

nicians” but also “generals” in the Populist underground, Haberer goes one step further. He argues that detached from concepts of “going to the people”, and the anarchic peasants revolution, the Jewish revolutionaries exerted Western influence on Populist ideology, politics and tactics. Jewish leaders of the *Zemlia i Volia* and the *Narodnaia Volia*, going against the Populist stream, were successful in bringing into revolutionary Populism elements of organized political work along the German model. Thus, they contributed to both a moderation and a politicization of Populism, which in fact anticipated the Marxist phase in the Russian revolutionary movement. The *maskilic* background of the Jewish revolutionaries is, then, the crux of Haberer’s revision. Their *maskilic* upbringing influenced many Russian Jewish young men and women to join revolutionary Populism, and as *maskilim* they worked to Westernize its distinctly Russian peasant character.

Haberer’s quantitative revision – namely the high ratio of Jews in revolutionary Populism and their share in its leadership – is well founded and of immense contribution. His explanation for this phenomenon, particularly the *maskilic* argument, however, needs reconsideration. It is questionable whether the Russian version of Jewish enlightenment was such a Westernizing or revolutionizing force as Haberer depicts it, and whether the non-insignificant number of Jewish revolutionaries who converted tells us something different about their Jewish motives. Moreover, Haberer’s account posits the Jewish Populist revolutionaries as almost a monolithic group, whereas available data indicate that there were a number of Jewish revolutionary types, each coming from different backgrounds, possessing different attitudes to their Jewishness and harboring different goals. From the perspective of a more heterogenic approach to the Jewish revolutionaries, Haberer’s study may be said to describe one segment of the Jewish Populists, that stands at the opposite end of the continuum from the accepted version, with several other types in between. On the whole, it seems that while the accepted version may have minimized the Jewish factor in the activity of Jewish Populists, Haberer’s revision undoubtedly tends to overemphasize it.

Haberer’s study is, nevertheless, the most updated, authoritative study of Jewish participation in Russian revolutionary Populism, and the above reservations, more than questioning its conclusions, are proof of its productivity. Indeed, one can hardly exaggerate the contribution that Haberer’s study makes to the fields of Russian Jewish history and the history of Russian revolutionary movements.

Daniel Gutwein

MINCZELES, HENRI. *Histoire générale du Bund. Un mouvement révolutionnaire juif*. Austral, Paris 1995. 526 pp. Ill. F.fr. 190.00.

As the first historians of the Jewish labour movement wrote mainly in Russian and in Yiddish (with an occasional sprinkling of German and, occasionally, Polish or Hebrew), the fruit of their labours unfortunately remained inaccessible to readers unfamiliar with these languages.

From the end of the 1960s onwards, a host of seminal books on the subject have appeared in English – we need only mention the works of Bernard K. Johnpoll, Ezra Mendelsohn, Henry J. Tobias, Nora Levin and Jonathan Frenkel – opening up this field of studies to the English-reading public. Much

valuable research has also been undertaken in Israel, usually followed by English translations. Recent Polish contributions remain, sadly enough, untranslated.

Although France hosts the largest Jewish community of Western Europe and despite the fact that the local Jewish labour movement was strongly rooted in the country (both the Jewish Communists and the French *Bund* published dailies in Yiddish after World War II), it is only quite recently that the academic world has shown interest in the subject. This neglect is surprising indeed in view of the powerful impact the Jewish Communist faction had in France and of the long-standing French tradition of research in social history.

It is in this sense that the present book is a landmark. Minczeles's piece of research – in fact the substance of his Ph.D. in history – is the first monograph of the *Bund* to be published in French. The author is not only an historian, specializing in Jewish life in Lithuania – which includes Wilno (Vilna), a crucial nexus of *Bund* activity in pre-World War I Russia and pre-World War II Poland – but has also been personally involved in Bundist activities in France, which lends a personal touch to his research.

The book encompasses the entire history of the main Jewish Labour party, from its beginnings (the pre-*Bund* era) until the final disbanding of the reascent *Bund* in Poland, forced into a “merger” with the Polish United Workers Party (i.e. Communist) in 1948.

