

Globalizing *Doikayt*: How the Bund Became Transnational

Abstract

In contrast to the global dispersion of the post-Second World War Bund, examination of its previous history as a powerful and influential force in Jewish life is usually confined to the former Pale of Settlement. Without disputing its centers of gravity in Russia and Poland, the paper argues for the inclusion also of the effects of migration and transatlantic network-building within this picture. It follows Bundists abroad, exploring how emigrants transnationalized the in practice Bund rather than by design. The article connects the histories of the Bund in Tsarist Russia and independent Poland with those in Argentina, Switzerland, and the United States, highlighting local adaptations as well as the dependency of the Bund “back home” on global network-building. The author argues that only by taking such a transnational perspective we can fully grasp the Bund's impact on modern Jewish history.

Keywords

Jewish Labor Bund, Migration History, Eastern Europe, American Jewish history, Latin American Jewish History, Global Networks



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Submitted on 2022, March 15th, Accepted on 2022, April 29th

DOI: 10.57616/PLIT_2022_03

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

pl.it | rassegna italiana di argomenti polacchi | 13 | 2022

ISSN: 2384-9266 | plitonline.it

Transnational history emerged in the late 1990s with the challenging of the nation-state as the often-unquestioned ordering category of social research. Examining social and cultural cross-border phenomena, this approach aims to break free of methodological nationalism (Wimmer, Glick Schiller 2002): that is, the continuing fragmentation of scholarship and history into nationalized versions of the past. While this has opened up historical research to a variety of new approaches and insights (Epple 2012; Saunier 2013), a blurred usage of the term runs the risk of turning "transnationalism" into a mere buzzword. As a research strategy, however, transnationalism still represents a complex and demanding challenge as it departs from traditional assessments of relevance, area-based expertise, as well as common research structures – from funding and supervision to globally dispersed archival resources.

Reflecting on the arrival of the "transnational turn" in historiography, Shulamit Volkov (2006) warned that while Jewish history might appear as a prototype case for transnational histories, its transnational character should neither be essentialized nor taken for granted. Understanding the transnational dimension of Jewish history requires the examination of details, expressions, and limits. The sociologist Ludger Pries suggested to counter obfuscation by concentrating on what he called "transnational social spaces". These include biographies, organizations, institutions, identities, and families as analytical categories that inherently transcend national societies as the "'quasi natural' units of reference" for the study of the relations of human life (Pries 2008: 8).

Such an approach to transnationalism allows us to identify structures and practices that on the one hand informed Jewish life and history but which on the other have so far escaped attention because of the division of related historiography into (proto)national areas of interest. This division can be critiqued not for its focus on regional questions but rather its tendency to assume state borders being the boundaries of social phenomena, networks, and academic scholarship. From a novel perspective, turning to the transnational dimensions of biographies, identities, or organizational patterns allows us both to empirically examine how Jewish experiences in Earth's remote places were connected and what gave rise to the differences between them.

This is particularly true for the history of the Bund. Research on the latter has traditionally limited its focus to Eastern Europe, dividing up experiences by time and space (e.g., the history of Bund in Tsarist Russia or in independent Poland). The biographies of most Bundists transcended such boundaries, however. Also, as a major player in the Jewish labor movement, the Bund was never confined to these geographic territories alone. This paper thus draws on this observation, following the Bund abroad and at a greater distance overseas. In so doing, it asks how it became transnational and what this development meant for the Bund as an organization, as a political and cultural institution, and as a source of identity.

On the one hand, just by its full name, the Bund might be mistaken for being inherently transnational: The Jewish Labor Bund in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania. Yet, it did not perceive these territories as nationally defined but rather as regions within Imperial Russia, calling for national-cultural autonomy within them and potentially the overall empire too. For a long time, historiography on the Bund has focused on this history as a part of Russian – and later Polish – Jewish

history (e.g., Mendelsohn 1970; Tobias 1972; Pickhan 2001; Jacobs 2009). On the other hand, there has always been the notion – from the very beginning of the Bund through its afterlife in memoirs and historical studies – that while its program focused on Eastern Europe, the movement's membership and influence spanned much further afield. Leon Oler, one of the Bund's founders, stated in 1957 in looking back that the “60-year history of the Bund resembles the life story of a person who lived through his most crucial phases not only at different times, but in different countries, and – in light of recent decades – on different continents” (Oler 1973: 124). Uncovering the transnational history of the Bund, therefore, does not represent a departure from the more classical political histories written during the last few decades. It adds, rather, a largely forgotten layer to them by emphasizing the relevance of cultural work and different forms of activism during leaders' and members lives filled with meaningful deeds and episodes of mobility (Mazower 2017).

