

Ber Borokhov: The Role of Yiddish Language Research in a Life of Zionist Activism

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ABSTRACT

A survey of Ber Borokhov's contribution to research on Yiddish language and literature aims to clearly describe his influence on the history of Yiddish studies and the ways in which his unique combination of political and academic work reflected the times in which he lived. His research endeavors are highlighted within a framework of Borokhov's biography and his dedication to Zionism. By deliberating on his research and publications on Belgian bilingualism and the struggle for human rights, as well as heretofore unanalyzed published and unpublished work, Borokhov's conception of filology is clarified, especially in terms of his concerns for Jewish identity and his visionary leadership of the Poaley-tzion party's activity in Palestine and the diaspora. This essay goes beyond the previous focus of scholars, which was limited to his influential article, "Di ufgabn fun der yidisher filologye," and the extensive life-long research on Borokhov by the historian Matityahu Mintz.

Key words: Yiddish research, standardization, Yiddish orthography, filology, Zionism, Poaley-tzion

Both popular history and academic scholarship recognize Ber Borokhov as a leader of Socialist Zionism and most specifically the Poaley-tzion party. When that party split several years after his death, Borokhov became the revered leader of the party that emerged on the political left. However, if one carefully examines the history of scholarly research on Yiddish in the twentieth century and the biography of Borokhov, two startling patterns emerge. Firstly, it is Borokhov more than any other researcher in the

years preceding World War I who set the agenda for Yiddish research that would prevail after the war in the years preceding World War II. Secondly, it is this research that occupied most of his time, energy, and vision in the last ten years of his life. Borokhov died at age 36 in December 1917; at that time, he stood out throughout the world as one of the main leaders of the Zionist cause.

The manipulation of Borokhov's legacy at the end of his life and in subsequent years within Poaley-tzion, the larger Zionist movement, the State of Israel, as well as the limited interpretation of his work by Yiddish language researchers and Jewish studies scholars have left us with a picture that is framed only by a few of his well known writings. I aim to integrate a larger variety of his writings, within a biographical framework of the ideas and values that were prevalent during those thirty-six years, but also keeping in mind Borokhov's unique energetic work capacity that was coupled to an ability to integrate his passions, all of which appealed to his followers. In other words, if we provide an historic context for his life and work, his diverse achievements harmonize with each other in ways that are not shocking at all. Borokhov was a genius who was sensitive to the needs of his people during his life that spanned the years 1881 and 1917.

Matityahu Mintz devoted his career as a historian to the study of Borokhov. Although there is much to be gleaned from his biographical books, the published collection of Borokhov's correspondence, the reports on Zionist conference proceedings, and his many articles, Mintz did not focus on Borokhov's research on Yiddish Studies, despite the fact that this was the main activity of Borokhov's last decade. His biographical books do not cover 1907-1913, the foundational years of his Yiddish research. Furthermore, the editors of Borokhov's writings in Israel excluded most of his published work on Yiddish.

However, we do have the anthologized Yiddish writings edited by his party colleagues in the early part of the twentieth century and by Nachmen Mayzl, after he came to Israel in the 1960s.¹

Mintz has claimed that Bogdanov had an outsized influence on the philosophical positions taken by Borokhov, including on Borokhov's orientation toward researching language. Although Bogdanov influenced his thinking on socialist Zionism, Bogdanov's influence on his Yiddish language work has not been demonstrated. Bogdanov postulated that human conversation derives from communication of a labor collective. Borokhov, however, did not write about the philosophy of language and meaning in similar ways to Bogdanov. But like Borokhov, Bogdanov, after the failed revolution of 1905, was part of a group of activists who turned from political work to building worker's educational and cultural groups, "proletarian hegemony."² The discussion in this paper will demonstrate that Borokhov's Yiddish-related research and advocacy stem rather from a combination of his fascination with languages and linguistics from his youth, his conviction that Jewish national autonomy within the east European context at the time was based on language- and culture-based identification, and that his scholarship that focused on establishing a pedigree for Yiddish language and literature as well as standards for research reflected the predilections of a diverse group of Jewish researchers and political leaders in the years preceding World War I, of which Borokhov was a part, albeit the leading proponent.³

In recent years, researchers of Yiddish have limited themselves to Borokhov's published work, especially the programmatic, militant article, "*Di ufgabn fun der yidishe filologye*," which appeared in *Der pinkes* (1912-1913), edited by Shmuel Niger, a volume

that set the standards for scholarship on Yiddish during the rest of the century.⁴ Writing before the reception of *Der pinkes*, Zalmen Reyzen in the Yiddish literary *Leksikon* called Borokhov “one of the most serious and educated writers on Jewish public affairs.”⁵ But the accomplishments of a researcher should not be reduced to published work. To understand research-based contributions, one must always make recourse to motivational factors, biographical context, and related activities that do not directly involve manuscripts or publications. Such a challenge requires an examination of the larger context of the work, other considerations in the researcher’s life activities and the more general tenor and concerns of the time.⁶ This has not been done in the research on Borokhov. I will attempt through broad brush strokes to comprehend Borokhov’s contributions to Yiddish research in relation to his biography, contemporary philosophical and political issues, evaluations of those close to him, and an analysis of his publications that are clearly related to his Yiddish research, but have heretofore been overlooked.

Although it is intriguing to explore the nature of Borokhov’s political leadership qualities and the connection between his view of language and culture and the tenets of Socialist Zionism, I will concentrate on a characterization of his Yiddish research and his vision of the societal implications of his research results. I will uncover an approach to basic research in the humanities and social sciences that reflects communal and nationalistic motivation. Comparable scholars are rare nowadays, but in the years before World War I, Borokhov was a young Yiddish researcher, intent on serving the political needs of the Jewish nation in Eastern Europe. He also researched and published on demography, economics, and immigration.

Born in Zolotonozhe in 1881, he was raised in Poltava, Ukraine, a center for Hebrew culture of the *khibas tsion* movement, and a city full of political exiles that was also devoted to Russian culture. His father reports that in the first two or three years of Borokhov's life the parents spoke Yiddish to Borokhov and then switched to Russian. By the age of seventeen or eighteen, the largely self-educated Borokhov organized study groups of his friends and lectured to them on philosophy, history and literature. Borokhov moved between streams of intellectual curiosity, general Russian liberalism, and Jewish nationalism. In 1900 he was a popular speaker for the Russian Socialist-Democratic party, but by November of that year, he became a defender of Zionism, and he founded "the first socialist Poaley-tsion group ever," consisting of one hundred fifty participants. Very soon, however, a period of withdrawal from public life is interjected, one of intensive study, research, reading, and writing, which his wife Lyuba refers to as "life in the office." In 1902, Borokhov published his first work, in Russian, on philosophy and Jewish culture. 1904 marks another change. Borokhov allied with the General Zionist leaders M. Usishkin and Sh. Levin, becoming a famed speaker all over the Pale, yet remaining a Socialist Zionist.⁷ Borokhov had not been exposed to poor Jewish workers and traditional yidishkeit in Poltava (according to Lyuba, "vigam lo et haruakh, hadat dos pintele yid"). His acquaintance with the impoverished Jews of the Lithuanian provinces, their labor strikes, and their folksongs Lyuba identifies with Borokhov's transformation from general Zionist to Socialist Zionist. However, Borokhov claimed that he was a Socialist Zionist years before those tours.⁸

November 1905 through March 1906 was the period when Borokhov became the architect of the new Poaley-tsion party. His classic writings, "The National Question and

the Class Struggle” and “Our Platform,” appeared in 1905 and 1906. In these works, he considers the material condition of territory as the foundation for all other conditions of production, and a struggle is waged for control of material conditions. Spiritual conditions, including languages and customs, are of secondary importance. At this point, he wrote, “the historical materialist should not search for the real content of a social problem in the culture.”⁹

Borokhov’s base remained in Poltava in the early days of the party, until his arrest on the night of the dissolution of the first Duma in June 1906. Once out on bail after five months of incarceration, he went underground in Minsk, yet continued to direct party affairs. Here he immersed himself more in Yiddish, which included starting to write parts of his articles in Yiddish, according to the reports of his translator, Rubashov-Shazar, and his editor, Vitkin-Zerubovl.¹⁰ Forced to flee Russia in 1907 because of political persecution, he did not return until August 1917. The first two years, he resided in Lieges, Belgium, and wrote a study on the nationality question in Belgium, in Yiddish, most likely the first article he wrote entirely in Yiddish (initially published in the party’s volume of collected articles, *Yugnt-shtime*, Farlag der hamer, Vilna, 1908). We also have evidence as early as October 1908 that he was interested in reading Yiddish *belles lettres* and that reading Yiddish texts took up much of his time.¹¹ Vienna became his base in September 1909. His articles sent from Vienna to the central Poaley-tzion journal, *Dos fraye vort*, published in Galicia (Austro-Hungarian empire), were all in Yiddish and were read in the Russian empire.¹²

Tsu der natsyonaler frage in Belgye (About the Nationality Question in Belgium)

After the Minsk period, Borokhov embarked on a pattern of dual activity that he continued for the rest of his life: on the one hand, extensive travel, publication and organizing for the World Union of Poalei-tzion; on the other hand, serious social, linguistic, and literary research at his every stopping point. Party leaders were not necessarily satisfied that trips in western Europe, paid for by the movement, in order for Borokhov to speak before groups of Zionist affiliated university students from Russia, should support his research visits to libraries in search of Yiddish manuscripts. His financial situation was stressful, relations with his wife Lyuba were strained, and by February 1909 she returned to Poltava leaving Borokhov in Lieges. According to Lyuba, the stay in Belgium inaugurated Borokhov's serious work and study.¹³

I will dwell on his sojourn in Lieges, examining his first documented, sustained research effort. He explained to local party followers, that he had come to study the problem of dual nationality as a basis for an understanding of Jews and Arabs in Palestine.¹⁴ What emerged was a largely sociolinguistic evaluation of statistics he compiled on the relationship between Flemish and French and the achievement of the respective nationalities. He recognized the influence of prestige of a language on language shift. He demonstrated that even in provinces in which Flemish speakers constituted a majority, their numbers were lowering because of the higher status of French culture. Concern for such issues is a hallmark of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language since the 1960s. Borokhov was ahead of his time.

