

# לקט

יִיִדִישֶׁע שטודיעס היינט

**Jiddistik heute**

**Yiddish Studies Today**

d|u|p

Der vorliegende Sammelband *לקט* eröffnet eine neue Reihe wissenschaftlicher Studien zur Jiddistik sowie philologischer Editionen und Studienausgaben jiddischer Literatur. Jiddisch, Englisch und Deutsch stehen als Publikationssprachen gleichberechtigt nebeneinander.

*Leket* erscheint anlässlich des XV. Symposiums für Jiddische Studien in Deutschland, ein im Jahre 1998 von Erika Timm und Marion Aptroot als für das in Deutschland noch junge Fach Jiddistik und dessen interdisziplinären Umfeld ins Leben gerufenes Forum. Die im Band versammelten 32 Essays zur jiddischen Literatur-, Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft von Autoren aus Europa, den USA, Kanada und Israel vermitteln ein Bild von der Lebendigkeit und Vielfalt jiddistischer Forschung heute.



יִיִּדִישׁ אױסגאַבעס און פֿאַרשונג

Jiddistik Edition & Forschung

Yiddish Editions & Research

Herausgegeben von Marion Aptroot, Efrat Gal-Ed,  
Roland Gruschka und Simon Neuberger

Band 1



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*Yidish: oysgabes un forshung*  
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## Bridging the “Great and Tragic *Mekhitse*”

Pre-war European Yiddish Serials and the Transition to Post-*Khurbn* America

In a 1931 speech given in Berlin to a group of Eastern European Jewish intellectuals who had gathered together to establish the first ever comprehensive Yiddish language encyclopedia, the historian Simon Dubnow spoke of the potential audience for such an important undertaking. As Dubnow saw it, the encyclopedia, which was to commemorate the milestone of his seventieth birthday a year earlier, had the potential to unify and enlighten the vast Yiddish-speaking world. Dubnow optimistically remarked on that February day:<sup>1</sup>

אַן ענציקלאָפּעדיע איז אַ פּאָלקס-בוך, וואָס  
יעדער דאַרף אים האָבן. אַ פּאָלק, וואָס 10  
מיליאָן מענטשן ריידן אויף ייִדיש, מוז האָבן אַן  
ענציקלאָפּעדיע אויף זײַן אייגענער שפּראַך.

An encyclopedia is a people's-book, and  
each nation must have one. A people, 10  
million of whom speak in Yiddish, must  
have an encyclopedia in their own lan-  
guage

By contrast, nearly three dozen years later, in 1966, the Polish-born cultural activist Iser Goldberg wrote in much more modest and subdued terms in the Foreword of the twelfth and final Yiddish volume of the encyclopedia that was now housed in New York:<sup>2</sup>

מיר ברענגען דעם באַנד צו די טויזנטער ליי-  
ענערס און אַבאָנענטן אין אַלע ייִדישע ייִשובֿים  
איבער דער גאַרער וועלט און מיר האָפֿן, אַז דורך

We bring this volume to the thousands of  
readers and subscribers in Jewish com-  
munities all over the whole world and

*This paper originally began as a talk given at the conference “Transforming a Culture between Soft Covers: Yiddish Journals in the New World,” held at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2009. I am grateful to Professors Jeremy Dauber and David N. Myers, as well as the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies, for the opportunity to participate in that conference. I also thank Jeffrey Shandler, Barbara Schmutzler, and Marisa Elana James for their suggestions and assistance, and the University at Albany’s Center for Jewish Studies for its support.*

1 Simon Dubnow, ווי אַזוי זײַנען מיר געקומען פֿון ייִדישע ענציקלאָפּעדיע צו אַן ענציקלאָפּעדיע אין, Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People (Simon Dubnow Papers, folder 1). All translations are the author’s unless otherwise noted.

2 Goldberg 1966: (unpaginated).

דעם האָבן מיר געמאַכט אַ וויכטיקן צושטייַער  
 צו דער פֿאַרצווייגטער חורבן-ליטעראַטור.  
 we hope that with it, we have made an  
 important contribution to the growing  
*khurbn* literature.

The vast gulf that separates these two statements about the anticipated audiences for די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע is more than simply geographic and chronological. It is a chasm that is marked by rupture and previously unimaginable violence. Any accounting of the loss that was endured by European Jewry must not only include the number of lives destroyed, but must acknowledge that the Nazi Holocaust broke almost fully the historical continuity of a people with thousands of years of cultural creativity on the continent. Indeed, it is almost impossible to conceive of twentieth-century European Jewish history without it being entirely overshadowed by the breach that occurred. In terms of Yiddish print culture, Europe between the two world wars was home to a vast array of popular, literary, artistic, and scholarly journals in the Yiddish language. Although in some regions the use of Yiddish was declining owing to its speakers' linguistic acculturation, the years 1919–1939 marked the pinnacle of Yiddish cultural creativity. In Poland, for example, there were more than 1,700 Yiddish periodicals published in this time.<sup>3</sup> With very few exceptions – and these were mostly within the Soviet sphere or among Displaced Persons – the Yiddish press on the European continent came to a near-end during World War II and the Nazi Holocaust.

For a period of time, the magnitude of this loss dissuaded many historians of the Jews from engaging with the Holocaust, and, conversely, deterred historians of the Holocaust from contending with the contours of those civilizations that were destroyed. A consequence of this is that Jewish history itself has at times been represented as an containing interregnum that brackets off the years 1939–1945 as if they existed outside of normal historical development.<sup>4</sup> Given that it is nearly impossible to represent this period in ways other than through the language of loss and annihilation, it is worthwhile to note the presence of the very few frayed threads of continuity that do bind the pre-war and post-war periods together, and to examine those cultural projects that began in Europe in the optimistic years following World War I and continued through World War II and after in the United States. This essay highlights two cases of pre-war Yiddish serials that were able to continue publishing during and after World War II by transitioning to the United

3 Bacon 2008: 1402.

4 In this regard, the history of the Jews in this period parallels some of the issues raised in the 1980s during the *Historikerstreit* among German historians over the issue of whether the Nazi period marks a rupture within the German past. Also see Engel 2010.



