

state was virtually non-existent, as it had been in the days of the Company Raj. Company employees who had privately traded in limestone, silk, and opium, often became planters, who, over time, succeeded in turning a protean landscape into a disciplined environment, or what Jayetta Sharma called the “Empire’s Garden”.¹

Most importantly, these two thoroughly researched and clearly argued books elucidate the value of regional history to understanding the emergence of global capitalism. They also creatively blend the methods of environmental, social, cultural and economic history to reveal how merchants and planters, rivers, rajas, tribal communities, and the millions of indentured laborers who were essentially enslaved on the tea plantations transformed and were shaped by this aqueous environment. Both authors have written methodologically and theoretically sophisticated books that will undoubtedly shape South and Southeast Asian studies and the scholarship on the British Empire for some time.

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TRĘBACZ, MICHAŁ. *Israel Lichtenstein. Biografia żydowskiego socjalisty.* [Israel Lichtenstein. A Biography of a Jewish Socialist.] Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Łódź 2016. 250 pp. Pzł 40.00.

In the early twentieth century, Łódź was a rapidly developing, industrial Polish city with all the typical features of early capitalism: chaotic and uncontrolled urbanization, deep social divisions, areas of extreme poverty, and oases of wealth. With approximately 500,000 residents in 1911, the city was a living laboratory for observing all manner of social processes, and provided perfect conditions for a debate about whether class or national divisions were more important in politics. The so-called proletarian capital of Poland was inhabited by approximately 167,000 Jews, 82,000 Germans, and 270,000 Poles. It was here that the political skills and social engagement of Israel Lichtenstein (1883–1933) flourished. According to Michał Trębacz, Lichtenstein was an undisputed leader and one of the most significant individuals in the history of the Bund, a secular Jewish socialist party, in the city of Łódź. To confirm this thesis, Trębacz cites Emanuel Szerer, who equated Lichtenstein with Bronisław Grosser, Włodzimierz Medem, Bejnisz Michalewicz, and other legendary founders of the Bund.

Trębacz argues that the social engagement of Lichtenstein was rooted in his moral attitude rather than in his ideological views: “He perceived freedom as having the greatest value of all. For him, this was a very broad and diverse concept, covering a range of political freedoms, freedom from economic constraints, social freedom, the freedom of ideological and religious beliefs and the right to freely manifest them” (p. 14).

The first chapter of the biography is dedicated to Lichtenstein’s childhood and adolescence. After two years of working in a foundry and a bakery, at the age of fourteen, the

1. Jayetta Sharma, *Empire’s Garden: Assam and the Making of India* (Durham, NC [etc.], 2011).

young Lichtenstein left provincial Włocławek without a penny in his pocket to go to Warsaw, an escape that changed his life. He found a job in a bookstore, where he could read all sorts of books day and night. Thus, according to the author, the bookshop was not only a workplace for the young boy, but also a school and a university, where he could read books in Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, and Polish. After several years spent in the bookstore, Lichtenstein attended a teacher training college. Trębacz quotes Aleksander Margolis, who explained Lichtenstein's choice of education by saying that "having made so much effort to educate himself, he wanted to educate others" (p. 21).

In his early twenties, Lichtenstein met a writer, Isaac Leib Peretz, who introduced him to a large group of people involved in intellectual discussions, an important influence on his intellectual development. Another influence, his involvement in the labour movement, began with joining the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) party – of which Rosa Luxemburg was the leading figure. Subsequently, Lichtenstein joined the Bund. It is difficult to say for certain why the young Lichtenstein left Rosa Luxemburg's party, but one interpretation is that Lichtenstein rejected the SDKPiL's position on the national issue and, specifically, their position towards the assimilation of Jews. Trębacz cites Dawid Mejer: "The idea of assimilation was alien to him. [...] His ethnic soul, which was filled with Jewish concerns [...] made him detest the ignorant attitude towards the life of the Jewish masses and their cultural needs" (p. 23).

