



"Did You Teach Us to Do Otherwise?"

Young Women in the Tsukunft Youth Movement in Interwar Poland and Their Role Models

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the issue of Jewish youth movements' contribution to women's empowerment in interwar Poland using the example of the socialist movement Tsukunft. The article explores the movement's politics of memory in the interwar period and the selection of heroines whom the young women of Tsukunft were supposed to emulate, as well as real-life examples of Bundist women activists of the interwar period who served them as role models. In its examination of this alternative to the examples proposed by the mainstream state narrative, the article offers a view of Jewish social life in Poland, but also asks more specific questions, such as the true nature of relationships between Bundist women and men.

KEYWORDS: Bund, interwar period, Jewish youth, role models, Tsukunft, women



Among the documents of the interwar Jewish youth organization Tsukunft held in Polish archives there are only two membership cards. Both of them belonged to young women. The sisters Rachela Beri and Chana Beri were grassroots members who participated in the organization's activities in the industrial Zagłębie region.¹ There is nothing odd about the fact that the only preserved membership cards belonged to women. Indeed, Tsukunft, the youth organization of the Bund socialist party, was fundamentally coeducational.² The 1930 calendar for young Jewish workers clearly stated that 45 percent of Tsukunft activists were young women between the ages of fourteen and eighteen.³

The most tragic episode of the movement's history—World War II—determined how the Tsukunft movement would be remembered by its former members.⁴ Stories of young men and women fighting in the ghettos (especially during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising) emphasize their courage, uncompromising attitude, and sense of duty and responsibility.⁵ Some of the young female activists worked as "couriers," or perhaps



more accurately, “spearheads.” On highly risky missions, using false identities, they smuggled underground press, documents, money, medicine, and weapons in and out of the ghettos.⁶ Was their heroism a function of attitudes molded before the war? In 1945, Władka Meed, recalling the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (she had remained on the “Aryan” side and helped pass weapons into the ghetto), posed a rhetorical question in a letter to one of Tsukunft’s prewar leaders, Moyshe Kligisberg: “You speak of heroism, but could there have been any other response? Did you teach us to do otherwise?” She continued this thought further on: “I’ll tell you more: you were the cause of our pride, and our actions. That was not heroism, we did what we thought was right, and it was right to fight the Nazis with all we had.”⁷ Meed’s testimony emphasizes that the Tsukunft’s ideals as espoused before the war continued to serve its young people as a real compass, especially during their fight against the Nazis. Drawing on archival material, ideological brochures, press cuttings, speeches, memos, teaching programs for instructors, press articles, and personal accounts, this article examines the empowering and often radicalizing experience of young Tsukunft women during the interwar period as they learned from their female role models how to live, organize, rebel, resist, and fight. I argue that despite the scarcity of high-ranking female leaders both in the Bund and Tsukunft, the movement’s choice of heroes and real-life examples shaped the new generation of women. It offered an alternative narrative promoting the strong, socialist Jewish woman. The article also examines the relationship between Bundist women and men in interwar Poland, stressing the marginal platform given to women by the male leaders of the party.

New State, New Challenges

The Jewish population in interwar Poland numbered around three million. This was about 10 percent of the country’s total citizenry, making Jews the second-largest minority in the country, after Ukrainians. Polish Jews also constituted the second-largest Jewish community in the world in absolute numbers, and the largest in proportionate terms.

The political map of Jewish society in Poland was shaped before World War I, at a time when the Polish lands were partitioned under three foreign powers: the Russian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Prussia. Many new political bodies were born only after 1918, but the interwar Jewish political landscape was rooted in the prewar state. In the 1880s and 1890s, two new schools of thought became increasingly popular amid secularizing Jews: Zionism and socialism. The aim of Zionism was to create a Jewish state in the ancestral homeland, and thus to resolve the animosity Jews often experienced from their neighbors. Secular opponents of Zionism, on the other hand, supported *doikayt* (“hereness” in Yiddish), believing that the fight for Jewish rights needed to be won where Jews were living. Adherents of both options shared their ideas for creating a new, just, socialist society, whether in Palestine or in Central and Eastern Europe. There were also religious supporters of a new Jewish state, who attempted to fuse modern secular Jewish politics with Judaism. Most Orthodox Jews rejected Zionism, seeing it as a substitute religion and a movement that could

undermine the spirituality of the Jews. Analogously, they also boycotted the vision of autonomy in the Diaspora, stressing that the concept was secular. The spectrum of approaches to Jewish issues led to the creation of a great many political parties, which shaped Jewish life in the interwar period. The modern Jewish parties set up their own youth organizations, labor unions, and cultural and educational associations, and published their own press. At this time, Jewish society created a new model of political organization, tailored to the circumstances of the young twentieth century. In this period we can speak of the birth of "modern Jewish politics."⁸

Within this context, the Bund, founded in 1897, provided political tools for impoverished Eastern European Jewry. The Bund was a socialist, anti-Zionist party that promoted the profound democratization and socialization of means of production, in the tradition of democratic Marxism. It advocated national and cultural autonomy for Eastern European Jews, the establishment of a secular school system, and the support of secular Jewish culture. The party insisted that the future of the Jewish people would best unfold in the same places in the Diaspora in which they had lived for centuries. Throughout the entire interwar period, the party maintained a sizeable representation in municipal councils, as well as Jewish *kehillas* (organized communities); however, none of its representatives were ever elected to the Polish Parliament. The membership of the party itself in the interwar period constituted about ten thousand people, which is a number comparable to the size of its youth movement.⁹

Jews living in interwar Poland also had to come to terms with transformations that had occurred in other areas of life after 1918. One of these was women's emancipation. Women were given both active and passive suffrage for the Legislative Parliament by decree of the head of state on 28 November 1918,¹⁰ while separate legal acts regulated the issue for local governments.¹¹ Equal voting rights thus became fact, later confirmed by the (1921) March Constitution, which made all citizens equal in the eyes of the law. Women's rights activists declared this a breakthrough. Their publications were full of reflections on the new opportunities for women. These were often accompanied by remarks on the generation that was just entering adulthood, crossing into a world of equal rights. It was especially emphasized that girls coming of age in post-World War I Poland had opportunities their mothers had not had. Female citizens of independent Poland had more access to education, and above all now also had rights in the public sphere. Moreover, relations between the sexes were changing. Young people now grew up alongside one another, sometimes even attending coeducational schools and interacting socially. Friendly relationships between boys and girls were, for this generation of mothers, a sign of a new era.¹²

These new models of behavior led to debates on the participation of women in public life. Women from non-Jewish communities took a range of standpoints on the issue. Conservative women's rights activists saw women primarily as mothers and wives. Liberal activists worked to promote women's activities in all areas, asserting that women were perfectly capable of occupying positions previously seen as exclusively male. The enthusiasm they expressed for the prospects of young women in the years immediately following World War I was not entirely borne out in reality, however. The gap between theory and practice was sometimes a yawning chasm, and some new laws were in fact anticonstitutional; one forbade women to serve as judges,

for instance.¹³ Moreover, although during the interwar period over half of those voting in parliamentary and local elections were women, only a small group of female activists actually stood for election.¹⁴

Jewish circles were no different from others in these matters. As Jolanta Mickutė has noted, Zionism promoted a new type of Jewish woman. She was to be healthy both in body and spirit, and her fundamental role was to bear children and raise them according to Zionist national tradition. She was also supposed to be prepared to sacrifice herself for her nation. Polish female Zionist activists of the 1920s were mainly active in spheres to which men had not usurped the sole right, that is, above all social care and schooling—domains that seemed to be extensions of women's traditional roles.¹⁵ In response to the tension between innovation and tradition, the traditionalist Jewish party Agudas Yisroel also applied modern cultural and political tools to protect young women from drifting away from religious life. However, as Naomi Saidman shows, this move was a traditionalist revolution, allowing women to access the role of religious activists.¹⁶ The Bund in its ideology was aware of the oppression of women. As a Marxist political movement, it perceived this oppression as a result of the existing relation of production. Thus, here the woman's role was to contribute to the creation of a socialist society with the help of the party.