States at the start of the war: the ייִוואָ-בלעטער (*YIVO Journal*, Vilna and New York, 1931–1980) and די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע (*The General Encyclopedia*, Berlin, Paris, and New York, 1932–1966). Although their paths quickly diverged, both the ייִוואָ-בלעטער and די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע began through the efforts of the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) that was housed in Vilna, Poland. Both serials began in the early 1930s and, taken together, mirrored YIVO’s dual mission of being the home for the most sophisticated and current scientific research in the Yiddish language, while simultaneously providing a base from which to educate and improve the conditions of Eastern European Jewry. The *YIVO-bleter*’s mission was to be the premier venue for scholarly research on Eastern European Jewry, while *Di algemeyne entsiklopedye*’s was to bring methodically researched general knowledge to the masses of Yiddish speakers.

The existence of these two Yiddish serials – that were among the only ones to have existed before, during, and after the war – allows for the possibility of understanding this period through a chain of tradition that links the world that was destroyed to the one that remained. It furthermore serves as a way to conceive of Jewish history in this period with an eye towards its continuity, and a realization that wartime and post-war Yiddish culture in the United States was shaped in part by the presence of those few refugee scholars and institutions that were able to relocate there.<sup>5</sup> An examination of these two serials in relation to one another may also be able to inform some of the current conversations about the ways in which Jewish communities in general and Yiddish scholars in particular responded to the Nazi onslaught.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the mere fact that the serials continued to be published, despite all the historical forces working against them (including the near total loss of the editors, writers, and readers that supported them), is worthy of note and study.

The ייִוואָ-בלעטער and די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע were among many significant projects to be launched in the post-World War I burst of Yiddish-language activity in Europe. In this time of optimism and expan-

5 For a discussion of this question regarding the extent to which post-war Yiddish literature is a continuation of pre-war, see Estraiikh 1999. Also see Anita Norich’s (2007) elegant discussion of the ‘fallacy’ of understanding Yiddish and English in America on a historical continuum in which one replaces the other.

6 Two such valuable discussions at present are those raised most recently by historians considering the questions of Jewish ‘silence’ after the Holocaust (particularly in the United States), and by historians discussing the final days of the ideologies of Diaspora Nationalism in Europe. In terms of the debates on the so-called “myth of silence,” see Diner 2009 and Cesarani and Sundquist 2012. On Territorialists’ reconsideration of Jewish Diasporist ideologies in the late 1930s, see, most notably, Karlip 2005 and Weiser 2011: 226–259.

sion, these two publishing ventures were viewed by their initiators as marking a new era in both the Yiddish language and the national community that supported it. As projects of YIVO, they were tied to an institute that, on the one hand, was widely recognized as the preeminent center for Yiddish cultural research (notwithstanding being only in its fifth year), and on the other, was facing a moment of deep fiscal crisis. As the historian Cecile Kuznitz has described it, the early 1930s, in particular, marked a period of “Scholarship under Pressure,” during which scholarly productivity abruptly slowed as attention had to be increasingly directed toward fund-raising.<sup>7</sup> The gap between the organization’s ambitions and financial resources was growing wider.

In spite of a lack of much-needed funds, the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער* first appeared in early 1931, and from the first issue, it set a new standard for Yiddish scholarly research. As the realization of a vision articulated by Zalmen Reyzen at YIVO’s 1929 conference, during which much of the institute’s agenda was decided, the journal is notable not only for the high quality of its articles and stature of its contributors, but, in keeping with Max Weinreich’s oft-repeated insistence on YIVO’s non-partisanship, there is a total absence of articles that directly consider contemporary politics.<sup>8</sup> In the Introduction to the first issue, the *YIVO-bleter*’s editors articulated the tension between their lofty aspirations and financial capacity, and, rather than providing a full programmatic statement stating the journal’s aims and standards, they were frank about their doubts as to whether YIVO would be able to sustain this “new burden.”<sup>9</sup> In spite of these fears, the Central Committee remained committed to the project as it would fill a large void in YIVO’s publications, which, up to then, had consisted of either compendiums of articles from several of its key research areas or shorter articles in its newsletter, *ידיעות*. At the same time, the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער* was envisioned as a tool not only for the Yiddish-speaking Jewish intelligentsia, but its editors optimistically hoped that it might find a popular audience as well, and *[...] קעגען שטילן דעם גרויסן דאָרשט צו וויסן, וואָס איז פֿאַראַן אין אונדזער ברייטער מאַסע.* (help satisfy the great thirst for knowledge that exists among our broad masses). The journal was to correspond to the four sections of YIVO itself: Philology, History, Economics and Statistics, and Psychology and Pedagogy. In addition, it would provide information about YIVO’s program and accomplishments, and archival materials, and would be a “central tribune for all Yiddish scholarly work.”<sup>10</sup>

7 Kuznitz 2000: 221–269; Kuznitz 2008: 2090–2093.

8 See YIVO 1930; on YIVO and founder Max Weinreich’s ‘neutrality,’ see Kuznitz 2000: 242f, 253–257.

9 *Di tzentral-farvaltung fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* 1931: 1.

10 *Ibid.*: 3.

