moreover, the institute's leaders recognized that relying on a widely dispersed network of individual donors – many of whom lived in great poverty – was an inefficient and uncertain financial strategy.

As YIVO searched for a more reliable source of income, it invoked its self-proclaimed role as a national institution serving all Yiddish-speaking Jews. Its founders sought to fill the functions of a national academy, library, and university. In the case of a politically sovereign people, Diaspora Nationalists argued, such institutions would be publicly funded by tax revenues. Since the Jewish people had no government of its own, they concluded, YIVO's work should be financed by a kind of self-imposed tax. Such statements implied that the entire Jewish community had not only an interest in but an obligation to support Yiddish scholarship. As early as 1926 Emanuel Ringelblum wrote that if Polish Jewry did not receive funds from the state, then it must be able to rely on the Jewish public.[62] As Tcherikower put it in a fundraising speech, "We have become the folk's Ministry of Education. The folk must become our Ministry of Finance!"[63]

Invoking YIVO's role as a de facto public institution, Nachman Meisel suggested that supporters make regular monthly contributions since the institute "should become a matter of the entire Jewish people."[64] But the YIVO leadership had a more ambitious plan. In 1926 Ringelblum proposed that the institute seek subsidies from kehillahs in addition to dues-paying members.[65] On its second anniversary, YIVO wrote that although "When a group of youths from a shtetl sends us a few dozen złotys … the money is truly holy," it would nevertheless prefer systematic funding from Jewish organizations, kehillahs, and government institutions.[66] The institute now began efforts to secure annual subsidies from all such bodies, primarily though not exclusively in Poland.

In 1926 the Yiddish School Organization (YISHO) in Warsaw had begun making monthly payments of $25 to YIVO.[67] The institute now approached other groups such as the Union of Jewish Writers and Journalists, asking for similar regular donations.[68] Moreover, in 1927 it began a campaign among kehillahs that resulted in contributions from at least three Polish cities as well as the Jewish community of Vienna. Surveying these results, it declared with satisfaction that "the wall is broken" and the principle established that the institute must receive support from the representative bodies of the Jewish public.[69] At an April 1928 meeting, YIVO leaders reaffirmed their strategy of seeking communal funds and noted hopefully that if every shtetl in Poland could be persuaded to make a periodic contribution it would add up to a significant sum.[70] That summer they sent a memorandum to several kehillahs as well as to the Council of Jewish Professional Associations, explaining their request:

> Communal organs and kehillahs must subsidize the Yiddish Scientific Institute … This support from the kehillahs must become systematic and general, because the Yiddish Scientific Institute is not a matter of individual scholars but a matter of organized Jewish society. The growth and the development of the Yiddish Scientific Institute are in the interest of the entire Jewish public.[71]

This appeal succeeded in securing several pledges for the fiscal year 1928–1929. As much as they welcomed this income, however, YIVO leaders prized even more the vindication the donations represented. By agreeing to help fund Yiddish scholarly work, these organizations seemed to recognize YIVO's self-proclaimed status as a national institution deserving of public aid.

Ironically, while the institute went to great lengths to avoid allying itself with a particular political camp, its support among members of socialist parties proved crucial to the success of these initiatives. Assuming that representatives of the Bund would be favorably inclined to allotting communal funds to YIVO, the institute's 1928 appeal targeted cities with a large Bundist faction in the local kehillah. At the same time YIVO leaders met with the Central Committees of the Bund and Poale Zion in order to secure the support of their kehillah delegates in budget votes.[72] Tcherikower noted privately that members of these parties were in fact instrumental in arranging subsidies.[73] Thus, however reluctant YIVO leaders were openly to forge ties to political movements, they were happy to exploit the sympathies of Diaspora Nationalist parties to their financial advantage.

YIVO sought donations not only from Jewish sources. As we have seen, the Minorities Treaties obligated the Polish government to fund educational work in the languages of its national minorities, including Yiddish, and at the start of the interwar period these conditions created high expectations among Diaspora Nationalists. When Polish authorities failed to fulfill their treaty obligations, Jewish leaders felt the right to demand the aid they believed was rightfully theirs.[74] Thus at the same time that it began its appeals to Jewish communal bodies, YIVO also sent a memorandum to the municipal authorities of twenty-four Polish cities. It argued that according to the terms of the Minorities Treaties, Jewish institutions such as YIVO were entitled to a share of the tax dollars paid by Jewish citizens of the Polish state. If the national Polish authorities failed to fulfill this obligation, then local governments were bound to provide subsidies to the institute.[75]

This initial appeal was a striking success, as at least eighteen city governments agreed to provide sums ranging from 3,000 złotys (about $337) for large centers such as Vilna and Łódź to 25 to 50 złotys ($2.80 to $5.60) in the case of small towns.[76] These results further cheered YIVO leaders, who believed that if such subsidies were granted annually they would create the steady source of income the institute craved. Weinreich remarked that

> The material situation of YIVO is currently in part firmly established.… When the campaigns in the municipal and communal organs began we didn't foresee that the institute would win the recognition of such institutions so quickly … And now we can note with satisfaction that our appeals … have succeeded very well.[77]

If donations from kehillahs carried symbolic weight, the import of the municipalities' response was even more potent. YIVO supporters believed that it implied acknowledgment of the principle that Jewish cultural work was entitled

to government funding. A Yiddish newspaper in Sosnowiec wrote that the institute had established that "to the extent that scholarly institutions in general exist by public funds, YIVO must also enjoy what is due to it."[78] In 1930 the *Yedies* declared that as the "central scholarly institution" of the Jewish citizens of Poland, YIVO deserved to be funded by the taxes they paid to the Polish government. By granting subsidies, local governments had come closer to recognizing that "*YIVO must be supported by the general state budget*."[79]

Moreover, YIVO leaders believed that they had set a precedent, encouraging municipal support for other Jewish cultural and educational endeavors. Weinreich hoped that after agreeing to donate regularly to YIVO, city council members would be more willing to do the same for the Yiddish secular schools.[80] As the *Yedies* put it, "Every subsidy that is voted by a magistrate brings us closer to full public recognition for our scholars and thus also for Jewish cultural work in general, which must be supported by public funds equally with the analogous work of the other nationalities in our country."[81] In fact, in this period fifty-nine local governments granted TSYSHO schools nearly 450,000 złotys, or just over $50,000, annually.[82] While the Polish national government only rarely approved subsidies, the success of appeals to Polish city councils seemed to observers to vindicate the principle of minority rights on a limited scale on the local level.

For the next few years support from kehillahs and especially from municipalities continued to grow. In 1930 the institute received subsidies from at least twenty-two Polish cities totaling more than 10,000 złotys. Together with almost 3,000 złotys donated by at least ten kehillahs, these sums comprised about 10 percent of the institute's total budget.[83] For the fiscal year 1930–1931, thirty-one city governments voted subsidies totaling more than 18,630 złotys or approximately $2,100.[84] The largest donations came from Warsaw, where the kehillah gave 600 złotys and the municipality an impressive 6,000 złotys.[85] The Warsaw City Council subsequently pledged 10,000 złotys, with delegates from the Polish Socialist Party and the pro–Piłsudksi Sanacja joining Jewish parties in their support.[86] At their high point more than a third of YIVO's income was comprised of such subsidies. The institute's leaders expected this proportion to continue rising in the future and felt that "There was no doubt that in a few more years the greatest part of YIVO's budget would be covered by public legal institutions."[87] Buoyed by their successes, they outlined ambitious plans to raise 525,000 złotys from 300 kehillahs and 300,000 from municipal governments, in addition to 2.7 million złotys from other sources.[88] YIVO believed that it had finally achieved recognition of its national status and its right to government support, as well as the practical necessity of a reliable funding base.

With the creation of a steady stream of income from both individuals and institutions in Eastern Europe, primarily in Poland, YIVO appeared to have found the congenial reception lacking across the Atlantic. Yet despite the symbolic importance of its Polish subsidies and frequent pessimistic pronouncements

about the United States, in fact the majority of the institute's funding did come from American sources. The sums it received from the American Section and from organizations such as the Joint were only a fraction of its founders' initial expectations. Nevertheless, since the institute's income was likewise much reduced from Shtif's original projections, these donations comprised a substantial part of its diminished budget.[89] By contrast, funds from individual contributors and public bodies in Eastern Europe indicated widespread support for YIVO, yet the sums that these sources could provide were meager in comparison to those arriving from the United States. The relative affluence of American Jewry meant that its lukewarm response overshadowed the contributions of even the most dedicated Polish supporters.

YIVO's budget for the period from August 15, 1925 to March 31, 1927 vividly reflects the nature of the institute's financial base in these years. Almost two thirds of its approximately $2,270 in income during this period came from American sources. Of the funds generated in the United States half were raised by the Amopteyl; grants from the Joint and People's Relief comprised the other half.[90] The remaining third of YIVO's budget consisted of contributions from Western and Eastern Europe in roughly equal measure. There was a significant difference between the two donor bases, however: while the funds received from the West came from only three sources, more than a dozen groups contributed from the East.[91] The most generous of these were two Warsaw-based organizations and two in the Baltics. Significantly, two of these four largest East European contributors were groups affiliated with the Yiddish secular schools. Most of the remaining donors from the region sent sums ranging from the equivalent of a few cents to a few dollars.[92]

A summary of YIVO's income during its first five years paints a similar picture. The institute estimated that it had raised a total of $46,000 in that period. Of that sum $17,000 or 37 percent came from fundraising campaigns abroad, primarily in the United States. An additional $5,525 or 12 percent came from large Jewish organizations in the United States and to a lesser extent Western Europe.[93] Subsidies from city governments and kehillahs, mainly in Eastern Europe, accounted for 13 percent of the total.[94] Thus even as it built support close to its Vilna home, American sources remained crucial to YIVO's funding. Yet these figures also underscore the continued importance of the institute's dedicated grassroots base: while a quarter of its income derived from organizations – roughly evenly split between the West and the East – nearly two thirds consisted of small sums painstakingly gathered via individual pledges, support groups, and fundraising trips throughout the world.

YIVO's balance sheet for 1931 shows that in that year roughly one third of its income derived from East European sources. Contributions from members, support groups, and fundraising campaigns throughout the region accounted for approximately one quarter of the institute's income, while subsidies from seventeen city governments and nine kehillahs in Poland totaled another 7 percent. Support in the Baltics continued to be particularly strong: donations from

individuals and organizations in Lithuania exceeded the sums gathered in more numerous Polish locales.[95] Yet these figures were still overshadowed by income from the United States and Western Europe. The amount sent by the Amopteyl in New York exceeded the total from twelve other support groups throughout the world, while donations from four German kehillahs more than doubled the sum raised from nine cities in Poland.[96] Campaigns in six West European locales brought in more funds than in two Baltic lands and twenty-eight Polish cities combined.[97] The same pattern held with regard to Jewish organizations. The Joint office in Berlin alone supplied 11 percent of YIVO's income. By contrast, twelve different groups of East European Jews donated to the institute that year: four banks; two B'nai Brith lodges; a students' group in Złoczów; a library in Białystok; a group of Vilna medical personnel; and associations of manual laborers, printers, and hairdressers in Grodno. Yet their combined contributions totaled only 973 złotys, the equivalent of $111 or less than 1 percent of YIVO's total budget.[98]

Taken together, these figures demonstrate that YIVO had succeeded in establishing a diverse and growing network of supporters among the ordinary Jews of Eastern Europe. Yet the poverty of the region meant that this enthusiastic backing could not translate into the substantial sums needed to sustain its work. Thus funding from the United States and Western Europe remained crucial to YIVO, even as the many small donations it received from the East – focused on the region of Vilna and the Baltics – vindicated its role as the champion of the folk and a national institution for stateless Yiddish-speaking Jewry.

YIVO at a Watershed

Despite the disappointment of their more grandiose plans, YIVO leaders were confident that they were building a secure if modest financial base thanks to their legions of dedicated supporters in Eastern Europe and their contacts further West. It was in this mood of optimism that they initiated their most ambitious undertaking, the construction of the YIVO headquarters in Vilna. The institute's first address in the city was the apartment of Max Weinreich at 14 Groys Pohulanka.[99] By early 1926 YIVO's local leaders were looking for separate office space since, as they noted, "Work is growing sharply and we are crowded in the present environment."[100] In May 1926 they rented two rooms a few doors away in the premises of the TSBK, at number 18 on the same main thoroughfare.[101] The following year they were already discussing the possibility of buying property, since, as they explained, they could not afford to pay rent.[102] In the meantime the institute took four additional rooms at the same address to accommodate its increased activity.[103]

In early 1928 YIVO leaders began considering purchasing a plot of land on which to erect a building of their own. Although some felt that they should wait until their budget was on a firmer footing, others argued that a construction project would invigorate and focus fundraising efforts. In April YIVO founded

a Building Committee for the purpose of "erecting in Vilna a secure home for scattered Yiddish scholarship."[104] Six months later the committee concluded that the time had come to take the "risky step" of a real estate purchase, for although the institute's rented premises had expanded to twelve rooms it was still severely cramped. The committee had identified "a suitable place for a building of our own," a lot at 18 Wiwulski Street with two existing wooden structures. It considered the larger of the two, at the rear of the site, suitable as a headquarters "after an appropriate renovation."[105] The $4,500 price was considered a great bargain, with renovation costs expected to amount to several thousand dollars in addition.[106] This work would entail, most significantly, adding a fireproof cement cellar under the existing structure to create secure storage for the institute's collections. The first floor would have space for exhibits and workrooms for those needing access to the collections, while the second floor would house lecture rooms and offices.[107]

YIVO leaders laid particular emphasis on the property's location in Pohulanka, a "very convenient" neighborhood to the west of the city center.[108] Close to the central thoroughfare of Groys Pohulanka, an avenue lined with modern residential buildings, Wiwulski was a lightly developed side road that still featured open lots in the 1930s.[109] The Building Committee praised the site "five minutes from Groys Pohulanka, a quiet, pretty, only partially built up street. This part of the city has a good future, but the street will never become noisy."[110] Weinreich expressed confidence that in such a location "we'll have a delightful building, secure and comfortable."[111]

As the Building Committee began an intensive fundraising campaign, its early successes seemed to vindicate its high expectations. By the time it completed the purchase in September 1928 it had already raised $900, mostly in the form of $100 donations from wealthy supporters in Vilna such as Herts Kovarski, Tsemakh Szabad, and David Kaplan-Kaplanski.[112] The committee felt confident that it could secure additional funds by broadening its appeals and asked figures such as Szabad, Dubnow, and Shatzky to solicit minimum donations of $100 in Warsaw, Berlin, and New York, respectively.[113] By April 1929 it had collected more than enough to pay for the land and structures at 18 Wiwulski Street.[114] In addition, Weinreich embarked on a six-month fundraising trip throughout the United States. Despite competition from Zionist *shlikhim*, American skepticism of high Yiddish culture, and the hot weather, when he returned in August he had helped raise more than $10,000 for the Building Fund.[115]

By the end of 1929 workers had completed a major component of the renovation, laying a cellar under the larger wooden structure, and the institute's leaders planned to move into their new building in the spring of 1930.[116] They optimistically described it as only a temporary home, however, predicting that it would serve their needs for only a few years as their activity continually expanded.[117] They considered "the present house a modest but quite respectable and secure shelter" that would suffice until they raised $50,000 for a

FIGURE 8. Cover of receipt booklet for donations to the Building Fund designed by Uma Olkenicki, c. 1930. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

brand-new, permanent facility.[118] Weinreich proposed setting aside $1,000 of the Building Fund as prize money in a competition for the design of this future headquarters.[119]

These ambitious plans reflected the mood in which YIVO ended the decade, as it seemed to be entering an era of intensive activity under conditions of relative stability. The day seemed in sight when it would no longer constantly struggle to cover daily expenses. Moreover, it was well on its way to completing its largest undertaking, a home of its own, which it was confidant would provide a fitting setting for the continued development of Yiddish scholarship. The institute's leaders felt that they had concluded a "period of preparation, of gathering strengths, of clarifying goals, of laying the foundation."[120] They were now ready to embark on "that great and systematic work" to which they aspired.[121]

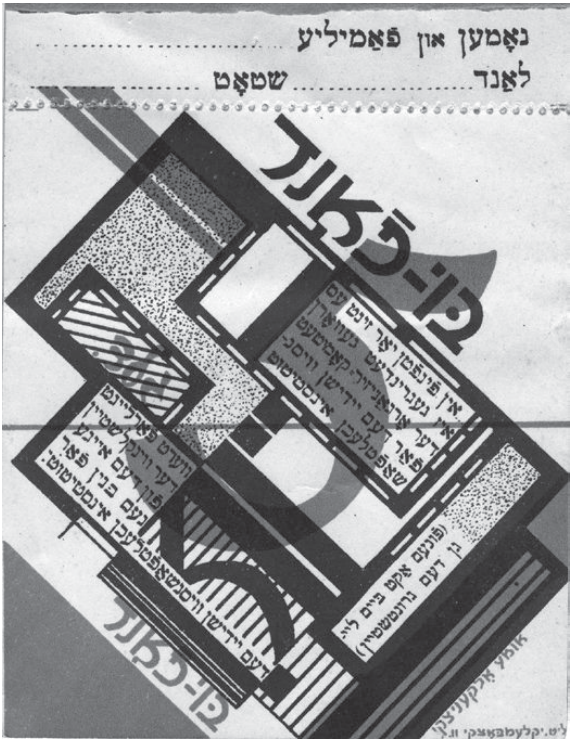


FIGURE 9. Receipt for donations to the Building Fund designed by Uma Olkenicki, c. 1930. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

The period's successes were capped by YIVO's first conference, held in Vilna on October 24–27, 1929. The cornerstone of the new headquarters was laid to great fanfare in a ceremony replete with orchestras and flag-waving schoolchildren. In his remarks Tsemakh Szabad stressed the appropriateness of the building's location: "I am proud of my Vilna, that just here in impoverished Vilna is created such a glorious institute …" Other speakers described future plans for a separate teaching facility to complement the research center now under renovation. Thousands of supporters flocked to this and other public events. Thus despite the simmering conflicts that came to the fore at the conference, as previously discussed, the meeting demonstrated YIVO's mass support in Eastern Europe.[122]

As the most authoritative forum for the institute's leadership since the preliminary conference, the gathering also gave official sanction to many policies carried out until that time on an ad hoc basis. It created a new governing structure with an Executive Office located in Vilna, the closest the institute ever came to officially moving its center.[123] It also proclaimed the founding of the Yiddish Scientific Institute itself. Up to that time, activities had been

carried out under the auspices of the Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute. By formally establishing YIVO as a legal entity, the delegates declared that Yiddish scholarship had come of age. In 1927 Weinreich had written to Shatzky, "Two–three more years' work and we will stand firmly on our feet and we will be able to prove ourselves before the world."[124] YIVO's first conference bore out that prediction by demonstrating the institute's accomplishments to date and its readiness for future work.

Yet while 1929 seemed a moment of great promise, in fact it was the brink of a precipice. Mere days after the conference ended, the Wall Street crash set off a worldwide depression. Within months this economic collapse began to take its toll, transforming the early 1930s into a "period of catastrophic material crisis."[125] Its impact was felt earliest and most acutely via its effects in the United States, as income from the Amopteyl and other American sources plummeted. The Amopteyl ceased its monthly subsidies of $100 in January 1930 as its budget fell by 40 percent.[126] By the end of the year YIVO leaders' optimism about their new headquarters had evaporated. Weinreich wrote privately to Shatzky, "We've already stopped talking and writing about the 'provisional building,' for it will probably suffice for us for a decade."[127] The institute's home was both a victim of and a contributor to its financial predicament. While work on the facility suffered from the drop in fundraising, the crisis was deepened by mounting costs that far exceeded original estimates. YIVO budgeted a few thousand dollars for the renovation, yet by the end of 1930 it had already spent $15,000 and estimated that another $5,000 would still be required to finish the job.[128]

In July 1930 all construction was halted for lack of funds.[129] By 1931 YIVO had incurred a debt of nearly $4,000 and feared losing its still-uncompleted building at auction if it did not raise $1,000 immediately.[130] The institute sought to borrow to cover this sum, but in March 1931 a major bank loan of about 35,000 złotys (roughly $4,000) fell through at the last minute.[131] Its leaders described their situation as "truly catastrophic," with fundraising at a "minimum" level and work in a state of "permanent crisis."[132] As the Central Board wrote to Lestschinsky, "It's very bad. Unbelievable how bad. Creditors protest one after the other. It's difficult to get coal for heating. Nevertheless we work."[133] By 1932 YIVO's income had fallen to less than half its precrash level and staff members had not received regular wages for more than a year.[134] When employees petitioned for payment of their salaries, Reisen replied that YIVO had no credit left to borrow further and could not satisfy their demands "unless a miracle occurs."[135] In fact, to continue operating the institute was reduced to taking a loan from staff members who had set aside money to cover their personal rent.[136]

The Building Committee responded to this calamity with a new fundraising initiative, selling stamps for 10 marks (about $2) each. It noted that the stamps could be divided into halves since many supporters could not afford to purchase even one.[137] The American Section did its part, soliciting contributions to its "1 Dollar Campaign for the Building of the Yiddish Scientific Institute."[138]

Reisen raised much of the funds needed to complete the renovation during a five-and-a-half-month trip to South America in the summer and fall of 1932, carried out under the slogan "A Roof for the Yiddish Scientific Institute."[139] With these appeals YIVO turned once again to its core constituency, gathering small sums from ordinary men and women. Yet the contrast to the Building Committee's original effort to attract gifts of no less than $100 reflected starkly its diminished expectations in the wake of the economic collapse.

By the end of 1932 YIVO's new headquarters was finally ready for occupancy. Yet this accomplishment came at a heavy price, for the institute was on the verge of bankruptcy. By the time it moved into its new facilities at the start of 1933 it faced a debt of 80,000 złotys or about $9,000, almost 20 percent of which was owed to creditors ready to foreclose. This figure included thirteen months of unpaid wages owed to its staff. The institute's leaders believed that if its debts were not met its building and collections would be put up for auction and it would "cease to exist" within a few months.[140] These financial woes were now exacerbated by the crisis of German Jewry, which remained a significant source of aid up until Hitler's ascension to power in January 1933.[141]

In August 1933 the institute decided on extreme measures to keep its doors open. It launched a "Redemption Fund to Save the Existence of YIVO," writing confidentially to its most dedicated supporters, "We demand from you not a donation, but a sacrifice." It canceled debts of 16,000 złotys (approximately $1,800) owed to members of the Building Committee and slashed its already-reduced budget in half to about $4,000 a year. It also further reduced the staff from nineteen to eleven and cut the salaries and work hours of those remaining.[142] YIVO personnel protested these measures, arguing that the institute had a duty to avoid layoffs "in such a time when anyone who loses his work has no prospects to soon find another employment" and that "the negligible sums that the [remaining] workers have received [as wages] … truly make normal work impossible."[143] In October the staff requested that they be paid a portion of the funds gathered on Reisen's trip abroad, noting that they had received a total of five weeks' salary in the last six months.[144]

This "redemption campaign" was a risky strategy that placed a heavy burden on YIVO supporters and staff. Yet it succeeded in averting the most dire scenario, liquidation of the institute's assets, and stabilized its finances at a reduced level of activity.[145] In retrospect, some believed that YIVO had behaved recklessly in undertaking such an expensive building project and pursuing it even at the risk of bankruptcy. Yet the institute's leaders defended their course of action, citing a "moral duty to the thousands of friends around the world who gave contributions to the Building Fund" and who wished to see the headquarters completed. Moreover, they argued, without its own facility during this difficult period YIVO would have been evicted from its rented premises and its collections dispersed.[146] If YIVO had waited for more favorable conditions, its Vilna headquarters – like the institute itself – would mostly likely never have come into existence at all.

"The Temple of Yiddish Scholarship"[147]

When YIVO finally moved into its new headquarters in January 1933, there was still no floor laid in the vestibule, no paint on some walls, and no furniture in some rooms.[148] Despite the work that remained to be done, however, the institute's leaders expressed satisfaction that "the treasures of Yiddish creativity" were now well housed and accessible to the public.[149] Zelig Kalmanovitch wrote to Yudel Mark, "from the ruin that you perhaps remember from the time of the [1929] conference it has become a fine house, warm and bright …"[150] Shortly after its opening a staff member described the institute's building bustling with activity, filled with scholars, schoolchildren, and workers coming to consult or supplement the valuable material that filled its storerooms:

> In the library workroom Jewish schoolgirls are working on a variant of Mendele's "Kleyne mentshele" [Little Man], in the office a young man pages through the New York [journal] "Hamer" [Hammer], an old labor activist reads the latest issue of the "Fraye arbeter shtime" [Free Voice of Labor]. Z. Reisen is busy again with a person who brought a manuscript of Eliakum Zunser.[151]

The impact the headquarters made was unmistakable. One "simple Jewish worker" from Białystok began the report of his visit by quoting the biblical account of Moses before the burning bush, adding, "One feels here as in a holy place." He related his sense of wonderment upon entering the structure: "Come inside the colossal newly constructed building and you don't know where to turn first and what to think about first."[152] A Vilna resident also used religious imagery when recalling how "We used to come into YIVO as into a true temple, the temple of Yiddish scholarship, and look at the elegant, tidy building and its departments inside with a feeling of true awe."[153]

Marc Chagall used a similar trope when he remarked of the headquarters, "although it is apparently as poor as a little house in one of my paintings, it is however at the same time as rich as the Temple."[154] Yet Chagall was exceptional in portraying the edifice as quaint and humble. More typical were those who stressed its impressive appearance and up-to-date amenities. Weinreich noted that the facilities boasted fireproof storage for the YIVO collections and that any item could be located in three minutes.[155] The Building Committee proudly described its parquet floors, glass display cases, well-equipped workrooms, and landscaped grounds. Although much remains to be done, the chairman stated, "We may be satisfied that YIVO has at least a beautiful and pleasant dear home with roomy, sunny, and airy workrooms, with central heating and all conveniences."[156] The historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz, who traveled from New York to Vilna to spend a year in YIVO's Aspirantur training program in 1938, recalled her first visit to the building:

> We entered an enormous vestibule. I gasped with astonished pleasure at its uncluttered spaciousness. … The whole place shimmered with the sheen of its highly polished wood floor. … I was impressed that each seat [in the reading room] had its own built-in

tubular fluorescent lamp – something you didn't have in the main reading rooms of the New York Public Library."[157]

This sense of freshness and innovation was enhanced by YIVO's location in Pohulanka, a neighborhood where fields and orchards were just being replaced by broad, straight streets and new construction.[158] As the area developed it became the location of several Jewish institutions including the relief society EKOPO (Evreiskii Komitet Pomoshchi Zhertvam Voiny; Jewish Committee to Aid War Victims) and the Hevrah Mefitse Haskalah School, as well as the home of many YIVO leaders including Weinreich and Reisen.[159] This concentration of modern, secularly oriented residents and organizations led one writer to claim in 1929 that Pohulanka was "now the center of the entire intellectual life of the city, with all the institutions" located there.[160]

The YIVO headquarters itself was a freestanding building set far back from the curb, surrounded by plantings and the smaller structure on the site.[161] Supporters so valued this attractive, park-like setting that an anonymous party donated 2,000 trees and flowers to beautify the grounds.[162] Dawidowicz wrote in her memoirs,

> The YIVO occupied about a half acre of land, with a six-foot-high picket fence enclosing the property on the street front. … There, at the far end of a tree- and shrub-lined paved walkway some seventy-five feet long, stood the YIVO building. … On each side of the walkway a lawn with bright flowerbeds stretched to the end of the property, whose boundaries were marked by clusters of trees..... I had never seen a Jewish institution in so verdant a setting.

Both the headquarters and its surroundings left an indelible impression. As Dawidowicz concluded:

> Everything about the YIVO – its location, its landscaped setting, its modern design, the gleaming immaculateness of the place – delivered a message. I interpreted it to mean that the YIVO had class, was no moldering institution, but a place from which distinction and excellence would issue. Even more: The YIVO was no seedy relic of the past; it belonged to the future.[163]

YIVO supporters took especial pride in the contrast their modern facilities presented to the older institutions of Jewish Vilna. In particular, YIVO was often compared to another famed local landmark, the Strashun Library. Founded in 1892 with the bequest of the scholar Matisyahu Strashun to the Vilna Jewish community, the library was noted for its collection of rabbinic works. Observers referred to YIVO as "a new Yavneh," "a palace, a temple, a tower that will light far, far around it," and "the third Temple in the Jerusalem of Lithuania."[164] Khaykel Lunski, the Strashun's longtime librarian, similarly called his workplace "the temple of the spirit, the palace of wisdom, the pride of Vilna," and "a source of light for all of Russian Jewry, the Yavneh, the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem of Lithuania."[165]

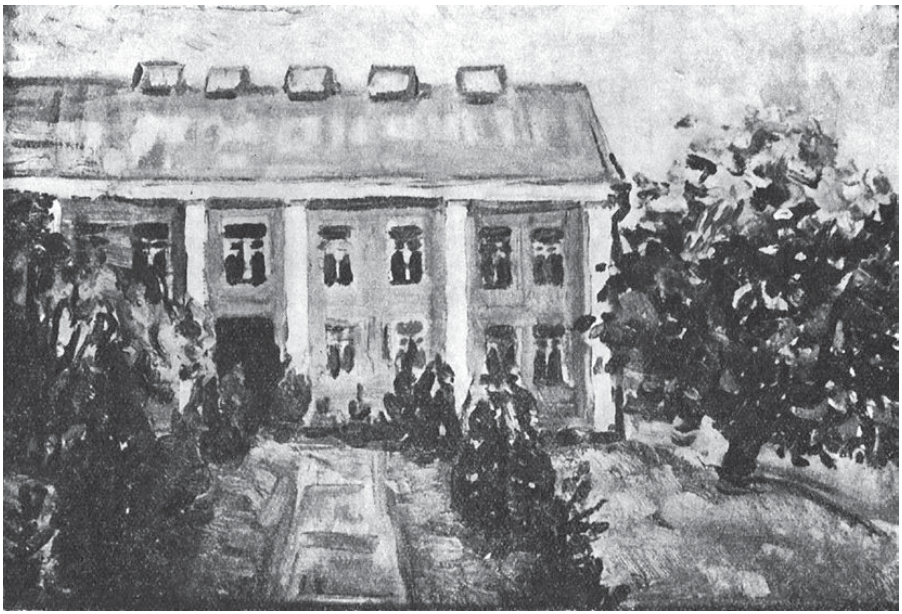


FIGURE 10. "Our Garden in Wilno," painting of the headquarters by Bencion Cukierman in *Heftn far yidisher kunst* [Notebooks for Jewish Art], 1936. From the Library of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

If YIVO, as Dawidowicz wrote, "belonged to the future," then the Strashun represented Vilna Jewry's rich past. It was housed in the historic Jewish quarter in the city center, the traditional focus of community life. Although a site of great poverty by the interwar period, the neighborhood's narrow winding byways, often spanned by arches, remained the quintessential symbol of Jewish Vilna. The heart of the area was the shulhoyf, where the Great Synagogue and many kloyzn were located. The shulhoyf was also the site of the local well, public bath, and communal announcement boards, making it the focus of social as well as religious activity.[166] The Strashun was housed in the midst of this complex, originally in a section of the Great Synagogue and after 1901 in its own adjacent building.[167] As an institution rooted in the city's legacy of religious learning, it formed a fitting part of the core of traditional Vilna. Shmuel Niger wrote that the Strashun found its rightful home among the medieval streets of the Jewish quarter: "One could move from the crowded shulhoyf and build a separate building for the richest Jewish library in Lithuania. But … an old matron [*baleboste*] doesn't move to new apartments, an old matron doesn't build … that's what the upstarts do." Niger characterized the library as a *yoyredte*, a proud but impoverished lady who held on to the symbols of her former glory.[168]

In contrast to the Strashun, the dignified aristocrat tucked away in the shulhoyf, YIVO was the "upstart" boldly staking its claim with a prominent new headquarters. In "remote Pohulanka," a fifteen-minute walk from the antiquated Jewish quarter, the institute was situated among open lots with its only close Jewish neighbor the playing field of the Maccabi sports club.[169] In this setting its building dominated the surrounding landscape much as YIVO hoped to dominate the Jewish cultural landscape. In a fictional but telling anecdote, Daniel Charney claimed that the structure was located on the highest point in the city, a spot where both Russians and Poles had sought to construct a church. Instead, however, the institute built its "temple of knowledge" on Wiwulski Street, and thus "the Vilna Jews became closer to the heavens than the Russian Orthodox and the Catholics taken together."[170] While the Strashun might have had greater *yikhes*, its rather frayed gentility could not compete with the dynamic image that the YIVO building projected.

Yet however forward-looking YIVO's vision of Jewish culture, the institute's supporters saw no clear dichotomy between the Strashun Library in the shulhoyf and YIVO on Wiwulski Street. In fact, rather than dismissing Vilna's heritage as the Jerusalem of Lithuania, they were often the most vocal in their praise of "old, eternal Vilna."[171] The builders of Yiddish culture in the interwar period saw no contradiction in celebrating Vilna's traditions and challenging them at the same time. They contributed their share to the mystique of the city, then co-opted that mystique for their own work. In this way, even while creating modern alternatives they could claim the glories of Vilna's past as their own.

They thus spoke of "old-new Vilna," a place where "shadows tremble on the boundary between the traditional past and the modern present," as the poet Zalman Shneur put it.[172] Niger described Vilna as "a medieval – and yet one of the most modern Jewish cities," a place where ancient buildings concealed groundbreaking ideas.[173] The author of one article asked rhetorically what represented the true spirit of Vilna: the rabbi, the maskil or the Bundist; the old-fashioned *gmiles-khsodim* [free loan societies] or the modern self-help organizations; the "primitive," "dying" shulhoyf or the institutions of the "living new Jewish humanist culture." He replied that all are links in the "golden chain" of Jewish life in the city, all elements of "*nusekh vilne* [the Vilna style]."[174] Other writers invoked in one breath "the Vilna of Torah and Haskalah … [and] of the Jewish labor movement."[175] In the same vein, Abraham Golomb described YIVO's task as fusing Jewish folk traditions and Haskalah innovation to produce cutting-edge research.[176] In such formulations, often starkly opposed influences were rhetorically woven into a seamless whole, a Diasporic counterpart to the Zionist *Altneuland*.[177]

The theme of blending old and new was especially resonant in the realm of scholarship, as observers linked the city's past to its traditions of religious study. Those who created the institutions of secular Yiddish education and culture thus claimed to be carrying forward Vilna's legacy as a center of rabbinic

learning. In this view, YIVO and the Yiddish schools were but the contemporary version of the yeshivas and kloyzn for which Vilna had long been renowned. Visiting a Yiddish school Niger reported, "in front of my eyes swim the shadows of the Gaon's Kloyz, of Ramayles' Yeshiva … one learns new, entirely new things, but it's the old sitting and learning, it's the old constancy, it's the Litvak's eternal love for Torah and wisdom."[178] It was no surprise, he continued, that YIVO established its headquarters in the city, since the institute was "a modern *sha"s* [Talmud]," a place where – according to Charney – students followed debates among Yiddish linguists instead of between the Talmudic sages Hillel and Shammai.[179] Another writer concurred that YIVO properly "built [its] nest right in our old Vilna, in the long-recognized 'Jerusalem of Lithuania,' in the place where over the generations the 'golden chain' of Jewish cultural creativity was forged." "Everything in Vilna has changed, even the Torahs," he concluded, "but the soul remained the same!" [180]

Some took this argument further, describing the secular, sometimes politically radical movements that flourished in the city as Vilna's truest heirs. In fact, they maintained, its most important legacy was a "tradition of *beginning* new things … a pioneer tradition." As Niger explained, "Even the revolution of the Vilna Jewish street began from building, not from breaking."[181] Weinreich similarly stated that "Tradition doesn't mean copying the old. Breaking, disturbing the old can also be tradition." In Vilna, Weinreich wrote, the dramatic changes in Jewish life since the time of the Haskalah had not led to disintegration. Instead, the city's historical consciousness and spirit of innovation combined to produce an infusion of fresh energy and creativity:

> But when a community possesses tradition and life force it builds anew; and if not, it simply creates ruins, and a ruin remains.… In Vilna there remain no ruins, because besides tradition Vilna has a second virtue: momentum. It is a city of inventiveness, of pioneering.[182]

Supporters argued that it was precisely these qualities that made the city a uniquely fitting home for YIVO, a forward-looking institution deeply rooted in the Jewish past. At a 1929 meeting, one YIVO leader noted how appropriate it was that the institute be located in "old, ever-blooming Vilna," a city where "there is a natural growth from the old Yiddish culture to the modern; therein lies the difference between Vilna and other cities."[183] Weinreich described YIVO's very function as being "a bridge from the past to the future." It could thus only flourish in a setting as saturated with historical consciousness as the Jerusalem of Lithuania. In Vilna, Weinreich concluded, "there is paired Jewish tradition and the Jewish present. Only from the two elements together can one build a Jewish cultural future."[184]

Thus YIVO leaders envisioned their work not as a rejection of Vilna's legacy but as its most faithful successor, perpetuating and extending its most valuable qualities. Yiddish activists believed that the old ways of life were inevitably fading. They merely sought to preserve the essence of earlier achievements

and incorporate it into a new synthesis that would include the best of both worlds.[185] In this, their efforts reflected in microcosm the work of modern Yiddish culture as a whole. On one occasion, a YIVO collector visiting a small town in search of historic documents watched in amazement as local Jews hurried to synagogue for morning prayers. He described the sight as "a living Chagall picture … a scene from *The Dybbuk* …"[186] His reaction points to the way in which by the interwar period Yiddish artists – like Yiddish scholars – had distanced themselves from the shtetl even as they idealized it, rendering it the stuff of cliché. By symbolically separating traditional Jewish life from the realm of present-day reality, they could transform it into the raw material of a progressive, secular future.

At the 1929 conference Latzky-Bertholdi noted that "People once thought that freedom meant secularism," while in fact true freedom was the ability to draw from all elements of Jewish tradition, including religion. Because Vilna residents recognized this truth, there YIVO could "become the center of the free spirit, and Vilna will thus remain worthy of the name Jerusalem of Lithuania."[187] In this way YIVO leaders formulated a vision of Jewish culture committed both to preservation of the past and to constant innovation, a vision that both drew on and contributed to the myth of Vilna they themselves helped create. Writing in 1945, Weinreich recalled the headquarters not as a counterpoint to Vilna's traditional institutions but as their culmination: "YIVO's building at 18 Wiwulski Street [served] as a witness to what the Jewishness of Yatkever Street [in the Jewish quarter] can achieve."[188] To Weinreich, it seemed in retrospect that such a synthesis could only have arisen in "old and ever-young Jewish Vilna."[189]

From the first, the YIVO headquarters embodied this symbiotic relationship between the institute and the city it made its home. As the Building Committee prepared to make its purchase, it noted,

> It is clear without excessive words what a value it will have for our cause, and even more – for the entire Yiddish cultural movement, that somewhere in the wide world there can be found a building entirely devoted to Yiddish scholarship and culture; and can there be a doubt that that 'somewhere' must be Vilna?[190]

The site quickly confirmed its status as a local landmark, for visitors began arriving even before YIVO had taken up residence there.[191] As a staff member recounted, groups of all sorts came to see the institute's new facilities:

> And in whatever room I enter I meet excursions. A Białystok Yiddish society, a group of Jewish soldiers wandering in from various places to [military] service in Vilna, students from a Polish Jewish gymnasium for whom Mr. [Moyshe] Lerer has everywhere in each room "endless interesting things to show."[192]

Shortly after its opening "great masses of people streamed to the building" to view an exhibit on "Jewish Social Movements." Nearly 5,000 arrived in one week, and to meet demand special hours were added for schools and excursion

groups.[193] By 1936 the number of such visitors forced the institute to set aside a special time for guests to tour the building. As the *Yedies* wrote, "People come from all countries and parts of the world, and as they arrive in Vilna they go first of all to YIVO."[194] In his guidebook *1000 yor vilne* [1000 Years of Vilna] Zalman Szyk proposed itineraries for tourists with varying amounts of time to spend in the city. He suggested that those with only a free half day begin their visit in the Jewish quarter and conclude with a stop at the YIVO building, as if to reenact in a few hours the path from traditional to modern Vilna.[195]

Although intimately linked to its Vilna setting, YIVO leaders emphasized that the headquarters' significance extended well beyond the bounds of the city. The first principle of an organizational plan formulated in 1927 stated that "the Yiddish Scientific Institute is no local institution; rather its work encompasses all countries with a compact Jewish settlement."[196] As the focal point of a worldwide movement YIVO served Jews throughout the Diaspora, "everywhere that there are Jewish communities, masses of the Jewish folk that speak and feel in Yiddish," as Szabad put it.[197] Thus the Building Committee wrote that the YIVO headquarters "is not a question for Vilna. It is a matter of creating a home for all of Yiddish culture."[198] The institute's leaders argued that their new facilities would strengthen not only their own work but that of Diaspora Nationalists more broadly, since "a home of its own for YIVO … raises the prestige of all Yiddish cultural activity of which YIVO is the center."[199] The American Section thus described this "house of Yiddish scholarship" as "a fireproof treasury for Jewish creativity in all lands and of all times." "The Yiddish Scientific Institute is a cornerstone of the cultural edifice of our people," it continued, and "the YIVO building is the cornerstone of the institute."[200] As Daniel Charney put it in verse, material arrived "from East, North, and South" to the YIVO headquarters, "where the treasure of our people lies hidden."[201]

This vision of a truly international organization with Vilna at its center was given concrete expression in one of the headquarters' most impressive features. Upon entering the building one stood in an "enormous vestibule" facing a wide staircase framed by pillars. On the staircase landing hung prominently a colored map of the world marked to indicate the locales of YIVO activity.[202] One observer described the scene shortly after the building's opening:

> On the broad stairs the visitors consider the large map of the world with the pins stuck into cities: green – YIVO's national [branch] organizations; yellow – support groups for YIVO; red – YIVO c[ommittees?] and one large dark pin, the inscription near which everyone reads aloud more loudly than usual – Vilna … [203]

Another writer noted that this expansive map with its Yiddish place names, itself an innovation, conveyed a powerful message that no place or topic lay outside the scope of Yiddish scholarship.[204]

As this image demonstrated, Yiddish-speaking Jews were a particularly far-flung community with its heartland spread across Eastern Europe and with emigrant outposts from North America to South Africa. YIVO thus served, in

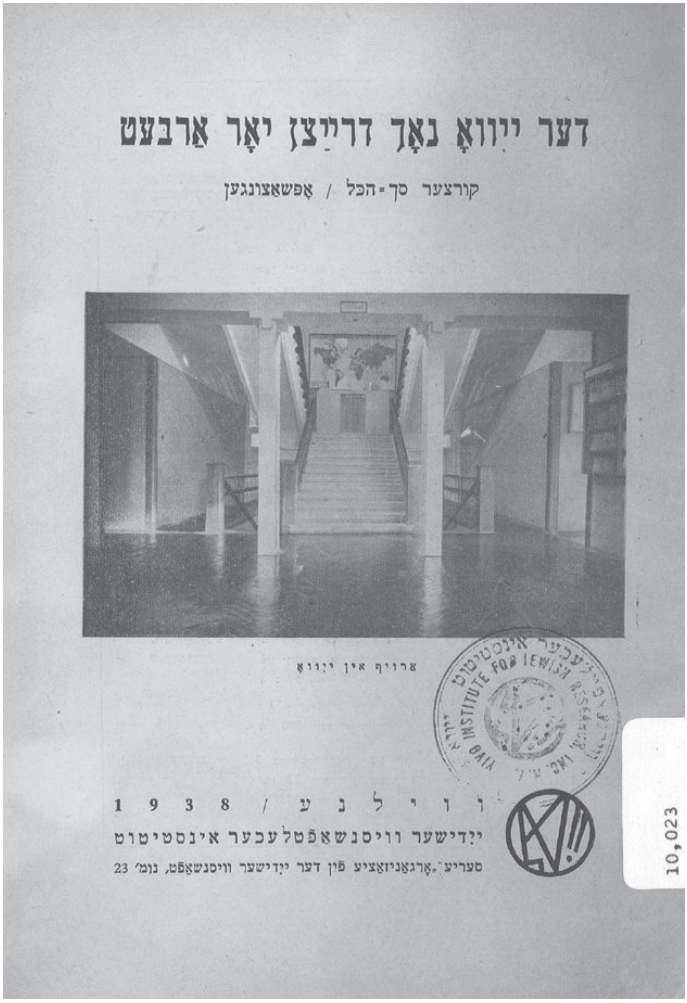


FIGURE 11. Cover of the brochure *Der yivo nokh draytsn yor arbet* [YIVO after Thirteen Years' Work], 1938, showing the vestibule of the headquarters with a map of the world on the landing. From the Library of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

the words of Zalman Reisen, as "a means of organizing Jewish creative energy across countries and borders, a point of connection for all the dispersed parts of our people, the intellectual ingathering of the exiles for the international Yiddish nation."[205] Since this nation nowhere possessed a state of its own, it was united by language rather than land. As Noah Prylucki stated, "Yiddish itself is recognized as a territory, the anarchic republic with its seat in Vilna. YIVO is the scholarly academy of the territory 'Yiddish.'"[206] As the guardian of the national culture and final arbiter of its tongue, the institute functioned

as the highest authority of the Yiddish nation. In this sense, as an early Riga supporter put it, YIVO indeed served "the dispersed Jewish people … instead of a government."[207]

If Vilna was "the capital of Yiddishland," as a speaker at the 1935 World Convention said, then the YIVO headquarters was the closest that Yiddish-speaking Jews came to a capitol building.[208] It served as both a "temple" for those distant from religious belief and a "people's palace" for a nation in Diaspora.[209] With no grand edifices to serve as icons of national pride, Diaspora Nationalists viewed the institute's headquarters as the physical embodiment of their loftiest aspirations. Thus, according to Charney, "the small, modest building of YIVO" became "the symbol and ornament of our highest cultural achievements in the entire world."[210]

Conclusion

A formal decision was never made to relocate the seat of YIVO. Rather, "The center of gravity of the institute's work moved of its own accord to Vilna."[211] As Weinreich wrote in 1935, "Vilna didn't seize the institute; rather, it was laid upon our city."[212] The fact that the YIVO building was ultimately constructed in Vilna, despite the ongoing reservations of the institute's leaders, vindicated the belief that only the Jerusalem of Lithuania could house the foremost institution of Yiddish culture. The shift to the East also meant a shift away from Shtif's idea of a research center serving a relatively narrow circle of intellectuals. By instead focusing on their grassroots support in Eastern Europe, YIVO leaders implicitly endorsed the Vilna plan for an organization that would devote greater energy to the needs and aspirations of the Yiddish-speaking masses. As Jacob Shatzky put it in 1951, "While the Berlin method was academic utopianism, the Vilna method was democratic realism."[213] Ironically, by choosing the more provincial Vilna over the cosmopolitan German capital, YIVO embraced the broader vision of serving an transnational Diaspora of Yiddish speakers throughout the world.

Why then were YIVO leaders so slow to embrace Vilna as their headquarters? One consideration was certainly financial. Their resources already strained by a vibrant range of Diaspora Nationalist projects, Vilna activists were painfully aware of the difficult economic conditions for Yiddish cultural work in the region. If they hesitated to acknowledge the obvious – that the institute's strongest support lay in Poland and the Baltics – it was at least in part because of their reluctance to focus their hopes on the impoverished communities of the region. By settling on a Vilna location they implicitly admitted their failure to attract native German Jews to their cause. Abandoning Berlin meant abandoning the dream of securing large donations from the relatively affluent communities of Western Europe.

To overcome these economic limitations the institute employed a series of strategies to establish a secure income. Although American support never

reached the levels hoped for by YIVO's founders, they came increasingly to rely on aid from across the Atlantic. The institute's dedicated donor base in Eastern Europe could not balance its budget sheet but confirmed YIVO's widespread popularity among the folk. Moreover, the positive response to its appeals from both Jewish kehillahs and non–Jewish municipalities seemed to validate, at least on a limited scale, YIVO's self-proclaimed status as a national institution. Ultimately, none of these tactics could compensate for the lack of full government support, nor insure against the devastating impact of the worldwide depression. Yet despite these obstacles the institute managed to complete its headquarters in the Jerusalem of Lithuania, crowning the achievements of modern Yiddish culture and forging a powerful icon for the stateless Yiddish nation.

5

"To Forge Intellectual Weapons for Our People!"

Scholarship in Times of Crisis, 1931–1939

Introduction: "Jewish Reality Has Changed"

During the years of the financial collapse YIVO's work inevitably suffered, as its publications appeared infrequently and the growth of its collections slowed. In addition to the obvious budgetary crisis, the institute's leaders and supporters identified several other culprits for this diminished activity. One was the lack of sufficient personnel to oversee the day-to-day administration of the institute. "The primary impediment" to YIVO's flourishing, noted members of the Central Board, "is that staff and finances are lacking, that the Executive Office is overloaded with work, and so it is no surprise that they lag behind."[1] Tcherikower argued that paid administrators were needed since YIVO could no longer rely on "several people devot[ing] their entire spare time for free" as it had in "the heroic period" of the institute's founding, a complaint repeated later in the decade.[2]

In practice, such tasks fell largely on the shoulders of the core members of the Executive Office – Max Weinreich, Zalman Reisen, and Zelig Kalmanovitch – whose organizational and fundraising duties impinged on their scholarly work. Reisen's extended trip to South America in 1932, for example, raised the sums necessary to complete the YIVO headquarters but deprived the Vilna office of a major figure for almost six months. Kalmanovitch departed for Paris for nearly a year in late 1933 to take alternate employment when the institute could not afford to pay his salary.[3] Weinreich's frequent absences in the mid-1930s had a particularly acute impact. Weinreich was unable to work after being seriously injured during a pogrom in Vilna in November 1931, when he lost sight in one eye.[4] His widening intellectual horizons also led him away from YIVO, as he spent the academic year 1932–1933 at Yale University and the fall of 1933 in Vienna.[5] During these periods he was sorely missed, for his role as a guiding force was recognized by the institute's other leaders – all his elders – who spoke with admiration of his intellectual and administrative abilities.[6] As

Kalmanovitch noted, "Weinreich was the true leader of YIVO, and that he is not there is felt at every step."[7]

At the same time, internal critics reiterated now-familiar grievances. If the institute had recently experienced a decline, they maintained, this was because it had grown distant from the folk. Throughout this period some members of YIVO's leadership such as Isaac Giterman charged that "the broad public lost interest in the work of YIVO" because "YIVO did not satisfy the needs of the broad public. Its work is too abstract [and] cut off from the masses."[8] Yet others such as Kalmanovitch rejected the repeated "accusations from various sides that [YIVO] is divorced from real life, that it went down 'academic' paths, that it so to speak retreated from its first principle, 'to serve the Yiddish masses in their fight for their cultural emancipation.'" The high volume of YIVO's correspondence with supporters around the world, he argued, disproved such charges.[9] Tcherikower and Lestschinsky maintained that YIVO's diminished productivity was due less to the institute's actions than to external factors beyond its control. Collecting had decreased not because YIVO had alienated its core supporters but rather because "the local zamlers have no money and because leftist sentiments are spreading." Reisen recalled that the institute had originally hoped to collaborate with the Soviet academies for Jewish research, which the political climate now made impossible. "We haven't changed, Jewish reality has changed," he concluded.[10]

In fact, in these years Yiddish-speaking Jewry had to contend with ominous changes on several fronts. To concern about the precarious economy was now added the rising menace emanating from Nazi Germany. Moreover, the Polish government became increasingly hostile to its Jewish minority and formally abrogated the Minorities Treaties in 1934.[11] Its authoritarian tendencies further intensified following the death of Józef Piłsudski the following year.[12] As the regime heightened its monitoring of suspected left-leaning organizations, YIVO's fear of government surveillance increased – and not without justification.[13] Faced with these twin economic and political threats, many Jews became impatient with the solutions proposed by moderate political groups. As they turned increasingly to movements at either end of the spectrum such as communism on the left and Revisionist Zionism on the right, divisions in Jewish life became ever starker.[14]

In this increasingly polarized atmosphere, the institute – and its ideal of objective scholarship – suffered attacks from all sides. The leaders of other Vilna Jewish institutions objected to the "one-sided, partisan attitude of the YIVO board, where anti-Zionism and anti-Hebraism reign," a view that YIVO leaders attributed to "fanatics" who sought to slander them.[15] Yet while some protested YIVO's supposed anti-Hebraist stance during a fundraising campaign in South Africa, others lodged complaints that emissary I. N. Steinberg spoke too warmly of Zionism there.[16] The sharpest polemics in these years came from the left, as communist sympathizers criticized the institute's "active nationalist politics" and predicted "the complete rule of YIVO by reactionary elements."[17]

A campaign in South America led a Uruguayan newspaper to urge its readers to unite "Against the Reactionary Petit Bourgeois YIVO Culture" and "Against its Socio-Fascist Emissary!"[18]

Yet despite – or perhaps because of – these multiple pressures, YIVO was able not only to resume its activities in the mid- and late 1930s but to do so with renewed energy. Max Weinreich's growing interest in the cutting-edge fields of social scientific research, which he brought back from New Haven and Vienna to Vilna, led YIVO to produce its most innovative scholarship. As projects under discussion since the institute's founding were finally realized, its closer collaboration with the Yiddish secular schools and greater emphasis on popular work tested both its commitment to nonpartisanship and its clout in the broader Yiddish cultural sphere. Thus at the end of the interwar period, the institute faced a darkening political landscape with apprehension about the future but undiminished intellectual vigor.