From the beginning of his essay, he refers to Palestine, noting that Belgium and Palestine are of the same geographic size, but Belgium has a population of 13.7 million and Palestine 700,000.¹⁵ He points to the concept of the national language of the state, in

the case of Belgium, the recognition of three national languages, Flemish, French, and German. But the government did not recognize three associated nationalities, only one Belgian nation. Germans are a small minority in all provinces, five of which are Flemish speaking and four French speaking. Literacy was higher in the French-speaking provinces than in the Flemish-speaking ones, but in 1900 close to the same numbers in Belgium spoke only one of the languages, comprising less than fifty percent of the overall population, indicating a high degree of bilingualism.¹⁶

It is not clear how Borokhov had the where-with-all to focus on language use, which was examined in the Belgian census since 1866. Contemporary research calls this an interest in the macro-sociology of language. Moreover, in presenting the statistical findings, Borokhov, with no formal university training, felt obligated to inform his Jewish Socialist readership of the history of Belgian cultural politics. Three to four hundred years earlier, the Flemish were part of the ruling majority, constituting the most famous painters and leading the textile industry. The French Walloons, on the other hand, were the repressed minority. There was little difference between the Flemish language and Dutch (Borokhov compares this to the difference between the Lithuanian and Polish dialects of Yiddish; whereas, he compares the difference between the language of the Walloons and French as less than that between Russian and Ukrainian). During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Walloon intelligentsia took on French. Belgium had not gained its independence from Holland until 1830. The social, economic, and cultural picture then changed. The Walloons, under the influence of France, had become the more industrialized and intellectual group, and held more important economic positions, even in the Flemish provinces. The Flemish population was at the

time the more agricultural and rural. Borokhov appreciated that both groups being Catholic distanced themselves from Protestant Holland.¹⁷

However, Borokhov pointed to the successful efforts of the Flemish in achieving recognition for their language as equal to French in all locations, requiring government officials and judges to command both languages, and declaring that all laws be publicized in both languages (legislation passed in 1873 and 1879). Notwithstanding these accomplishments, “*di flemishe merheyt asimilirt zikh mit der volonisher minderheyt, un grade dort, vu di flemen shteln for gor a groyse merheyt, in di flemishe provints*” (the Flemish majority is assimilating into the Wallonian minority, and specifically where the Flemish represents a very large majority, in the Flemish provinces).¹⁸ In 1866, fifty per cent of Belgians spoke only Flemish, but that number decreased to forty-two percent by 1900. Borokhov’s thesis: legislated equality of nationality groups does not strengthen the weaker group in its isolation, but rather, leads to its disappearance and assimilation into the stronger group.¹⁹

Borokhov wrote at the time, that in Palestine just as in Belgium, “a more undeveloped, agricultural majority will assimilate into a more developed, more industrialized national minority: the Arabs will assimilate with the Jews.”²⁰ Borokhov distinguished himself even within the Zionist leadership by consistently supporting the activity of the Jewish agricultural settlers in Palestine, and although he was aware of different situations in various societies, predicted that Jews would develop influence in Palestine, as the more industrialized and “developed” minority. In Belgium, changes took place despite the efforts of Flemish nationalists who fought for the rights of the Flemish language. Equal rights did not lead to the strengthening of national renaissance and cultural expression of

the Flemish speakers, since they remained less industrialized and less prestigious. Related problems still reign in Belgium today, where language and culture divide the country. Borokhov's predictions did not come true. Currently there are four linguistic regions in Belgium, Dutch (Flemish) representing 60 per cent of the population, French (Walloon) representing 40 per cent, German representing only 74,000 speakers, and the officially bilingual, French-Dutch, but de facto French capital, Brussels.²¹ Analysis of contemporary service encounters showed that Dutch-only practices in the Flemish region often led to communication breakdown and the authors call for changes in this policy that would introduce plurilingual practices.²² On the other hand, recent violence triggered by Flemish right-wing opposition have been accompanied by calls for splitting the country in two, along language and culture lines.²³

There was no discussion of Yiddish language and culture in Borokhov's analysis. His conclusions, however, included the hope for national autonomy in Austria, Russia, Turkey, and Palestine. He used language data from the census to formulate economic and political predictions.²⁴ Borokhov's appreciation of the depth of identification of individuals and groups with their language and the plethora of social factors that bear on these feelings and loyalties distinguished him from the other Jewish leaders who advocated for Yiddish at the time. His treatment of issues related to language use and the meaning that group members derive from such use was very sophisticated for the time, far more nuanced than other advocates of uniform standards in the social usage of a system of communication. Borokhov presaged the research endeavors of the future disciplines of sociolinguistics, the ethnography of speaking, and the sociology of language.

It is perhaps these shared underlying concerns and motivations that explain why contemporary researchers of Yiddish language are so attracted to Borokhov. He would later not only advocate for the standardization of Yiddish, its integration into the public sphere of political and cultural rights and autonomy for Jews in eastern Europe, but also for an understanding that language more than any other factor identified the heart and soul of this minority group.

The Belgian study demonstrated several new aspects of Borokhov: devotion to research, activity somewhat removed from that of movement functionary and theoretician, concentration on language issues, and the composing of his results in Yiddish. All of these remained essential characteristics of his work for the rest of his life.

It is not clear when Borokhov's investigations into Yiddish language and literature commenced. It seems that the libraries of Vienna were the site for his systematically researching the older Yiddish literature, starting in 1909, but we know that he had been reading modern Yiddish literature while in Belgium. It takes him some time to organize his life in Vienna, to coordinate the office of the Poaley-tsiyon, and to secure enough work to stabilize his finances. Lyuba does not come to Vienna until the summer of 1910. Borokhov was hoping to visit Palestine during the summer of 1912, between Lyuba's semesters at the university, but the trip never materialized. Ben-tsvi was in favor of moving the office to Palestine, with Borokhov as one of the heads of that office, but Kaplanski opposed this plan. Although Vienna remained Borokhov's home base until the summer of 1914, he traveled extensively during this period to various west European cities for party work and library research. The dual nature of these trips was recognized by some of his contemporaries, and included work in the libraries of Amsterdam, Berne,

Cambridge, Hamburg, London, Munich, Oxford, and Paris. He researched problems of Jewish socialism, economics, emigration, and especially old Yiddish texts. In 1912, Borokhov reviewed the scope of his research and writing projects: “general philosophy, social philosophy, economics, especially the nationality question, history of the Jewish workers movement, linguistics, psychology, and social psychology.” His close party colleague and the individual most concerned with his remaining writings after his death, Yankev Zerubovl, charted his move to Yiddish research from social science research. Zerubovl interpreted the motivation that guided Borokhov’s application of his previously practiced research methods to the field of language and language-based culture to his growing conviction that the development of Yiddish research would be the best path to an understanding of the core identity of the masses of the Jewish population at the time and in recent centuries.²⁵

Der pinkes

From Borokhov’s correspondence with the literary critic Shmuel Niger, the editor of the first collective volume on Yiddish research, *Der pinkes* (Vilna: Kletskin Farlag, 1912-1913), it is obvious that Borokhov was instrumental in all stages of putting this collaborative volume together. Borokhov’s two major contributions to the volume set the foundations for modern scholarship in Yiddish – one, “*Di ufgabn fun der yidisher filologye*” (The Tasks of Yiddish *filologye*) defined and detailed the study of Yiddish *filologye* and proclaimed its strong nationalist purpose, and the second, “*Der bibliotek fun der yidisher filolog*” (The Library of the Yiddish *filolog*) provided a bibliography of studies on Yiddish over its history that has remained a standard reference, although substantially enriched, refined, and amended as the field developed. There is an element

of revelation in the appearance of his first studies on Yiddish *filologye*, indicating that even the individuals closest to him had not been aware of the extensive nature of his library investigations. Up until then it was generally thought that “Borokhov equaled Poaley-tzionism and Poaley-tzionism equaled Borokhov.”²⁶

In “*Di ufgabn*”, one finds a tone of advocacy and resoluteness. *Filologye* is touted as the crown of the awakening of repressed nations, and so too in the case of the Jews. Just as Yiddish writers in the nineteenth century attempted to convince the readers of the writers’ pedigree, similarly Borokhov tries to prove the longstanding indigenous authenticity not only of the Yiddish language, but also of the research field itself. Innovation and tradition are dual themes that are intertwined throughout the article. He describes the main characteristics of the structure, history, and linguistic components of Yiddish. He sets out to prove that Yiddish has a grammar and orthography that do not have to be created, but only regulated and standardized.

According to Borokhov, the *filolog* is not only a linguist but also a national leader, educator, and planner.

Di ershte zakh far yedn ufvakhndikn folk iz vern a har iber zayn eygener shprakh, kidey vos beser, vos breyter, vos produktiver zi oysnutsn inem natsyonaln shafn.

(The first duty of every awakening people is to become a master of their own language, in order to better, more broadly and more productively, utilize it in national creativity.)²⁷

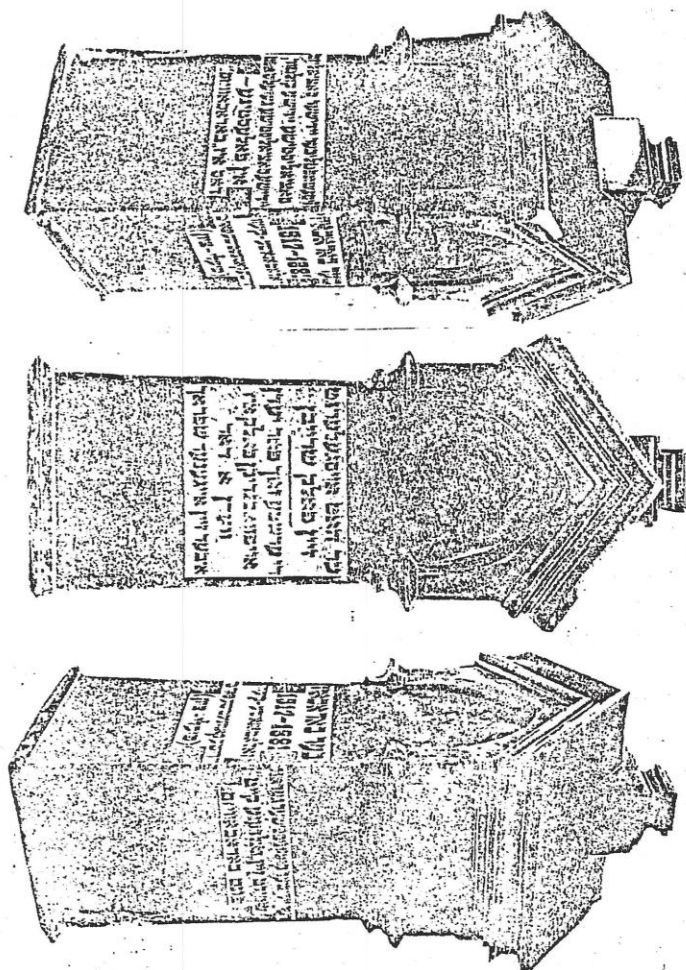


FIGURE 1.

Monument erected at the gravesite of B. Borokhov in Kiev, December 17, 1918,
by Russian Poaley-tsiyon.