The Bund and migration history

What distinguished the Bund from its many alternatives and opponents was its concept of *doikayt* (Yiddish: “hereness”). Carried by tremendous popular support even in illegality, the Bund rested on the conviction that neither assimilation into the Russian-speaking labor movement nor migrating to other destinations offered viable solutions to the poverty and misery of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. From a Jewish and Marxist standpoint, the Bund saw twin repression as Jews and as workers. It called for revolutionary activism in the places of inhabitation by creating and fostering a revolutionary and socialist Yiddish workers' culture (Tobias 1972; Gechtman 2005b). Most importantly, this was a departure from understanding life in the diaspora as God's punishment. In reference to the Russian labor movement, it rejected the notion that the envisioned class-free future would present an all-encompassing solution to cultural repression and antisemitism. *Doikayt* set the Bund against traditionalism and Orthodoxy as well as Zionism and the Bolsheviks. Yet, it also established the Bund's popularity by addressing the specific conditions and needs of the oppressed and impoverished but culturally increasingly self-confident Yiddish-speaking Jews in Tsarist Russia. *Doikayt* equated presence with home, and the Bund developed a complete political agenda out of this recognition. Most pointedly, one of the Bund's famous election posters stated in 1918: “Where we live, that's our homeland!” (Manor-Friedman 1994: 111). What in hindsight might pass as a mere factual statement was in its time a revolutionary call to action.

Unlike the Bolsheviks, the Bund did not operate as a clandestine party but as a popular social movement. Bundism was less devoted to rigorous political debate among party leaders and focused more on enabling Bundists to work toward a free and just future by transforming daily life and work. This, first of all, made the Bund a revolutionary agent of cultural change. This examination of how the movement took on transnational dimensions, therefore, relies on classical literature positioning the Bund as a workers' initiative within modern Jewish politics (Tobias 1972; Mendelsohn 1970, 1993; Frankel 1984, 2009;

Michels 2005) as well as on studies emphasizing its internal heterogeneity (Pickhan 2001; Jacobs 2009). Across these examinations of the Bund in Russia or Poland, one will find frequent mentions that it reached beyond such territorial boundaries. Yet, only more recently has a new line of research emerged picking up on these developments in remote lands. Particularly, David Slucki's (2012) study of the Bund's global history after the Holocaust broke new ground, with it now being supported by several other works also uncovering Bundist histories abroad (Blomqvist 2020; Pâris de Bollardi re 2021). Focusing on the postwar period, these studies connect to internal debates within the Bund after the Holocaust, when it tried to rise again from the ashes of destruction. While it remained a politically active organization – and has continued to do so in Australia until today – it otherwise never regained its erstwhile strength. In most cases, Bundists rather looked back at a glorious past, mourning the death of far too many comrades and struggling with being sidelined by the rise of Zionism and its alleged lack of alternatives (e.g., Kazdan 1952; Aronson *et al.* 1960; Herts 1968). The Bund's postwar transnationalism was thus conditioned by an overwhelming feeling of loss and marginalization.

What has long been forgotten, however, is that the Bund had already experienced a long history of transnational entanglements, ties, and dependencies even before the Second World War (Mayoraz 2013, 2014; Wolff 2021). Already during the earliest stages of developing and applying the concept of *doikayt* would the Bund also be shaped by migration. The movement's transnational history did not start as a consequence of the violent loss of the homeland due to Nazi occupation, but rather as an integral facet of its emergence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This transnationalism is embedded, indeed, in the wider trends of European history, especially the massive emigration of Eastern European Jews to Western Europe and the Americas (Sorin 1992; Gartner 1998; Diner 2000, 2015; Lesser 2012). This paper aims to highlight the dynamics and effects of the Bund's early transnational history by examining one critical yet often overlooked junction therein: the relationship between the Bund's "golden age" during the first half of the twentieth century and the "age of great migrations" unfolding in parallel.