Recovering Finances and the World Convention

Two years after the creation of the Redemption Fund YIVO was still drawing on donations to that emergency campaign, while staff members complained that they were owed a total of 22,000 złotys (or a little more than $4,000).[19] Nevertheless, by 1935 the institute was on its way to a modest financial recovery. Its fortunes mirrored those of Poland as a whole, where the economy reached its lowest point in 1933 and began a gradual rebound by 1936 that lasted until the outbreak of World War II.[20] By 1935 the institute's budget had climbed to three times its low of 1933, and by the following year its financial situation had stabilized, allowing it to resume publishing and other activities.[21] In 1936 its income of 97,375 złotys (equivalent to $18,373) covered its expenses of 86,924 złotys, and by late in the decade YIVO's annual budget was matching its levels before the crash.[22]

As the economic situation in the United States also improved the Amopteyl began to recover its financial footing and the share of YIVO's income from American sources rose.[23] In 1935 they accounted for about one quarter of YIVO's budget and 38 percent by 1939.[24] However, the sums raised in the United States never again matched their earlier importance in the institute's ledgers, in part because the devaluation of the dollar in 1933 meant that contributions in American currency lost 40 percent of their purchasing power in Poland.[25] The American Joint Distribution Committee, for example, contributed approximately 3 percent of the institute's budget in 1935, and although that proportion doubled to about 7 percent in the following years it did not match the figure of roughly 10 percent for the precrash period.[26]

In one sign of recovery the Warsaw Friends of YIVO were able to open their own office in the Polish capital in 1937.[27] The Vilna headquarters originally denied its request for funding, maintaining that it was barely covering its own expenses, but eventually relented and began providing the Warsaw branch a

monthly subsidy.[28] More significantly, the institute succeeded in restoring its staffing levels after the drastic reductions of the crisis period, although employees complained in 1938 that their salaries had remained static since the deep cuts five years earlier.[29] While the YIVO leadership insisted that their budget was still too precarious to meet demands for a 15 percent raise, the staff countered that "the material situation of YIVO is quite good" and that "in the last years the institute grew greatly in all branches of its work."[30] The personnel later added that they felt insulted by the administration's tone, since "We have in the good as well as the bad times each in his own way contributed to the growth of YIVO from its first day on."[31] The following spring the staff called a work stoppage and then a strike, yet the issue remained unresolved.[32]

As the institute continued to work to regain its momentum, it returned to its earlier fundraising strategies. Campaigns throughout the world continued to provide a substantial percentage of YIVO's total income in the mid- and late 1930s, often close to half and in at least one case the majority.[33] Despite reservations about investing time and money in sending shlikhim on extended tours, major campaigns were undertaken in these years in South America, South Africa, and England as well as throughout Poland, the Baltics, and North America. Smaller sums were raised in diverse places including Switzerland, Colombia, Finland, Portugal, and China.[34]

One strategy for making campaigns more effective was to work in partnership with YISHO, a tactic that had earlier been considered and rejected.[35] Although YIVO and the Yiddish secular schools collaborated increasingly closely from the mid-1930s on, their efforts to coordinate fundraising still met with mixed results. In 1935 YIVO refused a request from YISHO leaders to avoid sending I. N. Steinberg to South Africa at the same time as their own emissary's visit.[36] In 1938 YIVO did agree to a YISHO proposal to carry out joint actions in Australia and Argentina, with 65 percent of income going to the schools and 35 percent to the institute.[37] The following year YIVO and YISHO planned to coordinate their Polish campaigns, but just weeks afterward school leaders attacked a YIVO fundraiser in Pinsk for interfering with their own work.[38]

On such trips YIVO tried to attract support from a variety of Jewish social and professional groups as well as individuals, instructing shlikhim to appeal to organizations including banks, associations of handworkers and merchants, and cultural and artistic societies. It deliberately reached out to those with diverse political leanings, seeking to "win communal activists of various directions." Emissaries were asked to note their contributors' orientation – whether Zionist, Bundist, religious, or assimilationist – and to provide information on the makeup of various kehillahs.[39] This information would presumably be useful as YIVO continued to make systematic appeals to Jewish communal authorities and sought to identify those sympathetic to its cause. In 1938 it contacted fifty-four kehillahs, emphasizing their "holy duty" to support the institute's "great national work" and arguing that "YIVO is a necessity of the

FIGURE 12. Staff, students, and supporters in the Esther-Rachel Kaminska Theater Museum, 1935. Front row, fifth, seventh, eighth, ninth, twelfth, and fourteenth from left: Yermiyahu Shapiro, Libman Hersh, Pati Kremer, Anna Rosental, David Kaplan-Kaplanski, and Leyb Turbovitsh. Standing behind Hersh and Kremer, left to right: Zelig Kalmanovitch, Max Weinreich, and Zalman Reisen. Standing on right: a group of aspirants. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

first rank for Polish Jewry" in its "difficult struggle for our people and its survival."[40] After reaching a nadir in 1934, when they were entirely absent from YIVO's budget, contributions from this source increased steadily in the mid- and late 1930s both in terms of the number of communities participating and in the sums raised. Yet despite this positive trend the funds generated from kehillahs were a negligible part of the institute's overall income, amounting to only 1 to 2 percent of the total.[41]

Even more striking was the precipitous decline in the subsidies from Polish municipalities on which YIVO had placed such great symbolic and material weight. The institute did not give up all hope of securing aid from the Polish government, even when the Warsaw Friends advised the Central Board that it was "an almost hopeless matter."[42] Yet by the mid-1930s contributions from local Polish authorities had ceased entirely.[43] Thus even as the economic situation improved in Poland, the rightward shift of political life ultimately doomed the institute's vision of a secure Yiddish cultural work carried out with government recognition and support.

It was against this backdrop of heightened tensions that YIVO held its second major gathering on August 14–19, 1935. Unlike the 1929 "conference," planned as a meeting of the institute's members and supporters, YIVO envisioned its 1935 "World Convention" as a forum for the leading figures in Yiddish culture internationally. The convention intended to assess not only the state of YIVO's work but of "Yiddish scholarship and culture in general" in order to develop an agenda for the future. Thus, the institute's leaders wrote, "the convention will truly be a holiday for everyone who holds dear the building up of Jewish scholarship in the language of the folk."[44]

While Marc Chagall inaugurated YIVO's Art Section by presenting an exhibit of his engravings in the headquarters, other organizations sponsored concurrent events such as the Yiddish PEN Club's Day of Yiddish Literature, at which authors read from their works.[45] Performances by pupils of the Yiddish schools, visits to the OSE children's colony and the Strashun Library, a flotilla organized by the Maccabi sports club, and an opera in Yiddish were also held in conjunction with the convention. Despite the summer heat, these events attracted overflow crowds of one thousand or more people.[46] Thus, as Weinreich noted, the occasion served as a showcase for both the vibrancy of Jewish creativity in Yiddish and YIVO's central role for all branches of that creativity.[47]

Yet if it confirmed the institute's stature in the Yiddish cultural sphere, frequent acrimonious exchanges at the convention belied the assertion that YIVO "has united around itself … all elements who value the Yiddish culture of the masses."[48] Until the very start of the opening session YIVO leaders argued whether to include the name of Józef Piłsudski when honoring the recently deceased.[49] One attendee described the "charged" atmosphere at sessions where "from time to time calls of protest broke out in such a sharp form that the chairman was not able to control the room."[50] Many Bundist delegates protested YIVO's silence in the face of the "current and burning question" of the harassment and closing of Yiddish schools by the Polish government.[51] Bundists also criticized YIVO's "permitting itself to make concessions to Hebraism" by failing to naturalize the spelling of Hebrew and Aramaic elements in Yiddish.[52] At the same time delegates from Poale Zion distributed a flyer demanding that "The YIVO convention … must unite in the protest of the Jewish working masses against the persecution of Yiddish in Palestine" at the hands of "bourgeois Zionists."[53]

Many of these attendees continued to press YIVO to affiliate openly with the socialist cause. At the convention Nathan Buchsbaum, a member of Left Poale Zion and a representative of the Yiddish secular schools, complained that YIVO was "distancing itself from the workers and getting closer to the bourgeoisie" whereas its "direction as an institution" should be in accordance with "the organized Jewish working masses."[54] Like-minded delegates – most, like Buchsbaum, affiliated with the Yiddish secular schools – called on YIVO to show unequivocal support for the political camp they saw as the folk's champion. If not, Buchsbaum and others were prepared to break with the institute.[55]

The question of YIVO's political stance was thrown into sharp relief at the time of the convention with the formation of the Popular Front, the attempt of pro–Soviet forces to unite the left in the fight against fascism, in the summer of 1935.[56] Communists and their sympathizers criticized the institute's failure "to mobilize the forces of nonpartisan scholarship in the struggle against antisemitism and fascism" and demanded YIVO's open support for their efforts.[57] Thus a group of convention delegates "with various political and social positions" circulated a petition asking YIVO "to create a joint front against the assault of cultural barbarism" by uniting "with all progressive forces in the Jewish sphere" in attending a communist-sponsored Yiddish cultural conference that fall in Paris.[58]

The majority of delegates took these grievances to heart, adopting resolutions of support for the Yiddish schools and of protest against the treatment of Yiddish in the Jewish homeland.[59] Yet if they agreed, as Weinreich put it, that YIVO should undertake more projects with "the necessary closeness to life," they rejected the implications drawn by their critics. While the convention voted to "serve the cultural needs of the masses of the Jewish folk in an organized and systematic way," the institute's leaders continued to maintain that this could best be achieved by remaining ideologically nonpartisan in order to reach out to as wide a segment of the Jewish public as possible.[60]

Several observers, both at the time and more recently, have characterized the central conflict at the convention as between the vision of an institution working in isolation from "restless noisy life" and one emphasizing the issues of the day and the concerns of ordinary Jews.[61] Noah Prylucki came closest to evoking the image of the ivory tower when he compared YIVO to the headquarters of a military campaign. As the central institution of Yiddish culture YIVO needed to remain aloof from partisan battles, he stated, for if it involved itself directly it would jeopardize all the folk had worked to achieve: "A cultural struggle [*kultur-kamf*] is taking place and YIVO is the staff headquarters. If the headquarters is hit, all is ruined. As our highest cultural position, YIVO must be taboo, armored, [it] must not directly mix into the political struggle."[62] Like Kalmanovitch, he believed that YIVO's mission demanded a certain distance from the turmoil of the Jewish street.

As at the 1929 conference, however, the majority of YIVO leaders remained firmly committed to serving the folk through scholarship that was both engaged in pressing communal issues and politically neutral. Moreover, they argued that in an era of rising partisanship YIVO's catholic approach was more valuable than ever. As Weinreich put it, "in the *confusion* of Jewish society we have created a unified center of communal will. In opposition to the centripetal strivings in Jewish life we have put forth a centrifugal force."[63] In a speech at the convention Dubnow described the work of the Zionist Hebrew University and the Diaspora Nationalist YIVO as two halves of one whole. He spoke of the "cultural dualism" of Jewish scholarship carried out at the same time in Hebrew and Yiddish, in "the Jerusalem of the Land of Israel" and "the Jerusalem of

the Diaspora," Vilna.[64] Yet in this increasingly antagonistic climate, as Jews were pressed to choose sides between Zionism and Diaspora Nationalism and between pro- and anticommunism, many saw the institute's inclusive stance as a doomed attempt at fence straddling. In 1932 Raphael Mahler had stated that "YIVO must in the near future decide if it stands for bourgeois culture or for proletarian culture," and many felt that future had now arrived.[65] At the convention Bundist Shloyme Mendelsohn remained unconvinced by Dubnow's words. "Today is such a time when dualism is our great enemy," he said.[66]

Mendelsohn and his fellow Marxists also reiterated their objections to YIVO's scholarly methodology. They maintained that pure research was untenable since "all scholarship is connected to politics..... We don't believe that YIVO should become a political organization. We only believe that its work should have a clear coloring."[67] Another Bundist delegate, Jacob Pat, made the nature of this "coloring" explicit when he remarked that the institute's guiding principle should be "the *shkhine* [divine light] of socialism."[68] The most vocal proponent of this view continued to be Mahler, who argued once again that YIVO should carry out its work from the perspective of class struggle. Not only was this the only intellectually honest approach, but only in this way could YIVO attract the support and serve the needs of Yiddish-speaking workers.[69]

The majority of YIVO's leaders, however, continued to see absolute objectivity as the sine qua non of academic work. As Dubnow stated in 1934, "Neutrality in social questions is after all the holiest principle of scholarship."[70] In a speech at the convention he reiterated his view that the goal of history should be to reconstruct events "how they truly were ... not to create puppets for this or that ideology a priori. The ideology must be the a posteriori result of historical research ..."[71] Dubnow and others countered Mendelsohn and Mahler by arguing that YIVO could best serve the needs of the Jewish public by maintaining its standards of unbiased research. YIVO's role was to provide information on issues facing Jewish society, and only if that information were as objective as possible could accurate conclusions be drawn that would help the Jewish masses. As Lestschinsky put it, YIVO's task was to "deal with current problems in a scholarly fashion, and the parties can afterward draw their conclusions. Then YIVO will truly become a central institution that researches all burning problems objectively."[72] Kalmanovitch likewise argued that YIVO should not make "declarations that are built on a priori assumptions" in order to please "one or another social group." Instead, he wrote, "Its method of work is to create facts and let the facts speak for themselves ... Precisely this approach has created for it the trust and sympathy of broad circles."[73] Weinreich concurred, restating his conviction at the convention that "we are sure that precisely [through unbiased scholarship] we best serve the masses of the Jewish folk for whose sake YIVO was created and in whose merit it lives." [74] A few years later he emphasized the distinction between scholarship and ideology, stressing the need to "guard ourselves from politics.... The politician comes

with a thesis and looks for material to support it.... The art of the scholar is to consider things as far as possible from subjectivity."[75]

Yet at the same time Weinreich articulated a more nuanced view. At the convention he conceded that "Of course people carry even into their research their interests, sympathies and antipathies," but reaffirmed that objective work was nonetheless a worthy ideal.[76] On another occasion he reflected on the evolution of YIVO's work: "There were times when we ourselves were not sure if we would slide from scholarship into politics," he admitted. When the institute was founded pure research was a novelty in Jewish life and "so the historic task of YIVO was to demonstrate through deeds, through accomplishments, the legitimacy of the scholarly approach" divorced from political concerns. At first YIVO was reluctant to deal with politically sensitive topics, Weinreich noted, but it had shown that fears "that we will stumble into politics" were unfounded since "our work lies on another plane and we are already so mature that we know how to uphold the border." This did not mean, he added, that anyone could ever be absolutely objective in his academic work. Yet while some degree of subjectivity was inevitable, by striving to minimize such influences the scholar could best fulfill his vocation and be of use to his people.[77]

New Directions in Scholarship

While much of their rhetoric revisited old debates, in the mid- and late 1930s YIVO's leaders did demonstrate renewed commitment to the principles articulated at the convention as they embarked on a range of novel projects with fresh energy. Some initiatives were short lived, such as the branch devoted to Jewish art.[78] Nevertheless, under the leadership of Max Weinreich the institute produced some of its most innovative and influential scholarship in these years. As Weinreich broadened his academic horizons far beyond his original focus on Yiddish language and literature, he sought to use emerging social science disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology to develop an interdisciplinary approach to the problems of contemporary Jewish life.

Weinreich explored these new directions during a visit to the United States in 1929, when he contacted academics including the sociologist W. I. Thomas, coauthor of *The Polish Peasant in America*.[79] Weinreich was also in touch with the anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir, who approached the Rockefeller Foundation on Weinreich's behalf to inquire about prospects for funding. Although the foundation's immediate answer was negative, it encouraged a future application from YIVO, prompting Weinreich to prepare a detailed proposal for a five-year "Sociological and Psychological Survey of East European Jewry."[80] The proposal described YIVO as distinct among scholarly institutions in pursuing subjects "closely connected with the every day secular Jewish life of the present and the past." It set forth a research plan encompassing family life, education, economic roles, religion, social organization, and "weaknesses of the Jewish nervous system, mental disorders, etc.," especially as a result of

trauma during World War I. Information on these topics would be gathered from archival and published sources, responsa literature, questionnaires, and autobiographies.[81]

Although the foundation rebuffed YIVO's repeated approaches at this time, it did enable Weinreich to spend the 1932–1933 academic year as a Rockefeller Foundation fellow at Yale University attending the Seminar on the Impact of Culture on Personality run by Sapir and psychologist John Dollard.[82] During his stay at Yale Weinreich further explored the latest trends in American social science, particularly as they shed light on the relationship between the individual and society.[83] While in the United States he also visited the Tuskegee Institute, a vocational training school for African Americans, which led him to reflect on the parallels between Americans blacks and Polish Jews as minorities in their respective societies.[84]

In September 1933 Weinreich received a subsidy from the Rockefeller Foundation for his research on Jewish youth in Eastern Europe. Although this grant was made to Weinreich personally, YIVO hopefully interpreted it as a sign of growing recognition for the institute as a whole in "wider scholarly circles" and a harbinger of future external funding.[85] Weinreich subsequently spent the fall of 1933 in Vienna, where he studied with Charlotte Bühler, a specialist in child and adolescent psychology. He also met with psychoanalyst Siegfried Bernfeld, a pioneer of *Jugendforschung*, a field that took an interdisciplinary approach to the study of youth.[86] This experience subsequently led Weinreich to produce an authorized Yiddish translation of Freud's *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* as well as a study of its author (who served on YIVO's honorary Curatorium).[87]

Weinreich's engagement with the social sciences left a deep impact on his work and perforce on the work of YIVO as a whole. In an unsuccessful 1933 grant proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation, Weinreich reconceived much of the institute's research agenda within the framework of the study of culture and personality, the model that he had encountered at Yale.[88] His ultimate ambition was to use the insights of the social science disciplines to understand the most far-reaching problems of the Jewish people. As he stated in 1935, the institute's "great goal" was "to create the scholarly synthesis of Jewish life in all its manifestations in the entire world."[89]

The most significant project to grow out of Weinreich's new intellectual orientation was the Division of Youth Research, created in 1934. Through this initiative he brought his interest in the social sciences to bear on a topic of great immediate import to the Jewish public, the future of the generation then coming of age.[90] As the *Yedies* wrote, YIVO sought "to clarify the economic, social, and psychological problems of Jewish youth" because "never has the situation of Jewish youth been as complicated as today."[91] The division planned to examine how external factors such as economic conditions and education influenced the development of the individual. Its research would thus "stand at the crossroads of sociology, psychology, and biology, or more precisely it is a

FIGURE 13. Max Weinreich (standing, right) with students at a seminar on psychoanalysis, 1936. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

synthetic research of Jewish personality," a formulation that clearly echoed the paradigm of the Yale seminar.[92]

As its first major undertaking the division began collecting personal documents such as children's diaries, letters, and creative writing.[93] Weinreich adopted this method of obtaining data from American and European colleagues; in particular, it had become widespread among Polish scholars in the 1920s.[94] Eventually the division began a project to observe Jewish children in their home environments.[95] In 1935 YIVO also established a Division for the Jewish Sport Movement to gather information on sports clubs for Jewish youth, produce publications on "current sports problems," and aid provincial sport enthusiasts.[96]

By far the most significant initiative in this field was the effort to collect autobiographies of Jewish adolescents and young adults. Begun in 1932, the project was later expanded under the aegis of the Division of Youth Research.[97] To spur the writing of such personal accounts, the institute held contests open to Jewish women and men from 16 to 22 years of age from any background or country. In addition to the first contest in 1932, which was limited to the Vilna region, larger ones were organized in 1934 and in 1938–1939.[98] Entries could be written in any language and were submitted anonymously, with cash and other prizes awarded for the best compositions. In the contest announcement, the division stressed the magnitude of the challenges facing Jewish young

people and the role that such documents could play in gaining insight into their predicament. "Through the autobiographies," it stated, "we want to get to know the life of Jewish youth in the current painful time. We want to know the obstacles that stand before the youth in creating for himself a position in life, what conflicts he has with the distant and near environment, with himself." It encouraged participants to record all of their experiences in detail, their failures as well as their successes, without embellishment or commentary. This paralleled the instructions to zamlers, who were asked to be as inclusive and precise as possible so that YIVO's scholars would have the most complete, accurate data from which to develop their analyses.[99]

The autobiographies project ultimately became one of the most successful ever undertaken by the institute.[100] Its three contests resulted in 627 submissions from at least a dozen countries, the great majority written in Yiddish and from localities in Poland.[101] As the contest announcement underlined, these documents yielded unique insights that could not be replicated in other types of sources. The active role of Jewish young people themselves was crucial to the success of this effort, since such knowledge could only be gleaned through the personal participation of those willing to tell their own stories: "In order to understand the situation we must hear the voice of the youth themselves; they themselves must tell about their psychic and social problems."[102]

Like the work of the zamlers, YIVO hoped that the contests would not only generate a highly important body of research material but also build ties to the rising generation. It wrote with satisfaction that through the work of the Division of Youth Research "several hundred energetic and active people put themselves in contact with the central Yiddish scholarly institution," and it appealed to participants to remain in touch with YIVO after submitting their entries.[103] When Weinreich published his study *Der veg tsu undzer yugnt* [The Path to Our Youth], a statement of the theory and methodology of the Youth Research project, he sent copies to many of those who had submitted entries to the contests. The volume itself included an appeal for further autobiographies, diaries, letters, and archival material related to Jewish youth.[104] Weinreich solicited his readers' reactions to the book and expressed the hope that his study would better enable his young correspondents to continue their work for the division.[105]

Yet as others scholars have noted, the autobiography contests were designed to do more than gather data and attract new support to the institute, as important as those goals were. Just as the zamlers felt that their collecting contributed to a great undertaking, thus infusing their lives with meaning and dignity, the *Yedies* wrote that all who submitted their autobiographies could feel proud that their efforts "gave scholarship the possibility of finding the ways and means to understand and make healthier the life of the Jewish individual and group."[106] Moreover, while the zamlers documented fellow members of the folk, the contests asked participants to look inward and record their own lives. They thus created a forum for Jewish youth in the 1930s to reflect on

their personal experiences and to express their inner yearnings and creative impulses. By assuring its young correspondents of the value of this enterprise, YIVO reinforced a positive sense of their identity as East European Jews. It provided these young men and women, most of whom faced limited professional prospects, a sense of purpose in the process of describing their own apprehensions about the future. In this way, the very act of participating in the contests was therapeutic, strengthening their resolve to face the challenges they themselves helped to record.[107]

As YIVO set about working with youth and adolescents, it also finally took steps to address the needs of advanced Jewish students. While by the mid-1930s the institute had realized many of its collection, research, and publishing projects, at least on a modest scale, it still lacked a teaching component. As we have seen, YIVO's founders envisioned a division for higher learning alongside their research academy. It reiterated these plans as it renovated its headquarters, writing at the time of the 1929 conference, "we stand on the eve of the realization of the great dream of the modern Jewish intelligentsia – to create … a worthy building of its own for the first Yiddish college."[108] In 1934 the institute finally fulfilled "one of the most important points in its work program" by founding the Aspirantur, a graduate-level "seminar for higher Jewish studies" named in honor of leading YIVO activist Dr. Tsemakh Szabad on his seventieth birthday.[109]

The goal of the Aspirantur was to provide "intensive scholarly preparation by acquainting [students] with sources, by delving into methodology, by teaching them to do scholarly work independently and to have a scholarly approach to the problems of Jewish culture and society."[110] These aspiring scholars, called aspirants, planned to come to Vilna for one academic year and were given a stipend of 60 złotys a month (about $11) for living expenses.[111] Each undertook a research project on a topic suggested by the Executive Office and attended lectures by YIVO affiliates and visiting scholars. They also spent several hours a day working with the institute's collections on tasks such as cataloging.[112] Weinreich served as director of the program and met with students informally; in addition, each presented four reports on his or her research in the course of the academic year.[113] A candidate who completed a successful project would receive *smikhe* [certification] stating that he or she was capable of independent scholarly work.[114] The institute planned to accept ten students for the first session of the Aspirantur, but the enthusiastic response of more than 100 applicants prompted it to raise that number to fifteen. Enrollment rose in the three of the following four years, reaching a high of twenty-two students during 1937–1938.[115]

As director Weinreich stressed a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach. "The conventional division of subjects is not correct," he told a group of students in 1935. "Today it doesn't pass the test. One [subject] steals into the next."[116] There was also a comparative dimension to their training, as aspirants heard visitors present talks on topics such as Finnish and Estonian folklore.

Moreover, Weinreich's vision for the program was clearly linked to the social scientific fields he had explored abroad, as he invited John Dollard to visit the Aspirantur.[117] Weinreich revealed the impact of his stays in the United States when he responded to criticisms of assigned research topics and the structure of discussions by noting that they were based on American models. Students also often read American as well as Polish scholarship as background for their own work.[118] As he stated at the conclusion of the program's second year, "We are all fundamentally researching different sides of the complex called the life of the Jewish people and perforce we are all doing one thing – the Jewish *social sciences*."[119] This innovative method, Weinreich implied, was the only one that could yield insights into the multifaceted nature of Jewish society. Yet in fact, most Aspirantur projects fell within the parameters of one of YIVO's four research sections, with philology and history accounting for roughly the same number as social scientific disciplines.[120] Thus Weinreich's vision signaled less a fundamental change in YIVO's direction than a continuation of its earlier work within a new conceptual framework.

Engaging the Jewish Public

The Aspirantur reflected not only the intellectual trends of the period, but also the institute's growing focus on present-day issues. As Reisen put it, "Just as we want the work of YIVO to be sufficiently academic and at the same time connected to society, so too with the Aspirantur."[121] The Central Board added that this desire "is felt especially sharply now in the present moment," when "a scholarly approach to the problems of Jewish reality" was "pressing and current to the highest degree."[122] Thus the Executive Office's first criterion in choosing students' topics was that "the themes should be connected to whatever degree with contemporary problems of Jewish life and creativity."[123] Yet as with the emphasis on the social sciences, such rhetoric exaggerated the actual shift in YIVO's priorities: Weinreich's insistence that students' research be "directly useful to Jewish society" was not always borne out by the examples he cited, such as Jewish dress in the early nineteenth century.[124]

The Aspirantur was originally envisioned as a one-year program providing graduate-level instruction for budding scholars, yet this model was soon called into question on both pragmatic and methodological grounds.[125] While there was no dearth of applicants it soon became apparent that few had the desired academic background, the equivalent of a university education with expertise in Jewish culture and history.[126] This concern was the initial impetus for the creation of the Proaspirantur, named in memory of YIVO founder and Bundist activist Borukh Kahan-Virgili, which began its first session in the fall of 1938. The institute designed the Proaspirantur as a two-year preparatory course for prospective aspirants with gymnasium diplomas or the equivalent.[127] There was much discussion of how the Proaspirantur should structure its curriculum to best meet its ambitious goal of providing the equivalent of an undergraduate

college education in two years.[128] YIVO staff outlined an intensive course of study including Yiddish language and literature through the Haskalah period as well as Jewish history and the economics, demography, and sociology of Jewish communities around the world.[129] Special hours of language instruction were arranged for proaspirants whose knowledge of Yiddish was weak, further straining their schedules, while others were enrolled concurrently in Vilna's Stefan Batory University.[130]

Weinreich envisioned the Aspirantur as serving "the whole community," and the YIVO leadership saw it as an opportunity to strengthen ties to a broad spectrum of young people by attracting students who were "not necessarily academics but also people of practical life" such as workers and teachers.[131] In practice, however, the nature of the program excluded many potential applicants lacking sufficient formal education. By serving students with less academic preparation, the Proaspirantur had a social as well as intellectual goal: to make scholarly training truly accessible to the folk. Anna Rosental noted that "the Proaspirantur was conceived for workers, autodidacts. This is the only place [for them]." She and Reisen expressed disappointment when only one of the five students accepted into its first session was not a graduate of a Yiddish gymnasium.[132]

Yet both teaching programs did present opportunities for linking YIVO's work to new constituencies. Following Reisen's suggestion, from the start academic seminars for students were also open to the public.[133] After their first year it was reported that these sessions drew "staff members of YIVO, teachers, student youth, etc., so that the large meeting room of YIVO was always full. In this way the seminars greatly invigorated the interest in the institute among Vilna Jewish intellectuals."[134] YIVO also solicited both input and financial support for the Aspirantur and later the Proaspirantur from organizations including kehillahs and the Jewish Geographical Society [Yidishe gezelshaft far landkentenish].[135] It thus realized Weinreich's suggestion at the time of YIVO's founding that Jewish cultural and communal groups sponsor scholarships to the proposed auditoria as a way of involving them more directly in the institute's work.[136] Adopting this policy was a matter of financial exigency as well as principled outreach: because of the cost of student stipends YIVO's teaching programs became the single largest expense directly related to its scholarly mission, comprising approximately 10 percent of its total budget.[137]

The creation of the Proaspirantur also furthered another of YIVO's long-discussed goals, forging closer ties to the Yiddish secular school network. As educational activists continued to press it, the institute finally did take concrete steps to fulfill its resolution of support passed at the 1935 convention.[138] While such initiatives had mixed results in the realm of fundraising, this strengthened relationship culminated in TSYSHO's agreement to jointly plan and finance the Proaspirantur, covering half its expenses.[139] This decision was due in part to the expectation that the new program would train future teachers for the Yiddish schools, seen as a particularly pressing need since the closure of the

Vilna Teachers Seminary in 1931.[140] Just as YIVO's founders emphasized the symbiotic relationship between scholarship and pedagogy, so its leaders now described its teaching component and the schools as mutually dependent: YIVO would help train a new generation of educators, who would in turn ensure that children and youth were raised in the spirit of Diaspora Nationalism.[141] Yet despite such signs of growing cooperation YIVO's work with the schools continued to test the limits of nonpartisanship, as YISHO pushed to relax a rule that aspirants refrain from political or communal activity during the period of their studies.[142]

With the creation of the Proaspirantur Yiddish activists finally achieved their long-held ambition of securing all levels of "the building of Yiddish secular culture."[143] Weinreich noted, "The story between the Aspirantur and the gymnasium was missing. With the Proaspirantur we have a whole building from the bottom up: elementary school, gymnasium, Proaspirantur, Aspirantur and hopefully – a member in a scholarly section of the Yiddish Scientific Institute."[144] As Zhitlowsky had advocated as early as 1898, a young Jew could now receive her entire education – from the earliest years through advanced professional training – in modern institutions in her mother tongue. Thus the Proaspirantur was envisioned not only as a two-year program serving a handful of students but as the linchpin of a viable model of a self-sustaining Yiddish culture that, it was assumed, would continue to grow in future years.

In his 1924 memorandum Nokhem Shtif articulated the goal of creating an institutional basis to secure the continuity of Yiddish scholarship, and in 1926 YIVO's founders noted the necessity of "rearing the scholarly succession, which we are sorely lacking."[145] The Aspirantur and Proaspirantur, founded with "full consciousness of the pressing need to care for a succession," answered this call by fostering the next generation of Yiddish scholars.[146] Yet the Proaspirantur in particular cast a wider net, seeking not only "to prepare capable young people for the Aspirantur and lead them on the path to scholarly research" but also to "prepare them for pedagogical work in our high schools or for communal work on a higher level."[147]

Thus, as YIVO leaders wrote in 1938, the import of YIVO's teaching component ultimately went beyond forming "a new cohort of Jewish scholars" to creating

> a qualified Jewish intelligentsia that will serve our people in its great and difficult needs.… Dozens of young people, our best and our brightest, most with academic training, who would have been teaching assistants among non-Jews, receive a stipend in YIVO which gives them the possibility of doing scholarly work and preparing themselves for their important mission as future teachers, guides, leaders and builders of the life of our people.[148]

In this formulation these students were poised to become the next generation of Jewish communal leadership, connected to the Yiddish-speaking masses, committed to their welfare, and equipped with the intellectual tools to understand

their predicament. Thus, like the Division of Youth Research, the Aspirantur and Proaspirantur would cultivate a vanguard of young activists, convincing them that they had a crucial role to play in addressing contemporary problems. In this way the programs would ensure not only the future of Yiddish scholarship but of Yiddish-speaking Jewry as a whole.

Indeed, for some individuals these programs, like the autobiography contests, provided a sense of purpose and self-fulfillment. A young man from Warsaw wrote passionately of his disappointment at not being accepted into the Aspirantur and his hope of meeting with Weinreich to discuss his future prospects: "I want very much to talk things through with you in person. There is much, very much that it is impossible to convey in a letter." Describing his abilities, commitment, and "strong drive for scholarly work," he asked, "why would you not help me, especially when you created the Aspirantur exclusively for this purpose?" Although stymied in his intellectual ambitions, this correspondent had one consolation: "I have suffered very much because … I was not able to do anything to fulfill my aspirations. But I did do something: I finished my autobiography."[149]

Others were more successful. Chaim Munits submitted an autobiography as well as material on local history and Shmuel Zanvil Pipe was a devoted local folklore collector before they were accepted into the Aspirantur. Pipe eventually attended all four sessions of the program and became a full YIVO staff member by his final year, as did fellow student Ber Shlosberg.[150] In such cases YIVO truly fulfilled its ambition of serving the folk, reaching out to ordinary Jews and fundamentally reshaping their lives through Yiddish scholarship. Because of the educational opportunities that YIVO afforded a Munits and a Pipe, one recent scholar pronounced the Aspirantur a success.[151]

Yet Pipe's acknowledged mastery of Yiddish folklore resulted not only from his academic talents but from the unexpectedly long duration of his studies. Nor was his case unique. While the Aspirantur was originally intended as a one-year program, it was decided in 1936 that "outstanding" students might return for a second year.[152] By its third session a majority of students were returnees; by its fourth, eight new candidates were accepted, three returned for a second year, and eight were in their third or fourth year.[153] Yet so many students remained for so long not only because of the high standards of the program but also because of an underlying dilemma: graduates simply had nowhere to go to fulfill their career ambitions.

In 1937 Weinreich argued that while amateurs used to conduct research in their spare time, after the economy worsened this was no longer possible.[154] The Aspirantur hoped to fill this gap by creating a new generation of professional scholars. YIVO provided this training but could afford to employ very few of the mature academics it produced. "We would wish for a possibility of making a living from Yiddish scholarly work. For the time being I don't know any Jews who live from scholarly work," admitted Weinreich in 1939, echoing Shtif in 1924.[155] Emanuel Ringelblum acknowledged this fact when he

FIGURE 14. Aspirants Ber Shlosberg (left) and Shmuel Zanvil Pipe, 1939. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

opposed expanding the Aspirantur, arguing that it would only add to the ranks of the unemployed.[156] The institute could compensate for the lack of graduate programs in Jewish fields, but not for the lack of faculty positions.

It was this bleak reality as well as the desire to serve the Jewish community that led YIVO leaders to suggest alternate career paths for those who completed their studies.[157] They noted that students' expertise in pedagogy or "contemporary social matters" could help graduates find employment in education or social work, while their hands-on experience with the YIVO collections would qualify them to become archivists or librarians.[158] Thus despite their success in purely academic terms, the economic and political climate of mid- and late 1930s Poland limited the extent to which the Aspirantur and Proaspirantur could ameliorate the situation of budding Jewish intellectuals. Ultimately, these initiatives were a testament to both the achievements of Yiddish scholarship and the material constraints of their place and time.

In these years, educational programs as a whole assumed a more prominent role in the institute's work. Such matters fell most directly within the purview of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section. In its first volume of *Shriftn*, which appeared in 1933, it described its primary concern as research into "the psychology of the folk" with practical import.[159] In 1935 section head Leibush Lehrer of New York resigned his post, citing the need for a "local person" more familiar with the section's focus, "practical problems that are closely related to the schools in Poland."[160] Nevertheless, while it distributed several

questionnaires to Jewish schools and collected material for its Pedagogical Museum, it remained the least active of the institute's four original research divisions.[161]

YIVO's most significant efforts to aid pedagogues and pupils in these years were through its initiatives in curriculum and professional development. In 1934 Reisen proposed creating a Yiddish language curriculum for the schools.[162] Although at this time Weinreich expressed reservations that this would allow teachers to participate too directly in YIVO's work, three years later he himself developed a detailed plan for this subject at the high school level that included the history of the language and its components and dialects, as well as practical matters of grammar, usage, and style.[163] In 1937 YIVO approved a TSYSHO proposal to jointly publish a "fundamental library" of books for use by high school students as well as by adults engaged in home study, which it hoped would fulfill the institute's "responsibilities to the Yiddish cultural world" and "attract new sympathies and strengths to us."[164] Although this venture was never realized, the following year the two organizations collaborated in producing curricular materials in subjects including mathematics and geography.[165]

These projects culminated in a series of conferences and teacher training workshops held jointly by YIVO and TSYSHO during the winter and summer breaks in the 1937–1938 and 1938–1939 academic years. One hundred and thirty delegates, including sixty teachers, attended a June 1937 course focused on the teaching of Yiddish language and literature in the Yiddish secular schools. Classes were built around the theme of Sholem Aleichem and his work, the subject of a concurrent exhibit that drew 25,000 visitors.[166] The following June the institute hosted a conference to discuss ways to strengthen the Yiddish curriculum in the TSYSHO schools.[167] A January 1938 course drew 120 teachers, half from outside of Vilna, and a year later 200 people – including 147 teachers from 35 cities – attended a ten-day program of 80 lectures on topics including pedagogy, Yiddish literature and song, and Jewish demography and history. This event was followed by a conference focusing on the teaching of history.[168] The winter courses also offered instruction in Yiddish at various levels for those wishing to strengthen their knowledge of the language.[169]

With these initiatives, and with the shaping of the Proaspirantur in part as a teacher training seminary, by the late 1930s the institute finally fulfilled its long-standing promise to help the Yiddish secular school network in a substantive way. If TSYSHO was gratified to receive such long-awaited assistance from YIVO, it returned the favor by contributing materials and financing to YIVO's Pedagogical Museum as well as the Proaspirantur.[170] Yet more significant were the lessons that it imparted to its students. In 1937 pupils were asked to write compositions on the question "What Do I Know about YIVO?" Jacob Lugerner described the institute as "the center of Jewish culture for the entire world," while Sheyndl Lyustigman wrote, "YIVO has a colossal significance

FIGURE 15. Staff of courses for Yiddish teachers, 1937–1938. Front row, left to right: Chaim Shloyme Kazdan, Zelig Kalmanovitch, Shloyme Mendelsohn, and Leyb Turbovitsh. Back row, second, third, sixth, and seventh from left: Aron Mark, Ber Shlosberg, Zalman Reisen, and Max Weinreich. From the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

for Jewish cultural life and therefore all must support it."[171] YIVO's leaders no doubt expected that Jacob, Sheyndl, and their classmates would grow to adulthood and do precisely that.

While Yiddish pedagogues were developing these new projects in Poland, the Historical Section continued its work in Germany. After the Nazi takeover in January 1933 Elias Tcherikower left Berlin for Paris, where he devoted much of his energy to producing two further volumes of *Historishe shriftn*.[172] He and the other leaders of the Historical Section undertook new projects including a Division for Collecting Materials on the History of the Jews in Russia and a publication on the history of French Jewry.[173] While Tcherikower focused his attention on Russia and France, the Warsaw-based historians, led by Ringelblum and Mahler, argued that since Tcherikower continued to reside "abroad" in Paris they played a vital role in conducting historical work on the ground.[174] They revived the renamed Historical Commission for Poland in the fall of 1934 with the help of a monthly subsidy of 100 złotys from YIVO's central office.[175] Their work as leaders of the commission – as its name suggested – focused on local history. It thus illustrated the Diaspora Nationalist principle of *doikeyt* [hereness], their sense of belonging in their East European homes, by highlighting Jews' rootedness in Polish soil and their deep connection to a myriad of cities

and towns throughout the country.[176] The commission sometimes collaborated with the Jewish Geographical Society, an organization whose work in tourism and regional history mirrored the commission's own, thus showing the broader concern with these issues in the 1930s.[177]

This interest dated to the beginning of the decade, when the Central Commission to Research Jewish Antiquities in Poland carried out its collecting trip to Lublin in 1930.[178] This body tried to revive its work in the late 1930s, but plans for further travels came to naught.[179] Rather than organizing expeditions, the Historical Commission, like the other divisions of the institute, came to rely on a grassroots network of ordinary Jews who volunteered their efforts to record the history of their hometowns. In the mid-1930s it revived the campaign to document pinkeysim of Jewish communities and associations, asking respondents to record the location and contents of historically significant material in their cities and towns.[180] Working together with the Joint, the Yiddish schools, and the Geographical Society, in 1937 it sent at least 2,500 questionnaires to individuals and organizations throughout Poland, including 1,000 to rabbis it identified with the help of the Orthodox Agudas Ha-Rabonim [Rabbinical Union].[181] In total more than 300 pinkeysim were registered in this way.[182] YIVO hoped eventually to have volunteers copy their contents as well as to publish a survey of these valuable documents.[183]

As time went on and much of the material sent in by zamlers remained unprocessed by YIVO's overworked staff, it became clear to the institute that it would likely never have the resources to carry out synthetic studies on the scale it originally envisioned. One solution was to shift some of that task to the folk itself, making its role in the institute's work even more crucial. Both Weinreich and Ringelblum greeted enthusiastically as a promising sign the appearance in 1930 of a volume on the town of Prużana, Poland, produced largely by seventh-grade history students at the local Jewish elementary school.[184] Weinreich wrote that the publication showed the "great creative powers that emerged from hiding in the Yiddish cultural sphere," although he bemoaned the fact that YIVO could support such work with advice but not funding.[185] Ringelblum described the book as "a true pioneering project" produced by "a group of modern, secular activists" including local teachers and "folk intellectuals." He lauded the publication for advancing YIVO's mission by "organizing the Jewish working youth for collective scholarly work."[186]

As YIVO's recovery got underway it began a campaign to encourage supporters to copy Prużana's efforts. In January 1935 the *Yedies* issued a broad appeal for "Local Scholarly Work." It asked readers to provide detailed information on their hometowns, from physical appearance to social and economic structure to local folklore.[187] Within a year and a half this request had generated a substantial response among "a wide circle of cultural activists," especially "the new multitude of correspondents from the Division of Youth Research." Like many of the institute's projects in these years this initiative was couched in Weinreich's preferred terminology as an effort to gather "sociographic"

material on social relations and daily life. Correspondents were implored to "Carry further and strengthen the sociographic work locally! … Renew the connection with YIVO!"[188]

As the commission began planning a series of monographs on Polish-Jewish communities, it saw this effort as a way of generating funds as well as building ties to the Jewish public. Just as YIVO appealed to kehillahs for general subsidies, it now asked Warsaw Jewish authorities to support a publication on that city with a donation of 4,000 złotys. Stressing the Polish capital's importance as "the largest urban Jewish settlement in Europe," it underscored the opportunity to help create "the most beautiful historical monument for your kehillah, which has played such a great role in Jewish life."[189] In addition to the Geographical Society, the commission enlisted the financial support of organizations such as the Central Committee of Jewish Academic Unions.[190] It also contacted merchants' associations, free-loan societies, professional groups, and *landsmanshaftn* [hometown associations] as well as commercial and industrial firms and sought to impress upon them the importance of preserving historical material.[191] In this way YIVO saw local history as a tool for strengthening links to a range of Jewish institutions as well as local supporters throughout Poland and abroad.[192]

As would-be historians in cities and towns took YIVO's call to heart, they began requesting guidance on composing monographs.[193] In response, in 1938 the leaders of the Historical Commission published detailed instructions aimed at "young researchers with a high school education."[194] This text stressed that local monographs, a necessary first step toward a comprehensive history of the Jews of Poland, could only be undertaken as "a collective work of the organized Jewish public." As the example of Prużana showed, the authors need not be professional historians "if they just have a strong will, love and understanding for the thing."[195] However, they must carefully follow the directions provided by YIVO as to preparation, research, critical evaluation of sources, and writing. Correspondents were told to emphasize economic and cultural history; they were also reminded that "Researching the history of social movements in each city is a very important matter."[196] By July 1938 more than forty potential authors had responded to this appeal.[197] With this project to an unprecedented degree, ordinary women and men were entrusted not only with gathering raw data for YIVO's academic staff to analyze but with the work of creating Yiddish scholarship itself.

In some cases the institute's supporters rose to the challenge. The kehillah in Lwów was inspired by YIVO's calls to create a Historical Commission to write the history of its community, and YIVO agreed to support a monograph underway in Częstochowa.[198] The most successful efforts, however, were in the cities of Łódź and Plock. In 1934, thirty members of the Łódź branch of the Jewish Geographical Society created a "scholarly section" to carry out archival surveys and gather ethnographic data. Two years later the group affiliated with the local Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute. In 1938 it published *Lodzsher visnshaftlekhe shriftn* [Łódź Scholarly Writings], a volume

focusing on regional history, with help from the local kehillah as well an association of Łódź emigrants in New York.[199]

Ringelblum appealed to the Plock kehillah and landsmanshaft to support Isaiah Trunk's *Geshikhte fun yidn in plotsk, 1237–1657* [History of the Jews in Plock, 1237–1657], published in 1939, and most funding was eventually provided by Plock natives currently residing in Warsaw.[200] As the very dates of his title made clear, Trunk set out to demonstrate the deep roots of the Jews in their homes as well as their contributions to the Polish economy: "Jewish history in Poland traces its path through many, many centuries when the dawn of agricultural work began in the land, which was backward and poorly developed and needed the skilled hands of merchants and craftsmen." The author also stressed that the fate of Jews had always been intertwined with that of their Christian neighbors, that they "suffered together with the rest of the population when they suffered misfortune and decline."[201]

Like the Division of Youth Research and the Aspirantur, the Historical Commission's work responded to the dilemma of the Jewish individual beset by antisemitism and economic hardship by convincing him that he had a crucial role to play in advancing knowledge of Jewish life and culture. Yet by focusing on the long and fruitful settlement of the Jews in Poland, these projects also addressed the collective needs of the Jewish community by showing it to be an integral part of the fabric of Polish society, thus bolstering its self-image as a positive force within its lands of residence. As Trunk himself wrote,

> This book appears at a time when the rights of the Jewish population of Poland are disputed – at a time when reactionaries consider Polish Jews, who have lived in the country for centuries, as foreigners.
>
> This book shows that Jews are no foreigners in Poland who arrived yesterday.[202]

In this way, such works of local history made explicit the larger implications of the concept of doikeyt.

Publications and Language Planning

Publications such as those on Łódź and Plock served the additional function of helping disseminate YIVO's research to its far-flung network of supporters. They thus fulfilled the institute's mission of producing scholarship not only "from the folk" but also "for the folk." Although as we have seen YIVO was less consistent in addressing the second half of this mandate, by the 1930s it did take further steps in that direction. The creation of the Aspirantur and Proaspirantur helped the institute's work reach a young scholarly audience, while the YIVO headquarters in Vilna quickly became a venue where the broad public came to consult its collections, attend lectures, or visit exhibits. Thousands of individuals as well as school groups and excursions viewed displays such as one on "Jewish Social Movements" and another highlighting 350 publications currently appearing in Yiddish.[203] Visitors to the building represented a

range of backgrounds, by no means exclusively academic. A survey of the 838 patrons of the reading room during 1937, for example, found that only 194 were students and 89 scholars.[204]

For those who could not come in person to the YIVO reading room or exhibit hall, however, the printed word played a central role in transmitting Yiddish cultural knowledge to a broader audience. The institute's publications conveyed the fruits of its work to a constituency that reached far beyond Vilna throughout Eastern Europe and around the globe, extending its stature as an international center of scholarship. In fact, much of the energy of YIVO's staff in these years went toward its publication projects. These were also a significant expense on the institute's balance sheet, usually costing several times what they generated in income, and consequently they slowed to a trickle during the years of financial crisis.[205] The institute did manage to bring out Kalmanovitch's Yiddish translation of Simon Dubnow's *Geshikhte fun khsidizm* [History of Hasidism] in 1930 and 1933. Volumes of *Shriftn* prepared by the Economic-Statistical and Psychological-Pedagogical Sections also appeared in 1932 and 1933 respectively, although these were rather slim compendiums.[206]

A more active publication program resumed by the middle of 1936 when YIVO's financial situation normalized, and by the last years of the decade it produced an impressive bibliography of scholarly work.[207] The Historical Section devoted much of its resources to the two weighty volumes of *Historishe shriftn* that appeared in 1937 and 1939, and the institute published the ten-volume Yiddish version of Dubnow's *Velt-geshikhte fun yidishn folk* [World History of the Jewish People] between 1938 and 1940.[208] In the United States the Amopteyl, which had earlier produced two issues of its own journal, reported in 1936 that it was starting to carry out its own scholarly work, thus demonstrating "the international character of YIVO."[209] It soon brought out two yearbooks of academic articles.[210]

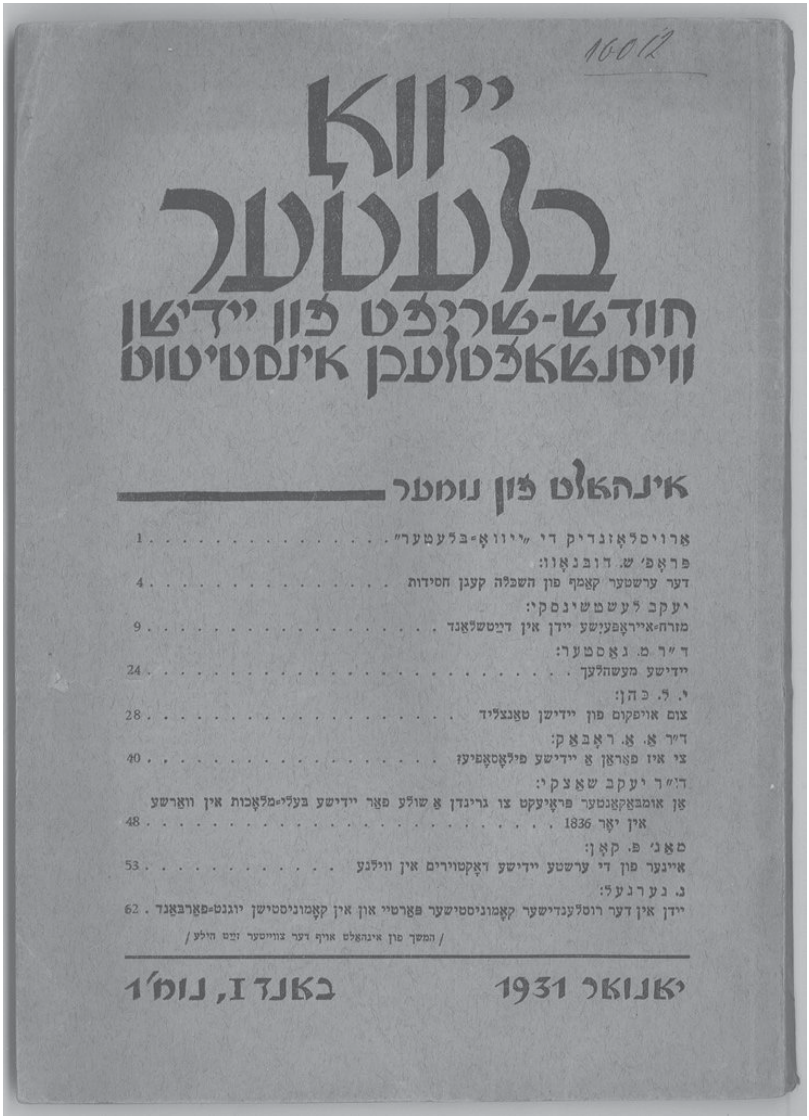
Some works that appeared in this period had waited years to see the light of day. The 1937 volume of *Historishe shriftn* was originally planned as a festschrift for Dubnow on his seventieth birthday in 1930, while a linguistic study by Noah Prylucki that appeared the same year had been typeset from 1922 to 1931.[211] One of the most eagerly anticipated projects was the volume *Yidisher folklor*, composed of zamlers' contributions to the Ethnographic Commission and conceived as a reward for their dedicated work. The volume was under discussion since 1926 and was mostly edited by Y. L. Cahan during his visit to Vilna in 1930, yet it did not appear until 1938, a year after Cahan's death.[212]

In expanding its publication program the institute revisited one of the earliest goals of Yiddish scholarship: making world knowledge available to Yiddish-speaking Jews in their native tongue. As YIVO's founders had underscored, such work both elevated the European Jewish vernacular and educated its speakers, particularly members of the common folk who might know no other language. Such were the underlying aims of the Dubnow Fund, established in honor of its namesake's seventieth birthday to produce a *General Encyclopedia [Algemeyne*

entsiklopedye] in Yiddish.[213] In 1931 the fund established a board with equal representation from YIVO and a Berlin-based committee.[214] Differences of opinion arose over the project's intended audience as well as the proper emphasis on Jewish versus general subject matter. YIVO Central Board member Joseph Jaszuński advocated a publication covering all fields of knowledge aimed at a popular readership, although he also expressed concerns whether such a wide-ranging work, which would have to treat "current questions [and] living persons," would be able to discuss politically charged topics in a sufficiently "*pareve* [neutral]" manner.[215] While some wished 30 percent of the ten-volume work to focus on Jewish themes, Jaszuński and Weinreich favored limiting Jewish content to a supplementary eleventh volume.[216] Although logistical difficulties as well as these ideological disagreements caused the institute to withdraw formally from the Dubnow Fund, several of its staff – most notably Kalmanovitch, Lestschinsky, and Tcherikower – remained closely involved in the project.[217] The first volume appeared in 1934 with articles covering topics alphabetically from the Aa River to Atlantic City, and three further volumes were published in the next three years.[218]

While a plan to translate Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* went unrealized, in 1933 the institute established the Mereson Fund to "help raise the level of Yiddish scholarly literature and to bring into the circle of Yiddish culture the classics of social thought and the standard works of various branches of scholarship."[219] In 1937 the fund published a long-completed Yiddish version of Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* by its founder and namesake, Jacob Mereson.[220] It also sponsored Weinreich's translation of Freud, which appeared in 1936–1938, and planned to publish the work of anthropologist Franz Boas.[221] In this way YIVO married its long-standing goal of enlarging the scope of Yiddish literature with Weinreich's burgeoning interest in contemporary social science.