He compares institutions of other nationalities that base their work on the folk vernacular, pointing to that which Jews lack: literary, *filologishe*, ethnographic societies, nationality schools and a folk *filologye* with an academy. He proceeds to attack the older researchers of Yiddish as assimilationists, who were distant from Jewish life, wrote their findings in foreign languages, producing work that was too academic, not aimed at nationalistic goals.

The *filolog*, Borokhov's national hero, was charged with both "humanizing" and "nationalizing" the folk vernacular. The former task involved development of the language as an expression of all universal cultural themes; the latter goal entailed refinement of the language, uprooting foreign elements, in order that the nation would recognize its language as its unique possession.²⁸

Der pinkes concludes with Borokhov's "*Bibliotek*", a bibliography of 500 annotated entries, covering 400 years of research on Yiddish, starting with what he referred to as "primitive *filologishe* writings" of Christian humanists in 1514. He notes that Yiddish *filologye* is not a chaotic field for dilettantes. An organized bibliography is a basis for establishing a research tradition in a discipline. Borokhov was preparing a sequel to the "*Bibliotek*" for the planned second volume of *Der pinkes*, with almost one thousand additional entries, but fewer notes. Niger claimed that the manuscript to the sequel of the "*Bibliotek*" was in the YIVO Archives.²⁹

In addition to these two major contributions, Borokhov published three other items in *Der pinkes*. His review of N. Prilutski's *Zamlbikher* criticized Prilutski for not identifying the informant and the specific location in his collection of witticisms relating to geographic locations, and for not following a consistent method for collecting folklore.

Thus, Borokhov is urging researchers of Yiddish to follow standards of scholarship. Moreover, his review of Landoy and Vakhshateyn's collection of private letters from Prague from 1619 recommends the volume as an example of a text that demonstrates the fruits of following the most careful research and publishing methodology. In passing, he commends Landoy for his interest in the Yiddish language of everyday use and notes that he is a rare Western European intellectual whose native language is Yiddish, but "does not draw his facts about Yiddish from dead books or conversations with friends." In his short note in *Der pinkes* as an addendum to Tshemerinski's descriptive and analytic article on Yiddish phonetics, Borokhov criticized Tshemerinski for not being up to date on the science of phonetics. Borokhov provided his own table of Yiddish sounds. Borokhov's familiarity with phonetics served as the underpinning for his proposed standardized orthography.³⁰

Despite the recognition in recent decades that Borokhov, more than any other single researcher, launched research into Yiddish language at the beginning of the twentieth century, to date, only one of his articles, "*Di ufgabn*," has been the focus of any detailed scrutiny.

***"Undzer natsyonale visnshaft"* ('Our National Research')**

Following up on "*Di ufgabn*," Borokhov published a concise article geared to a more popular audience, on the realm and role of Yiddish language research in the national consciousness. This presentation has not been discussed previously by researchers of Borokhov. It contained a visual schematic of the interlocking overlap of *filologye* with

both the natural sciences and research on culture (see figure 1). It was published in 1916 by his longtime friend and Poaley-tsiyon comrade, Kalmen Marmor, who edited a short-lived Yiddish labor Zionist journal in Chicago. Marmor had recently left the party to become affiliated with the Socialist party, yet he retained his friendship with Borokhov and Ben-Tsvi. Borokhov in the article lamented that the war had put the brakes on the nascent research on Yiddish *filologye*, which had made major strides in the national consciousness just a few years earlier. “Without national research today, there can be no national culture ... The one branch of national research that deserves the greatest recognition is *filologye*.” The work of the *filolog* is to learn from the people and their refined poets, but the *filolog*’s task is to bring order to the language and culture, based on research, according to Borokhov. Phonetics bridges the natural sciences and *filologye*; folklore bridges the cultural sciences and *filologye*. He predicted that research on Yiddish will result in normative achievements that will enable lexical and thematic widening of Yiddish literature, as well as the acceptance of shared orthographic standards.³¹

FIGURE 2. *Di natsyonal visnschaft* (Researching the Nation)



Standardized Yiddish Orthography

Borokhov's influence on standardized Yiddish orthography is great even though his published contributions on the subject are short: a note at the end of the "*Ufgabn*," a letter to Niger, and one to a newspaper. In his "*Ufgabn*," he sets the tone for why standardized spelling is so vital at that time for the Jewish people. "*Frier darf men dos folk oyslernen shraybn rikhtik, dernokh ersht vet er zikh kenen lernen shraybn sheyn.*" (First teach the people how to write correctly, then they will learn to create belles-lettres). The message of this imperative is foundational. Standardized spelling for the up-and-coming nations at this time set the fundament for cultural expression, as it had similarly applied to the "big nations."³²

"Shrayb vi du redst" (Write the way you speak).³³ We can detect his inclination toward a bottom-up approach to standardizing, urging also the standardizers to use the masses as a guide, not the intellectual social planners. His principles are not just phonological, but also etymological and morphological. He favors the Northeastern (*litvisher*) dialect as the standard for pronunciation. Ironically, however, he was not able to convince the typesetters of his own publication to accept his system and complains about this.³⁴ The first publication printed according to Borokhov's rules (1917) was the collection of four volumes of the selected writings of the Socialist leader of the American Jewish Congress and Poaley-tzion movement, Dr. Yitskhik-Ayzik Haleyvi Hurvitch.³⁵ One of the largest manuscript items that can be attributed to Borokhov can be found in the current YIVO Archives. In a series of handwritten notes, "*Mayn oysleygekhts*" (My Way of Spelling), he listed pairs of realizations, which reflect such issues as the silent *hey*

that indicates the influence of German orthography on Yiddish writing style, and the influence of Yiddish dialectal variation in vowel realizations.³⁶

The postscript to the “*Ufgabn*” best explains his approach to Yiddish orthography and reflects a broad and deep knowledge of phonetics (the physical and physiological basis of speech sounds) and phonology (the relationship of speech sounds to each other and the ways that their realization is a reflection of both the linguistic environment and processing in the brain). Borokhov must have gained this sophisticated understanding from years of studying several languages and the field of linguistics. But as he pointed out, he was not the first standardizer of Yiddish orthography, but only one voice, in addition to such serious planners, like K. Zhitomirski, N. Prilutski, A. Gordin, Sh. Hokhberg, and Y. Yofe. He praised Sholem Aleichem for standardizing spelling twenty-five years before the appearance of *Der fraynd* and derided this daily newspaper for criticizing him and not supporting standardized Y spelling that goes back four to five hundred years.³⁷ In his short description of the basis for his suggested orthography, Borokhov is very sensitive to the way Yiddish is pronounced, including where primary and secondary stress are located in words, the physical description of the height of the tongue in vocalic realization, and the genesis of sounds in the throat. We should remember that the *litvisher* dialect was not that with which he grew up, but that with which he had become familiar on Zionist speaking tours and from his time living in Minsk. His examples also reflect a knowledge of the historical and componential origins of Yiddish words. He also recommends that neologisms be integrated into traditional Yiddish patterns of pronunciation and spelling.³⁸ Borokhov was preparing an article for the planned second volume of *Der pinkes*, “The Reform of the Yiddish Language and

Spelling,” focusing on phonetics and orthography, which was to be about the same length as the “*Di ufgabn*.” He also intended to publish a one hundred-page book on Yiddish spelling in the Kletskin-farlag.³⁹ Borokhov devoted much of his Yiddish language research to establishing orthographic standards for the language. This activity reflects the general emphasis in those years on language planning, with spelling at its core. But in striving to understand Borokhov’s connections of his language work to his political goals, the fundamental relationship lies in a dedication to standards and rules that is closely linked to devotion to society, to the future of the group, rather than to an individualistic involvement in scholarly activity.

The Yiddish and Hebrew writer, Aron Reuveyni, Borokhov’s younger Poaley-tzion comrade from Poltava, and younger brother of Yitskhak Ben-Tsvi, wrote to Borokhov from Jerusalem at the beginning of 1914, having heard of the impact of *Der pinkes*, although not having yet seen a copy of the collection. The entire letter is about standardized Yiddish orthography, warning Borokhov that just setting rules for standardization is not enough. He urges Borokhov and Niger to organize a collective, regulatory organization for standard Yiddish in Vilna, analogous to the *Vaad halashon* in Jerusalem that deliberated at the time on issues of standardized Hebrew. We see that Borokhov was not a lone voice for Yiddish spelling rules and that others cared about implementation of standards on the part of a collective.⁴⁰

In 1913, Borokhov had already called for an academy for all *filologishe* goals. Only such an organization with authority could support a special committee for orthographic reform. Moreover, Borokhov was encouraged by the fact that he was part of a collective of spelling standardizers, who, although working independently, came up with the same

rules. “Because they work with objective research tools, they arrive at similar conclusions.”⁴¹ He did not view his recommendations as quirky or individualistic. He viewed them rather as agreed upon by normativists who represented a consensus, and an outcome based on generations within a community that regulates itself.

Borokhov on Language and National Minority Rights; Borokhov in the USA

In his Marxist articles associated with the founding of the Russian Poaley-tzion party (1905-1907), Borokhov had already demonstrated familiarity with the history of language-based nationalism and of demands for minority rights and for national political autonomy. He chided the “petty bourgeoisie” for favoring their own language and culture and for not recognizing the right of each nationality to self-determination. We do know that the foundation of national autonomy was a point on the agenda of the Poltava meeting, Purim 1906, that resulted in “Our Platform.” In his writing of this period, Borokhov clearly stated that the Poaley-tzion party demanded the democratic guarantees of national political autonomy: national education, cultural autonomy of the *kehiles* (organized Jewish communities), equality of languages, proportional representation, and general voting rights, for the Jews and other subjugated nationalities in Russia. In a Russian manuscript written by Borokhov in 1907, he planned a book on the nationality question dealing with the history of minority rights, but not mentioning issues of language and culture. Parallel to the situation in the diaspora, the First Poaley-tzion Conference in Jaffa, Palestine, January 1907, in the second point on its program agenda, dedicated itself to “establishing state autonomy for the Jewish nation.”⁴²

Although there are many references to the significance of language to the identity of national groups in Borokhov's early work, it is only in his treatment of Belgian society and politics and the later booklet on broader questions of minority rights in Europe that Borokhov underscored the centrality of language in nationality politics. The work on these lengthy, research-based publications paralleled the years during which he devoted himself to the social and cultural history of Yiddish language and literature. Concomitantly, he continued, without a hiatus, to work for his Poaley-tzion party up until his death.

