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Preface and Acknowledgements

It was my lucky day in February 1989, when at the ceremony of opening the Solomon Mikhoels Jewish Center in Moscow, which was perceived then as an important event of the *perestroika* period, I met Harold Ostroff, general manager of the Forward Association. This was the moment when the New York Yiddish newspaper *Forverts* (Forward) entered in my life, though as a staffer of the Moscow Yiddish literary monthly *Sovetish Heymland* I already knew something about this newspaper. To make a long story short, later in the same year, in November, my first article appeared on the pages of the *Forverts*. In May 1990 I came to New York as a guest of the *Forverts* and the Workmen's Circle. At the time, they were still vibrant organizations, with a relatively strong constituency of Socialist-minded, mostly elderly, immigrant and American-born Yiddish speakers. It was memorable to meet Mordechai Shtrigler, the editor-in-chief, and Yosl (Joseph) Mlotek, the associate editor, in whose section of the newspaper my pieces first appeared.

Although, historically, the editor-in-chief defined the strategy for the venerable newspaper, Ostroff or one of his predecessors had changed the balance of power. In any case, when I came to New York, Ostroff, who cut an impressive and likable figure, occupied the most spacious office and it was clearly he who made principal decisions concerning current and perspective functioning of the *Forverts*. 1990 was a turning point year, when the Forward Association decided to launch an English-language newspaper. The idea was that the English outlet would attract enough readers to make profit and provide a stable financial basis also for the Yiddish newspaper, whose circulation had been declining for years. As it happened, this was a gamble which had a fatal flaw: instead of becoming profitable, the

English *Forward* failed to find a sustainable readership and, year after year, ruined the finances of the Forward Association. Clearly, both the fateful decision and its realization were incongruous with the strategic acumen, historically characteristic of the *Forverts*.

This was the juncture in the history of the newspaper at which I started my quarter-of-a-century-long sideline career of working as a *Forverts* journalist, writing from Moscow, then from Oxford, and finally doing it in New York. Gradually and apparently logically I developed fascination with the history of this remarkable periodical, whose first issue came out in April 1897. After getting a job at the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, New York University, in 2003, I could and would spend uncountable hours reading microfilms at the university library and the YIVO library. Life became easier when digitized copies of the *Forverts* began to appear in jpress.org.il. An additional impulse came from the conference called "Abraham Cahan and His *Forverts*," which I was encouraged to organize at our department in April 2007. My good friend from the time of working for the *Sovetish Heymland*, Boris Sandler, who became editor of the *Forverts* in 1998, encouraged me to write articles dealing with personalities and events in the history of the newspaper. With time, more and more people, many of them once household names but totally unknown now, populated the landscape of my research.

Pages of the *Forverts* carry unique information on a broad, almost infinite, range of themes for research by social, intellectual, and cultural historians, literary scholars, political scientists, linguists, and students in other fields. The book that follows this preface focuses on the first half of the twentieth century, the "Russian years" of the *Forverts*, when Abraham Cahan, a towering personality of the time, stood at the helm of the newspaper, from 1903 until his death in 1951. It is hardly surprising that, given my Soviet background, I kept comparing the Russian Imperial and the Soviet waves of Jewish immigrations. This is a separate theme, which this book does not undertake, leaving it to other scholars to do a comparative study. Still, it is worthwhile to mention that the *Forverts* contains a trove of material that can be used for analyzing the enormous difference in virtually every aspect of the cultural, ideological, and organizational structures of the two "Russian" waves. My modest hope is that *Transatlantic Russian Jewishness* will encourage more people (with a good knowledge of Yiddish) to turn to studying this rich cultural layer of American immigrant life.

I am very grateful to Eugene Shvidler, who generously supported the production of this book. My friends and colleagues in the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies made 53 Washington Square South a nice, stimulating place to work. The research for this book involved several archives and libraries. I am particularly indebted to the staff of the Center of Jewish History, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and the HSE University (Moscow) Basic Research Program. Hasia Diner has been playing an invaluable role in giving me guidance in the landscape of American history. There are many friends and colleagues who helped me in various ways over the years (my sincere apologies to everybody whom I have forgotten to mention): David Engel, Mikhail Krutikov, Michael Matlin, Mikhail Mitsel, Deborah Moore, Graham Nelson, Sam Norich, Chana Pollack, Marsha L. Rozenblit, Boris Sandler, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Lyudmila Sholokhova.