Over the course of the 1930s, the *YIVO*-בלעטער released a steady stream of volumes (although the numbering system often varied and there were occasional gaps in publication). Its contributors included most of the luminaries of the Yiddish intellectual world, such as Simon Dubnow, Max Weinreich, Alexander Harkavy, Avrom Menes, Noyekh Prilutski (Noah Prylucki), Jacob Lestschinsky, Elias Tcherikower, Zelig Kalmanovitsh, Nachman Meisel, Emanuel Ringelblum, Zalmen Reyzen, Jacob Shatzky, Solomon Birnbaum, Shmuel Niger, and Raphael Mahler. The topics were equally vast, and included articles on subjects such as Jewish demography, history, literature, arts, culture, folklore, linguistics, philosophy, philology, Jewish communal life, and scholarly reviews of works in Yiddish, English, Polish, and Spanish. Given the location of *YIVO*, there were a significant number of articles on Polish Jewish history. Throughout the 1930s, the *YIVO*-בלעטער stuck to its decision to avoid contemporary politics, yet touched on some ongoing issues obliquely by historicizing them, such as with Menes’ investigation of Jewish political autonomy in the biblical period.<sup>11</sup> However, the calm “exterior” of the *YIVO*-בלעטער did not adequately represent the often fierce debates occurring within the institute as to the extent to which its research should respond to the growing emergency.<sup>12</sup> It was only in 1939 that the increasingly hostile situation faced by Polish Jewry was reflected (albeit indirectly as well) in the pages of the *YIVO*-בלעטער, as the question of historical anti-Semitism was addressed by several contributions. The January–February edition (vol. XIV, no. 1), for example, contains a historical study by Joseph Lifshits of the anti-Jewish Hep! Hep! riots of 1819 that took place in German lands, as well as an examination by Zosa Szajkowski of French anti-Jewish activity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The final volume from Vilna (May 1939) opened with an article by Joseph Mirkin on “Jewish and anti-Jewish themes in Christian religious art in Medieval France.”

Another debate that arose among the editors and contributors in the *YIVO-bleter*’s early years concerned the extent to which the journal should focus on scholarly issues that specifically addressed issues relevant to Jewish studies or whether non-Jewish topics should be likewise considered.<sup>13</sup> The discussion resulted in a compromise that would maintain the journal’s thematic coherency, yet allow a measure of freedom among its contributors to explore “non-Jewish” themes if they could be shown to be germane to Jewish-related subjects. As the editors wrote in 1932:<sup>14</sup>

11 For example, Menes 1931.

12 See Kuznitz 2000: 264–267.

13 See *YIVO-bleter* 1932: 3.

14 *Ibid.*: 3.

די ייוואָ-בלעטער דאַרפֿן אָפּשפּיגלען די פֿאַרש-  
אַרבעט פֿון די וויסנשאַפֿטלער, וואָס זיינען פֿאַר-  
אייניקט אין און אַרום ייוואָ. ממילא פֿאַלן אָפּ  
יענע געביטן, פֿאַר וועלכע מיר האָבן ניט קיין  
סעקציעס: נאַטור-וויסנשאַפֿט, טעכניק אד"גל  
בלייבן אויסן. וואָס עס איז שייך צו אַלגעמיינע  
פּראָבלעמען פֿון עקאָנאָמיק, סטאַטיסטיק,  
שפּראַך-וויסנשאַפֿט אא"וו, קענען זיי יאָ באַ-  
האַנדלט ווערן אין די ייוואָ-בלעטער, אויב די  
מיטגלידער פֿון אונדזערע וויסנשאַפֿטלעכע  
קאָלעגיעס האָבן וועגן דעם צו זאָגן עפעס  
אייגנס. בכל-אופן איז געוונטשן, אַז סײַ אין  
די אַרטיקלען אויף יידישע טעמעס, סײַ ביים  
רעצענזירן ביכער זאָל ווי ווייט מיגלעך געוויזן  
ווערן דער צוזאַמענבונד, וואָס איז פֿאַראַן  
צווישן יידישע און אַלגעמיינע פּראָבלעמען, סײַ  
מעטאָדיש, סײַ אין תּוך.

The *YIVO bleter* must reflect the research work of the scholars that are united in and around YIVO. As a matter of course those areas that do not have sections: natural sciences, technology, and the like remain out of consideration. That which is pertinent to general problems of economics, statistics, language-studies, etc., can be treated in the *YIVO bleter*, if the members of our scholarly committees have anything to say about them. In any case, it is hoped that to the extent possible, both in the articles on Jewish themes and in book reviews the connection between Jewish and general problems should be demonstrated, that is among Jewish and general problems, both in method and in content.

At the same time as the ייוואָ-בלעטער was being launched, a second initiative with ties to YIVO was getting underway: the first comprehensive Yiddish-language encyclopedia. Although beset by similar fiscal constraints and ideological debates as the ייוואָ-בלעטער, די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע was to a much greater degree at the mercy of historical events in the 1930s. Unlike the ייוואָ-בלעטער, which was based in Vilna and could therefore benefit more easily from the institutional support of YIVO itself, די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע was established in Berlin, which left the project vulnerable when the situation in Germany began to turn dire. At the same time, each project can be seen as a reflection of the milieu in which it was founded. The ייוואָ-בלעטער, based as it was in the capital of the Yiddish cultural world and in a thriving Jewish center, was created to showcase and promote the best intellectual work produced on the subject of Jewish studies. By contrast, Berlin was host to a community of Eastern European Jewish émigrés, who were not in the same sense 'home,' but who were exposed to a much more cosmopolitan city in which exiles from many parts of Europe had congregated. This may account in part for what was a highly contentious decision to produce an encyclopedia of general knowledge that focused on the larger world rather than one restricted to Jewish topics.