Yet these were tumultuous years, during many of which Borokhov struggled to support himself and his family financially. "*Mayn lebns-krayz iz shreklekh fardreyt – durkh farplonterte private, partey – un visnshaft-inyonim*" (My life's circle is tremendously mixed up – through problematic private, party – and research affairs).⁴³ But Mintz has discussed that the earlier move to Lieges had at least in part been motivated by the desire to cut costs, yet Lyuba had to return alone to Poltava because they could not afford to live together, and that Borochoy's move to Vienna was due to the party's ability to financially support his work there as contrasted with Belgium. But even in the Vienna years, he had trouble making ends meet especially after the birth of their daughter.⁴⁴

Using Vienna as a base from 1909 to 1914, he pursued his Yiddish research alongside party work. He never got to visit Palestine. He had planned a trip from Lieges, as early as 1908. Ben-tsvi also writes of wanting to bring B to Palestine. Borokhov refers to a planned trip to Palestine in a letter to Ben-tsvi, also mentioning his desire to study Turkish, Arabic, and Hebrew. In 1914, Borokhov wanted to visit for a few months

before an intended tour of the USA and turned to the Poaley-tzion party in the USA for financial assistance, but this was never realized.⁴⁵

Amidst the chaos of the war, Borokhov moved the party office to Milan, Italy, where he stayed from August until December 1914, still also doing Yiddish research, using Vatican holdings, as well as those in Milan and Parma. Before he came to America, he took part in meetings in Milan to establish Jewish congresses in all neutral countries, as well as a World Jewish Congress that would represent Jewish needs at the peace conference following the war. It was not easy to secure boat passage to the USA in November, 1914, and he wrote to party leaders in New York, thanking them for the funds they sent, although informing them that he needed to borrow additional funds.⁴⁶

From the end of 1914 until July 1917, Borokhov, his wife, and daughter lived in New York City, although he went on speaking tours for the party in other cities. He continued his research on the Yiddish language of older texts located in American libraries and wrote articles about Yiddish literature and bibliographies of major writers. Soon after arriving, in the spring of 1915, the topics for a speaking tour of the mid-West included, Socialism and Nationalism, the History of Yiddish Literature, Philosophy and the Working Class, and the History of the Yiddish Language. Yiddish was integrated into his Zionist speaking tours, which reflected the intellectual and cultural interests of his audience. At the time of the fourth convention of the National Workers Farband in September 1916, its leadership had met with Borokhov and had undertaken to publish his history of Yiddish language and literature in four volumes. During these years his financial situation was better than in Europe, as he derived income from writing for the Yiddish daily, *Di vorhayt*, and also editing for a period of time the Poaley-tzion weekly,

Der yidisher kemfer. In addition, Borokhov continued writing on economic themes and intensified his political activity. By March 1916, educators in the labor Zionist Yiddish schools in the Bronx, New York, called a meeting in order to discuss the standardization of Yiddish spelling, together with Borokhov, J. Joffe, and other colleagues.⁴⁷

While living in New York, Borokhov would work on old Yiddish manuscripts at night until the early hours of the morning, after finishing his journalistic and party responsibilities. Before leaving for a trip outside of New York, Borokhov, afraid that a fire that might destroy his copies of the manuscripts, gave his friend from Poltava Tcherikower the key to the cabinet in which he kept them. Four weeks later, Borokhov installed an iron safe to protect these papers. Family members and associates knew that his concern for his Yiddish research work was immeasurable.⁴⁸

Emerging onto the American scene for just a few years, although the factions in Poaley-tzion were different from Europe, Borokhov remained a consistent supporter of settlement in *erets-yisroel* and of a Hebrew-based culture there. The Russian party had early on advocated for a Hebrew-speaking proletariat in Palestine. However, Borokhov was opposed to the positions of the leaders Syrkin and Kaplanski of the Socialist Poaley-tzion in the US (Borokhov's followers at the time were called Democratic Poaley-tzion), for their not giving equal weight to Zion and diaspora, and the corresponding Hebrew and Yiddish activity. He accused them of favoring Zion and Hebrew, and of using work in the diaspora only as a means toward Zionist settlement, and of even teaching too much Hebrew literature in their American schools. At the end of December 1914, immediately after his arrival in the USA, Borokhov, at the 8th Poaley-tzion convention in Rochester, New York, argued that Hebrew was only a subject of study and should not become the

language of instruction in the new schools of the movement. He also urged the Jews in *erets-yisroel* to develop a more sympathetic attitude toward Yiddish in order to breach the gulf between the diaspora and *erets-yisroel*.⁴⁹

During his time in America and then the few months he spent in revolutionary Russia, Borokhov had to navigate differences within Poaley-tzion about major issues, such as governmental decisions about entering a world war, the focus on and loyalty to happenings in Russia, and a willingness to work with Bolshevik revolutionaries. In his years in the United States, the major issue of the day was the Jewish Congress movement, which he championed, stressing the leverage such an organization would have on influencing guarantees for Jewish minority political rights in a European peace treaty. This political involvement did not prevent him from also co-founding a committee to codify Yiddish grammar and orthography. For Borokhov, standardizing the Jewish mother tongue and securing political rights were both issues necessary for providing for a secure Jewish future.⁵⁰

In kamf far yidishe rekht (Struggling for Jewish Rights)

While in Vienna he maintained close relations with nearby Jewish communities and party activities in Galicia. He was particularly interested in the efforts relating to Jewish minority rights in Galicia and the campaign to list Yiddish as the Jewish language in the census of 1910. He foresaw a reformed, democratic, secular *kehila* (organized Jewish community) that would administer all cultural and educational work.⁵¹ Borokhov authored a chapter, “Di yidishe rekht-lage in estraykh,” in the booklet he edited in 1916

in New York, *In kamf far yidishe rekht*, with contributions by David Ben-Gurion and Elias Tcherikower. It is this work on the role of language in minority rights that may be viewed as a second bridge between Borokhov's Yiddish research and his political writings. Although never abandoning his faith in and support for a Zionist territorial imperative, he campaigned for meeting Jewish cultural, social, and economic needs in the diaspora within a political system that would guarantee minority group rights. Language and culture define nationality, according to Borokhov in 1916, and each nationality deserves political autonomy.

In kamf far yidishe rekht was an expression of the movement to recognize national autonomy. Its proponents assumed such autonomy in central and eastern Europe would reach fruition after the dissolution of the empires at the end of World War I. This was an accepted part of the mission of Borokhov's Zionist party. This was also the focus of Borokhov's activities in Russia during the last months of his life, in the summer and fall of 1917. The booklet consisted of 96 pages and was published by the Yidish natsyonaler arbeter-farband fun amerike – the Jewish National Workers Alliance, known as the Farband, a fraternal, Socialist-Zionist organization headquartered in New York City, with many branches in New York and other cities across the United States. Its cultural, political, and educational activities were carried out in Yiddish, including the founding and administration of the first supplementary, secular Yiddish schools. Tcherikower authored chapters on Jewish emancipation in western Europe and the absence of rights for Jews in Russia. Ben-Gurion wrote chapters on the absence of rights for Jews in Romania and rights for Jews under Turkish rule. In Borokhov's forward, we read of the atmosphere of despair that overtook the authors, because of the burdens that the Jewish

masses had to bear during the war, "*an emes(er) gehenim*" ('a true hell'), both physically and spiritually, because of economic destruction, military recklessness, and political unruliness.⁵² He calls for an end to the vulnerable position of Jews in most countries, which resulted in their disproportionate suffering in times of crisis. Therefore, the booklet was meant to guide American Jews in how to respond to the situation, by calling for a guarantee of Jewish national and individual rights throughout the world.

In the introductory chapter on the concept of human rights and the history of the struggle for such rights, the autodidact Borokhov demonstrated familiarity with this history. Moreover, he also grasped the subtleties of social conflict and the relevant legal systems in different societies. In fact, he starts out by declaring that no basic rights are guaranteed, rather their attainment reflects a process of struggle and conflict resolution. Those with power and wealth have rights to a place to live and clean air, while in some countries the population has no rights. He also points out that in times of war and street violence the basic rights to life disappear. The only source of rights for Jews was the protection by the king. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Jews benefitted from the Declaration of the Rights of Man in France. But even after political emancipation, Borokhov complained that Jews were treated the worst, and he called for a renewed struggle for their rights.⁵³

Right before World War I, the Russian Duma passed a law that allowed every nationality to found folk schools in which almost all subjects were taught in the group's mother tongue. Borokhov enthusiastically supported such a move that would develop modern schools based on Yiddish language and literature and would benefit the cultural development of Russian Jews alongside that of the other nationalities.⁵⁴

The worst and best scenarios for Jews described in this booklet, which was both a didactic and activist primer, were David Ben-Gurion's analyses of rights in Romania and Turkey. Romania, which had become an independent state in 1878 by international agreement in Berlin and had been obligated to eliminate all limitations on the rights of citizens of all nationalities, proceeded to classify its Jews as foreign nationals, even given that they had no foreign state to defend them.⁵⁵ Romanian Jesuit government officials provoked demonstrations that threatened to kill all Jews and at the same time sent representatives to European governments to gain concessions in order to modify the article in the original Berlin tractate, to comply by stating that under limited conditions certain Jews could become citizens. From 1880 through 1902 successive restrictions on the rights of Jews were instituted, including prohibiting employment in banks and the train system, not allowing business records to be kept in Yiddish or Hebrew, severe limitations on attending schools for Romanian Jewish children, insisting that private Jewish schools be open on the Sabbath and when teaching Jewish religion not allowing head coverings, as well as the government's right to deport them at any time as foreign nationals.⁵⁶

On the other hand, Turkey is portrayed as the only place in the Old World in which Jews did not suffer from restrictions of their rights. Non-Muslim minorities, such as the Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, were considered millets, with internal autonomy, with rights that belong to each nationality as a group. Each millet had an elected national council, a religious leader, and its own constitution. A committee of Jewish notables designed a constitution in 1865. Council members were required to be able to read and write the national language, Hebrew. Each year the national Jewish council, composed of

sixty secular and twenty religious members, elected two working committees, one for religious affairs and the other for overall, societal issues, including taxation and relations with the Turkish government. Members of the latter group were required to know both Turkish and Hebrew. Each millet had the right to educate its children in its own primary and secondary schools in its own language, with the same rights as the government schools, in which the official state language, Turkish, was used. Ben-Gurion gives as an example, the Hebrew gymnasium in Jaffa, whose graduates could expect the same privileges as those who completed a Turkish gymnasium. Yet he indicates that the new program of the Young Turks has shown the tendency to narrow the rights of minorities in the realm of education, emphasizing that all schools must meet general standards and be under the control and inspection of the government. At the same time, the program stated, “but with the observance of the principle of not interfering in the instruction relating to mother tongue, religion and literature of each nationality.”⁵⁷