My special thanks to Igor Nemirovsky, Maxim Shrayer, and Ekaterina Yanduganova for encouraging me to publish this book at Academic Studies Press.

Most probably, this book would not have been written if my parents, Nesya and Yakov, like many other people of their generation, used Yiddish as a secret language—to hide something from their children. Lucky for me, they did not do this. Rather, they inadvertently equipped me with the essential tool for this kind of research.

This may sound trite, but my wife Elena's contribution was really enormous. In addition to her help as an experienced university librarian, she has been tolerating my actual or virtual (at the writing desk) absence.

Introduction

This book has been written, first and foremost, with the objective to contribute to understanding of how the American Yiddish-speaking press, and more specifically the *Forverts* (Forward), historically far and away the most successful Yiddish newspaper, reflected and influenced ideological transformation of its writers and readers in the first half of the twentieth century. Started in April 1897, the same year when the nationalist Zionism and the Marxist anti-nationalist Bund emerged as organized political movements, the *Forverts* had the primal impact on shaping and transforming the worldview of hundreds of thousands of immigrants and their offspring. Initially a forum for Socialism, internationalism, secularism, and anti-Zionism, the newspaper over the years changed its agenda in virtually all domains of its political and cultural ideology.

The word "transatlantic" in the title of this book is not a new theoretical term. Rather, it is an attempt to categorize the split worldview of Yiddish-speaking immigrants. During the period under analysis, the constituency of the newspaper was indeed transatlantic: new and old arrivals from the Russian Empire and, to a smaller extent, from Austria-Hungary and Romania. Of the over one million respondents of the 1910 US Census of Population who claimed Yiddish as their mother tongue, about eighty percent came from Russia.[1] Events in the "old country" remained one of the central topics, and often the central topic, covered by the *Forverts*. Moreover, the immigrant newspaper would alter its ideological stripes in the response to the situation in Russia and, later, the Soviet Union. This explains why many pages of this book are focused on the newspaper's reaction to the situation in the "old country."

1 Ira Rosenswaike, "The Utilization of Census Mother Tongue Data in American Jewish Population Analysis," *Jewish Social Studies* 33, nos. 2–3 (1971): 141–159.

The tone-setters in the *Forverts* belonged to the social class of *intelligentsia*, creators and consumers of secular high culture, whose education and ambitions carved them a distinct place in Russia's society in general and among Russian Jews in particular. The continuing economic development of imperial Russia, and the pre-1880s state policy of "civilizing" Jewish subjects through luring them into general education were preparing ever larger numbers of Jews to give up their traditional ways and live a life culturally compatible with that of the urban mainstream population. At the same time, Jewish products of the "civilizing" modernization often failed to find a satisfying place and purpose in the country that had reared them for integration, but also imposed humiliatingly low glass ceilings, and tolerated or failed to prevent acts of anti-Jewish violence, described in Russian and then in other languages as "pogroms."

For all that, a new stratum of people, with one leg in traditional society and the other in the non-Jewish world, had arisen in Russia. Not only intellectuals steeped in Russian, Polish or German culture belonged to this stratum. The same or nearby social space was populated by "semi-intelligentsia" (*poluintelligenty* in Russian / *halb-inteligentn* in Yiddish). This snobby tag described the "haphazardly educated" autodidacts, many of them renegade Talmudic students. Yet secularized "conscious" or "enlightened" workers (*soznatel´nye rabochie* / *bavustzinike arbeter*) formed the most populous group of modernized Russian Jews. They dominated Jewish civil societal space, sandwiched between the traditional Jewish and general Russian societies. This space—distinct in its lifestyle, social organization, values, and behavior—was an important recruiting ground for diverse political and cultural movements and groupings. Its inhabitants were known, in Yiddish, as *khevrelayt*, meaning "members" of associations, organizations, and so forth. Judging by the level of literacy among Jews arriving in America, people from the modernized groups played a more salient role among the immigrants than among those who stayed in Russia.[2] Not only were they more receptive to radical ideas, but also more mobile. Some of them had to leave Russia fleeing persecutions and oppression, though economic reasons for emigration prevailed.