YIVO's new journal *Yivo bleter* [YIVO Pages], launched in January 1931 and edited by Zelig Kalmanovitch, represented another attempt to broaden the reach of the institute's work.[222] Rather than focusing on narrowly conceived articles, the new publication intended to serve as a "central organ" that would promote conversation among YIVO scholars and supporters across all its academic fields.[223] Moreover, each issue was less expensive than the *Shriftn* both for the institute to print and for readers to purchase. By appearing more frequently and at a lower cost than previous publications, YIVO hoped that the journal would enable it to keep in touch regularly with "the broad strata of [its] friends and supporters." Such communication was encouraged by features like the "Question Box" in which readers' queries were answered by YIVO staff.[224] Thus the *Bleter* was intended to help to "still the great thirst for knowledge that exists among our broad masses" by "maintaining contact among the scholars themselves and between the scholars and the public."[225] The *Yedies* also noted the contemporary relevance of the *Bleter's* content, which emphasized "material that ties the past to the present."[226]



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ייוו בלעטער

חודש-שריפט פון ייִדישן וויסנשאַפטלעכן אינסטיטוט

אינהאַלט פון נומער

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יאַנואַר 1931 באַנד I, נומ׳ 1

FIGURE 16. Cover of the first issue of the journal *Yivo bleter*, 1931. From the Library of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

In 1930 Weinreich and Szabad had argued for making the institute's work accessible to the average reader through "scholarly popularizations," and in 1932 board members reiterated the need for books and periodicals that ordinary Yiddish speakers could both afford and understand.[227] While the Economic-Statistical and Philological Sections had each discussed creating a

popular journal since the 1920s, late in the following decade these publications finally came into being. In May 1937 there appeared the first issue of *Di yidishe ekonomik* [Jewish Economics], a periodical geared to both "the demands of the intelligent reader among the masses and the demands of serious public affairs and scholarship." Its editor, Jacob Lestschinsky, intended the journal to be less specialized than the other publications of his section and to focus more on contemporary problems such as the current situation of Polish Jewry and how it could be ameliorated.[228] Similarly, the Philological Section's *Yidish far ale* [Yiddish for All] debuted in March 1938 as "a journal for practical usage of the Yiddish language" aimed at the general public.[229] Editor Noah Prylucki wrote that only with the active participation of writers, journalists, and teachers could *Yidish far ale* "become a regulating center for Yiddish around the entire globe and a unifier of Yiddish language usage."[230] TSYSHO cosponsored this publication and purchased 300 copies of each issue, another instance of the close collaboration between YIVO and the secular Yiddish schools during these years.[231] Pedagogues expressed disappointment, however, that their continued calls for YIVO to produce textbooks for the Yiddish schools went unheeded.

In 1939 the institute introduced its new "Popular Series" of publications with Weinreich's *Di shvartse pintelekh* [The Little Black Dots]. This history of the alphabet from prehistoric times to YIVO's own attempts to standardize Yiddish orthography was "written in accessible language so that young and old can understand it." Reviewers praised it as "comprehensible and transparent for the broad mass of readers" and as an important contribution to "our popular-scholarly literature."[232] With these projects YIVO seemed finally to fulfill its duty to the folk. Yet, as the late date of these publications suggests, the institute was reluctant to devote its limited funds to popular work. Moreover, it always resisted producing literature for a truly mass audience, seeking instead to educate the public to appreciate more sophisticated fare.

Thus despite these new initiatives, some continued to criticize even YIVO's more "popular" journals as elitist.[233] In fact, these publications still were beyond the financial means or intellectual interests of many ordinary YIVO supporters. While Prylucki boasted that *Yidish far ale* had sold 100 copies at Warsaw newsstands, this figure paled in comparison to that of the Warsaw dailies *Haynt* [Today] and *Moment*, which had a circulation in the tens of thousands.[234] A YIVO commission declared as its slogan "1000 subscribers for each of our publications," and indeed, distribution of *Yivo bleter* hovered around that mark.[235] In the first five months of its inaugural year it distributed 1,057 copies, including 738 to paid subscribers; by 1935 the number of subscribers had increased to 1,231.[236] Yet if its circulation figures could not support YIVO's aspirations to a genuinely mass readership, they did confirm its standing as an international cultural center. The single largest destination for the *Bleter* was the United States, which accounted for 40 percent of copies in 1931 and 65 percent in 1934. The second largest was Poland, followed by Argentina, South Africa, Lithuania, and Australia.[237]

As they had foreseen YIVO's scholars perforce had to create norms for the Yiddish language, in particular for academic prose, to compose their own publications. One of their original goals was to found a body with the authority to standardize Yiddish and "to rule on questions [*paskenen shayles*] … of grammar, orthography, terminology" to help raise Yiddish from an unregulated *zshargon* to a modern *kulturshprakh* [language of culture].[238] At the same time it served the Yiddish-speaking public by addressing the practical needs of teachers, writers, and ordinary Jews who carried out their day-to-day activities in the language.

While the Philological Section's prescriptive work predictably slowed during the years of economic decline, its Terminological Commission continued to gather data by distributing questionnaires on various crafts and trades in 1932 and 1933.[239] The commission also collected vocabulary for botany, zoology, and East European place names.[240] By 1938 it had compiled 20,000 terms on 100 topics, including more than 2,000 on tailoring alone.[241] Although the vast majority of this material was never systematically organized or analyzed, the commission took a step toward a standardized vocabulary in 1938 with a publication on terminology for a wagon.[242] The same year, the creation of *Yidish far ale* marked a further effort to address the need for linguistic norms.[243] This publication was a source of some conflict within YIVO, as Kalmanovitch and Weinreich criticized Prylucki's skills as a scholar and deemed him unqualified to edit the journal.[244] Kalmanovitch in particular clashed with Prylucki over the latter's insistence on printing *Yidish far ale* according to his own preferred orthography.[245]

In fact, of the Philological Section's language-planning initiatives, the most far reaching – and most contentious – was the Orthographic Commission's project to reform Yiddish spelling. This seemingly esoteric topic generated years of acrimonious debate, for it encapsulated many of the central tensions in YIVO's work: its relationship to the the folk in general and the Yiddish secular schools in particular; to Jewish tradition; and to the left, particularly communism. Ultimately, it shed light on the extent of YIVO's authority in the Yiddish cultural sphere.

As it prepared to formulate its spelling system YIVO took unprecedented steps to cast a wide net in soliciting popular input. In 1930 it published a volume of materials on Yiddish orthography as the "first step" in initiating "a broad public discussion" of the topic. The editors noted that with this endeavor YIVO would finally fulfill both parts of its "double mission," not only "to research Jewish life" but also "to assume the function of an arbiter [*posek*] in all questions of our culture that demand standardization." In this way the institute would "satisfy *practical needs* of Jewish cultural life" as well as the "intellectual interests of the masses of the Jewish folk" who demanded spelling reform.[246] In 1931 YIVO branches in Warsaw, Romania, and Argentina held meetings to discuss their views on the issue.[247] That May the Philological

Section called a conference in Vilna that was attended not only by YIVO's scholarly associates but also by Yiddish writers, journalists, and teachers, including representatives of YIVO support groups in the United States and Lithuania; Yiddish schools in Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland; and American and Polish Yiddish cultural associations.[248]

By far the most controversial issue taken up at the conference was the proposal to naturalize the loshn-koydesh component of Yiddish by having it conform to the phonetic orthography used for all other parts of the language. Debate on this issue was "heated and at times stormy," lasting seven hours.[249] Since this change had been introduced in the Soviet Union, where Hebrew was considered tainted by clerical and Zionist associations, it was associated with procommunist and antireligious sympathies. Moreover, those on both sides of the issue claimed to represent the true populist stance, seeking to ensure that Yiddish remained the language of the folk. Thus while Kalmanovitch argued against naturalization for the sake of "remaining socially and psychologically connected to the masses," Prylucki held that on the contrary, naturalization was "a question of democratizing Yiddish culture." Many less educated people already wrote that way, Prylucki argued, and in the nineteenth century many Yiddish writers had adopted such spelling precisely to reach a mass audience, thereby "winning the woman [reader] and excluding the mystic."[250]

The most outspoken supporters of this reform were Yiddish pedagogues, who maintained that such a change would make it much easier to teach correct spelling in their classrooms. Describing his pupils' difficulties with the loshn-koydesh component as "tragic," Aron Mark stated, "We must introduce naturalization for the sake of the schools." Yet this laudable educational goal also implied a specific vision of Yiddish culture, one that stressed innovation over Jewish tradition. As Aron Mark put it, "we now need a culture with new content.… The [Yiddish] school must create a new type of person." One speaker urged the delegates "to look to the future and not backwards" toward Hebrew culture. Others in attendance took a more conservative view. Abraham Golomb opposed naturalization, arguing that YIVO's goal should indeed be "to bring us closer to the past." While Anna Rosental commented that Hebrew literacy was naturally declining among her students, Kalmanovitch protested what he saw as a step toward eliminating the entire Hebrew element from Yiddish.[251]

As in clashes over the meaning of serving the folk, this debate could quickly acquire political overtones. Thus one delegate connected the concern for the young generation to class politics when he stated that "All those who have in mind the children must be for naturalization" since the future lay with the youth, not the "bourgeois elements." Weinreich, Yudel Mark, and others admonished attendees to consider the matter dispassionately, reminding them that it was essentially a practical rather than a linguistic or ideological question. Nevertheless, opponents of reform were well aware of the implications of their decision. Shmuel Niger warned that naturalization would place "weapons

in the hands of our enemies to agitate the masses." One delegate cautioned that such a step risked antagonizing both the Orthodox and Zionist camps. Others expressed fears that it would be seen as bringing YIVO closer to the orbit of the Soviet Union, where "one poisons the children" with an orthography denuded of loshn-koydesh.[252]

In the end, the conference voted down resolutions introduced by Reisen and Weinreich stating that it supported naturalization in principle but found it to be impractical at the current time. Prylucki's resolution favoring naturalization and instructing the Philological Section to implement such a policy narrowly passed by a vote of 26 to 21.[253] Yet rather than settling the issue, this outcome proved to be only the next step in years of further wrangling. Weinreich was quick to point out that the conference, while called by the Philological Section, was not an organ of YIVO and thus its votes were merely "*recommendations*" without "binding force." In fact, of the fifty-six attendees with voting rights only five were section members; they were far outnumbered by twenty-six teachers and school activists and seventeen writers and journalists. Of the section members in attendance only Prylucki supported naturalization.[254]

Thus the leaders of the institute approached the question of orthography as an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the broad Jewish public, yet were quick to distance themselves from the conference when it reflected a popular view at odds with their own. At the same time, they were forced to consider how much influence the institute had in fact accrued to dictate the terms of a standardized language. Both Weinreich and Niger feared that if YIVO decreed such a radical orthographic change yet publishers and ordinary Yiddish speakers failed to adopt it, the institute's prestige would be diminished. Shloyme Bastomski, on the other hand, argued that "If the institute does not [introduce naturalization] YIVO may lose its authority" since the schools seemed set on such a move.[255] In the end, the course of spelling reform tested both YIVO's commitment to the folk and its stature within the world of Yiddish culture.

In the wake of the 1931 conference the Philological Section began circulating a series of questions on orthography to its members, which sparked further discussion lasting several years.[256] Moreover, action on the issue was delayed as work slowed during the financial crisis.[257] In October 1934 the Central Board formally accepted 150 spelling rules promulgated by the Philological Section, which were announced on the institute's tenth anniversary and published as *Oysleyg-takones fun yidish* [Spelling Rules for Yiddish].[258] Significantly, these guidelines omitted the question of naturalization, thus leaving in place the status quo. Admitting that no consensus had been reached on this controversial issue, the section wrote that "uniformity in a certain number of points is infinitely better than complete orthographic chaos.[259]

YIVO asked the Yiddish secular schools to introduce its new orthography in its classrooms and publications.[260] Yet although the spelling system was formulated in consultation with educational organizations in Vilna, pedagogues

soon came forward with suggested changes and requested an opportunity to comment.[261] In June 1936 the leaders of YIVO and TSYSHO met together with fourteen teachers from throughout Poland to discuss the rules.[262] Further forums were held to consider specialized issues, such as the difficulties mathematics instructors faced teaching in a script written from right to left.[263] Following certain changes suggested on these occasions, a revised orthographic handbook was published in 1937.[264]

YIVO now began a campaign to encourage adoption of its spelling guidelines. To this end the Warsaw Friends of YIVO hosted a lecture by Weinreich as well as meetings with representatives of the Yiddish PEN Club, press, literary societies, journalists, and printers' unions.[265] Printers in the Polish capital approved the first eight rules in January 1937 and additional ones the following year.[266] Most significantly, TSYSHO agreed to implement the unified orthography in its classrooms.[267] This step was considered a significant achievement, a sign of YIVO's strengthened relationship with the Yiddish schools and a guarantor of its influence among the next generation. As Weinreich wrote, since this decision "[w]ith every day more people write according to the new spelling rules. As a few more years pass, the YIVO spelling will be the only spelling that cultured Jews will use."[268]

In fact, however, many in the Yiddish cultural sphere continued to ignore YIVO's dictates.[269] Moreover, the institute could not always impose its norms even internally, as on more than one occasion the Vilna headquarters criticized the Warsaw branch for the poor language in its correspondence and publications.[270] For their part, writers for YIVO publications sometimes complained of the extensive redaction of their work in Vilna. They maintained that the editors flattened their prose in favor of a standard YIVO style that they characterized as either arbitrary or biased toward the Lithuanian dialect of Yiddish.[271] Such grumblings prompted a lengthy defense of the institute's approach:

> Before YIVO there was almost no one who did scholarly work in Yiddish. We are now trying to create such a scholarly language. Necessarily it is *ours*, that is to say in the sense that that we use it and promote it among all scholarly minded Jews. We think that it is the best means to awaken and elevate Yiddish scholarly thought.

The charge that YIVO sought to impose the Lithuanian dialect or "stifle someone's individuality" was unfounded, the writer continued. "There is still no style, no 'canon' of how to write today; whatever just sounds Jewish [*yidish*] is accepted." The basis of such a style was "how the folk speaks" in whatever dialect, as well as Hebrew elements; what YIVO rejected were foreign influences and the language of the popular "Warsaw newspapers, the worst source of Yiddish that ever existed."[272] Thus, YIVO dismissed accusations of elitism in the name of upholding its academic standards and its prerogative as the final arbiter of Yiddish usage.

Yet even as they continued their prescriptive endeavors the leaders of the Philological Section sometimes questioned their utility. At a 1934 meeting

Kalmanovitch complained that "our normative work is very limited" and had little impact on the broader Yiddish cultural world. Reisen – who elsewhere noted that even the Soviet government had difficulties in imposing Yiddish language reforms – responded that the institute had more influence than Kalmanovitch credited. In fact, he added, "There are schools in many lands, there is a press, etc., that demand [guidance] from the institute." Weinreich posed the question of who precisely was the audience for their rulings in the realm of language planning: the entire Yiddish-speaking public, the YIVO board, or themselves alone? Yet despite voicing such doubts both he and Reisen concluded that even if Kalmanovitch's pessimistic assessment proved correct, their efforts were valuable in their own right and should be continued: "even if it were for ourselves only, the work is still necessary."[273]

In 1939 Weinreich reaffirmed that the institute's language planning constituted an important milestone: "we already know what is correct and what is false. Whoever wants to learn how to write Yiddish as it should be can do so." Moreover, he continued, the existence of such standards elevated Yiddish-speaking Jewry to the level of nations whose tongues were regulated by national language academies, such as the French and the Poles. They also further bound together the transnational Yiddish Diaspora:

> This is after all a truly great thing, that Yiddish – a language that is spread over the entire world – should everywhere, in Vilna and in Buenos Aires, in New York and in Melbourne, in Tel-Aviv and in Johannesburg, be written in the same way. How did this become possible? Because there was created in the Jewish world the central institution for researching and developing Yiddish – YIVO.[274]

Scholarship in Times of Crisis

In 1938, the *Yedies* asked YIVO's staff and affiliates to submit their opinions on the question of "Yiddish scholarship today." It explained that there was disagreement among the institute's leaders on how best to respond to the increasingly dire conditions in Europe. Some believed that YIVO should shape its scholarly activity to "accommodate ourselves to the times, put forth other themes." Others argued that the institute should demonstrate its resolve to overcome current challenges by refusing to allow the enemies of the Jewish people to dictate its agenda. They maintained that "there is no reason to change; we must gird all our strengths to weather the storm."[275] Yet all agreed that the institute had a vital role to play in a crucial period for European Jewry. In the final years of the 1930s, as YIVO scholars considered the distressing developments around them, they stressed the heightened importance of scholarship in times of crisis. As the *Yedies* wrote, the task of the institute was "to forge the intellectual weapons for our people in one of the most critical moments of its history!"[276]

Indeed, as academic pursuits came to be described with military metaphors, YIVO's work was seen as a key tool in the Jewish arsenal. By

emphasizing contemporary issues in the Aspirantur, Weinreich hoped to train "new researchers who could help our people in the difficult struggle for its existence with the weapons of understanding and knowledge."[277] A speaker addressing students in that program used a similar image while presciently observing that scholarship had become central to the anti–Jewish canards prevalent in both Western and Eastern Europe. Research about the past and present

> is one of the intellectual battlefields of our time. Never before was propaganda about Jews helped so much by ideas, theories, and scholarship.... Never before was antisemitism such a central point in the ideology and Weltanshauung of a large part of the intelligentsia of many European peoples....

At such a time, he argued, YIVO needed to become "a factor that actively achieves results" in Jewish life by responding to such abuses.[278]

One of the ways that the institute played such a constructive role was by underscoring the dignity of Jews and the value of their culture. As Weinreich put it in 1933, Nokhem Shtif believed that "to raise the importance of the Yiddish language ... means in effect the respect of the Jew for himself and his faith in himself, his confidence."[279] With new initiatives such as the Division of Youth Research and its autobiography contests, promoting this sense of self-worth of the Jewish individual became ever more central to YIVO's mission. One guest at a YIVO exhibit powerfully conveyed the impact of the institute's work especially in difficult times. He wrote of his visit to the impressive headquarters:

> You come here with a heavy heart, insulted and ridiculed by millions of enemies, and your heart is strengthened by the sheaf of the creation of the folk. You see our greatness enduring dozens and hundreds of years. You see how small and insignificant are the housepainter Hitler and his minions. Here is the source of heroic struggle from which the worker draws fresh energy and strength, the Jewish nationalist – dignity and pride.[280]

Thus the YIVO building and the activity within came to embody not only the achievements of Yiddish culture but the resilience of Yiddish-speaking Jews. Similarly, when a dedicated locale for YIVO's work opened in Warsaw in 1937 supporters underscored its "symbolic significance. Not to throw down one's hands, not to become tired – this is the answer of the Jewish community to the ruin of Jewish life. Don't fall into resignation and despair – rebuild and build further; each at his segment of the front."[281]

The institute's scholars sometimes focused on new directions for research that would reinforce this sense of resolve. They thus proposed that talks at the 1935 convention treat positive topics with an overarching theme of "building up Jewish life." The Historical Section, for example, agreed to concentrate on "periods of growth" rather than on subjects such as pogroms or expulsions.[282] As the Aspirantur speaker cited previously argued, YIVO's work

should "express the creative and constructive spirit that rules over the chaos and agitation of Jewish life."[283] Even the short-lived Art Section framed its work in similar terms when it wrote in the sole issue of its journal, "Our people always answered oppression and persecution with even greater exertions for spirit and culture. Let's also now open a powerful source of life for the Jewish future!"[284]

Moreover, many YIVO leaders insisted that their research could offer much more than psychological support. By providing objective analysis and historical perspective, they maintained, the tools of scholarship were uniquely suited to yield insights into the current crisis; "without a scholarly approach, however, it is impossible not only to solve [the problems of Jewish life] but even to understand them properly."[285] At the convention Dubnow asked rhetorically whether one stopped studying geology during an earthquake, while Yudel Mark compared YIVO to "a lighthouse in the rough seas of our bitter present."[286] Similarly, in 1938 Ignacy Schipper argued that European Jewry was living in a "boiler" in which constant persecution left it no time to take stock of its predicament. With its sober, academic analysis YIVO could give the Jewish public the means to assess its situation rationally, "a kind of pause for the Jewish community, a chance to reflect."[287] Hardly a luxury in times of distress, in this view scholarship was a pressing need.

As always, the first step was to gather data. As early as 1933 Ringelblum proposed that the Historical Section collect materials on the impact of the "*gzeyres hitler* [Hitler decrees]" for an eventual exhibition.[288] Meanwhile, the Psychological-Pedagogical Section prepared questionnaires on how the current crisis affected "the living and working conditions of Jewish teachers" as well as the "psychological condition of the school child."[289] Yet beyond documenting adversity, even more crucially, YIVO could help the Jewish public formulate a response. As Weinreich put it at the convention, "We must research not only in order to understand life but also in order to change it."[290] Addressing policy issues directly, in 1936 the institute resolved to devote its energies to topics "that have a current interest and can directly serve social needs" such as scholarship that would refute Nazi racial theories.[291] A few years later YIVO provided information to Jewish politicians on ritual slaughter, a practice that the Polish government was then considering restricting.[292]

As we have seen, the work of the Historical Commission demonstrated that even research on the distant past could have contemporary resonance. Just as Emanuel Ringelblum argued in 1926 that historical studies could serve as a support in the fight for Jewish rights, so too did Isaiah Trunk in 1939, writing "at a time when the rights of the Jewish population of Poland are disputed."[293] By demonstrating Jews' long and productive settlement in the country, scholars such as Trunk combatted the view of Jews as an alien and parasitical element that gathered increasing strength in the mid- and late 1930s. "It is therefore thoroughly necessary to carry out archival research that will provide material to oppose the false position of these [antisemitic] historians and to place in the

correct light the significance of the Jews for the development of Poland," concluded the commission, for now "Historical works take on a purely political significance beyond the scholarly."[294] As Jacob Shatzky put it in 1951,

> That a Jewish Sejm deputy in Poland could, from the floor of the Polish parliament, struggle for Jewish rights with conclusions and facts from the just-published works of YIVO historians – this was in itself the greatest moral-national triumph of Jewish historiography in Poland.[295]

In such cases, supporters saw contemporary conditions as the ultimate test of YIVO's dictum that Yiddish scholarship could and should have a direct impact on daily life.

Of all of YIVO's divisions the work of the Economic-Statistical Section had always been most closely tied to current issues, and in the mid-1930s it was most immediately affected by the rise of the Nazis. By 1932 several of its projects were halted for lack of funds as YIVO's work as a whole slowed to a crawl.[296] Then Jacob Lestschinsky, the head of the section – still located in Berlin – was briefly arrested in March 1933 after Hitler's assumption of power. He fled the country upon his release, sojourning in Prague and Riga before settling in Warsaw.[297] After this period of upheaval the section was able to resume its work with fresh vigor. Indeed, in the late 1930s it had the largest budget of YIVO's four research sections, in part because it continued to generate its own funds from the Joint.[298]

In order to address the "pressing necessity" of "creat[ing] an objective picture of the economic situation of the Jewish people," the section now returned to a research project on Polish shtetls begun in 1932.[299] YIVO scholars may have been encouraged to pursue this theme by the successful work in Prużana. Weinreich spent most of his review of the Prużana volume detailing information on the current state of the town that he wished had been included and the Economic-Statistical Section also expressed interest in the research undertaken there.[300] The section produced a lengthy questionnaire covering each shtetl's demography, employment patterns, businesses and communal institutions, and the kehillah budget.[301] Like the Historical Commission's monograph campaign, this initiative demonstrated YIVO's growing reliance on its supporters to record wide-ranging, in-depth information about their local communities. While Tcherikower expressed doubts whether "provincial intellectuals" could complete the detailed survey accurately enough to yield useful results, Julius Brutskus argued that "today shtetl residents are more intelligent and better organized" than in the past.[302] In the late 1930s the section prepared additional surveys on Jews in large industrial cities, beginning with the textile industry in Łódź, as well as on rural Jews working in agriculture.[303] It also set about analyzing the results of the 1931 Polish census and prepared publications on Jewish demography.[304]

Most significantly, the Economic-Statistical Section began producing a series of publications that directly addressed the current problems of Jewish life. May 1937 saw the debut of the journal *Di yidishe ekonomik*, which, as noted, aimed

to discuss contemporary events in a manner accessible to the general public. Laying out "Our Tasks and Aims" in the first issue, editor Lestschinsky left no doubt of the severity of the challenges now facing the Jewish people. He wrote of the "*fateful crisis*" that was "the distinguishing feature of our epoch." Tossed about in a "great worldwide storm," Jews were often overwhelmed and felt they had no control over their fate. In fact, Lestschinsky continued, they had demonstrated tremendous energy in adjusting to shifting conditions: "Feverishly and with amazing risks Jewish individuals throw themselves on new geographic and social paths in order to stay above the waves that storm around them in any way possible." The central issue of Jewish life – and the charge of the Economic-Statistical Section and its new journal – was to consider this individual predicament as a collective problem. The section would help Jewish society as a whole orient itself in this tumultuous period through scholarly enquiry, "not with prepared social schemes or with ready political ideologies, but by providing comprehensive, objective, verified material about the life of the masses."[305]

In setting about this task *Di yidishe ekonomik* cast a wide net, writing about Jewish communities not only throughout Europe but in such far-flung locales as Australia, Libya, and South Africa, often in connection with the topic of emigration. On the one hand, it explained in its first issue, the journal would follow the dictum of stressing positive developments and practical work, for example in a 1937 article by Lestschinsky "On a Constructive Plan to Help Polish Jewry."[306] On the other, it did not shy away from covering disturbing trends, such as a rising number of suicides among Jews in Warsaw.[307] It also wrote about contemporary developments in Germany, where Lestschinsky maintained ties longer than any other of YIVO's founders. These pieces often discussed the impact of Nazi dictates on the Jewish family, treating matters such as average family size, children's education, and the prosecution of those who violated laws on racial purity.[308]

In the late 1930s the institute brought out separate reprints of several articles from *Di yidishe ekonomik* and *Yivo bleter* on Jewish demography, migration, and economic life, presumably so that they could be more widely distributed at a time when public discussion of these topics was becoming ever more urgent.[309] As one speaker noted, the importance of such questions in the contemporary environment was clear: "Certainly the theory of millions of economically superfluous Jews in Poland … plays in Poland the same function as race theory in Germany, the function of an ideological platform without which one cannot build a mass movement."[310] In the same vein YIVO also reprinted several versions of Libman Hersh's comparative study of Jewish and non–Jewish criminality in Poland, thus applying the tools of academic analysis to combat directly a common negative stereotype.[311] In such cases, as in the work of the Historical Commission, YIVO scholars once again set out not only to document Jewish distress but also to provide tools to defend Jewish rights and honor.

At the same time that YIVO sought increasingly to engage the issues of the day, it clung all the more tenaciously to its cherished stance of neutrality. This reflected not only its own principles but also its fear of the government's more vigilant monitoring of left-leaning organizations to root out suspected communist activities, which were banned under Polish law.[312] In 1937, for example, the institute shut down a support group in Lwów that was presumably engaged in such activities. Mahler opposed this step, arguing that YIVO was undermining its standing among the masses by forcing its own backers to disperse.[313] Weinreich, however, defended the decision, citing "the danger of using the institute for political purposes." "It is not right to demand that the institute facilitate work for illegal political parties," he argued.[314]

This heightened sensitivity to political partisanship could sometimes work to bolster YIVO's claim to represent all camps on the Jewish street. Fearful of arousing the ire of the Polish censor, it modified plans for an exhibit to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx. The institute decided to broaden its focus "to the left and to the right," changing its theme to "Jewish Social Movements."[315] "Great masses of people streamed to the [YIVO] building" to view the resulting display, according to the Vilna *Tog*, including groups from Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsa'ir and those "from various classes, social strata, and camps – right and left and center."[316] One visitor from Białystok recounted that lectures were held every day on a different party or movement. He recalled viewing materials on the Bund, anarchism, and all varieties of Zionism in Yiddish, Hebrew, and the language of the Bukharan Jews.[317] In this case YIVO's apprehensions led it to adopt a more inclusive approach to a potentially controversial topic.

YIVO leaders took satisfaction at expressions of support from unexpected quarters, such as when a journalist in the Hebrew newspaper *Davar* [Word] in Palestine argued that all nationally minded Jews – including Zionists – had an obligation to support the language and culture of the Jewish masses.[318] They were also surely pleased when the ultra–Orthodox Poale Agudas Israel [Workers of the Union of Israel] in Gorlice helped the Philological Section document the local dialect of Yiddish and requested copies of *Yidish far ale* in return.[319] Meanwhile, the institute's affiliates in Warsaw sought to strengthen their presence in the Polish capital by appealing to constituencies normally distant from Jewish concerns. They noted the "screaming paradox" that there were only 367 YIVO members in the city, roughly 1 percent of the total Jewish population.[320] With the opening of their own locale in 1937 they announced plans to "Vilnerize" Warsaw, reinvigorating their work with a diverse program of lectures designed to draw a broader and younger audience. They hoped to recruit Jewish professionals such as doctors and engineers; they also formed a Lawyers' Circle to collect material on the participation of Jews in Polish political life. The Warsaw Friends subsequently reported with satisfaction that these efforts had succeeded in attracting "thoroughly assimilated elements until recently estranged from Jewish culture" to YIVO.[321]

Noting such developments, Zelig Kalmanovitch stated in 1938 that the institute "has nearly no opponents. Once the Zionists attacked YIVO; there was an opposition within YIVO. Now it is already in the past. The *yehudim* [West European Jews] now also show an interest in YIVO." He argued that whereas the work of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the institutes for Jewish studies in the Soviet Union was necessarily politicized, YIVO simply sought to answer the question "Just what are Jews?" as thoroughly and objectively as possible.[322] While Kalmanovitch's assertions cannot be taken at face value, they reflect YIVO's growing insistence in these years on its role as a haven of integrity outside of political conflict and thus a broad tent under which all streams in Jewish life could unite. A 1938 brochure stated, "YIVO has never deviated from the principle of NON-PARTISANSHIP. It is an extremely careful institution that serves the entire Jewish folk, [an] institution of the folk that is truly supported by THE ENTIRE JEWISH FOLK throughout the entire world and is recognized by all circles of Jewish society." To emphasize its wide-ranging base of support it reproduced several pages of excerpts from the institute's guest book, including enthusiastic comments in Hebrew, Polish, German, and English as well as Yiddish.[323]

Thus in the final years of the 1930s – as Jews became increasingly disillusioned with moderate political movements and turned in greater numbers to those on the left and the right – ever more prominent became the trope of YIVO as a unifying factor for a factionalized Jewish people. If in 1935 Weinreich described the institute as "a centrifugal force" opposing "the centripetal strivings in Jewish life,"[324] in the following years this theme was repeated almost obsessively, as if seeking to counter growing polarization through rhetoric alone. The *Yedies* wrote in 1937 that YIVO had become "the international center of Yiddish scholarship," "the center of Yiddish culture and scholarship," and "an effective center to organize the creative energies of our people."[325] A single *Yedies* article of 1938 referred to YIVO as "the central institution for Yiddish culture and scholarship" that "stands in the center of the Yiddish cultural world," ready to "realize the central tasks of our culture, scholarship, and society."[326] Later that year it emphasized how important it was that "the center of Yiddish culture and scholarship remain strong and able to work in the time of trouble."[327] As the decade wore on a center in fact became increasingly difficult to sustain. Yet YIVO leaders became all the more insistent that the institute could hold the Yiddish-speaking world together even as that world seemed more decisively to be coming apart.

Conclusion

By the late 1930s developments in both Western and Eastern Europe cast a growing pall over Jewish cultural work, yet YIVO accomplished what it did in these years as much because of as in spite of these constraints. As it began to recover its financial footing, the institute renewed its activity with fresh energy. Led by

the wide-ranging intellectual interests of Max Weinreich, it applied an innovative, interdisciplinary approach to some of the key issues facing the Jewish individual and the Jewish collective. Driven by an increased sense of urgency, after a decade or more of discussion it created a teaching division as well as initiated projects aimed at reaching a broader audience and addressing the pressing concerns of the Yiddish-speaking public. Extending Ezra Mendelsohn's dictum that conditions in interwar Poland were bad for the Jews but good for Jewish culture, we may say that the conditions of this period impinged on YIVO's material security but fostered its scholarly achievements.[328]

A speaker at a 1938 YIVO board meeting asked whether it was appropriate to devote scarce resources to academic work at a time when so many Jews were in great need. He compared the study of folklore to a flower, beloved but inessential. "Can one be busy with flowers while woods are burning?" he asked. Weinreich replied that one must look beyond current circumstances to the period of eventual rebuilding. "Even in a time when forests are burning there are firemen who put out the fire, but luckier are those who can then raise flowers that will later beautify the forest," he said.[329] The *Yedies* wrote in 1938 that YIVO's work was all the more necessary now, when it would serve as "a guide and a comfort in a time when we must draw strength from our culture and our scholarship for upholding the folk – until the storm passes."[330] Ignacy Schipper, Zelig Kalmanovitch, and Elias Tcherikower all noted that Jews had traditionally turned to intellectual pursuits as a source of fortitude during difficult times. "For Jews in the Diaspora the bookshelf was perhaps the only free corner," Schipper stated. "YIVO is now creating a new bookshelf for us." Kalmanovitch concurred: "Indeed, cultural work must be done to spite those who wish us evil. In intellectual unity … the folk will draw strength to overcome all blows …"[331]

Thus, paradoxically, even as they grappled with the momentous challenges they faced YIVO's leaders planned resolutely for the future. On the institute's thirteenth anniversary in 1938 they noted that the existing headquarters had become cramped and commented, "YIVO indeed appears as healthy as a bar mitzvah boy, but its pants are too short." "We will have to build!" they proclaimed.[332] The board resolved to construct a new wing to be completed by the time of the institute's next major gathering in 1940.[333] Weinreich affirmed his pride in YIVO's past successes and his sense of determination for the future: "The very fact that we are able to plan a conference of the institute for 1940 is a sign that we have become rooted in Jewish life and that each will stay at his post as long as physically possible."[334]

Yet by 1939 YIVO's budget ledger included a loan for air defense alongside an entry for its projected building expansion.[335] At the opening of the Proaspirantur the previous year, Weinreich noted that YIVO had nearly given up the hope of creating such an ambitious new program under current conditions: "If we were to compare the time when the institute was established [to the present], it appears that it was a golden time. That we work and don't

throw up our hands is a sign that our strength is not broken."[336] On another occasion Weinreich was more circumspect as he looked ahead with some apprehension: "What will be later? We do not know. The skies are so overcast with clouds. It is possible that later we will consider our time as the good years." Nevertheless, he concluded, "I believe that YIVO can serve as an example of what still can be created in such storms … we will resist and overcome to spite all our enemies."[337]

Epilogue

From Vilna to New York[1]

World War II and Its Aftermath

With the outbreak of World War II, Hitler and Stalin realized the fruits of their nonaggression pact by invading Poland in September 1939. Soviet troops captured Vilna on September 19. The Soviet authorities arrested and deported Zalman Reisen, whom they later executed, presumably because of his outspoken views as editor of the Vilna *Tog*. Moyshe Lerer, a staff member with communist sympathies, became head of the institute. In October the Soviets turned the city over to the officially neutral government of Lithuania. Under Lithuanian rule YIVO continued to function, although the specter of war and political repression hung over its work. The institute retained control of its collections and a level of independence in its day-to-day operations. Ironically, its work was bolstered by refugee scholars and students who fled to Vilna from the Nazi-occupied sector of Poland, as well as by Lithuanian authorities' more positive attitude to Yiddish. YIVO published new work, including a volume of *Shriftn far psikhologye un pedagogik* [Writings for Psychology and Pedagogy], which appeared in 1940. It also held public lectures and prepared an exhibit in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of I. L. Peretz, while the Aspirantur enrolled students for the academic year 1939–1940. Thus in this early stage of the war some remained optimistic that Yiddish scholarship could continue unabated, albeit under very different political conditions.

These conditions again changed radically in June 1940, when the Soviet army retook control of the city and Vilna became the capital of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania. The following October the government-sponsored Institute of Lithuanian Studies officially absorbed YIVO, as it did analogous Polish and Belorussian institutions in the city, and renamed it the Third Museum and Library of the Institute of Lithuanian Studies. At the same time Noah Prylucki, who had arrived in Vilna from Warsaw, was appointed to a chair in Yiddish at the local university, an unprecedented sign of recognition

for the language.[2] In January 1941, YIVO was renamed the Institute of Jewish Culture and made part of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania, with Prylucki replacing Lerer as its head. During this period, YIVO's holdings were left essentially intact and even augmented by the addition of collections whose owners had fled or been killed. Prylucki and others continued to conduct classes and lectures. Yet as the Soviet regime imposed its ideological constraints, the intellectual independence that the institute had so carefully guarded was effectively eliminated.[3]

At the time of the war's outbreak, Max Weinreich was in Copenhagen en route to a scholarly conference in Brussels with his elder son, Uriel. After much hesitation he decided against returning to Vilna and instead made his way to the United States in March 1940. There he was reunited with Jacob Lestschinsky, whom government authorities had barred from Poland in 1938, and was soon joined by Elias Tcherikower, who fled Paris. In 1940, after considerable deliberation, the YIVO leadership announced that the New York office would take over the functions of the YIVO headquarters for the duration of the war. With Weinreich there to serve as a driving force, it planned to continue its work so that the European center could resume its activity as soon as possible after the end of the conflict.[4]

On June 24, 1941, the Nazis captured Vilna. A week later a representative of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg [Reich Administrator Rosenberg Task Force] visited the city. This body was charged with seizing Jewish cultural property and selecting items to be sent to the Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage [Institute for Research on the Jewish Question] in Frankfurt, where the Nazis planned to create a museum documenting the people they hoped to annihilate. In March 1942 the Nazis established a sorting center for Jewish books, archival material, and art and ritual objects in the YIVO headquarters. In addition to the collections already in the building, they brought looted material from other libraries, museums, and private collections in Vilna and the surrounding area. A group of laborers, including former YIVO staff members, was forced to select the most valuable objects to be sent to Frankfurt, while the remaining items would be destroyed. Among these were Zelig Kalmanovitch; Uma Olkenicki, director of YIVO's Esther-Rachel Kaminska Theater Museum; the poets Abraham Sutzkever (a former student at YIVO) and Szmerke Kaczerginski; and the librarian Khaykel Lunski of the Strashun Library.

Led by Sutzkever and Kaczerginski, some of the workers resolved to save as much of this material as possible. The members of this group, nicknamed the "*papir brigade*" [paper brigade], risked their lives daily by smuggling items out of the YIVO headquarters and into the Vilna ghetto, where they returned to their homes each evening. There they concealed books, manuscripts, artwork, and ritual objects in a variety of hiding places. They also gave items for safekeeping to non–Jewish contacts such as the librarian Ona Šimaitė and hid a large quantity of material in the attic of the YIVO building itself.[5] Since it was located outside of the ghetto confines, the headquarters also came to serve as

a transit point for weapons for the Jewish partisan movement. Kalmanovitch opposed armed resistance, rejecting secular Diaspora Nationalism and adopting religious faith during the war years.[6] Nevertheless, these efforts continued until the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto in September 1943.[7] Some of the paper brigade's hiding places went undiscovered and the items stored there survived the war, but the YIVO headquarters and its contents were completely destroyed.

After the liberation of Vilna by the Soviet army in July 1944, Sutzkever and Kaczerginski recovered whatever of the hidden material remained intact, transferring it to the Vilna Jewish Museum that they established with the approval of Soviet authorities. Yet the Soviet government had little interest in supporting Jewish culture, and many tons of surviving documents from YIVO and other Jewish repositories were destroyed before they could be transported to the museum. Realizing that these collections were still in peril, Sutzkever began to clandestinely transfer as much as he could to Moscow or to YIVO in New York. By the spring of 1946 both Sutzkever and Kaczerginski had emigrated, taking with them as much material as they could smuggle out. Over the course of the next year they continued to send packages to YIVO via a variety of couriers. The Vilna Jewish Museum functioned until June 1949, becoming the first institution of its kind dedicated to the Holocaust, but visitors were not permitted access to its prewar documents. When it was shut its collections were sent to the Lithuanian National Book Chamber, where they were closed to researchers and knowledge of their very existence was suppressed for the next forty years.[8]

Once the scope of the catastrophe of Yiddish-speaking Jewry became clear, YIVO leaders had to face the reality that their center in Vilna would not be rebuilt and that the United States would become the institute's permanent home. In 1942, YIVO moved from space in the HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) offices on Lafayette Street in New York to its own building at 531–535 West 123rd Street. At the end of the war the material that the Nazis had selected in Vilna for their museum and shipped to Frankfurt was located and transferred to a depot in Offenbach, Germany. Starting in July 1947 these parts of the institute's collections were sent to YIVO's now-permanent New York headquarters.[9] Also recovered were the surviving remnants of Vilna's Strashun Library as well as YIVO materials that had been hidden by Tcherikower in France during the war.

Even in one of the darkest hours of Jewish history YIVO scholars continued their commitment to serving the people, for they considered it a moral imperative to document the crimes of Nazi Germany and the fate of its victims. Emanuel Ringelblum's efforts to organize the extensive underground Oyneg Shabes [Sabbath Joy] archive in the Warsaw ghetto, while not officially connected to YIVO, were a clear continuation of his earlier work.[10] In New York YIVO was one of the first organizations to bring word of the unfolding catastrophe to the American public, publishing an account of the Warsaw ghetto

in 1940 and a brochure on the ghetto uprising four years later.[11] At the end of the war it immediately recruited zamlers to collect survivors' testimonies and documents from displaced persons camps, and within a year it had created one of the first collections of eyewitness accounts of Nazi atrocities.[12] Remarkably, as early as 1946 Weinreich published *Hitler's Professors*, a study of the complicity of German intellectuals in the Nazi regime.[13] Beginning in the 1960s YIVO scholars such as Isaiah Trunk produced pioneering studies of Jewish life under Nazi rule and YIVO collaborated with Israel's Yad Vashem Martyrs' and Heroes' Memorial Authority on a major fifteen-volume bibliography of Holocaust research.[14] YIVO thus undertook collection, research, and publishing projects on the destruction of European Jewry decades ahead of the development of Holocaust studies as an academic field.

YIVO in the United States

In the wake of the Holocaust YIVO's mission was irrevocably altered, as it came to terms with the decimation of the Yiddish-speaking folk that had constituted its raison d'être. While the desire to preserve the past had always been part of the institute's mandate, YIVO leaders now became ever more conscious of the need to guard the remnants of East European Jewry. To this end they initiated collecting projects designed to gather material from the "old world" held by American Jewish immigrants, such as its Museum of the Homes of the Past.[15] Yet at the same time, YIVO refused to treat that life as a "museum object that one regards with archeological indifference and sheds dry, antiquarian tears," as Jacob Shatzky put it in 1951.[16] If YIVO became more backward looking in the postwar period, it remained committed to the present and future of the Jewish people. As it adjusted to its new home, the institute's leaders came to see that future as closely bound up with its American setting.[17]

This conviction was largely driven by the views of Max Weinreich, who remained, in New York as he had been in Vilna, the institute's primary intellectual force. In the United States, he maintained, YIVO's work was just as valuable to Jewish immigrants and their children as it had been to Jews in Eastern Europe. By the 1940s, the process of Jewish integration into the American mainstream was well underway and Jews were abandoning Yiddish in large numbers. Yet Weinreich insisted that the tools of scholarship, particularly the interdisciplinary social science approach he favored in the 1930s – much of which, as we have seen, he absorbed from American sources – could as usefully be applied in the United States. The dilemmas of relatively affluent, acculturated American Jewry might seem very different from the plight of the impoverished, marginalized community of interwar Poland. For Weinreich, however, both faced the same underlying problem: Jewish youth were still a minority in the United States, and as they tried to fit into American society they needed a grounding in their own culture and a positive sense of identity as much as their

prewar counterparts. "We will be able to make psychically healthier, psychically stronger every young Jew in this country," he declared in 1945.[18] Moreover, he was convinced that although the majority of American Jews might abandon Yiddish in their rush for acceptance, they would eventually recognize it as a necessary part of their being. As he wrote thirteen years later, "As long as the world exists, there will always be Jews who want to understand their roots in order to thereby understand themselves."[19]

Under Weinreich's leadership as research director, YIVO returned to familiar topics and techniques and applied them to the American context. In 1942 it held another autobiography contest, this time soliciting the life stories of American Jewish immigrants.[20] Drawing on a favorite theme of the prewar Historical Section, it published the two-volume *Geshikhte fun der yidisher arbeter bavegung in di fareynikte shtatn* [History of the Jewish Labor Movement in the United States].[21] At the same time, Weinreich sought to build contacts with the wider academic and Jewish communities. The *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* was founded in 1946 to make the institute's research accessible to an English-speaking audience. As the institute's Library and Archives continued to grow, in the 1950s the acquisition of records from organizations including the American Jewish Committee and HIAS made YIVO a major center for the study of American Jewish history. At the same time, YIVO reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to the Yiddish language. In 1941 it created the linguistic journal *Yidishe shprakh* [Yiddish Language] as a successor to *Yidish far ale*. It also published several important reference works that remain unsurpassed, such as Nokhem Stutchkoff's Yiddish thesaurus.[22] In 1953 YIVO played a key role in initiating a project to create a definitive twelve-volume Yiddish dictionary.[23] In this way it continued its work of documenting and standardizing the language, a task given new urgency as the numbers of native speakers declined.

In fact, Weinreich had no illusions that the masses of American Jews would return to Yiddish as a daily vernacular. Instead, he began to focus his efforts on cultivating a small group that would ensure the "scholarly succession" that YIVO's founders had originally envisioned. Thus he attempted to recreate the Aspirantur with a mix of native-born students and recent arrivals from Europe, many of whom would go on to long associations with the institute. These included his son, the linguist Uriel Weinreich; his future daughter-in-law, the folklorist Beatrice (Bina) Silverman Weinreich; the sociolinguist Joshua A. (Shikl) Fishman; and YIVO's long-time music archivist Eleanor (Chana) Gordon Mlotek. In addition, YIVO had notable success in introducing Yiddish instruction to American college campuses. In 1947 Weinreich taught the first accredited courses in the language at the City College of New York.[24] In 1949 his son Uriel made a significant contribution to the field when he published the textbook *College Yiddish* at the precocious age of twenty-three. This volume, the first to present the study of Yiddish as an academic subject for the American classroom, has become a mainstay of generations of language students. Only

two years later, the younger Weinreich was appointed to the Atran Chair for Yiddish Language, History, and Culture at Columbia University.[25]

Despite such intensive activity, however, the vision of continued commitment to Yiddish alongside productive interaction with English-language academia proved elusive. The accomplishments of both generations of Weinreichs notwithstanding, with a few exceptions the study of Jewish history and culture as a whole – let alone its East European variant – remained virtually absent from American campuses in this period. Among the wider Jewish public in the United States, just as Zhitlowsky had maintained at the time of YIVO's founding, interest in high Yiddish culture was also limited. Thus although the institute made some efforts to broaden its financial base, it met with little success.[26] As was the case in Vilna, individual donations from dedicated enthusiasts, most European born, continued to be the core of its support. Relying on this aging and economically modest population, which supplied as much as 80 percent of YIVO's budget, was hardly a promising strategy.[27] Concerns about the institute's intellectual and material trajectory led to debates over the proper emphasis on Yiddish versus English, the Vilna legacy versus the American future. Such conflicts, as well as the desire to focus on his own scholarship, led Max Weinreich to resign the post of research director in 1950.[28]

In 1955 YIVO moved to a former Vanderbilt mansion at 1048 Fifth Avenue in New York, but its grandiose new surroundings belied ongoing internal problems. The change of its English name that year from the Yiddish Scientific Institute to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research reinforced apprehensions about a lessening commitment to Yiddish, while budget constraints meant that its publications appeared only sporadically. A period of relative quiet was capped by the tragic early death of Uriel Weinreich in 1967, followed by the passing of Max Weinreich two years later. Their two greatest works appeared posthumously: Uriel's *Modern English-Yiddish Yiddish-English Dictionary* in 1968 and Max's four-volume *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh* [History of the Yiddish Language] in 1973. The latter work, a wide-ranging exploration of Jewish language and culture, is considered the crowning achievement of Weinreich's career. Its formulation of Yiddish as "the language of *derekh-hasha"s* [the way of the Talmud]" raised the question of whether Weinreich reconsidered his staunchly secular approach to Jewish society as he wrestled with the implications of the European catastrophe and American assimilation.[29]

In 1968 YIVO created two new teaching programs that filled important curricular gaps on American campuses. The Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture,[30] an intensive summer course, addressed the growing need for language training at a time when decreasing numbers of students could claim native fluency. Its success has led to several similar programs internationally. The Max Weinreich Center for Advanced Jewish Studies provided supplemental coursework for students enrolled in university graduate programs, thus continuing the tradition of the Aspirantur.[31] European-born staff members – including Shloyme Noble, Isaiah Trunk, and Lucjan

Dobroszycki – as well as younger faculty such as Dan Miron and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett offered an array of classes on East European and American Jewish history, Yiddish language and literature, and the Holocaust.[32] They played a crucial role in training a generation of young scholars who often had no other opportunity to study these subjects. With the rapid growth of ethnic studies in the following decade the alumni of both the Uriel Weinreich *zumer program* [summer program], as it is known, and the Max Weinreich Center soon became leaders in the expanding field of Jewish studies across the United States. These programs were thus finally able to fulfill their namesakes' vision of bringing YIVO's scholarship into fruitful dialogue with the larger American academic scene.