In the last two chapters, Borokhov writes about the personal and political rights innate to all citizens of a state, as distinct from the problem of nationalities, or what we call today ethnic minorities, which he insists must be afforded nationality rights. In his discussion of basic rights for citizens, he contrasts the presence of a legal system and its enforcement. For example, Jews are protected as are all Russian citizens by criminal laws, yet even though pogroms are against the law, the government has allowed them to occur. Borokhov shows no tolerance for such a government and calls for its overthrow and punishment. When the rights of Jews are ignored by the government, other groups perceive that Jews are worthy of such treatment and a social atmosphere is created that encourages pogroms and blood libels.⁵⁸

Turning to the rights of nationalities and the national question, Borokhov underscores that the clearest and most important sign of a nationality and the development of national identity is its language and culture. He recognizes though that there may be other national interests, such as territory. If the national group does not have a territory or its geographic territory is insufficient, Borokhov points to possible motivation for colonization or emigration. Identifiable feelings of national identity may first be advocated by the intelligentsia and then spread in waves through the group. If this consciousness creates conflict with other groups or the government, the situation leads to a struggle for national rights. Writing in the USA in 1916, Borokhov admits that claims for national rights for Jews can only be made in countries that recognize the rights of nationalities, such as Austria, Turkey, and Belgium. He explains that the Yiddish noun “natsyon” and adjective “natsyonale” (herein “nationality”) connote the modern east European usage, that views *“yedes folk als a historishn organizm”* (each people as an historical organism) The expression of rights for different nationalities varies with the country, depending on its history, geography, and social structure. In Austria and Switzerland, provincial self-government rules; in Turkey, national autonomy; and in Belgium, the equality of language rights. Turning to the possibilities for the recognition of the rights of Jews in the diaspora, Borokhov dismisses the possibility of provincial self-rule, leaving equal rights for languages and national autonomy.⁵⁹

Honing in on equal rights for languages, as he had done earlier in his research on the nationality question in Belgium eight years earlier, in this booklet, he writes that at the same time that the government uses the official language of the state, which is usually that of the ruling majority, all laws, regulations, and official acts must be communicated

to the population in all the languages of the country. *“Nor tsu der bafelkerung darf di regirung redn in der mutershpakh fun der bafelkerung”* (But to the population the government must speak in the mother language of the government).⁶⁰ In the courts, all sides participating must understand what is going on in their languages. Government officials must know the languages in the area in which they are serving. In addition, in private settings, public meetings, and the press, citizens must be allowed to use their language. Borokhov declares that Jews must demand equal rights and freedom for their mother tongue, Yiddish. He specifically identifies a future Polish state, in which the government would communicate with its Jewish citizens in Yiddish, where Yiddish would be the language of instruction in all Jewish schools, and a Jewish national institute would oversee all domestic Jewish activities. At the same time, Borokhov does not relent in demanding an end to Jewish homelessness and the realization of the Zionist impulse. Only then will the problems of the reckless trampling of Jewish rights be stopped the world over. This will be guaranteed by the formation of international Jewish organizations and the new Jewish Congress. First the Jewish assimilationists who oppose such initiatives must be defeated, and the struggle for rights must be transformed into a struggle for national pride and independence.⁶¹ In this booklet, Borokhov’s advocacy for the rights of Jews and for Yiddish does not conflict with his commitment to the Zionist settlement in Palestine.

Borokhov accepted that in the diaspora the introduction of national autonomy would guarantee a future for the Jews and their language Yiddish.⁶² He looked forward to a time when in Galicia there would be courts run in Yiddish, as well as public meetings, the press, elementary, high schools, and schools of advanced study, libraries, museums,

theaters, national statistics, supported literary production, all organized by a Yiddish national council as a part of the government.⁶³ After his death, between the wars, albeit short-lived, parts of Borokhov's vision for Yiddish language and culture would be realized in Poland and the Baltic states, and more broadly in regions of the Soviet Union.

Other Yiddish Studies Writings

Borokhov's other writings that are germane to Yiddish Studies include bibliographies of Sholem Aleichem and Peretz, his "Plan for a History of Yiddish" (written in 1913, but published in 1926 after his death), and his preliminary plan for a broad history of Yiddish literature (published in 1917). Researching the planned literary history was most likely his major project of his last years, of which we only possess some archival notes besides the published outline. One of his most substantial contributions was the bibliographic commentary and detailed glossary in Basin's anthology of five hundred years of Yiddish poetry.⁶⁴

His plan for the history of the language is similar in organization to Max Weinreich's later history (1973) and that in Birnbaum's Yiddish grammar (1979), beginning with Jewish languages in general and the similarities between Yiddish and other Jewish languages, as well as the emphasis on Yiddish as a fusion language and such languages in general. In the latter part of the twentieth century, these became the accepted initial approaches to the description and analysis of the history, structure, and functions of Yiddish. Borokhov was again ahead of his time. Yet, Weinreich in his writing did not indicate his indebtedness to Borokhov's earlier ideas. Weinreich's Marburg dissertation in 1923 on the history of Yiddish scholarship presented a typology similar to that of Borokhov's "Plan." We do have evidence that Weinreich corresponded with Borokhov as

early as 1914. In addition, he was responsible for publishing Borokhov's plan for the history of Yiddish posthumously for the first time in 1926 in the first volume of YIVO's *Filologishe shriftn*. Furthermore, Weinreich was involved in the arrangements on behalf of YIVO for accepting Borokhov's papers after his death, and, therefore, was very familiar with Borokhov's Yiddish research.⁶⁵

Borokhov's lengthy and detailed letters to the literary critic and editor, Shmuel Niger, from 1912-1914 and in 1917 constitute not only the largest collection of Borokhov's correspondence, but also contain lengthy notes and insights into Borokhov's Yiddish research. Niger published two collections of Borokhov's letters and pointed out that Borokhov "put more erudition, sharp thinking, and potential energy into these letters than others did in tens of articles."⁶⁶

The Last Months in Russia

In May of 1917, Borokhov and a group of other leaders received a telegram signed by A. Berlinroyt inviting them to come to Russia immediately. He and Ben-Tsvi had been elected to the party's central committee. He was also notified that he would be appointed Professor of Yiddish Language at the Jewish Polytechnicum that was being established in Ekaterinislay.⁶⁷ Borokhov arrived in Russia in time to attend the Third Conference of Russian Poaley-tzion, entering on August 28, 1917 (old calendar), to an ecstatic reception. During the deliberations, he advocated for a secular Jewish school in which all subjects would be taught in Yiddish. He also called for a secular *kehila*. Jewish autonomous self-rule would administer all domestic Jewish issues, be they economic,

social welfare, immigration related, or collecting statistics, and organizing education and cultural expression. At the conference, Poaley-tzion is referred to as the Russian Jewish Social Democratic Workers Party. The conference endorsed a Jewish autonomous body to organize and aid unfettered emigration to Palestine and settlement there, as a function of the new democracy in Russia. A summary of the talk of Avrom Revutski (Shlimavitsh) included the condition that Jewish settlement in Palestine would not in any way harm the situation of the native Arab population.⁶⁸

Borokhov represented the party at the Conference of Nationalities in Kiev, where he delivered addresses on a projected Russia as a federation of nationalities and on problems of language. He argued that every nationality should organize its autonomy through its own language, for Jews, in Yiddish, the language of the proletariat.⁶⁹ He was selected as a delegate to the All Russian Jewish Congress and to the Constitutional Convention of the Russian Republic. He took ill in October and was bedridden for one and a half months with an infection, with two loyal Poaley-tzion comrades at his side nursing him in the hospital. Nachmen Mayzl visited Borokhov a few days before he died, and he reported that Borokhov accepted his invitation to write a short history of Yiddish literature within the following two weeks, which the Kiev *Farlag* would publish in book form. Borokhov died in Kiev in December 1917.⁷⁰

Borokhov's Unpublished Writings

Over the years, Borokhov, his wife Lyuba, and his friends referred to notes and papers, most likely photographic copies and comments relating to Old Yiddish texts that

Borokhov assembled during his visits to European libraries and archives. He needed these for his research and writing and viewed them as his most valued possessions. When Borokhov rushed to Russia in the summer of 1917, he sent his unpublished notes and writings that he carried with him from the USA via the Russian Foreign Ministry Office in Stockholm, but these were confiscated in Petrograd, and he had to enter without them. The possible loss of these materials caused him much anguish. Lyuba, along with their daughter and newborn son, as well as his comrade Zerubovl, remained behind in Stockholm. Upon receiving his despondent letters, they feared that this separation from his major life's work would destroy Borokhov.⁷¹ After his death, his friend, the Poaley-tsiyon leader Leon (Leyb, Kasriel) Khazanovitsh located the papers in Petrograd and planned to give them to Rafelkes. The party leaders were able to get them out of Russia. In a letter to the central committee of the Poaley-tsiyon party in Kiev, Khazanovitsh shares that news, with the reservation that these were Borokhov's papers "except for those on Yiddish literature that he (Borokhov? RP) had with him." However, it cannot be known whether all the confiscated materials were recovered.⁷²

We do not find evidence of the nature of these papers until there are discussions between Borokhov's party comrades and the *filologishe* section of the newly formed YIVO in Vilna. January 1926, Zalmen Reizen and Max Weinreich of that section write to the Borokhov Committee in Berlin, reporting on their discussion with Yankev Zerubovl, representing Poaley-tsiyon, who had come from Warsaw to Vilna to negotiate terms regarding what YIVO would do with these *filologishe* papers were they to be donated. In the letter, YIVO promises, without having seen the papers, to study them, register their contents and publish them in whole or in part. They imply that many years have passed

and the work might have been surpassed by more recent Yiddish *filologishe* research.⁷³

According to records in the Arkhion haavoda (now part of the Pinchas Lavon Institute for Labor Movement Research, in Afeka, Israel), the materials were transferred to YIVO in 1928. Zerubovl was the archivist in charge at the Arkhion haavoda for many years and assembled materials related to Borokhov's life. Three documents attest to the transfer from the Poaley-tzion party to YIVO, with rights belonging to Lyuba Borokhov.⁷⁴

Tcherikower claimed that after Borokhov's death the party split in more than two parts and that Borokhov's papers ended up in Berlin, Moscow, and Palestine.⁷⁵

Years after the transfer of Borokhov's materials to YIVO, Zerubovl complained to YIVO personnel about the neglect of Borochoy's materials, and received the response that Yiddish research had advanced beyond Borokhov, rendering the work only of archival value, and that researchers would rather present their original findings.⁷⁶ Max Weinreich makes no mention of the papers in the YIVO Archives in Vilna in his work.