Socialist ideas appealed to many Yiddish-speaking arrivals. Tony Michels distinguishes three periods in the development of the Socialist

2 Simon Kuznets, "Immigration of Russian Jews to the United States: Background and Structure," *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 113–116.

movement among European Jewish immigrants. The first, dating from 1880 to 1900, witnessed the arrival of relatively few people who gravitated to Socialism. For the most part, they were intellectuals, directly or tangentially associated with radical circles in Russia. More commonly, however, immigrants originally encountered Socialist ideologies in the United States, where "a popular Jewish labor movement arose . . . almost ten years before the birth of its counterpart in Russia and fifteen years before the Russian Jewish workers' movement grew into a significant force." Thousands of people involved in the Russian movement, often carrying the experience of the 1905 revolution, came to America during the second period of transatlantic Jewish Socialism, between 1900 and 1914. The third period, between the end of World War I and the introduction of the restrictions for immigration from Europe in 1924, brought across the ocean observers and participants of the revolutionary events of 1917 and the ensuing civil war.[3]

While we can only surmise that, judging by the census returns, about eighty percent of *Forverts* readers originated from the Russian Empire, we know for sure that the percentage of Russian-born was even higher among the staff writers. Furthermore, the majority of them came from one particular area in the empire—*Lite*, or the historical Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which approximately comprised the territories of contemporary Lithuania, Belarus, and some areas of Poland and Latvia. This is hardly surprising giving the fact that, in the nineteenth century, *Lite* was a major source of Jewish immigrants from Russia.[4] In addition, Lithuanian Jews, or Litvaks, as Polish and other co-religionists called them, dominated Jewish publishing also in the "old home."[5] Significantly, the geography that Jews had in their heads often did not fit contemporary maps. Thus, the poet Morris Winchevsky (1855–1932), who was born in Lithuania, founded in London the Socialist Yiddish newspaper, naming it *Dos poylishe yidl* (Polish Jew).

In 1929, the Yiddish writer David Bergelson (1884–1952) portrayed retrospectively the first wave of Russian-Jewish emigrants settling in the United States. Alongside impoverished, hungry and jobless people, that

3 Tony Michels, "Toward a History of American Jews and the Russian Revolutionary Movement," in *A Century of Transnationalism: Immigrants and Their Homeland Connections*, ed. Nancy L. Green and Roger Waldinger (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 185–187.

4 Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 80–81.

5 Gennady Estraikh, *In Harness: Yiddish Writers' Romance with Communism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 19–20.

wave, according to Bergelson's somewhat sarcastic description, contained criminals and young men who were unwilling to serve in the Russian army. There came also Jewish Socialists and a-kind-of-Socialists (*sotsialistlekh*), many of them speakers of the *sabesdiker loshn*, a sub-dialect of the Lithuanian Yiddish, which sounded lispy and therefore funny to other Yiddish speakers' ears. They, speakers of this Yiddish variety, appeared at the forefront of the American Jewish masses, they preached "physiological Socialism, cosmopolitanism, and linguistic anarchism."[6] This half-satirical description of pioneers of Jewish Socialism in the United States reflects, first of all, Bergelson's desire to taunt one of the most prominent pioneers—the "Litvak" Abraham, or Abe, Cahan, a divisive figure, who had many detractors, but also many more fervent admirers.