Sisters in Arms

The Bundist movement in interwar Poland worked to attract women by various means: creating libraries, organizing courses, excursions, concerts, and lectures, but also creating day cares and supporting equal pay for women. However, as Jack Jacobs has shown, the dedicated Bundist women's organization, *Yidisher arbeter froy* (The Jewish Working Woman, hereafter YAF), was not very successful, attracting fewer new female members than before the war.¹⁷ Its failure to draw new members from among the older generation may have stemmed from the then predominant vision of women as mothers, running the household, and having no time for political engagement. Nonetheless, the YAF persisted in targeting this segment of the Jewish population. A Yiddish pamphlet published in 1928, entitled *My Sisters! A Word to the Jewish Working Woman*, written by YAF leader Dina Blond, urged women: "It is not only you who live such a hard life, and your fate is not your fault. Try for a minute to leave the four walls of your tiny apartment and look around at what is going on in the world. You will see that there are thousands of ordinary Jewish women workers who live like you."¹⁸ The solution suggested by Blond was to organize, and join the Bund (since the individual alone cannot do much, but as part of a group people have more power). It seems that this message was much more attractive to the younger generation, that is, for women coming of age who were trying to figure out their adult life and had only just entered the workforce. Hungry for acceptance, knowledge, and simply fun, many of them indeed joined the Bund's youth organization: *Tsukunft*.¹⁹

Reasons for joining the movement were not always idealistic. As the studies by Kamil Kijek and Daniel Heller show, despite the intentions and ideals of the main activists, young people often signed up not to change the world but to take advantage of the ed-

educational and cultural programs on offer, and to feel accepted among their peers.²⁰ One of Tsukunft's radical activists, Klara Mirska, who later became a communist, recalled:

It was a friend of mine who believed that she would sooner impress young people seeking solutions in socialism with her high school diploma and her bourgeois background who drew me to Tsukunft. Yes! All this may seem strange and brutal, but there were all kinds of reasons why young people, especially women, joined left-wing organizations.

"Tsukunft" was a youth organization organized by the Bund. I liked the words about socialism and equality. I had no idea what differences divided the socialist parties. My concept of the essence of socialism was very vague. It seemed to me that socialists are better people because they strive for justice and want to make the world happy, which meant me too. That was enough for me. I could just as easily have joined the Poalei Zion Left or the communist youth organization. It was pure coincidence that I joined "Tsukunft." I was admitted to the Gracchus Babeuf Circle, which consisted of students, mostly from high school graduation classes.²¹

Mirska's comments show that recruits often had difficulty distinguishing between the various left-wing movements, from the Zionist workers' party (Poalei Zion) to the communists. They also reveal another vital yet paradoxical aspect of membership of Tsukunft and other youth movements among young people: their political fluidity. On the one hand, members seemed fanatically committed to the cause, while on the other, their biographies and testimonies are full of references to how, before they became activists, they had worked for other organizations, sometimes with diametrically different profiles.²² Nevertheless, once they joined the organization and decided to stay, they became acquainted with one highly singular image of a woman's role: that of revolutionary.

Radical Role Models

The leaders of the Tsukunft, predominantly men in their thirties and forties, were well aware that political decisions were often founded not on deep reflection but on emotion.²³ The Tsukunft program creators admitted that the purpose of teaching about the socialist struggle was to create an emotional bond between the Tsukunftists and the organization.²⁴ In young women these emotions were most easily stoked by learning about heroines from the past, women who had emerged as leaders. Especially for a socialist organization such as Tsukunft, it was not hard to identify and leverage radical role models from the past, either from the Bund itself or from the movements that preceded it. Members of Tsukunft (Tsukunftists) studied the lives of female revolutionaries. The stories of female political activists, speakers, and even martyrs were told at meetings and summer camps, and published in the Tsukunft press.²⁵ They were repeatedly held up as role models, and as a result must have had an impact on the ideals of young female Tsukunft members.

The biographies of the heroines published in the Tsukunftist press (usually on International Women's Day) and the movement's educational materials evince some common features. Heroines were selected on the basis of their involvement in the struggle with political and class order among both Jews and non-Jews. They were usually praised for their persuasive abilities or their martyrdom. The message of these images was that the transgression of the gender order by these historical women was justified by the final sacrifice of death or their preparedness to make that sacrifice for their beliefs.

The most famous woman whom young Tsukunftists were taught to look up to and emulate was Rosa Luxemburg, whose *In Memory of the Proletarian Party* was mandatory reading for every member of the movement. In it, she demonstrated, using the example of the history of the Polish Proletarian Party, her belief in popular movements, and indirectly accused Lenin of putschism.²⁶ Born in Zamość into a Maskilic family, Luxemburg was the daughter of a timber merchant, and became active in the Polish, German, and international socialist movements at an early stage. She was an outstanding speaker and thinker, a cofounder of the social democracy movement of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, and a participant in the 1905–1907 revolution in Warsaw. She spent a significant part of World War I in German prisons because of her antiwar agitation, and was murdered by government-sponsored right-wing paramilitary troops in 1918 for her leading role in the German revolutionary movement. Undoubtedly, she was indeed one of the greatest figures in the international workers' movement of her time. Although during her lifetime she opposed the Bund's "nationalist" policy, after her murder the movement praised her as a Jewish heroine whose life was worth emulating.²⁷ The very first Tsukunft circles that emerged in interwar Poland bore Luxemburg's name. One of these was the Włocławek cell, one of only a few groups in existence in Poland in 1919.²⁸

Another subject of Tsukunft's cultural and educational activities was the heritage of Louise Michel. Michel was one of the most influential figures in French politics in the nineteenth century, and a key participant in the Paris Commune. She was born in an austere castle as the daughter of a maid and the castellan's son. She started her adult life as an elementary teacher, but after moving to Paris, where she opened a progressive school, she became very politically engaged, advocating for women's rights. In 1871, during the Paris Commune, she became an ambulance driver and a soldier. She surrendered on learning that her mother had been arrested, and was incarcerated and sent to New Caledonia. In exile she embraced anarchism, and upon returning to France she became one of the leaders and symbols of the movement.²⁹

Other young female revolutionaries also celebrated—both Jewish and non-Jewish—were those implicated in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II: Sophia Perovskaya, Vera Figner, and Hesia Helfman. Perovskaya, a young Russian noblewoman, participated in two failed attempts to kill the tsar, and the third, successful one she also helped to plot and orchestrate. Together with her fellow conspirators from the radical underground organization the People's Will (*Narodnaya volya*), she was condemned to death by hanging. Thus, Perovskaya became the first woman to be executed for a political crime in Russia. Her actions ultimately helped pave the way for systemic change, and she was hailed a "saint"³⁰ by the radical leftists of her time. Vera Figner

was also born into a noble family. As a member of the Executive Committee of the People's Will, she took an active part in the creation of its paramilitary wing and coordinated its activities. She also participated in the planning of the tsar's assassination.³¹ Hesyā Helfman, however, was probably the easiest for young Tsukunftists to identify with, due to her Jewish heritage. Helfman, born in Mazyr (Gomel region, today Belarus) and also a member of the People's Will, was assigned the task of running a safe house where the terrorists could plot the assassination.³²

References to the revolutionary history of the Russian Empire did not end with the assassins of Alexander II. Tsukunft also highlighted the activities of Yekaterina Breshkovskaya, known as "the grandmother of the Russian revolution."³³ Breshkovskaya too was born into a noble family. She left home in her twenties to join the followers of anarchist Mikhail Bakunin; in 1878, she was arrested and was the first woman in Russia to be sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. Released in 1896, she immediately returned to her political activities, and in 1901 she cofounded the Socialist Revolutionary Party, whose main goal was the redistribution of all land to the peasants. In 1907, she was again arrested, and exiled to Siberia for life. She regained her freedom in 1917, but she opposed the Bolsheviks, and after the October Revolution fled Russia for Czechoslovakia in 1924.