One of the fundamental issues that distinguished the leftist parties in Poland from each other at that time was their attitudes to national affairs. While the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) combined the struggle for social rights with the struggle for Polish independence, the SDKPiL party sought to conduct an internationalist workers' revolution, liquidate national states and introduce the rule of the proletariat. It was also reluctant to acknowledge the aspirations for independence. However, with the escalation of the revolutionary mood in 1905, the SDKPiL worked closely with the Bund and the left faction of the PPS. In December 1918, some activists of the SDKPiL and PPS-Left created the Polish Communist Party (KPP), operating under the name of the Polish Communist Workers' Party (KPRP) until 1925. Lichtenstein could have been discouraged from joining the SDKPiL by its suggestion to assimilate other nations. According to Jan Kancewicz, "Writing on behalf of the SDKPiL party, Felix Dzerzhinsky recognized Yiddish as the language of agitation. The party, however, did not recognize the Jews as a nation. It opted for the usefulness of assimilation, in this case to Polishness. Although, of course, it was not compulsory" (p. 24).

While in the Bund, Lichtenstein adopted the pseudonym "Samuel" and was initially responsible for the composition and distribution of illegal literature. During the revolution (1905–1907), he was able to come out from the shadows. This quiet and shy young man transformed into a revolutionary. Trębacz quotes Sofia Dubnow-Ehrlich, who described how, in this period, Lichtenstein found his voice as a public speaker and "champion of the people" (p. 26).

The second chapter of this book describes how Lichtenstein developed his organizational skills and social activities in Łódź – he moved there with his family in 1907 following the repression he had experienced after the events of 1905. He became the head of a school for deaf children, run by the Jewish Association for Helping the Deaf and Dumb, "Ezras Ilmin", which he co-founded. At the same time, he was an activist in the Hebrew Teachers' Mutual Aid Society. In 1913, Lichtenstein founded, together with a group of Jewish intellectuals, the Society for Helping Mentally Handicapped Children. His activity in the field of education and helping children was influenced by his strategy of combining official social activities with more radical political activity, and by his own experiences in his youth,

which made him particularly sensitive to the conditions of children – he believed that with help and education, their lives could be changed. As a result of his commitment, he became the leader of the local Bund after a few years of living in Łódź. In 1917, he was elected to the City Council of Łódź as the Bund's representative.

In the following chapters, Trębacz outlines Lichtenstein's political activity at the level of the City Council and later at the national level. He became a councillor for the first time in January 1917, when the City Council groups were organized along national rather than political lines. The only two people to reject the logic of this decision were Lichtenstein and Ignacy Gralak, a representative of the Polish Socialist Party-Left (PPS-Lewica). They both remained independent. Protesting against nationalism, while defending the right to Jewish autonomy, Lichtenstein said on a podium: "Poland will really only be happy if all the inhabitants of this land are happy, and this is based on the complete equality of all citizens without distinction of nationality" (p. 60). During his first term on the City Council, Lichtenstein dealt mainly with the defence of social rights, the provision of basic food products, and the right of citizens to universal education. When the first anti-Semitic riots took place in independent Poland in 1919, they were condemned by the PPS and Lichtenstein stated: "The Jewish proletariat never lost its faith in the moral power of the Polish proletariat and it has been relying only on the solidarity of this proletariat. In moments of the strongest anti-Semitism and hatred of Jews, we affirm that we will obtain rights only in solidarity with the Polish proletariat. We believe that the working class will understand that all this ethnic and religious fighting is against its interests" (p. 104).

In the final chapter, Trębacz describes the Bund's last parliamentary campaign in Poland in 1930, and Lichtenstein's last term on the City Council of Łódź in 1927–1933. While the parliamentary campaign was a failure, the elections to the City Council of Łódź were successful for the Bund, which won five seats and had its first representative in the City Council's Corporate Management Team. The strong position of the Łódź Bund allowed it to use its organizational base for operations on a national level: a national conference of the Bund was held in the City Council of Łódź on 1 June 1930. Its members were to decide on the accession of the whole organization to the Socialist International. Lichtenstein welcomed delegates and conference guests by saying that the Bund was more like a family than a typical political organization united only by common political goals; a comparison designed to mitigate the conflicts between different factions. On the second day of the conference, the Bund decided to join the Socialist International. Lichtenstein wrote that the Bund realized that "the Jewish proletariat is a minority within a minority" and that the only chance for the implementation of their demands was to cooperate with the workers of other nationalities (p. 161).