Abraham Cahan (1860–1951), one of the founders of the *Forverts* and its editor for nearly fifty years, received education at the Vilna Teachers' Institute, which trained Russian-speaking instructors for Jewish state-run schools and, like many educational institutions of the time, served likewise as a hotbed of radicalism. In 1882, Cahan immigrated to the United States to avoid questioning or even imprisonment for his links with the Socialist movement, which was illegal in Russia. In New York City, he mastered English remarkably quickly, successfully integrated into political circles, and gained recognition as a talented author of English and Yiddish prose and journalism. His 1896 novella *Yekl, A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, its 1975 film adaptation *Hester Street*, and his 1917 novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* remain in active use, even if primarily as teaching and research materials.

Under the stewardship of Cahan, the *Forverts* became the most flourishing Yiddish newspaper in the world, combining Socialist pieces with sensationalist ones, and featuring numerous didactic articles, which urged readers to stay "progressive," particularly in their pursuit of Americanization. In his editorial that marked the sixth anniversary of the daily, Cahan explained his strategy of deviating from the traditional pattern of other Socialist newspapers, which tended to be redolent of dry, professional periodicals.[7] Pronounced changes began to become manifest in 1903, when Cahan, who defined in great measure the nature of the ideology of the *Forverts*, or Forvertsism (as it was sometimes called), finally returned to

6 David Bergelson, "Bletlekh (kimat oytobiografye)," *Oyfkum* 5 (1929): 2–6.

7 Abraham Cahan, "Forvertizmus," *Forverts*, April 21, 1903, 4.

the editorship after several hiatuses. 1903 also was the year of the Kishinev pogrom, which shook the Jewish world. A man of huge ambitions, Cahan was determined to transcend the relatively narrow circle of committed Socialists, and run a newspaper championing Socialism to a mass readership across the political spectrum. The *Forverts* was not a party organ and could go its own way, or—to use a Yiddish idiom—*makhn shabes far zikh*, or "make Sabbath for itself." Moreover, with its clout of the biggest Socialist newspaper in the United States, the *Forverts* was active and influential as a builder and modifier of the labor movement in country.

Among other things (notably choosing a style accessible to the audience composed by and large of scantily educated speakers of different Yiddish dialects), Cahan's strategy implied the application to the covered events the populist-cum-nationalist criteria: "is it good or bad for the Jews?" This was only partially a purely pragmatic turn. To all appearances, Cahan sincerely assumed that an alloy of Socialism and mild nationalism was what the Jewish masses needed. Besides, he simply did not believe that proletarian internationalism existed in reality rather than in Marxist theory of future social change.

The first chapter of this book focuses on the discussions initiated and hosted by the newspaper during World War I. The issue at stake, namely Socialists' stand on patriotism, was a neuralgic topic for Socialists. The war put to a difficult test Marx's idea that proletarians did not have homelands: that they were, by the nature of their enslaved role in society, internationalists and their loyalties gravitated to other proletarians first and last. Wartime developments and debates contributed to making Jewish nationalism—in the form of anti-assimilationism and cross-class ethnic solidarity—more pronounced in the ideology of the *Forverts*. Cahan dismissed arguments of those who tried to safeguard the purity of the Marxist dogma. Patriotic articles of the *Forverts* infuriated the future Communist leader Leon Trotsky, who lived in New York in the early months of 1917, and caused his acrimonious break with the newspaper. Paradoxically, as time went on Moyshe Olgin (1878–1939) and Max Goldfarb (1886–1937), the two *Forverts* journalists who supported Cahan's stand particularly strongly, turned Communists and worked in the Communist International, or Comintern, whose ideology was built on the premise of proletarian internationalism.

The year 1917 brought two revolutions, which changed drastically the way the newspaper told its readers to see the world. Russia, dismissed previously as a barbaric country, emerged as a beacon of progress. This was

a sigh of relief for many in the *Forverts* constituency, who loved Russian culture, but loathed the autocratic czarist regime and therefore sided with Germany during World War I. Although the *Forverts* advocated for gradual and peaceful transition from capitalism to Socialism, it gave a qualified welcome to the Bolshevik revolution. For about five years, the coverage was sympathetic, with a hope that the Soviet regime would turn to democratic forms of governance. In September 1921, the *Forverts*, and the American Socialist movement in general, faced a serious crisis when the Jewish Socialist Federation, a constituent of the Socialist Party, jumped on the Communists' bandwagon. Among the rebels were five *Forverts* journalists. One of them, Olgin, later edited the Communist daily *Frayhayt* (also spelled German-style as *Freiheit*, Freedom). From that moment on, as Chapter 2 shows, the *Forverts* fought on two anti-Communist fronts, the domestic one and the Soviet one.