Lastly, Tsukunft's politics of memory featured women Bundists who could serve as role models.³⁴ Of these, the most frequently lauded were Nadejda Grinfeld, Anna Lifshits, Esther Riskind, and Fania (Vera) Grobelska.³⁵ Nadejda Grinfeld joined the Bund in Kishiniev in 1903. During the 1905–1907 revolution, she headed the Bundist self-defense group in Odessa. In 1917, she was a popular speaker at mass meetings in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg) and Kronstadt, after which, in 1917 and 1918, she sat as a parliamentary deputy in the Republic of Moldavia.³⁶ As Sofia Dubnow-Erllich recalled: "She was a tall, shapely, spirited woman of diverse gifts, one of those restless natures that find it hard to bear the burden of their own giftedness, she moved in Bundist and Menshevik circles, strictly adhering to the defensist line, often spoke at meetings, and was well received by the Kronstadt sailors."³⁷ Anna Lifshits,³⁸ born in 1881 in the village of Kelmė (now Lithuania), was remembered mostly for her role in the 1905 revolution, when she was very active in the city of Odessa, especially during the events surrounding the sailors' mutiny on the armored cruiser Potemkin; she was perhaps the most revered speaker at the mass meetings there. In 1910, she was one of four Bund delegates invited to the International Socialist Congress in Copenhagen. She remained in Denmark for the next few years and then moved to Latvia.³⁹ Esther Riskind was born in Lyady (Vitebsk region, now Belarus) into a Hasidic family, and ran away from home to avoid an arranged marriage. She became a political activist as a young woman and was involved in Bundist work in Kharkov (now Kharkiv, Ukraine), Białystok, Łódź, and Warsaw.⁴⁰ In summer 1905, during a Bundist rally in Białystok, anarchists threw a bomb at the police. The police opened fire and, as a result, two Bundist women were killed: the 25-year-old Riskind and 21-year-old Gitl Zakheim. Due to their tragic deaths, both Riskind and Zakheim were remembered and commemorated alongside the movement's most eminent leaders. The cult of Riskind among young people in interwar Poland was so strong that one of the Warsaw branches of Tsukunft was named Tamara, which was her party name.⁴¹ A similar mes-

sage was conveyed in the movement's memory of Fania Grobelska, an activist shot in Warsaw during a 1905 demonstration. The most resonant element of her story as studied by young Tsukunft women was her dying words to her comrade: "Why do you cry over me? I have fallen in struggle, not somewhere under a fence."⁴² Many more such young women active in the early years of the Bund remained unnamed. Thus, Zakhaim and Grobelska (about whose lives we know very little) stood as a symbol for all their struggles.

The tradition of women's activism and their pioneering spirit was promoted not least through the slogans and iconography of the Tsukunft. Their ideals were to be re-created by young members in their own lives. Women activists and rebels were visible in the symbolic sphere (though certainly not as prominently as male heroes⁴³). Local circles bore their names, and their pictures and biographies appeared in the movement's press and were held up as subjects for study and discussion during the movement's meetings, thus serving as points of reference for the young women of Tsukunft. Such stories and examples encouraged young Polish Jewish women to fight for the rights of the working class despite the personal risks.

Contemporary Figures

In addition to historical heroines, thinkers, and martyrs, other role models for the young women in Tsukunft were Bundist women contemporary to themselves. Although the ratio of women to men in the party was lower than in the youth organization, at just over 26.6 percent in 1930,⁴⁴ some Bundist women politicians with inspiring life stories undoubtedly influenced young Bund followers. They were usually described by contemporary journalists as passionate speakers, which is a rather typical description of women involved in political life at the time, stressing their commitment and emotionality. However, intransigence and devotion to others were two qualities from their peacetime activism that served as useful examples for wartime work.

When asked by a USC Shoah Foundation interviewer about political activists in Lublin, Tsukunft member and Holocaust survivor Shirley Warman immediately recalled one name: Bela Szapiro.⁴⁵ Szapiro was born around 1890 into a Hasidic family living near Lublin, where her father owned a printing house. Like her two sisters, Bela attended a secular secondary school (*gimnazjum*). She was the only one of the siblings not to graduate; her parents married her off to a wealthy Hasid, Szyffer. Her marriage did not last, however, and after the divorce Bela raised her two children by herself. She became involved in social and political activities sometime before 1914, first joining the Hazomir Club, where she met local political activists (mostly Zionists) and started campaigning for aid for indigent Jewish women. She came into contact with the Bund through its Grosser Library, and joined the party in 1918. In February 1919 she was elected to Lublin City Council, where she became known for her fierce, courageous speeches.⁴⁶ As one of her Polish political opponents wrote in an anti-Semitic comment: "Bajla [Bela] Szyffer . . . who dons the red shroud of international workers' solidarity whenever and wherever she can, cleverly smuggles the Jewish interest in."⁴⁷ At council sessions she defended workers' rights and campaigned for improved working con-

ditions. Education also played an important role in her work. As a council member she lobbied for measures including local government financial support for Jewish schools (she was an active supporter of TSYSHO, the Central Jewish School Organization). Her political activism was closely tied to her work in Yiddish cultural and educational institutions, where she met her second husband, Jakub Nissenbaum, editor in chief of the local Yiddish-language *Lubliner tugblat* (Lublin daily) newspaper and a Bund activist. In the 1930s she became involved in the construction of the I. L. Peretz Culture Center, which was to have included a secular school, evening courses for workers, and library. However, the outbreak of World War II prevented the center from becoming fully operational. At meetings of the city council in 1934–1939, and during the local government election campaign in 1939, she criticized the authorities harshly for tolerating the growing wave of anti-Semitism in both the city and the country as a whole. Her stance was similar during the debate on ritual slaughter: "As a Bundist she declares that the Bund does not defend religion, but it is also against the violation of religion. The Bund believes that at a time of rapid rise in anti-Semitism, . . . the abolition of ritual slaughter is adding fuel to the fire of the 'unleashed anti-Semitic cacophony.' Councilor Nisenbaum ends with the statement that although the Poles would like to oust the Jews from Poland, they should know that they will not remove the Jews; the Jews will stay here."⁴⁸ Her speeches at rallies, audacious and well-constructed, gained her many supporters, even among traditional Jews.⁴⁹