Neither the Bund's intellectual debates nor its oft-examined organizational history provide deeper insight here. As with many aspects of the Bund's history, tracing its transnational character means, first of all, looking for what activists were actually doing and understanding what being a Bundist meant in practice. The Bund was particularly successful among Jewish workers in Tsarist Russia, where personal experiences, pride, and high-risk activism (McAdam 1986) inspired life-defining identification as Bundist. Looking at his activism, Nokhum Khanin (1934: 16), a leading figure in New York's socialist scene, would state "*eyn mol a bundist – ale mol a bundist*" (once a Bundist – always a Bundist). This was as a half-descriptive and half-prescriptive standpoint that mirrored the sentiments of many around him, from the "Forverts" to the Jewish unions and the cultural activists in the Arbeter Ring (Lutik 1927; Yeshurin 1964; Basch 1998; Michels 2005; Katz 2011). To assess the Bund's reach beyond Russia and Poland, we need to uncover how these identities emerged and changed before, during, and after migration. While we can assume that Bundists did not

simply drop their hopes, forms of activity, and sense of solidarity when they filled in an immigration form, migration has still remained but a side note in Bundist historiography.

While from a more classical perspective migration and *doikayt* would appear to be contradictory elements of the Bund's history, taking a transnational view can elicit potential overlaps and intertwined dynamics. One key to the Bund's success in Russia and Poland was that under the slogan "*in di gasn tsu di masn*" (in the streets to the masses) (Schafroth 2016: 44) it took Yiddish culture seriously (Gechtman 2005b; Moss 2009; Pickhan 2009; Shtakser 2009; Nishimura 2013). As a central component of *doikayt*, the Bund pioneered a self-conscious Yiddish workers' culture with a variety of related institutions and branches, from the labor-union movement, through culture and education, extending to sports and youth work too (Woodhouse, Tobias 1966; Jacobs 2001; Mahla 2010; Kozłowska 2013). Hence, the Bund's influence reached unusually far beyond its membership base and party structure. What did this influence mean if these "masses", the Yiddish workers, relocated to other streets on other continents? To follow these migratory complexities, I suggest thinking of the Bund as resting on three simultaneously emerging but not always overlapping pillars: the Bund as an organization, Bundism as a political agenda, and being a Bundist as an identity (Wolff 2021: 18-19). This epistemological differentiation within one larger overarching Bundist history will help us to see its transnational outreach and condition.

Transnationalism out of repression

While the Bund throughout its heyday and period of crisis pre-Second World War established close ties with socialist movements abroad, it never intentionally developed foreign branches or party representations among emigrant workers (Tobias 1972; Jacobs 1993). The exception to this rule, however, was central to the Bund's survival in its early years. Striving for a better future in the place of inhabitation via an illegal movement, Bundists in Tsarist Russia constantly faced the threat of arrest, punishment, and exile to Siberia (Yeshurin 1964: 5-6; Nam 2010; Wolff 2021: 57-59). Instead of retreating into conspiratorial secrecy, the Bund relied on a mass movement organized into party cells spread out all over the Pale of Settlement. This secured outreach, but also exposed members and leaders to the risk of persecution and arrest. This became threatening when, already in 1898, the secret police led by Sergei Zubatov cracked down on the Bund leadership and their party in a wave of arrests (Kossovski 1942; Shvarts 1968).

Stripping the new party of its leading thinkers and organizers only one year after its foundation almost sealed the Bund's fate right at the outset. Yet it persisted by creating a new dual leadership structure. First, all of a sudden, inexperienced workers moved to the top of the Central Committee, which operated from within the Pale of Settlement. Second, a number of leading Bundists escaped the "Zubatovshchina" to countries like Austria and Switzerland. There, they joined circles of revolutionary Russian intellectuals and émigré students. In order to remain actively involved with the party, they

quickly established another body that the Central Committee first welcomed and then in 1899 recognized as the Bund's Foreign Committee (Mayoraz 2013: 56), the second part of the party's new head structure. While the Central Committee operated in hiding to coordinate local committees, union activities, and a – highly important – secret printing press (T. 1907; Berman 1953; Kling 1970; Tobias 1972: 90), the Foreign Committee maintained intellectual leadership and organized material support.

Returning to Oler's metaphor of the Bund as a person with a transnational life, in a unique structure the Central and Foreign Committees shared across borders the function of being the Bund's brains, while the latter became the face and visible hand of the Bund outside of Russia. Working as an organizational and intellectual base for the Bund beyond the reach of the Tsarist police, the Foreign Committee organized the printing and smuggling of relevant material, kept in touch with emigrant Bundists, and oversaw the ties to other Russian or European socialist parties (Weill 2001; Mayoraz 2013). On an individual basis, emigrant leaders also wrote for journals and papers, introducing Bundist perspectives to the non-Bundist Yiddish and Russian press: be it Zivion reporting from the Zionist congress in Basel in 1901 for the New York "Forverts" or Vladimir Medem regularly writing for the journal "Den" published in St. Petersburg (Zivion 1940; Portnoy 1979: 489).