Although Cahan edited a Yiddish newspaper, wrote prolifically in this language, and claimed love for his mother tongue, he did not regard preservation of Yiddish as worthy of high priority. In his vision of Americanization of his readers and their children, English should become their language for all domains of life. He found irrational and even harmful activities led by Yiddishists, who put Yiddish in the center of modern Jewish nation building. Chapter 3 describes debates about Yiddish schooling in the United States, most notably the schools established by the Workmen's Circle, a Socialist-leaning mutual-aid society. Cahan and a number of *Forverts* writers resisted the endeavors of educators and activists to pass their knowledge of Yiddish and Yiddish culture to the younger generation. However, facing dissatisfaction from the Workmen's Circle, whose membership formed the core readership of the newspaper, Cahan reluctantly curtailed the anti-Yiddishist campaign.

Among the scores of staff writers and regular contributors, Raphael Abramovitch (1880–1963), a prominent figure in the circles of Russian Socialist emigration, played an oversized role in highlighting the political course of the newspaper. Chapter 4 follows his career as a *Forverts* journalist in the 1920s–1950s. Cahan, whose dictatorial style of editorship was often unendurable, demonstrated remarkable patience and deference to Abramovitch, even when the latter's articles deviated from the general line set by the editor. The two men's opinions diverged regarding Soviet politics, Zionism, and Socialism, but they managed, nevertheless, to preserve a working and friendly relationship. Directly or indirectly, the *Forverts* acted

as a sponsor of Socialists and Socialist organizations. For such a political *luftmensh* as Abramovitch, the salary paid by the newspaper was his main lifeline. In addition, he had a big audience for his thoughtful analytical essays and (usually wrong) predictions. Thanks to the *Forverts*, he earned a reputation in the American Socialist and liberal circles, which helped him enormously when he settled in New York in 1940. His escape from Europe, facilitated by the *Forverts*-linked Jewish Labor Committee, brought to an end the peripatetic phase in his life that began when he left Soviet Russia, making Berlin and then Paris his home.

Berlin of the Weimar period had a sizable population of Eastern European intellectuals, some of whom worked as correspondents of American Yiddish newspapers. The *Forverts* kept a bureau in Berlin (Chapter 5), headed by the demographer and statistician Jacob Lestschinsky (1876–1966). For several years, the bureau boasted among its journalists the writer David Bergelson (before he turned to Communism), the poet and essayist David Eynhorn (1886–1973), and the philologist Max Weinreich (1894–1969). Weinreich later directed the Yiddish Scientific Institute, known as YIVO, with headquarters in Vilna and, from 1940, in New York, but continued to write for the *Forverts* and, like Abramovitch, to live, at least partially, off its salary. The newspaper had also other Berlin-based contributors, such as the Marxist theoreticians Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) and Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), and the Jewish historian Simon Dubnov (1860–1941). According to Cahan, who visited the German capital on many occasions, the city did not function as an incubator of ideas related to Jews, but made an impact as "the Jewish world's main marketplace of ideas." Cahan likewise assigned great importance to using Berlin as a communication hub, especially given the political barriers established in Eastern and Central Europe after the continent's postwar remapping.[8]

Berlin housed the offices of the American Joint Jewish Distribution Committee, and the ORT, established in Alexander II's Russia as Association for Promotion of Skilled Trades, and rebranded as World ORT in 1921. Both organizations were active in Jewish colonization projects in the Soviet Union. Jewish agricultural colonies in Crimea and in southern areas of Ukraine had singular appeal for American sponsors. Chapter 6 describes the reflection of this campaign in the pages of the *Forverts*, particularly