The figures who gathered in early February 1931 to organize the encyclopedia were made up of those Eastern European Jews who had been drawn to Berlin in the early 1920s, when it was a magnet for Yid-

dish and Hebrew writers, scholars, and journalists, attracted to the city’s vibrancy, affordability, and cosmopolitanism.<sup>15</sup> Although there was a significant exodus of this community following the stabilization of the German currency and the subsequent decline in Yiddish and Hebrew publishing, many still remained, including Dubnow, the historian and head of YIVO’s History Section Elias Tcherikower, the Menshevik leader Raphael Abramovitch, the demographer Jacob Lestschinsky, the head of the ORT (the Society for Handicraft and Agricultural Work among the Jews of Russia) Leon Bramson, and the Territorialist leader Abraham Rozin (pseud. Ben-Adir). By the time of the February meeting, planning work on the encyclopedia had been underway for several months, and a publishing arm – named the Dubnow Fund – was established to oversee the project’s administration.<sup>16</sup>

Like the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער*, from the very beginning there were debates among the founders about the content of the encyclopedia – specifically, whether it would be scholarly or popular in format, whether it could discuss political topics with the necessary objectivity, and to what extent it would contain general or specifically Jewish knowledge. It was only after several tense discussions – at times played out in the Yiddish press (including the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער* itself) – that a compromise was reached.<sup>17</sup> At a meeting in late 1931, it was decided that the volumes of encyclopedia would contain a ratio of 70 percent general knowledge to 30 percent Jewish, but most of the specifically Jewish content would be relegated to a supplement dedicated to Jewish life and culture. Thus, the decisions reached were nearly the reverse of those concerning the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער*. Whereas the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער* would be scholarly in tone, open-ended, and largely focused on Jewish themes, *די אָלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע* would be for a mass readership, have a definitive end, and be heavily weighted towards general knowledge (ten volumes of general knowledge and one dedicated to Jewish topics). This settlement, however, was not sufficient to fend off a split between the Berlin and Vilna camps, and by the end of 1931, YIVO – primarily citing financial difficulties – officially dropped its ties and the encyclopedia became a project of the now-independent Dubnow Fund alone.

In spite of these setbacks and the growing crisis in Germany, in April 1932, a *פּראָבּעדהעפּט* (sample volume) of the encyclopedia was released to great fanfare and was significant enough to warrant critical

15 Estraiikh and Krutikov 2010. For a comprehensive overview of Yiddish in Weimar-era Berlin, see Estraiikh 2006. On Hebrew in Weimar-era Berlin, see Pinsker 2011: 105–140.

16 YIVO 1931.

17 Yashunsky 1932. For more on Yashunsky’s concerns about the extent to which the Dubnow Fund could maintain the necessary scholarly objectivity, see Kuznitz 2000: 261.

reviews.<sup>18</sup> In between its covers, readers were shown a wide variety of entries on subject matters modeled on those found in the German *Brockhaus*, the British *Britannica*, and the French *Larousse*, such as (following the Yiddish alphabet) the Amarna Period in ancient Egyptian history, unemployment, the author William James, President Abraham Lincoln, motors, empirical criticism, Esperanto, and radium. The specifically Jewish content included entries on Hasidism, reprints of portraits of religious Jews by Marc Chagall, Jewish demography, and the Zionist leader Max Nordau. Its contributors included not only the organizers, but comprised a “who’s who” among the Yiddish intelligentsia. Even those most intimately tied to the YIVO circle, such as Weinreich, are listed.

Less than a year after the release of the פראָבעדעפֿט, however, the Dubnow Fund faced its first major crisis with the Nazi takeover of power on 30 January 1933. The editors and contributors of the encyclopedia who were based in Berlin were forced to flee the country. Although Dubnow ended up in Riga, Abramovitch, Ben-Adir, Bramson, Tcherikower, and others resettled in Paris and were forced to rebuild their organization almost entirely from scratch. This was the first of many challenges that forced reconsiderations in the plans for the project. Unlike the ייִוואָ-בלעטער, which saw only comparatively modest interruptions in its publishing schedule on account of economic or political challenges in the 1930s, and responded to the worsening situation for Jews throughout Europe only in 1939, changes in עניניקלאָפּעדיע די אַלגעמיינע appeared almost from the outset. Immediately, the publication schedule was adjusted so that rather than publishing ten volumes of general knowledge, twenty smaller ones were planned. Despite the highly enthusiastic reception that greeted the first volume (1934), a publishing pace of approximately one volume a year could be sustained, and none were released in 1938.<sup>19</sup> In addition, volumes released in the middle of the decade (all of which were on the letter *alef*) augur a conceptual change in which the focus on general knowledge began to shift toward the particular. Each of these volumes ends on a surprising note, with multi-authored, journal-length entries on the decidedly Jewish topics of “antisemitism” (1936) and the “land of Israel” (1937).<sup>20</sup>

18 Tsentral-komitet fun “dubnov-fond” 1932. For examples of reviews, see Klinov 1932 and Svet 1932.

19 For a fuller account of the volumes in *Di algemeyne entsiklopedye*, see Trachtenberg 2006.

20 Ben-Adir, Tcherikower, and Abramovitch 1936; Ben-Adir and Menes 1937.

A much more dramatic shift in the publishing schedule of די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע occurred on what was the eve of war in the spring of 1939, where, in an unexpected move, the editors decided to release the long-promised supplement, entitled יידן, well ahead of schedule. Unlike the volumes on general knowledge, יידן contains journal-length essays on Jewish history and social science, such as essays on anthropology, archaeology, history and historiography, demography, economics, emigration, and colonization. Although this special volume seems to have been a response to the deteriorating situation, the editors explicitly refrained from discussing it. Instead, they focused the Introduction on the immediate challenges facing the project, such as the death of two of their colleagues. They did, however, announce the first major change in plans: a second יידן volume to serve as a companion to the first.