The Bund's first transnational steps thus came early and were intentionally taken. Yet, they remained limited to the top of the party alone. Based on prominent figures and their organizational capabilities, the Foreign Committee became a channel for printed material and money. In this role, it also sent the Bund's publications abroad and hoped to receive subscription fees. The returns remained marginal financially speaking, but this act did initiate a transfer of knowledge that secured the presence of the Bund's voice in the growing circles of Jewish socialism from London to New York (*Referat* 1906). Nevertheless, other reports reveal that already in the early 1900s substantial sums crossed the Atlantic into European Bundist funds. Such transfers even led Jonathan Frankel, in his classical evaluation of Jewish politics during the Russian Revolution of 1905, to conclude: "Revolutionary organizations depended to an extraordinary extent on the ebb and flow of fundraising and this dependence grew as the Russian economy was undermined by the turbulence of war and internal disorder" (Frankel 2009: 68).

An economic history of political movements is one of the great desiderata of modern history, probably mostly because of the myths surrounding the topic, particularly when it comes to the Russian Revolutions (Lyandres 1995). Newer research, however, has indicated that instead of conspiracies one should look rather at social practices to develop a better understanding (Lainer-Vos 2012) of the "social meaning of money" (Zelizer 1997). Such practices also shaped the Bund vis-à-vis its transnational dimensions. While the Foreign Committee channeled funds into Russia, the creation of such financial streams depended on variables beyond the reach of that body, most importantly, emigrant Bundists willing to send money to support the fight back home (Wolff 2017). This means that the deliberately introduced top-level organizational transnationalism of the Foreign Committee somehow "depended" (Frankel 1984) on other, unintended transnational practices to enable its work.

Popular Transnationalism until the First World War

In about two decades before the First World War, around 2.5 million Jews left Russia (Klier 1996; Lederhendler 2009). Eastern European Jewish quarters emerged in cities like Paris, London, and Berlin, and most importantly in the United States. Between 1904 and 1914, 1.4 million Russian Jews (i.e., Jewish inhabitants of the Russian Empire) migrated to New York alone (Weissbach 1988: 84; Sorin 1992: 137), turning the city's Lower East Side into "the Jewish East Side" (Hindus 1996). Another approximately 100,000 Russian Jews went to Argentina, where most arrived (and stayed) in Buenos Aires (Weill 1936; Sofer 1982). Among these emigrants were thousands of Bundists, as well as many more sympathizers besides.

Looking at Jewish life and Bundism in New York and Buenos Aires reveals many similarities between experiences – but also striking differences, too. Instead of being "too busy to look back" (Brinkmann 2010: 51), the Bundists and their circles stayed connected to the movement's politics and ideas in "the old home" (Kobrin 2010; Lipphardt 2010; Wolff 2021). To understand how they did that without a local Bundist organization, and moreover in countries like the US with little resemblance to what they had experienced in Russia, we need to examine how Bundism from the Eastern European shtetls and Jewish quarters was put into practice in overseas metropolises.

The first Bundists arrived in the Americas around the year 1900 alongside other Jewish migrants. For many, the goal was New York. At the third annual convention of American Bundist organizations, held in New York in 1906, national secretary Israel Bergman proudly declared the existence of over twenty such organizations in the US, other clubs from Montreal to Cape Town, as well as a global smuggling network that even reached incarcerated Jewish soldiers in Japan (*Referat* 1906: 8-14). In the US, and New York particularly, these immigrants encountered both a capitalism and a socialism foreign to them (Lederhendler 2009). The differentiated labor market and cultural life on-site neither reflected the Bund's agenda nor its form of organization. What provided orientation, therefore, was not Bundist circles but rather the Yiddish press (Perlman 1960; Mendelsohn 1976). Many Bundists found a new environment around "Forverts", Abraham Cahan's socialist daily that dominated political life on the Lower East Side (Rich 1967; Manor 2009). While the integration of Bundists added new depth and layers to American Jewish socialism in general and the Forverts Association in particular, any attempts to form a Bundist party organization in the US would have been considered a split within American Jewish socialism, harming the impressive advance of the Socialist Party of America (SPA) (London 1910; Michels 2005). Therefore, most immigrated Bundists supported the SPA and its agenda of forming a national progressive movement.