8 Abraham Cahan, "Ir farshport tsu forn in Varshe, Vilne, Kovne, Rige oder Keshenev," *Forverts*, August 27, 1921, 6.

in articles by Zalman Wendroff (1877–1971), the Moscow correspondent of the newspaper. Numerous representatives of the *Forverts* visited the Soviet Union and monitored the situation in Jewish agricultural settlements. Soviet journeys of Cahan, in 1927, and the star novelist Sholem Asch (1880–1957), in 1928, had received strongest attention in the press. Even when the general editorial line of the newspaper became anti-Soviet, colonization would be praised as a positive development, a more promising transformation of Jewish life than the Zionist project in Palestine. Veteran members of the Bund, such as Baruch Charney Vladeck (1886–1938), the business manager of the *Forverts* and a man well connected in New York politics, and Bentzion Hoffman (1874–1954), or Tsivion, as he usually bylined his columns (spelled also Zivion; he also used the byline B. Rozman), had consistently dismissed the idea of a Jewish state as a panacea for the ills of Jewish life. They disagreed with Cahan, who in the mid-1920s revealed his sympathies to Labor Zionism.

The 1930s brought disappointments and challenges. The economic crisis decreased the profitability of the newspaper, and it had to turn to its funds accumulated during the "fat" 1920s. Even more dramatic were the ideological changes in the American Socialist movement. The Socialist Party membership had suffered a deep decline and a new split along "radical" and "right-wing" lines. In the internal affairs of the *Forverts*, analyzed in Chapter 7, the split led to an irreparable break in relations between Cahan, a major figure among the "right-wingers," and Vladeck, who tended to align with left-of-center political groupings. (Their relations had become so poisonous that Cahan did not even attend Vladeck's funeral.) For his part, Cahan saw light in Franklin D. Roosevelt and made headlines by proclaiming that the president "should be a Socialist, if anybody is entitled to membership in our party he is."[9] The anti-Sovietism of the newspaper grew markedly stronger in the 1930s, although many readers and some writers still cherished a hope of democratic transformation of the Soviet regime.

The August 1939 Soviet-German Pact, which divided Poland in the inaugural phase of World War II, produced a shocking effect on the *Forverts* constituency. If earlier only some authors had the tenacity to equate Nazism and Communism, now this idea dominated the newspaper's output. In June 1941, when Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the newspaper laid

9 Seymour M. Lipset and Gary W. Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 210.

out its position and followed it till the end of the war: its sympathies lay with the Soviet people and the Red Army, but not with the Stalinist regime. In the meantime, the 1940s, analyzed in Chapter 8, saw the newspaper's noticeable warming to religion—a transformation that puzzled and troubled the old readership of the newspaper. Some of them, who remembered the *Forverts* as it was in the days of their youth, wrote letters protesting the changes. It seems that the concurrent pro-Israel stance of the newspaper did not irritate the vast majority of readers.

By the mid-1950s, the "transatlantic Russianism" of the *Forverts* was becoming a thing of the past. First of all, its readership already included a significant number of American-born or -reared people, many of them former students of supplementary Yiddish schools run by the Workmen's Circle or other organizations. Hillel Rogoff (1882–1971), who replaced Cahan as editor-in-chief in 1951, was eight years old when his parents brought him to America. Second, Russian Jews were much less represented among Yiddish-speaking immigrants who came to America in the 1920s–1950s. Polish Jews increasingly dominated the pages of the *Forverts*. Readers developed a taste for stories and novels by the Polish-born Isaac Bashevis Singer (1902–1991), ultimately a Nobel Prize winner, though many considered his writings less significant than those of his brother, Israel Joshua Singer (1893–1944). While the clout carried by the newspaper was weakening with the declining circulation, its indirect influence remained tangible in American Jewish society, most notably in the second and even third generation of Jewish immigrants, who grew up in the cultural and ideological climate that reigned among hundreds of thousands of *Forverts* readers.