Throughout the 1970s the Weinreich Center benefited from United States government grants, which helped to address the perennial issue of the institute's financial base. Federal and New York State funds also made it possible to extend the collecting, cataloging, and preservation efforts of the YIVO Library and Archives.[33] Among the notable projects that resulted was *Image Before My Eyes*, an exhibit, book, and documentary film exploring interwar Polish Jewry.[34] In 1982 the Max and Frieda Weinstein Archive of Recorded Sound was created and three years later its director, Henry Sapoznik, founded the Yiddish Folk Arts Program, known as KlezKamp, which has since been emulated throughout the world.[35] Benefiting from the ethnic pride movement in the United States, it exposed young artists to Yiddish culture and was a major factor in the worldwide explosion of interest in East European Jewish music known as the klezmer revival. Thus YIVO connected to a broad Jewish public through the unexpected medium of music, fulfilling both its prewar commitment to addressing a popular audience and Weinreich's postwar prediction that American Jews would someday rediscover their roots.

Another reason for the increased attraction of music was the decline in Yiddish literacy, which made cultural forms such as literature inaccessible to growing numbers of Jews. This linguistic shift extended to the ranks of the YIVO staff, where living witnesses to prewar Yiddish culture were replaced by younger, largely American-born personnel. Bowing to this reality, YIVO came to rely increasingly on English as its lingua franca. Thus, to a large degree the institute abandoned its historic commitment to Yiddish as not only the subject but also the medium of its work.

It had been assumed since World War II that any YIVO materials surviving the Nazi occupation of Vilna and not immediately recovered had been destroyed by the Soviets. However, with the advent of perestroika at the end of the 1980s, word reached New York that much of what remained of YIVO's prewar collections was hidden in the Lithuanian National Book Chamber. Library director Antanas Ulpis received orders to destroy the documents during the Stalinist era but instead allowed them to languish quietly, uncared for but undisturbed.[36] After years of negotiations, the government of now-independent Lithuania refused to recognize YIVO's legal ownership of these materials but

allowed the archival portions to be brought to New York in 1995 and 1996 to be sorted and duplicated, with the originals returned to Vilna. They constitute an integral part of several of YIVO's most important archival collections, including the institute's own administrative records.[37]

The fall of the Soviet Union also made possible the revival of Jewish scholarship in the region. In 1991 David E. Fishman of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America established Project Judaica, a joint venture of that institution, YIVO, and the Russian State University of the Humanities in Moscow.[38] As the first program of Jewish studies in post–Soviet Russia, it played an important role in exposing students to a culture that had been almost completely suppressed for two generations. It has since produced a cohort of young scholars, some of whom have gone on to careers in the West and in Israel, as well as leaders of the Russian Jewish community. The project also encompassed a survey of Jewish archival resources in the former Soviet Union. These initiatives have led to the publication of important research guides as well as needed textbooks and other materials in Russian.

With little research or teaching staff in this period, YIVO's role as a generator of original scholarship declined and the Weinreich Center shifted its focus from academic classes to public programming. It continued to publish, temporarily reviving the journals *YIVO Annual* and *Yivo bleter*. In these years, the first volumes of the *Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*, a project begun by Uriel Weinreich in 1959, finally began to appear with a German press.[39] In addition, the institute increasingly turned its attention to English-language publications that made material from its collections accessible to an Anglophone audience. Significant examples include a volume of folklore gathered by the Ethnographic Commission, anthologies of autobiographies solicited by YIVO in Vilna and in New York, Herman Kruk's writings in the Vilna ghetto, and the first full English version of Weinreich's *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh*.[40]

As YIVO became less active in the areas of scholarship and education, its focus shifted to its library and archival collections. These continued to expand, most notably with the acquisition of the Bund Archives of the Jewish Labor Movement in 1992. The institute greatly improved access to its collections with the publication of the *Yiddish Catalog and Authority File of the YIVO Library* and the *Guide to the YIVO Archives*, as well as with the start of online cataloging projects.[41] These tools have been invaluable to researchers, who come from around the globe to consult YIVO's more than 380,000 printed volumes and 10,000 linear feet of archival material. The institute's New York staff also went to the aid of the Argentine branch of YIVO, run since World War II as an independent institution, after it was severely damaged in the 1994 terrorist bombing of the AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina) Jewish community center in Buenos Aires.

By the early 1990s YIVO had far outgrown its Fifth Avenue headquarters. In response the institute's major supporters created the Center for Jewish History to house YIVO and several other Jewish academic organizations. In 1994

YIVO relocated to temporary offices and in early 1999 moved to the Center's renovated building at 15 West 16th Street, where it shares a reading room and other resources with its partners. While this arrangement has brought fresh opportunities for collaborative work, it also posed a new set of financial challenges. Moreover, YIVO's distinctive institutional culture, still retaining traces of its East European origins, became largely subsumed into the framework of mainstream American Jewish communal life.

In 2008 *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* appeared and an online version was launched two years later.[42] This publication in many ways encapsulates the institute's role at the start of the twenty-first century. Rather than an original scholarly work, it represents a landmark of synthesis involving more than 400 researchers from around the globe. In this way, YIVO continues to serve as the international center of scholarship envisioned by Nokhem Shtif in 1924. The print and online versions draw heavily on YIVO's own unparalleled collections, highlighting their central importance for the study of Yiddish culture and East European Jewry. The scope of the encyclopedia is also telling, encompassing Jewish life in Eastern Europe from its origins until 2000. By integrating the European catastrophe into the larger study of Jewish history, YIVO – as it was in the 1940s – remains far ahead of trends in mainstream Holocaust research. And by including the postwar history of this community, it implicitly treats East European Jewry – again, against the dominant narratives in the United States and Israel – as an ongoing, living entity.

While this approach to its object of study is fully in keeping with the views of YIVO's founders, much different is the diminished role of Yiddish. While the language and its culture are extensively documented in the encyclopedia, it is neither the medium of the publication nor the defining factor of its vision of Jewish life. Finally, this project is by its nature both invaluable for scholars and of interest to the general public. Part of its website, like that of YIVO's Educational Project in Yiddish Culture (EPYC),[43] is tailored to students and teachers. In this way YIVO continues to speak at the same time to academics, educators, and ordinary people, to produce work that is both intellectually rigorous and broadly accessible. This is an achievement that would certainly be applauded by its founding generation.

Conclusion

The Reality of Interwar Yiddish Culture Versus the YIVO Myth

A measure of incongruity always distinguished the symbolic importance of YIVO from the less exalted reality of its day-to-day existence. Like its adopted home of Vilna, which maintained and even strengthened its prestige as it suffered material decline, YIVO's inability to realize its most ambitious plans did nothing to diminish its stature. Indeed, its achievements seemed all the more impressive given the political and economic constraints it faced. To those who did not share the assumptions of Diaspora Nationalism YIVO was a modest institution in a provincial Polish city, perpetually on the verge of bankruptcy and serving a narrow circle of scholars, students, and intellectuals. For its activists and supporters YIVO represented the pinnacle of modern Jewish culture, an organization that gave dignity to the lives of 11 million Yiddish-speaking Jews throughout the world.

In January 1941, at YIVO's first annual conference held in the United States, Max Weinreich underlined this larger dimension of the institute's work:

> YIVO was incomparably more than one can realize from the 30,000 pages of research and materials that we published in our journals and books. It was incomparably more than the archives and library that thousands of zamlers brought together without a penny of reward and that in some divisions could be compared to the very richest Jewish collections. YIVO was great principally because of the *social* effects of its activity. … If I set out to write the history of YIVO from 1925 to 1939, I would of course devote sufficient space to portraying it as a place for collecting, as an editorial board, as a publisher. I would also show how it slowly became a crystallizing point for intellectual forces. But mainly I would be captivated by the *myth* of YIVO. Yes, YIVO became a myth. One could never understand its role if one saw it only as an institution where a few dozen people did certain work and received for it certain (more correctly: uncertain) wages.[1]

As Dan Miron has noted, Weinreich spoke at a particularly poignant moment, when the future of the institute – if not yet the East European Jewry it

represented – seemed in grave doubt. Yet as Miron put it on the institute's sixtieth anniversary, YIVO always operated on a plane "between science and faith," between its sober commitment to objective scholarship and its lofty mission to serve the Yiddish nation.[2]

These poles were easily reconciled in the rhetoric of YIVO supporters. Just as the legendary stature of Vilna transformed traditional kheyder study into modern secular research, so "the small, modest building of YIVO" in the Jerusalem of Lithuania became "the symbol and ornament of our highest cultural achievements in the entire world."[3] In 1975 Arcadius Kahan, the son of Borukh Kahan-Virgili, wrote that YIVO "built bridges between real being and spiritual inspiration. YIVO integrated the present world and the next world of secular Jewry."[4] In practice, of course, such terrain was much more complex to navigate.

From the very start YIVO leaders were acutely aware of this gap between ideal and reality. By the fall of 1925, they had already compromised their ambitions by resolving to begin work without the substantial financial backing that they hoped to receive from Western Europe and the United States. In retrospect they argued that this had been the right course of action. "Perhaps [this decision] … was not a good one," they wrote; "however, there was no other way at all."[5] Similarly, they defended their choice to embark on an expensive building program that nearly bankrupted the institute, noting that if they had not purchased their headquarters when they did it would never have been possible.[6]

While the institute's activists soon realized that they could not fulfill their expansive plans under the conditions of the interwar period, they looked hopefully toward a more favorable future. In 1929 they spoke of their accomplishments to date as mere preparation for the true work of the institute.[7] That year, and again in 1938 in much bleaker circumstances, they reiterated their goal of expanding their facilities to include a Yiddish university.[8] Yet as the situation worsened and their original optimism became harder to sustain, they also looked backward with a sense of nostalgia. In the 1930s both Reisen and Weinreich wistfully recalled the years before the economic crash as "a legendary golden time."[9] In 1938 Weinreich mused, "It is possible that later we will consider our time as the good years."[10] By 1941, Weinreich's words had become painfully prescient as he recalled YIVO's founding: "Then, in 1925, we also spoke of difficult times. Today we know that those were *idyllic* years, linked with bright hopes and with healthy activity in all fields of Yiddish creativity."[11]

Ironically, this fixation on an idealized past and an auspicious future might seem in conflict with the Diaspora Nationalist principle of doikeyt, of a focus on the here and now. Yet as external threats grew and YIVO became more acutely aware of its limitations, these only strengthened its conviction that scholarship could and should address the needs of the Jewish present. However much their horizons had narrowed by the final interwar years, by looking to a time beyond their current economic and political marginalization the institute's leaders were able to preserve their faith in their vision of Jewish culture.

Academic Achievements and Symbolic Significance

Simply in terms of its academic work, YIVO's accomplishments were remarkable. Its collection initiatives created what remains today the world's largest repository of material on East European Jewish history and on Yiddish language and culture. In this sense, the institute approached its goal of founding a national library and archives for Yiddish-speaking Jewry. Thanks to the success of the zamler phenomenon, men and women from across Eastern Europe and around the globe became both the subjects of Yiddish scholarship and active participants in its creation. While vast quantities of material necessarily escaped the zamlers' zealous purview – and much of what did not was destroyed during World War II – YIVO responded with notable success to the call set forth by Simon Dubnow in 1891 and reportedly reaffirmed as he was led to his death in the Riga ghetto a half century later: "Record it all!"[12]

Only a portion of YIVO's collections was fully cataloged in the interwar period and less still was scrutinized by scholars. In many cases the institute's staff never reached the next stage of their work, the systematic analysis of source material. While YIVO brought out such comprehensive publications as the translation of Dubnow's *Velt-geshikhte fun yidishn folk*, for the most part its scholars did not produce the grand works of synthesis that were their ultimate ambition. These would have to wait for the postwar period. Nevertheless, as Weinreich noted in his 1941 address, YIVO's bibliography of journals and monographs is a monumental achievement.[13] Even more significant is the impact of this scholarly production. In 1951 Jacob Shatzky cited nearly 300 references to YIVO imprints in "foreign language," that is, other than Yiddish, sources.[14] Moreover, sixty years after Shatzky's remarks any serious student of East European Jewish history and culture must be acquainted with the institute's publications. They often reflect not only the history of the field but also the current state of research, for in some areas the work of YIVO's prewar affiliates remains unsurpassed. This fact speaks to both the institute's intellectual stature and to the devastating impact of the Holocaust, which destroyed not only a generation of mature scholars but also the "scholarly succession" that YIVO worked so assiduously to cultivate.

The institute's ongoing influence is felt most strongly in the discipline of history, which together with modern Jewish literature today comprise the most vibrant areas of Yiddish and East European Jewish studies. The field of ethnography still relies on the work of YIVO researchers, as do to a lesser extent the study of Old Yiddish literature and linguistics – so central to the institute's founding generation – which are now active for the most part in Germany. YIVO's contributions to the social sciences in the mid- and late 1930s were among its most innovative, yet while the Division of Youth Research's autobiographies collection has become one of the institute's most analyzed these disciplines have had the fewest successors in the contemporary academic scene. Some cultural anthropologists and sociolinguists have continued to produce

work in the YIVO tradition, but fields such as demography, labor economics, and pedagogy have become less active. These areas of research inevitably declined in the wake of the decimation of Yiddish-speaking Jewry, for they most fully expressed YIVO's conviction that scholarship must both draw from the living Jewish folk and address its immediate concerns.[15]

Indeed, no concept in YIVO's history was more frequently invoked than its mandate to serve the folk, yet none was more ambiguous or more contested. Again fulfilling Dubnow's charge, YIVO excelled in documenting the lives of ordinary Jews. It was equally committed in theory to ensuring that the products of this research were widely disseminated back to the masses, but in practice it often shied away from devoting too much of its limited resources to projects designed for the broad public. Many long-discussed popular publications never came to fruition or did so only after long delays, and its duty to treat contemporary problems was often honored in the breach.

Moreover, many who shared this devotion to the folk but defined it in Marxist terms saw defense of the working class as the essence of YIVO's mission, leading to fears that political influence would compromise the institute's scholarly standards. As Jewish life became increasingly polarized in the mid- and late 1930s and the institute's critics ever more vocal, YIVO reaffirmed the importance of ideological neutrality even as it finally turned more attention to popular projects. Ultimately the institute was able to navigate the fine line between folk and class and between engagement and partisanship. Yet its fear of politicization – and its hesitancy to prioritize work for ordinary Jews – meant that it failed to complete some of the tasks that supporters deemed most essential, such as publications for the Yiddish schools.

YIVO's history thus reflects both the rewards and tensions of its decision to locate in the heartland of the Yiddish nation, in a constantly evolving relationship with a mass audience committed to Diaspora Nationalist principles. The loss of such an audience – and YIVO's reluctance to engage American Jews instead through sentimentality and kitsch, the level to which many now reduce the East European legacy – irrevocably altered the context of YIVO's work. It is this change that most distinguishes the contemporary institute from its prewar predecessor.

YIVO's connection to the folk spoke to its mythic function as a national institution for Yiddish-speaking Jewry and the highest arbiter of its culture. The idea of a center for Yiddish scholarship developed as many East European Jews were reformulating their identity in secular terms. YIVO's very creation demonstrated the maturity of the Yiddish language and its ability to sustain a modern existence on a par with the European models Jews saw around them. Its significance thus went far beyond gathering historic documents or publishing academic monographs to play a central role in the redefinition of Jewish peoplehood in modern times.

Moreover, Yiddish scholarship had implications not only within the Jewish community but on the larger international stage. Diaspora Nationalists believed

that raising the prestige of their much-maligned vernacular was key to winning recognition for Jews as a national group. By placing Yiddish at the center of its research agenda YIVO reinforced the idea of Yiddish-speaking Jewry as a discrete entity with its own cultural legacy, contemporary needs, and political imperatives. The Philological Section refuted negative stereotypes of Yiddish by standardizing the language and documenting its long history, while the Historical Section demonstrated the rootedness of Jews in Eastern Europe and their contributions to their countries of residence. Meanwhile, the Economic-Statistical Section defended Jewish honor by debunking common antisemitic views of Jews as an economically unproductive element. In all these ways, the institute's work bolstered claims to respect and rights for the Yiddish nation.

At the same time these efforts had psychological ramifications for the individual, reinforcing the self-esteem of Yiddish speakers and their sense of belonging in Polish society. While YIVO's research could boost Jewish pride, the Psychological-Pedagogical Section and the Division of Youth Research also examined the negative impact of discrimination on children and adolescents. YIVO's work thus addressed both the practical needs and inner longings of Jewish women and men. As Miron wrote of the YIVO building,

> The house at 18 Wivulski did function as a cultural citadel, because it appealed not only to the rational faculty but also to the imagination and the traumatized sense of identity of millions of Jews by conveying to them the faith in their cultural independence and thus their right to self-respect.[16]

Indeed, the institute's headquarters in Vilna became a powerful icon, one that both built upon and enhanced the prestige of the Jerusalem of Lithuania. If Diaspora Nationalists envisioned the Yiddish language as a substitute for territory, then the YIVO building served as a capitol for a stateless people lacking concrete markers of its collective identity. It thus became a potent political as well as intellectual symbol, at once the apex of Vilna's famed institutions and the focal point of a transnational Diaspora built upon modern Yiddish culture.

Yet the same assumptions that imbued a small academic organization with such far-reaching import also revealed its limitations. To Diaspora Nationalists YIVO indeed epitomized the highest aspirations of East European Jewry, an institution that elevated the Yiddish language while representing all of its speakers. Yet this premise was emphatically rejected by their rivals in Jewish nationalism, the Zionists, who dismissed the idea of an identity rooted in the tongue of the Diaspora and presented an alternate vision of the Jewish future centered on a land of its own. Others remained distant from these debates, no matter how loudly they raged. These included the camps of liberal Polonized Jews and the traditionally Orthodox, who considered the effort to redefine Jewishness around secular Yiddish culture as irrelevant to their own lives as YIVO believed these groups to be to the modern age.

Even within the narrower ranks of its ideological supporters YIVO's sway was far from complete. They all agreed that for Yiddish to play the role of national tongue and European kulturshprakh, it needed to be codified and standardized. YIVO made strides in developing recommended terminology and usage, but of the institute's language-planning initiatives by far the most successful – if also the most politically sensitive – was the creation of a unified orthography. With TSYSHO's decision to adopt these rules in its classrooms YIVO achieved a significant victory, demonstrating the institute's dominance in the Yiddish cultural sphere and apparently securing its influence for the years to come. Yet as Weinreich himself noted in 1939, many continued to disregard YIVO's preferred spelling. The popular Yiddish press flourished with little regard for its guidelines, while some writers expressed resentment toward what they considered the institute's elitist dictates.

Today YIVO's authority is less contested, yet it operates in a vastly changed landscape. The success of Zionism in creating a Jewish state has eclipsed the plans of Diaspora Nationalists, while the fall of the Soviet Union has rendered moot conflicts over socialism and communism. The institute's stature has risen among Yiddish activists, and today even such historically populist publications as the *Forverts* have adopted its orthography.[17] Yet YIVO's hegemony is largely the result of the shrinking of the circles of secular Yiddish culture, itself a consequence of European destruction and American assimilation. In a development that surely would have shocked YIVO's prewar leaders – with the possible exception of Zelig Kalmanovitch – its prescriptions are still freely ignored by the most vibrant sector of contemporary Yiddish publishing, the ultra–Orthodox.

The Economy of Yiddish Culture

Ultimately, YIVO's importance derived not only from its own achievements but from its key role in the larger effort to construct a network of Yiddish-language institutions in the first decades of the twentieth century. Diaspora Nationalists sought to enable a Yiddish-speaking Jew to live out her life and fulfill her intellectual needs entirely in her mother tongue. Such a goal was first articulated by Chaim Zhitlowsky before World War I. As Nokhem Shtif and other future leaders of the institute gathered in the years of revolution, first in Saint Petersburg and then in Kiev, they dreamed of finding a setting in which Yiddish could develop into the vehicle of all aspects of Jews' communal life and all levels of their culture. They envisioned a self-sustaining cycle that would generate both a sophisticated literature in Yiddish and an audience for such works. As the "crown of the building of secular Yiddish culture,"[18] an academic institute would both complete this edifice and raise it to new heights. Ideally, the entire Jewish public would come to understand the imperatives of Diaspora Nationalism; until such time, the teachers and pupils of the Yiddish

secular schools served as an intellectual vanguard. Taken together, the institute and the schools made possible a cultural economy that encompassed both the ordinary Jew and the intellectual, mass culture and high culture.

YIVO itself was born at a moment when the protections afforded by the Minorities Treaties seemed to make the realization of this vision possible, at least on a modest scale. By winning respect for the language Yiddish scholarship had helped to secure such protections; now, portraying the institute as a national institution, YIVO argued its right to public funds as well as subsidies from Jewish representative bodies. Although the results were modest compared to its original hopes, for a number of years this strategy created a significant and apparently stable source of income as well as a form of moral vindication. Yet the economic woes of the early 1930s put an end to these successes and by the time recovery began late in the decade political conditions had made government support untenable. As Poland moved increasingly toward the model of an ethnically and religiously homogenous nation-state, lack of support for Jewish culture turned in many cases to harassment and repression. Arcadius Kahan may have believed that YIVO's history proves that "the spiritual can conquer and does conquer the material,"[19] but in this setting YIVO could never overcome the larger structural factors that impeded Diaspora Nationalists' plans.

In 1939 Weinreich noted that with the establishment of the Aspirantur and Proaspirantur, "we have a whole building from the bottom up" so that a young Yiddish speaker could receive a complete education in the language from the earliest age to professional training.[20] A teaching component was the last major element of YIVO's program to be realized, long after its collection and publication efforts were underway. These programs were much more modest endeavors than the college or university that YIVO's founders originally envisioned. Nevertheless, in the space of half a decade they produced significant research and a small cohort of graduates ready to take up the mantle of Yiddish scholarship. Yet here, more so than in zamling or even publishing – where volumes were often delayed for years for lack of funds – the institute's financial constraints made themselves felt. YIVO could neither answer the demand for stipends on the part of would-be students nor ensure a livelihood for those it trained.

The accomplishments of YIVO's aspirants proved the success of the Yiddish cultural network in purely intellectual terms but could not alter its fundamental limitations. Most Jews, as well as members of other national minorities, still needed a solid command of the state language to pursue advanced degrees or professional careers. This was one reason that the majority of Polish Jewish parents sent their children to government-sponsored schools, which also offered the significant advantage of free tuition.[21] Even among those enrolled in private Jewish institutions, TSYSHO pupils accounted for only a small percentage of the total number of Jewish students.[22] The pressure to move beyond the Yiddish-language sphere was felt not only in Poland. A similar trend was

evident in the Soviet Union, even in the years when Yiddish enjoyed state support, as well as in the much more open United States.[23]

This predicament bedeviled Diaspora Nationalists' broader efforts to garner funding and status for a stateless tongue. While the rightward trend of interwar politics dashed their aspirations in Poland, the Soviet Union appeared for a time to represent another resolution of their perennial dilemmas. So it seemed to Nokhem Shtif, who abandoned YIVO in its infancy for a post at a government-sponsored academy in Kiev. Shtif followed other Jewish intellectuals who believed that state sponsorship would finally ensure a secure foundation for Yiddish culture. Yet their choice proved tragic, as Soviet authorities began restricting academic freedom and eventually turned murderous in their pursuit of ideological purity. Shtif's fate thus became emblematic of another central tension in the institute's work: the risk that political demands would overwhelm the requirements of rigorous scholarship. Today, with the establishment of a Jewish state, it is cultural production in Hebrew that benefits from government resources. Yet ironically, despite its historically hostile attitude toward Diaspora tongues in general and the European vernacular in particular, Israel offers the most institutionalized support for Yiddish language and culture.

An alternate market-driven model was presented by popular Yiddish publishing and theater. YIVO spoke with pride of the reach of its books and journals, yet the circulation of the Yiddish press dwarfed the one thousand subscribers to *Yivo bleter* worldwide. The contrast was even starker in the United States, where the *Forverts* claimed nearly 200,000 readers at its height.[24] Lestschinsky and Weinreich were regular contributors to that American newspaper, which allowed them both to supplement their income and to expand their readership far beyond a narrow circle of scholars.[25] Their parallel journalistic careers offer proof that catering to a popular audience was in fact compatible with YIVO's academic standards. Yet as much as YIVO sought to engage a broad public, it could never accede to a vision of scholarship shaped primarily by profits. Despite their idealization of the masses Yiddishist intellectuals distrusted the market as the mechanism for producing and distributing their work.[26] For their part, the institute's leaders ridiculed the "*farbiznevet* [commercialized]" American atmosphere and its lack of regard for high Yiddish culture, just as they derided the language of Warsaw newspapers as "the worst source of Yiddish that ever existed."[27] Rather than degrade their standards to appeal to the lowest common denominator among the folk, YIVO held out the hope of elevating the taste of the masses and creating a more discriminating cultural consumer.

As the audience for Yiddish culture has dwindled, a market-based approach is no longer an option. At the same time the Jewish educational and communal world, particularly in the United States, has come increasingly to rely on the largesse of individual donors. In 1935 Simon Dubnow lamented, "Where can one find a Jewish Carnegie or a Rockefeller for our YIVO?"[28] In the prewar

period a wealthy patron such as Boris Kletzkin could occasionally be found to underwrite a Yiddish publication. YIVO benefited from the generosity of some relatively affluent supporters – including, for example, Tsemakh Szabad and Jacob Mereson – yet its benefactors could never fund projects as ambitious as those Diaspora Nationalists conceived. In the end neither the state nor the market nor the philanthropist could cut the Gordian knot of Yiddish culture.

Ultimately, YIVO leaders and their fellow activists were unable to realize the vision of a stable, ramified culture in the Yiddish language. Yet this vision pointed to how Jews living in the Diaspora in a secular age could be both fully Jewish and fully modern. It allowed them to create an unprecedented center for a national community scattered over four continents but united by language, an institution that inspired the fervent loyalty of thousands of ordinary men and women while it harnessed the energies of an intensely creative cohort of scholars. YIVO's academic work spoke to the concrete needs and innermost aspirations of Jews in the interwar period, even as it still speaks to us today. By combining the highest intellectual standards with the deepest commitment to the Jewish people, fidelity to the Jewish past with faith in the Jewish future, YIVO demonstrated how scholarship could serve as a powerful tool for negotiating the challenges of modernity.

Notes

Introduction

1. Aron Mark died in 1938. In 1940 YIVO contributed to the costs of erecting a monument on his gravesite. Executive Office to the Yiddish Literary and Journalistic Society in Vilna, 5 May 1940, RG 1.1, Records of YIVO (Vilna): Administration, folder 641. All archival citations refer to the collections of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research unless otherwise noted. Yivo Mark, known by the diminutive Yivele, perished in Ponar, a site of mass shootings of Vilna Jews during the Holocaust, along with his mother Fruma Segal Mark and younger brother Mikhl. Zosa Szajkowski, "Der yivo un zayne grinders," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 41. Biographical information from Zalman Reisen, "Mark, Aron," *Leksikon fun der yidisher literatur prese un filologye* (Vilna: Kletskin-farlag, 1927), 2: 342 and Mordecai Joffee, "Mark, Aron," in *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*, ed. Ephraim Auerbach, Yitskhok Kharlash, and Moyshe Starkman (New York: Congress for Jewish Culture, 1963), 5: 505–507. For recollections of Mark by a former student, see Musia Landau, "Aron mark – der filzaytiker fenomen" in *Mit shraybers, bikher un mit … vilne* (Tel Aviv: H. Leyvik-farlag, 2003), 71–75 and Ibid., "Di vos hobn undz gelernt dem alefbeys un nokh mer …." *Yerusholaimer almanakh* 28 (2008): 237–238.
2. Examples of such verse are found in the epigraph. "Mir zamlen" by Abraham Reisen appears in *Der yivo nokh draytsn yor arbet* (Vilna: YIVO, 1938), 23. It was originally published in the *Forverts* (New York) in 1930 and is cited under the title "Der yidisher visnshaftlekher institut" in Szajkowski, 51. Daniel Charney's "S'kayklen zikh reyfn" was inscribed in the YIVO guestbook and published in the *Vilner Tog*, 14 August 1935, 2. It is cited with minor changes under the title "Yivo marsh" in Szajkowski, 50–51. Abraham Sutzkever composed "Kerndlekh veyts" in the Vilna Ghetto in March 1943. It was published in the collection *Yidishe gas* (New York: Farlag matones, 1948), 32.
3. *Barikht fun der konferents fun dem yivo* (Vilna: YIVO, 1930), 58; Daniel Charney, *Vilne (memuarn)* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-farband fun poylishe yidn in argentine, 1951), 227–228.

4. N. Pereperkovitsh, "Unzere shprakh-gilgulim," *Folk un visnshaft*, 8 October 1925, RG 82, Tcherikower Archive (YIVO, Vilna), folder 2388.
5. *Yedies fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* 10 (12 March 1926).
6. Solomon Birnbaum gives a figure of 11.8 million for 1931, Uriel Weinreich 10.7 million for 1935, and Dovid Katz 13 million for "the eve of World War II." Solomon Birnbaum, *Yiddish, A Survey and Grammar* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 40–41; Uriel Weinreich, *College Yiddish* (New York: YIVO, 1949), 80; Dovid Katz, "Language: Yiddish," Gershon Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008): 980.
7. On the history of Yiddish and its traditional role in Jewish society, see the classic work by Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, ed. Paul Glasser, trans. Shlomo Noble with the assistance of Joshua A. Fishman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). See also Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 3–26 and Dovid Katz, *Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 1–172.
8. On the rise of modern Yiddish culture see Emanuel S. Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish Culture* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers and the Workmen's Circle, 1987), 27–97; David E. Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005); Harshav, 119–138; and Katz, *Words*, 173–366.
9. F. M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1965) and Ibid., *Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); and Ernst S. Dick, "The Folk and their Culture," in *The Folk: Identity, Landscapes and Lores*, ed. Robert J. Smith and Jerry Stannard (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1989), 11–28.
10. Roland Sussex, "Lingua Nostra: The Nineteenth-Century Slavonic Language Revivals," in *Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe*, ed. Roland Sussex and J.C. Eade (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1983), 111–127; and Tomasz Kamusella, *The Politics of Language Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (Houndsmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). On these issues in the work of five historians from "small peoples" of Central and Eastern Europe, see Monika Baár, *Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). On this process within the field of ethnography in the Polish context, see Aleksander Posern-Zieliński, "Kształtowanie się etnografii polskiej jako samodzielna dyscyplina naukowa (do 1939 r.)," in *Historia Etnografii Polskiej*, ed. Witold Armon et. al. (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1973), 29–113.
11. This description is broadly schematic. In the movement's early years, some Zionists accepted the notion of a Jewish homeland in a territory other than Palestine. After the failure of the proposal to accept Uganda as a Jewish homeland in 1903, these split to form the Territorialist movement. Zionists also varied greatly in the importance they attributed to Hebrew culture as well as to work in the Diaspora. For a recent study that stresses the commonalities between Zionism and Diaspora Nationalism in one East European context, see Joshua Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
12. On Dubnow's thought see Simon Dubnow, *Nationalism and History*, ed. Koppel S. Pinson (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958); Robert M. Seltzer, "Simon Dubnow: A Critical Biography of His Early Years," (Ph.D.

diss., Columbia University, 1970); Jonathan Frankel, "S. M. Dubnov, Historian and Ideologist," introduction to *The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnov* by Sophie Dubnov-Erlich (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1991), 1–33; David H. Weinberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Haim Zhitlowski, Simon Dubnow, Ahad Ha-Am, and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identity* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1996), 145–216; and Simon Rabinovitch, "The Dawn of the New Diaspora: Simon Dubnov's Autonomism, from St. Petersburg to Berlin," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 50 (2005): 267–288.

13. On Zhitlowsky's thought see Goldsmith, 161–181; Weinberg, 83–144; and Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 125–154. The two movements were closely related but not identical. Yiddishists such as Zhitlowsky naturally supported the Diaspora Nationalist goal of securing legal protection for the Jews as a distinct minority group, which included support for cultural production in Yiddish. Yet while all adherents of Diaspora Nationalism recognized Yiddish as an expression of the national culture of European Jewry, not all put the language at the center of their definition of Jewishness.
14. Jonathan Frankel, introduction to Arcadius Kahan, *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xvi–xvii; Mitchell B. Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 17–19.
15. Quoted in Benjamin Nathans, "On Russian-Jewish Historiography," in *Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multi-National State*, ed. Thomas Sanders (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 415.
16. *Barikht*, 59.
17. Kalman (Keith) Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 265–266.
18. Itzik Nakhmen Gottesman, *Defining the Yiddish Nation: The Jewish Folklorists of Poland* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 145–153; Haya Bar-Itzhak, *Pioneers of Jewish Ethnography and Folkloristics in Eastern Europe* (Ljubljana, Slovenia: Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2010), 78–79; and Christoph Daxelmüller, "Ostjüdische Volkskultur – Ostjüdische Volkskunde, Das 'Jidishe Visnshaftlekhe Institut' (JIWO, YIVO) in Wilna im Fokus Politischer und Nationalkultureller Interessen Zwischen Ost und West," *Jahrbuch für Deutsche und Osteuropäische Volkskunde* XXXVII (1994): 26.
19. Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22. See also Hroch's "The Social Interpretation of Linguistic Demands in European National Movements," Working Paper no. 94/1 (Florence, Italy: European University Institute, 1994).
20. Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). See also Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).
21. Such a movement gained impetus after 1905, when the Russian government eased restrictions on Yiddish publishing and the Bund adopted a platform of national cultural autonomy. See Fishman, *Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture*, 12–17 and 53–61.

22. "A vokh farn idishn visnshaftlekhn institut," unidentified clipping, Latvia, 1928, RG 1.1, folder 516.
23. "Grandieze oyftuen fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," *Naye folkstsaytung*, Warsaw, 12 December 1926, clipping in RG 1.1, folder 516.
24. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Schocken, 1989), 81–103; and Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness* (Portland, OR: Littman Library, 2002).
25. This view of the Wissenschaft movement has been superseded by later scholarship, as discussed in Chapter 3. On the movement see Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994); and Nils Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth Century Germany: Between History and Faith* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).
26. Quoted in Isaiah Trunk, "Historians of Russian Jewry," in *Russian Jewry (1860–1917)*, ed. Jacob Frumkin, Gregor Aronson, and Alexis Goldenweiser (New York: T. Yoseloff: 1966), 467.
27. Marek Web, "Dubnov and Jewish Archives: An Introduction to his Papers at the YIVO Institute," in *A Missionary for History: Essays in Honor of Simon Dubnov*, ed. Kristi Groberg and Avraham Greenbaum (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1998), 89.
28. On the history of the Hebrew University see David N. Myers, *Re-inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
29. On Jewish scholarship in the Soviet Union see Alfred Abraham Greenbaum, *Jewish Scholarship and Scholarly Institutions in Soviet Russia, 1918–1953* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1978); Mark W. Kiel, "A Twice Lost Legacy: Ideology, Culture, and the Pursuit of Jewish Folklore in Russia until Stalinization, 1930–1931" (Ph.D. diss., Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1991); Gennady Estraikh, *Soviet Yiddish: Language Planning and Linguistic Development* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 62–85; and David Shneer, "A Study in Red: Jewish Scholarship in the 1920s Soviet Union," *Science in Context* 20, no. 2 (2007): 197–213. On Polish-language Jewish scholarship see Aryeh Tartakower, "Ha-Makhon le-mada'e ha-Yahadut be-Varshah," in *Studies in Memory of Moses Schorr*, ed. Louis Ginzberg and Abraham Weiss (New York: Moses Schorr Memorial Committee, 1944), 1: 163–176; Abraham Weiss and Pninah Kraemer-Weiss, "Makhon le-mada'e ha-Yahadut be-Varshah," in *Sefer ha-shanah/Yorbukh*, ed. Aryeh Tartakower (Tel Aviv: World Federation of Polish Jews, 1967), 2: 359–380; Natalia Dorota Aleksiun-Madrzak, "Ammunition in the Struggle for National Rights: Jewish Historians in Poland between the Two World Wars" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2010); and Natalia Aleksiun, "Setting the Record Straight: Polish Jewish Historians and Local History in Interwar Poland," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 7 (2008): 127–141. On the American setting see Paul Ritterband and Harold S. Wechsler, *Jewish Learning in American Universities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
30. In addition to the works cited above see Jonathan Frankel, ed., *Reshaping the Jewish Past, Studies in Contemporary Jewry* X (New York: Oxford University

Press, 1994); Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron, and David N. Myers, ed., *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998); David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman, ed., *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); David N. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); and Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

31. In addition, it is in the discipline of history that contemporary scholars continue to draw most on the work of their nineteenth-century predecessors. By comparison, relatively little contemporary scholarship in the Jewish social sciences looks to such intellectual forefathers. For exceptions that do focus on the social sciences see Hart; John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Gur Alroey, "Demographers in the Service of the Nation: Liebmann Hersch, Jacob Lestschinsky, and the Early Study of Jewish Migration," *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 265–282; and Gennady Estraikh, "Jacob Lestschinsky: A Yiddishist Dreamer and Social Scientist," *Science in Context* 20, no. 2 (2007): 215–237. Work has also appeared on two specific areas in the history of Yiddish literary scholarship: the study of Old Yiddish literature and the study of Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union. For the former see Jerold C. Frakes, *The Politics of Interpretation: Alterity and Ideology in Old Yiddish Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); and Ibid., *The Cultural Study of Yiddish in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). For the latter see Chava Turniansky, ed., *Di yidishe literatur in nayntsetn yorhundert: zamlung fun yidisher literatur-forshung un kritik in ratn-farband* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993); Mikhail Krutikov, "Soviet Literary Theory in the Search for a Yiddish Canon: The Case of Moshe Litvakov," in *Yiddish and the Left: Papers of the Third Mendel Friedman International Conference on Yiddish*, ed. Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov (Oxford, UK: Legenda, 2001): 226–241; Ibid., *From Kabbalah to Class Struggle: Expressionism, Marxism, and Yiddish Literature in the Life and Work of Meir Wiener* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 135–309; and Marcus Moseley, "Revealing and Concealing the Soviet Jewish Self: The Desk-Drawer Memoirs of Meir Viner," in *Culture Front: Representing Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. Benjamin Nathans and Gabriella Safran (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 269–287.

32. This line of inquiry was initiated by Yerushalmi's influential work. See also Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of the Israeli Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); David G. Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); and Steven J. Zipperstein, *Imagining Russian Jewry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

33. For the former, see Benyamin Lukin, "'An Academy Where Folklore Will Be Studied': An-sky and the Jewish Museum," in *The Worlds of S. An-sky*, ed. Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 287–295; and Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 229–260. For the latter, see Gottesman and Bar-Itzhak.

34. "Aspirantur oyf tsutsugreytn yud. gelernte un forsher," *Nayer Folksblat*, 1934, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 471.
35. See for example Christopher Hutton, "What Was Going on at the 1935 Yivo Conference," in *The Politics of Yiddish*, ed. Dov-Ber Kerler (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 1998), 29–40.
36. For recent studies that discuss cultural work primarily as an outgrowth of political ideology, see Eli Lederhendler, "Language, Culture, and Politics," *Jewish Responses to Modernity* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 9–22 and Zvi Gitelman, "A Century of Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe," in *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 3–19. The most influential works in the field in the last generation have focused on modern Jewish politics, including Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915–1926* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); and Ibid., *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
37. Cecile E. Kuznitz, "Yiddish Studies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 552–554.
38. See Gottesman; Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation;* Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Barry Trachtenberg, *The Revolutionary Roots of Modern Yiddish, 1903–1917* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008); Gabriella Safran, *Wandering Soul:* The Dybbuk's *Creator, S. An-sky* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Jess Olson, *Nathan Birnbaum and Jewish Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013); and Joshua M. Karlip, *The Tragedy of a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).
39. See Kenneth B. Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
40. Most work on transnationalism focuses on post–World War II migration from the third world, particularly in the context of postcolonialism. See for example Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Basel, Switzerland: Gordon and Breach, 1994); Linda Basch, Cristina Blanc-Szanton, and Nina Glick Schiller, *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1998); and Peggy Levitt, "Transnationalism," in *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*, ed. Kim Knott and Sean McLoughlin (London and New York, 2010); 39–44. For work that applies this concept to the experience of East European Jews, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Daniel Soyer, "Transnationalism and Americanization in East European Jewish Immigrant Public Life," in *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 47–66; and Rebecca Kobrin, *Bialystok and its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), esp. 5–6.

41. The comment above on the literature on transnationalism applies equally to the related work on Diaspora. See James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (August 1994): 302–315; Khachig Tölölyan, "Rethinking Diaspora(s)," *Diaspora* 5, no. 1 (1996): 3–36; Kim Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse." *Diaspora* 10, no. 2 (2001): 189–219; Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008); and Stephane Dufoix, *Diasporas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). For theoretical work that does incorporate the Jewish experience see William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 83–99; and Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
42. The most influential work in this vein has been Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). Among the voluminous literature on nationalism see also Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1987); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
43. See Gottesman and Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation.*
44. *Barikht*, 12.
45. N. Pereperkovitsh, "Unzere shprakh-gilgulim," *Folk un visnshaft*, 8 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388.
46. *Der alveltlekher tsuzamenfor fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* (Vilna: YIVO, 1936), 37.
47. Joshua A. Fishman, *Ideology, Society, & Language: The Odyssey of Nathan Birnbaum* (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma Publishers 1987), 60.
48. On these materials see Marek Web et al., "Yidishe zamlungen in der hayntiker vilne," *Yivo bleter*, new series, I (1991): 281–298; and Henrikh Agronovski, "Opgefunene dokumentn vegn der geshikhte fun vilner yivo," *Yivo bleter*, new series, II (1994): 343–348.
49. For the former, see Arcadius Kahan, "Der derekh fun yivo in zayn vilner tkufe," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 9–21 and Dan Miron, "Between Science and Faith: Sixty Years of the YIVO Institute," *YIVO Annual* 19 (1990): 1–15. For the latter, see Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938–1947* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989), esp. 77–100. The most valuable source for the institute's early years is the catalogue of an exhibit on YIVO's history; see Szajkowski, 22–77. A master's thesis in German provides an overview of YIVO's prewar history but relies exclusively on published sources; see Martina Kölch, "Das YIVO-Institut in Berlin und Wilna (1925–1940), Eine neue Wissenschaft fuer eine neue Geisteswelt," (M.A. thesis, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 2000). A useful introduction to the institute is the exhibit catalog prepared by Stefan Schreiner; see *Wissenschaft des Ostjudentums* (Tübingen:

Universitätsbibliotek, 2000) and the earlier version of his essay there published as "Die Wissenschaft des Ostjudentums – eine Erinnerung an die Gründung des YIVO von 70 Jahren," *Judaica: Beitrage zum Verständnis des jüdischen Schicksals in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* 51, no. 4 (1995): 209–221. For a summary account of YIVO's history from its founding until 2000, see my article in *The YIVO Encyclopedia*, 2090–2096, reprinted in *YIVO and Its Founders* (New York: YIVO, 2009).

50. Most notable are the essays collected in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980) devoted to the institute's fiftieth anniversary. These include, in addition to the articles by Kahan and Szajkowski cited above, Joshua A. Fishman, "Yivo in amerike," 98–101; Dov Levin, "Tsvishn hamer un serp," 78–97; and Isaiah Trunk, "Yivo un di yidishe historishe visnshaft," 242–254. See also Lucjan Dobroszycki, "YIVO in Interwar Poland: Work in the Historical Sciences," in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, ed. Y. Gutman, E. Mendelsohn, J. Reinharz, and C. Shmeruk (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989): 494–518; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Coming of Age in the Thirties: Max Weinreich, Edward Sapir, and Jewish Social Science," *YIVO Annual* 23 (1996): 1–103; Israel Lempert, "Der goyrl fun yivo in historishn iberbrokh (1939–1941)," *Yivo bleter*, new series, III (1997): 9–42; David G. Roskies, "Maks vaynraykh: oyf di shpurn fun a lebedikn over," *Yivo bleter*, new series, III (1997): 308–318; David E. Fishman, "Max Weinreich and the Development of YIVO," in *Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture*, 126–137; Ibid., *Embers Plucked from the Fire: The Rescue of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Vilna*, 2nd ed. (New York: YIVO, 2009); and Kalman Weiser, "Coming to America: Max Weinreich and the Emergence of YIVO's American Center," in *Choosing Yiddish: Studies on Yiddish Literature, Culture, and History*, ed. Shiri Goren, Hannah Pressman, and Lara Rabinovitch (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 233–252. Gottesman and Kassow's books contain much valuable information on YIVO's research in ethnography and history, respectively. It should be noted that most of the authors mentioned here and in the previous note have been affiliated with YIVO in New York, either as students or as staff.

51. The autobiographies gathered by YIVO's Division of Youth Research are probably the institute's single most studied collection. A selection of these documents has been published in English translation; see Jeffrey Shandler, ed., *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland Before the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). Separate anthologies have also been published in Polish and Hebrew; see Alina Cała, ed., *Ostatnie Pokolenie: Autobiografie Polskiej Młodzieży Żydowskiej Okresu Międzywojennego* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2003) and Ido Bassok, ed. and trans., *'Alilot ne'urim: otobiyografiyot shel bene no'ar Yehudim mi-Polin ben shete milhamot ha-'olam* (Tel Aviv: Beit Shalom Aleichem, Mercaz Zalman Shazar and Tel Aviv University, 2011). Studies based on the autobiographies include Moses Kligsberg, "Socio-Psychological Problems Reflected in the YIVO Autobiography Contests," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 1(1946): 242–259; Ibid., "Di yidishe yugnt-bavegung in poyln tsvishn beyde velt-milkhomes (a sotsiologishe shtudye)," in *Studies in Polish Jewry 1919–1939*, ed. Joshua A. Fishman (New York: YIVO, 1974), 137–228; Alina Cała, "The Social Consciousness of Young Jews in Interwar Poland," *Polin* 8 (1994); 42–65;

Ibid., "Histoires personelles dans l'Histoire, Jeunes Juifs en Pologne, 1919–1939," in *Écriture de l'Histoire et Identité Juive, L'Europe ashkénaze XIXe-XXe siècle*, ed. Delphine Bechtel, Évelyne Patlagean, Jean-Charles Szurek, and Paul Zawadzki (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), 133–149; Marcus Moseley, "Life, Literature: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Interwar Poland," *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 3 (2001): 1–51; Michael C. Steinlauf, "Jewish Politics and Youth Culture in Interwar Poland: Preliminary Evidence from the YIVO Autobiographies," in *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics*, 95–104; Gershon Bacon, "Woman? Youth? Jew? – The Search for Identity of Jewish Young Women in Interwar Poland," in *Gender, Place and Memory in the Modern Jewish Experience*, ed. Judith Tydor Baumel and Tova Cohen (London and Portland, OR: Valentine Mitchell, 2003); Toby W. Clyman, "The Double Voice in Polish Jewish Women's Autobiographies of the 1930s," *Polin* 19 (2007): 459–466; Ido Bassok, "Li-she'elat 'erkan ha-histori shel ha-otobiyografiyot me-osef Yivo," *Mada'e ha-Yahadut* 44 (2007): 137–164; Ibid., "Hebetim ba-hinukh shel no'ar Yehudi be-Polin ben milhamot ha-'olam le-or otobiyografiyot shel bene-no'ar Yehudim me-osef Yivo" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2010); Kamil Kijek,"Między uniwersalną nauką a narodową polityką: Charakter projektu badań nad młodzieżą Żydowskiego Instytutu Naukowego (JIWO) w Polsce międzywojennej," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, no. 2(2010): 157–193; and, Ibid., "Max Weinreich, Assimilation, and the Social Politics of Jewish Nation-Building," *East European Jewish Affairs*, 41, no. 1–2 (April–August 2011): 25–55.

1. "Language Raised to the Level of a Political Factor"

1. S. M. Dubnow, "Ob izuchenii istorii russkikh evreev i ob uchrezhdenii russko-evreiskago istoricheskago obshchestva," *Voskhod* 4, no. 9 (April–September 1891): 1–91.
2. Simon Dubnow, "Nahpesah ve-nahkorah," *Pardes* 1 (1891): 221–42. On this essay, see Steven J. Zipperstein, *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 89–92. Some of the material collected is today preserved in the YIVO Archives. See Web, "Dubnov," 87–92.
3. On the Jewish Historic-Ethnographic Society, see W. Kiel, 393–446; and Veidlinger, 229–260.
4. S. Ginsburg and P. Marek, ed., *Yidishe folks-lider* (Saint Petersburg: Voskhod, 1901).
5. Other work on Yiddish folklore published before World War I and cited by Shtif in his memorandum include Ignatz Bernstein, ed., *Yudishe shprikhverter* (Warsaw: M. Spektor, 1888), reprinted as *Yudishe shprikhverter un redensarten* (Cracow: Y. Fisher, 1908); Y. Pirozshnikov, ed., *Yidishe shprikhverter* (Vilna: n.p., 1908); N. Prylucki, ed., *Yidishe folkslider*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Farlag "bikher far ale," 1911) and vol. 2 (Warsaw: Nayer ferlag, 1913); Y. L. Cahan, ed., *Yidishe folkslider*, 2 vols. (New York: Internatsionaler bibliotek farlag, 1912); and N. Prylucki and Sh. Lehman, ed., *Noyekh prilutskis zamlbikher far yidishen folklor, filologye un kultur-geshikhte*, 2 vols. (Warsaw: Nayer ferlag, 1912–1917). Nokhem Shtif, "Vegn a yidishn akademishn institut," in *Di organizatsye fun der yidisher visnshaft* (Vilna: TSBK and VILBIG, 1925), 14–15.

6. On the expeditions, see *Tracing An-sky: Jewish Collections from the State Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg* (Zwolle, Netherlands: Waanders Uitgevers, 1992); David G. Roskies, introduction to S. Ansky, *The Dybbuk and Other Writings* (New York: Schocken, 1992), xxiii–xxv; Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein, ed., *The Worlds of S. An-sky* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), especially the following in that volume: Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "'We Are Too Late': An-sky and the Paradigm of No Return," 90–94, Lukin, 287–295, and John E. Bowlt, "Ethnic Loyalty and International Modernism: The An-sky Expeditions and the Russian Avant-Garde," 307–319; Safran, *Wandering Soul*, 86–205; and Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Jewish Dark Continent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
7. See *Dos yudishe etnografishe program*, ed. L. I. Shternberg, vol. 1, *Der mentsh* (Petrograd: n.p., 1914). An annotated translation of the questionnaire has now been published. See Deutsch, 95–313. A planned second volume, organized around the Jewish calendar, never appeared.
8. On the use of folklore in *The Dybbuk*, see Roskies, *Dybbuk*, xxv–xxix; Seth L. Wolitz, "Inscribing An-sky's *Dybbuk* on Russian and Jewish Letters," in *The Worlds of S. An-sky*, 172–182; and Safran, *Wandering Soul*, 211–221.
9. Shtif, "Vegn," 15.
10. On Borochov, see Trachtenberg, *Revolutionary Roots*, 117–134.
11. Ber Borochov, "Di oyfgabn fun der yidisher filologye," in *Shprakh-forshung un literatur-geshikhte*, ed. Nachman Meisel (Peretz-farlag: Tel-Aviv, 1966), 53. The article originally appeared in *Der pinkes*. On this essay, see Trachtenberg, "Ber Borochov's 'The Tasks of Yiddish Philology,'" *Science in Context* 20, no. 2 (June 2007): 341–352.
12. Borochov, "Oyfgabn," 53.
13. Ibid., 55. On the history of Yiddish studies, see Max Weinreich, "Geschichte und gegenwärtiger Stand der jiddischen Sprachforschung," Ph.D. diss., Marburg, 1923, reprinted as *Geschichte der jiddischen Sprachforschung*, ed. Jerold Frakes (Atlanta, GA: Scholars' Press, 1993); Dovid Katz, "On Yiddish, in Yiddish and for Yiddish: 500 Years of Yiddish Scholarship," in *Identity and Ethos: A Festschrift for Sol Liptzin on the Occasion of his 85th Birthday*, ed. Mark H. Gelber (New York: P. Lang, 1986), 23–36; Frakes, *Politics of Interpretation*; and Ibid., *Cultural Study*.
14. He disagreed, however, that philology was more important than history in this regard. Bal-dimyen [Nokhem Shtif], "Der pinkes," *Di yudishe velt* 1, no. 2 (February 1914) and no. 3 (March 1914): 247. This article was also reprinted in *Literatur un lebn* (New York) in the issues of April and May 1914.
15. Shtif, "Vegn," 10. On the notion of "centering" Yiddish as an object of study, see Katz, "On Yiddish"; Frakes, *Politics of Interpretation*, 12–20; and Neil G. Jacobs, "Introduction: A Field of Jewish Geography," *Shofar* 17, no. 1 (Fall 1998): 12–18.
16. The full title was *Der pinkes, yohrbukh far der geshikhte fun der yudisher literatur un shprakh, far folklor, kritik un bibliografye*. It was dated 1911/2 and published by the Kletskin-farlag in 1912/3.
17. This article is also reprinted in *Shprakh-forshung un literatur-geshikhte*, 76–136. On this work, see Trachtenberg, *Revolutionary Roots*, 77–80.
18. Shtif to Mereson, Sept. 23–Oct. 6, 1910, RG 262, Papers of Jacob Mereson.