With the outbreak of war in September 1939, the greatest part of Yiddish print culture in Europe came to an end. By a combination of fortune and determination, both the יוואָ-בלעטער and די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע were able to be reestablished in the United States and continue for decades. The United States at this time, as Anita Norich has noted, became, by default, "unquestionably the center for Yiddish culture," and the war years were defined by a period of profound transformation within both American Yiddish and Jewish culture.<sup>21</sup> In order to maintain their projects, the surviving editors and contributors had to negotiate between remaining true to the scholarly missions on which they were first launched and the new circumstances in which they found themselves. In keeping with prior experience, the transition (administratively speaking) from Europe to the United States for the יוואָ-בלעטער was somewhat smoother than it was for די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע. In the case of the former, Max Weinreich and his son Uriel were in Denmark en route to Belgium. When war broke out in September, Weinreich stayed in Western Europe and made his way to the United States, arriving in March 1940. Even before his arrival, however, he had given permission to YIVO's אַמאָפּטייל (American Section) to take temporary responsibility for publishing the יוואָ-בלעטער, and by October, New York was declared the organization's new headquarters. The first New York-based volume to appear was issued in February of 1940, less than a year after the publication of the last Vilna volume.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, the onset of war brought a much more dramatic interruption to די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע. Weeks after releasing the second יידן volume,

21 Norich 2007: 12.

22 For a discussion of how YIVO reconstituted itself in 1940 in New York, see Soyer 2008.

its editors were forced to flee Paris ahead of the German invasion. After heading first to Toulouse and then Marseilles, Abramovitch and others reached Lisbon by August. With the help of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Bund, and the Emergency Rescue Committee, they were able to obtain visas that allowed them entry into the United States in September 1940.<sup>23</sup> Lestschinsky had arrived prior to the war in 1938. Copies of the second יידן volume, which had been sent to the United States (since Poland was no longer accessible), were lost at sea, but a few volumes survived and were reprinted through the auspices of the New York-based Central Yiddish Cultural Organization (CYCO), which agreed to oversee the project's remaining volumes. However, most of the figures associated with the two serials did not survive the war years. Zalmen Reyzen was executed by Soviet forces. Simon Dubnow was murdered in a mass killing of inhabitants of the Riga Ghetto. Bramson, having fled Paris with Abramovitch, remained in Marseilles and died in early 1941. Noyekh Prilutski was murdered by the Gestapo. Zelig Kalmanovitsh was confined to the Vilna Ghetto and perished in Estonia. Emanuel Ringelblum was killed in Warsaw in 1944.

Written in March 1940, the Foreword of the second יידן volume at last made direct reference to the now unavoidable crisis.<sup>24</sup> Recognizing that the chief institutions of Eastern European Jewish cultural life were fully under German or Soviet control, the editors saw די אַלגעמיינע עניציקלאָפּעדיע as acting in the role of surrogate and revised their task accordingly. With no understanding of the totality of the destruction that was to come, they set about the task of creating a catalog of their history, society, and culture, as if attempting a snapshot of the Yiddish world on the eve of war. The second יידן volume followed the model of the first, and was based on Jewish arts, culture, and language. With the announcement of a third יידן volume, the mission of the encyclopedia began a radical shift, in which the knowledge that was originally thought of as supplementary came to overshadow the entire project, and the relationship between general and Jewish knowledge was inverted.

Now housed in the United States and with little sense of when or if they might return to Europe, the two serials continued to publish through the war years and to adjust to their new circumstances. Both had bases of support in the United States (ייוואָ-בלעטער for אַמאָפּטייל and CYCO for די אַלגעמיינע עניציקלאָפּעדיע), so publishing continued, although at a more sporadic rate. As the war raged in Europe, the figures associated with the ייוואָ-בלעטער and די אַלגעמיינע עניציקלאָפּעדיע watched powerlessly while the people and organizations associated with their re-

23 See the Jewish Labor Committee Archives, Box 32, Folder 7 and Box 38, Folder 23.

24 "Di redaktsye" 1940.



spective projects were being annihilated. In the wartime pages of the *YIVO-Blatt* and *עונציקלאָפּעדיע*, it is clear that the editors struggled with the burdens of taking responsibility for preserving the memory of the Yiddish world that was under assault, and for identifying ways to support its surviving members in the United States.

In particular, this combination of mourning on the one hand and determination on the other permeates the pages of the *YIVO-Blatt* during the war years. For example, in the January–February 1940 volume, which appeared prior to Weinreich’s arrival in the United States, there is a note stating that, with great regret, temporary responsibility for publishing the journal was to be taken over by the *אַמאָפּטייל*, but only with the consent of the Vilna community. The editors and contributors included many of those who had been associated with *YIVO* since its inception, but who had migrated earlier, such as Lestschinsky, Mahler, Niger, and Jacob Shatzky. This issue begins a shift in the journal’s attention to Jewish life in the United States, with the inclusion of two articles: Nathan Goldberg’s “Data on the Condition of the Jewish Writer in New York City” and Herman Frank’s “Economic Organization of the Jewish Middle Class in the United States.”<sup>25</sup> A year later, in the January–February 1941 volume, Weinreich addressed the crisis head-on for the first time. Beginning what would become a tradition lasting several years, he used the *YIVO-Blatt* as a forum to assess the state of Jewish scholarship, and the threat to it posed by the war. He affirmed *YIVO*’s commitment to Jewish scholarship by discussing how, during its Vilna period, *YIVO* served as a center for both academic and cultural pursuits. With the connection to Europe now lost, the *אַמאָפּטייל* had to serve the basic functions of the *YIVO* and he insisted that the role of Jewish scholarship was important, not only to serve as a ‘weapon’ against those who would seek to oppress the Jews, but also to provide a means to liberate Jews from their own ignorance about the Jewish past, present, and future.<sup>26</sup> With this, the *YIVO-Blatt* became an instrument to provide not only a forum for scholarship, but a vehicle for activism. For the next several years, the *YIVO-Blatt* reprinted Weinreich’s addresses to *YIVO*’s annual conventions. In 1943, for example, his speech, *דער ייִוואָ אין אַ יאָר*, *פֿון אומקום* (*YIVO* in a year of death) was a defense both of *YIVO* and of scholarship itself, and was very expansive in its understanding of its mission in America.<sup>27</sup> He expressed his anguish at sitting in a “blessed land” when so many were being “devoured” on the other side of the ocean. He spoke of the need not to sink into despair, but to push on-