They nevertheless remained loyal to the Bund, aiming also to reinforce its work. Instead of founding a Bund in the US, they created new circles. Arriving Bundist immigrants and established leaders of American Jewish socialism – from Cahan to the later SPA congressman Meyer London – formed groups supporting the Bund in Russia, most importantly the "Friends of the Bund".

The latter was a supportive network made up of Bundists and other influential Jewish socialists in New York who were able to respond to urgent requests. For instance, after the Friends of the Bund received a call for action with an expressed "need of money" from the Foreign Committee on February 6, 1905, right at the onset of the first Russian revolution, it instantly raised \$1,000 at an emergency meeting (Circular letter, Friends of the Bund, 1905, Bund Archives, New York, RG 1400, ME-18, 3). While in hindsight \$1,000 might appear a meager sum for a party such as the Bund, this impression changes if we adjust the value to historical economics. Comparing monetary amounts across time (and space) is complicated, but we can calculate worth over time based on complex and nuanced measures (Williamson, Cain 2022). Depending on the form of measurement used, \$1,000 in 1905 translates to between \$30,300 (real price) and \$719,000 (economic share) in 2020¹.

The difference in the figure arrived at depends on the changing value of money in specific contexts, for instance whether one refers to a fixed bundle of goods across time (real price) or one adjusted to shifts in consumption and needs (relative value in consumption), if we relate the sum in question to wages (labor value), purchasing power (income value), or conversely the total output of the economy (economic share). Many of those options make sense for certain comparisons but say little about the value of that sum of money in daily life (Williamson and Cain 2022). To find a meaningful and moderate middle ground in relation to immigrant lives in 1905, this paper uses the relative value in consumption (RVC). It compares the value of a given sum based on an average bundle of goods and services such as food, shelter, and clothing, an average household would buy in each specific time period. The RVC therefore allows the best approximation of the changing value of an amount of money in daily life. This indicates that, based on average consumption, \$1,000 in 1905 had a relative value of \$68,600 (RVC) compared to 2020.

The Friends of the Bund directly wired this donated sum to their comrades in Switzerland and committed to raising more in the days and weeks to follow. To achieve that, the American Bundists and their supporters turned to what today would be called "crowdsourcing". In creative events and campaigns – from selling solidarity tickets in batches of hundreds to local unions for Bundist picnics in New York's parks to canvassing the streets of the Lower East Side and organizing fundraising balls – they raised many small donations of a few cents each that cumulatively added up to overall substantial sums. In 1905, Bundists in the US alone collected enough to transfer \$38,932.77 (\$2,670,000 RVC) to the Foreign Committee. Rejecting large donors and patrons as bourgeois, every cent came from Jewish immigrant workers who themselves made barely enough to feed their families. Yet, they decided to donate to such campaigns in order to display their solidarity with the Russian Bund in practice.

The campaigners could make the compelling case that the Russian Bund needed this steady transatlantic flow of resources. When in 1906, for instance, representatives of the Foreign Committee informed American Bundists about

¹ Calculation based on <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/relativevalue.php>.

their activities, they reported that the Foreign Committee had operated on a budget of approximately \$9,000 in 1903 (\$660,000 RVC), \$13,000 in 1904 (\$934,000 RVC), and \$41,500 (\$2,857,000 RVC) in the first eleven months of 1905 alone (*Referat 1906*: 9). Subscriptions and membership fees remained of marginal importance; this money almost exclusively came from American Bundist initiatives. Yet, the material transfers did not result in organizational adjustments. Despite the existence of more than a hundred organizations worldwide in 1906 (*Referat 1906*: 8), and leading Bundists claiming to integrate them into the party by recognizing them as foreign clubs (e.g., Zivion 1907), the Foreign Committee ultimately rejected any such requests.

