

# A b s t r a c t s

## Impulses for Europe Traditions and Modernity of East European Jewry

Antony Polonsky

Fragile Co-existence

The Politics and History of East European Jews

Eastern Europe's large Jewish communities have their own history. In the 18th and 19th centuries, repression and reform forced the Jews to assimilate to foreign peoples. However, attempts to integrate failed repeatedly and led to an ideological debate. As Zionists, integrationists, and socialists, they pursued different paths to social and legal equality. Most East European Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. After the Second World War, some of the survivors tried to shape Communist societies – unsuccessfully. Antisemitism and pogroms forced them to emigrate.

Dietrich Beyrau

Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe

Disasters and Social Advancement

Since emancipation, the history of Europe's Jews has been written in two ways: as the advance from the periphery towards the centre of society and as a series of disasters. This applies to Eastern Europe in particular. At the start of the 19th century, over 80 per cent of Ashkenazi Jews lived there. Their emancipation led to a break with tradition, emigration, acculturation, and multiple concepts of identity. Antisemitism and pogroms were their constant companion. Nationalist forces in East Central Europe saw the Jewish population as a disruptive element in their efforts to build nation-states. Dynamism and opportunities for advancement made Soviet Moscow a "new Jerusalem" for urban Jews. The break with civilisation that was the Holocaust hit the Jews of Eastern Europe particularly hard. Today only about 4 per cent of the world's Jews live in this area.

Remembrance as Balancing Act

Public and Scholarly Handling of East European Jewish Heritage

Knowledge about the life of the East European Jews and the Shoah has grown in past decades. But the appropriate transmission of East European Jewish history and culture is highly demanding. Sometimes, there is a danger of remembrance of the Holocaust's victims sliding into commercialism and kitsch, and because Jewish life is often treated as a museum artefact, its renaissance ends up forgotten. Delphine Bechtel, Michael Brenner, Frank Golczewski, Rachel Heuberger, François Guesnet, Cilly Kugelman, and Anna Lipphardt explain what kind of conclusions they have drawn from this balancing act in their work in museums, libraries, classrooms, and archives.

## Topoi of East European Jewry

Steven E. Aschheim

Reflection, Projection, Distortion

East European Jews in Jewish Culture in Germany

Since the Enlightenment, the image of East European Jews, Ostjuden, has played a crucial role in German Jews' self-definition. Jews from Eastern Europe were considered backward. This backwardness seemed to endanger the German Jews' integration into modern society. Therefore, they repudiated the Ostjuden. At the same time, there emerged a sense of collective responsibility for their "weaker brethren". At the start of the 20th century, a positive countermyth was established. The unspoiled nature of the Ostjuden was turned into a cult. These clichés revealed more about the self-understanding of the German Jews than the reality of the Ostjuden.

Gershon David Hundert

The Force of Knowledge

The Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in East European

Since the end of the East-West conflict, interest in the history and culture of East European Jews has grown enormously. Access to archives has opened up new research opportunities. The YIVO Institute of Jewish Research has used it. Together with over 400 scholars, YIVO has produced the first encyclopaedia of East European Jewry. The results are significant. The encyclopaedia lays bare all the layers and diversity of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Work on the encyclopaedia has also shown where the gaps in our knowledge of East European Jewry remain. Furthermore, this project is by implication a sociological compendium of Jewish Studies in the world.

Micha Brumlik

From Obscurantism to Holiness

East European Jewish Thought in Buber, Heschel, Levinas

In public perception, East European Jewish thought is surrounded by a mystical veil. The three thinkers Martin Buber, Joshua Heschel, and Emmanuel Levinas shared the East European Jewish experience, an education in existential philosophy in Germany, and the ordeal of witnessing the mass murder of Europe's Jews. They are united by a universalistic ethic aimed at promoting direct human responsibility. More clearly than Buber and Heschel, we have Levinas to thank for an appreciation of what one could call "East European Jewry".

Oleg Budnitskii

The Jews and the Cheka

Myths, Numbers, and People

To this day, the antisemitic topos of "Judeo-Bolshevism" haunts political arguments. Paradoxically, after the October Revolution, mostly Jewish voices expressed shock at the rise of Jews in the Soviet state apparatus. That there did in fact exist a kind of elective affinity between Jews and the new state in the first years after the revolution does not go back to ideology, as is often implied.