25 Goldberg 1940; Frank 1940.

26 Weinreich 1941.

27 Weinreich 1943.

ward and to recognize that YIVO had an “obligation to the entire future of the Jewish folk.” Likewise, he insisted on maintaining YIVO’s high standards and not giving in to the temptation to popularize its work. He pointed to YIVO’s future task of reorienting its research toward the problems faced by Jews in the United States.

At the same time, work on *ענציקלאָפּעדיע* continued. In 1942, the third of the *ייִדן* volumes was released. The volume contains long, multi-authored essays on vast swaths of Jewish history and culture, with essays on Jewish literature, the press, Jewish communal and national life, and the Jewish socialist and labor movement around the world. For the editors, even as they continued with a cultural project they had created before the war, they understood that an era had come to a close. As they wrote in the foreword:<sup>28</sup>

מיט די בענד „ייִדן“ האָבן מיר זיך באַמייט אונ־טערצופֿירן אַ מיין סך־הכל פֿון יענעם פּעריאָד ייִדישע געשיכטע, וואָס האָט זיך פֿאַרענדיקט אין האַרבסט 1939. דאָס איז אַ מיין ליטעראַרישער מאָנומענט, וווּ עס זאָלן פֿאַרפֿיקסירט ווערן די [ד]ערפֿאַרונגען און רעזולטאַטן פֿון דער מאַטעריעלער און גייַסטיקער אַנטוויקלונג פֿון ייִדישן פֿאָלק ביז צום אָנהייב פֿון דעם היסטאָרישן איבערבאַך פֿון דער צווייטער וועלט־מלחמה.

With the *Yidn* volumes we have taken pains to provide a sort of accounting of that period in Jewish history that came to an end in autumn 1939. This is a form of literary monument that should make permanent the experiences and achievements of the material and intellectual development of Jewish people up to the beginning of the historical rupture of World War II.

Given this recognition of the fact that the large majority of their original audience was no longer alive, it is somewhat surprising to find that, in 1944, the editors released a fifth (and what would be the final) volume of general knowledge. In the introduction, the editors spoke of the many difficulties in bringing the volume to fruition.<sup>29</sup> Most immediate was that two of its chief editors in New York had passed away, Ben-Adir in 1942 and Tcherikower in 1943. Worse was the attempt to write an encyclopedia with the knowledge that their audience of European Yiddish-speakers was being annihilated and that their project no longer had the same sort of relevance in its new home. The editors thus made no mention of any future volumes of general knowledge, but instead announced a continuation of the *ייִדן* series on the topics of the “organization of internal Jewish life and of Jewish folk culture.”

With the war’s end and the two serials now permanently based in the United States, and with an American(ized) audience possessed of profoundly different economic, political, and religious concerns, and

<sup>28</sup> “Hakdome,” *Di algemeyne entsiklopedye* 1934–1966 (yidn: gimel): (unpaginated).

<sup>29</sup> “Hakdome,” *Di algemeyne entsiklopedye* 1934–1966 (5): (unpaginated).

which spoke a different language from the Yiddish-speaking Jews of pre-war Europe, each publication was forced to undergo a reassessment of its mission. Rather than start anew, the editors of the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער* and *די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע* insisted on the continuing need for their projects, but recognized that they had to adapt them for the diminished Yiddish-speaking community in North America and its distinct needs. Three changes in particular stand out: (1) both serials display an increased level of self-reflection about their projects, in which the editors discuss their uncertain financial status and the need to adapt the missions of the serials themselves; (2) there is a very discernible shift toward essays on Jewish history in general and a marked increase in subjects related to the United States and the Holocaust; and (3) the publication of English-language versions of their work. Furthermore, the pre-war patterns established by both serials continued in the post-war era, in that the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער* maintained a relatively stable and reliable publication schedule, whereas *די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע* ended up entirely abandoning its original mission of creating a general encyclopedia and instead became a miscellany that was focused on issues of Jewish history and the Holocaust.

For the dozen years after World War II, the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער* maintained a steady publishing schedule of (typically) one volume a year. In the post-war years, it became notable for research into the current and past conditions of Jewish life in North America (in addition to Jewish history in other periods and regions), and for writing some of the earliest historical investigations into aspects of the Holocaust. In this, the *ייִוואָ-בלעטער* had to walk a fine line between remaining relevant to a rapidly dwindling audience and avoiding turning Yiddish into what was called in another – albeit related – context, a *יאָרצײַט-קולטור* (culture of commemoration), in which it might become over-identified with mourning and loss and a metonym for the Holocaust.<sup>30</sup> By 1948, however, YIVO stopped reprinting addresses by Weinreich and resumed volumes that, in form, largely resembled those prior to the war. The articles in this period on Jewish life in North America are often expansive and ambitious. Volume xxxi–xxxii (1948), for example, was dedicated to questions of education and the psychology of Jewish families and youth. Later issues contained a variety of articles on topics such as Jewish religious life, Jewish agriculture in Canada, the New York Jewish literary scene, records of Jews in the Los Angeles Police Department, the participation of Jews in the American labor movement, and the New York school system. Volume xxxviii (1954) is dedicated entirely to the topic of Jewish life and culture in the United States, and offered articles

30 On the use of this term, see Norich 2007: 26f, 109.

on Yiddish literature, Jewish migration, Jewish education, and the extent to which Jews identified with American society.