Currently there are only fragments of notes by Borokhov in the YIVO Archives in New York, which might be part of that original collection. Nothing by Borokhov has been found in recent years in Vilnius, when remnants of other YIVO collections were uncovered. Recently books have been written about the post-war politics of saving library and archival collections from pre-war Europe, but not enough has been documented about the pre-war holdings that were destroyed. In the list of entries on Yiddish language and literature given to YIVO in 1928, it appears that there are no unpublished completed articles on the list, but rather notebooks, sheets, and photocopies relating to old Yiddish texts.⁷⁷ A full inventory of all of Borokhov's archival documents, including those at

YIVO in New York and at the Lavon Institute for Labor Movement Research in Israel
still needs to be assembled.

TABLE 1

LIST OF MATERIALS OF BOROKHOV'S WORK ON *FILOLOGYE* AND LITERATURE WHICH ARE BEING DONATED BY THE POALEY-TSION IN AGREEMENT WITH THE WISHES OF L. BOROKHOV TO THE *YIDISH* *VISNSHAFTLEKHN INSTITUT* IN VILNA

Arkhiyon Haavoda, Makhon Lekheker Tnuat Haavoda a"sh Pinchas Lavon
File: IV 104 Borokhov 104B

1. Handwritten ms. of "*Di geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur*" (1915)
- 2.-11. Notebooks "*Yidishe filologye*", bibliographical notes and quotes, notebook no. 281 contains materials collected at the British Museum
12. Notebook with *filologishe* text selections and cut-outs of excerpts
13. A file with 194 pages of *filologishe notes* and galleys of "*Di geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur*"
14. 121 numbered sheets containing notes, texts, and copied poetry, including *Seyfer maro ha muser* and "*Eyn sheyn mayse*"
15. Notebook containing a synopsis and notes to *Yidish a zamlbukh*, edited by I. L. Peretz, volume 2, Warsaw, 1910.
16. Notebook of notes
17. Notebook of notes
18. Notebook of notes
19. Notebook within notebook #16, containing preceding notes
20. Copy of a synopsis of the *Bove bukh* (13 pages), and of the *Seyfer midos* and other texts, relating to the *Brantshpigl* and the Yosefon, including photographic copies of original texts, notes to the book, *Ale ley geshikhte*
21. Copies of Borokhov's published articles, articles taken from the *Yidishe velt*
22. "*Farloyfike sistematizatsye fun di filologishe notitsn un materyaln*" – B. Borokhov
23. A notebook containing Yiddish words and 8 pages of German words
24. A page of text, "*Di yidn un di dayshe poezye*"
25. A page, "*Undzer kultur-leksiskon*"
26. Handwritten article, "*Shehekhyanu vikimonu... keyn literatur-geshikhte hot men bay undz nokh nit, ober ver vet zi amol shraybn ... etc.* pages 1-2, 6-9, 13-20.
27. Borokhov, "*Di geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur*", clippings from journals, copyright 1915
28. "*Di bibliotek fun dem yidishn filolog*", pages 2-66.
29. Pages 135-149 of a printed German text on philology with Borokhov's marginal comments and 5 additional pages of his comments

30. “*Der omud hoesh fun der yidisher bikher-velt*” by B. Borokhov, an article from an American Yiddish newspaper
31. A notebook with *filologishe* materials, the pages numbered 3-160
32. Individual sheets with notes, totaling 79 sheets
33. Frontespiece of Sholem Aleichem’s *Dos meserl*
34. Handwritten notes, 28 pages
35. Various notes in a notebook of 100 pages
36. Notes, 32 pages and 1 and ½ large-sized sheets
37. Photographs of various pages of Old Yiddish publications, numbered 13-282, missing pages 124, 144, 256. No. 186 consists of 4 cards, 192 of 2, 253 of 4, and 254 of 15.

After his death, the pattern of publication of Borokhov’s work stressed the split image, that which the editor of the second volume of *Poaley-tzion shriftn* in 1928 termed the “*nigale*” (‘revealed’), the old Borokhov up until 1906, and the “*nister*” (‘hidden’), of the last eleven years of his life.⁷⁸ But he too did not include any language and literary studies. We can conclude that the work on Yiddish language and literature was not viewed as belonging to party politics by the party colleagues in charge of publishing his work. The editors of the Hebrew edition of his work acknowledged that their third volume covering 1911-1914 did not include writing on Yiddish language and culture, although they admitted that that work was Borokhov’s central intellectual effort of those years. They claimed that that work would appear in a future volume, but it was never published. *Di ufgabn* was not republished until 1966 and an English translation of the entire article did not appear until 2007.⁷⁹

From *yidishe filologye* to Mid-century Yiddish Studies

Just what is *filologye*, according to Borokhov, what endeavors does it encompass? In a publication after “*Di ufgabn*,” he delineates the subfields of his chosen discipline: grammar, language history, word construction, dialects, literature and literary history, folklore, archeology, folk traditions, customs, moral and art history. He bases his classifications on the curricula of academic programs of the time and on published work in Germany. Borokhov’s own charge, as evidenced in the statement of his goals, was broader and grandiose: “*Mayn tsvek iz nit di shprakh, oykh nit di literatur, nit di sotsyale antviklung – nor di kultur, velkhe nemt in zikh altsding.*” (My goal is not the language, nor the literature, not societal development – but the culture, and that includes everything). The *filolog* is not merely an academic researcher, but rather a nationalistic leader who has faith in the future of the language: “*Far a filolog iz nor moglekh... az zayn obyekt lebt un vet lebn*” (For a *filolog* it is only possible ... that his research object lives and will continue to live). The separation of research and advocacy did not exist for Borokhov. He cited two examples of the embodiment of his values, *Der pinkes* and “Dr. Birnbaum’s activity and ideological struggle.” He expressed his plan for raising funds to relieve the financial stress for Nathan Birnbaum, the organizer of a world Yiddish culture movement with offices in Vienna, after he had led the Tshernovits Yiddish Conference in 1908.⁸⁰

The two publications of Borokhov, which I have discussed in detail, reflect his focus on language as a cornerstone of the personal and group identity of the Jewish people and on the role of the language of a minority in achieving cultural and political autonomy within a multilingual and multicultural state. Previously these publications have not been

understood in relation to Borokhov's passion for Yiddish and serious dedication to researching Yiddish.

Borokhov wrote of the need for a scholarly academy based on Yiddish culture. As soon as he came to the USA, he called a meeting together with Y. L. Cahan and J. Joffe on January 24, 1915, where it was decided to found an organization to research Yiddish language, literature, folklore, archaeology, art history, and bibliography, called *Der folkskval* (The Source of the Nation).⁸¹ In the mid-1920s, three such research centers were founded in eastern Europe. These research institutes in just a few years, each with a group of resident researchers, provided the groundwork for the investigation of all aspects of Yiddish culture, not to be achieved again after World War II. The sectional divisions of these inter-war academies were similar. In Vilna: *filologye*, pedagogy, history, and social economics. In Minsk: language, literature, history and economics-demography. In Kiev: *filologye*, literature, history and, later, pedagogy. The culture of Yiddish-speaking Jews was at the core of all these categorizations. Jewish research was centered in Europe in those years, not in America. Although these sections operated rather independently, with little evidence of interdisciplinary cooperation, they may be considered the fruition of Borokhov's broad vision.

The study of Yiddish, as Borokhov had drafted, was not limited to the parameters of the humanities. Research on Yiddish expanded into areas that we would now recognize as the social sciences: economics, psychology, and education. In the three institutes, history linked the humanities and the social sciences. Although the institutions were geared to the practical needs of social planning, the historical aura dominated the early research in the various disciplines. Elements of language and literature were investigated in terms of

how they developed within an historical framework. The rise of the social scientific analysis of Yiddish culture was most evident upon the relocation of YIVO to New York City in 1941. YIVO issued a new English-language serial, *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, largely devoted to translation of its research findings that had been produced in the Yiddish language.

Research on Language and Nationalism Intersects with the Social Sciences and the Humanities

The approach to the study of Yiddish in its social context during the first half of the twentieth century is an example of the manner in which the research on Jewish life during this time was related to the earlier German research tradition at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Yiddish research developed in parallel with general Jewish research. Woodruff Smith (1991), in his book on politics and the cultural sciences in Germany 1840-1920, presents a review of the beginnings of the social sciences in the Enlightenment, of the interest in culture that derived from Romanticism, and of the formation of the cultural sciences in the middle of the 19th century. According to his historical perspective, there was a constant mutual influence between academic theory and popular culture, in both directions. He describes the exchange of ideas and vocabulary between various disciplines at the end of the 19th century, between imperialistic ideology and culture theory, between different political answers of researchers of culture who were dealing with social change. He underlines the original attempts, between 1890 and 1914, on the part of researchers, to construct a broad, united

science of culture that would overcome competing paradigms and disciplines in order to form a basis for effective social policy.

Turning to language, the influence of Herder's theories holds sway in Germany at least until the middle of the 19th century. Herder's theory of the *Volkgeist* postulates a unique spirit for each nation, embodied in the customs, behavior, government and economic structure, but, most of all, in language, through which human thinking is expressed. Other than the natural sciences, the discipline that was most developed in Germany in the mid-19th century and influenced European intellectual circles most was *Philologie*. More than any other discipline, the study of language was most identified as having originated in Germany. von Humboldt presented a theory of education and a general philosophy based on *Philologie*. Several of the budding Yiddish researchers studied at German universities at the beginning of the 20th century.⁸²

Mitchell Hart (2000), in his dissertation on Jewish social science at the beginning of the 20th century, demonstrates the involvement with the contemporary social situation, in contrast with the historical analysis of that time. The chief interest was in demography, economics, health issues, and social organization, making use of statistics. *Wissenschaft des Judentums* at the beginning of the 19th century presented Jews as a community of faith, but, at the end of that century, social scientists asked questions about Jewish identity, continuity, and the demise of the Jewish people. The new nationalism at the end of the century tried to reverse the process and found a relationship with the kindred theories of social science that understood Jewish identity not in terms of religion but rather in terms of the concept of nation or peoplehood. Therefore, Zionists, along with Yiddishists and Yiddish researchers busied themselves with historical memory, language,

folklore, art, and literature. All were worried about assimilation. Hart describes that Jewish social scientists searched for the effects of immigration, industrialization, urbanization, and technical and medical developments. Therefore, they approached disciplines, such as demography, anthropology, social biology, sociology, and political economics. The researchers searched for practical results of their research to serve contemporary Jewish society.⁸³

It was in this intellectual environment that Borokhov did his basic research on the Yiddish language. He was one of a cadre of Yiddish language and literature researchers that arose in the years before World War I who were deeply concerned with politics and the future of the Jews in eastern Europe. This group included S. Birnbaum, Y.L. Cahan, Z. Kalmanovitsh, Sh. Niger, N. Prilutski, N. Shtif, and M. Veynger. Borokhov was convinced that if the Jewish people cultivated a standard Yiddish language and were knowledgeable about their long literary history in Yiddish, they would more effectively advance their political, social and cultural interests in eastern Europe. It is this view of Yiddish research at the beginning of the 20th century that fits the historical context, rather than a picture of humanities researchers of language, literature, and folklore, which became familiar to mid-century American academicians and Yiddish studies scholars worldwide.