The social structure was decisive: The Bolsheviks needed officials who were literate, and the Jews had to see to their livelihood between 1918 and 1921, when private enterprise was outlawed. It is also wrong to say the share of Jews in the secret police was especially high in these years, and that the Jewish contingent exacted revenge on its former tormenters. The statistics on perpetrators and victims take the wind out of such assertions.

Moyshe Kligsberg

The Jewish Youth Movement in Poland between the Wars

A Sociological Study

The First World War led to the impoverishment of a large part of Poland's Jews. Jewish youth seemed to have been robbed of any possibility of a future. Nonetheless, instead of submitting to fate in this situation, Jewish youth found the strength to work together for a better future. The hunger for education, organization, self-help, and idealism were the central tenets of this movement. No matter what level of society they came from, these Jewish groups developed a certain lifestyle, which included constant reading, clubhouse visits, and outings and camps as well as the rehabilitation of physical work as a prestigious undertaking.

Heiko Haumann

Shtetl and Jewish Village

Crossover Cultures and Autonomous Consciousness

Jews and non-Jews in shtetlekh and Jewish villages were both familiar and alien to one another in their relations. Boundaries were regularly crossed, but such activity was encumbered by outside pressure to view the Jews as "the other". This pressure is one reason why great value was attached to autonomy, solidarity, and Jewish self-consciousness. The shtetl and the Jewish village did not differ fundamentally, which is relevant for comparisons of Jewish lifeworlds in Eastern and Western Europe.

## The Heritage of East European Jews

Anke Hilbrenner

Simon Dubnow's Relevance Today

Civil Rights, Multiculturalism, and Difference

The Russian-Jewish historian Simon Dubnow was the first to ascribe to the diaspora a key function in shaping Jewish identity. From his analysis of the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe, he developed the concept of "nationalism without a nation state": diaspora nationalism. Members of the minorities in supranational states were to enjoy the same civil rights as members of the majority. Their cultural rights were to be guaranteed through the creation of autonomous communities. The field of nationalism studies has largely ignored Dubnow's work. But his concept is quite relevant to contemporary European societies marked by multiculturalism and internal difference.

Jascha Nemtsov

“The Scandal was Perfect”

Jewish Music in the Works of European Composers

Well into the 19th century, Jewish music went largely unnoticed in European culture or was treated dismissively. Russian composers wrote the first chapter of musical Judaica. At the start of the 20th century, a Jewish national school of music was established in Russia; this school later influenced the work of many composers in Western Europe. Since the Holocaust, Jewish music has become not only a folklore element but a political and moral symbol.

Verena Dohrn

“We Europeans par Excellence”

The David Koigen Family in Russian-Jewish Berlin

After the October Revolution, Russian-Jewish refugees gathered in Berlin. They formed a social-cultural milieu all their own. The intellectuals among them were active in public life and as intermediaries between east and west. The painful experiences of the revolution and the difficulties of life in exile made them the pre-conceptualisers of a united Europe. One of them was the social philosopher David Koigen. However, he and his family experienced the flipside of his European self-understanding. He was not at home in the Russian, Jewish, or German world. That Koigen, who was one of Germany’s most famous scholars, has fallen into oblivion has just as much to do with his place between cultures as with the Nazis’ persecution and annihilation of the Jews.

Marina Dmitrieva

Traces of Transit

Jewish Artists from Eastern Europe in Berlin

In the 1920s, Berlin was a hub for the transfer of culture between Eastern Europe, Paris, and New York. The German capital hosted Jewish artists from Poland, Russia, and Ukraine, where the Kultur-Liga was founded in 1918, but forced into line by Soviet authorities in 1924. Among these artists were figures such as Nathan Altman, Henryk Berlewi, El Lissitzky, Marc Chagall, and Issachar Ber Ryback. Once here, they became representatives of Modernism. At the same time, they made original contributions to the Jewish renaissance. Their creations left indelible traces on Europe’s artistic landscape.