Nevertheless, a vivid pattern of exchange took shape. Money moved in one direction and people, ideas, and forms of engagement in the other. Bundism's beginnings in the US were spontaneous yet driven by previous experience of flexibly organizing local groups and networks. Even before the foundation of an American umbrella organization in 1903, Bundists there had formed nine local organizations and eight *landsmanshaftn* (*Referat 1906*: 8-9). After the Kishinev pogrom in 1903, the Bund devoted much energy to informing the world about the atrocities inflicted (Marten-Finnis 2003; Penkover 2004). American Bundists even created "self-defense groups" in the US, not to fight local antisemitism but rather as emotional facets of related groups in Russia, contributing to the fight by raising funds for arms and leaflets. In this matter, the Central Committee adopted a transnational stance and directly asked "all Americans" to join their fight through both fundraising and spreading awareness of the violence to their country folk (*Di pogromen 1905*).

Secondary Bundism: Local Activism with Transnational Politics

Apart from engagement in such support groups, many Bundists affiliated with the newly emerged Socialist Party and carried their Bundism into it. They founded socialist organizations such as the Jewish Agitation Office, and in 1912 the much more successful Jewish Socialist Federation (JSF). Both "functioned as the American equivalent to the Bund" (Michels 2005: 173), promoting and practicing a Bundist form of socialism. Temporarily, the JSF received recognition as the Yiddish-speaking branch of the Socialist Party (Salutski 1913; Epstein 1953: 6; Michels 2005: 171-178). Cahan partly cooperated with the JSF, but also cast a critical eye on it out of the suspicion it might become a "Bund in America" (Levin 1977: 167). This fear was not entirely unsubstantiated. Even though it was not named after the Bund and avoided having overly close relations with it, the JSF leadership was still made up of the same persons as those heading the American Bundist groups. Their networks and practices were as much a contribution to American socialism as a challenge to the singular role of the Forverts Association therein.

The continuous arrival of Bundists to the US also had an impact on already-existing socialist organizations. Under Bundist influence, for instance, the former unionist self-organized insurance circle Arbeter Ring developed

into the most prominent cultural association in the American Jewish workers' movement and beyond. By 1905, Bundists had already formed fourteen openly Bundist Arbeter Ring branches, influencing many more branches, before organizers with a Bundist background eventually established a guiding presence also in its leadership ranks (Hurwitz 1936; "Dvinsker brentsh" 1939; Arbeter Ring, Yeshurin, Yakob 1962; Trunk 1976). A similar development can be seen in the American Jewish union movement, where Bundists first established a "Bund-type radical activism" (Basch 1998: 61) during labor struggles such as the famous New York shirtwaist strike of 1909. It established the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union as a major player in the American labor movement, with devoted Bundists like Baruch Charney Vladeck taking up positions among its highest ranks (Vladek 1947; Basch 1998; Wolff 2021: 291-294).

Such organizations became carriers of Bundism in the US without working under the Bund's banner or adopting its name. We can, therefore, think of them as secondary Bundist organizations. They were organizationally independent from the Bund but practically and ideologically closely connected to it. By transferring Bundist thought and action into a functionally highly differentiated American society, they added ideas, practices, and experiences to Jewish socialism without directly challenging preexisting organizations like the Forverts Association or the Socialist Party (Wolff 2021: 250-259). While the Bund as an organizational frame seemed unwanted or rather unfit for American capitalism, secondary Bundism transnationalized major Bundist ideas such as *doikayt* as well as the Bundist form of *yidishkayt* (secular Jewish workers' culture in the Yiddish language) to the Lower East Side and beyond.



Fig. 1. Bundists in Buenos Aires: The rare and apparently only known image of the founders of the Avangard group in front of a portrait of Karl Marx. Sitting in the front row (second person from the left) is Pinie Vald. Source: IWO, Buenos Aires, 1114.

Recreating a Bund in South America

When at the turn of the twentieth century many Bundists came to Argentina, they developed a different kind of transnationalism. The economic conditions, the unions formed, and Jewish life in general resembled the Russian experience to a greater extent than was the case in the US. Moreover, Yiddish culture was only in its infancy along the Rio de la Plata (Sofer 1982; Nouwen 2013). Immigrating Bundists could develop their preferred form of organizational life in the Jewish quarters of Buenos Aires, where most of them decided to stay, without undermining locally established Jewish socialist organizations.