Borokhov and Zionism and Yiddish Research

Thus, within his career of seventeen years of simultaneously working for the Zionist cause, researching and writing about Jewish concerns that were connected to

demography, economics, emigration, and human rights, as well as his extensive and intensive involvement with researching Yiddish language and literature, Borokhov did not sense that there were conflicts in the support of all of these goals. His co-workers and followers in the Poaley-tsiyon party were well aware of these activities that were in consonance with their interests and with Borokhov's political and Zionist commitments in the years prior to and during World War I. After the failed revolution in Russia of 1905 and the Helsingfors conference in 1906, all branches of the Zionist movement were engaged in *Gegenwartsarbeit*, ministering to the needs of the Jewish masses, especially in the realms of education and culture, where they were living, in Europe, not focusing on preparation for settlement in Palestine. Such work of Borokhov and *Poaley-tsiyon* was a far cry from Borokhov's research on the history of the Yiddish language and literature, and standards for spelling. Historians who account for Borokhov's research on Yiddish simply as part of the party's *Gegenwartsarbeit* minimize his scholarly work on Yiddish. He spent so much of his time and energy in researching and writing about Yiddish, specifically because of his devotion to a positive future for the Jewish people. He was convinced that research on Yiddish and active work towards its standardization and cultivation would secure that future. Furthermore, he pursued his Yiddish research during years when he and his family were under the daily pressure of financial deprivation.

A year after his death, his party comrades in Kiev erected a four-sided monument in the cemetery, on December 17, 1918. On the front: his name, years, places of birth and death, and the identification of his party: "Jewish Communist Party (Poaley-tsiyon)". On one side: "Jewish Communist Thought Forges Its Golden Chain from Borokhovism." On another side: "Research-based Jewish Socialism, Socialist Jewish Culture, Jewish

Socialist Society, in Palestine – That Is Borokhovism.” And on the backside: “He Taught His People to Write, the first thing for every awakening people is to become a master over its own language” (*Di ershte zakh far yedn ufvakhndikn folk iz vern a har iber zayn eygener shprakh*).⁸⁴ Niger, writing twenty years after Borokhov’s death called for admitting Borokhov into the “national pantheon,” since he was a “national figure,” much more than a “party or factional leader.”⁸⁵

His achievements were unique, but Borokhov was indeed a product of his times. Yiddish as a subject of research and national identity had developed its champions in those years, and Borokhov was its leading advocate. Within this historical context, it was natural for him to consistently support settlement in Palestine where Hebrew was spoken, and national autonomous rights for Jews in the diaspora based on the recognition and cultivation of Yiddish. Research on the structure of Yiddish and standards for its use along with writing the history of its literature based on previously unexamined sources had become the specialty of this Zionist leader. As a leader who was passionately devoted to guaranteeing continuity and a future for the Jewish people, standards for Yiddish and respect for its culture were intimately intertwined with his political goals.

I have benefitted from discussions at conferences at which I presented my findings on Borokhov over the years, starting from the session that I organized together with Mitchell Cohen and Yoav Peled at YIVO, to mark the centenary of Borokhov’s birth, March 1982, through the World Congress of Jewish Studies, August 2017. I appreciate the valuable help extended to me by archivists at YIVO (Gunnar Berg, Fruma Mohrer, and Marek Web), the American Jewish Archives (Abe Peck, Kevin Proffitt, and Fannie Zelicer), the Arkhion haavoda at the Pinchas Lavon Institute for Labor Movement Research (Eran

Tal), and the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel-Aviv University (Sarah Appel and Anat Shimoni). I am grateful to Daniela Steila, Bob Weinberg, and Laurie Bernstein for directing me to the sources on Bogdanov.

1 Matityahu Mintz, *Ber Borokhov: hamaagal harishon (1900-1906)* (Tel-Aviv, 1976); Matityahu Mintz, *Naye tsaytn, naye lider: Ber Borokhov 1914-1917* (Tel Aviv, 1993); Matityahu Mintz, ed., *Igrot Ber Borokhov 1897-1917* (Tel-Aviv, 1989), esp. his biographical introduction, 13-92; Matityahu Mintz, “*Tsionistn un poaley-tsionistn af der tshernovitser shprakh-konferents*,” YIVO-bleter, new series, 1 (1991): 93-108, although this documents his colleagues involvement, since Borokhov did not attend the conference; B. Borokhov, *Ktavim*, vols 1 and 2, eds. L. Levita and D. Ben-Nakhum, vol. 3, eds. L. Levita and Sh. Rakhov (Tel-Aviv, 1955, 1958, 1966); D. B. Borokhov, *Poaley tsiyon shriftn: ershtes bukh* (New York, 1920); B. Borokhov, *Geklibene shriftn II*, ed. B. Loker (New York, 1928); Ber Borokhov, *Shprakh-forshung un literatur-geshikhte*, ed. Nakhmen Mayzl (Tel-Aviv, 1966).

2 Matityahu Mintz, “Ber Borochof: Early Ideas and Later Lessons,” *Jewish Frontier*, August-September (1981), 43-44; Mintz, *Igrot*, 19, 29; Mintz, *Naye tsaytn*, 24; Mintz, personal communication, 1980-1984; Avraham Yassour, “Philosophy, Religion, Politics: Borochof, Bogdanov and Lunacharsky,” *Studies in Soviet Thought* 31, no. 3 (1986), 207, 211-214, 216, 221, 228; Alexander Bogdanov, *The Philosophy of Living Experience: Popular Outlines*, ed., intro. David G. Rowley (Leiden, 2016), 44, 177, originally written 1910-1911; K. M. Jensen, *Beyond Marx and Mach: Alexander Bogdanov’s ‘Philosophy of Living Experience’* (Dordrecht, 1978), 34; Craig Brandist, *The Dimensions of*

Hegemony: Language, Culture and Politics in Revolutionary Russia (Leiden, 2015), 35, 44.

3 On his knowledge of modern and ancient languages, including Sanskrit, as a youth, and his enthusiasm while picking up Turkish, see: Zalmen Reyzen, “Borokhov, Ber,” in *Leksikon fun der yidisher literatur, prese, un filologye*, 1 (Vilna, 1926), 213; Tsherikover, E., “Ber Borokhov vi ikh ken im,” *Literarishe bleter*, 51 (1927), 999; B. Borokhov, letter to Lyuba, Sept 1909, in Mintz, *Igrot*, 285; Mitchell Cohen, “The Contours of Ber Borochof’s Political Thought,” paper delivered at the 55th Annual Conference of YIVO, March 1982, 3.

4 Reprinted in Ber Borokhov, *Shprakh-forshung un literatur-geshikhte*, ed. Nakhmen Mayzil (Tel-Aviv, 1966), 53-75; Dovid Katz, “Ber Borokhov, Pioneer of Yiddish Linguistics,” *Jewish Frontier*, June-July (1980): 10-14; Dovid Katz, *Yiddish and Power* (New York, 2015), 110-111, 177-178, 271; Barry Trachtenberg, “Ber Borochof’s ‘The Tasks of Yiddish Philology’,” *Science in Context*, 20, no. 2 (2007): 341-352; Barry Trachtenberg, *The Revolutionary Roots of Modern Yiddish 1903-1917* (Syracuse, New York, 2008), 108-134, 155-156.

5 Zalmen Reyzen, “Borokhov, Dov-Ber,” in *Leksikon fun der yidisher literatur un prese* (Warsaw, 1914), cols. 90-91.

6 Compare the approach of Santer in his history of infectious diseases that is based on an understanding of contemporary philosophical and religious ideas in each period. Santer quotes Pagel, whose life work was to “place scientific and medical discoveries in the to us less comprehensible philosophical and religious setting in which they first

appeared.” Melvin Santer, *Confronting Contagion: Our Evolving Understanding of Disease* (New York, 2015), xii.

7 Sh. Niger, “*Briv fun Ber Borokhov*,” *YIVO-bleter* 6, (1934): 8-9, Borokhov asked Niger to convey this autobiographical information to Z. Reyzen for the *Leksikon*; M. A. Borokhov, in B. Borokhov, *Geklibene*, xv-xvi; Ber Borokhov, “At the Cradle of Zionist Socialism: 1906,” *Jewish Frontier*, January (1981): 24, originally written 1916; Lyuba Borokhov, *Prakim miyoman khay* (Givat-khaviva, 1979), 24-25, 44; Yitskhok Ben-tsvi, *Gezamlte shriftn I* (New York, 1937), 16, 22; L. L., “Borokhov, Ber,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* 4 (1971), 1256.

8 Cf. Lyuba, *Prakim*, 23, 43-44; Ber Borokhov, “At the Cradle,” 24-26.

9 Ber Borochoy, *Nationalism and the Class Struggle: A Marxian Approach to the Jewish Problem* (Westport, Conn, 1972), 140-144, 153-159, 187; quotation, Borokhov, *Poaley tsion shriftn*, 71.

10 Y. Zerubovl, *Ber Borokhov: Zayn lebn un shafn* (Warsaw, 1926), 159-160; Y. Zerubovl, “*Ber Borokhov un zayn yidish-forshung*,” in *Ber Borokhov, Shprakh-forshung*, 42-43; Reyzen, “Borokhov, Ber,” 215-216; B. Tsh. and Y. K., “Borokhov, Ber,” in *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*, 1 (New York, 1956), 236; Ber Borokhov, “*A naye pshores program*,” in *Geklibene*, 50-66.

11 Borokhov mentions an interest in Asch, Hirshbeyn, and the *Literarische monatshriftn*, letter to party colleague Berlinraut, *Igrot*, 206; he expresses a concern for the possible deterioration of his vision because he is reading so much Yiddish, letter from Lieges to Lyuba in Poltava, 26 Apr 1909, *Igrot*, 230.