This book, however, does not trace the generational ideological and cultural change in the segment of the American Jewish population formed by Yiddish-speaking immigrants. Rather, it focuses on the changes of the immigrants' vision of the world, above all of those immigrants whose ideological voyages began before, or even long before, World War I and continued through the tumultuous decades of the twentieth century.

Chapter 1

World War I

The Collapse of the Socialist International

In 1912, the year when the Jewish (in fact Yiddish-language) Socialist Federation, or JSF, was formed at a convention held in Patterson, New Jersey, the Socialist Party of America allowed foreign-language federations to act as autonomous subsections whose members simultaneously belonged to the broader Socialist community of party card-carriers.[1] The federative structure of the party was not to all members' liking. Thus Morris Hillquit, a prominent figure in the Socialist Party, serving as its international secretary until 1913, disapproved of this decision, although it opened a new way to increase its membership.[2] This was the time when Socialism was rising in the United States. In 1911, American voters had elected some 450 Socialist officials, including 56 mayors, 305 aldermen and city councilmen, and one congressman, Victor Berger. After the 1914 election, Meyer London would join him as the second Socialist congressman. Both Berger and London were European-born Jewish immigrants. The 1912 election, in which Eugene V. Debs, the presidential candidate of the Socialist Party, had received over 900,000 votes, marked the apogee of the Socialist movement in America. By then, the Socialist Party's membership had grown to 118,000.[3] The *Forverts*,

1 Jacob Sholem Hertz, *Di yidishe sotsialistishe bavegung in Amerike* (New York: Der Veker, 1954), 143; Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 172.

2 Irwin Yellowitz, "Morris Hillquit: American Socialism and Jewish Concerns," *American Jewish History* 68, no. 2 (1978): 165–166.

3 James Chace, *1912: Wilson, Roosevelt, Taft and Debs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 182–183, 238–239; Jonathan Frankel, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 222.

then a fifteen-year-old daily, identified itself with the JSF, though, as we will see later in this chapter, it was not always a temperate comradeship.

The Forward Association, formed to act as the independent non-profit publisher of the *Forverts*, was composed of about 150 members (their number doubled in the 1920s), representing trade unions and other labor movement organizations. On October 26, 1912, the newspaper offices moved into a new home at 173–175 East Broadway. The ten-story Forward Building towered far above its neighbors and formed an easily recognized landmark. The second floor had an auditorium with a siting capacity of a thousand, which would be used for mass events of various kinds, receptions, concerts, and literary evenings. The printing equipment, installed in the basement, could easily produce the circulation of that period: 132,000 copies daily, and 150,000 copies on Sundays.[4]

For the older generation of Jewish socialists, who came to America in the 1880s and 1890s, Germany had a symbolic importance as the heart of Socialism. Tellingly, the façade of the Forward Building, designated a New York City Historic Landmark in 1986, still features carved bas-relief portraits of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Ferdinand Lassalle. One more portrait, whose identity remains under question, has been identified as Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Liebknecht, or August Bebel. The title itself of the newspaper emulated that of the Berlin-based central organ of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, Vorwärts, established in 1891. The word *forverts*, with a tinge of foreignness in Yiddish, had entered the language usage as part of the German-derived socialist terminology, including the term of address *genose*, from the German Genosse, or "comrade."

Bundists formed the core of the JSF. Following the defeat of the 1905 revolution in Russia and subsequent heavy-handed suppression of the labor movement by the czarist government, the emigrant wave brought hundreds of members of the Bund, a 1897-established Jewish constituent of the Russian Socialist movement. In 1906 the Bund had a sufficient membership in the United States to hold a national convention with nearly hundred delegates.[5] Many of them hoped that the JSF would become an American version of their party in Russia. Especially as in Russia their party occupied a similar subsidiary place in the Socialist movement: in 1912, the same

4 "Forward in Its New Home: Socialist Daily Newspaper Formally Opens Its Ten-Story Building," *The New York Times*, October 27, 1912, 15.

5 Frank Wolff, "Revolutionary Identity and Migration: The Commemorative Transnationalism of Bundist Culture," *East European Jewish Affairs* 43, no. 3 (2013): 322.