Another rally speaker⁵⁰ who played an influential role in Bundist life in interwar Poland was Paulina, or Pesia (Sara), Szweber. Szweber was born Pesl Katelianska in Brest, around 1875. She started her professional career by opening a dressmaking shop, which rapidly became popular among local women. Her workshop was organized in accordance with socialist principles as described by the Russian writer and journalist Nikolai Chernishevsky in his novel *What Is to Be Done?* (1863), which meant that all employees received the same wages and worked an eight-hour day. Around 1900 she joined the Bund, which in that period was illegal. In 1903 she was arrested. After that she became active in a number of towns. In 1905 she was one of the leaders of the Polish Jews' protests against the tsarist regime that took place in Kalisz, and was chosen to negotiate with the governor: "I, too—at that time a small, skinny girl—was chosen to be a member of the delegation,"⁵¹ she recalled. After the 1905–1907 revolution she moved first to Lublin and then to Łódź, where she was arrested for a second time. Released on bail and suffering from tuberculosis, she decided to move to the province of Galicia, where she met her future husband, Elijah Szweber, a member of the local Jewish Social Democratic Party. After World War I, she moved to Warsaw.⁵² She became an active trade union organizer and thenceforth devoted her whole life to the unions, working as a trade union official and general secretary of the garment workers' union. In 1927 she was elected to the Warsaw City Council (and reelected in 1938).⁵³ She was also a member of the National Council of Jewish Class Trade Unions (Land-rat), and the de facto joint head of all Jewish trade unions in Poland. After Jewish trade unions formally joined the Class Trade Unions organization, Szweber also represented them before the non-Jewish public. One occasion on which she did so was at the 1929 International Women's Day celebrations in Warsaw: "On behalf of Jewish working women, Councilor Comrade Szweber greeted those gathered and pointed

out that what divides working women of different nationalities is irrelevant, but that we are all united by a common path of struggle for a better tomorrow; a common path to fight for socialism. We all have one language in this struggle: class consciousness and workers' unity."⁵⁴ Among class trade union activists she fought actively for a greater focus on youth and women's issues.⁵⁵

Another female activist who had a major influence on all Tsukunfists due to her journalism work was Sofia Dubnow-Erlich. A poet, political activist, critic, and translator, she was born in 1885 in Mstislavl, the eldest child of the well-known Jewish historian Simon Dubnow. When she was five, the entire family moved to Odessa. She later studied at the Bestuzhev Courses in St. Petersburg, during which time she began a literary career as an essayist. In 1904 she was expelled from the school for participating in a student protest. In 1905 she entered the history and philology department of St. Petersburg University, and later studied comparative religion and history of world literature at the Sorbonne (1910–1911). She joined the Bund and married Henryk Erlich, one of the leaders of the party. In 1918 they both moved to Warsaw. There, Dubnow-Erlich worked to make a difference in young people's lives. She eagerly participated in Tsukunft meetings, speaking on literature and other topics. As one Tsukunft member from Warsaw recalled: "We had this speakers' club at Tsukunft, and, for instance, Mrs Erlich would come to the club meetings. . . . She taught us literature: Russian literature, German literature. She opened my eyes to Chekhov, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky. When we came out, after she finished her evening, we couldn't go straight home. So the whole group, we went down to the Vistula, and took her every word apart."⁵⁶ She was a permanent, regular contributor to the Bund's Polish-language cultural journal *Nowe pismo* (New journal), in which, under the pen name Z. Mściławska, she published pieces on the social life of young people in Poland. In her contributions, she stressed the importance of sexual education and conscious motherhood, issues that in Poland at that time were at the center of a heated debate on abortion.⁵⁷ She believed that teaching about maternity, sexual relations, and equal rights to sexual pleasure was a duty of socialists, essential to creating a better reality. In her words: "This is a great time for our social activists to eradicate the superstition that discussing sexual matters exaggerates the role of sex in human life: the opposite is true—the persistent silence on these matters distorts the perspective."⁵⁸ For this reason she also wrote a series of articles for Tsukunft's *Yugnt veker* (The awakener of the youth), which attracted considerable debate. Her virtually unprecedented comments on young people's sexual lives and the new era of male-female relations were published in 1934.⁵⁹ As she stressed in her memoir, she sympathized with young women entering the youth movement:

Working women who had grown up early and been hardened in the struggle for existence spoke in plain terms of what they found lacking in the new free relations with their comrades. On entering the milieu of activist socialist youth, they had hoped to encounter a like-mindedness in ideas and a heart-warming camaraderie, and generally these hopes had been fulfilled. But when constant contact led to intimacy, youth has its imperatives, and these relationships often left a feeling of dissatisfaction, coming from a sense of their emotional poverty and confinement within the boundaries of the physical.⁶⁰

By speaking openly on young women's struggles, she broke these taboos and empowered female Tsukunftists, promoting a new kind of womanhood. Her responses to their problems and ideas about the new order appealed to young people who were confused in the rapidly modernizing world.⁶¹

Female Tsukunft members could also relate to Rena Hister Hertz, who was younger than the aforementioned women. Born in Przemyśl into a religious family, she received a traditional education. Around 1919 she became active in Tsukunft and was elected to the local workers' council. In 1920 she strongly opposed war with the Soviet Union, which was very radical, so much so that Herman Liberman, a politician in the Polish Socialist Party—and also from Przemyśl—suggested she be silenced, which did not happen. Later she was active in Lwów (now Lviv, Ukraine), and finally moved to Warsaw, where she studied at Warsaw Free University. She was a secretary of the youth section of the National Council of Jewish Class Trade Unions. Her experience in the union movement prompted her to write a scientific review of the work of women and young people in the Jewish clothing industry in Poland.⁶² She was also the only female member of the Central Committee of the Tsukunft to serve two terms.⁶³ Like other female leaders, she was known for her oratory skills, traveling and giving speeches, sometimes even in two different places in one day.⁶⁴

These were not the only women to hold significant positions within the party. Estera Alter Iwińska (stepsister of the Bund's leader, Victor Alter), a lawyer, was twice elected to Warsaw City Council as a representative of the Bund (in 1919 and 1927).⁶⁵ Anna Heller Rozenal was the head of the Bund in Wilno (now Vilnius, Lithuania).⁶⁶ Rozalia Eichner, a teacher and graduate of the philological faculty at the Sorbonne, together with trade union activists Golda Jakubowicz Zilberberg and Blimele Kleyner-Rozenblum, was elected a councilor in the city of Łódź,⁶⁷ and Rivke Antman represented the Bund on Białystok City Council.⁶⁸ Finally, Sheyne-Feygl Szapiro Michalewicz, known as Dina Blond, was the leader of the YAF between the wars, and Cecylia (Tsipe) Edelman served as its secretary.⁶⁹ Despite these strong examples, however, the leaders of both the Bund and Tsukunft were nearly all men, and this issue and the relatively small number of women within the party were the subjects of a heated press debate in 1939.⁷⁰

The struggles and professional life of women Bundists, as well as their life choices—which involved abandoning religious life, seeking an education, getting divorced, and focusing on party and union activism—were inspiring for young Tsukunftists. These activists were living examples of modern women: independent, self- and class-conscious, struggling with double or even triple oppression: as women, as workers, and as Jews.