In addition to the increase in essays related to American subjects, not surprisingly, a substantial number of articles also address aspects of the Holocaust, including Weinreich's own *Hitler's Professors*, a monograph-length condemnation of the German scientists and scholars who lent their support to the Nazi regime. Other contributions concerned the Lodz ghetto, the impact of the war on the psychology of Jewish youth, the relevance of Jewish national ideologies in the post-war period, obituaries of those YIVO members killed during the war, the effect of the Nazi occupation on Jewish family relations in Poland, and Zelig Kalmanovitch's diaries of the Vilna ghetto. The entirety of volume xxxvii (1953) is concerned with the Holocaust and focuses almost exclusively on the experiences of victims, including articles on social differentiation in concentration camps, rescue efforts, Jewish resistance, and the Madagascar plan.

Following the 1944 release of the fifth volume of general knowledge, experienced a hiatus of half a dozen years. In 1950, the promised fourth volume of the Yidn series was released. The editors announced their intentions that the volume would be the first of a new three-part series. The initial three יידן volumes, they wrote, existed on the other side of a vast divide that signified the end of an era:<sup>31</sup>

די ערשטע סעריע [א, ב, ג] איז פֿאַרטראַכט און דורכגעפֿירט געוואָרן אין די יאָרן 1938–1941, וואָס זײַנען געוואָרן די גרויסע און טראַגישע מחיצה צווישן דער עפֿאַכע פֿון עמאַנסײַפֿאַציע און דעם חורבן תש"א–תש"ה.

נאָך דעם צווייטן וועלט־קריג און דער קאַ־טאַסטראָפֿע פֿון אייראָפּעיִשן ייִדנטום האָט זיך אָנגעהויבן אַ נייע תקופֿה פֿון ייִדישער געשיכ־טע. דער אייראָפּעיִשער פּעריאָד – די עפֿאַכע פֿון דער פּאָליטישער און גײַסטיקער פֿירערשאַפֿט פֿון מיזרח־אייראָפּעיִשן ייִדנטום אין דער ייִדי־שער וועלט – האָט זיך פֿאַרענדיקט אין איינעם מיט דעם כּמעט פֿולשטענדיקן חורבן פֿון די גרויסע ייִדישע קיבוצים אין דער אַלטער היים.

The first series [of three] was conceived and carried out in the years 1938–1942, which were a great and tragic *mekhitse* between the epochs of emancipation and *khurbn* 1941–1945.

After World War II and the catastrophe of European Jewry, there began a new period in Jewish history. The European period – that epoch of the political and intellectual leadership of Eastern European Jewry in the Jewish world – has ended together with the near total *khurbn* of the great Jewish communities in the old world.

31 "Hakdome," *Di algemeyne entsiklopedye* 1934–1966 (yidn: daled): (unpaginated).

However, in deciding to continue with their project, the editors of די וועלט, like those of the ייוואָ-בלעטער, provided one of the very few links between the world that was destroyed and the one that lay ahead. They saw the encyclopedia’s task as providing a means with which to help the new Jewish communities in the United States and Israel assume their positions of leadership in the Jewish world:<sup>32</sup>

[...] the emerging communities in the new world and the young state in the birthplace of the Jewish people are an omen of the ever-lasting living strength of our ‘eternal people’ that has experienced so many catastrophes and *khurbones*.

[...] די אויפֿשטייגנדיקע ייִשובֿים אין דער נייער וועלט און די יונגע מלוכה אין [ע]ם געבורטלאַנד פֿון ייִדישן פֿאָלק זיינען אַן אָנזאָג אויפֿן בלייבנדיקן לעבנס־כוח פֿון אונדזער „אייביקן פֿאָלק“, וואָס האָט שוין איבערגעלעבט אַזוי פֿיל קאַטאַסטראָפֿעס און חורבנות.

In what can best be described as a type of scholarly יזכור־בוך for European Jewry, the fourth יידן volume provided a comprehensive overview of European Jewish history, country by country, with a particular focus on the period prior to the war. With richly illustrated essays by many of the surviving original editors and contributors to the project, such as Abramovitch, Lestschinsky, Menes, and Shatzky, this volume is a comprehensive catalog of the world they once knew and was their last opportunity to memorialize it.

Seven years later, volume 5 of the יידן series appeared and it was dedicated to Jewish life in the Americas, divided among the United States, Canada, and Latin America.<sup>33</sup> By this time, most of the original editors had passed away or were no longer actively involved. As others rose to assume responsibility for the project, they expressed their wish to reinvigorate the encyclopedia (restricting it to the יידן volumes only) and to restore it to a regular printing schedule. They anticipated publishing a volume on the destruction of European Jewry and another on the state of Israel. The final two volumes of די וועלט appeared only several years later, in 1964 and 1966, and both are accounts of the Holocaust, discussing the assault on Jewish communities in the various European states.

By the mid-1960s, both serials had largely reached their ends. After the *YIVO-bleter*’s volume XLI (1957–1958), which was dedicated to the recently deceased Shmuel Nizer, publishing became much more er-

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. (yidn: hey).

matic, and the final volume was published in 1980.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, both serials managed to reach wider audiences by creating English-language versions immediately after the war. In 1946, YIVO released the first *Annual of Jewish Social Science* and CYCO published the first of three (later expanded to four) volumes of *The Jewish People: Past and Present*. In their initial period, both serials largely consisted of translations of the Yiddish volumes, with the *YIVO Annual* mostly comprising articles from the 1940s onward, with the goal of presenting a comprehensive view of “every major Jewish settlement, and in time they cover significant phases of two thousand years of Jewish life, with accent on the present.”<sup>35</sup> *The Jewish People: Past and Present* was largely a translation of articles found in the first three ײִדיש volumes.