19. Bal-dimyen, "Der pinkes," 248. On Shtif's review of the *Pinkes*, see Trachtenberg, *Revolutionary Roots*, 153–156.
20. Bal-dimyen, "Der pinkes," 250.
21. Shtif, "Vegn," 11–12. The works cited by Shtif published before World War I include M. Vaynger and N. Prylucki, "Yidishe dialektologye," in *Noyekh prilutskis zamlbikher*, vol. 1. Relevant works omitted by Shtif include Zalman Reisen's *Yudishe gramatik* (Warsaw: Ferlag "progres," 1908) and *Yudishe ortografye* (Warsaw: Ferlag "kultur," 1913).
22. Shtif, "Vegn," 13. On this cohort of scholars, see Delphine Bechtel, "Les chercheurs en linguistique et histoire littéraire yiddish: Une génération d'intellectuels engagés dans la première moitié du xxe siècle," in *Écriture de l'Histoire et Identité Juive*, 253–278.
23. Bal-dimyen, "Der pinkes," 254.
24. Borochov, "Oyfgabn," 53; Ber Borochov, "Gramatishe frumkeyt," in *Shprakhforshung*, 369. The article originally appeared in *Di yudishe velt* in 1913. Shtif agreed on the need for a body to rule on matters of Yiddish spelling and usage, writing that Yiddish orthographic reform would have to wait "until the appropriate institution is founded that will have the necessary knowledge and the authority to carry out" such changes. Bal-dimyen, "Der pinkes," 250. Shtif then criticized Borochov for ignoring his own principle and implementing his own reforms independently. Ibid., 251.
25. Borochov, "Oyfgabn," 72.
26. Chaim Zhitlowsky, "Tsionizm oder sotsializm?" in *Gezamlte shriftn* (New York: n.p., 1917), 5: 72–73.
27. David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing*, 42. Hermann Tzvi Schapira, who formally presented the proposal to the congress, had written a series of articles on the subject of a Jewish institute of higher learning in the Hebrew journal *Ha-Melits* [The Advocate] as early as 1882. However, the combination of rabbinical seminary and scientific research facility that he envisioned would seem to have little in common with later ideas of a Jewish university.
28. At the time, according to Chaim Weizmann, the plan was seen as "a response to a deep-seated need. The Russian-Jewish youth was being systematically excluded from the Russian schools." Only afterward did Weizmann add that younger Zionists such as himself, followers of Ahad Ha'am, also saw it as part of a "general cultural program and spiritual awakening." Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York: Harpers, 1949), 68. This view of a Jewish university as a remedy for antisemitism dominated early Zionist discussions of the topic, although some argued that if it proved impossible to establish such an institution in Palestine a European location might be considered. Ibid., 136; Leonard Stein, ed., *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, series A: letters (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1: 303 note. By 1903, however, Weizmann and other Zionist leaders had come to the conclusion that the projected institution of higher learning could only be founded in a Jewish homeland in the Middle East. Meyer W. Weisgal, ed., *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, series A: letters (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 3: 174.
29. Zhitlowsky, 54.
30. Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 276.

31. Quoted in Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish Culture*, 196. On the conference, see Goldsmith; Olson, 183–208.
32. Joshua A. Fishman, *Ideology, Society, & Language: The Odyssey of Nathan Birnbaum* (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma Publishers, 1987), 60.
33. Myers, *Re-Inventing*, 47; Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, 137.
34. Shmuel Niger [A. Vilner], "Vegen dem rayen tsu shafen a yudishe universitet," *Di yudishe velt* 2, no. 1 (April 1914): 126–134. This article was also reprinted in June 1914 in *Literatur un lebn* (New York).
35. Ibid., 127. Such phrasing, of course, echoed the debate among Zionists over the idea of a "Jewish land" versus a "land for the Jews." Although it would be simplistic to identify all Zionists with the latter concept, supporters of the Hebrew University did stress this position in advancing their arguments.
36. Ibid., 128.
37. Ibid., 133.
38. Ibid., 131.
39. Ibid., 134.
40. Trachtenberg, *Revolutionary Roots*, 20–45.
41. For a discussion of responses to World War I in Yiddish literature, see David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 92–101, 115–121, and 134–141. On the effects of the war on East European Jewry, see Jonathan Frankel, "The Paradoxical Politics of Marginality: Thoughts on the Jewish Situation During the Years 1914–1921," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* IV, ed. Jonathan Frankel (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1988): 3–21; Steven J. Zipperstein, "The Politics of Relief: The Transformation of Russian Jewish Communal Life During the First World War," in Ibid., 22–40; and Aviel Roshwald, "Jewish Cultural Identity in Eastern and Central Europe during the Great War," in *European Culture in the Great War*, ed. Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (New York: Cambridge University Press, 199), 89–126.
42. Shmuel Yosef Fuenn's book about the city, *Kiryah ne'emanah* [Faithful City], written in 1860, was the first example of a history of an individual East European Jewish community and has been cited as the first book on the history of the Jews in Russia. Trunk, "Historians," 454. This work was followed by Hillel Noah Magid Steinschneider's *'Ir Vilnah* [*City of Vilna*] in 1900, which, like its predecessor, focused on the lives of great religious leaders. As Shmuel Niger observed, Vilna "portrays every step that she makes … About no Jewish community, except for Jerusalem, of course, has so much been written as about the Jerusalem of Lithuania." Niger, "Vilne," in *Vilne: a zamelbukh gevidmet der shtot vilne*, ed. Yefim Yeshurin (New York: Vilner brentsh 367 arbeter-ring, 1935), 776–777.
43. Shtif, "Vegn," 20. On these works, see Cecile E. Kuznitz, "On the Jewish Street: Yiddish Culture and the Urban Landscape in Interwar Vilna," in *Yiddish Language and Culture: Then and Now* (Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 1998): 84–87. Among them are *Vilner kulturele anshtaltn (bibliotekn, shuln)* (Vilna: n.p., 1916); Tsemakh Szabad and Moyshe Shalit, ed., *Vilner zamelbukh*, 2 vols. (Vilna: N. Rosental, 1916–1918); Khaykel Lunski, *Fun vilner geto, geshtaltn un bilder, geshribn in shvere tsaytn*, introduction by Dr. H. Yibin (Vilna, Farlag fun dem farayn fun di yidishe literatn un zshurnalistn in vilne, 1920); Zalman Reisen, ed., *Pinkes far der geshikhte fun vilne in di yorn*

fun milkhome un okyupatsye (Vilna: Yidishe historish-etnografishe gezelshaft afn nomen fun sh. an-ski, 1922); and Moyshe Shalit, ed., *Oyf di khurves fun milkhomes un mehumes, pinkes fun gegnt-komitet 'yekopo' in vilne (1919–1931)* (Vilna: EKOPO, 1931).

44. "Khronik: di historishe komisye," in *Vilner zamelbukh* 2: 255.
45. "Historish-etnografishe gezelshaft a"n sh. an-ski," in *Unzer tog, spetsiele oysgabe far amerike* (Vilna: n.p., 1921), 47–48. On the society, see Cecile E. Kuznitz, "An-sky's Legacy: The Vilna Historic-Ethnographic Society and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Culture" in *The Worlds of S. An-sky*, 320–345.
46. Lunski, *Vilner geto*, 72.
47. "Historish-etnografishe gezelshaft," 47.
48. Shalit, "Naye historiografye," in *Vilne: a zamelbukh*, 365.
49. Shtif, "Vegn," 18–20.
50. Ibid., 21. Among the works cited by Shtif published prior to World War I are H. Burgin, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher arbeter-bavegung in amerika, rusland un england* (New York: Fareynikte yidishe geverkshaftn, 1915). These works were often written by adherents of the movements themselves, making them more publicistic than truly scholarly.
51. Shtif, "Vegn," 19–20. These include M. Zilberfarb, *Dos yidishe ministerium in ukraine un di idishe avtonomye* (Kiev: Folks-farlag, 1919); E. Tcherikower, ed., *Di yidishe avtonomye un der natsionaler sekretaryat in ukraine* (Kiev: n.p., 1919); and Ibid., *In der tkufe fun revolutsye* (Berlin: Yidisher literarisher farlag, 1924). On the period of Jewish autonomy in Ukraine, see Jonathan Frankel, "The Dilemmas of Jewish National Autonomism: The Case of Ukraine 1917–1920," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Howard Aster and Peter J. Potichnyj (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies and the University of Alberta, 1990): 263–279; and Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 33–102.
52. On the pogroms, see Abramson, 109–140.
53. Fruma Mohrer and Marek Web, *Guide to the YIVO Archives* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 269. Shtif recorded the name of this group as the Committee to Collect and Publish Material about Pogroms in the Ukraine. Nokhem Shtif, "Oytobiografye fun nokhem shtif," *Yivo bleter* V, nos. 3–5 (March–May 1933), 200. In August 1920, the Folks-farlag published an appeal that cited a "historiographical duty" to preserve material relating to Jewish suffering. Although it is unclear whether this appeal was connected specifically to the effort to document the pogroms, this seems the most likely context. Szajkowski, "Yivo," 25.
54. Shtif, "Vegn," 19.
55. Ibid., 19–20. Among these are Elias Heifetz, *Pogrom-geshikhte (1919–1920)* (New York: Arbeter-ring, 1921); Elias Tcherikower, *Antisemitizm un pogromen in ukraine 1917–1918* (Berlin: Mizrekh-yidisher historisher arkhiv, 1923); Nokhem Shtif, *Pogromen in ukraine* (Berlin: Farlag "vostok," 1923); and A. Revutski, *In di shvere teg oyf ukraine* (Berlin: Yidisher literarisher farlag, 1924).
56. Nokhem Shtif, "Vegn," 10.
57. Samuel D. Kassow, "Zalmen reyzen un zayn gezelshaftlekh-politishe arbet, 1915–1922," *Yivo bleter*, new series III (1994): 67–97.
58. Z[almen] R[eisen], "A yidishe universitet in vilne," *Vilner tog*, 5 April 1920, 2. Reisen argues that Vilna must be the location of the proposed university.

59. Such schools would only be funded on the primary level. Another provision of the treaties stipulated that Jews would not be required to violate the Sabbath. On the Minorities Treaties, see Oscar I. Janowsky, *Jews and Minority Rights (1898–1919)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933); Jacob Robinson, Oscar Karbach, Max M. Laserson, Nehemiah Robinson, and Mark Vichniak, *Were the Minorities Treaties a Failure?* (New York: American Jewish Congress, 1943); Mark Levene, *War, Jews, and the New Europe: The Diplomacy of Lucien Wolf, 1914–1919* (Oxford, UK: Littman Library, 1992); and Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004). On the implementation of the treaty provisions in Poland, see Jerzy Ogonowski, *Uprawnienia językowe mniejszości narodowych w Rzeczypospolitej Polkskiej, 1918–1939* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2000); Jolanta Żyndul, *Państwo w państwie?: autonomia narodowo-kulturalna w Europie Środkowowschodniej w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Wydawn. DiG, 2000); and Kamusella, 598–603.
60. The Polish treaty, which was the model for all subsequent treaties, was signed on June 28, 1919. Lithuania signed a "declaration" on minorities in 1922 and Estonia and Latvia did so the following year. Robinson et al., 158–161, 166–167, and 327–329.
61. Poland abrogated the treaties in 1934. Fink, 338–343.
62. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370.
63. On the origins of the Yiddish schools during World War I, see Zosa Szajkowski, "The Struggle for Yiddish During World War I: The Attitude of German Jewry," in *Never Say Die! A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters*, ed. Joshua A. Fishman (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981), 369–391.
64. The two organizations worked cooperatively, with the TSBK functioning as the local arm of TSYSHO. On the Yiddish secular schools in interwar Eastern Europe, see Chaim Shloyme Kazdan, *Di geshikhte fun yidishn shulvezn in umophengikn poyln* (Mexico: Gezelshaft "kultur un hilf," 1947), 19–371; Miriam Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–39* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1950), 18–39; and Shimon Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression: Jewish Education in Interwar Poland* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988). On the schools of the national minorities in Poland, see Stanisław Mauersberg, *Szkolnictwo powszechne dla mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo P.A.N. im. Ossolińskich, 1968).
65. Shtif, "Vegn," 21–22. *Di naye shul* was published in Warsaw and Vilna, *Shul un lebn* in Warsaw. Many other journals were short lived. The journals cited by Shtif are *Shul un lebn* (1918–1920) and *Pedagogisher byuleten* (1922–1923) in Kiev, *Pedagogish bletl* (1922) in Šiauliai (Shavl) and *Oyf di vegn tsu der nayer shul* (1924–1929) in Moscow. Other similar publications include *Dos shul-leben* (1920) in Warsaw, *Shul un heym* (1921–1922) in Vilna, and *Shul fragn* (1922) in Riga.
66. Shtif, "Vegn," 22. The works cited by Shtif include Hene Rivlin, *Di arbet in kinder-gortn* (Petrograd: Komisariat far natsionale inyonim, idopteylung, 1922); F. Shneerson, *Di gezelshaft, di shul, un di defektive kinder* (Warsaw: Farlag shul un lebn, 1922); Ibid., *Katastrofale tsaytn un di vaksndike doyres* (Berlin: Yidisher literarisher farlag, 1924); and *Shul-pinkes, finf yor arbet fun tsentraln bildungskomitet, 1919–1924* (Vilna: TSBK, 1924).
67. Shloyme Mendelsohn, "Vegn a hoykh-shul," *Shul un lebn* 5 (1 Oct. 1921): 6; A. Golomb, "Tsi konen undzere folks-shuln zikh antviklen on a hoykh-shul?," *Di naye*

shul 7 (November–December 1922): 92–94. While rendering the Yiddish term *hoykh-shul* (derived from the German *Hochschule*) as "college" is not exact, it similarly indicates an institution of postsecondary education with an emphasis on teaching rather than research. Elsewhere the Yiddish term is used to mean a teacher training institute.

68. Niger, "Vegen dem rayen," 127.
69. A. Golomb, "Vegn a yidisher hoykh-shul," *Kultur* 1 (Nov. 1922): 36.
70. Golomb, "Konen," 94.
71. Ibid., 93.
72. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370.
73. Golomb, "Vegn," 35.
74. Ibid.
75. Golomb, "Konen," 92–93.
76. Mendelsohn, 7.
77. Shtif, "Vegn," 24–25.
78. Yudel Mark, "Nokhem shtif – der initsiator fun yivo," lecture given at the 1951 YIVO conference, RG 540, Papers of Yudel Mark, folder 371. See also printed version in *Davke* 3, no. 9–10 (February–April 1952): 93–101.
79. Moyshe Shalit, "Nokhem shtif," *Literarishe bleter* 15 (13 April 1934): 231; Ibid., "A pekl briv fun nokhem shtif," *Literarishe bleter* 26 (30 June 1933): 422; Simon Dubnow, *Dos bukh fun mayn lebn* (Buenos Aires: Alveltlekher yidisher kultur kongres, 1962–3), 3: 26; Moyshe Shalit, "Der arkhiv fun nokhem shtif," *Literarishe bleter* 32 (11 August 1933): 512.
80. Shalit, "Nokhem shtif – bal dimyen," *Literarishe bleter* 16 (20 April 1934): 244.
81. Nokhem Shtif, "Fun nokhem shtifs oytobiografye," ed. Moyshe Shalit, *Literarishe bleter* 33 (18 August 1933): 527–528 and 34 (25 August 1933): 545.
82. Shtif, "Oytobiografye," 211; Shalit, "Nokhem shtif – bal dimyen," *Literarishe bleter* 14 (5 April 1934): 210–211. On Shtif's early career, see Trachtenberg, *Revolutionary Roots*, 138–150; on his contribution to the *Pinkes*, see Ibid., 150–153.
83. Yudel Mark, "Di ershte yorn fun yivo (a kapitl zikhroynes)," *Di tsukunft* 81, no. 4. (April 1975): 131.
84. See, for example, "Opsheyd-zitsung tsum opfor fun kh' vaynraykh keyn amerike," undated [February 1929], RG 1.1, folder 8.
85. Zalman Reisen, "D"r m. vaynraykh opgeforn keyn amerike," *Literarishe bleter* 9 (1 March 1929): 168.
86. The quote is from Zelig Kalmanovitch. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 26–27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11.
87. Tcherikower to Weinreich, 10 March 1929, RG 82, folder 2125.
88. For personal recollections of Weinreich, see Dina Abramowicz, Abraham Brumberg, Eleanor Gordon Mlotek, Gabriel Weinreich, Beatrice Silverman Weinreich, and Joshua A. Fishman, "Zikhroynes vegn d"r maks vaynraykh," *Yivo bleter*, new series, III (1997): 328–352; and Gabriel Weinreich, *Confessions of a Jewish Priest* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005), passim. For intellectual profiles of Weinreich, see Max Weinreich, *Oysgeklibene shriftn*, ed. Samuel Rollansky (Buenos Aires: Ateneo Literario en el IWO, 1974), 12–22; Lucy S. Dawidowicz, "Max Weinreich: Scholarship of Yiddish," in *The Jewish Presence* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1977), 163–176; Robert D. King, *The Weinreich Legacy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1988); and David E. Fishman, "Max Weinreich and the Development of YIVO," in *Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture*, 126–137.

89. For a bibliography of Weinreich's journalistic work, see Eleanor Gordon Mlotek and Shmuel Goldenberg, "Hesofe tsu der maks vaynraykh-bibliografye," *Yivo bleter*, new series, III (1997): 370–440. This article supplements an earlier bibliography concentrating on Weinreich's scholarly output. See Leybl Kahn, "Bibliography of Max Weinreich's Writings," in *For Max Weinreich on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, Alexander Erlich, Rachel Erlich, and Joshua A. Fishman (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), 287–305.
90. In an autobiographical sketch submitted by Weinreich to the University of Marburg and cited by Jerold Frakes, Weinreich gives his birth year as 1893. However, the date of 1894 is universally reproduced elsewhere. See Weinreich, *Geschichte der jiddischen Sprachforschung*, vii.
91. For Weinreich's biography, see the sources above as well as Jerold C. Frakes's forward to Weinreich, *Geschichte der jiddischen Sprachforschung*, vii–xvi; Weinreich, *Oysgeklibene shriftn*, 8–11; and *Yedies* 109 (Spring 1969) passim.
92. Mark, "Ershte yorn," 130–131. See also Ibid., "Zikhroynes fun yudl mark," *Forverts* 28 September 2012, 11.
93. Ibid., 132.
94. Ibid., 131–132. See also letter of Mark to Szajkowski, 15 February 1975, RG 82, folder 2444.
95. Mark to Szajkowski, 15 February 1975, RG 82, folder 2444.
96. Shtif, "Oytobiografye," 199. On efforts to build Jewish cultural life in Kiev, see Moss, esp. 32–38, 52–57, and 87–95. On Yiddish activists' vision of Jewish culture in this period more broadly, see Moss, esp. chapters 2 and 4.
97. Daniel Charney, "Vi azoy bergelson hot mikh gemakht in berlin far a 'kiever,'" *Tog* (New York) 17 (January 1953): 5; Zalman Reisen, "Latski, zev-volf (vilhelm)," *Leksikon* 2: 77–78.
98. Ibid., 209; Zalman Reisen, "Tshernikov, yoysef," *Leksikon* 1: 1212.
99. Zosa Szajkowski, "Yivo," 26. The notable exception was Max Weinreich, who moved to Vilna at the time of the revolution.
100. Bal-dimyen [Nokhem Shtif], "Der idisher komunist, di kultur-lige un dos idishe bukh," *Di tsukunft* 28, no. 1 (January 1923): 32; Szajkowski, "Yivo," 25. On the Kultur-lige and Folks-farlag, see Moss, 52–57 and passim.
101. This circle included Der Nister, David Hofstein, Peretz Markish, Leib Kvitko, and the artist Issachar Ber Rybak. Charney, "Vi azoy;" Leonard Prager, *Yiddish Literary and Linguistic Periodicals and Miscellanies: A Selected Annotated Bibliography* (Darby, PA: Norwood Editions, 1982), 55.
102. Shtif to Mukdoni, 13 April 1920, RG 227, Papers of Alexander Mukdoni, folder 79.
103. Quoted in Nachman Meisel, *Geven a mol a lebn* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-farband fun poylishe yidn in argentine, 1951), 237–8. Shalit, "Pekl," 422; Shtif to Mukdoni, 13 April 1920, RG 227, folder 79. Shtif composed an article on and bibliography of Yiddish publishing in Russia during World War I and the Russian Revolution. See Bal-dimyen, "Der idisher komunist." In this article, Shtif responded to a piece in *Oyfboy* (New York), the journal of the pro–Soviet American Representation of the All-Russian Jewish Public Committee (Idgezkom). See "Dos idishe bukh in di yorn fun der revolutsye," *Oyfboy*1, no. 3 (August 1922): 8–18. Shtif also planned a series of "Yearbooks for Yiddish Literature and Press" in 1920 that was never realized. Moyshe Shalit, "Arkhiv," 495.

104. Bal-dimyen, "Idisher komunist," 32–33.
105. Shalit, "Arkhiv," 495; Mark, "Ershte yorn," 132; Shtif, "Oytobiografye," 210; Dubnow, *Bukh* 3: 17. According to Charney, en route from Kiev to Kaunas, Shtif lived temporarily in Moscow, where he worked sorting the pogrom materials while seeking a Lithuanian visa. Shtif was unhappy in Kaunas, where he lived in the "worst circumstances" and had no opportunity to pursue his research. Shtif to Mowshowitch, 4 April 1922, RG 348, Papers of Lucien Wolf and David Mowshowitch, folder 192.
106. Nokhem Shtif, "Oytobiografye," 213; Shalit, "Arkhiv," 495. Mark writes mistakenly that Shtif left in May of 1922. Mark, "Ershte yorn," 132.
107. Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 200–201; Dubnow, *Bukh* 3: 19–20. In the realm of Hebrew literature, Chaim Nachman Bialik moved from Odessa to Berlin at this time and brought his publishing house Moriah with him. David N. Myers, "Distant Relatives Happening onto the Same Inn: The Meeting of East and West as Literary Theory and Cultural Ideal," *Jewish Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 87–88. Other Hebrew writers who settled in Berlin include Saul Tchernichowsky and David Frishman. On the Hebrew literary circle in Berlin, see also Brenner, 198–202.
108. Bal-dimyen, "Idisher komunist," 31; Leo and Renate Fuks, "Yiddish Publishing Activities in the Weimar Republic, 1920–1933," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 33 (1988): 423; Dubnow, *Bukh* 3: 19–20.
109. Shtif to Mowshowitch, 4 April 1922, RG 348, folder 192. Latzky-Bertholdi worked at the Klal-farlag, Tcherikower at the Yudisher-farlag. Fuks, 423; Dubnow, *Bukh* 3: 19.
110. Dubnow, *Bukh* 3: 26, 29, and 119.
111. Delphine Bechtel, "Les revues modernistes yiddish à Berlin et à Varsovie de 1922 à 1924: La quête d'une nouvelle Jérusalem," *Études Germaniques* 46, no. 2 (April–June 1991): 164.
112. Shtif published a sketch of this cafe scene in one of the Yiddish journals that sprang up in Berlin at the time. See Bal-dimyen, "Feliton, literatur (siluetn fun romanishes cafe)," *Dos fraye vort* 5 (1 August 1923): 31–35. For an account of a reception at the cafe, see Charney, "Vi azoy."
113. Fuks, 425. On this milieu, see Delphine Bechtel, *La Renaissance culturelle juive en Europe centrale et orientale, 1897–1930: Langue, littérature et construction nationale* (Paris: Editions Berlin, 2002), esp. 201–251, and *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin*, ed. Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov (London: Legenda, 2010).
114. Dubnow, *Bukh* 3: 29. The collection was now known as the Archive for the History of East European Jews. In Yiddish, the name was Mizrekh yidisher historisher arkhiv, in German Ostjüdisches Historisches Archiv. The material then remained in the possession of Tcherikower until 1925, at which time it was transferred to YIVO. The surviving portions of the collection are today housed at YIVO as part of the Tcherikower Archive. Mohrer and Web, 269.
115. Shtif, "Vegn," 19–20. See the works cited in note 51 above. Historical works on other themes continued to be published during and after World War I. Those cited by Shtif include *Der royter pinkes*, 2 vols. (Warsaw: Farlag kultur-lige, 1921–1924); Ignacy Schipper, *Geshikhte fun yidisher teater-kunst un drame* (Warsaw: Farlag kultur-lige, 1923); and articles by S. Ginsburg, A. Ginzburg,

and Jacob Shatzky in the journal *Di tsukunft* and elsewhere. Shtif, "Vegn," 21. Also relevant is Prylucki's *Yidisher teater: 1905–1912* (Białystok: A. Albek, 1921).

116. Shtif, "Vegn," 16–17. The works cited by Shtif include Libman Hersh, *Di yidishe emigratsye* (Vilna: Farlag "di velt," 1914); H. Frank and Kh. Blankshteyn, *Statistik fun der bavegung fun der yidisher bafelkerung in bialistok* (Białystok: Kehile farvaltung in bialistok, 1920); Jacob Lestschinsky, *Dos yidishe folk in tsifern* (Berlin: Klal-farlag, 1922); Mark Wischnitzer, *Yidishe bal-melukhe-tsekhn in poyln un in lite* (Klal-farlag: Berlin, 1922); Ber Borochov, *Di yidishe arbeter-bavegung in tsifern* (Berlin: Fareynigtn borokhov-komitet, 1923); and Ben-tsion Rubshteyn, *Galitsye un ir bafelkerung* (Warsaw: n.p., 1923). Other relevant works include Lestschinsky's *Der idisher arbayter* (Vilna: Bikherferlag "tsukunft," 1907); *Dos ekonomishe leben fun iden in rusland far'n 19ten yorhundert* (Kiev: Kiever farlag, 1918); and *Dos yidishe ekonomishe lebn in der yidisher literatur* (Warsaw: Kultur-lige, 1921).

117. "Fun di 'bleter far yidisher demografye statistik un ekonomik,'" *Literarishe bleter* 31 (5 August 1927): 607.

118. The German title was *Blätter für Demographie, Statistik und Wirtschaftskunde der Juden*. It appeared with the financial support of the Paris-based Conférence Universelle Juive de Secours (known in Yiddish as the Velt Hilfs Konferents), whose leaders included Efroykin and Latzky-Bertholdi. Once that organization could no longer subsidize it, it relied on aid from the American Joint Distribution Committee to produce its fifth and final issue before disbanding in 1925. The issues were numbered no. 1 (February 1923), no. 2 (15 April 1923) no. 3 (15 August 1923), no. 4 (15 June 1923), and no. 5 (15 June 1925). Ibid.; Jacob Lestschinsky to Shmuel Niger, 6 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2371; YIVO, Berlin to YIVO, Vilna, 10 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401.

119. The journal had published since 1905. On the Bureau, see Efron, 166–173; and Hart, 56–73.

120. On Lestschinsky's career, see Gennady Estraikh, "Jacob Lestschinsky," 215–237; and Alroey, "Demographers," 265–282.

121. Weinreich, Vilna to Shtif, Berlin, 5 November 1923, RG 584, Papers of Max Weinreich, folder 345. Charlottenburg refers to a Berlin neighborhood. I thank Leyzer Burko for bringing this letter to my attention.

122. Kassow, "Jewish Communal Politics in Transition: The Vilna *Kehile*, 1919–1920," *YIVO Annual* 20 (1991): 62–63 and 67–68.

123. Kassow, "Zalmen reyzen."

124. Kassow, "Jewish Communal Politics," 63; Arcadius Kahan, "Vilna – The Socio-Cultural Anatomy of a Jewish Community in Interwar Poland," in *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History*, ed. Roger Weiss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 159; Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, 41–44 and 52–53.

125. On the literary movement Yung Vilne, of which Sutzkever was a member, see Abraham Novershtern, "Yung Vilne: The Political Dimension of Literature," in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, 385–398; Joanna Lisek, *Yung Wilne – żydowska grupa artystyczna* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu

Wrocławskiego, 2005); and Justin Cammy, *Young Vilna: Yiddish Culture of the Last Generation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming).

126. Works on Yiddish linguistics and literature published in these years and discussed by Shtif in his memorandum include a series of studies by Prylucki, *Der yidisher konsonantizm* (Warsaw: Nayer ferlag, 1917), *Tsum yidishn vokalizm* (Warsaw: Nayer ferlag, 1920), *Dialektologishe paraleln un bamerkungen* (Warsaw: Nayer ferlag, 1921), *Dos gevet* (Warsaw: Farlag kultur-lige, 1923), and *Mame-loshn* (Warsaw: Farlag kultur-lige, 1924); Zalman Reisen, *Gramatik fun der yidisher shprakh* (Vilna: Farlag Sh. Shreberk, 1920). Other works mentioned by Shtif are Zelig Kalmanovitch, *Yidishe gramatik* (Minsk: Melukhe farlag fun vaysrusland, 1921); Max Weinreich, *Shtaplen* (Berlin: Farlag vostok, 1923); and articles by Israel Zinberg, Weinreich, and Shtif in the journals *Di tsukunft* and *Bikher-velt*. Shtif, "Vegn," 11–12. Shtif omitted several relevant works, for example his own *Humanizm in der elterer yidisher literatur* (Berlin: Klal-farlag, 1922); Reisen's *Fun mendelson biz mendele* (Warsaw: Kultur-lige, 1923); and Max Weinreich's doctoral dissertation on the history of Yiddish studies, the last presumably because it was written in German. Works on Yiddish folklore discussed by Shtif include Y. Elzet, ed., *Der vunder oytser fun der yidisher shprakh*, 4 vols. (Warsaw: Brider levin-epshteyn, 1918–1920); Sh. Bastomski, ed., *Baym kval* (Vilna: Farlag "di naye yidishe folkshul," 1920); Y. Kh. Ravnitski, ed., *Yidishe vitsn* (Berlin: Farlag Moriah, 1922); and M. Vanvild, ed., *Bay unz yuden, zamlbukh far folklor un filologye* (Warsaw: Farlag pinkhes graubard, 1923). Shtif, "Vegn," 14–15. Among the works Shtif omitted is Sh. Bastomski, ed., *Yidishe shprikhverter: far shul un familye* (Vilna: Farlag "di naye yidishe folkshul," 1920).

127. "Tsu ale yidishe filologn!," *Vilner tog*, 13 May 1923, 3. This appeal also appeared in other publications such as *Tealit: teater un literatur*. Cited in Gottesman, 113.

128. Its full title was *Yidishe filologye, tsveykhoydeshdike bleter far shprakhvisnshaft, literatur-forshung un etnografye*. The journal was edited by Reisen, Weinreich, and Noah Prylucki and published by the Kultur-lige in Warsaw. It published a total of three issues marked vol. 1, no. 1 (January–February 1924); vol. 1, no. 2–3 (March–June 1924); and vol. 1, no. 4–6 (July–December 1924). The third and final number did not in fact appear until January 1926 and was published "with the assistance of the Organizing Committee of the Yiddish Scientific Institute." See Prager, 177. I thank Brad Sabin Hill for helping clarify this information.

129. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370.

130. Both Weinreich and Lestschinsky wrote for the *Forverts*, with Lestschinsky serving as chief of the publication's Berlin bureau from 1921 to 1933. Such work was quite lucrative as it brought payment in American dollars. See Gennady Estraikh, "The Berlin Bureau of the New York *Forverts*," in *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin*, 141–162; and Amy Blau, "Max Weinreich in Weimar Germany," in Ibid., 163–178.

131. Shtif to Mukdoni, 13 April 1920, RG 227, folder 79.

132. Shtif to Liessin, 22 July 1924, RG 201, Papers of Abraham Liessin, folder 1169.

133. This was not strictly speaking true at the time, since both *Yidishe filologye* and *Bleter far idisher demografye, statistik, un ekonomik* were in existence at that time. In addition, it should be noted that despite Shtif's complaints about the lack of forums for his work, he did publish at least eight articles and two longer scholarly works in these years. See his *Humanizm in der elterer yidisher literatur*; *Pogromen*

in ukraine; "Idisher komunist;" and the bibliography in Shalit, "Nokhem Shtif," 229–230.

134. Shtif to Liessin, 22 July 1924, RG 201, folder 1169.
135. Shtif, "Oytobiografye," 214.
136. Shtif to Liessin, 22 July 1924, RG 201, folder 1169.
137. Shtif to Mukdoni, 10 December 1923, RG 227, folder 79.
138. Shtif to Opatoshu, 11 December 1923, RG 436, Papers of Joseph Opatoshu, folder 271.
139. Shalit, "Arkhiv," 512.
140. Ibid., 513; Shtif to Mowshowitch, 4 April 1922, RG 348, folder 192.
141. Shtif to Mukdoni, 10 December 1923, RG 227, folder 79.
142. Max Weinreich, "Nokhem Shtif," *Di tsukunft* 38, no. 6 (June 1933): 348.
143. Shtif to Mereson, Sept. 23–Oct. 6, 1910, RG 262.
144. Joseph Sherman, "David Bergelson (1884–1952): A Biography," in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism*, ed. Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraikh (London: Legenda, 2007), 23–24.
145. Shalit, "Arkhiv," 496; Ibid., "Nokhem shtif," 210; Shtif to Niger, 19 January 1923, cited in Szajkowski, "Yivo," 35.
146. Shtif to Mukdoni, 13 April 1920, RG 227, folder 79.
147. Shalit, "Der arkhiv," 496; Mark, "Nokhem Shtif."
148. Shtif to Mukdoni, 8 October 1923, RG 227, folder 79.
149. Shtif to Mowshowitch, 4 April 1922, RG 348, folder 192.
150. Shtif to Mukdoni, 10 December 1923, RG 227, folder 79.
151. Shtif to Mowshowitch, 4 May 1922, RG 348, folder 192.
152. Shtif to Sachs, 7 April 1925, quoted in Herman Frank, *A. s. zaks: kemfer far folks-oyflebung* (New York: A. s. zaks gezelshaft, 1945), 272–273.
153. Bechtel, "Les revues," 175.
154. Shtif to Mukdoni, 10 December 1923, RG 227, folder 79; Shtif, "Oytobiografye," 206.
155. Mark, "Nokhem Shtif;" Mark, "Ershte yorn," 134. Although as a young man Shtif abandoned the religious observance of his childhood, he later returned to it from time to time. Moyshe Shalit wrote of Shtif, "He would fall into difficult moods of religious absorption, and entire periods would pass when he would truly uphold the laws and customs." Shalit, "Nokhem shtif," 210. Shtif wrote in an autobiographical fragment that in times of "difficult spiritual crisis," he tried to return to the faith of his youth, "but [he] never succeeded completely." Shtif, "Fun nokhem shtif," 545. It seems that the time of World War I and the subsequent years in Berlin were one such "difficult period" when Shtif engaged in some forms of religious practice. For example, Yudel Mark wrote that Shtif became Sabbath observant during the war years, and Shtif commented in one letter from Berlin that he was not attending the theater since he was in mourning for his mother. Mark, "Nokhem Shtif;" Shtif to Mukdoni, 8 October 1923, RG 227, folder 79. On Shtif's religious observance, see also Greenbaum, note 134, 174.
156. Weinreich, "Nokhem shtif," 345–346. Some contemporaries suggested that Shtif would have moved to Poland had he been encouraged and able to do so. Shalit commented that "no one called him to Poland." Shalit, "Nokhem Shtif," 210. Mark maintained that Shtif wanted to move to Vilna but was unable to obtain a Polish visa because of the Lithuanian citizenship he held from the period of his

residency in Kaunas. Mark wrote that Weinreich and Szabad tried to get a Polish visa for Shtif but without success. Mark, "Ershte yorn," 133.

157. Mark, "Nokhem Shtif."
158. Shalit, "Nokhem Shtif," 210.
159. On Shtif's career in the Soviet Union, see Greenbaum, passim; and David Benjamin Shneer, "A Revolution in the Making: Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2001), 122–135.

2. "The Idea of the Institute Is Already Ripe"

1. "Tsu ale yidishe filologn!," *Vilner tog*, 13 May 1923, 3.
2. Blau, "Max Weinreich," 172; Weinreich to Shatzky, 23 April 1924, RG 1.1, folder 708. Grigori Aronson, a Bundist activist, also wrote about a plan to create an institute for statistical and economic work about this time. Abraham Reisen to Shtif, 22 February 1925, RG 82, folder 2369.
3. Myers, "Distant Relatives," 100 note 68; Dubnow, *Bukh* 3: 45–46. See also invitation to a meeting of this group signed by Dubnow and Elbogen, 5 June 1924, RG 82, folder 2376.
4. M[ajer] B[ałaban], "Kronika, O uniwersytet żydowski," *Nowe Życie* I, no. 1–3 (June–August 1924): 119–121; L. H., " Kronika, O uniwersytet żydowski," *Nowe Życie* I, no. 4–6 (September–December 1924): 271–274.
5. N. Feinerman to Judah Joffe, 12 December 1938, RG 546, Papers of Judah Joffe, folder 98. My thanks to Alec Leyzer Burko for bringing this document to my attention.
6. Szajkowski, "Yivo," 25 and 41. It is unclear if the organization referred to is the same one mentioned previously. I have been unable to locate the original of this document or any confirmation of this episode in other sources.
7. Frank, 266–267; A. Litvak, "Vegn a yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," *Literarishe bleter* 52 (30 April 1925): 1; Szajkowski, "Yivo," 25. Although Litvak states that Sachs's plan was supported by the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union, Szajkowski disputes this. Szajkowski, "Yivo," 27.
8. The guests probably included, in addition to Steinberg, Shtif, and Tcherikower, Steinberg's brother Dr. Aron Steinberg, Ben-Adir (Abraham Rosin), Dr. Eliyahu Olshvanger, Franz Kursky, Vladimir Kosovsky, Daniel Charney, Matisyahu Soloveytshik, and A. Litvak. Tcherikower states that Lestschinsky was also present but does not mention Soloveytshik or Litvak. Elias Tcherikower, "Tsu der geshikhte fun a gelungenem pruv," RG 82, folder 2444. See also printed version of Tcherikower's article in *Literarishe bleter* 13 (28 March 1930): 237–239. Litvak omits Ben-Adir, Olshvanger, Kosovsky, and Charney. He also states that Lestschinsky was unable to attend, as was Dubnow. Litvak, "Vegn." See also Szajkowski, "Yivo," 26.
9. Tcherikower, "Geshikhte."
10. A. S. Sachs to N. Shtif, 14 June 1925, incomplete, RG 82, folder 2376.
11. Tcherikower, "Geshikhte."
12. Ibid.
13. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370.
14. Tcherikower, "Geshikhte;" Litvak, "Vegn;" Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370; Shtif to Kalmanovitch, 6 August 1924, quoted in Szajkowski, "Yivo," 27. The other members of the committee were Tcherikower and I. N. Steinberg.

15. Shtif to Kalmanovitch, 6 August 1924, quoted in Szajkowski, "Yivo," 27. It was perhaps characteristic that Shtif would wish to avoid writing the memorandum himself yet gave Kalmanovitch detailed instructions on how to carry out the task. He did the same when proposing an article on the institute to the editors of the *Literarishe bleter*. See Shalit, "Pekl," 422.
16. Mark, "Ershte yorn," 132–133.
17. Shtif, "Vegn," 29–30.
18. Ibid., 30.
19. Ibid., 30–1.
20. Ibid., 31.
21. Ibid., 31–32.
22. Ibid., 33.
23. Szajkowski, "Yivo," 27; Shtif to Tcherikower, 15 February 1925, RG 82, folder 2369; Mark, "Ershte yorn," 133. He also asked for Tcherikower's help in making additional copies of the document. Tcherikower's wife, Rebecca, did make four additional copies. Szajkowski, "Yivo," 27.
24. Shtif to Sachs, 7 April 1925, quoted in Frank, 272; Shtif to Weinreich, 15 February 1925, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 80.
25. Shtif to Weinreich, 15 February 1925, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 80. The fact that Shtif planned to contact Weinreich at this early date only came to light when this letter was found among YIVO's surviving prewar archival material brought from Lithuania to New York in 1995 and 1996.
26. Tcherikower, "Geshikhte;" Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370. At the meeting were Shtif, Tcherikower, Olshvanger, Ben-Adir, Lestschinsky, Abraham Menes, Aron Steinberg, I. N. Steinberg, and Fishl Shneerson.
27. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370.
28. Ibid.; N. Shtif, "Letter No. 1," 7 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2372; Initiative Group to Educational Department, Workmen's Circle, 19 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2373; "A por verter tsu aykh, amerikaner kolegn," undated [June 1925?], RG 82, folder 2376. Jacob Lestschinsky wrote personally to Shmuel Niger, asking him to organize a meeting of Yiddish activists in New York to publicize the idea of the institute. Lestschinsky to Shmuel [Niger], 6 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2371.
29. Shtif to Tcherikower, 6 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370; unlabeled document, May 1925, RG 82, folder 2375; Tcherikower and Shtif to members of the Initiative Group, 25 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2380; announcements of meetings, RG 82, folder 2371; N. Shtif, "Letter No. 1," 7 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2372. Eight of the Initiative Group's nine members had attended the meeting Shtif organized the previous month. The changes were Ben-Adir, who was absent, and Roza Simkhovitsh, who joined the group. As discussed in Chapter 3, I. N. Steinberg resigned from the group in August to protest the inclusion of representatives of Soviet Jewish institutions among those invited to the preliminary conference.
30. Tcherikower, "Geshikhte."
31. Dubnow to Shtif, 18 February 1925, RG 82, folder 2369.
32. Dubnow to Shtif, 28 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2382; letter of Organizational Committee, 29 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2390.
33. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370.
34. Zhitlowsky to Shtif, 8 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2373.

35. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 31 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370; Initiative Group to Zhitlowsky, 23 June 1925, RG 82, folder 2378; Initiative Group to Zhitlowsky, 31 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2381; Tcherikower to Shtif, 23 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2382.
36. Shtif to Sachs, 7 April 1925, quoted in Frank, 272–3.
37. Sachs to Shtif, incomplete, 14 June 1925, RG 82, folder 2376.
38. I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union, Executive Meeting, 15 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388. Another negative response came from the poet Abraham Reisen, who criticized the memorandum on several counts and concluded that while "the idea of a Yiddish scholarly institute [*yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut*] is a very fruitful one, it must be set up correctly, right side up." Reisen took particular issue with Shtif's emphasis on philology, arguing that social and economic problems were much more important and less well studied. He also criticized the memorandum for its insufficient attention to Zhitlowsky and praise of Tcherikower's work, which Reisen described as "mediocre." Abraham Reisen to Nokhem [Shtif], 22 February 1925, RG 82, folder 2369.
39. Tcherikower, "Geshikhte." Tcherikower gives a figure of thirty-one attendees at the meeting and thirty-one persons are listed in the minutes. See Minutes of the United Meeting of the Central Educational Committee, Vilna Educational Society and Invited Guests, 24 March 1925, reprinted in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 286–287. However, Szajkowski enumerates thirty-three participants, and one of those omitted in the minutes but listed by Szajkowski in fact spoke at the meeting. See Szajkowski, "Yivo," 30.
40. Minutes of meeting in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 286–289. The committee consisted of Weinreich, Reisen, Josef Czernichow, Gershon Pludermakher, and Dr. Herts Kovarski.
41. The five committee members met together with Abraham Golomb, Sofia Gurevich, and Leyb Turbovitsh.
42. "Vilner tezisn vegn a yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," in *Di organizatsye fun der yidisher visnshaft* (Vilna: TSBK and VILBIG, 1925), 34; "Rezolutsye fun tsveytn yidishn shultsuzamenfor fun der poylisher republik," in Ibid., 2nd ed., 40. This committee included early Vilna supporters such as Weinreich and Reisen, leaders of the Bund including Kremer, Rosental, and Beinish Mikhalevich, and the young Warsaw historians Emanuel Ringelblum and Raphael Mahler.
43. "Letter No. 2," May 1925, RG 82, folder 2374.
44. "A yidisher akademisher institut," *Vilner tog*, 29 March 1925, 2.
45. "Letter No. 2," May 1925, RG 82, folder 2374. In May a second edition appeared that included the resolutions of the TSYSHO convention. A third and fourth edition were also published in late 1925. *Yedies* 2 (23 October 1925); *Yedies* 5 (4 December 1925).
46. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 3 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2370. See also Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370.
47. Shtif, "Vegn," 32; *Tsvey yor arbet far dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* (Vilna: YIVO, 1927), 55. The institute's budget would never reach that figure at its high point. On YIVO's finances see Chapter 4.
48. "Barikht fun der ershter baratung vegn dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," RG 82, folder 2383. This included 650 marks a month for the Berlin office, which took

into account personnel for the Historical and Social-Economic Sections, and 250 marks for the Vilna office, part of which would cover the needs of the Philological Section. To these figures they added 1,200 marks for publishing the *Shriftn* and 100 marks for the Pedagogical Section.

49. *Forbaratung vegn dem visnshaftlekhn institut* (Berlin: Organizir-komitet far dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut, 1925), 4; "Kheshbn fun institut," 20 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2412.
50. Shtif and Tcherikower to Efroykin, draft of telegram, 18 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2382.
51. Shtif to Shatzky, 27 October 1925, RG 1.1, folder 713.
52. Organizational Committee to Niger, 30 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2381.
53. Shtif, Organizational Committee to Shatzky, 8 September 1925, RG 82, folder 2386.
54. Shtif to Shatzky, 27 October 1925, RG 1.1, folder 713.
55. "Akademisher institut, kheshbn, tsum 15 juni," RG 82, folder 2412; OSE to Initiative Group, 30 June 1925, RG 82, folder 2377.
56. Yosef Loewy, I. L. Peretz Yiddish Culture Society, Munich to Initiative Group, 5 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2382; Yiddish Culture League, Mannheim to Organizational Committee, 16 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2389; Jewish Culture Society, Gross-Hamburg to Tcherikower, 20 November 1925, RG 82, folder 2392.
57. See for example M. Gros (Josef Zimmermann), Vienna to Shtif, 20 May 1925, RG 82, folder 2375; Leo Kenig, London to Initiative Group, 4 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2379; Elie Kubowitzki, Union of Jewish Workers' Cultural Societies in Belgium, Brussels to Initiative Group, 4 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2382; and *Di prese*, Antwerp to Shtif, 2 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2382. The base of support was surer in Paris where the founders could turn to Israel Efroykin, a colleague from Saint Petersburg days who was then living in the city. Efroykin organized a group in Paris whose first meeting was attended by more than thirty people. See Efroykin, Conférence Universelle Juive de Secours, Paris to Initiative Group, 1 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2379; Efroykin to Shtif, copy, 20 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2380.
58. Mark, "Ershte yorn," 132–133. Mark first recalled that the sum was $20, then corrected it to $24. See Mark to Szajkowski, 18 January 1975 and 13 March 1975, RG 100: Records of YIVO (New York), box 74–3, folder 102; Szajkowski, "Yivo," 36–37.
59. Yudel Mark, Jewish Real Gymnasium, Ukmergė (Vilkomir), Lithuania to Tcherikower, 2 May 1925; RG 82, folder 2374; Jewish Real Gymnasium, Vilkomir to Tcherikower, 29 May 1925, RG 82, folder 2375.
60. Yudel Mark to Initiative Group, 24 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2378; Y. Ts. Nayshlos, Central School Organization, Riga to Committee for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, copy, 14 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388; Dorpat Jewish I. L. Peretz Society to Committee for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 23 October 1925, copy, RG 82, folder 2389; Dorpat Jewish I. L. Peretz Society to Committee for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 21 November, 1925, copy, RG 82, folder 2392.
61. "Letter No. 2," May 1925, RG 82, folder 2374.
62. In Yiddish the term *Lite* refers to a much larger area than that of the interwar (or present-day) Lithuanian state. On the strength of Jewish political and cultural

movements in this region see Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, 40–44. See also Dovid Katz, *Lithuanian Jewish Culture* (Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 2004).

63. The institute also established contact with other East European countries such as Romania. See for example Yiddish Cultural Federation in Romania, Cernăuți (Czernowitz) to Initiative Group, 27 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2381.
64. Organizational Committee to Efroykin, 16 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.
65. Ibid.
66. Weinreich to Shtif, 31 October, 1925, copy, RG 82, folder 2390.
67. Shtif to Niger, 4 November 1925, RG 82, folder 2391.
68. Organizational Committee to American Section, 24 November 1925, RG 82, folder 2392.
69. Organizational Committee to Shatzky, 23 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2390.
70. Organizational Committee to Shatzky, 27 October 1925, RG 1.1, folder 713; Shtif to Niger, 4 November 1925, RG 82, folder 2391.
71. Berlin Initiative Group to eight cultural organizations, Berlin, 16 June 1925, RG 82, folder 2376.
72. Shtif to Shatzky, 27 October 1925, RG 1.1, folder 713.
73. Organizational Committee to Culture League, Mannheim and Mushinski, Chemnitz, 8 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2393.
74. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 9 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2393.
75. Shtif, "Vegn," 3.
76. Ibid., 6.
77. "Vilner tezisn," 34.
78. Sh. Niger, "Gelernte yidn un idishe gelernte," *Tog* (New York), 3 October 1925, 4.
79. Ibid.
80. Y. Radak, "Der idisher visnshaftlekher tsenter un di idishe shul," *Folk un visnshaft* (Riga), 8 October 1925; Y. Ts. Nayshlos, Secretary, Central Yiddish School Organization, Riga to Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 14 October 1925, copy, both RG 82, folder 2388.
81. Shtif, "Vegn," 25.
82. A. Litvak, "Vegn," 2.
83. "A vokh farn idishn visnshaftlekhn institut," Latvia, 1928, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 516.
84. Shtif, "Vegn," 3.
85. Jewish Education Society of Lithuania, Kaunas, "Rezolutsye," 21 November 1925, RG 82, folder 2392.
86. Golomb, "Vegn," 36.
87. [N. Shtif,] "A yidisher akademisher institut," undated [May 1925?], RG 82, folder 2375.
88. Shtif to Shatzky, 3 September 1925, RG 82, folder 2386.
89. Ch. Eisenstadt-Barsilai to Shtif, 21 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2394.
90. Shtif, "Vegn," 23.
91. Shtif to Shatzky, 3 September 1925, RG 82, folder 2386.
92. Jacob Shatzky in *Fraye arbeter shtime* (New York), 8 October 1926, quoted in *Tsvey yor arbet* 67.
93. Shtif, "Vegn," 6. Tarbut [Culture] was a network of modern Jewish schools with a Hebraist orientation.
94. Max Weinreich, "Nokhem Shtif," 348.