Response

Young Tsukunft members often felt empowered and radicalized on joining the organization. Tsukunft offered them entertainment, organizing summer camps, discussions, excursions, sports, and cultural activities, but also provided a new vision of a world in which everyone could be equal and there would be no shortage of opportunities

or material goods. Tsukunft members' submissions to YIVO autobiography contests⁷¹ show that young people were starting to see the world of childhood, or rather of their parents, inextricably bound up with Judaism, in a negative light (or to perceive that their opinions would be welcome). They reflected in particular on private, family life. Young Tsukunft members often noted that their parents' relationships were not necessarily fulfilling or successful.⁷² One female Tsukunft member described her childhood as follows:

I was born in a small town, Zdzięcioł, a child of poor laborers, in 1913, a year before the outbreak of World War I. My father was a man of broad shoulders, medium height, well built, a carpenter by trade. He was a religious fanatic. He devoted his free time to studying . . . and fulfilled all the commandments. At home he behaved like an absolute ruler. Toward his children he was harsh and unbending. Mother was short, and quite smart. . . . She was never satisfied with her life, and unlike Father, she was always upset.⁷³

Subscribing to socialist ideology was, in their (accurate) conviction, an attack on religiousness and traditionalism. Their experiences corresponded with the image of the traditional world purveyed by the Tsukunft press, where, for instance, pious Jewish women were mocked for wearing a wig (*sheytl*).⁷⁴ Their parents' and grandparents' generations were held to be fundamentally incapable of understanding the modern world, cowardly yet despotic, and always convinced they were right.

These autobiographies also indicate, however indirectly, the importance of the youth movement to its members, and offer an insight into the ideology it promoted. Their descriptions of traditions or religion undeniably echo words their authors had read in Tsukunft papers and brochures, or heard at branch meetings. Their descriptions of their families often used frank or even harsh words where their relatives did not correspond to the model of the "new society." In this respect, the autobiography of a young, 22-year-old woman from Międzyrzec is particularly interesting. She concludes her life story with thoughts of leaving for a larger city, where she could become independent, work in a factory, and only take a husband when she felt the need.⁷⁵ Her words about her future spouse echo the life decisions of Esther Riskind and Bela Szapiro. Similar words were also expressed in another autobiography, in which a young woman learning her profession dreamed: "When I'm finally all trained up, I'll go work in the big city. I'd like to be independent and live as I please."⁷⁶ Unfortunately, when her apprenticeship finished, the factory owner retracted the job offer and she had to make her own way, sewing at home on her mother's machine.

The "new society," though declaratively desired by all members of Tsukunft, whether male or female, actually came as something of a shock, however, especially for the young men in the organization. As a Warsaw girl named Sheyndl states in a letter sent in to *Yugnt veker* in 1930, even though there was no *ezras nashim* (separate women's section in the synagogue) in the organization and Tsukunft had disallowed the separation of young men and women, this ideological approach was not fully accepted by the male activists. They still did not treat women as equal discussion partners, and the author of the letter even noted that women from her local branch were

sexually objectified and mocked by its male members.⁷⁷ Her voice is that of an empowered woman who sees the hypocrisy of some of her comrades and takes issue with it. It is echoed in one of the autobiographies, in which the young activist notes: "All day today I chased Comrade Rapaport. Though he himself should have been interested in calling the meeting, because he is the chair, but that doesn't concern him at all. All he cares about is being called 'Chair.'" ⁷⁸

Women encountered more obstacles to joining Tsukunft than men. As one author wrote: "My father liked to come and look for me at the meeting room. Luckily, he never found me. I generally hid under the bench in the back administration room. Father even warned me that if he found me at the venue he might hit me."⁷⁹ Her mother, in turn, "didn't understand her," and "would have preferred she devote herself to housework and stop thinking."⁸⁰ For some of the women who decided to join, however, it was a very empowering moment. For one sixteen-year-old who joined the organization shortly after she started work for a tailor, the autonomous decision to become politically active marked the beginning of her adult life: "When it was decided I would work for the tailor, I went to the local Bund office and signed a declaration. . . . All I remember is that when we got back home we were so excited that for a long time we could talk about nothing else."⁸¹ Another girl from Międzyrzec joined the movement because she was employed in a factory where the workers were exploited and she decided to do something about it.⁸² Both these declarations show conscious and politically engaged young women, but even if that was not always true, membership in the movement did give these women a sense of hope and power. Learning about women revolutionaries from the past showed that change was possible, and though it might require sacrifices like leaving one's family and devoting one's life to the struggle, it could offer in return a sense of communal space and a new family. The *Nowy Dwór yizkor bukh* (memorial book) features a testimony showing that these were attributes sought after by young Jewish working women:

There were seven of them: Sheyndl, Rukhtshe, Perl, Ete, Moyshe, Basye and "the Bobeshi" [Grandma]. They were also called "the orphans." When they became orphans, at the end of World War I, the oldest, Sheyndl (later the wife of Yankl Roznblum, who died in Paris), was fifteen years old. They had come at that time from Pelcowizna (a suburb of Warsaw) to their relatives, the family of Meyer Magid (Meyerl Senders) in Nowy Dwór, and they immediately began to live a hard life, working 8–10 hours a day at embroidery and other tasks. The oldest, themselves inexperienced children, became the breadwinners for the younger ones. Later on, these "proletarian women" joined the trade union and also Tsukunft, where Rukhtshe became especially active. She became a member of the clothing workers' union executive, secretary of Tsukunft, and a librarian. The whole Maroko family, big and small, followed in her footsteps.⁸³

The testimonies shed new light on the generational experience and show that the moment of joining the movement represented a turning point in the path of self-realization as Jewish female activists.

Conclusion

Daniel Blatman suggests that in interwar Poland “the place of the ‘revolutionary women’ was taken over by female activists of the women’s auxiliary, such as Sara Schweber or Dina Blond, whose main efforts focused on organizational and informational work among women, or by such members as Bella Shapiro or Sonja Nowogrodzki, who concerned themselves mainly with education and cultural activity among women and youth.”⁸⁴ Following on from Gertrud Pickhan’s argument that neither Szweber nor Szapiro were activists and they only performed cultural and educational work,⁸⁵ it is worth noting that none of the women mentioned by Blatman were simply “helpers”; they were all independent and politically active individuals who played major roles in both their communities and Tsukunft. The way they were (un)remembered and (un)celebrated later by the Bundist politics of memory⁸⁶ played a major role in the recognition of this essential truth. Scholars should not criticize the focus of these female activists on work with youth and women; these were crucial aspects in women’s lives. The dual roles of political activist and woman were for Tsukunft’s female members a challenge and a responsibility. They were conscious of the need for profound changes in society that would bring about the equal treatment of women, and therefore a focus on the upcoming generations.

Placing young people in the spotlight was not a new tactic devised by the Bund. Women revolutionaries active in tsarist Russia had taken a similar approach. As Manya Shohat, a Zionist, recalled:

I always opposed [the Bund], but I knew that its impact on the lives of the masses was enormous. . . . It created the ethic of work and inculcated respect for work among the masses. We all know that Jews held an attitude of scorn for manual work. In particular, they scorned a woman’s work. Maids were most ashamed of their work. This attitude was a product of long exile, and the Bund began to fight it. This was its powerful historical contribution, and thus it liberated the woman. . . . The Bund won the hearts of the youth. . . . Among Jews, the Bund succeeded because it organized the workers to strike, carried out practical actions and was a symbol of an ideal and a wider vision. Youth believed in the Bund.⁸⁷

The faith in the Bund among the young women who joined Tsukunft and stayed on as activists is undeniable. Their activism in the movement often defined who they were both as women and as public figures. Yet the (male) leadership of the movement seemed not to value enough the popularity of Tsukunft’s progressive ideas among women. They promoted rebellious role models but did not offer an adequate platform to stress women’s issues or give women a place in the leadership. The time for Jewish women socialists as leaders of the movement, and not simply as activists, was yet to come. Yet the images of female “revolutionary women,” both historical figures and contemporary activists, undoubtedly shaped the young generation of members in Tsukunft and ultimately propelled many of them to embody the ideals of their female role models during the Holocaust.