Gertrud Pickhan

Levitan – Gottlieb – Liebermann

Three Jewish Painters in Their Historical Context

Historiography has discovered pictures (once again). That applies to the works of Isaak Levitan, Maurycy Gottlieb, and Max Liebermann. These three painters, all of Jewish origin, were almost contemporaries, but they lived in very different social and political surroundings. Liebermann belonged to the bourgeoisie in Germany; Gottlieb, a representative of Polish Jewry, was embedded in the ambivalent tapestry of Jewish-Polish relations in Austrian Galicia; and Levitan, not least through his friendship with Anton Chekhov, was integrated into the artistic circles of Russia. The influence of their different lifeworlds on the motifs they selected and on their reception by contemporaries and posterity illustrate the diversity of Jewish constructs of identity in Europe.

Tamar Lewinsky

Culture in Transit

East European Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany

After the Holocaust, East European Jewish culture lived on in Germany, of all places, well into the 1950s. Thousands of Jews from Eastern Europe had fled to the U.S. zone of occupation. The “displaced persons” of Jewish origin founded newspapers, created a rich literature, staged Jewish plays, performed music, and built a Zionist oriented school system. They picked up on East European Jewish traditions, but also worked on new topics and embraced new forms of artistic expression.

Omry Kaplan-Feuereisen

In the Service of the Jewish People

Jacob Robinson and International Law

Jacob Robinson (1889–1977) spent the greater part of his life in Eastern Europe. As a politician, minority rights activist, and specialist in international law, he had already gained an international reputation while living in Lithuania. Based in New York starting in 1941, he worked between the poles of specifically Jewish and generally human interests. Through his efforts to inculcate Jews with a national self-consciousness and his activity in the fields of international law and historiography, Robinson left his mark on the history of Europe and the world.

Eglė Bendikaitė

Intermediary between Worlds

Shimshon Rosenbaum: Lawyer, Zionist and Politiker

Shimshon Rosenbaum (1859–1934) grew up in a Lithuanian-Jewish community in what is now Belarus. As a lawyer and politician, he campaigned throughout his life for Jewish rights. He worked in Minsk, Vilnius (Vil'na), and Kaunas (Kovno), and in independent Lithuania, he served first as deputy foreign minister and then as minister for Jewish affairs. A moderate Zionist, he maintained contacts with Jews around the world and tried to modernise East European Jewry. Disappointed by growing antisemitism in

Europe, he immigrated to Palestine in 1924. There, he remained active on behalf of Lithuania as that country's general consul in Tel Aviv.

Manfred Sapper

[On] Overcoming War

Jan Bloch: Entrepreneur, Publicist, Pacifist

Jan Bloch is a classic example of an upwardly-mobile, 19th century Jew. Bloch worked his way up from humble conditions in central Poland to become one of the Russian Empire's leading entrepreneurs. [[I reworked this a bit. Bloch was born in Radom and first worked in Warsaw, then Podolia (beyond Polish ethno-linguistic territory). I think the "ost" was accidentally attached to "polnisch" and not "jüdisch".]] He financed railroad lines for the state during Russia's era of "borrowed imperialism". However, Bloch's initiatives to overcome war represent his greatest service. He lent impetus to the Hague Peace Conference. In his radical work *The Future of War* [[How is fundamental understood here? Basic and fundamental sound off the mark in English.]], he predicted total annihilation through industrialisation of war and Russian revolution [[What revolution? He was dead in 1902.]]. He called for a departure from Clausewitz and advocated arms control as well as an international court of justice. This book deserves its place as a classic work of historical peace research.

Jennifer Young

Generational Change

Moyshe Kligesberg and yugnt-forshung

Convinced that the personality of a human being is not predetermined, but formed in childhood and youth, the academic Moyshe Kligesberg had his finger on the pulse of the Jewish youth of his day. His findings from the interwar era are a unique fund of ideas about the life of the East European Jews. He noted that the immigration of Jewish youth to the United States during and after the Second World War was equivalent to a generational change. Polish-Jewish youth's affinity with Yiddish culture and its distinct sense of community from the interwar era had been lost, in Kligesberg's view. It was succeeded by an individual orientation toward success.

Anja Tippner

Movement and Nomenclature

Jewish Identity in Il'ia Erenburg

In 38 episodes, Il'ia Erenburg's novel *The Stormy Life of Lazik Ro-itshvanets* deals with the possibilities of Jewish identity under conditions of assimilation, economic constraints, and antisemitism. Through the example of the protagonist and his wanderings through Europe and Palestine, the text shows how every society and place produces its own image of Jewish identity and at the same time rejects it. In the interplay of circulating stereotypes, Hasidic views, and traditions, Erenburg formulates a construct that is relational and always endangered.