95. Shtif, "Vegn," 26.
96. Yudel Mark, "Oyfgabes," RG 82, folder 2396; Radak, "Idisher," RG 82, folder 2388.
97. Litvak, "Vegn," 1.
98. N. Shtif, "Vegn dem program fun dem tsunoyffor fun yidishe visnshaftler mit fortreter fun kultur-organizatsyes," undated [June 1925?], RG 82, folder 2377.
99. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370.
100. Michael Weichert, "Yidishe akademye," *Literarishe bleter* 70 (4 September 1925): 65–66.
101. Yudel Mark, "Di oyfgabes fun der filologish. sektsye fun dem visnsh. inst.," *Der veg tsu der yidisher visnshaft* (Kaunas), 15 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.
102. M. Anin, "Di yidishe masn un di visnshaft," *Folk un visnshaft* (Riga), 8 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388.
103. Shtif, "Vegn," 26–27.
104. A. Glants, "Idishe visnshaft – der ingster tsvayg fun der idisher kultur," *Tog* (New York), 16 December, 1925, 4.
105. Yudel Mark, "Oyfgabes," RG 82, folder 2396.
106. Jewish Educational Society, Kaunas to Organizational Committee, 23 November 1925, RG 82, folder 2392; "A vokh farn idishn visnshaftlekhn institut," Latvia, 1928, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 516; L. Feldman, Johannesburg to Organizational Committee, 27 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.
107. N. Pereperkovitsh, "Unzere shprakh-gilgulim," *Folk un visnshaft*, 8 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388.
108. Shtif, "Vegn," 3.
109. Ibid., 27.
110. Ibid., 28–29.
111. Ibid., 32.
112. Ibid., 24.
113. Berlin Initiative Group to eight cultural organizations, Berlin, 16 June 1925, RG 82, folder 2376.
114. "Vilner tezisn," 35.
115. Shtif, "Vegn," 28.
116. Minutes of the meeting in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 286–289.
117. "Vilner tezisn," 37.
118. [N. Shtif,] "A yidisher akademisher institut," undated [May 1925?], RG 82, folder 2375.
119. Shtif, "Vegn," 31.
120. Organizational Committee to Y. Rubin, 3 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398.
121. Shtif, "Vegn," 25.
122. "Vilner tezisn," 35.
123. Minutes of meeting in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 287–288.
124. "A yidisher akademisher institut," *Vilner tog*, 29 March 1925, 2.
125. Vilner tezisn," 35.
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid., 38.
128. Ibid.
129. Shtif, "Vegn," 31. When Shtif wrote, "The institute should be a *research institute* for scholars, not a teaching institution for students," he amended the sentence by

adding, "for the time being." [N. Shtif,] "A yidisher akademisher institut," undated [May 1925?], RG 82, folder 2375.

130. "A yidisher akademisher institut," *Vilner tog*, 29 March 1925, 2.
131. "Grandieze oyftuen fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," *Naye folkstsaytung* (Warsaw), 12 December 1926, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 516.
132. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
133. To minimize expenses they proposed holding the meeting in Warsaw or Danzig (Gdańsk), which would not require the purchase of a visa, and sending only one representative from Poland. Weinreich to Berlin Initiative Group, 8 June 1925, RG 82, folder 2376.
134. The Jewish Educational Society of Kaunas planned to send Yudel Mark, then to send Mendel Sudarski when Mark was unable to attend. Mendel Sudarski to Shtif, 1 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2379; Yudel Mark to Initiative Group, 3 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2382; Esther Eliashev (E. Gurland-Eliaschoff) to Initiative Group, 24 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2380.
135. I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers' Union to Tcherikower, telegram, 6 August 1925; Workmen's Circle to Tcherikower, telegram, 7 August 1925, both RG 82, folder 2382.
136. *Forbaratung*, 1.
137. Shtif, "Letter No. 1," 7 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2372; Berlin Initiative Group to eight cultural organizations, 16 June, 1925, RG 82, folder 2376.
138. Shtif, "Vegn dem program fun dem tsunoyffor fun yidishe visnshaftler mit fortreter fun kultur-organizatsyes," RG 82, folder 2377.
139. Ibid.; Weinreich to Berlin Initiative Group, 8 June 1925, RG 82, folder 2376; *Forbaratung*, 11.
140. Ibid., 12.
141. Ibid., 16–17.
142. Ibid., 13–14.
143. Ibid., 14–15.
144. Ibid., 15–16. This publication, to be called *Kultur-korespondents* [Cultural Correspondence], was to have a summary in a European language to attract a broader audience. Plans for such a newsletter, although discussed for many years, were never realized.
145. *Forbaratung*, 12 and 18; A. Pekler, "Di berliner konferents," *Vilner tog*, 6 September 1925, 3. After this time the Berlin Initiative Group became the Organizational Committee, while the Organizational Committee members in Vilna sometimes called themselves the Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute.
146. Shtif, "Vegn," 24.
147. M. Anin, "Yidishe masn," RG 82, folder 2388.
148. Quoted in Nathans, 415.
149. Shtif, "Vegn," 23.
150. Organizational Committee to American Section, New York, 14 November 1925, RG 82, folder 2391; Vilna office to Organizational Committee, 24 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2397. The reference is to the Joint Distribution Committee and the Instytut Nauk Judaistycznych, which is discussed in Chapter 3.
151. Organizational Committee to Jewish Workers Cultural League, Detroit, 21 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.
152. Bal-dimyen, "Der yidisher visnshaftlekher institut, a yor arbet," *Varshever shriftn* 1926–1927: 2–3.

153. Shtif, "Vegn," 5.
154. Max Weinreich, "Ein jiddisches wissenschaftliches Institut," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, new series, 5 (1 April 1926), 69. Also quoted in *Tsvey yor arbet*, 63. This statement is all the more striking for being published in a German journal. The institute's founders used the terms *khokhmes yisroel* and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* interchangeably, the former as the Yiddish translation of the latter. Thus, Shtif refers to "'visn vegn yidn' (khokhmes yisroel)." Shtif, "Vegn," 24. Weinreich's use of the term *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in this citation is rendered as *khokhmes yisroel* in its Yiddish translation.
155. Sh. Niger, "Gelernte."
156. On nineteenth-century Wissenschaft scholarship see Roemer; on the interwar period see David N. Myers, "The Fall and Rise of Jewish Historicism: The Evolution of the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (1919–1934)," *Hebrew Union College Annual* LXIII (1992): 107–144. This interpretation is supported by the fact that such views were expressed even by Weinreich, who was certainly conversant with the current state of German scholarship.
157. Shtif, "Vegn," 6.
158. Ibid., 3–4.
159. Niger, "Vegn," 127.
160. Niger, "Gelernte."
161. Shtif, "Vegn," 3–4.
162. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 26 March 1925, RG 82, folder 2370. Similarly, the Organizational Committee later wrote to a students' group in Germany that it could take "the great source of knowledge and methodology" in Western Europe and apply it to scholarly work in Yiddish. Organizational Committee to Jewish Students Union, Jena, 12 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2402.
163. Minutes of meeting, undated [23 April 1926?], RG 1.1, folder 2.
164. Shtif, "Vegn," 4.
165. Ibid., 8–9 and 24.
166. Ibid., 24.
167. "Tsvey yor arbet far dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," undated [1927], RG 1.1. folder 3.
168. *Forbaratung*, 7.
169. Ibid., 11.
170. Circular letter of Organizing Committee, Philological Section, undated [May 1926?], RG 82, folder 2405. On the plans of the Bibliographic Commission see also *Yedies* 14 (13 August 1926).
171. "Tsvey yor arbet far dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," undated [1927], RG 1.1, folder 3.
172. Esther Sudarski, "Der yidisher visnshaftlekher institut," *Der veg tsu der yidisher visnshaft* (Kaunas), 15 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.
173. "Opsheyd-zitsung tsum opfor fun kh' vaynraykh keyn amerike," undated [February 1929], RG 1.1, folder 8. See Chapter 5 on the work of the Mereson Fund, which undertook to translate classics of social science into Yiddish.
174. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 11 April 1928, RG 1.1, folder 20.
175. Organizational Committee, Berlin to members of the Organizational Committee in Vilna, 10 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401; Tcherikower to Shatzky, 10

September 1927, RG 82, folder 2410. In fact, many articles in the *Shriftn* were translated from German, Russian, or other languages.

176. Shtif, "Vegn," 29.
177. Weinreich, "Ein jiddisches," 70. Also quoted in *Tsvey yor arbet*, 63.
178. Organizational Committee to Efroykin, 16 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.
179. *Yedies* 2 (23 October 1925); *Yedies* 3 (6 November 1925); Letter of Organizational Committee, 29 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2390; A. Golomb, "Proyekt fun arbets-plan far der terminologisher komisye," 9 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388. The Economic-Statistical Section did not begin to operate until February 1926. "Di ekonomik-statistishe sektsye," RG 82, folder 2399.
180. *Yedies fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* 1 in *Literarishe bleter* 75 (9 October 1925) and separate offprint. The *Yedies* would later be published independently of the *Literarishe bleter* and appear less frequently.
181. *Yedies* 2 (23 October 1925).
182. "Memorandum," Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, RG 1.1, folder 1.
183. "Di arbet farn yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," reprint from *Vilner tog*, no. 169 [15 August 1925?], RG 82, folder 2383.
184. A. Pekler, "Berliner konferents."
185. "Di plener far an institut," *Morgn zhurnal* (New York), 12 October 1925, 8; "Vegen idishen institut," *Morgn zhurnal* (New York), 19 November 1925, 6; "Fun dem organizir komitet far dem visenshaftlekhen idishen institut," *Forverts* (New York), 24 October 1925, 6; Tsivyon, "Idishe interesen," *Forverts*, 21 November 1925, 3.
186. Niger, "Gelernte;" A. Glants, "Idishe visenshaft."
187. Shatzky was apparently sent the memorandum but did not receive it and read a borrowed copy. Shatzky to Initiative Group, 25 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2380. He may have learned of the project from Max Weinreich, who mentioned it as an aside in a personal letter. Weinreich to Shatzky, 10 April 1925, RG 1.1, folder 708.
188. Shatzky, Niger, and the folklorist Y. L. Cahan comprised the section's initial leadership. Minutes of meeting, 17 October 1925, RG 1.1, folder 681; Tcherikower, "Geshikhte."
189. Organizational Committee to P. Wiernik, 8 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398; Shatzky to Organizational Committee, 4 April 1926, RG 82, folder 2196.
190. See for example Organizational Committee to Sh. Ayznshtat, Jerusalem, 8 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2395; Organizational Committee to Bloshteyn, Buenos Aires, 27 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2397; L. Feldman, Johannesburg to Organizational Committee, 27 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2397.
191. Organizational Committee to correspondents in Vienna, London, and Paris, 23 September 1925; Organizational Committee to correspondents in Mannheim, Chemnitz, Munich, and Brussels, 24 September 1925, all RG 82, folder 2387.
192. "Kolektive farlezung vegn yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," *Folkstsaytung* (Warsaw), 16 October 1925, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 1; *Yedies* 2 (23 October 1925); Ts. Nayshlos, Central School Organization, Riga to Committee for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, copy, 25 September 1925, RG 82, folder 2387; Ts. Nayshlos, Central School Organization, Riga to Committee for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, copy, 14 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388; *Folk un visnshaft*

(Riga), 8 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388; Organizational Committee to Jewish Educational Society in Kaunas, 29 September 1925, RG 82, folder 2387; *Yedies* 5 (4 December 1925); *Der veg tsu der yidisher visnshaft* (Kaunas), 15 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.

193. The Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute continued to oversee day-to-day work until the formal founding of YIVO itself at the 1929 conference.
194. Litvak, "Vegn," 1.
195. *Yedies* 14 (13 August 1926).
196. *Tsvey yor arbet*, 11; *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
197. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 23–24.
198. Organizational Committee to Alexander Mukdoni, 28 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2397.

3. "From the Folk, For the Folk, With the Folk"

1. Bal-dimyen, "Der yidisher," 14.
2. *Yedies* 14 (13 August 1926).
3. Y[udel] M[ark], "Funem folk, farn folk, mitn folk," *Der veg tsu der yidisher visnshaft* (Kaunas), 15 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.
4. On attitudes toward the folk among Yiddish scholars see Gottesman and my review of Gottesman's work in the journal *Polin*, available at: http://www.aapjstudies.org/index.php?id=28.
5. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, excerpts, 10–11 April 1928, RG 82, folder 2219. On the role of zamling in YIVO's work see Marek Web, "Tsu der geshikhte funem yivo-arkhiv," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 170–176.
6. Central Commission to Research Jewish Antiquities in Poland by the Historical Commission of "YIVO," Warsaw, incomplete document, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 469.
7. A. Golomb, "Proyekt fun arbetsplan far der terminologisher komisye," 9 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388. The folklorist Dov Noy describes this relationship as a pyramid, with researchers at the top, informants at the bottom, and collectors as the intermediary between them. Dov Noy, "Araynfir tsu di etnografishe anketes heft 1: yontoyvim, 1928," *The Mendele Review* 02.018 (27 May 1998), available at: http://yiddish.haifa.ac.il/tmr/tmr02/tmr02.018.txt.
8. Examples of calls to zamlers by the Terminological Commission, Bibliographic Center, Historical Section, and Psychological-Pedagogical Section are cited elsewhere in this chapter. For an example of a call by the Economic-Statistical Section, see "Tsu ale landorganizatsyes, gezelshaftn, 'fraynd,' shtitsgrupes, zamlkrayzn, un fraynd fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," September 1929, RG 1.1, folder 546.
9. Minutes of meeting of the Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Vilna, 1 October 1928, RG 1.1, folder 543.
10. Organizational Committee to members of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 12 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2395. On the Bibliographic Commission (later Center), see Dina Abramowicz, "A pruv tsu shafn a natsionaln bibliografishn tsenter far yidish," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 102–132.

11. *Yedies* 2 (23 October 1925); *Yedies* 3 (6 November 1925).
12. Letter of the Organizational Committee to twenty-one newspapers and journals, 5 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398; Vilna office to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 24 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2397; minutes of meeting of the Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Vilna, 7 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398; *Forbaratung*, 14.
13. Organizational Committee to Shatzky, New York; Bloshteyn, Buenos Aires; and Rafalovitsh, Kaunas, 27 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2397; Organizational Committee to Z. Ratner, Moscow, 15 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2402; *Yedies* 14 (13 August 1926).
14. Abramowicz, 103–105.
15. Organizational Committee to members of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 5 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401; *Yedies* 19 (7 January 1927).
16. *Barikht*, 72; "Barikht fun der bibliografisher tsentrale," undated [1929], RG 1.1, folder 605. The center received 260 Yiddish newspapers and 60 in ten other languages.
17. Organizational Committee to members of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 5 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401; *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929). The volume covered the year 1926 and did not appear until October 1928. See *Bibliografishe yorbikher fun yivo*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Kultur-lige, 1928).
18. *Tsvey yor arbet*, 7.
19. Shatzky to Weinreich, 18 January 1926, copy, RG 82, folder 2396.
20. Organizational Committee to Shatzky, 18 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396; minutes of meeting of the Bibliographic Commission, 3 October 1927, RG 1.1, folder 605.
21. The body was originally called the Folklore Commission but also used the appellation Ethnographic Commission. It switched to the latter by November 1925 and reverted to its original name in 1930. Gottesman, 119 and 146. On the work of the Ethnographic Commission see Gottesman, 117–170 and Beatrice Silverman Weinreich, ed., *Yiddish Folktales* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), xxii–xxxii. Noy writes that one of the commission's leaders, Khaim Khayes, felt that its work was looked down upon by YIVO scholars in other fields and that this accounts for its status as a "commission" rather than a full-fledged "section." Noy, n.p. While Khayes may indeed have wished to create a Folklore Section, as Noy writes, it does not seem that YIVO's relegating ethnography to a commission was intended as a sign of its lesser importance. Rather, the institute's founders conceived of the field as part of the discipline of philology; hence the Ethnographic Commission was one of several commissions that fell under the Philological Section.
22. *Yedies* 3 (6 November 1925); Cecile E. Kuznitz, "An-sky's Legacy: The Vilna Historic-Ethnographic Society and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Culture," in *The Worlds of S. An-sky*, 330.
23. On the contentious relationship between the two organizations, see Kuznitz, "An-sky's Legacy," 329–340.
24. *Yedies* 2 (23 October 1925); *Yedies* 4 (20 November 1925).
25. *Yedies* 6 (18 December 1925).
26. *Yedies* 4 (20 November 1925); minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 25 February 192[7], RG 1.1, folder 2; *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929). Noy suggests that

one reason the brochure appeared so late was that the commission's leaders did not wish to invest too many resources in educating the zamlers, since they believed that the future of Yiddish culture lay rather with the youth of the Yiddish schools. Noy, n.p.

27. Press release, 9 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401; Organizational Committee, Vilna to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 6 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401.
28. Vilna office to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 7 February 1926, RG 82, folder 239; minutes of meeting of the Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Vilna, excerpts, 11 April 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
29. Minutes of meeting of the Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Vilna, 10 September 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
30. "Tsvey yor arbet far dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," *Vilner tog*, 1927, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 516; minutes of meeting of the Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Vilna, 1 October 1928, RG 1.1, folder 543.
31. List of zamlerkrayzn in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 321–323; *Barikht*, 67.
32. For a memoir of one zamler's collecting trips, see Meyer Kuczynski, "Oyf a visnshaftlekher yivo-ekspeditsye," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 255–268.
33. "Vegn yidishe familye-arkhiv (notitsn fun a zamler farn yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut)," *Vilner tog*, 8 June 1928, RG 1.1, folder 516.
34. Y. Sh. Grinshteyn to YIVO, copy, 11 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2399.
35. *Yedies* 12 (21 May 1926).
36. "Barkht fun 2 yor arbet funm 'an-ski zamler-krayz farn yiv"o,'" 28 October 1927, RG 1.1, folder 533.
37. An-ski zamlerkrayz, Warsaw to Friends of YIVO, Vilna, 30 October 1926; An-ski zamlerkrayz, Warsaw to Friends of YIVO, Vilna, 22 October 1928, both RG 1.1, folder 533.
38. Report on work, Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Warsaw, 24 January 1929, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 453.
39. *Yedies* 22 (29 July 1927).
40. See for example B. Tishler, Stanisławów to the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 23 October 1929, RG 1.2, Records of YIVO (Vilna): Ethnographic Committee, folder 4; *Yedies* 17 (5 November 1926).
41. Chaim Sheskin, Tel Aviv to Ethnographic Commission, 10 February 1928, RG 1.2, folder 3. *Opsherenish* refers to a Jewish boy's first haircut at the age of three.
42. Ethnographic Commission to Sheskin, 22 February 1928, RG 1.2, folder 3.
43. Aron Bam, Opsa to YIVO, 21 June 1929; Ethnographic Commission to Aron Bam, 9 July 1929, both RG 1.2, folder 4.
44. Szajkowski, "Yivo," 52. On Verblunski see R. Biran, "Parashat Berl Verblunski, asfan folklor be-Polin ben shete milhamot ha-'olam," *Mekhere Yerushalayim be-folklor Yehudi*, 19–20 (1997–8): 239–270.
45. *Yedies* 7 (8 January 1926).
46. Izak Kremer to YIVO, undated [1929?], RG 1.2, folder 4.
47. Notice in *Moment* (Warsaw), 1928, cited in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 323. The Polish government limited the right of its citizens to possess materials deemed subversive, and the institute had to obtain permission to receive certain periodicals from abroad. For an example of YIVO's correspondence with Polish authorities regarding this issue, see Security Department, Vilna Provincial Office to Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 10 January 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8.

48. Boris Brutskus, "The Yiddish Scientific Institute," *B'nai Brith Magazine* XLII, no. 8 (May 1928): 255.
49. *Yedies* 21 (1 April 1927).
50. *Tsvey yor arbet*, 54.
51. N. Meisel, "Veln mir lozn untergeyn?," *Literarishe bleter* 13 (1 April 1927): 243; "Tsvey yor arbet far dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," *Vilner tog*, 1927, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 516.
52. Appeal of the Ethnographic Commission, January 1926, RG 1.1, folder 616; Weinreich, Building Committee to Board of the Jewish Gymnasium, Vilkomir, 26 October [November?], 1925, RG 1.2, folder 2.
53. An-ski zamlerkrayz, Warsaw to Friends of YIVO, Vilna, 30 Oct. 1926, RG 1.1, folder 533.
54. Report of the Peretz zamlerkrayz, Kołomyja, 24 October 1929, cited in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 324–325.
55. *Yedies* 25 (8 August 1928).
56. *Barikht*, 65.
57. "Grandieze oyftuen fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," *Naye folkstsaytung* (Warsaw), 12 December 1926, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 516.
58. Organizational Committee, Berlin to American Section, New York, 17 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2402.
59. *Yedies* 11 (23 April 1926).
60. *Yedies* 10 (12 March 1926).
61. Melekh Grumf [?], Warsaw to YIVO, Vilna, 10 March 1927, RG 1.1, folder 547.
62. Appeal of the Ethnographic Commission, January 1926, RG 1.1, folder 616.
63. Vilna office to Tcherikower, 14 December 1926, RG 82, folder 2070.
64. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 22 December 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
65. *Tsvey yor arbet*, 50.
66. *Yedies* 25 (8 August 1928); *Yidisher folklor*, ed. Y. L. Kahan (Vilna: YIVO, 1938), xii.
67. Kahan, *Yidisher folklor*, 353–357; Gottesman, 162.
68. "Vilner tezisn," 36–37.
69. Appeal of the Ethnographic Commission, January 1926, RG 1.1, folder 616.
70. H. Abramowicz, "Tog ayn tog oys, farhit fun farnikhtung unzer folklor!," *Vilner Tog*, **19** November 1925, 2.
71. *Yedies* 22 (29 July 1927).
72. *Yedies* 8 (22 January 1926).
73. *Yedies* 21 (1 April 1927).
74. See *Etnografishe anketes, heft 1: yontoyvim* (Vilna: YIVO, 1928). The introduction to this volume was published online (in transliteration) in *The Mendele Review* 02.018 (27 May 1998) and is available at http://yiddish.haifa.ac.il/tmr/tmr02/tmr02.018.txt.
75. Noy, n.p. As Noy writes, from the questionnaires' wording, "their readers and users could not imagine that in the Vilna Gaon's Jerusalem of Lithuania there were in the 1920s more yeshiva students than visitors to YIVO." Gottesman points out that Weinreich, who saw folklore as a tool for researching the history of the Yiddish language, was more interested in the past whereas a dialectician such as Prylucki wished to use folklore to study regional differences in contemporary Yiddish. Gottesman, 173–174.

76. Organizational Committee to Shatzky, New York; Bloshteyn, Buenos Aires; and Rafalovitsh, Kaunas, 27 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2397.
77. *Yedies* 13 (18 June 1926).
78. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 17 January 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2; *Yedies* 20 (25 February 1927). On the history of the YIVO Library see Dina Abramowicz, "The YIVO Library," *Jewish Book Annual* **25** (1967–1968): 87–102 and Zachary M. Baker, "The Yiddish Collections of the YIVO Library: Their History, Scope, and Significance," *YIVO Annual* 22 (Evanston, IL and New York: Northwestern University Press and YIVO, 1995): 253–273, reprinted from *Yiddish Catalog and Authority File of the YIVO Library*, 5 vols. (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990), ed. Zachary M. Baker and Bella Hass Weinberg. On the history of the YIVO Archives see Marek Web, "Tsu der geshikhte," 168–191 and Fruma Mohrer and Marek Web, "The YIVO Institute and the YIVO Archives: A Brief History," *Guide to the YIVO Archives*, xi–xix.
79. Web, "Tsu der geshikhte," 170–171. In the case of the Esther-Rachel Kaminska Theater Museum, the donation of material by the Yiddish actors Ida Kaminska and Zygmunt Turkow in 1927 led to the creation of a separate unit within YIVO. Web, "Tsu der geshikhte," 176–77; Mohrer and Web, 78–79. A similar, less successful effort was made to create a Peretz Museum around the donation of Peretz's widow, Helena, to YIVO. Kuznitz, "An-sky's Legacy," 331. In contrast, the collection efforts of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section resulted in a Pedagogical Museum that fell under the purview of that section. Chaim Ormian, "Yidishe psikhologishe un pedagogishe forsharbet in poyln," in *Shriftn far psikhologye un pedagogik, tsveyter band*, ed. Leibush Lehrer (Vilna: YIVO, 1940): 193.
80. On the Philological Section's linguistic work as a whole see Mordkhe Schaechter, "Dem yivos yidish-oyftu," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 199–208.
81. A. Golomb, "Proyekt fun arbetsplan far der terminologisher komisye," 9 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388; minutes of meeting of the Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Vilna, 7 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398; appeal, Terminological Commission, 21 April 1926, RG 1.1, folder 616. On the Terminological Commission see Leybl Kahn, "Der terminologisher oyftu fun yivo," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 229–241.
82. "Bashlosn fun der baratung vegn dem y.v.o.," 15 July 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2; minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, excerpts, 10–11 April 1928, RG 82, folder 2219.
83. *Barikht*, 54.
84. A. Golomb, "Proyekt fun arbetsplan far der terminologisher komisye," 9 October 1925 RG 82, folder 2388.
85. *Yedies* 2 (23 October 1925); Organizational Committee to Educational Department, Workmen's Circle, New York, 29 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2394; *Yedies* 19 (7 January 1927).
86. A. Golomb, "Proyekt fun arbetsplan far der terminologisher komisye," 9 October 1925 RG 82, folder 2388.
87. Press release, Terminological Commission, undated, RG 1.1, folder 616.
88. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 27 June [1926], RG 1.1, folder 2.
89. "Bashlosn fun der baratung vegn dem y.v.o.," 15 July 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2 and RG 82, folder 2223; "Bashlosn fun der organizir-komisye oyf ir zitsung," 18 July [1927], RG 82, folder 2223.

90. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
91. Traditionally such words are spelled as they would be in their source languages. On Yiddish orthographic reform in the Soviet Union see Estraikh, *Soviet Yiddish*, 115–140; Mordkhe Schaechter, "Fun folkshprakh tsu kulturshprakh," in *Der aynheytlekher yidisher oysleyg* (New York: YIVO and the League for Yiddish, 1999), 18–26; and Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 72–81.
92. "Bashlosn fun der baratung vegn dem y.v.o.," 15 July 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2 and RG 82, folder 2223.
93. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, excerpts, 10–11 April 1928, RG 82, folder 2219 and RG 1.1, folder 2.
94. On this point see David G. Roskies, "Maks vaynraykh: oyf di shpurn fun a lebedikn over," *Yivo bleter*, new series, III (1997): 308–318 and Barry Trachtenberg, "Inscribing the Yiddish Past: Inter-War Explorations of Old Yiddish Texts," *Yiddish and the Left*, 208–225.
95. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, continuation, 11 April 1928, RG 1.1, folder 2.
96. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 14–16 October 1930, RG 82, folder 2219.
97. Minutes of meeting, 23 October 1938, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544; proaspirants to Executive Office, 4 April, 1940, RG 1.3, Records of YIVO (Vilna): Aspirantur, folder 4055.
98. Some biographical and bibliographical material on modern Yiddish literature did appear. In the late 1930s a total of two articles on contemporary writers were published, one on Abraham Reisen and one on Isaac Bashevis Singer. *Yivo-bibliografye 1925–1941* (New York: YIVO, 1943), 122–124.
99. YIVO's bibliography of its own publications from 1925 to 1941 lists a total of sixty-six entries for literature of the Haskalah period, thirty-five for earlier periods, forty-nine for the classical troika of Yiddish writers (Mendele Moykher Sforim, I. L. Peretz, and Sholem Aleichem), and twenty-three for "postclassical" writers. *Yivo-bibliografye* 113–124.
100. "Barikht tsum organizir-komitet far dem yidishn visnshaftlikhn institut vegn der arbet farn landoy-bukh," 21 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2395; introduction to *Shriftn fun yidishn visnhsaftlekhn institut*, *filologishe serye* 1 (Vilna: Kletskin-farlag, 1926), n.p.
101. *Yedies* 14 (13 August 1926).
102. Rudolph Glanz in *Unzer tribune*, Vienna, no. 11 (1926), quoted in *Yedies* 18 (19 November 1926).
103. *Filologishe shriftn* 2 (Vilna: Kletskin-farlag, 1928); *Yedies* 25 (8 August 1928). This volume and the following one were edited by Weinreich and Reisen, while no editor is listed for the *Landau Book*.
104. Introduction to *Filologishe shriftn* 2, n.p.
105. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929); introduction to *Filologishe shriftn* 3 (Vilna: Kletskin-farlag, 1929), n.p.
106. Letter of Organizational Committee, 29 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2390. Those in attendance included, in addition to Dubnow and Tcherikower, Lestschinsky, Shtif, and Mark Wischnitzer. Dobroszycki, 495. For overviews of the work of the Historical Section see Ibid., 494–518; Isaiah Trunk, "Yivo un di yidishe historishe visnshaft," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 242–254; and Heidemarie Petersen, "'Mir

zen far zikh di geshikhte nit fun a historisher mumie': Die Historische Sektion des YIVO und die jüdische Geschichtsschreibung im Polen der Zwischenkriegszeit," *Jüdische Kultur(en) im Neuen Europa, Wilna 1918–1939*, ed. Marina Dmitrieva and Heidemarie Petersen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004): 163–179.

107. Dubnow to Shtif, 28 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2382.
108. Minutes of founding meeting of the Historical Section, 31 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2238; see also published version in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 291–294.
109. Letter of the Historical Section, RG 82, folder 2404; *Yedies* 12 (21 May 1926).
110. Minutes of meeting of the Historical Section, 8 April 1926, RG 82, folder 2238.
111. Organizational Committee, Berlin to members of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 10 March 1926, RG 1.1, folder 1; Tcherikower to Shatzky, 23 April 1926, RG 1.1, folder 713.
112. *Yedies* 17 (5 November 1926).
113. Shatzky to Tcherikower, 24 May 1926, RG 82, folder 2196.
114. Tcherikower to Shatzky, incomplete, undated [June–July 1926], RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 603.
115. "Arbets-program fun der historisher sektsye," undated [1929], RG 82, folder 2237.
116. Organizational Committee, Berlin to unidentified American correspondent, incomplete, undated [December 1925], RG 82, folder 2394; Organizational Committee to P. Wiernik, 8 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398; Shatzky to Organizational Committee, 4 April 1926, RG 82, folder 2196.
117. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 23 April 1926, RG 1.1, folder 713; Organizational Committee to American Section, 4 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2395.
118. Tcherikower to Lestschinsky, 10 August 1929, RG 82, folder 2141.
119. Tcherikower, introduction to *Historishe shriftn* 1 (Warsaw: Kulture-lige, 1929), n.p.
120. On the work of Jewish historians writing in Polish see Natalia Aleksiun, "Setting the Record Straight: Polish Jewish Historians and Local History in Interwar Poland," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 7 (2008) 127–141 and Ibid., "Ammunition in the Struggle for National Rights: Jewish Historians in Poland between the Two World Wars," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2010).
121. Tcherikower, introduction to *Historishe shriftn* 1, n.p.
122. Shatzky to Tcherikower, 27 September 1929, RG 82, folder 2197; Shatzky to Tcherikower, 24 May 1926, RG 82, folder 2196. Shatzky also wrote of the eminent Dubnow, a close friend of Tcherikower, "I don't have a high opinion of Dubnow as a historian and consider his works *good compilations*."
123. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 23 November 1927, RG 82, folder 2197. Tcherikower added that Shatzky's financial support for the volume did not give him special rights and that his tone was not in keeping with the "friendly collegial" relations among YIVO's leaders.
124. Vilna office to Tcherikower, 2 February 1927, RG 82, folder 2071; letter to members of the Central Board and the scholarly sections, 5 December 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8.
125. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 23 April 1926, RG 1.1, folder 713; Organizational Committee, Berlin to Members of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 10 March 1926, RG 1.1, folder 1.
126. Shatzky to Tcherikower, 24 May 1926, RG 82, folder 2196.

127. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 10 September 1927, RG 82, folder 2410. In the summer of 1926 Schwarzbard had assassinated Ukrainian leader Simon Petlyura in revenge for the recent pogroms in that country. On Tcherikower's work for Emigdirect, see Joshua Michael Karlip, "The Center That Could Not Hold: *Afn Sheydveg* and the Crisis of Diaspora Nationalism" (Ph.D. diss., Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2006), 274–280.
128. "Di arbet fun der historisher sektsye, berlin," undated [1929?], RG 82, folder 2237; protocol no. 2 of the Historical Section, 21 November 1929, RG 82, folder 2238; "The Historical Section," undated [1929?], RG 82, folder 2237.
129. Ringelblum to Historical Section, 1 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401.
130. "Rezolutsye fun tsveytn yidishn shultsuzamenfor fun der poylisher republik," in *Di organizatsye fun der yidisher visnshaft*, 2nd ed., 40.
131. Ringelblum to Historical Section, 1 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401. On Ringelblum's reaction to YIVO's founding see Kassow, *History*, 39–40. For detailed information on the seminar and the *Yunger historiker* group, see Ibid., 58–63; Natalia Aleksiun, "Training a New Generation of Jewish Historians: Majer Bałaban's Seminar on the History of Polish Jews," in *Zwischen Graetz und Dubnow: Jüdische Historiographie in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. François Guesnet (Leipzig: Akademische Verlaganstalt, 2009): 147–176; and Ibid., "Ammunition," 361–372.
132. The issue, which appeared in 1926, was published by the Kletskin-farlag and edited by Raphael Mahler, Emanuel Ringelblum, and Jacob Berman.
133. Lestschinsky to Tcherikower, 26 September 1926, RG 82, folder 2138. The latter phrase is a Biblical allusion.
134. This issue, also published by the Kletskin-farlag, was edited by Mahler.
135. Minutes of meeting of the Commission for YIVO, 10 September 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2; Kassow, *History*, 81.
136. *Yedies* 20 (25 February 1927).
137. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 22 December 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
138. See for example "Bashlosn fun der baratung vegn dem y.v.o.," 15 July 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2 and RG 82 folder 2223.
139. Minutes of meeting of the Warsaw Historical Commission, 18 November 1929, RG 82, folder 2243; letter to members of the Central Board and the scholarly sections, 5 December 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8. Ironically, when the American Section announced plans to publish a quarterly journal of its own Zalman Reisen argued that this would pose no conflict. He commented that smaller articles could be directed to the United States while more important work would be reserved for the *Shriftn*. Since the American Section operated more independently of the Vilna headquarters and was, moreover, a major source of the institute's funding, the YIVO leadership was presumably less inclined to argue with Shatzky than with Ringelblum. Minutes of meeting of the Commission for YIVO, 10 September 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
140. Protocol no. 2 of the Historical Section, 21 November 1929, RG 82, folder 2238; minutes of meeting of the Warsaw Historical Commission, 5 December 1929, RG 82, folder 2243.

141. Some of the older generation, for example Mark Wischnitzer, did hold Ph.D. degrees. Jacob Shatzky also held a doctorate, perhaps another reason for his resentful attitude toward Tcherikower.
142. Dobroszycki, 500; Kassow, *History*, 83; Aleksiun, "Ammunition," 369 note 59.
143. E. R[ingelblum], "Dray yor seminar far yidisher geshikhte," *Yunger historiker* 1 (1926): 7–11.
144. Jacob Berman, "Di oyfgabn fun der historisher sektsye fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," *Yunger historiker* 1 (1926): 19.
145. *Yedies* 20 (25 February 1927). See also the translation of this questionnaire in Dobroszycki, 512–513.
146. *Yedies* 21 (1 April 1927).
147. On this body see Kassow, *History*, 84–85 and Dobroszycki, 501–503.
148. Minutes of meeting of the Historical Section, 25 January 1929, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 603; minutes of meeting of the Warsaw Historical Commission, 18 November 1929, RG 82, folder 2243; Central Commission to Research Jewish Antiquities in Poland by the Historical Commission of YIVO, Warsaw, incomplete document, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 469; Dobroszycki, 501; Aleksiun, "Ammunition," 561. The course was intended for architects, historians, amateur photographers, communal officials, artists, and vocational teachers.
149. Minutes of meeting of the Central Commission to Research Jewish Antiquities in Poland, 27 June 1930, RG 82, folder 2248; "Barikht fun der delegatsye funem yid. visnshaftlekhn institut oystsuforshn di yidishe altertimlekhkeytn in lublin," [1930], RG 82, folder 2248.
150. Minutes of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 22 March, 29 March, and 7 May 1930, RG 82, folder 2243. The commission photographed the collections of an antiques collector and hoped to photograph other private and museum collections as well. Protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 22 March and 30 April 1930, RG 82, folder 2243. Its other plans included producing a "brochure on collecting and conserving Jewish antiquities" written by Bałaban. Minutes of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 4 February and 29 March 1930, RG 82, folder 2243.
151. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 23 November 1927, RG 82, folder 2197.
152. Tcherikower, introduction to *Historishe shriftn*, n.p.
153. "First meeting of the Berlin members of the Historical Section," 10 November 1929, RG 82, folder 2238.
154. Jacob Berman, "Oyfgabn," 19–20.
155. "A visnshaftlekhe historishe khrestomatye," undated [1929], RG 82, folder 2238; *Yedies* 28 (24 January 1930).
156. Jacob Berman, "Oyfgabn," 19–20.
157. On the relation of their work to communal and political issues, see Kassow, *History*, 65–78 and Aleksiun, "Ammunition," 506–527 and 628–642.
158. E. R[ingelblum], "Dray yor," 10.
159. On the differing impact of Ringelblum and Mahler's political convictions on their scholarship see Kassow, *History*, 60–64 and 75–78.
160. Minutes of meeting of the Warsaw Historical Commission, 5 December 1929, RG 82, folder 2243. Berman would become a prominent leader in postwar communist Poland.

161. On the Berlin Bureau of the *Forverts*, see Estraikh, "Berlin Bureau," 141–162. Lestschinsky discussed his personal views on Jewish politics and emigration in relation to his scholarly work in the introduction to a book published shortly after World War II. See his *Oyfn rand fun opgrunt* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-farband fun poylishe yidn in argentine, 1947), 7–14.
162. "The Economic-Statistical Section," undated [February 1926], RG 82, folder 2399; press release, undated [June 1926], RG 82, folder 2406. In attendance at the first meeting were Lestschinsky, Julius Brutskus, Mark Wischnitzer, Y. Koralnik, and Nokhem Gergel. On the work of the section, see Jonathan Frankel, introduction to *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History*, by Arcadius Kahan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xvi–xvii.
163. Organizational Committee, Berlin to Vilna office, 10 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401; *Yedies* 23 (7 October 1927).
164. "The Economic-Statistical Section," undated [February 1926], RG 82, folder 2399; "Fun der redaktsye," *Shriftn far ekonomik un statistik*, ed. Jacob Lestschinsky (Berlin: Kultur-lige, 1928) n.p. The second and final volume was published by YIVO in Vilna under the title *Ekonomishe shriftn* with Lestschinsky as editor.
165. Minutes of meeting of the Economic-Statistical Section, 24 June 1926, RG 82, folder 2264.
166. Vilna office to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 25 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2403.
167. Minutes of meeting of the Economic-Statistical Section, 13 November 1929, RG 82, folder 2264; *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
168. N. Khanin, Jewish Socialist Farband, New York to Lestschinsky, 5 May 1932, RG 1.1, folder 549.
169. Lestschinsky to Prof. Goldelman, Y. Grinboym, et al., 2 August 1926, RG 82, folder 2408; *Yedies* 16 (1 October 1926).
170. Minutes of meeting of the Economic-Statistical Section, 18 December 1929, RG 82, folder 2264.
171. Minutes of meeting of the Economic-Statistical Section, 4 April and 13 November 1929, RG 82, folder 2264; letter to members of the Central Board and scholarly sections, 5 December 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8.
172. Organizational Committee, Berlin to Vilna office, 10 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401.
173. "Fun der redaktsye," *Shriftn far ekonomik un statistik*, n.p.
174. Minutes of meeting of the Economic-Statistical Section, 18 December 1929, RG 82, folder 2264.
175. Organizational Committee, Berlin to Vilna office, 10 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401.
176. "Fun der redaktsye," *Shriftn far ekonomik un statistik*, n.p.
177. Hart, 71.
178. *Yedies* 25 (8 August 1928); incomplete typescript, RG 82, folder 2264.
179. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 2 December 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
180. *Yedies* 23 (7 October 1927).
181. OSE to Organizational Committee, 8 April 1926, RG 82, folder 2404; M. Kreynin and A. Dijour, Emigdirect to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 6 May 1926, RG 82, folder 2405; *Yedies* 23 (7 October 1927).

182. Minutes of meeting of the Economic-Statistical Section, 13 November 1929, RG 82, folder 2264; *Yedies* 23 (7 October 1927).
183. Correspondence of Jacob Lestschinsky, RG 1.1, folders 547–551, passim.
184. Executive Office, Vilna to Tcherikower, 14 December 1926, RG 82, folder 2070.
185. Tcherikower to Vilna office, 6 July 1928; Vilna office to Tcherikower , 30 July 1928, both RG 82, folder 2076.
186. *Yedies* 2 (23 October 1925).
187. Roza Simkhovitsh to N. Shtif, copy, 3 September 1925, RG 82, folder 2386.
188. *Yedies* 4 (20 November 1925); "Organizir-komitet far dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut, pedagogishe komisye," 6 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2393.
189. Y. Rubin to Organizational Committee, copy, 22 January [1926], RG 82, folder 2396.
190. "Organizir-komitet far dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut, pedagogishe komisye," 6 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2393.
191. "Vilner tezisn," 38.
192. *Yedies* 7 (8 January 1926).
193. Ormian, 192. The section also formed commissions to study the language of the Jewish child and Jewish children's drawings, but these did not become active.
194. *Yedies* 19 (7 January 1927).
195. "Bashlosn fun der baratung vegn dem y.v.o.," 15 July 1927, RG 82, folder 2223 and RG 1.1, folder 2.
196. He was chosen as secretary at the 1929 conference. *Barikht*, 119.
197. Ormian, 192; circular letter of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, undated, RG 1.1, folder 582.
198. Circular letter of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, undated, RG 1.1, folder 582; minutes of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, protocol no. 1, 9 November 1927, RG 1.1, folder 582.
199. Minutes of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, protocol no. 20, 5 May 1929, RG 1.1, folder 582.
200. Minutes of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, protocol no. 15, 30 May 1928 and protocol no. 22, 2 October 1929, both RG 1.1, folder 582.
201. Circular letter of the Organizational Committee, 14 February 1929, RG 1.1, folder 583; "Tsu ale yidishe bildungs- un dertsiungs-anshtaltn," [1929], RG 1.1, folder 584; letter to members of the Central Board and scholarly sections, 5 December 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8.
202. "Tsu der psikho-pedagogisher arbet fun visnshaftlekhn institut," undated, RG 1.1, folder 582.
203. Minutes of meeting of the Pedagogical Section, Vilna, 26 May 1926, RG 1.1, folder 582.
204. Minutes of the Board Meeting, 9 April 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8. On this topic see Diane K. Roskies, "Der kheyder-proyekt bay der psikhologish-pedagogisher sektsye fun yivo," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 269–281, which also includes a sample response to the questionnaire. Roskies notes that many of the questions reproduced critiques of the kheyder dating to the Haskalah. Ibid., 271.
205. Letter to members of the Central Board and scholarly sections, 5 December 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8; "Barikht fun der psikhologish-pedagogisher sektsye tsum 19tn merts 1930," RG 1.1, folder 582; Ormian, 192. The latter project was organized

by Lyuba Konel, who later published the results of her research. See L. Konel, "Tsu der kharakteristik fun farsheydene shiler-tipn," *Yivo bleter* 1 (January–May 1931): 138–146.

206. Minutes of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, protocol no. 1, 9 November 1927; protocol no. 6, 19 December 1927; protocol no. 14, 8 May 1928, all RG 1.1, folder 582.
207. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Commission [?], 3 December 1928, RG 1.1, folder 582.
208. Excerpts of minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee with Tcherikower, Vilna, 10–11 April 1928, RG 82, folder 2219.
209. Minutes of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, protocol no. 7, 9 January 1928, RG 1.1, folder 582.
210. Minutes of meeting of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, protocol no. 23, 20 October 1929, RG 1.1, folder 582.
211. "Instruktsye numer 1," Psychological-Pedagogical Section, undated, RG 1.1, folder 601.
212. *Yedies* 13 (18 June 1926).
213. Minutes of meeting of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, protocol no. 18, 21 January 1929 and protocol no. 19, 1 March 1929, both RG 1.1, folder 582.
214. D. Velem, Secular Yiddish Folkshul, Różana to Psychological-Pedagogical Section, 23 May, 1929; children of fourth and fifth class, Secular Yiddish Folkshul, Różana to Yiddish Scientific Institute, 22 May, 1929; D. Velem to Yiddish Scientific Institute, 10 June 1929; Psychological-Pedagogical Section to children of the Różana Yiddish Secular School, 4 June 1929, all RG 1.1, folder 583.
215. Tuvye Yofe to Ethnographic Commission, 21 December 1928, RG 1.2, folder 3.
216. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
217. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, excerpts, 10–11 April 1928, RG 82, folder 2219.
218. Minutes of the Board meeting, 14 October 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8.
219. Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Warsaw to YIVO, Vilna, 11 April 1929, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 453.
220. *Barikht*, 81.
221. Shtif, as we have seen, soon left for the Soviet Union. By the 1930s some YIVO leaders such as Kalmanovitch and Tcherikower would become increasingly conservative as they grew disillusioned with Diaspora Nationalism, while Lestschinsky would become sympathetic to socialist Zionism. On the ideological transformation of Kalmanovitch and Tcherikower, see Karlip, "The Center That Could Not Hold;" On Lestschinsky, see Estraikh, "Jacob Lestschinsky."
222. On the cultural influence of the Bund in interwar Poland, see Jack Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009).
223. Reisen, however, was not a member of the party. On Reisen's politics and his view of the relationship between politics and Yiddish culture, see Kassow, "Zalmen reyzen."
224. On this party see Ibid., "The Left Poalei Zion in Inter-War Poland," in *Yiddish and the Left*, 109–128.
225. I. N. Steinberg to the chairman of the meeting, 7 August 1925, RG 82, folder 2382.

226. Shtif to Weinreich, incomplete, 5 September 1925, RG 82, folder 2386.
227. An-ski Zamlerkrayz, Warsaw to Friends of YIVO, Vilna, 21 November 1926, RG 1.1, folder 533.
228. A. Gromb to YIVO, 8 November 1928, RG 1.1, folder 533. On another occasion police arrived to search the home of a prominent Jewish doctor during a meeting of YIVO supporters, leading observers to suspect a "malicious denunciation." "Sensatsionele politsey-revizye in der voynung fun dr. gershon levin," unidentified clipping [1930], RG 1.1, folder 518.
229. Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Warsaw to YIVO, Vilna, 11 April 1929, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 453.
230. It also cited the economic climate, which was not suitable for "calm scholarly work." Presidium of the An-ski Circle, Warsaw to YIVO, Vilna, 27 December 1931, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 454.
231. On the contrast between Vilna and Warsaw as centers of Jewish cultural and political activity, see Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, 41–44 and 52–53. On Vilna, see Arcadius Kahan, "Vilna – The Socio-Cultural Anatomy of a Jewish Community in Interwar Poland," in *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 149–160; Kassow, "Jewish Communal Politics," 62–64; and Kuznitz, "An-sky's Legacy," 343–345.
232. Z. Reisen, Danzig to Friends of YIVO, Vilna, 11 March, 1927, RG 1.1, 547.
233. Lestschinsky to Tcherikower, 1 September 1929, RG 82, folder 2141.
234. "Di insinuatsyes kegn 'ivo,' *Dos naye lebn* (Białystok) [October?] 1929, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 517.
235. Mark, "Ershte yorn," 135–36.
236. *Barikht*, 22 and 85.
237. Ibid., 105.
238. Ibid., 84–85.
239. Ibid., 34–35.
240. "Di insinuatsyes kegn 'ivo,' *Dos naye lebn* (Białystok), [October?] 1929, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 517.
241. Shimen Shpigel, "Vos s'iz noytik tsu ton," *Literarishe bleter* 7 (18 February 1927): 130.
242. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, excerpts, 10–11 April 1928, RG 82, folder 2219.
243. *Yedies* 23 (7 October 1927).
244. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 26–27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11.
245. Nokhem Shtif, "Vegn," 7 and 23.
246. Organizational Committee [?] to Central Secretariat of Jewish Workers Cultural Societies, Leipzig, 15 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.
247. "Rezolutsye tsu der kultur-tetigkeyt fun di yid. arbeter-kultur-faraynen," undated, RG 1.1, folder 458.
248. On the relationship between populism and class consciousness in interwar Poland, see Kassow, *History*, 77.
249. *Barikht*, 87.
250. Ibid., 81.
251. Ibid., 33–34.

252. Ibid., 84–85.
253. "Di insinuatsyes kegn 'ivo,' *Dos naye lebn* (Białystok), [October?] 1929, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 517.
254. *Barikht*, 83. A similar debate played out earlier among members of the Kultur-lige in Kiev. See Moss, *Jewish Renaissance*, 90–93.
255. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee of the American Section, 12 December 1928, RG 1.1, folder 516.
256. N. Meisel, "Veln mir," 243.
257. "Di oyfgabn un tsiln fun der yidisher visnsh. gezelsh. in vilne," *Tsayt* no. 1234, undated clipping, RG 82, folder 2414.
258. "Komisye far idish visnshaftlikhen institut gegrindet in montreal," unidentified clipping, 1927, RG 1.1, folder 516.
259. Niger, "Gelernte."
260. *Barikht*, 83.
261. Z. Kalmanovitch, "Der yivo," *Literarishe bleter* **45** (4 November 1932): 720.
262. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 26–27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11.
263. Z. Kalmanovitch, "Der yivo." On the idea of two levels of Jewish cultural and communal work, one based in party loyalties and one superseding such distinctions, see Kassow, "Jewish Communal Politics," 86–88. For a contrasting view stressing the benefits of competition among Jewish factions, see Kahan, "Vilna," 153–155.
264. The Curatorium was established at the 1929 conference, as discussed in the following chapter.
265. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 14–16 October 1930, RG 82, folder 2219.
266. Organizational Committee to P. Wiernik, New York, 8 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398.
267. Organizational Committee to Aron Ayzenbakh, Nowy Sącz, 8 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398.
268. Organizational Committee to Sh. Ayznshtat, Jerusalem, 8 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2395.
269. *Yedies* 20 (25 February 1927).
270. Organizational Committee to Sh. Ayznshtat, Jerusalem, 8 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2395.
271. On the history of the Hebrew University see Myers, *Re-inventing the Jewish Past*.
272. "Z," "Der yidisher visnshaftlekher institut." *Vilner tog*, 14 April 1925, 3.
273. "Tog ayn tog oys," *Vilner tog*, 6 March 1925, 3. This latter phrase might also be translated as "Yiddish people." The equivalence of the terms "Yiddish" and "Jewish" was another reason that Diaspora Nationalists could conceive of the "Jewish people" as the "Yiddish nation."
274. Copy of excerpt of article by Dr. Shimen Federbush, "Der emes vegn 'yivo,'" *Dos tagblat* (Lwów), 1931, RG 1.1, folder 519. They also assured him that YIVO had on display the bloodied shirt of a Yiddishist attacked in Palestine.
275. Dawid Neiger, "Żydowski Instytut Naukowy ('IWO') w Wilnie w świetle faktów," *Nowy Dziennik* (Cracow), 23 November 1929, clipping, RG 82, folder 2215.