◆ About the Author

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◆ Notes

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1. Ogólny-Żydowski Związek Robotniczy "Bund" w Polsce [General Jewish Labor Federation "Bund" in Poland], Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archive of New Files], 2/1214/0/2.4/30/II/29. According to testimonies submitted to Yad Vashem, the sisters perished in the Holocaust: Yad Vashem, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/> (accessed 11 August 2019).

2. For more on Tsukunft, see Jack Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2009); Gertrud Pickhan, "Gegen den Strom": *Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund "Bund" in Polen 1918–1939* ["Against the current": The General Jewish Workers' Federation "Bund" in Poland 1918–1939] (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001); Magdalena Kozłowska, *Świetlana przyszłość? Żydowski Związek Młodzieżowy Cukunft wobec wyzwań międzywojennej Polski* [A shining future? The Tsukunft youth movement and challenges of interwar Poland] (Kraków: Austeria, 2016).

3. *Arbeter tashn-kalendar* [Worker's pocket calendar] (Varshe, 1930), 34. On Tsukunft and women, see Magdalena Kozłowska, "Briders un Shvester? Women in the Tsukunft Youth Movement in Interwar Poland," *Scripta judaica cracoviensia* [Kraków studies in Jewish history] 13 (2015). According to summaries compiled by the organization, ten thousand young people belonged to Tsukunft around that time; see "Der yungt-bund Tsukunft afn 4-tn tsuzamenfor fun Bund" [The Tsukunft youth movement at the Bund's 4th convention], *Yugnt veker* [The awakener of the youth], 15 January 1933, 3.

4. David Slucki, *Sing This at My Funeral: A Memoir of Fathers and Sons* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), 22.

5. Among the female members of Tsukunft (and the affiliated children's organization SKIF [Sotsyalistisher Kinder Farband, Socialist Children's Union]) active in the Jewish resistance movement whose names are known are Tsipore and Brokhe Aynshayn, Asya Big, Guta Blones, Tobcia Dawidowicz, Zośka Goldblat, Miriam Szyfman-Fainer, Cluwa Krystal Nisenbaum, Hannah Krystal Fryshdorf, Bluma Klog, Stefa Moryc, Feigel Peltel-Międzyrzecki [Władka Meed], Sore Rozenboym, Rivke Rozenstein, Marynka Segalewicz, Chaika Belchatowska Spiegel, Leah Szyfman, and Anka Wolkowicz. See Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture*, 149; Martyna Rusiniak-Karwat and Alicja Jarkowska-Natkaniec, eds., *Prasa getta warszawskiego: Bund i Cukunft* [Warsaw Ghetto underground press: Bund and Tsukunft] (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2016), xxvii.

6. "The main objective of our mission on the Aryan side—the goal for which we endured constant danger [and] hid like frightened animals . . . was to obtain arms for the resistance in the ghetto." Władka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 94.

7. Letter from Władka Meed to Moyshe Kliglsberg, 14 October 1945, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 719, #5.

8. Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

9. Pickhan, "Gegen den Strom," 126–130.

10. Article 1 of the electoral act read: "Every citizen of the state, regardless of gender, who has reached twenty-one years of age by election day, is a voter for Parliament." Article 7, in turn, stated: "All citizens of the state who hold active voting rights are voters for Parliament." Quoted from "Dekret o ordynacji wyborczej do Sejmu Ustawodawczego z dnia 28 XI 1918" [Decree on the electoral system to the Legislative Sejm of 28 November 1918], *Dziennik praw państwa polskiego* [Journal of laws of the Polish state] 1918, no. 18, item 46.

11. Women gained universal suffrage at the regional and municipal council level in the former Kingdom of Poland. See "Dekret o utworzeniu Rad Gminnych na obszarze b. Królestwa Kongresowego z dn. 27 XI 1918" [Decree on the creation of Communal Councils in the area of the former Congress Kingdom of Poland of 27 November 1918], *Dziennik praw państwa polskiego* 1918, no. 18, item 48, art. 12; "Dekret o wyborach do Rad Miejskich na terenie b. Królestwa Kongresowego wydany w dn. 13 XII 1918" [Decree on elections to City Councils in the former Congress Kingdom of Poland, issued on 13 December 1918], *Dziennik praw państwa polskiego* 1918, no. 20, item 58, arts. 2, 4.

12. Dobrochna Kałwa, *Kobieta aktywna w Polsce międzywojennej: Dylematy środowisk kobiecych* [The active woman in interwar Poland: Dilemmas of women's milieu] (Kraków: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Historia Jagiellonica," 2001), 29–32.

13. *Ibid.*, 34.

14. *Ibid.*, 34. For more on the female MPs and senators in interwar Poland, see Mariola Kondracka, "Posłanki i senatorki II Rzeczypospolitej: Nowe obszary publicznej działalności kobiet" [MPs and senators of the Second Polish Republic: New areas of women's public activity], *Dzieje najnowsze* [Recent history] 46, vol. 2 (2014): 145–149.

15. Jolanta Mickutè, "Making of the Zionist Woman: Zionist Discourse on the Jewish Woman's Body and Selfhood in Interwar Poland," *East European Politics and Societies* 28, no. 1 (2014): 137–162.

16. Naomi Seidman, *Sarah Shenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement: A Revolution in The Name of Tradition* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2019).

17. Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture*, 82–97.

18. Dina Blond, *Shvester mayne! A vort tsu der yidisher arbeter-froy* [My sisters! A word to the Jewish working woman] (Warsaw: Di Velt 1928), 6.

19. The membership numbers for various youth organizations of the time are difficult to estimate precisely, as the leaders probably inflated their statistics. We also know that their numbers were constantly fluctuating, and young people often skipped from one movement to another. Nor is it easy to find information on all the organizations from the same period, which is why comparing particular years is no small challenge. Basic information may be gleaned from the estimates released by the movements themselves, in their own publications, though even here we should remain cautious. According to the summaries prepared by the organizations for 1933, 10,000 young people belonged to Tsukunft, Ha-Shomer ha-Tsair counted 30,226 activists, and Betar 33,422. Examining these numbers, we can clearly see that the Zionist movements were most popular among young Jews. If we were to sum up their membership counts, Zionists of all stripes would be in the overwhelming majority, especially considering that this data does not include all the organizations. See "Der yungt-bund, Tsukunft' afn 4-tn tsuzamenfor fun Bund," 3; "Misparim" [Numbers], *Ha-Shomer ha-Tsair: Iton ha-bogrim shel histadrut Ha-Shomer ha-Tsair* [Ha-Shomer ha-Tsair: The alumni newspaper of the Ha-Shomer ha-Tsair Federation] (February

1934), 44; Izaak Remba, *Shnataim: Din ve-heshbon shel netsivut Betar be-Polin mishnot 5692–5693* [Two years: Betar Commission in Poland report for the years 5692–5693] (Warsaw, 1934), 3.

20. Kamil Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu: Świadomość, kultura i socjalizacja polityczna młodzieży żydowskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej* [Children of modernism: Political consciousness, culture, and socialization of Jewish youth in the Second Polish Republic] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2017); Daniel Heller, *Jabotinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

21. Klara Mirska, *W cieniu wiecznego strachu (wspomnienia)* [In the shadow of eternal fear (reminiscences)] (Paris: Imprimerie, 1980), 114.

22. See, e.g., Autobiography #3514, in Yiddish, 1939, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 33–34; Autobiography #3749, in Yiddish, 1939, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 28. Cf. Jacob Sholem Hertz, *Di geshikhte fun a yugnt* [The history of the youth] (New York: Unzer Tsayt, 1946), 283.