Ulrich Schmid

Two Souls in My Chest

Dual Cultural Identity: Mandel'shtam, Pasternak, and Brodsky

The lyrical work of Osip Mandel'shtam, Boris Pasternak, and Joseph Brodsky belongs to the inner sanctum of 20th century Russian literature. All three poets had a Jewish background which they suppressed to different extents. Their difficult relationship to Jewry, however, was a driving force behind their artistic work: The poetry and the autobiographical self-mythologizing of the three poets was aimed not least at a cultural transformation that was to lead Jewry – which was in their view stagnant – to a most vaguely understood Christian world culture.

### Jewish History and Transnational Memory

Anna Lipphardt

Forgotten Memory

East European Jews in Diaspora: The Example of Vilne

How East European Jews are remembered is increasingly becoming the focus of attention. Nevertheless, how East European Jews remember themselves is largely unknown. Most Holocaust survivors did not return to their homelands, but settled around the world. The Jewish associations of fellow countrymen from the old world kept the memory of their homeland and the Holocaust alive in their new countries. This is seen in the case of Jews from Vilnius (Vil'na, Vilne). The way they look at the past differs fundamentally from the way Jews still living in Eastern Europe look back. This contains the potential for conflict over historical interpretation and cultural heritage. This is demonstrated by the dispute over materials from YIVO Institute of Jewish Institute still located in Lithuania.

Katrin Steffen

The Presence of Those Absent

Jews in Poland's Collective Memory

Before the Second World War, over 3 million Jews lived in Poland. Almost all of them were killed during the Shoah. The Communist regime forbade commemoration of the Jews as a special group of victims. That may have changed since 1990, but the memory of the Jews still polarises Polish society. That is shown by the antisemitic pogroms of the postwar era and the Jedwabne debate. There exists a competition of victims between Jews and Poles. A mythological-symbolic "Jew" is present in Polish memory. Moreover, a virtual Jewry has come into being at former sites of Jewish life.

Ansgar Gilster

The Place Does Not Speak / The Place Says Nothing / The Place That Does Not Speak / The Place That Says Nothing

## Taking Photographs at Auschwitz

Auschwitz can be photographed in a broad variety of ways. Nonetheless, the picture that one makes of Auschwitz remains unfocused. No explanation for what happened can be found. The very different pictures made at the former concentration camp and killing centre during a photography seminar tell the story of a futile effort to approach the site.

## Magdalena Waligórska

## The Fiddler as a Fig-Leaf

## The Politicisation of Klezmer in Poland

Klezmer music has become very popular in Poland. The Festival of Jewish Culture in Cracow has gained national and international significance. Nonetheless, this is about more than music. The festival has become a litmus test, by which changes in the country's political mood and its attitude towards its Jewish heritage is measured.

## Zofia Wóycicka

## 1,000 Years in [[the? one?]] Museum

## The History of the Polish Jews

In 2011, Warsaw's Museum of the History of Polish Jews will open. A millennium of Jewish history in Poland is to be told on 4,000 square metres of exhibition space. The museum will also serve as a culture and education centre for Poland and Warsaw. The building itself – which involved the collaboration of an international team of historians, architects, and exhibition designers – will be one of the most modern museum facilities in Europe.

## Semen Charnyi

## Integration and Self-Assertion

## The Jewish Community in Russia

After decades of discrimination, it has been possible to observe a renaissance of Jewish life in Russia since Perestroika. Despite strong emigration, there is an active community life with schools, media, cultural facilities, and associations that look after Jewish interests. State antisemitism belongs to the past.

## Dmitrii El'iashevich, Maksim Mel'tsin

## A Stormy Upturn

## Jewish Studies in Russia

After a long hiatus under Soviet rule, the field of Jewish Studies in Russia has undergone a stormy upturn since Perestroika. Schools and institutions for adult education have been established. Numerous publications, academic institutes, and information centres address Jewish topics. The emphasis is on ethnographic field work and historical investigations especially

into the 20th century. But Russian academia still does not recognise Jewish Studies as an independent field of study. A decline in private donations has hit Jewish Studies in Russia particularly hard. And to this day, official schoolbooks remain silent about Russia's Jewish heritage.