This also meant that Yiddish cultural activities would draw far more openly on their Eastern European origins than was so in the US. In the popular tongue, for instance, *rusos* meant Russian Jews and the leading Jewish socialist meeting place was called Biblioteca Rusa. In this newly founded socialist library, Bundists and other revolutionaries from Russia met and quarreled about both the struggle in Tsarist Russia and the proper way to organize a Jewish labor movement in Argentina (Vald 1929: 35-36; Laubstein 1997: 171-178). Smaller in number and focusing on local issues, Yiddish life as well as the formation of Jewish socialism in Buenos Aires operated with far greater disconnect from the Bund in Europe than was the case in the US. The only traces I found for regular relations between Bundists in Argentina and elsewhere (beyond migration and individual contacts) until after the First World War were announcements in local Bundist journals of newly arrived Bundist publications for the collection of the Biblioteca Rusa (regularly announced in "Der avangard", 1908-1910).

Instead of channeling their energy into relief organizations like the Friends of the Bund, the immigrants to Argentina founded the group Avangard (N.N. 1908; Vald 1909; N.N. 1937). Regardless of having a different name, it aimed to continue the Bund's work in the South American country. Following the local Bundist leader Pinie Vald, this also included a transfer of the Bundist concept of national-cultural autonomy (Vald 1917; Gechtman 2005a). From 1908 onward, the group published the monthly "Der avangard" – to the best of my knowledge, the first lasting Yiddish periodical in Latin America. It was a pioneering, high-quality Yiddish journal that was only discontinued as a result of police violence in 1910 and with the subsequent destruction of the Biblioteca Rusa (Vald 1942). This brutal crackdown on socialism and Jewish self-organization in Argentina (Mirelman 2005) scattered the local Bundist movement. Later attempts to revive "Der avangard" were short-lived and of lesser quality. Nevertheless, as Avangardistas in the 1900s transferred practical Bundism to the Southern Hemisphere, they took on founding roles for Yiddish unions, Yiddish theaters outside the red-light district, educational initiatives, the Jewish strike movement, and even activities countering antisemitism (Libman 1908; Vald 1908a, 1908b; N.N. 1909. More material in: IWO, Buenos Aires, 1114). Again, they collected donations – albeit for a long time only for local purposes. Despite intense archival research, I could not find any traces of intellectual exchange or money transfers between Argentinian Bundists and, for instance, the Foreign Committee. This would change after 1917.

Transnational self-confidence in the interwar period

The October Revolution also shook the Bundist world. Just like other socialist organizations, the Bund was torn between siding with socialism or communism (Brumberg 2001; Gechtman 2010). After a few years, the social-democratic Bund found new traction in independent Poland, where it experienced a second golden age (Jacobs 2009). Now operating legally, it did no longer require a Foreign Committee and focused instead on local work and a new party center in Warsaw (Pickhan 2001).

In the wake of the October Revolution, Bundism overseas changed as well. In 1923, Bundists in the US for the first time formed an American Bund Club that subsequently received recognition as an externally supportive Bundist organization. It was small in size, and its goals were confined to supporting the nascent Bund in Poland (Bundisher Klub 1938; Wolff 2021: 376. Membership card as well as other materials, Bund Archives, New York, RG 1400, ME-18, 10). Regardless of its size and agenda, around it emerged new forms of ideological and material transfer, indicating that the Bund held on to its revolutionary goals yet directed them more toward cultural work. Intensified union work carried the movement to fresh electoral successes in Poland, but Yiddish education began to shape the new Bund from the ground up (Jacobs 2009; Kozłowska 2013, 2020). In the US, many secondary Bundist organizations embarked on a similar path, closely knitting together a cultural web with the Bund in Poland.

This was a two-way street. American donations were needed to keep the school network TSISHO going, while Bundists there printed books and memoirs by emigrant leaders that inspired the movement “back home”. At the same time, Bundist leaders from Poland toured the US and lectured about Europe and the Bund. The tens of thousands of dollars collected during such educational and fundraising events during the 1920s almost completely went to support election campaigns in Poland as well as the TSISHO. In the late 1930s, such transfers amounted to approximately \$200,000 (ca. \$8-9 million RVC) (Wolff 2021: 391). Additionally, Bundists stepped up their relief activities for comrades threatened by antisemitism and growing fascism. This led to the foundation of the Jewish Labor Committee (Collomp 2021) which can be seen as another major secondary Bundist organization. Most importantly, collecting donations first required sharing knowledge and awareness as well as developing a vernacular connecting both donors and recipients. Their success made the Bundists effective cultural and political brokers between the “old” and the “new home”. Bundist fundraising there also left its mark on cultural and educational work in the US, most importantly the Arbeter Ring (Gelibter 1935; Niger 1940).