23. Cf. Valerie Holman and Debra Kelly, eds., *France at War in the Twentieth Century: Myth, Metaphor, and Propaganda* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000).

24. "Unzer kultur-arbet: Biuletin" [Our cultural work: Bulletin], nos. 3–4 (1937): 1.

25. An essential part of the educational work of the movement, often stressed by its leaders, was "self-improvement." Regardless of their cultural capital (the Tsukunft's activities were mainly targeted at young factory or workshop laborers), young people were expected to read works of philosophy and selected Yiddish poetry and prose, and to steer clear of mass culture, or *shund*, and the omnipresent pop culture in Polish. The absolute minimum was reading the movement's periodicals, which delivered the organization's official messages, and information on events from the life of the movement, the current political situation, required reading, etc. Over the course of the interwar period, the most important publication became *Yugnt veker*, released from 1923 to 1939, first as a monthly, and from 1927 a biweekly.

26. The suggestion to read this book is given in "Arbeter plan far 'Tsukunft'-krayzn" [Working plan for Tsukunft circles], *Naye kultur* [New culture], no. 1 (1938): 9–13.

27. In one of the articles praising her she was called "the sharpest female head," though no references to her actual works are provided. Instead, it is stressed that she spent a significant amount of time in prisons and was murdered. See "Heldins un martinerins" [Female heroes and martyrs], *Yugnt veker*, 15 March 1927, 4.

28. "Prowints" [Province], *Sotsyalistishe yugnt shtime* [Socialist youth voice], no. 5 (1919): 8. The other four circles in Włocławek were named after Karl Marx, Jean Jaures, Friedrich Engels, and August Bebel.

29. "Heldins un martinerins (bamerkungen tsu bilder)" [Female heroes and martyrs (comments on the photographs)], *Yugnt veker*, 1 March 1930, 3.

30. Cf. Walter Moss, *Russia in the Age of Alexander II, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky* (London: Anthem Press, 2002).

31. Lynne Ann Hartnett, *The Defiant Life of Vera Figner: Surviving the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014). For Figner's memoir see Barbara A. Engel and Clifford N. Rosenthal, eds., *Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar* (London: Routledge, 1975).

32. Biographical notes on Sophia Perovskaya, Vera Figner, and Hesyā Helfman, *Yugnt veker*, no. 6 (1 March 1930): 3.

33. "Di bobbe fun der rusishe revolutsye" [The grandmother of the Russian revolution], *Yugnt veker*, no. 21 (1 October 1934): 10. For more on Breshkovskaya and her image in America, see Alison Rowley, "Russian Revolutionary as American Celebrity: A Case Study of Yekaterina Bresho-Breshkovskaya," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Melanie Ilic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). See also Choi

Chatterjee, "Imperial Incarcerations: Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, Vinayak Savarkar, and the Original Sins of Modernity," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 850–872.

34. For more on women in the Bund before World War I, see Harriet Davis-Kram, "The Story of the Sisters of the Bund," *Contemporary Jewry* 5, no. 2 (Fall–Winter 1980): 27–43.

35. They are mentioned, for instance, in a specimen plan for a year's work with Tsukunft groups published in 1937: *Undzer kultur arbet-biuletin* [Our culture work bulletin], nos. 3–4 (November 1937): 3.

36. Leopold H. Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 509.

37. Sophie Dubnova-Erich, *Bread and Matzoh*, trans. Alan Shaw (Tenafly, NJ: Hermitage Publishers, 2005), 184.

38. Memories of Anna Lifshits: Hirsz Abramowicz, *Profiles of a Lost World: Memoirs of East European Jewish Life before World War II*, ed. Dina Abramowicz, trans. Eva Zeitlin Dobkin, 143–145. More on her life: Morten Thing, *De russiske jødiske i København 1882–1943* [The Russian Jews in Copenhagen] (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2008), 288–310.

39. "Anna Lifshits," *Yugnt veker*, 1 January 1927, 4. Interestingly, her biography published in the Tsukunft press stressed that in Latvia she devoted herself to promoting sexual ethics.

40. Her male friends from the party romanticized her move, and were enchanted mostly by her physical appearance: "Esther was dark like a gypsy woman. Her eyes burned with a moving fire. Her dark face was set in a frame of pitch-black hair. And when she spoke it seemed to me as she knows something else, something deep, secret, hidden." See B. Vladeck, *In lebn un shafn* [In life and work] (New York: Forverts, 1936), 111.

41. Jacob Sholem Hertz, *Doyres bundistn* [Generations of Bundists], vol. 2 (New York: Unser Tsayt, 1956), 351–354.

42. "Nisht hinter a pliot" [Not under a fence], *Yugnt veker*, no. 9 (1 May 1929): 13.

43. The photographs of Tsukunftists held at the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH) show that only pictures of men (Karl Marx, Henryk Erlich, Wiktor Alter) adorned the headquarters of Tsukunft circles. See Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Cultural and Memorial Monuments in the Collection, Central Bund Committee until 1939.

44. Pickhan, "Gegen den Strom," 131.

45. Interview with Shirley Warman from the collection of the USC Shoah Foundation (accessed 9 August 2019).

46. Her sharp tone is evident in a letter she sent to the *Lubliner tugblat* to clarify her stand: "Brief in der redaktsye" [Letter to the editors], *Lubliner tugblat*, 30 October 1935, 4. Besides being a city councilor she also spoke at rallies. See "Polska pracująca w dn. 1 maja" [The working Poland on 1 May], *Gazeta robotnicza: Organ Polskiej Partji Socjalistycznej: Pismo codzienne dla polskiego ludu pracującego* [The worker's newspaper: The organ of the Polish Socialist Party: A daily magazine for the Polish working people], 25 May 1935, 6.

47. "Rada miejska" [City council], *Głos Lubelski* [The Lublin voice], 7 November 1929, 3.

48. "Zniesienie uboju rytualnego w Lublinie" [Abolition of ritual slaughter in Lublin], *Dziennik Wileński* [Wilno daily], 24 March 1936, 4.

49. Robert Kuwałek, "Szpiro-Szyffer Bela," *Słownik biograficzny miasta Lublina* [Biographical lexicon of the city of Lublin], ed. Tadeusz Radzik, Adam Witusik, and Jan Ziółek, vol. 2 (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1996), 266–268; Hertz, *Doyres bundistn*, 2:93–98; Moshe Zalzman, *Bela Shapiro, di populere froyen-geshalt* [Bela Shapiro, popular female figure] (Paris: Imprimerie, 1983).

50. "O czym wolno mówić na wiecach" [What may be spoken of at rallies], *Robotnik* [The worker], 16 March 1930, 3.

51. Sare, "Fun 'kleinem Bund' tsum groysn 'Tsukunft'" [From a small 'Bund' {Union} to a great 'Future' {Tsukunft}], *Yugnt veker*, no. 24 (2 November 1937): 12.

52. Jacob Sholem Hertz, *Doyres bundistn* [Generations of Bundists], vol. 3 (New York: Unser Tsayt, 1968), 75–79.

53. *Album pamiątkowe miasta stołecznego Warszawy: 1919–1929* [Commemorative album of the capital city of Warsaw] (Warsaw: Miejskie Zakłady Graficzne, 1929).

54. "Wspaniały przebieg 'dnia kobiet' w Warszawie" [Splendid 'women's day' celebrations in Warsaw'], *Robotnik*, 10 June 1929, 1.

55. "Dziesięć lat pracy i walki związków zawodowych w Polsce. Obrady IV kongresu związków zawodowych; dalszy ciąg trzeciego dnia obrad" [Ten years of work and struggle by the trade unions in Poland. Sessions of the 4th trade unions congress: continuation of the third day of sessions], *Robotnik*, 29 June 1929, 1.