Anatolii Podol's'kyi

The Reluctant Look Back

Jewry and the Holocaust in Ukrainian Remembrance

Ukraine was once a centre of East European Jewish life. Most Ukrainian Jews were killed during the Holocaust. Jewish culture in Ukraine perished with them. In the Soviet Union, that culture slipped into oblivion. While Ukraine's official politics of remembrance blends out the country's Jewish heritage, private individuals and organisations are trying to embed Jewish culture and history as a part of Ukrainian identity in the public consciousness. This is a painful process: It demands that Ukrainians recognise their share of the responsibility in the annihilation of the Jews in their country.

Vytautas Toleikis

Repress, Review, Remember

Jewish Heritage in Lithuania

Important centres of East European Jewish life were once located on the territory of modern-day Lithuania. The Nazis and their Lithuanian accomplices murdered almost all of the Jews there. In the Soviet Union, commemoration of the victims and the preservation of the Jewish heritage were taboo. This changed with Lithuanian independence. However, the recognition of co-responsibility in the murder of Lithuania's Jews has met with resistance in parts of the political world. The refusal to prosecute alleged perpetrators of the Holocaust is vexing. Within society and the younger generation's concept of history, the country's Jewish heritage is increasingly secure.

Lithuanian Capers

History, Rule of Law, and the Jews

Vilnius will be a European Capital of Culture in 2009. Lithuanian prosecutors are currently investigating former partisans who fought on the Soviet side against the Nazis. Former Jewish partisans are potentially affected as well. The Nazis, with the support of Lithuanian auxiliaries, murdered more than 94 per cent of Lithuania's 220,000 Jews between 1941 and 1944. Today in Vilnius, antisemitic incidents are once again being reported. Many historians and members of the US Congress are therefore demanding that Vilnius's designation as a European Capital of Culture be reconsidered.

Marlis Sewering-Wollanek

The Rediscovery of the Jews

Czech History Books since 1989

The history of the Jews in the Bohemian lands was hardly mentioned in Czechoslovakia under Communist rule. Since 1989, this has gradually begun to change. However, most of the schoolbooks that appeared after the political upheaval continued to ignore Jewish issues. Only in 1995 were Jewish topics given more space. The negative image of the State of Israel was also revised. The emphasis of history books from the late 1990s was on the representation of Jews as victims, in particular victims of the Nazis. But just a few of the textbooks that have appeared in the last decade take a European perspective and mention the cultural and intellectual impulses that emanated from Bohemian Jews.

Diana Dumitru

Moldova: The Holocaust as Political Pawn

The Awkward Handling of Jewish Heritage

Moldova is having a hard time in finding an appropriate way to acknowledge the Jewish heritage of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria. It is even more difficult to enshrine the remembrance of the victims of the Shoah in the country's collective memory, as an analysis of school books shows. Commemoration of the Holocaust has become a political pawn in a dispute over history and the politics of identity. Politicians and historians are arguing over "Moldovanism" and "Romanianism". Behind this is a struggle over Moldova's political orientation. Reviving Jewish community life seems easier than working through the past and remembrance.

Péter György

In the Ghetto of Remembrance

The Jewish Museum in Budapest

Hungary has the fourth largest Jewish community in Europe. Nonetheless, there is nothing here to indicate that Jews were once as integrated into society as nowhere else on the continent but Germany. This situation is illustrated in particular by the Jewish Museum in the middle of Budapest's city centre. There, the history of the Jews is reduced to religious objects and the Holocaust. That the Jews were an integral part of Hungarian history is ignored. The museum is so detached from its history that visitors to the synagogues and the museum can only divine that the premises are located at the scene of the crimes committed in 1944. To this day, the Hungarian state has not found it necessary to declare this area on the grounds of the former ghetto an official memorial site.

Felicia Waldman

From Taboo to Recognition

Romania, the Jews, and the Holocaust

The existence of Jews on Romanian territory was suppressed under Communism. Romania's complicity in the Holocaust was a taboo. President Ion Iliescu's remark that there had been no Holocaust on Romanian territory represented a particularly low point. Only with the integration of Romania

into international organisations and the convening of the Elie Wiesel commission of inquiry did the climate change. Now Romania is becoming increasingly willing to accept responsibility for commemorating the victims of the Holocaust and integrating the country's Jewish heritage into its national remembrance culture.