276. On Jewish scholarship in the Soviet Union, see Greenbaum; Shneer, *Yiddish*, 72–81; and Ibid., "A Study in Red," 197–213.
277. For example, an organization in South Africa wrote that it could raise little money for YIVO since potential supporters were currently involved in a project to settle Jews in the Soviet Union. L. Feldman, Johannesburg to Organizational Committee, 27 January 1926, copy, RG 82, folder 2396.
278. Announcement of the Pedagogical Commission, Berlin, 4 February 1926; Organizational Committee to Jewish Section, Invikskult, Minsk, 2 February 1926, both RG 82, folder 2398.
279. Organizational Committee to Editors, *Kultur*, Chicago, 9 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398.
280. " – N," "Notitsen, 'idishe iden,'" *Haynt* (Warsaw), 17 November 1926, 4. The reference is to the president of Poland, Józef Piłsudski.
281. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, undated [1927], incomplete, RG 1.1, folder 2.
282. Nora Levin, *The Jews in the Soviet Union Since 1917* 1 (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 189–190; Kassow, *History*, 414–415 note 61. The phrase "fascisized Yiddishism" is from the title of another Soviet publication attacking YIVO's scholarship. See *Fashizirter yidishizm un zayn visnshaft* (Minsk: Belorussian Academy of Sciences, 1930).
283. On this institute see Maria Dold, "'A Matter of National and Civic Honour': Majer Bałaban and the Institute of Jewish Studies in Warsaw," *East European Jewish Affairs* 34, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 55–72 and Aleksiun, "Ammunition," 724–770.
284. "Grandieze oyftuen," unidentified clipping, RG 1.1, folder 516.
285. Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Vilna to the Historical Section, Berlin, 29 April 1926, RG 82, folder 2404.
286. On Ringelblum's relationship with Bałaban and Schipper, see Kassow, *History*, 53–57.
287. Schipper served as a deputy in the Polish Sejm first as a representative of Poale Zion and later as a General Zionist. Bałaban earlier ran in parliamentary elections and Schorr later served in the Polish Senate. Robert Moses Shapiro, "Ignacy Schipper," *The YIVO Encyclopedia*, 1672; Ibid., "Majer Bałaban," Ibid., 113; Natalia Aleksiun, "Mojżesz Schorr," Ibid., 1675–1676.
288. On Tahkemoni, see Aleksiun, "Historiyonim Yehudim ve-ha-hazon shel rabanut me-sug hadash. Bet ha-midrash le-rabanim Tahkemoni ve-ha-makhon le-mada'e ha-Yahadut be-Varshah ben milhamot ha-'olam," in *From Breslau to Jerusalem: Rabbinical Seminaries Past, Present and Future*, ed. Guy Miron (Jerusalem: Machon Schechter, 2009): 165–202 and Ibid., "Ammunition," 723–738.
289. Central Yiddish School Organization in Latvia to Psychological-Pedagogical Section, 13 February 1929; 5 March 1929; 10 March 1929; and 12 March 1929, all RG 1.1, folder 583.
290. Moyshe Lerer to Psychological-Pedagogical Section, 26 February 1929, RG 1.1, folder 583.
291. Psychological-Pedagogical Section to Zysha Frydman, 18 March 1929, RG 1.1, folder 583.

292. Aleksander Zysha Frydman to Organizational Committee, 29 April 1929, RG 1.1, folder 583.
293. Minutes of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, protocol no. 9, 14 February 1928, RG 1.1, folder 582.
294. Society of Friends of YIVO to Amopteyl, 2 Sept. 1929, RG 1.1, folder 5.
295. As one scholar has noted, when documenting the kheyder YIVO asked its correspondents to record their childhood memories rather than query contemporary kheyder instructors, suggesting that they associated this traditional institution with the past. Diane K. Roskies, "Der kheyder-proyekt, 272. On this point, see also Chapter 4 and Kuznitz, "Jewish Street," 83–84.
296. Solomon Birnbaum to Initiative Group, 6 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2379.
297. Solomon Birnbaum to Initiative Group, 13 July 1925, RG 82, folder 2379.
298. Solomon Birnbaum to Max Weinreich, copy, 16 September 1925, RG 82, folder 2387.
299. Solomon Birnbaum to Max Weinreich, copy, 30 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2390.
300. Niger, "Gelernte."
301. On this point see Shmuel Hiley, "Solomon A. Birnbaum," in *History of Yiddish Studies*, Winter Studies in Yididsh 3, ed. Dov-Ber Kerler (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood, 1991), 9–10.
302. "Opsheyd-zitsung tsum opfor fun kh' vaynraykh keyn amerike," undated [February 1929], RG 1.1, folder 8.
303. David Shneer, "A Study in Red," 203.
304. Moss, 148 and 155–158.

4. "The Capital of Yiddishland"

1. Tcherikower, "Geshikhte." Tcherikower states incorrectly that the headquarters moved to Vilna in the summer of 1926.
2. Max Weinreich, "Der yidisher visnshaftlekher institut (yivo)," in *Vilne: a zamelbukh gevidmet der shtot vilne*, ed. Yefim Yeshurin (New York: Vilner brentsh 367 arbeter-ring, 1935), 323.
3. For an overview of interwar Vilna that employs many of these tropes, see Kahan, "Vilna."
4. *Barikht*, 28.
5. Irving Howe, Ruth R. Wisse, and Khone Shmeruk, ed., *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987), 406–407. Translation by Nathan Halper modified by the author. For a detailed analysis of this poem, as well as a discussion of the relationship between the city's history and its portrayal in Yiddish poetry in the interwar period, see Abraham Novershtern, "Shir halel, shir kinah: dimuyah shel Vilnah be-shirat Yidish ben shete milhamot ha-'olam, " in *Studies in East European Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Professor Shmuel Werses*, ed. David Assaf et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), 485–511.
6. Weinreich, "Der yidisher," 323. The street names in Polish were Żydowska and Szklana, respectively.
7. Daniel Charney, *Vilne (memuarn)* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-farband fun poylishe yidn in argentine, 1951), 197.

8. Weinreich, "Der yidisher," 323.
9. Shtif, "Vegn," 31–32. Shtif may have altered the printed text of this passage from the original version in response to the enthusiastic reception of the project in Vilna.
10. Organizational Committee, Berlin to members of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 2 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398.
11. Shtif to Weinreich, 15 February 1925, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 80.
12. Shitf, "Vegn," 2nd edition, 31–32.
13. Ibid. Yudel Mark provides another explanation why Shtif, despite his praise of Vilna, insisted that the city could not serve as YIVO's headquarters. He contends that Shtif wished to move to Vilna – now in Poland – but was unable to do so since he held Lithuanian citizenship from the time of his residence in Kaunas. In the spring and summer of 1926, Tsemakh Szabad tried to secure a visa for Shtif but was unsuccessful. According to this account, Shtif could hardly advocate the move of the institute to a city in which he could not reside. Mark's assertion that Weinreich wished from the start for the institute to be in Vilna is, however, contradicted by contemporary sources. Mark, "Ershte yorn," 133.
14. "Vilner tezisn," 36.
15. *Forbaratung*, 18.
16. Ibid., 6.
17. Ibid., 18.
18. Ibid., 5–6.
19. Ibid., 18.
20. Bal-dimyen, "Der yidisher," 12.
21. *Forbaratung*, 18.
22. Ibid, 12.
23. Announcement, Organizational Committee, 27 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398; Organizational Committee, Berlin to Members of Organizational Committee, Vilna, 5 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401.
24. "Geltbarikht" in *Tsvey yor arbet*, 81ff.
25. Vilna office to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 18 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.
26. Press release, 26 April 1926, RG 82, folder 2404; minutes of meeting, 11 April 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
27. Organizational Committee, Berlin to members of Organizational Committee, Vilna, 24 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2403.
28. Press release, 26 April 1926, RG 82, folder 2404.
29. Minutes of meeting, 12 May 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2; Tcherikower to American Section, 3 August 1926, RG 82, folder 2408; Tcherikower to Lestschinsky, 25 July 1926, RG 82, folders 2138 and 2407.
30. Tcherikower to Lestschinsky, 25 July 1926, RG 82, folder 2138; minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 22 July 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
31. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 22 July 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2; Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Vilna to Tcherikower, 30 July 1926, RG 82, folder 2070; Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Vilna to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 30 July 1926, RG 82, folder 2407.
32. Minutes of meeting of the Commission for YIVO, 10 September 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2; Tcherikower to Shatzky, 3 December 1926, RG 82, folder 2410.
33. Vilna office to Tcherikower, 2 November 1926, RG 82, folder 2070.

34. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 22 December 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2; Vilna office to Tcherikower, 29 December 1926, RG 82, folder 2070.
35. Minutes of meeting, 2 December 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
36. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 3 January 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2.
37. Tcherikower to Weinreich, 1 August 1927, RG 82, folder 2122.
38. Ibid.
39. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 11 October 1927, RG 82, folder 2410.
40. "Bashlosn fun der baratung vegn dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," 15 July 1927, RG 82, folder 2223. An earlier handwritten version of the resolutions omits the mention of Vilna as the seat of the Organizational Committee, suggesting that this was a last-minute decision. See "Bashlosn fun der baratung vegn dem y.v.o.," 15 July 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2. According to these plans, the fifteen-member Organizational Committee would include three representatives each from Vilna, Berlin, and New York; two each from Warsaw and Riga; and one each from Lithuania and Romania. A smaller core body would be composed of two representatives each from Vilna and Berlin and one from New York.
41. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 3 November 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2.
42. Tcherikower to Vilna office, 13 December 1927, RG 82, folder 2073; Tcherikower to Shatzky, 11 October 1927, RG 82, folder 2410; Vilna office to Tcherikower, 25 November 1927, RG 82, folder 2073.
43. Weinreich to Shatzky, 1 December 1926, RG 1.1, folder 708.
44. Vilna office to Tcherikower, 18 February 1927, RG 82, folder 2071.
45. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 10 September 1927, RG 82, folder 2410.
46. Tcherikower to Vilna office, 2 October 1926, RG 82, folder 2073.
47. Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 9 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2393; Organizational Committee, Berlin to Members of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 25 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2340.
48. Vilna office to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 24 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2397; Vilna office to Tcherikower, 3 August 1926, RG 82, folder 2070.
49. Borukh Zukerman, People's Relief Committee to Tcherikower, 18 June 1926, RG 82, folder 2406; Tcherikower to Organizational Committee, New York, 3 August 1926, RG 82, folder 2408.
50. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 16 February 1927, RG 82, folder 2410.
51. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 2 February 1927, RG 82, folder 2071.
52. Shatzky to Organizational Committee, 4 April 1926, RG 82, folder 2196.
53. Organizational Committee, Berlin to unidentified American correspondent, incomplete, undated [December 1925], RG 82, folder 2394.
54. Shatzky to Organizational Committee, 4 April 1926, RG 82, folder 2196; Shatzky to Tcherikower, 20 December 1926, RG 82, folder 2196; Organizational Committee to American Section, 4 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2395; Shatzky to Organizational Committee, 24 May 1926, RG 82, folder 2196; Tcherikower to Shatzky, 23 April 1926, RG 1.1, folder 713; Tcherikower to Shatzky, 10 September 1927, RG 82, folder 2410.
55. Tcherikower to Shatzky, 10 September 1927, RG 82, folder 2410.
56. Organizational Committee, Vilna to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 6 March 1926, RG 82, folder 2401.

57. M. Rabinowiciui, Kybartai, Lithuania to Shtif, 23 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2397; see also copy, RG 82, folder 2394.
58. *Yedies* 17 (5 November 1926).
59. Minutes of meeting of the Commission, 10 February 1928, RG 1.1, folder 2. See also minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 3 November 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2.
60. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
61. From 1929 to 1931 major campaigns were undertaken in Romania, the United States and Canada, the Baltics, Switzerland, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Those traveling on behalf of YIVO included Weinreich, Reisen, Tcherikower, and Czernichow. "Barikht fun der tsentraler farvaltung, 1930–1935," RG 1.1, folder 13.
62. E. R[ingelblum], "Dray yor," 7–11.
63. Speech by Tcherikower in England, quoted in Szajkowski, "Yivo," 62.
64. N. Meisel, "Veln mir," 243.
65. Minutes of meeting, 2 December 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2.
66. *Tsvey yor arbet*, 55.
67. Receipts, YISHO, Warsaw, RG 1.1, folder 534.
68. Z. Reisen, Danzig to Friends of YIVO, Vilna, 11 March, 1927, RG 1.1, 547. This body agreed but soon reneged on its pledge.
69. Minutes of meeting of the Commission, 3 September 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2; *Yedies* 23 (7 October 1927); "Das jüdische wissenschaftliche Institut," *Die Stimme* (Vienna), undated clipping [1927], RG 1.1, folder 516.
70. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 10–11 April 1928, excerpts, RG 82, folder 2219.
71. Vilna office to Tcherikower, 24 July 1928, RG 82, folder 2076; *Yedies* 26 (14 September 1928); *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929); minutes of meeting of the Commission, 11 March 1928, RG 1.1, folder 2; memorandum, incomplete, undated [mid 1928], RG 1.1, folder 7.
72. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 21 May 1928; minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 2 July 1928, both RG 1.1, folder 2.
73. "Protokol fun der privater baratung vegn yiv"o," 20 August 1930, RG 82, folder 2222.
74. E. R[ingelblum], "Dray yor," 7–11.
75. Vilna office to Tcherikower, 24 July 1928, RG 82, folder 2076; *Yedies* 26 (14 September 1928); *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929); minutes of meeting of the Commission, 11 March 1928, RG 1.1, folder 2.
76. "Subwencje samorządów," undated [December 1929], RG 1.1, folder 8; *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929). The latter source gives a figure of nineteen municipalities. Notably, such support came both from large cities and small towns that may have had a Jewish majority in local government. On local subsidies for Jewish organizations in small towns see Samuel D. Kassow, "Community and Identity in the Interwar *Shtetl*," in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, 208.
77. Minutes of meeting of the Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 1 October 1928, RG 1.1, folder 543.
78. V. Liberman, "Der yudisher visnshaftlikher institut," *Unzer tog* (Sosnowiec), 21 December 1928, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 516.
79. *Yedies* 29 (28 February 1930).

80. *Barikht*, 34.
81. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
82. Kazdan, *Yidishn shulvezn*, 168. On local subsidies for Jewish schools and the efforts involved in securing them see Ibid., 168–173.
83. Szabad, Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute to the Administration of the Communal Bank, 8 October 1931, RG 1.1, folder 456; "Der yidisher visnshaftlekher institut," RG 82, folder 2444. Another source gives a figure of thirty city governments. See "Subwencje samorządów," undated [December 1929], RG 1.1, folder 8; *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929). Yet another gives a figure of fifteen kehillahs. See "Kehile subsidyes oyfn yor 1930," RG 1.1, folder 451.
84. "Subwencje samorządów," undated [1931], RG 1.1, folder 9.
85. "Zestawienie przychodów Tow. Przyjaciół Żydowskiego Insytutu Naukowego za chas od 1-go stycznia do 1-go sierpnia 1931r," RG 1.1, folder 456.
86. Friends of YIVO, Warsaw to YIVO, Vilna, 13 January 1931; Central Board, YIVO, Vilna to Friends of YIVO, Warsaw, 21 February 1932, both RG 1.1, folder 538. The Sanacja was formally known as the Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem [Non-Party Bloc for Cooperation with the Government].
87. Circular letter of the Executive Office, 30 August 1933, RG 1.1, folder 12; Jacob Shatzky, "Finf un tsvantik yor yivo," in *Shatski-bukh*, ed. E. Lifschutz (New York and Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1958), 311. It should be noted, however, that both kehillahs and municipalities sometimes failed to deliver some or all of the promised funds.
88. Memorandum, incomplete, undated RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 513.
89. The Joint's support of YIVO was likely facilitated by the fact that its director in Poland, Isaac Giterman, was a leading YIVO activist and after 1930 a member of its Executive Office. Kassow, *History*, 97.
90. "Geltbarikht" in *Tsvey yor arbet*, 81ff. The American Section gave $725, the Joint $550, and People's Relief $180 during this period. This last organization donated a total of $300, $120 of which was spent prior to August 1925.
91. Ibid. Supporters in Berlin donated $270 and $24 arrived from a Workmen's Circle Branch in London.
92. Ibid. The largest sums were 1,117 złotys (about $125) from YISHO, 800 złotys (about $90) from the public health organization TOZ (the Polish branch of OSE) in Warsaw, $60 from TSYSHO in Riga, and $10.50 from a support group in Dorpat.
93. "Aperçu sommaire du budget de l'Institut Scientifique Juif' de Vilna pour la période 1926–1930," RG 1.1, folder 45. These consisted of $4,200 from the Joint, $1,000 from ORT and OSE combined, $200 from the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, and $125 from the Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Wissenschaft des Judentums.
94. Ibid. $3,500 came from city governments and $2,500 from kehillahs.
95. "Probe-balans," 31 December 1931, RG 1.1, folder 451. Donations from members in two Baltic cities (1,040 złotys) exceeded the income from four locales in Poland combined (884 złotys); two Baltic support groups gave more (3,992 złotys) than seven of their Polish counterparts (1,324 złotys); and fundraising campaigns in Lithuania (16,811 złotys) generated more than those conducted in twenty-eight Polish cities (14,930 złotys). YIVO's total income according to this document was 164,688 złotys or about $18,715.

96. Ibid. The American Section gave 6,279 złotys ($705.15) of a total of 12,368 złotys collected from support groups. The kehillahs in Altona, Hamburg, Berlin, and Vienna together donated the equivalent of 7,095 złotys of the total of 10,095 raised from Jewish communities, while nine Polish kehillahs donated a total of 3,000.
97. Ibid. Income from campaigns in London (15,568 złotys), Paris (14,533 złotys), and Lithuania (16,811 złotys) was on a par with the total from twenty-eight Polish locales combined (14,931 złotys).
98. Ibid. The Joint made a donation equivalent to 13,615 złotys and gave an additional 5,229 złotys for a specific publication, for a total of approximately $2,141.
99. The name of the street in Polish was Wielka Pohulanka.
100. Members of the Organizational Committee, Vilna to Organizational Committee, Berlin, 7 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398.
101. Minutes of meeting of the Commission for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 12 March 1926, RG 1.1, folder 2; *Yedies* 24 (16 December 1927).
102. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 25 May [1927], RG 1.1, folder 2; minutes of the Commission meeting, 3 September 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2; Vilna office to New York office, 22 September 1927, RG 82, folder 2072.
103. *Yedies* 24 (16 December 1927).
104. The committee's chair was the Vilna banker Tuvye Bunimovitsh. Minutes of meeting of the Presidium, 29 April 1928, RG 1.1, folder 7; excerpts of minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 10–11 April 1928, RG 82, folder 2219; circular letter of M. Weinreich, Building Committee, 24 April 1928, RG 1.1, folder 454.
105. A down payment of $1,000 was required at the time of purchase, with the balance due in six months. Minutes of meeting of the Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 1 October 1928, RG 1.1, folder 543.
106. It estimated the land and buildings at 18 Wiwulski to be worth $7,000 to 8,000. Minutes of meeting of the Building Committee, 1 November 1928, RG 1.1, folder 454. The institute had planned to spend $6,000 for a property and feared that even this sum would be insufficient. Minutes of the Commission meeting, 3 September 1927, RG 1.1, folder 2; Weinreich to Shatzky, 10 June 1928, RG 1.1, folder 708.
107. "Gmach Dla Żydowskiego Instytutu Naukowego w Wilnie," undated [November 1929–early 1930], RG 1.1, folder 454. The attic floor was later used as an exhibit space as well.
108. Minutes of meeting of the Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 1 October 1928, RG 1.1, folder 543. On this neighborhood see Kuznitz, "Jewish Street," 77–78.
109. Zalman Szyk, *1000 yor vilne* (Vilna: Gezelshaft far landkentenish in poyln, vilner opteylung, 1939), 307.
110. Minutes of meeting of the Building Committee, 1 November 1928, RG 1.1, folder 454.
111. Weinreich to Shatzky, 2 December 1929, RG 1.1, folder 708.
112. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, 23 September 1928, RG 1.1, folder 2.
113. Minutes of meeting of the Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, 1 October 1928, RG 1.1, folder 543; minutes of meeting of the Board, 6 November 1928, RG 1.1, folder 7; "Di bashlosn fun der baratung," 15–16 October 1928, RG 82,

folder 2219; minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, American Section, 12 December 1928, RG 1.1, folder 516.

114. The donations received included $2,000 from a single individual in Paris, $1,000 raised in Berlin, and $500 raised apiece in Warsaw, Riga, and Kaunas. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929); minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 9 April 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8.
115. Weinreich reported raising $15,000, with $3,000 needed for travel expenses. Minutes of meeting of the Building Committee and Organizational Committee, 31 August 1929, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 539. The largest individual gifts were a donation of $1,200 from the Yiddish writer and translator Jacob Mereson and a pledge of $1,000 from Charles Zunser. "Report on Yiddish Scientific Institute for Period Beginning January 1, 1928 and Ending July 31, 1929," RG 1.1, folder 793.
116. Letter to members of the Central Board and scholarly sections, 5 December 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8; "Gmach Dla Żydowskiego Instytutu Naukowego w Wilnie," undated [November 1929–early 1930], RG 1.1, folder 454.
117. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 31 January 1929, RG 1.1, folder 8.
118. Minutes of meeting of the Building Committee, 1 November 1928, RG 1.1, folder 454; *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
119. Max Weinreich, "Vegn undzer byudzshet-politik oyf dem noentsn yor (biz detsember 1930)," 6 August 1929, RG 82, folder 2223.
120. "Aroyslozndik di yivo-bleter," *Yivo bleter* 1, no. 1 (January 1931): 1.
121. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
122. *Barikht*, 58–61.
123. Ibid., 120. The conference set up a Central Board [Tsentrale farvaltung] of twelve members that would meet annually. Four members would form the Executive Office [Oysfir byuro], the core administrative leadership of the institute, to be located in Vilna. In addition, it established a Council of forty members and an honorary Curatorium of prominent Jewish figures. Besides YIVO's intellectual precursors like Chaim Zhitlowsky and Simon Dubnow, the Curatorium included such well-known personalities as Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud. YIVO's highest authority was vested in a conference, which would be called at least once every three years. *Barikht*, 107–116. In the wake of the 1929 conference the Berlin office was transformed into the Overseas Office [Oysland byuro]. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 14–16 October 1930, RG 82, folder 2219. The Executive Office consisted of Max Weinreich; Zalman Reisen; Zelig Kalmanovitch, who moved to Vilna in 1928 to assume a leading role at YIVO; Borukh Kahan-Virgili; publisher Boris Kletzkin; and Isaac Giterman. After the closure of the Berlin office in 1933, Tcherikower and Lestschinsky joined the body. In practice, it was Weinreich, Reisen, and Kalmanovitch who oversaw the work of the institute on a day-to-day basis; the Central Board failed to meet every year; the Council was never formed; and only two conferences were held between 1929 and 1939.
124. Weinreich to Shatzky, 6 October 1927, RG 1.1, folder 708.
125. Letter to the Institution for Social Security, 26 January 1936, RG 1.1, folder 456. The effects of the Great Depression began to be felt in Poland in the fall of 1929 and reached their nadir in 1933, leading to a "period of stagnation" lasting until 1936. Ferdynand Zweig, *Poland Between Two Wars: A Critical Study of Social and Economic Changes* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1944), 53–62.

126. Second session of the Central Board of YIVO in Vilna, 14–16 October 1930, RG 82, folder 2219. In the seventeen months prior to August 1929 the Amopteyl raised approximately $16,000, the same amount raised during the twenty-eight months from September 1932 through December 1934. "Report on Yiddish Scientific Institute for Period Beginning January 1, 1928 and Ending July 31, 1929;" "Statement of Receipts and Disbursements for Period Beginning September 1st, 1932 and Ending December 31, 1934," both RG 1.1, folder 793.
127. Weinreich to Shatzky, 2 December 1929, RG 1.1, folder 708.
128. "Aperçu sommaire du budget de l'Institut Scientifique Juif' de Vilna pour la période 1926–1930," RG 1.1, folder 451; minutes of meeting of the Building Committee, 2 June 1931, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 539. Another source gives the cost of renovation as 140,000 złotys (about $15,700), and other estimates for completing the building ranged from 35,000 to 40,000 złotys (roughly $4,000 to $4,500). Szabad, Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute to the Administration of the Communal Bank, 8 October 1931, RG 1.1, folder 456; second session of the Central Board of YIVO in Vilna, 14–16 October 1930, RG 82, folder 2219. See also "Tsu der yidisher efentlekhkeyt, helft boyen dem groysn binyen fun der yidisher kultur un visnshaft!," October 1931, RG 1.1, folder 454; circular letter of Z. Kalmanovitch and Z. Reisen, Central Board, 30 June 1931, RG 1.1, folder 454.
129. "Barikht fun der tsentraler farvaltung, 1930–1935," RG 1.1, folder 13; "Forshlog fun m. vaynraykh vegn khanukes-habayis fun yivo-binyen," undated [summer 1930?], RG 1.1, folder 454.
130. Minutes of meeting of the Building Committee, 2 June 1931, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 539; Szabad, Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute to the Administration of the Communal Bank, 8 October 1931, RG 1.1, folder 456; Executive Office to members of the Central Board, 15 March 1931, RG 1.1, folder 10. Another source gives a significantly higher figure of 60,000 złotys or about $6,700. Second session of the Central Board of YIVO in Vilna, 14–16 October 1930, RG 82, folder 2219.
131. Kalmanovitch to Tcherikower, 15 January 1931, quoted in Szajkowski, "Yivo," 62; Executive Office to members of the Central Board, 15 March 1931, RG 1.1, folder 10.
132. Executive Office to members of the Central Board, 15 March 1931, RG 1.1, folder 10; "Barikht fun der tsentraler farvaltung, 1930–1935," RG 1.1, folder 13.
133. Central Board, YIVO, Vilna to Lestschinsky, Berlin, 15 December 1932, RG 1.1, folder 550.
134. In November 1932, the treasurer reported expenses of 113,327 złotys ($12,733) and income of $6,300 for the year so far. "Kheshbn fun der hatsoe fun yivo fun 1tn yanuar 1932 bizn 20 november," RG 1.1, folder 451; protocol of the third session of the Central Board, 27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11. Other sources give figures of approximately 150,000 złotys ($16,854) in expenses and an income of almost 100,000 złotys ($11,236). These latter figures are perhaps projections rather than reflections of the actual budget. "Zestawienie Budżetowe na rok 1931–1932," RG 1.1, folder 451; "Budzshet-oyfshtelung oyfn yor 1932," RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 512; "Oyfshtelung fun der hakhnose fun yivo far der tsayt fun 1tn yanuar 1932 bizn 20tn November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 451. On staff salaries, see Tcherikower to Niger, 31 October 1932, quoted in

Szajkowski, "Yivo," 62; Representatives of the YIVO staff to the Executive Office, 1 July 1932, RG 1.1, folder 450.

135. Minutes of the meeting of the staff called by the Executive Office, 11 September 1931, Lithuanian addendum, folder 510.
136. Kalmanovitch to Giterman, 30 September 1932, quoted in Szajkowski, "Yivo," 62.
137. Circular letter of Z. Kalmanovitch and Z. Reisen, Central Board, 30 June 1931, RG 1.1, folder 454.
138. Circular letter of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, American Branch, undated, RG 1.1, folder 454.
139. Protocol of the third session of the Central Board, 27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11; Z. Kalmanovitch, "Der yivo," 720.
140. Circular letter of the Executive Office, 30 August 1933, RG 1.1, folder 12.
141. "Barikht fun der tsentraler farvaltung, 1930–1935," RG 1.1, folder 13.
142. Circular letter of the Executive Office, 30 August 1933, RG 1.1, folder 12; representatives of the YIVO staff to the Executive Office, 30 August 1933, RG 1.1, folder 450.
143. The staff also insisted that YIVO pay its debts to its workers within six to eight months and that it limit pay cuts, especially for certain individuals who relied on income from YIVO to cover their rent and other necessities. Representatives of the YIVO staff to the Executive Office, 30 August and 19 September 1933, RG 1.1, folder 450. When the Executive Office did not agree to their demands, staff members proposed saving the positions of their neediest colleagues by assuming a debt of 2,322 złotys they were owed by the institute and further reducing the salaries of some remaining workers. Representatives of the YIVO staff to the Executive Office, 14 September 1933 and 4 October 1933, RG 1.1, folder 450.
144. Representatives of the YIVO staff to the Executive Office, 24 October 1933, RG 1.1, folder 450.
145. "Barikht fun der tsentraler farvaltung, 1930–1935," RG 1.1, folder 13.
146. Circular letter of the Executive Office, 30 August 1933, RG 1.1, folder 12.
147. Parts of the following section draw on Kuznitz, "Jewish Street."
148. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 60.
149. Circular letter of the Executive Office, January 1933, RG 1.1, folder 12.
150. Kalmanovitch to Yudel Mark, 25 January 1933, cited in Szajkowski, "Yivo," 61.
151. Unidentified manuscript [Leyzer Ran], incomplete, undated [1933–1934], Lithuanian addendum, uncatalogued. I thank Chana Mlotek and Zachary Baker for identifying this document and bringing it to my attention.
152. "Vos a bialistoker hot gezen oyf der yiv"o-oysshtelung in vilne," *Undzer lebn* (Białystok), undated clipping [1934], RG 1.1, folder 527.
153. Abramowicz, "Zikhroynes," 328.
154. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 31.
155. Weinreich, "Der yidisher," 326–8.
156. *Alveltlekhe tsuzamenfor*, 84–6.
157. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 79.
158. Szyk, 307. Tsemakh Szabad wrote in 1929 that Pohulanka, within his memory unpaved and surrounded by woods, was now built up with new housing. Szabad, "Vilne amol un itst," in Yefim Yeshurin, ed., *Der vilner* (New York: Vilner brentsh

367 arbeter-ring, 1929), 14. Wiwulski Street was still so little developed that the institute had to ask the municipal authorities to speed up the installation of sewers. Weinreich, Executive Office to members of the Central Board and secretaries of the sections, 17 July 1930, RG 1.1, folder 454.

159. Other institutions located on Groys Pohulanka included the Central Vilna Jewish Merchants Union, the Jewish People's Bank, HIAS (the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), and three groups of Jewish university students. Sh. Chaikin, "Yedies vegn vilner gezelshaftn," in A. I. Grodzenski, ed., *Vilner almanakh* (Vilna: Ovnt kurier, 1939; reprint New York: Moriah Offset, 1992), 359–360; Szyk 268; "Członkowie Zarządu Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Żydowskiego Instytutu Naukowego w roku 1938/9," RG 1.1, folder 543.
160. Yefim Yeshurin, "Vilne, umfargeslekhe vilne, ikh benk nokh dir," in Yeshruin, ed., *Der vilner*, 59.
161. This building was variously described as the home of the caretaker and as a guest house for visiting scholars. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 77; Israel Cohen, *Vilna*, Jewish Community Series (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1943; reprint 1992), 413–414.
162. *Yedies* 64–65 (April–May 1937), 24.
163. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 77–79.
164. *Barikht*, 27 and 58; Charney, *Vilne*, 229.
165. Khaykel Lunski, "Di shtrashun bibliotek in vilne," in *Vilne: a zamelbukh*, 273; Ibid., "Shtrashun bibliotek," in *Unzer tog, spetsiele oysgabe far amerike* (Vilna: n.p., 1921), 45.
166. Sh. Szarafan, "Di religieze vilne," in *Vilner almanakh*, 327; Szyk, *1000 yor*, 125 and 172–173; Khaykel Lunski, *Vilner kloyzn, di yidishe gas un der shul-hoyf* (Vilna: Farlag fun dem farayn fun di yidishe literatn un zshurnalistn in vilne, 1920), 66–67.
167. Lunski, "Di shtrashun bibliotek in vilne," 276–278.
168. Shmuel Niger, "Vilne," in *Vilne: a zamelbukh*, 771.
169. Sh. Bastomski, "Der yidish-veltlekher shul-vezn in vilne," in *Vilner almanakh*, 206; Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 77.
170. Charney, *Vilne*, 227–228.
171. Shmuel Niger, "A pinkes fun vilne," *Di tsukunft* XXVI, no. 6 (June 1921): 373.
172. Moyshe Shalit, "A mayse-bukh vegn vilne," in *Vilner almanakh*, 81; Zalman Shneur, "Rehov ha-Yehudim be-or ve-tsel," introduction to *Ein Ghetto im Osten (Wilna)* by M. Vorobeichic (Zurich: Oreil Fussli Verlag, 1931), 4.
173. Niger, "Vilne," 775.
174. Y. Rubin, "Unzer vilne," in *Unzer tog*, 9.
175. Shalit, "A mayse-bukh," 81.
176. Minutes of meeting, undated [23 April 1926?], RG 1.1, folder 2.
177. *Altneuland* [Old New Land] was the term Theodor Herzl used to refer to his proposed Jewish state in his book of that name.
178. Niger, "Vilne," 773.
179. Ibid., 776; Daniel Charney, "Eyn kemakh – yesh toyre," in *Vilner almanakh*, 151–152.
180. A. Ginzburg, "Di neshome fun yidisher vilne," in *Der Vilner*, 27.
181. Niger, "Vilne," 778–779.
182. Weinreich, "Der yidisher," 323–325.

183. "Opsheyd-zitsung tsum opfor fun kh' vaynraykh keyn amerike," undated [February 1929], RG 1.1, folder 8.
184. Weinreich, "Der yidisher," 323. On Weinreich's use of Jewish history in the building of modern Yiddish culture, see David G. Roskies, "Maks vaynraykh."
185. On this view of Yiddish culture in interwar Vilna see Kuznitz, "Jewish Street," 82–87 and Ibid., "An-sky's Legacy," 325–327.
186. Kuczynski, 262.
187. *Barikht*, 28–29.
188. Max Weinreich, "Der yivo un di problemen fun undzer tsayt," *Yivo bleter* XXV, no. 1 (February–April 1945): 12. The latter street's name in Polish was Jatkowa.
189. *Barikht*, 60.
190. Minutes of meeting of the Building Committee, 1 November 1928, RG 1.1, folder 454.
191. Z. Kalmanovitch, "Der yivo."
192. Unidentified manuscript [Leyzer Ran], incomplete, undated [1933–1934], Lithuanian materials, uncatalogued.
193. "Di oysshtelung in yivo," *Vilner Tog*, March 1934, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 520.
194. *Yedies* 57–58 (August–September 1936): 16.
195. Szyk, *1000 yor*, 6.
196. "Bashlosn fun der baratung vegn dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," 15 July 1927, RG 82, folder 2223.
197. *Barikht*, 58–59.
198. Minutes of meeting of the Building Committee, 1 November 1928, RG 1.1, folder 454.
199. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
200. "Tsu der yidisher efentlekhkeyt, helft boyen dem groysn binyen fun der yidisher kultur un visnshaft!," October 1931, RG 1.1, folder 454.
201. This poem, entitled "S'kayklen zikh reyfn," was inscribed in the YIVO guestbook and published in the *Vilner Tog*, 14 August 1935, copy in RG 82, folder 2262 and in Szajkowski, "Yivo," 50–51.
202. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 78.
203. Unidentified manuscript [Leyzer Ran], incomplete, undated [1933–1934], Lithuanian materials, uncatalogued.
204. Abramowicz, "Zikhroynes," 328.
205. *Barikht*, 12.
206. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 37. It should be noted that YIVO affiliates outside of Vilna – including Prylucki himself – sometimes took a less sanguine view of Vilna's prominence. They complained that Vilna exerted too much control over work in other cities and argued for a more decentralized mode of organization. On this question see *Barikht*, 96–106; for Prylucki's complaints see minutes of meeting of the Central Board, Vilna, 1–2 October 1934, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 5, and *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 69. Some Board members maintained that Warsaw was not kept informed of important decisions and that "a kind of local patriotism" led the institute's scholars to favor topics relating to Vilna in their research. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15. Such grievances were sometimes put in terms that invoked Diaspora Nationalists' critique of Zionism. Lestschinsky argued that it would perhaps be best if the institute had no center at all since "The role that Jerusalem plays for

the Zionists Vilna cannot play." Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 14–16 October 1930, RG 82, folder 2219. Meisel similarly stated, "Vilna must not become like the Land of Israel that all of the Jews of the world must work for it." Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, Warsaw, 26–27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11. Here we see a less positive connotation to Vilna's appellation as "the Jerusalem of the Diaspora," as Lestschinsky put it.

207. N. Pereperkovitsh, "Unzere shprakh-gilgulim," *Folk un visnshaft*, 8 October 1925, RG 82, folder 2388.
208. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 107.
209. *Yedies* 10 (12 March 1926).
210. Charney, *Vilne*, 227–228.
211. *Tsvey yor arbet*, 47.
212. Max Weinreich, "Yidisher," 322.
213. Jacob Shatzky, "Finf un tsvantik yor yivo," 305. For a contrasting account that minimizes the differences between the Berlin and Vilna founders, see Fishman, "Max Weinreich," 126–130.

5. "To Forge Intellectual Weapons for Our People!"

1. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, [1936], RG 1.1, folder 632.
2. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 26–27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11; minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 16 October 1937, RG 1.1, folder 14.
3. Karlip, "Center," 341.
4. For a view of this incident from the perspective of Weinreich's young son, see Gabriel Weinreich, *Confessions*, 29–30.
5. "Barikht fun der tsentraler farvaltung, 1930–1935," RG 1.1, folder 13.
6. "Opsheyd-zitsung tsum opfor fun kh' vaynraykh keyn amerike," undated [February 1929], RG 1.1, folder 8.
7. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 26–27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11.
8. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 1–2 October 1934, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 5.
9. "Barikht fun der tsentraler farvaltung, 1930–1935," RG 1.1, folder 13.
10. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 26–27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11.
11. Emanuel Melzer, *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935–1939* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997), 9–10.
12. On political developments in Poland in this period see Antony Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland 1921–1939: The Crisis of Constitutional Government* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1972), 391–447. On attitudes toward and treatment of Polish Jews see Polonsky, 465–470 and Melzer, especially 15–94.
13. For documentation that the Polish government collected on YIVO's activities, see Lithuanian Central State Archives, Vilnius, collection 53, inventory 23, folder 2150. For example, one report noted that the "members of [YIVO] belong … with respect to politics to the Jewish democrats and the Bund." Starostwo Grodzkie w Wilnie, "Arkusz Informacyjny," undated [1938?]. I am grateful to Laimonas Briedis for his help in securing copies of these documents.

14. Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, 72–78.
15. Protocol 159, meeting of the Executive Office, 23 August 1934, RG 82, folder 2220.
16. Y. Botnitski, "Idish, hebreyish, un ivo," *Afrikaner yidisher tsaytung*, 24 April 1936; "Sharfe kritik fun tetikeyt fun yiv"o oyf zayn sesye in varshe," unidentified clipping, [Warsaw], [February] 1936, both RG 1.1, folder 523.
17. Incomplete clipping, *Literatur* [Warsaw, 1933–1934?], RG 1.1, folder 520.
18. "Kegn der reaktsionerer kleynbirgerlekher ivo kulter," unidentified clipping [Uruguay, 1934?], RG 1.1, folder 520.
19. "Hakhnose un hatsoe 1935," RG 1.1, folder 451; 10 staff members to Executive Office, 15 May 1935, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 510.
20. For an overview of economic trends in Poland in this period see Polonsky, 448–458 and Zweig, 53–86.
21. "Kase-umzats far yanuar-yuli 1935" and "Hakhnose un hatsoe 1935," both RG 1.1, folder 451; Report, Oct. 1937, RG 82, folder 2274.
22. "Bilans zamknięcia," 1936, RG 1.1, folder 543. According to surviving records YIVO's finances reached their precrash high point in 1931, when its total budget was 164,688 złotys. In 1936 and 1937 its overall budget was in the range of 100,000 złotys; this rose in 1938 and 1939 to the range of 150,000 złotys. "Probe-balans," 31 December 1931; "Balans fun yor 1936;" "Financial statement for 1937;" "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1938;" "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1939," all RG 1.1, folder 451.
23. While in August 1932 the Amopteyl had a deficit of $978, by December 1934 this figure was reduced to $697. "Yiddish Scientific Institute, Statement of Receipts and Disbursements for Period Beginning September 1st, 1932 and Ending December 31, 1934," RG 1.1, folder 793.
24. "Hakhnose un hatsoe 1935;" "Financial Statement for 1937;" "Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut/vilna, hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1938;" "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1939," all RG 1.1, folder 451.
25. In March 1933 the devaluation of the dollar led the exchange rate to drop from approximately 8.9 złotys per dollar (where it had been set since 1926) to 5.3 złotys per dollar in 1935. It remained at this rate until 1939. Robin L. Bidwell, *Currency Conversion Tables: A Hundred Years of Change* (London: Rex Collings, 1970), 36–37; Zweig, 62–64.
26. "Hakhnose un hatsoe 1935;" Financial Statement for 1937;" "Kase-barikht, yanuar-oygust 1937;" "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1938," all RG 1.1, folder 451.
27. "Gezelshaft 'fraynd fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut (yivo)' in varshe, barikht fun der tetikeyt fun 1tn may biz tsum 31tn oygust 1937," RG 1.1, folder 531.
28. YIVO, Vilna to Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Warsaw, 10 November 1937, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 455; Economic-Statistical Section, Warsaw to Executive Office, Vilna, 21 December 1938, 2 January 1939, and 8 March 1939, all RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 560.
29. Thirteen staff members to Executive Office, 22 September 1938, RG 1.1, folder 450. An undated list of staff members from the late 1930s includes twenty-eight names, thirteen of whom were former or current aspirantn. "Reshime fun di shtendike arbeter in di tsimern fun yivo," undated [1936–1937?], RG 1.1, folder 448. It should be noted that the cost of living in Poland dropped by 40 percent from

1929 to 1935 and remained at that level for the remainder of the interwar period. B. R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Europe, 1750–1993* (London: Macmillan Reference, 1998), 866; J. Taylor, *The Economic Development of Poland, 1919–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1952), 128.

30. Executive Office to staff members, 2 November 1938 and 14 November 1938; staff members to Executive Office, 7 November 1938, all RG 1.1, folder 450.
31. Staff members to Executive Office, 24 November 1938, RG 1.1, folder 450.
32. The matter was still unresolved in the fall of 1939, when eleven staff members were owed a total of 11,858.81 złotys. Staff members to Executive Office, 24 and 30 March 1939, both RG 1.1, folder 450; protocol, 8 October 1939, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 528.
33. Such campaigns accounted for between 42 and 55 percent of total income from 1935 to 1938 and 28 percent in 1939. "Hakhnose un hatsoe 1935," "Balans fun yor 1936," "Kase-barikht, yanuar-oygust 1937," "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1938," "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1939," all RG 1.1, folder 451.
34. Major campaigns took place in South America (1934–1935 and 1938), South Africa (1937), and England (1937). "Hakhnose un hatsoe 1935," "Kase-barikht, yanuar-oygust 1937," "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1938," "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1939," all RG 1.1, folder 451; list of campaigns, RG 1.1, folder 459.
35. Minutes of meeting of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, excerpts, 10–11 April 1928, RG 82, folder 2219.
36. Sh. Mendelsohn and Ch. Sh. Kazdan, YISHO to YIVO, 25 September 1935, RG 1.1, folder 534. See also correspondence relating to Steinberg's trip, RG 1.3, folder 4064.
37. YISHO, Warsaw to YIVO, Vilna, 20 December 1938, 27 January 1939, and 27 April 1939, all RG 1.1, folder 534.
38. YIVO, Vilna to YISHO, Warsaw, 2 February and 27 February 1939, both RG 1.1, folder 534.
39. "Organizatsye fun di yivo-aktsyes, 1937/38," RG 1.1, folder 448. The full list of categories for contributors was as follows: "nonpartisan; bourgeois Zionists; socialist Zionists; plain socialists; Bundists (also former); religious; assimilated; other; unknown."
40. List of fifty-four cities; YIVO to Jewish community of Baranowicze, 25 November 1938, both RG 1.1, folder 458.
41. "Balans fun yor 1936," "Kase-barikht, yanuar-oygust 1937," "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1938," all RG 1.1, folder 451; "Reshime kehiles vos hobn subsidirt dem yivo in yor 1938," "Subsidyes fun yidishe kehiles farn yivo in di frierdike yorn," "Reshime bayshtayerer," all RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 513. It is important to note that promised sums were not always paid in full. For example, in August 1939 the Vilna office wrote that the Warsaw kehillah still owed thousands of złotys allotted in previous years. Executive Office, Vilna to M. Linder, Friends of YIVO, Warsaw, 21 August 1939, RG 1.1, folder 540.
42. Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Warsaw to Central Board, Vilna, 6 November 1934, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 453.
43. Information is lacking for 1934. "Kase-umzats far yanuar-yuli 1935," RG 1.1, folder 451; handwritten list, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 513.
44. "Alveltlikher tsuzamenfor funm yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut in vilne," RG 82, folder 2261.

45. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 101–102; *Yedies* 49 (November 1934): 6–7.
46. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 101–102; Meisel, *Geven a mol*, 366–371.
47. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 25.
48. "Alveltlikher tsuzamenfor funm yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut in vilne," RG 82, folder 2261.
49. Meisel, *Geven a mol*, 363–364. The more left-wing members of the board opposed the idea, fearing that like-minded delegates would remain seated and thus provoke any representatives of the Polish government in attendance.
50. "A shul-tuer," "Der yivo un di shul-frage," *Vilner Tog*, 1935, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 521.
51. Ibid.; *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 115 and 131.
52. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 91.
53. "Tsu di delegatn tsum yivo-tsuzamenfor!," Vilna, August 1935, RG 82, folder 2261; *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 40–41 and 89.
54. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor,* 89.
55. In a 1931 article in a Left Poale Zion organ, Buchsbaum argued that if the left could not take over YIVO it should abandon the institute. Kassow, *History*, 408 note 48. For an account of Buchsbaum's attack on YIVO that year and Ringelblum's defense, see Kassow, *History*, 40–42.
56. This policy was initiated at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International. Kevin F. McDermott, "Popular Front," *A Dictionary of 20th-Century Communism*, ed. Silvio Pons and Robert Service (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010): 634–637.
57. "Sharfe kritik fun tetikeyt fun yiv"o oyf zayn sesye in varshe," unidentified clipping, [Warsaw], [February] 1936, RG 1.1, folder 523; "Vi darf zayn di rikhtlinye fun yiv"o?," 13 December 1936, unidentified clipping, RG 1.1, folder 524.
58. "Der forshlog vegn a gemeynzamen kultur-front," 19 August 1935, *Vilner Tog*, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 521. The Yiddish Culture Congress took place in Paris in November 1935 with the primary goal of planning a larger gathering, which was held in September 1937. Matthew Hoffman, "From Czernowitz to Paris: The International Yiddish Culture Congress of 1937," in *Czernowitz at 100*, ed. Kalman Weiser and Joshua A. Fogel (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 152–154.
59. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 134–135.
60. Ibid., 63–65 and 134.
61. Meisel, *Geven a mol*, 360–361; Hutton, 38–39.
62. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 126.
63. Ibid., 25.
64. Ibid., 15.
65. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 26–27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11.
66. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 91.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., 121.
69. Ibid, 90.
70. Protocol 159, Meeting of Executive Office, 23 August 1934, RG 82, folder 2220.
71. Simon Dubnow, "Der itstiker tsushtand fun der yidisher historiografye," *Yivo bleter* 8, no. 4 (December 1935): 294.

72. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 70.
73. "Barikht fun der tsentraler farvaltung, 1930–1935," RG 1.1, folder 13.
74. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 27.
75. "Barikht fun der Iter zitsung fun 3tn turnus fun der aspirantur," 2 September 1937, RG 1.3, folder 4052.
76. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 27.
77. *Dos tsveyte yor aspirantur oyfn nomen fun d"r tsemakh shabad baym yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* (Vilna: YIVO, 1938), 179.
78. The head of the project, Dr. Otto Schneid, wrote a detailed work plan and embarked on a fundraising tour in 1936 but accomplished little after publishing one volume of *Heftn far yidisher kunst, tsveykhodoshimdiker zhsurnal aroysgegebn fun kunstmuzey baym yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* no. 1 (November–December 1936). See "Tsu ale fraynd fun der yidisher kultur!," undated; "Dos shlikhes fun undzer muzey," undated; Otto Schneid to YIVO, Vilna, 16 December 1936, all RG 1.1, folder 469.
79. Weinreich, New York to W. I. Thomas, New York, 5 June 1929; Thomas to Weinreich, 1 July 1929; Weinreich, Vilna to L. Hersh, Geneva, 6 January 1931, all RG 82, folder 2257. See William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in America* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1918–1920).
80. Edmund E. Day, Rockefeller Foundation, Paris to Edward Sapir, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, 14 June 1929; Weinreich, Vilna to L. Hersh, Geneva, 6 January 1931, both RG 82, folder 2257.
81. "Proposals of the Yiddish Scientific Institute for a Sociological and Psychological Survey of East European Jewry;" Weinreich, Vilna to Tcherikower, Berlin, 6 January 1930; M. Weinreich, Vilna to L. Hersh, Geneva, 6 January 1931, all RG 82, folder 2257. The proposal, written with input from Thomas and Sapir, requested a total of $113,800 to be paid over five years.
82. Weinreich, Vilna to L. Hersh, Geneva, 6 January 1931; L. Hersh, Geneva to unidentified correspondent [Tcherikower], 28 April 1931, both RG 82, folder 2257.
83. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1–12.
84. On this episode see Jennifer Young, "Race, Culture, and the Creation of Yiddish Social Science: Max Weinreich's Trip to Tuskegee, 1932," in *Choosing Yiddish*, 217–232.
85. Executive Office to unidentified correspondent, 11 September 1933, RG 82, folder 2257.
86. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 3 and 86–87.
87. See Sigmund Freud, *Araynfir in psikhoanaliz, oytorizirte iberzetsung fun m. vaynraykh*, 3 vols. (Vilna: YIVO, 1936–1938) and Max Weinreich, *Psikhoanaliz: zigmund froyd un zayn shite* (Vilna: Druk. D. Krejnesa, 1937).
88. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 77–83. At this time YIVO apparently considered creating a Division for [the Study of] Culture and Personality. L. Lehrer, New York to Weinreich, Vilna, 12 November 1935, RG 1.1, folder 584.
89. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 199.
90. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 87–89. On the work of the division see also Kijek, "Max Weinreich."
91. *Yedies* 42–44 (January–March 1934): 4–5.

92. *Yedies* 45–46 (April–May 1934): 1–2.
93. Ibid.
94. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 89–90; Daniel Soyer, "Documenting Immigrant Lives at an Immigrant Institution: Yivo's Autobiography Contest of 1942," *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 1999): 219–221; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Marcus Moseley, and Michael Stanislawksi, introduction to *Awakening Lives*, xx–xxiii. One of the most influential works to make use of personal documents was Thomas's and Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in America*. This method was carried to Eastern Europe when Znaniecki returned to his native Poland in 1920 and introduced such techniques to the social sciences there. Soyer, "Documenting," 220. On the influence of Polish sociology on Weinreich's work see also Kijek, "Max Weinreich," 46 note 14 and 47 note 23.
95. "Barikht fun dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut tsum 31tn detsember 1939," RG 1.1, folder 632.
96. *Yedies* 51 (March 1935): 10–12; *Yedies* 54a–55 (January–March 1936): 9–10; "Optsvayg far der yidisher sport-bavegung," RG 1.1, folder 489; questionnaire and appeal, Division for the Jewish Sport Movement, RG 82, folder 2277.
97. On the autobiographies see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Moseley, and Stanislawski, xi–xlii; Moseley, "Life, Literature;" and Bassok, "Li-she'elat."
98. *Yedies* 39 (September 1932); *Yedies* 50 (January 1935): 8; *Yedies* 79–80 (November–December 1938): 115–118; "Konkurs oyf der bester oytobiografye fun a yugntlekhn," undated [1939], RG 1.1, folder 489. On at least one occasion the contest announcement was also printed in Hebrew. See "Al ha-no'ar ha-'ivri," undated, RG 82, folder 2277.
99. "Tsu der yidisher yugnt, a konkurs oyf der bester oytobiografye," 1939, RG 1.1, folder 489. For a different reading by a contemporary literary scholar of Weinreich's insistence that submissions be as factual as possible, see Moseley, "Life, Literature," 29–34.
100. These materials are now housed in the YIVO Archives as RG 4: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland. For published anthologies of the autobiographies and the many studies based on them, see note 51 in the Introduction.
101. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Moseley, and Stanislawski, xx. An earlier source gives a total of 640 submissions. Szajkowski, "Yivo," 47. The first contest resulted in only thirty-four entries; the majority of entries was generated by the second and third contests. *Yedies* 41 (March 1933): 7; *Yedies* 50 (January 1935): 8; *Yedies* 79–80 (November–December 1938): 115–118. A postwar sampling of surviving autobiographies carried out by Moses Kligsberg found almost three quarters to be in Yiddish, almost one quarter in Polish, and about 2.5 percent in Hebrew. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Moseley, and Stanislawski, xxi. About 86 percent of the entries in the second contest were submitted from Poland. Ibid., xxxix, note 20.
102. "Tsu der yidisher yugnt!," undated [1934], RG 1.1, folder 489.
103. *Yedies* 50 (January 1935): 10.
104. Max Weinreich, *Der veg tsu undzer yugnt* (Vilna: YIVO, 1935), 302.
105. Circular letter of the Division of Youth Research, 15 January 1935, RG 1.1, folder 489; *Yedies* 50 (January 1935) 10. On *Der veg tsu undzer yugnt* see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 90–93.