56. Interview with Szulim Rozenberg, conducted by Anna Szyba in 2006, <https://www.centropa.org/de/node/91684> (accessed 11 August 2019).

57. The debate later broadened to include a discussion on the civil code. See Dobrochna Kałwa, "Kobieta seksualność w świetle teorii Michela Foucaulta: Spojrzenie na Polskę międzywojenną" [Female sexuality in light of the theory of Michel Foucault: A look at interwar Poland], in *Kobieta i rewolucja obyczajowa: Społeczno-kulturowe aspekty seksualności. Wiek XIX i XX. Zbiór studiów* [Woman and the social revolution: Sociocultural aspects of sexuality. The 19th and 20th centuries. A collection of studies], ed. A. Żarnowska and A. Szwarc (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2006), 17–31; Dobrochna Kałwa, "Głos kobiet w sprawie planowania rodziny w świetle prasy z lat 1929–1932" [The voice of women's in the issue of family planning in light of the press from the years 1929–1932], in *Kobieta i kultura życia codziennego: Wiek XIX i XX* [Woman and the culture of everyday life in the 19th and 20th centuries], ed. A. Żarnowska and A. Szwarc (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 1997), 123–132; Magdalena Gawin, *Rasa i nowoczesność: Historia polskiego ruchu eugenicznego (1880–1952)* [Race and modernity: The history of the Polish eugenics movement] (Warsaw: Neriton, 2003).

58. Z. Mściśławska, "O zaniedbanym odcinku walki" [On the neglected section of the fight], *Nowe pismo* [New paper], 13 November 1932, 4.

59. For more on these articles, see Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture*, 19–29; Kozłowska, "Briders un Shvester?," 115–116.

60. Dubnova-Erlich, *Bread and Matzoh*, 223–224.

61. *Ibid.*, 223.

62. The review was supposedly published by the Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego (Institute of Social Economy), a left-leaning institution established in 1920 and from 1921 headed by Ludwik Krzywicki. The institute's founding aim was to identify the social problems facing Poland at that time and to develop social policy theory and practice. See I. Shipper, A. Hafftkka, and A. Tartakower, eds., *Żydzi w Polsce odrodzonej* [The Jews in the renascent Poland], vol. 2 (Warsaw: Warszawskie Zakłady Graficzne, 1933), 589.

63. Hertz, *Di geshikhte fun a yugnt*, 354–355.

64. Ziskind, "Der groyser yugnt miting" [The great youth meeting], *Piotrkover veker* [The Piotrków awakener], 14 September 1928, 2. That day Rena Hister opened a youth meeting in Piotrków and then traveled to Bełchatów to give another speech.

65. *Album pamiątkowe miasta stołecznego Warszawy*.

66. Irena Klepfisz, "Di Mames, Dos Loshn/The Mothers, the Language: Feminism, Yiddishkayt, and the Politics of Memory," *Bridges* 4 (1994), no. 1.

67. State Archive in Łódź, Akta miasta Łodzi, Akta osobiste byłych radnych [Files of the city of Łódź, Former councilors personal files], 13021, p. 37.

68. Hertz, *Doyres bundistn*, 2:496–497.

69. Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture*, 89–90.

70. *Ibid.*, 94–95.

71. These autobiography competitions were a key element of the project to study the Jewish youth (*Yugnt forschung—yugfor*) carried out in 1932, 1934, and 1949 by the Vilnius Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO). It was modeled on Polish sociological research, including the famous *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki. For more on the YIVO project, see Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*. Cf. Marcus Mosley, “Life, Literature, Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Interwar Poland,” *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 3 (2001): 1–51; Alina Cała, “Histoires personnelles dans l’histoire: Jeunes Juifs en Pologne, 1918–1939” [Personal stories in history: Young Jews in Poland], in *Ecriture de l’histoire et identite juive: L’Europe ashkenaze XIX e–XX e siècle* [Writing on Jewish history and identity: Ashkenazi Europe of the 19th and 20th centuries], ed. Delphine Bechtel, Evelyne Partlagean, and Jean-Charles Szurek (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), 133–149; Toby W. Clyman, “The Double Voice in Polish Women’s Autobiographies of the 1930s,” *Polin: Studies in the Polish Jewry* 19 (2007): 459–466; Michael C. Steinlauf, “Jewish Politics and Youth Culture in Interwar Poland: Preliminary Evidence from the YIVO Autobiographies,” in *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Z. Gitelman (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 95–104. Three anthologies of YIVO autobiographies have appeared: Jeffrey Shandler, ed., *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Alina Cała, ed., *Ostatnie pokolenie: Autobiografie polskiej młodzieży żydowskiej okresu międzywojennego* [The last generation: Autobiographies of Polish Jewish youth from the interwar period] (Warsaw: Sic!, 2003); Ido Bassok and Avram Novershtern, eds., *Alilot neurim: Otobiografijot shel bene neurim mi-Polin ben shete Milhamot ha-Olam* [Youthful plots: Autobiographies of Polish-Jewish youth between the two world wars] (Ramat Aviv: Ha-makhon Le-ḥeker Yahadut Polin, 2011).

72. Autobiography #3514, in Yiddish, 1939, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 1–2; Autobiography #3601, in Yiddish, 1939, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 1; Autobiography #3718, in Yiddish, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 1–3; Autobiography #3642, in Yiddish, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 1–3; Autobiography #3666, in Yiddish, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 2; Autobiography #3591, in Yiddish, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 1.

Cf. Kamil Kijek, “Radykalizm polityczny młodzieży sztetlowej okresu międzywojennego” [Political radicalism of shtetl youth in the interwar period], in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji* [The Destruction of Jews in Provincial Poland], eds. Adam Sitarek, Michał Trębacz and Ewa Witatr (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2012), 39–50; Kozłowska, *Świetlana przyszłość*, 245–254.

73. Autobiography #3666, in Yiddish, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 2.

74. Khanele, “Der sod fun eybiker yugnt” [The mystery of eternal youth], *Yugnt veker*, 15 April 1939, 8.

75. Autobiography #3759, in Yiddish, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4.

76. Autobiography #3666, in Yiddish, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 41.

77. Sheyndl, “S’iz nisht in ordenung” [It is not fair], *Yugnt veker*, 1 March 1930, no. 6, 15.

78. Autobiography #3749, in Yiddish, 1939, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 57.

79. Autobiography #3666, in Yiddish, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 48–49.

80. *Ibid.*, 37.

81. Autobiography #3749, in Yiddish, 1939, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 27–28.

82. Autobiography #3759, in Yiddish, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 4, 22.

83. *Pinkas Novi-Dvor* [The Pinkas of Nowy Dwór] (Tel Aviv, 1965), 168.

84. Daniel Blatman, "Women in the Jewish Labor Bund in interwar Poland," in *Women in the Holocaust*, ed. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 80.

85. Pickhan, "*Gegen den Strom*," 113–114.

86. The Bund community was full of historiographers who, in recording the chronicles of the organization, themselves mythologized the movement, as a counterbalance of sorts to the academic silence around the Bund in the 1950s and 1960s. This was the approach of Jacob Sholem Hertz, author of the sole book on Tsukunft: *Di geshikhte fun a yugnt: Der kleyner bund Tsukunft in Poyln* [The history of a youth: The little Bund {Union}Tsukunft in Poland], published in New York in 1946.

87. Manya Shohat, "The Women in the Bund and in Poalei Zion (1937)," in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, ed. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 425.