As could be expected, the opening section is devoted to the prehistory of the *Bund* and to the first steps of the Socialist movement among the Jewish masses of Czarist Russia. The following chapters analyse the spectacular upsurge of the party after its formal foundation in Vilna in 1897.

The young organization narrowly avoided two perilous pitfalls. On the one hand, its members were subjected to an efficient recruitment campaign by the police chief Zubatov, with the aim of destroying the very foundations of organized Jewish Socialism by coaxing its members and cadre into joining the police-controlled trade unions as a legal alternative to revolutionary activity, with all the risks this type of militancy implied. In Zubatov's view, the Czarist power structure could afford to encourage legal non-political trade unionism. His ingenious initiative came close to destroying the *Bund* – especially in the Minsk area – and the party was in fact lucky that the Ministry of the Interior ordered an end to the experiment after matters apparently got out of hand in Odessa where the so-called “Independents” had built up a mass-following starting from scratch, which spontaneously took to organizing mass strikes.

Then there was the temptation of terrorism. Despite the fact that such activity was at loggerheads with Marxism and Social-Democratic theory, the *Bund* leadership condoned, if not actually encouraged, Hersh Lekert's attempt to murder the military Governor of Vilna and later justified these tactics, after Lekert had been hanged, by appealing to the necessity of defending Jewish honour. The Geneva nucleus of exiled *Bund* cadre had a difficult job in getting the membership to renounce these tactics and as a matter of fact Lekert never ceased to be worshipped as a hero.

Minczeles also stresses – quite rightly – the role of the party in organizing Jewish self-defence against pogroms. A separate section of the book describes the conflictual relationship of the *Bund* with the Russian Social-Democratic Workers

Party on the eve of the historical split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.

Possibly the *Bund* enjoyed its finest hour during the 1905 Revolution in Russia – when it rose to unprecedented levels of influence – but this period was followed by the “Black Years”, during which all revolutionary activity was ruthlessly suppressed. The party nearly disintegrated in the course of this bleak period of depression and the process of restructuring the organization proved very painful. In fact, the party only recovered during the years immediately preceding World War I.

The author also offers an in-depth analysis of Socialist attitude towards the Jewish question in the Russian Empire and the inception of the Bundist specific ideology relating to this issue (“national-cultural autonomy”).

The examination of the Bundist reaction to World War I is followed by an analysis of the impact on the party of the Russian revolution and the Bolshevik seizure of power. In Russia, Communism spelled disaster and led to the *Bund*’s extinction: the majority of members were cajoled or pressurized into joining the Bolsheviks and the Social-Democratic rump party was subjected to harsh persecution and disappeared, except for its exiled figureheads which were to work in close connection with the uprooted Menshevik leaders in New York, whose fate they had shared.

The final chapter deals with the Polish *Bund* as it emerged from 1918 onwards, throughout the pre-World War II years – its heyday – and describes the *Bund*’s attempts to organize resistance against the Nazis and the Holocaust. Naturally, Minczeles stresses the scope and importance of the Bundist participation in the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

The account ends with an evocative depiction of the short-lived activity of the *Bund* after World War II until the party was compelled to dissolve and join the Polish Communists. Hundreds of members refused to do so and expressed their opposition by fleeing the country.

As the book relies mainly on secondary resources with an occasional reference to the rich *Bund* archives, this history cannot really be considered to cover new ground or open up fresh avenues of research. But it does paint a vivid picture of the movement from its inception (the party was founded in 1897) until its final demise. And it is especially valuable for its treatment of issues which have not been dealt with or only in a cursory manner in the standard works mentioned above, such as the split in the Russian *Bund* between Bolsheviks and Social-Democrats and the liquidation of the remnants of the *Bund* in Russia. It also offers unpublished materials on the activities of the *Bund* in Poland after the Holocaust. Regarding this particular subject, Minczeles has interviewed direct participants and provides details which, to the best of my knowledge, have never been revealed previously.

*Histoire générale du Bund* is highly readable, contains a substantial bibliography as well as an index (the latter is unfortunately still far from being a general rule in France) and will therefore prove a handy reference work for the French-reading public.

*Nathan Weinstock*