In the introduction to the *YIVO Annual* volume II–III (1948), Weinreich dramatically redefined YIVO’s task to his English readers as: “to study Jewish life present and past, near and distant with the tools of modern social science and to interpret Jewish life to the non-Jewish academic world.”<sup>36</sup> With this, Weinreich announced what might be viewed as a radically new vision for YIVO. With the linguistic shift to English and the relocation of YIVO to a country that was largely welcoming to Jews, YIVO’s scholarship would no longer be restricted to Yiddish-speaking Jewry alone, but would now be accessible to the wider world. He further made the case that what set YIVO apart was its unique ability to study “Jewish life *from within*” [original emphasis], on account of its particular frame of reference and intimate ties to the community. The following year, YIVO exemplified this shift by holding a symposium on the state of Jewish social scientific research. With nearly sixty contributions from leading scholars, including William Foxwell Albright, Hannah Arendt, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Harry Lurie, Shmuel Niger, and Max Weinreich, the participants sought to lay the groundwork for future academic work. The issues debated among the participants included the extent to which future research should be dispassionate and inattentive to utilitarian concerns or whether it should have a practical application; a reemergence of the debate as to whether YIVO’s research should be on Jewish or general topics; the overall significance of Jewish studies as a discipline; whether there would exist adequate research personnel to carry out the work; and to what extent YIVO could be viewed as being “sufficiently American in character.”<sup>37</sup> Subsequent volumes tended to follow the *YIVO-bleter*’s publishing schedule and

34 Since volume XLVI (1980), four volumes in a “new series” appeared, between 1991 and 2003.

35 Weinreich 1946.

36 Weinreich 1948.

37 Lurie and Weinreich 1949.

contain almost entirely English translations of its articles. Volume VII (1952) is a tribute to Peretz on the centenary of his birth. Publication slowed dramatically in the 1960s and had ceased by 1983.<sup>38</sup>

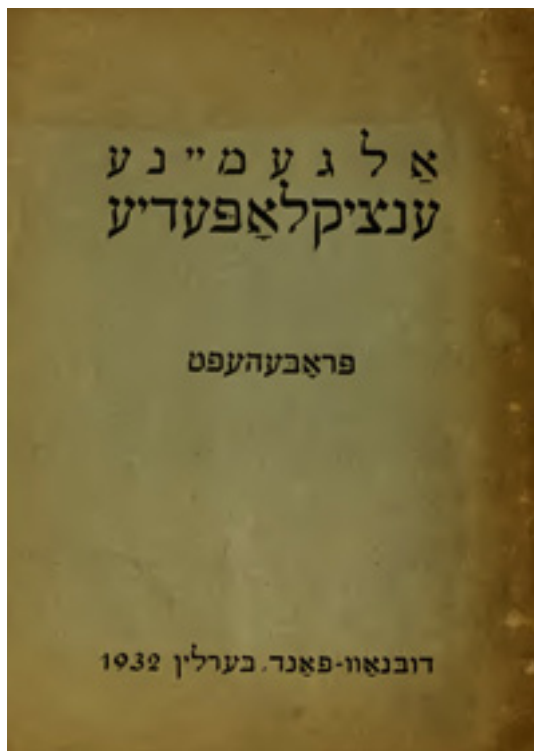
*The Jewish People: Past and Present*, true to the form of די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע, was published much more erratically than the YIVO Annual, the first three volumes appearing in 1946, 1948, and 1952. It was, in many respects, a much more prestigious work than the Yiddish encyclopedia. Although its editors were many of the same figures who were responsible for the Yiddish volumes, others, such as Salo Baron (Columbia University), Mordecai Kaplan (Jewish Theological Seminar), Jacob Marcus (Hebrew Union College), and Abram Leon Sachar (Brandeis) lent their names to the Editorial Advisory Board. Contributions from scholars whose work did not appear in the Yiddish volumes (and for whom such a choice may have been unimaginable), such as William Foxwell Albright, M. F. Ashley Montagu, and Gershom Scholem, were also included.<sup>39</sup> With the completion of the third volume, the editors expressed their intention to produce another three, but only one more volume appeared, in 1955, which was a commemoration of the tercentenary of Jewish life in what became the United States. The volume was dedicated to the Jewish Labor Committee, headed by Abramovitch, for having “saved the lives of many of our editors and contributors by bringing them to this country in the years 1940–42, and which enabled us to achieve this work.”<sup>40</sup>

By successfully transitioning to the United States, both the די אַלגעמיינע ענציקלאָפּעדיע and ייוואָ-בלעטער stand out from nearly every other Yiddish serial begun in Europe between the two world wars. Their presence in the historical record can provide a way to understand this period other than as a complete rupture; instead, it allows us to view it as one that contains lines of continuity between the two epochs and continents. In making the move to their new location, however, the serials were located in a land that was simultaneously welcoming to Yiddish-speaking Jews, but comprised a Jewish community that was less invested in Yiddish or the ideologies that had once supported its development. With potential audiences numbering in the thousands, as opposed to the millions that Dubnow once imagined, the projects struggled to locate their readership, yet continued to make scholarly contributions for decades after the war.

38 In 1990, Deborah Dash Moore edited a volume, *East European Jews in Two Worlds: Studies from the YIVO Annual*, which reprinted articles from the YIVO Annual. The following year, volume 20 of the Annual appeared, also edited by Deborah Dash Moore, and contains new research as well as earlier work translated from Yiddish.

39 Although Scholem was less than enthusiastic about his inclusion in the volume. See his letter to Menes dated 5 June 1945: YIVO Archives, Papers of Abraham Kin (RG 554): Box 5.

40 Abramovitch et al. 1955: (unpaginated preface).



*General Encyclopedia, Sample Volume, Dubnow Fund, Berlin 1932*



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