106. *Yedies* 49 (November 1934): 13.
107. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 89; Soyer, "Documenting," 220–221; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Moseley, and Stanislawski, xxv. Not all YIVO scholars were as enamored as Weinreich of this new turn in the institute's work. Leibush Lehrer, the head of the Psychological-Pedagogical Section, questioned Weinreich's reliance on autobiographies and the creation of "divisions," which he felt did not truly represent new disciplines and risked compartmentalizing the work of various scholars. Lehrer, New York to Weinreich, Vilna, 12 November 1935, RG 1.1, folder 584. Fishl Shneerson, another member of the section, was skeptical of psychoanalytic theory, which, he pointed out, was still controversial in much of mainstream academia. Shneerson to members of the Executive Office, 20 April 1936, RG 1.1, folder 584.
108. Minutes of meeting of the Building Committee, 1 November 1928, RG 1.1, folder 454; *Barikht*, 60; *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929).
109. Untitled document, undated [1934], RG 82, folder 2274.
110. "Aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad baym yivo (proyekt)," undated [1934], RG 82, folder 2220.
111. Bashtimungen vegn der d"r ts. shabad-aspirantur oyfn yor 1935/36," RG 1.3, folder 4050. Although YIVO assured the students that with this sum they could make ends meet if they lived frugally, they complained that their stipend was insufficient. Central Board, YIVO, Vilna to students, 17 March 1937, RG 1.3, folder 4050; second meeting of students, 26 October 1937, RG 1.3, folder 4052. The historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz provides a detailed account of her experience in the aspirantur during the academic year 1938–1939 in her memoir *From That Place and Time*, 3–203, especially 77–100. For a discussion of her personal budget see 60–62.
112. "Bashtimungen vegn der d"r ts. shabad-aspirantur oyfn yor 1935/36," RG 1.3, folder 4050.
113. "Barikht fun der Iter zitsung fun 3tn turnus fun der aspirantur," 2 September 1937, RG 1.3, folder 4052.
114. Circular letter, 27 November 1938; report of the session of the Central Board, 8–9 October 1938, both RG 1.1, folder 15; "Bashtimungen vegn der d"r ts. shabad-aspirantur oyfn yor 1936/37," RG 82, folder 274.
115. "Aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad baym yivo (proyekt)," undated [1934], RG 82, folder 2220; *Yedies* 54 (December 1935): 8. The following year it accepted sixteen out of nearly seventy applicants, in its third year twenty-two (of whom nineteen completed the program), and in its fourth year eighteen. *A yor arbet in der aspirantur oyfn nomen fun d"r tsemakh shabad baym yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* (Vilna: YIVO, 1937), 103; *Dos tsveyte yor*, 178; *Yedies* 85–86 (May–June 1939): 3. A postwar document give slightly varying figures of seventeen, sixteen, twenty-two, and twenty-one students for the four sessions, respectively. "Yivo proyekt far der konferents vegn yidishe materiele tvies kegn daytshland," RG 584, folder 74. I thank Kalman Weiser for this reference.
116. "Protokol fun der aspirantn-zitsung," 4 November 1935, RG 1.3, folder 4050.
117. "Barikht fun dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut tsum 31tn detsember 1939," RG 1.1, folder 632.
118. "Protokol fun der aspirantn-zitsung," 4 November 1935, RG 1.3, folder 4050. For an example of background reading in English- and Polish-language sociology

for Aspirantur projects, see Gabriel Haus, "Barikht nr. 1," 2 December 1937, RG 1.3, folder 3977. See also Kijek, "Max Weinreich," 46 note 14 on the influence of Polish sociology on the work of aspirant Chana Piszczacer-Mann.

119. *Dos tsveyte yor*, 179.
120. Over the four sessions of the Aspirantur Yiddish language, literature, and folklore accounted for twenty-six projects; history for nineteen; and the social sciences, including economics, sociology, psychology and pedagogy, a total of twenty-three. *Yedies* 85–86 (May–June 1939): 3.
121. Typically, Kalmanovitch disagreed, arguing that "it would be better if the Aspirantur trained [students] in purely scholarly work." "Protokol fun der aspirantn-zitsung," 4 November 1935, RG 1.3, folder 4050.
122. "Aspirantur oyf tsutsugreytn yud. gelernte un forsher," *Nayer Folksblat*, 1934, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 471.
123. Circular letter of the Executive Office, 29 February 1936, RG 1.1, folder 471.
124. *Yedies* 85–86 (May–June 1939): 1–2.
125. *A yor arbet*, 100.
126. Minutes of meeting, 7 November 1938, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544.
127. "Barikht fun der Iter zitsung fun 3tn turnus fun der aspirantur," 2 September 1937, RG 1.3, folder 4052; minutes of meeting, 7 November 1938, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544; *Yedies* 69–70 (November–December 1937): 5–6.
128. Minutes of meeting, [Fall 1938], RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544; minutes of meetings of the Proaspirantur, undated, RG 1.3, folder 4055.
129. Programs for language and literature, Proaspirantur, 1938–1939; Khasye Lubotski, "Barikht fun der arbet iber yidisher shprakh in der proaspirantur, arbetsyor 1938/1939," both RG 1.3, folder 4055; "D"r helers program farn limed yidishe gezelshaft-kentenish," 23 October [1938], RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544. Both Kalmanovitch and students in the program complained of the absence of modern Yiddish literature from the curriculum. Minutes of meeting, 23 October 1938, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544; students to Executive Office, 4 April 1940, RG 1.3, folder 4055.
130. Minutes of meetings of the Proaspirantur, undated; "Barikht fun der arbet fun di proaspirantn in universitet in meshekh fun akademishn yor 1938/1939," both RG 1.3, folder 4055; minutes of meeting, 7 November 1938, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544.
131. Weinreich, opening speech at the graduation ceremony of the second year of the Aspirantur, undated [June 1937], RG 1.3, folder 4051; "Sesye fun der tsentraler farvaltung in yivo," undated [1936?], RG 1.1, folder 632.
132. Minutes of meeting, 7 November 1938, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544; *Yedies* 85–86 (May–June 1939): 2–3. The one "nonacademic" student was Eliyahu Yones, who came from a poor family and had little formal education but was mentored by Weinreich. Yones eventually went on to complete a doctorate at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and published several books on the Holocaust in Lwów. He worked for many years as a journalist at Kol Yisrael and died in 2011. Interview, Eliyahu Yones, 2 July 1999, Jerusalem, Israel; Anka Shamir, "Eliyahu yones z"l (1915–2011): zshurnalist, pedagog, forsher," *Forverts*, 11 February 2011, 13.
133. Protocol 159, meeting of the Executive Office, 23 August 1934, RG 82, folder 2220; "Aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad baym yivo," 13 September 1937, RG 1.1, folder 471.

134. *A yor arbet*, 102.
135. YIVO to Jewish community of Baranowicze, 25 November 1938, RG 1.1, folder 458; "Sesye fun der tsentraler farvaltung fun yivo," undated [1936], RG 1.1, folder 632. The Vilna Jewish community was asked to provide support for two students. The Geographical Society agreed to cover half of one stipend with the support of its Warsaw branch, although it did not always pay its share promptly. YIVO to Jewish Community of Vilna, 6 December 1938, RG 1.1, folder 458; Jewish Geographical Society in Poland, Warsaw to Central Board, YIVO, Vilna, 14 January and 31 March 1936, RG 1.3, folder 4064.
136. "Vilner tezisn," 38.
137. "Hakhnose un hatsoe 1935;" "Balans fun yor 1936;" "Financial statement for 1937;" "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1938;" "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1939," all RG 1.1, folder 451.
138. YISHO, Warsaw to Executive Office, YIVO, Vilna, 22 May 1936, RG 1.12, folder 534.
139. Minutes of meeting, undated [Fall 1938], RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544; "Barikht fun dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut tsum 31tn detsember 1939," RG 1.1, folder 632; *Yedies* 77–78 (July–October 1938): 11.
140. Minutes of meeting, undated [Fall 1938]; minutes of meeting, 7 November 1938, both RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544. Polish authorities closed the school because of suspected communist activities among its students, which were illegal. Kazdan, *Yidishn shulvezn*, 215–216.
141. Weinreich, opening speech at the graduation ceremony of the second year of the Aspirantur, undated [June 1937], RG 1.3, folder 4051; "Aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad baym yivo (proyekt)," undated [1934], RG 82, folder 2220.
142. "Aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad baym yivo (proyekt)," undated [1934], RG 82, folder 2220; YISHO, Warsaw to Executive Office, YIVO, Vilna, 22 May 1936, RG 1.1, folder 534.
143. "A vokh farn idishn visnshaftlekhn institut," unidentified clipping, Latvia, 1928, RG 1.1, folder 516.
144. "Siem funem 4tn turnus fun der aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad un ershtn turnus fun der proaspirantur a"n fun b. kahan-virgili baym yivo," 20 June 1939, RG 1.3, folder 4053.
145. Organizational Committee to Y. Rubin, 3 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2398.
146. "Aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad baym yivo (proyekt)," undated [1934], RG 82, folder 2220.
147. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15; *Yedies* 77–78 (July–October 1938): 11.
148. YIVO to Jewish community of Baranowicze, 25 November 1938, RG 1.1, folder 458.
149. Sh. Shtern, Warsaw to Weinreich, 5 May 1936, RG 1.3, folder 4064.
150. *Yedies* 41 (March 1933): 8; *Yedies* 57–58 (August-September 1936): 6; *Yedies* 77–78 (July–Oct. 1938): 6. On Pipe and his work see Gottesman, 147–158.
151. Gottesman, 157.
152. "Sesye fun der tsentraler farvaltung fun yivo," undated [1936], RG 1.1, folder 632; *Yedies* 54a–55 (January–March 1936): 2–3.
153. *Dos tsveyte yor*, 183; circular letter, 27 November 1938 with report of the session of the Central Board, 8–9 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.

154. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 16 October 1937, RG 1.1, folder 14.
155. "Siem funem 4tn turnus fun der aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad un ershtn turnus fun der proaspirantur a"n fun b. kahan-virgili baym yivo," 20 June 1939, RG 1.3, folder 4053.
156. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 16 October 1937, RG 1.1, folder 14.
157. "Aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad baym yivo (proyekt)," undated [1934], RG 82, folder 2220.
158. Protocol 159, meeting of the Executive Office, 23 August 1934, RG 82, folder 2220; *Yedies* 69–70 (November–December 1937): 5; *Yedies* 85–86 (May–June 1939): 1–2.
159. Leibush Lehrer, ed. *Shriftn far psikhologye un pedagogik* (Vilna: YIVO, 1933), n.p. A second volume, also under Lehrer's editorship, was published in Vilna in 1940.
160. Lehrer, New York to Weinreich, Vilna, 12 Nov. 1935, RG 1.1, folder 584.
161. Ormian, 192–194.
162. Minutes of meeting of the Philological Section, 10 July 1934, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, Philological Section, folder 40.
163. Minutes of meeting of the Philological Section, 10 July 1934; "Program far yidisher shprakh farn litsey," 23 May and 2 August 1937, both RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, Philological Section, folder 40.
164. Executive Office to members of the Central Board, 8 November 1937, RG 82, folder 2218.
165. YISHO, Warsaw to YIVO, Vilna, 4 April 1938, 23 May 1938, and 2 June 1938, all RG 1.1, folder 534.
166. Circular letter, YISHO and YIVO, Vilna, 21 June 1937, RG 1.1, folder 609; *Yedies* 66–68 (August–October 1937): 2–8.
167. *Yedies* 75–76 (May–June 1938): 3.
168. "Di lererkursn fun der tsisho in yivo," *Undzer Tog*, January 1938, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 526; "Barikht fun dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut tsum 31tn detsember 1939," RG 1.1, folder 632; *Yedies* 81–82 (January–February 1939): 15–16.
169. Letter to Yofe, 22 November 1937, RG 1.1, folder 584.
170. Psychological-Pedagogical Section, Vilna to TSYSHO, Warsaw, 13 May 1930, RG 1.1, folder 584; Executive Office, YIVO to TSYSHO, 13 May 1940, RG 1.1, folder 641.
171. Student compositions, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 585.
172. See E. Tcherikower, ed. *Historishe shriftn, tsveyter band* (Vilna: YIVO, 1937) and E. Tcherikower, A. Menes, F. Kursky, and A. Rosin, ed., *Historishe shriftn, driter band, di yidishe sotsialistishe bavegung biz der grindung fun "bund," forshungen, zikhroynes, materialn* (Vilna-Paris: YIVO, 1939).
173. The first project was sponsored by the Sliozberg Fund, established by members of the prominent Günzburg family in honor of the seventieth birthday of Russian Jewish lawyer and communal leader Henrikh Sliozberg and led by scholars in Berlin and Paris. "Proyekt fun an arbet-plan far der opteylung baym yivo tsu zamlen materialn vegn der geshikhte fun di iden in rusland;" "Bashlosn benegeye der opteylung far yidisher geshikhte in rusland," 3 March 1933; incomplete document [Tcherikower to YIVO, Vilna?], all RG 82, folder 2253. Isaac Giterman complained that YIVO's courting of wealthy donors such as Günzburg "gave good arguments to the left, even the socialists." Lestschinsky concurred, arguing, "better TSYSHO

without Baron Günzburg than Günzburg without TSYSHO." Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 14–16 October 1930, RG 82, folder 2219. The second project was initiated in 1938 and resulted in a two-volume work published in New York. E. Tcherikower, ed. *Yidn in frankraykh* 1 (New York: YIVO, 1942), 7.

174. Protocol of the meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 17 November 1934, RG 82, folder 2244.
175. Trunk, Warsaw Friends of YIVO, Warsaw to Tcherikower, Paris, 7 March and 25 April 1935; Central Board, Vilna to Historical Commission, Warsaw, 5 November 1936, both RG 82, folder 2245; protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 17 November 1934, 28 October 1936, and 30 September 1938, all RG 82, folder 2244. The subsidy was later cut to 50 złotys. Historical Commission for Poland, Warsaw to Executive Office, 8 October 1937, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 606.
176. On the commission's work in this period, particularly its focus on local history, see Kassow, 82–89. On the interest of Polish-language Jewish historians in local history see Aleksiun, "Ammunition," 531–553 and Ibid., "Setting the Record Straight."
177. Central Commission for Researching Jewish Antiquities in Poland by the Historical Commission of "YIVO," Warsaw, incomplete document, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 469; protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 20 November 1936, RG 82, folder 2244; Historical Commission, Warsaw, "Barikht fun tetikeyt far der tsayt yanuar-may 1937," RG 82, folder 2247. On the closely related *landkentenish* [knowledge of the land] movement see Samuel D. Kassow, "Travel and Local History as a National Mission," in *Jewish Topographies*, ed. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2009): 242–264, especially 253 on its relation to YIVO; and Kuznitz, "Jewish Street," 74.
178. Minutes of meeting of the Central Commission to Research Jewish Antiquities in Poland, 27 June 1930; "Barikht fun der delegatsye funem yid. visnshaftlekhn institut oystsuforshn di yidishe altertimlekhkeytn in lublin," undated [1930], both RG 82, folder 2248. On the work of this body see Kassow, *History*, 84–85 and Dobroszycki, 501–503.
179. Historical Commission, Warsaw, "Barikht fun tetikeyt far der tsayt yanuar-may 1937," RG 82, folder 2247.
180. *Yedies* 21 (1 April 1927); protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 28 October 1936, RG 82, folder 2244; Historical Commission, Warsaw, "Ankete vegn zamlen yidishe historishe kveln in poyln," RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 60; Kasow, *History*, 84; Dobroszycki, 503–504.
181. Historical Commission, Warsaw, "Barikht fun tetikeyt far der tsayt yanuar-may 1937," RG 82, folder 2247; Historical Commission for Poland, Warsaw to Executive Office, 8 October 1937, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 606.
182. Minutes of meeting of the Historical Commission for Poland, 25 September 1937, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 605; "Barikht fun dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut tsum 31tn detsember 1939," RG 1.1, folder 632.
183. Historical Commission, Warsaw, "Barikht fun tetikeyt far der tsayt yanuar-may 1937," RG 82, folder 2247; minutes of meeting of the Historical Commission for Poland, 25 September 1937, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 605.

184. See G. Urinski, M. Wolanski, and N. Zukerman, ed., *Pinkes fun der shtot pruzshene* (Prużana: Wydawnictwo "Pinkos," 1930): 5. On their reactions see Kassow, *History*, 80–81 and 86–87 respectively.
185. Max Weinreich, "Derkenen dem haynt," *Yivo bleter* 3, no. 4–5 (April–May 1932): 289. Perhaps thinking of his failed application to the Rockefeller Foundation, he noted that the Middletown project in the United States "was subsidized by an institution with capital. For us, after all, such a thing is still in the utopian future." Ibid., 298.
186. E. Ringelblum, "An interesanter onheyb," *Literarishe bleter* 27 (3 July 1931): 518–519; Ibid., *Literarishe bleter* 28 (10 July 1931): 534.
187. *Yedies* 50 (January 1935): 12–15.
188. *Yedies* 57–58 (August–September 1936): 6.
189. Historical Section, YIVO, Berlin to Jewish community, Warsaw, 11 May 1930, RG 82, folder 2245. The kehillah agreed to provide a subsidy of 1,500 złotys. Central Board, YIVO, Vilna to Friends of YIVO, Warsaw, 10 June 1930, RG 1.1, folder 538.
190. Central Commission to Research Jewish Antiquities in Poland by the Historical Commission of YIVO, Warsaw, incomplete document, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 469.
191. Historical Commission, Warsaw, "Barikht fun tetikeyt far der tsayt yanuar-may 1937," RG 82, folder 2247; protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 23 March and 29 April 1938, both RG 82, folder 2244; Dobroszycki, 501.
192. Protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 8 November 1929, RG 82, folder 2243; minutes of meeting of the Historical Section, 2 January 1930, RG 82, folder 2239; protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 22 March 1930 and 29 March 1930, both RG 82, folder 2243.
193. Incomplete letter, Bilsk to YIVO, 14 November 1936, RG 1.1, folder 616; protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 23 December 1936, RG 82, folder 2244.
194. Historical Commission, Warsaw, "Barikht fun tetikeyt far der tsayt yanuar-may 1937," RG 82, folder 2247.
195. *Onvayzungen far forshung vegn der geshikhte fun yidishe yishuvim* (Vilna: YIVO, 1938), 1. The instructions were printed in the *Yedies* as well as a separate booklet. See *Yedies* 71–72 (January–February 1938): 16–22.
196. *Onvayzungen*, 1–6.
197. Historical Commission for Poland, Warsaw to Executive Office, Vilna, 9 July 1938, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 469.
198. Minutes of meeting of the Presidium of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 29 April 1938, RG 1.1, folder 546; protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 30 September 1938, RG 82, folder 2244; "Barikht fun dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut tsum 31tn detsember 1939," RG 1.1, folder 632.
199. *Lodzsher visnshaftlekhe shriftn* 1 (Łódź: Visnshaftlekher krayz bay der gezelshaft fraynd fun yid visn inst in lodzsh, 1938): iii–iv.
200. Protocol of meeting of the Historical Commission, Warsaw, 29 April 1938, RG 82, folder 2244.

201. Isaiah Trunk, *Geshikhte fun yidn in plotsk, 1237–1657* (Warsaw: YIVO, 1939), v–vi.
202. Ibid., v.
203. "Di oysshtelung in yivo," *Vilner Tog*, March 1934, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 520; "Di oysshtelung fun yidishn bukh un prese," undatd [1937], RG 1.1, folder 608.
204. During the year 1,797 items were checked out, including 984 by aspirants and 145 by YIVO staff. At this time YIVO's collections comprised 22,026 volumes and 8,759 periodicals. "Entfer af der ankete fun statistishn byuro fun der vilner shtat-farvaltung far 1937," RG 1.1, folder 506. In a five-week period in late 1938, 153 people visited the reading room and 114 checked out material, including 54 students, 12 teachers, and 1 scholar. Kh. Gritshanski, "Barikht fun shtudir-tsimer, 1.11. – 8.12.1938," RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 552.
205. Although the expense of publications varied, it usually accounted for 15 to 20 percent of the institute's budget. See "Kheshbn fun der hatsoe fun yivo fun 1tn yanuar 1932 bizn 20 november;" "Hakhnose un hatsoe, 1935, forme 1;" "Balans fun yor 1936," all RG 1.1, folder 451. The cost of publications was as much as six times the income they generated in the years of financial crisis. "Zestawienie Wplywów I Wydatków," 16 December 1935, RG 1.1, folder 513.
206. See Simon Dubnow, *Geshikhte fun khsidizm, ershter band* (Vilna: YIVO, 1930) and Ibid., *Geshikhte fun khsidizm, tsveyter band* (Vilna: YIVO, 1933).
207. Report, Oct. 1937, RG 82, folder 2274.
208. Some volumes had been published previously. See Simon Dubnow, *Velt-geshikhte fun yidishn folk*, 10 vols. (Vilna: YIVO, 1938–1940). For a complete bibliography of YIVO's publications see *Yivo-bibliografye*.
209. "Sesye fun der tsentraler farvaltung fun yivo," undated [1936], RG 1.1, folder 632. See *Pinkes, a fertlyoriker zshurnal far yidisher literatur-geshikhte, shprakh-forshung, folklor un bibliografye* 1, nos. 1–2 (1927) and 2, no. 1 (1929).
210. See Alexander Mukdoni and Jacob Shatzky, ed., *Yorbukh fun amopteyl* 1 (New York: YIVO, 1938) and Leibush Lehrer and Yudel Mark, ed., *Yorbukh fun amopteyl* 2 (New York: YIVO, 1939).
211. E. Tcherikower, ed., *Historishe shriftn, tsveyter band*, xiv; Noah Prylucki, *Dialektologishe forarbetn* (Vilna: YIVO, 1937), n.p.
212. *Yidisher folklor*, xii. On this volume see Gottesman, 162–166.
213. On this project see Barry Trachtenberg, "Di Algemeyne Entsiklopedye, the Holocaust, and the Changing Mission of Yiddish Scholarship," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 5, no. 3 (November 2006): 285–300 and Ibid., "Jewish Universalism, the Yiddish Encyclopedia, and the Nazi Rise to Power," in *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin*, 195–214.
214. Central board, YIVO, Vilna to Lestschinsky, 16 August 1931, RG 1.1, folder 548.
215. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 14–16 October 1930, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 5; "Barikht fun der tsentraler farvaltung, 1930–1935," RG 1.1, folder 13.
216. Trachtenberg, "Jewish Universalism," 203.
217. Ibid., 204; Karlip, "Center," 341.

218. See *Algemeyne entsiklopedye* 1–4 (Paris: Dubnow-fund, 1934–1937.). The project produced one additional alphabetical volume covering through most of the letter *beys* in 1944 as well as seven volumes oriented thematically around Jewish content from 1939 to 1966. I thank Barry Trachtenberg for clarifying this information.
219. "Protokol fun der zitsung fun der komisye vegn farshpreytung fun undzere oysgabes," 10 August 1931, RG 1.1, folder 513; *Yedies* 41 (March 1933): 7.
220. See *Di ershte printsipn, a sistem fun sintetisher filosofye fun herbert spenser*, trans. Jacob Mereson (Vilna: YIVO, 1937), ix.
221. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
222. Gennady Estraikh, "Zelig Kalmanovitch," *YIVO Encyclopedia*, 852.
223. "Yivo-bleter, khoydesh-shrift fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut," November 1930, RG 1.1, folder 511.
224. "Fregkestl," *Yivo bleter* 1 (January–May 1931): 93–94.
225. "Aroyslozndik di yivo-bleter," 3.
226. *Yedies* 39 (September 1932).
227. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 14–16 October 1930, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 5 and RG 82, folder 2219; minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 26–27 November 1932, RG 1.1, folder 11.
228. *Yedies* 79–80 (November–December 1938): 6. Menakhem Linder was appointed editor in June 1939. Linder, Editorial Board, "Di yidishe ekonomik," Warsaw to Executive Office, Vilna, 2 June 1939; Economic-Statisitcal Section, Warsaw to Executive Office, Vilna, 8 March 1939, both RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 566.
229. *Yedies* 73–74 (March–April 1938): 5; minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
230. N. Prylucki, "Yidish far ale," undated circular letter, RG 1.1, folder 511.
231. *Yedies* 77–78 (July–October 1938): 4; "Barikht fun dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut tsum 31tn detsember 1939," RG 1.1, folder 632; YIVO, Vilna to YISHO, Warsaw, 2 February 1939, RG 1.1, folder 534.
232. *Yedies* 81–82 (January–February 1939): 22. The quotes are from Lazar Kahan writing in *Undzer Ekspres* and from *Haynt*. See M. Weinreich, *Di shvartse pintelekh, bibliotek fun yivo, populere serye* (Vilna: YIVO, 1939).
233. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
234. *Yedies* 73–74 (March–April 1938): 5; minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15; Nathan Cohen, "Haynt," *YIVO Encyclopedia*, 692; Ibid., "Der moment," Ibid, 1193–1194.
235. "Protokol fun der zitsung fun der komisye vegn farshpreytung fun undzere oysgabes," 10 August 1931; "Hosofe tsum barikht vegn 'yivo-bleter;'" "Yivo-bleter 1932-barikht," all RG 1.1, folder 513; "Farshpreytung fun di 'yivo-bleter," RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 555.
236. "Barikht fun di yivo-bleter numern 1–5 (yanuar-may 1931);" "Zestawienie Wplywów I Wydatków," both 16 December 1935, RG 1.1, folder 513.
237. Poland's share during this period dropped from 20 percent to 14 percent, while the total for Western and Eastern Europe dropped from a half to a quarter. "Farshpreytung fun di 'yivo-bleter,'" RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 555.

238. Michael Weichert, "Yidishe akademye," 65–66.
239. "Ankete num. 2, terminologishe komisye," January 1932; "Instruktsyes far zamlers fun terminologishn material," 1932; "Zamlt dem yidishn fakh-loshn!," January 1933; "Zamlt di terminologye fun der landvirtshaft," 31 March 1933, all RG 1.1, folder 616.
240. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 193.
241. *Lingvistishe anketes, heft 2: terminologye fun a vogn* (Vilna: YIVO, 1938), 3.
242. Leybl Kahn, "Terminologisher oyftu," 235; *Lingvistishe anketes, heft 2*.
243. *Yedies* 73–74 (March–April 1938): 5; minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
244. Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation*, 252.
245. "Kalmanovitsh tsu tsherikovern, 12ter juni 1931 un 10ter marts 1938," RG 1.1, folder 546.
246. *Der aynheytlekher yidisher oysleyg: materialn un proyektn tsu der ortografisher konferents fun yivo* (Vilna: YIVO, 1930), v–viii.
247. *Yedies* 34 (3 July 1931); Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, Warsaw to YIVO, Vilna, 11 March 1931, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 454.
248. Opening of the Orthographic Conference, 24 May 1931, RG 1.1, folder 610; *Yedies* 34 (3 July 1931); Schaechter, "Folkshprakh," 60 note 38.
249. *Yedies* 34 (3 July 1931).
250. Minutes of meeting of the Orthographic Conference, second session, 24 May 1931, RG 1.1, folder 610. On Prylucki's views on naturalization see Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation*, 190–191.
251. Ibid.
252. Ibid.
253. The first resolution, introduced by Reisen, stated that the conference supported naturalization in principle but that such a step was not practical at the current time; it was voted down 20 to 26. The second, introduced by Weinreich, included only the second part of the above resolution; it was voted down 14 to 33 with 2 abstentions. The original minutes of the conference give slightly different votes of 14 to 32 for the second resolution and 26 to 20 for the third. *Yedies* 34 (3 July 1931); minutes of meeting of the Orthographic Conference, second session, 24 May 1931, RG 1.1, folder 610. Prylucki's break with the majority of YIVO leaders on this issue was another cause of Kalmanovitch's animosity toward him. "Kalmanovitsh tsu tsherikovern, 12ter juni 1931 un 10ter marts 1938," RG 1.1, folder 546.
254. M. Weinreich, "Vegn di rekomendatsyes fun der oysleyg-konferents," RG 82, folder 2270; *Yedies* 34 (3 July 1931).
255. Minutes of meeting of the Orthographic Conference, second session, 24 May 1931, RG 1.1, folder 610.
256. Weinreich, Central Board, YIVO to members of the Philological Section, 11 October 1931; correspondence between Weinreich, Central Board, YIVO and members of the Philological Section, 1931–1934, passim, all RG 1.1, folder 609.
257. Weinreich, Central Board, YIVO to members of the Philological Section, 11 October 1931, RG 1.1, folder 609.
258. *Takones fun yidishn oysleyg* (Vilna: YIVO, 1937), 31; see *Oysleyg takones fun yidish* (YIVO: Vilna, 1935).

259. Philological Section, YIVO, Vilna to YISHO, Warsaw, 24 February 1936, RG 1.1, folder 609.
260. Ibid.
261. Philological Section, YIVO, Vilna to TSBK, Vilna, 13 March 1935; YISHO, Warsaw to YIVO, Vilna, 22 May 1936, both RG 1.1, folder 534.
262. *Yedies* 56 (April–June 1936): 6; Schaechter, "Folkshprakh," 62.
263. "Baratung fun matematik-lerer," 9 July 1936, RG 1.1, folder 609.
264. *Takones*, 31.
265. "Tetikeyts-barikht fun der varshever gez. 'fraynd fun yivo,'" 9 February 1937, RG 1.1, folder 531.
266. Schaechter, "Folkshprakh," 67.
267. *Yedies* 56 (April–June 1936): 6.
268. Weinreich, *Shvartse pintelekh*, 227.
269. Efforts to encourage Yiddish publications to adopt YIVO's unified orthography continued until the 1990s. On the spread of YIVO orthography since 1936 see Schaechter, "Folkshprakh," 65ff.
270. Central Board, YIVO, Vilna to Historical Commission, Warsaw, 5 November 1936, RG 82, folder 2245; Kassow, *History*, 88.
271. Unknown correspondent [Z. Kalmanovitch?] to Y. Bernshteyn, Plock, 18 March 1932, incomplete; A. A. Roback to L. Lehrer, 14 September 1938, copy, both RG 1.1, folder 584.
272. Unknown correspondent [Z. Kalmanovitch?] to Y. Bernshteyn, Plock, 18 March 1932, incomplete, RG 1.1, folder 584.
273. Minutes of meeting of the Philological Section, 10 July 1934, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, Philological Section, folder 40. On Kalmanovitch's attitude to proper Yiddish style in 1925, see Karlip, "Center," 323–325 and 335–337.
274. Weinreich, *Shvartse pintelekh*, 225–226.
275. *Yedies* 79–80 (November–December 1938): 1.
276. *Yedies* 81–82 (January–February 1939): 2.
277. *Der yivo nokh draytsn yor arbet* (Vilna: YIVO, 1938): 5.
278. "Yidishe visnshaft in yidishn lebenskampf," lecture for the Aspirantur, no author, undated, RG 1.1, folder 478.
279. Max Weinreich, "Nokhem Shtif," 348.
280. "Vos a bialistoker hot gezen oyf der yiv"o-oysshtelung in vilne," *Undzer lebn* (Białystok), undated clipping [1934], RG 1.1, folder 527.
281. "Gezelshaft 'fraynd fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut (yivo)' in varshe, barikht fun der tetikeyt fun 1tn may biz tsum 31tn oygust 1937," RG 1.1, folder 531. For a description of the Warsaw office by a former employee, see Michał Rudawski, *Mój obcj kraj?* (Warsaw: Agencja Wydawnicza TU, 1996), 48–55.
282. "Ershter tsuzamenfor fun yidisher visnshaft un kultur," undated [1934], RG 82, folder 2220.
283. "Yidishe visnshaft in yidishn lebenskampf," lecture for the Aspirantur, no author, undated, RG 1.1, folder 478.
284. *Heftn far yidisher kunst*, 3.
285. "Helft shafn di d"r ts. shabad-aspirantur baym yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut!," RG 82, folder 2274.
286. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 14 and 141.

287. Minutes of scholarly meeting, 19 April 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15 and printed version, *Yedies* 73–74 (March–April 1938): 1–3.
288. Central Board, Vilna to Lestschinsky, 2 June 1933, RG 1.1, folder 551.
289. Questionnaires, Psychological-Pedagogical Section, undated, RG 1.1, folder 597.
290. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 64.
291. "Tetikeyt-program fun yivo far der noenster tsayt," undated [1936], RG 1.1, folder 13.
292. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15. A limited ban on kosher slaughter was enacted in 1936, and efforts to pass a complete ban continued until the outbreak of World War II. Melzer, 81–90.
293. Trunk, *Geshikhte*, v.
294. Historical Commission, Warsaw, YIVO to Dr. Mayzl, 1 February 1937, RG 82, folder 2245.
295. Jacob Shatzky, "Finf un tsvantik yor yivo," 308–309.
296. YIVO, Vilna to Lestschinsky, 12 August 1932; Economic-Statistical Section, Berlin to Prof. Sh. Goldelman, Prague, 30 August 1932; Economic-Statistical Section, Berlin to Executive Office, Vilna, 30 August 1932, all RG 1.1, folder 550.
297. Five years later Lestschinsky was forced once again to relocate, this time to New York, after the Polish government refused to allow him to return from vacation abroad because of his critical writings on contemporary Poland. Gennady Estraikh, "Jacob Lestschinsky," 230–231; Central Board, YIVO, Vilna to Lestschinsky, 20 March 1933, RG 1.1, folder 551.
298. The most extreme disparity was in 1938, when this section's expenses of 5,498 złotys were more than four times that of the Historical (1,274 złotys) and Philological Section (1,196 złotys). "Kase-barikht, yanuar-oygust 1937;" "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1938;" "Hakhnose un hatsoe farn yor 1939," all RG 1.1, folder 451; Society of Friends of YIVO, Warsaw to Executive Office, Vilna, 9 March 1939, RG 1.1, folder 540.
299. "Tsu di kultur-tuers in di yidishe shtetlekh," 1 July 1932, RG 1.1, folder 550.
300. Weinreich, "Derkenen dem haynt;" Economic-Statistical Section, YIVO to Yiddish School Organization, Prużana, 25 May 1932, RG 1.1, folder 549.
301. See *Der matsev fun yidishn shtetl* (Vilna: YIVO, 1933).
302. Protocol no. 15, Economic-Statistical and Historical Sections of YIVO, Berlin, 26 May 1932, RG 82, folder 2266.
303. "Arbet-program fun der ekonomish-statistisher sektsye fun yivo oyfn yor 1939/1940," RG 1.1, folder 546; "Ankete num' 9," Economic-Statistical Section, YIVO, 1939 and "Ankete vegn der yidisher landvirtshaftlekher bafelkerung," undated, both RG 1.1, folder 581.
304. "Barikht fun dem yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut tsum 31tn detsember 1939," RG 1.1, folder 632.
305. *Di yidishe ekonomik*, no. 1 (May 1937): 1–3.
306. Ibid., 3; *Di yidishe ekonomik*, no. 4–5 (August–September 1937): 129–148 and no. 6–8 (October–December 1937): 209–222.
307. *Di yidishe ekonomik*, no. 3–4 (March–April 1938): 185–188.
308. "Rasnshand-protses in daytshland," *Di yidishe ekonomik*, no. 2–3 (June–July 1937): 67–73; Menakhem Mirkin, "Tsol kinder fun di yidishe mishpokhes in daytshland," *Di yidishe ekonomik*, no. 3–4 (March–April 1938): 183–185; Ibid., "Yidn in di folkshuln in daytshland," *Di yidishe ekonomik*, no. 9–10 (September–October 1938): 487–488.

309. These included Menakhem Linder, *Yidishe vanderungen far di letste 10 yor* (Vilna: YIVO, 1938) and Jacob Lestschinsky, *Der yidisher handl in di shtet fun poyln* (Vilna: YIVO, 1938), both reprinted from *Di yidishe ekonomik*; and Ibid., *Vifl yidn zaynen faran oyf der velt?* (Vilna: YIVO, 1938), reprinted from *Yivo bleter*.
310. "Yidishe visenshaft in yidishen lebenskampf," lecture for the Aspirantur, no author, undated, RG 1.1, folder 478.
311. See *Farbrekherishkeyt fun yidn un nit-yidn in poyln, di farsheydene minim farbrekhns* (Vilna: YIVO, 1937), a reprint of an article in the second volume of *Ekonomishe shriftn*. An expanded version was published as *Yidn-farbrekhers, a paralel tsvishn der yidisher un nit-yidisher farbrekherishkeyt in poyln loyt di ofitsieler poylisher kriminal-statistik* (Vilna: YIVO, 1939). Hersh's lecture on the same topic at the 1935 convention was also reprinted as "Tsu der yidisher farbrekherishkeyt in poyln: di farsheydene minim farbrekhns," *Yivo bleter* 9, no. 4–5 (April–May 1936): 218–261.
312. Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 15.
313. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 16 October 1937, RG 1.1, folder 14.
314. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
315. "Tsveyte baratung fun di yivo-mitarbeter vegn der oysshtelung in tsuzamenhang mitn 50 yorikn yubiley fun k. marks, p"ts, bund," 24 March 1933, RG 1.1, folder 12.
316. "Di oysshtelung in yivo," *Vilner Tog*, March 1934, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 520.
317. "Vos a bialistoker hot gezen oyf der yiv"o-oysshtelung in vilne," *Undzer lebn* (Białystok), undated clipping [1934], RG 1.1, folder 527.
318. "Yivo ve-Erets Yisra'el," *Davar*, 7 February 1936, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 523.
319. Poale Agudas Israel, Gorlice to YIVO, 12 December 1938, RG 1.1, folder 604.
320. "Gezelshaft 'fraynd fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut (yivo)' in varshe, barikht fun der tetikeyt fun 1tn may biz tsum 31tn oygust 1937," RG 1.1, folder 531.
321. Friends of YIVO, Warsaw to Executive Office, Vilna, 19 March 1937, RG 1.1, folder 539; "Gezelshaft 'fraynd fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut (yivo)' in varshe, barikht fun der tetikeyt fun 1tn may biz tsum 31tn oygust 1937," RG 1.1, folder 531.
322. "Protokol fun der ershter zitsung fun der aspirantur," 9 September 1938, RG 1.3, 4053. On Kalmanovitch's view of YIVO's role, see Karlip, "Center," 338–340.
323. *Der yivo nokh draytsn yor arbet*, 6.
324. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 25.
325. *Yedies* 61–63 (January–March 1937): 1; *Yedies* 69–70 (November–December 1937): 7.
326. *Yedies* 71–72 (January–February 1938): 1.
327. *Yedies* 77–78 (July–October 1938): 1.
328. Ezra Mendelsohn, "Interwar Poland: Good for the Jews or Bad for the Jews?" in *The Jews in Poland*, ed. Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1986): 130–139. On the views of several leading Diaspora Nationalist intellectuals, including Tcherikower and Kalmanovitch, about the fate of Yiddish culture in these years, see Karlip, "Center," chapter 4, esp. 367–378. On the response of Polish-Jewish historians to these conditions, see Aleksiun, "Ammunition," 621–625.

329. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
330. *Yedies* 77–78 (July–October 1938): 1.
331. Minutes of scholarly meeting, 19 April 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15 and printed version, *Yedies* 73–74 (March–April 1938): 1–3; Z. K[almanovitch], "Der yivo in itstikn moment," RG 82, folder 2224; Karlip, "Center," 294.
332. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
333. *Yedies* 69–70 (November–December 1937): 6–7.
334. Minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
335. "Hoyptbukh 1939," RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 512.
336. Minutes of meeting, undated [Fall 1938], RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544.
337. Minutes of scholarly meeting, 19 April 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.

Epilogue

1. Parts of the epilogue draw on Kuznitz, "YIVO," *YIVO Encyclopedia*, 2090–2096, reprinted in *YIVO and Its Founders* (New York: YIVO, 2009).
2. On the contentious history of the chair, as well as on events during this period more generally, see Kalman Weiser, "The Jewel in the Yiddish Crown: Who Will Occupy the Chair for Yiddish at the University of Vilnius?" *Polin* 24 (2012): 223–255.
3. On YIVO's history during the Lithuanian and Soviet occupations see also Dov Levin, "Tsvishn hamer un serp, di geshikhte fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut in vilne unter der sovetisher memshole," *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 78–97; Henrikh Agranovski, "Opgefunene dokumentn vegn der geshikhte fun vilner yivo," *Yivo bleter*, new series, II (1994): 343–348; and Israel Lempert, "Der goyrl fun yivo in historishn iberbrokh (1939–1941)," *Yivo bleter*, new series, III (1997): 9–42.
4. On Weinreich's decision to come to the United States and the move of the YIVO headquarters, see Weiser, "Coming to America."
5. On Šimaitė, see *"And I Burned With Shame," The Testimony of Ona Šimaitė, Righteous Among the Nations* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007) and Julija Šukys, *Epistolophilia: Writing the Life of Ona Šimaitė* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).
6. On Kalmanovitch's view of resistance in the Vilna ghetto see his wartime diary, *Yoman be-geto Vilnah u-khetavim min ha-'izavon she-nimtse'u ba-harisot* (Tel Aviv: Moreshet Bet-Edut, 1977) and the fragments published in *Yivo bleter*, new series, III (1997): 43–113. See also the English translation in *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 8 (1953): 9–81. On the trajectory that led to his reconsideration of Diaspora Nationalism see Karlip, "Center."
7. On YIVO's history under Nazi rule see David E. Fishman, *Embers Plucked from the Fire: The Rescue of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Vilna*, 2nd ed. (New York: YIVO, 2009); and Ibid., *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 139–153. Primary sources on this period include Abraham Sutzkever, "Vi mir hobn geratevet dem yivo in vilne," *Eynikeyt* (New York) (February 1945): 15–16 and 30; Ibid., *Vilner geto: 1941–1944*

(Paris: Farband fun di vilner in frankraykh, 1946); Szmerke Kaczerginski, *Partizaner geyen* (Germany: Farlag "af der vakh," 1947); Ibid., *Tsvishn hamer un serp* (Buenos Aires: Der emes, 1950); Ibid., *Ikh bin geven a partizan* (Buenos Aires: Fraynd funem mekhaber, 1952); Ruzhka Korczak, *Lehavot ba-efer* (Tel Aviv: Workers Library, 1946); Rokhl Pupko-Krinsky, "Mayn arbet in yivo unter di daytshn," *Yivo bleter* XXX, no. 2 (Winter 1947): 214–223; and Ibid., "Laurel Trees of Wiwulskiego," in *The Root and the Bough*, ed. Leo W. Schwarz (New York: Rhinehart & Co, 1949), 155–163.

8. On the museum see the unpublished paper by David E. Fishman, "The Vilna Jewish Museum, 1944–1949." On Sutzkever and Kaczerginski's activities in this period see Fishman's forthcoming study of the fate of Vilna's Jewish cultural treasures during and after the Holocaust. I thank David Fishman for sharing these unpublished materials.
9. Lucy S. Dawidowicz gives an account of her work in the Offenbach depot in *From That Place and Time*, 312–326.
10. For a detailed account of Ringelblum's activities in the Warsaw ghetto see Kassow, *History*, 103–399.
11. See "Di yidishe geto in varshe," *Yivo bleter* XVI, no. 2 (November–December 1940): 200–201 and Shloyme Mendelsohn, *Der vidershtand in varshaver geto* (New York: YIVO, 1944).
12. They are housed in the YIVO Archives as RG 104, Eyewitness Accounts of the Holocaust Period.
13. *Hitler's Professors* was republished in 1999 by Yale University Press.
14. See Trunk's studies *Lodszher geto* (New York: YIVO, 1961) and *Judenrat* (New York: Macmillan, 1972). Robert Moses Shapiro translated and edited the former work, which was published by Indiana University Press in English in 2006. The YIVO-Yad Vashem bibliographical series appeared from 1960 to 1978.
15. This project was carried out during the years 1943 through 1945. Mohrer and Web, 197.
16. Shatzky, "Finf un tsvantik yor yivo," 317.
17. On YIVO's history in the United States see Joshua A. Fishman, "Yivo in amerike;" Zachary M. Baker, "Die Amerikanisierung der jiddischen Wissenschaft," *Judaica* 4 (December 1995): 222–236; and Cecile Esther Kuznitz, "YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in the United States," *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History*, ed. Stephen H. Norwood and Eunice G. Pollack (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2008), 768–770.
18. Max Weinreich, "Der yivo un di problemen fun undzer tsayt," *Yivo bleter* XXV, no. 1 (February–April 1945): 14.
19. Max Weinreich, introduction to *Farshvundene geshtaltn* by Hirsz Abramowicz (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-farband fun poylishe yidn in argentine, 1958), 8. On Weinreich's evolving thought in this period, as well as on the history of the institute as a whole, see Kalman Weiser, "Saving Yiddish, Saving American Jewry: Max Weinreich in 1940s New York City." I thank Kalman Weiser for making this forthcoming article available to me prior to publication.
20. An anthology of these autobiographies has been published as *My Future is in America: Autobiographies of Eastern European Jewish Immigrants*, ed. Jocelyn Cohen and Daniel Soyer (New York: New York University Press, 2006).
21. The work appeared in 1943 and 1945 under Tcherikower's editorship. An abridged English version was published as *The Early Jewish Labor Movement in the United States*, trans. and rev. Aaron Antonovsky (New York: YIVO, 1961).

22. Nokhem Stutchkoff, *Oytser fun der yidisher shprakh* (New York: YIVO, 1950; reprint 1991).
23. Four volumes of the *Groyser verterbukh fun der yidisher shprakh* [Great Dictionary of the Yiddish Language] appeared between 1961 and 1980. The first two were edited by Yudel Mark and Judah A. Joffe, the last two by Mark alone after Joffe's death. The headquarters of this project, which was not officially under YIVO auspices, eventually relocated to Jerusalem; the dictionary has never been completed.
24. Weiser, "Saving Yiddish."
25. Andrew Sunshine, "The Making of a Chair: Uriel Weinreich and the Yiddish Chair at Columbia University," in *Eydes, Evidence of Yiddish Documented in European Societies, The Language and Cultural Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*, ed. Marvin Herzog et al. (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemayer Verlag, 2008): 306–19.
26. For an account of one such attempt, a visit to Hollywood moguls by YIVO supporter Sol Liptzin, see Weiser, "Saving Yiddish."
27. *Yedies* 44 (March 1952): 4; *Yedies* 48 (March 1953): 3.
28. *Yedies* 109 (Spring 1969): 5.
29. Abraham Novershtern and Cecile Esther Kuznitz, "Yiddish Research after the Holocaust," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference and Keter, 2007), 21: 363–364; and David G. Roskies, "Maks vaynraykh."
30. The program was for many years sponsored jointly with Columbia University and later with New York University. It is currently cosponsored by Bard College.
31. From 1970 through 1974, the Weinreich Center enrolled students from sixty-five universities in nineteen states and four foreign countries. Incomplete document from YIVO's administrative files, undated, uncatalogued.
32. The course offerings of the Weinreich Center for the academic year 1976–1977 are reproduced in *Yivo bleter* XLVI (1980): 337–339.
33. *Yedies* 120 (Winter 1971/1972): 3; *Yedies* 131–132 (Fall–Winter 1974–1975): 1; *Yedies* 146 (Sept. 1978): 3.
34. These appeared in 1976, 1977, and 1980 respectively.
35. Since 1994 KlezKamp has been run independently by the nonprofit organization Living Traditions.
36. On the fate of YIVO's collections in Vilna after World War II see Agranovski; Marek Web, et al., "Yidishe zamlungen in der hayntiker vilne," *Yivo bleter*, new series, I (1991): 281–288.
37. On these materials see Eleanor Gordon Mlotek and Marek Web, "Der tsurikgekrogener kheylek fun vilner yivo-arkhiv," *Yivo bleter*, new series, III (1997): 441–452. I was privileged to make use of this material for the present work.
38. YIVO has not been a partner in Project Judaica since 2002.
39. The revived *YIVO Annual* was published from 1990 to 1996. Four volumes of the new series of *Yivo bleter* appeared from 1991 to 2003. The Max Niemayer Verlag in Tübingen, Germany has produced three volumes of the *Language and Culture Atlas* and five supplemental volumes since 1992; additional materials are available online at www.eydes.org.
40. See Beatrice Silverman Weinreich, ed., *Yiddish Folktales* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); Shandler; Cohen and Soyer; Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939–1944*, ed. Benjamin Harshav (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); and Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, ed. Paul Glasser (New Haven, CT:

Yale University Press, 2008). YIVO published the Yiddish original of Kruk's diary in 1961.

41. See Baker and Weinberg; and Mohrer and Web. An online version of the library catalogue is now available at the Center for Jewish History's website; see http://www.cjh.org. The *Guide to the YIVO Archives* is now also available online; see http://www.yivoarchives.org.
42. The encyclopedia was published by Yale University Press in 2008, with Gershon David Hundert as editor in chief. The online version is available at http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/.
43. This project, completed in 2004, is available at http://epyc.yivo.org.

Conclusion

1. Max Weinreich, "Di yidishe visnshaft in der hayntiker tsayt," *Yivo bleter* XVII, no. 1 (January–February 1941), 3–4. Part of this passage is quoted in Miron, 4; I have retranslated it from the original.
2. Miron, 1–15.
3. Charney, *Vilne*, 227–228.
4. Kahan, "Derekh fun yivo," 15.
5. *Yedies* 14 (13 August 1926).
6. Circular letter of the Executive Office, 30 August 1933, RG 1.1, folder 12.
7. *Yedies* 27 (1 April 1929); "Aroyslozndik di yivo-bleter," 1.
8. *Barikht*, 60; minutes of meeting of the Central Board, 8–10 October 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
9. *Alveltlekher tsuzamenfor*, 9; minutes of meeting, undated [Fall 1938], RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 544.
10. Minutes of scholarly meeting, 19 April 1938, RG 1.1, folder 15.
11. Weinreich, "Di yidishe visnshaft," 1.
12. The account of Dubnow's last words may be apocryphal. See Dubnov-Erlich, 247.
13. For a complete bibliography of YIVO's publications see *Yivo-bibliografye*, which lists 2,534 items in total.
14. Shatzky, "Finf un tsvantik yor yivo," 311.
15. On trends in Yiddish scholarship as a whole at the start of the twenty-first century, see Kuznitz, "Yiddish Studies."
16. Miron, 8–9.
17. It introduced this change in 1998. Paul Glasser, introduction to *Der aynheytlekher yidisher oysleyg*, vii. A notable exception is the linguist Dovid Katz, who has promulgated his own orthographic rules. See Dovid Katz, *Klal takones fun yidishn oysleyg* (Oxford, UK: Oksforder Yidish, 1992) and Ibid., *Tikney takones: fragn fun yidisher stilistik* (Oxford, UK: Oksforder Yidish, 1993).
18. "A vokh farn idishn visnshaftlekhn institut," Latvia, 1928, clipping, RG 1.1, folder 516.
19. Kahan, "Derekh fun yivo," 9.
20. "Siem funem 4tn turnus fun der aspirantur a"n fun d"r ts. shabad un ershtn turnus fun der proaspirantur a"n fun b. kahn-virgili baym yivo," 20 June 1939, RG 1.3, folder 4053.
21. On this point see Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation*, 216–217 and 268–269. While figures vary, in the mid-1930s approximately 60 to 75 percent of all Jewish

children in Poland attended public schools. Kazdan, *Yidishn shulvezn*, 550–551; Eisenstein, 96–97 note 3; and Frost, 50–51.

22. In 1936, of the minority attending private Jewish schools, 16,486 or 9 percent attended TSYSHO schools. Kazdan, *Yidishn shulvezn* 550.
23. At its height in Belorussia and Ukraine, where it was the largest, the Soviet Yiddish school network enrolled between a slight majority and approximately two thirds of Jewish students. C. S. Kazdan, "The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars," in *The Jewish People Past and Present* (New York: Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks and CYCO, 1948), 2: 133–134; Nora Levin, *The Jews in the Soviet Union Since 1917* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 1: 184.
24. Michels, 3.
25. Estraikh, "Berlin Bureau;" and Blau, "Max Weinreich."
26. Moss, 148–149 and 170–171.
27. Organizational Committee, Berlin to members of the Organizational Committee, Vilna, 25 February 1926, RG 82, folder 2340; unknown correspondent [Z. Kalmanovitch?] to Y. Bernshteyn, Plock, 18 March 1932, incomplete, RG 1.1, folder 584.
28. S. Dubnow to Z. Reisen and Z. Kalmanovitch, 8 December 1935, RG 1.1, Lithuanian addendum, folder 15.

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