Lichtenstein remained active to the end, but died prematurely at the age of fifty. His funeral in Łódź on 14 May 1933 turned into a huge demonstration. Three banners of the Bund, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the German Socialist Labour Party of Poland (Deutsche Sozialistische Arbeitspartei Polens - DSAP) were carried ahead of a crowd of 20,000 people, in which social class appeared to be more important than national identity. Jewish, German, and Polish socialists walked arm in arm in multi-ethnic Łódź. Unfortunately, they did not manage to stop the wave of fascist terror that, a few years later, killed millions of people, including Lichtenstein's entire family: his wife and two sons.

In assessing Lichtenstein's significance, Trębacz quotes Emanuel Szerer, who wrote that Lichtenstein's life is a symbol "of the decades-long march of the working class, which rose to the brightest heights of the proletarian revolutionary struggle thanks to its own strength and will in the darkness of slavery and the Middle Ages" (p. 228).

Though strongly connected with the history of Poland, the Bund is the subject of only a few Polish publications: the classic book is *The Jewish Workers' Bund in Poland (1915–1939)* by Emanuel Nowogródzki (1891–1967), General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Bund in Poland in 1921–1939. The latest edition of this book was issued in 2005 in Warsaw by the Jewish Historical Institute.¹ In 2007, the Institute issued yet another book entitled *The Jews and the Left. A Collection of Historical Studies*,² which is dedicated to the presence of Jews in the progressive movement in the first half of the twentieth century. In 2000, a collective work entitled *The Bund. A Hundred Years of Its History, 1897–1997* was published.³ Not only does Trębacz's book present the figure of Lichtenstein, but it also addresses the scarcity of Polish literature on the history of the Bund, offering a good introduction to the analysis of the role of the Bund in the history of progressive movements in Poland, including complementary considerations about the Bund at the supranational level.⁴

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Hunger and War. Food Provisioning in the Soviet Union during World War II. Ed. by Wendy Z. Goldman and Donald Filtzer. Indiana University Press, Bloomington (IN) [etc.] 2015. xvii, 371 pp. Ill. \$85.00. (Paper: \$35.00; E-book \$34.99.)

The terrible ordeal of World War II in the Soviet Union was accompanied by almost universal food shortages. Due, above all, to the loss of the most important agricultural regions to the German invader, food shortages complicated the Soviet war effort at and behind the military front. Meanwhile, in the occupied territories and in besieged Leningrad, Hitler's "war of annihilation" condemned millions of Soviet citizens to death by starvation. *Hunger and War* analyses several aspects of food shortages, starvation, and food provisioning in the Soviet Union. Although parts of this picture are familiar from previous scholarship, co-editors Wendy Z. Goldman and Donald Filtzer have assembled a coherent and informative volume that adds substantially to existing knowledge about

1. Emanuel Nowogródzki, *Żydowska Partia Robotnicza Bund w Polsce 1915–1939* [The Jewish Workers' Bund Party in Poland, 1915–1939] (Warsaw, 2005).

2. August Grabski, *Żydzi a lewica. Zbiór studiów historycznych* [The Jews and the Left. A Collection of Historical Studies] (Warsaw, 2007).

3. Feliks Tych and Jürgen Hensl (eds), *Bund. 100 lat historii 1897–1997* [The Bund. A Hundred Years of Its History, 1897–1997] (Warsaw, 2000).

4. Cf. Frank Wolff, "Eastern Europe Abroad: Exploring Actor-Networks in Transnational Movements and Migration History, The Case of the Bund", *International Review of Social History*, 57:2 (2012), pp. 229–255.