In Argentina, things developed similarly – albeit per other organizational patterns and on a different time schedule. A Bund Club was founded in 1924, and the Bundist school building in Lavalle Street became a center of Yiddish socialism in Buenos Aires (Laubstein 1997: 186-188; IWO, Buenos Aires, 1114; Organización de Maestros: 14; CAHJP, Jerusalem, AR, PER, 63-64). Argentinian Bundists faced more pressure from Jewish communist groups than their American comrades did (Visacovsky 2015). Left-wing Jewish politics in Argentina diversified into a Bundist, a Labor Zionist, an anarchist, and

a communist faction, mostly organized around their individual school networks (Zadoff 1994). Moreover, now for the first time, secondary Bundist organizations emerged, most importantly the Jewish Socialist Association of Argentina (N.N. 1924; N.N. 1936b). When, in 1930, the Polish Bund acknowledged this vibrant Bundist life in Buenos Aires, they instantly sent Benjamin Tabachinsky as a delegate on the long journey south. Despite initial concerns by the hosts about the political turmoil in Argentina, his visit in 1931 would be a success and inspired later ones – like by the famous Polish Bundist journalist Barukh Shefner in 1936 (Vald 1936a; N.N. 1936a).

Despite the enthusiasm shown during the receptions offered, these visits never ultimately met with the same outcome of revolutionary fundraising seen in the US. This was also because, in contrast to American campaigns, the collected funds were split between the Yiddish schools in Poland and Argentina. While the monetary gains for the Polish Bund remained modest, both visits directly elevated Argentinian Bundism. Tabachinsky left the idea of the TSISHO in Argentina, which led to the foundation there of the similarly structured Society for Jewish Secular Schools and of the TSVISHO. Both quickly became prominent institutions of local-reform pedagogy (Tsuker 1972; Zadoff 1994: 95-99). Shefner's visit, meanwhile, popularized those Bundist Yiddish schools to such an extent that, in the end, Vald (1936b) felt obliged to remind his comrades of the fact religious Jews were opponents, not allies.

Conclusion

In light of Jewish mass migration before the Second World War, *doikayt* was a double-edged concept. On the one hand, the Bund neither opposed nor favored emigration. Despite prominent calls to do so, it for a long time even rejected the recognition of Bund clubs abroad as official party branches. Structurally, the early Bund thus failed to respond to the practicalities of transnationalization with a sound organizational framework that would have officially supported and nurtured the emigrants' hopes to stay connected. On the other hand, carried forward by thousands of activists, Bundism and a Bundist presence unfolded "in other streets". This means that *doikayt* was possible everywhere (Slucki 2010). The diaspora had its centers of gravity, but was not spatially confined. By practice rather than by design, Bundists developed a transatlantic (and later global) Jewish socialist network. Therein Bundist groups, and to a greater extent secondary organizations, exported Bundism to many countries worldwide. This resulted in one large transnational network enabling the Bund's work. Ultimately, the historically famous Bund in Russia and Poland to an important extent would depend on these lesser-known developments abroad.

Hence, the organizational limits the Bund imposed on itself are only one part of the story; migration-based transfers of money and ideas as well as cultural outreach are others. Shaped by thousands of workers, the Bund became transnational through exiled leaders, rank and file activism, and many emigrant organizations, which maintained Bundism and adjusted to different local conditions. When in the US Bundism thrived in secondary Bundist groups, in Argentina also such organizations were established that were ideologically and organizationally

very similar to the “Russian” model. While quantitatively and qualitatively exceptional, the US and Argentina are only two of the many places of Jewish emigration in fact. Similar developments and adaptations of Bundist practices occurred in many other destinations, be it in European cities or in smaller circles in Latin America – like in Mexico, Uruguay, or Brazil. In the interwar period, these formerly disconnected oases slowly became nodes of one large Bundist network.

Uncovering this network not only helps shed light on the background to the Bund’s postwar global history, which in return has been so convincingly described by Slucki (2012). It might, furthermore, also aid rethinking modern Jewish history beyond the traditional centers of attention. As Jewish scholarship is continuously moving from methodologically nationalized approaches toward a more refined understanding of diaspora life, it might be insightful to consider the global nature of the Bund as a dominant substrata of transnational Jewish history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Paying more attention to these networks, adaptations, and forms of activism should allow a better understanding of the Bund’s complex historicity as well as help explain the revitalized interest in its legacy, as a “usable past” for today’s urgent questions (e.g., Crabapple 2020).

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