12 Zerubovl, “*Yidish-forshung*,” 43.

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- 13 Mintz, *Igrot*, 33-34, 42-44; I do not use the English adjective philological to refer to Borokhov's writings on language and literature, because usage in English implies the investigation of old texts in the history of language and literature. In this article, I will use the Yiddish terms, *filologye*, *filolog*, and *filologish*, in order to retain Borokhov's meaning; cf. Maks Vaynraykh, "Yidishe filologye," in *Algemeine entseklapedye, Yidn, beyz* (Paris, 1940), 101, who adapted Borokhov's broad definition of *yidishe filologye*, which placed linguistics at the center, but included research on Yiddish language, literature, and folk creativity, press, theater, and folk art; Lyuba, *Prakim*, 24-25, 44.
- 14 Yom-tov Levinski, "Di yidishe prese in belgye bizn khurbn," in *Di yidishe prese vos iz geven*, eds. Dovid Flinker, Mordkhe Tsanin, and Sholem Rozenfeld (Tel-Aviv, 1975), 618.
- 15 Borokhov, *Geklibene*, 72-73.
- 16 Ibid., 73, 76, 77.
- 17 Ibid., 77-79.
- 18 Ibid., 89.
- 19 Ibid., 90.
- 20 Ibid., 90-91.
- 21 July De Wilde, Ellen Van Praet, and Pascal Rillot, "Contesting the Monolingual Mindset, Practice versus Policy: The Case of Belgium," *Journal of Language and Politics* 15, no. 2 (2016): 123.
- 22 Ibid., 142.
- 23 Thomas Erdbrink, "Rattled by Attacks, Many Belgians Still Want Nation Split in Two," *The New York Times*, April 7 (2016): <https://nyti.ms/20ckzqP>.

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- 24 Borokhov, *Geklibene*, 90.
- 25 Mintz, *Igrot*, 46, 68; Borokhov referred to a planned trip to Palestine in a letter to Ben-tsvi, November 1, 1911, *Igrot*, 397-398; Borokhov reviewed his research fields in a letter to a party colleague in Crimea, May 1912, *Igrot*, 411; Zerubovl, “*Yidish-forshung*,” 42-46.
- 26 Tsherikover, “*Ber Borokhov*,” 1000.
- 27 Ber Borokhov, “*Di ufgabn fun der yidisher filologye*,” in *Shprakh-forshung*, 53; quotation was placed on the tombstone erected by the Poaley-tzion party in Kiev, December 1918; see Figure 1 and also Note 84.
- 28 Ber Borokhov, *Di ufgabn*, 54-56, 68-72.
- 29 Ber Borokhov, “*Di bibliotek funem yidishn filolog*,” in *Shprakh-forshung*, 76-136; Borokhov letter to Niger, 30 Nov 1913, Borokhov Collection, American Jewish Archives, Box 2246; Niger, “*Briv fun Ber Borokhov*,” 5-24, 7 see note.
- 30 Ber Borokhov, “*Noyekh Prilutskis Zamlbikher far yidishn folklor, filologye un kultur-geshikhte*,” in *Shprakh-forshung*, 152-157, see also Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto, 2011), 103-105; Ber Borokhov, “*A gerus fun far dray hundert yor*,” in *Shyprakh-forshung*, 174-177, quotation on 174; Ber Borokhov, “*Onmerkungen tsum forikn artikl*,” in *Der pinkes*, ed. Sh. Niger (Vilna, 1912-1913), columns 71-74, Mayzl failed to include in his anthology.
- 31 Ber Borokhov, “*Unzer natsyonale visenshaft*,” *Der nayer dor*, no. 3 (Chicago, January 1916): 17-20, quotation, 18, schematic figure photocopied from original

manuscript; Borokhov's handwritten manuscript, K. Marmor collection, RG 205, folder 355, roll 37, pages 31401-31412, YIVO Archives; see Figure 2.

32 Ber Borokhov, *Di ufgabn*, final section has heading, "Vegn der ortografye fun forikn artikl," 72-75; letter to Niger, 14 Dec 1912, in *Shprakh-forshung*, 388-400; letter to *Der fraynd* written 1912 but never sent, published posthumously in *Literarische bleter*, no. 51 (1927): 1001; quotation, Ber Borokhov, *Di ufgabn*, 59; on his gravestone in Kiev, his party comrades put, "Er hot oysgelernt zayn folk tsu shraybn" (he taught his people to write); see Figure 1 and also Note 84.

33 Ber Borokhov, *Di ufgabn*, 68.

34 Ber Borokhov, ed., *In kamf far yidishe rekht* (New York, 1916), 6.

35 A. Voliner, "Dov Ber Borokhov: Biografishe notitsn," in Dov-Ber Borokhov, *Poaley tsion shriftn*, 23; B. Tsh., "Hurvitsh, Yitskhok-Ayzik HaLeyvi," *Leksikon fun der nayer*, 3 (1960), 95-96.

36 RG3, Folder 1801, 81693-81732, YIVO Archives.

37 Ber Borokhov, letter to *Der fraynd*, 1001.

38 Ber Borokhov, *Di ufgabn*, 72-75.

39 Ber Borokhov, letters to Niger, 30 Nov 1913, 2 Dec 1913, Borochoy Collection, AJA.

40 Aron Reuveyni, letter, 4 Jan 1914, Borokhov 13B, file 104 IV, Arkhion haavoda.

41 Ber Borokhov, "Gramatishe frumkeyt," in *Shprakh-forshung*, 367-373, quotation, 371; he also ended the "*Ufgabn*" with a call for a national standardizing academy, 72.

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- 42 Ber Borochof, *Nationalism*, 147, 156; Ben-tsvi, *Gezamlte*, 31; D. B. Borokhov, *Poaley tsion shriftn*, 105; B. Borokhov, *Geklibene*, 33; B. Borokhov, *Ktavim*, 1, 338-352, note 513; Ber Borokhov, "At the Cradle," 25.
- 43 Letter to Niger, 14 Dec 1912, *YIVO-bleter*, 6 (1934), letter no. 4, 13.
- 44 Mintz, *Naye tsaytn*, 19; Ber Borokhov, *Igrot*, 520, letter to N. Birnbaum, July 1913; *Igrot*, 539, letter to L. Chazanovich, Oct 1913.
- 45 Letter to Ben-tsvi and his wife Rachel Yanit, 30 Aug 1908, *Igrot*, 198-199; Yitskhok Ben-Tsvi, "Poaley tsion in der tsveyter aliya," in *Geshikhte fun der tsionistisher arbeter bavegung in tsofn amerike*, vol. 2, ed. Leyb Shpizman (New York, 1955), 536; Ber Borokhov, *Igrot*, letter to Ben-tsvi, 1 Nov 1911, 397-398; Ber Borokhov, letter to H. Ehrenreich, 2 Apr 1914, Borochof Collection, AJA.
- 46 Mintz, *Naye tsaytn*, 29-33; Ber Borokhov, letter to Historical Geographic Society in Petersburg, asking for a loan to support this vital research as well as his family's financial needs, and his letter to Niger, 25 July 1914 from Milan describing the dangerous life in Vienna after the war had started with Russia and his need of a financial loan, Borochof Collection, AJA; Leyb Shpizman, "Eytapn in der geshikhte fun der tsionistisher arbeter-bavegung in di fareynikte shtatn," in *Geshikhte*, 430; Ber Borokhov, letter to New York leadership of *Poaley-tzion*, 5 Nov 1914, Borochof Collection, AJA.
- 47 Mintz, *Naye tsaytn*, 89-90; Shpizman, "Eytapn," vol. 1, 276, vol. 2, 399-400, 413; Ber Borokhov and N. M., *Shprakh-forshung*, 423; Yankev Zerubovl, in *Ber Borokhov tsu zayn fertsikster yortsayt*, ed. Yisroel Stolarski (New York-Mexico City, 1958), 19; Zalmen Reyzen, *Yidishe literatur un shprakh*, ed. Shmuel Rozhanski (Buenos-Aires, 1965), 59; B. Tsh. And Y. K., "Borokhov, Ber," 236; Jonathan Frankel, "The Jewish

Socialists and the American Jewish Congress Movement,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 16 (1976): 202-341.

48 Tsherikover, “*Ber Borokhov*,” 52, 1023.

49 Matityahu Mintz, ed., *Vaadat Krakuv shel miflagat Poaley-tzion berusya, 1907* (Tel-Aviv, 1979), *teudot*, section 2.8.1, par. Xb, 150; Ber Borokhov, “*Der sotsyalizm fun di hige poaleytsion*,” in *Geklibene*, 288; Shpizman, “*Eytapn*,” vol. 2, 411; David Ben-Gurion many years after Borokhov’s death underscored Borokhov’s consistent support for the extreme position of the party members in Palestine in support of the Hebrew language in Palestine and of the achievements of the pioneers in Palestine in general. Ben-Gurion referred to Borokhov as the most outstanding leader of Russian Jewry, the first great researcher of Yiddish, and recognized that during his advocacy for the Congress movement he altered his previous position and accepted that the proletariat had to work with the bourgeoisie, David Ben-Gurion, “*Eyner fun di yekhidey sgula*,” in *Ber Borokhov in der heym*, 32-35, 38.

50 A. Voliner, in *Poaley tsion shriftn*, 22-23; B. Borokhov, *Geklibene*, 274-300; Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews, Wars, and Communism*, vol. 1 (New York, 1972), 130, 324, 329-330; Zvi Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics* (Princeton, 1972), 49, 73; Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years 1915-1926* (New Haven, 1981), 136, 139, 151; Frankel, “The Jewish Socialists.”

51 Ber Borokhov, *Geklibene*, 107.

52 Ber Borokhov, *In kamf*, 3-4.

53 Ber Borokhov, *In kamf*, 7-10.

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- 54 Ber Borokhov, *In kamf*, 29.
- 55 Dovid Ben-Gurion, *In kamf*, 45-46.
- 56 Dovid Ben-Gurion, *In kamf*, 49-51.
- 57 Dovid Ben-Gurion, *In kamf*, 69-72, quotation 71.
- 58 Ber Borokhov, *In kamf*, 73-77.
- 59 Ber Borokhov, *In kamf*, 82-83, 86, 88-89, quotation, 89.
- 60 Ber Borokhov, *In kamf*, 89.
- 61 Ber Borokhov, *In kamf*, 90, 93, 96.
- 62 Mintz, *Naye tsaytn*, 24, see note 4; Mintz concurs that Borokhov's interest in Yiddish research is connected to this later publication on Jewish autonomy; however, he insists that the end goal of Borokhov's activities was the territorial concentration of Jews in Palestine at this time (1916) and somehow views Borokhov's Yiddish research, demands for respect for Yiddish, and concern for standardized Yiddish spelling as necessary for this Zionist imperative; yet he also states that Borokhov's devotion to Yiddish research "clouded and weakened old strivings," implying a weakening of Zionist goals, quotation, 25.
- 63 Ber Borokhov, *In kamf*, 56-57.
- 64 Ber Borokhov, "*Di bibliografye fun Sholem Aleykhem*," in *Shprakh-forshung*, 248-267; Ber Borokhov, "*Peretsiana: Di Perets-bibliografye*," in *Shprakh-forshung*, 226-231; Ber Borokhov, "*Plan far a geshikhte fun yidish*," in *Shprakh-forshung*, 137-143; Ber Borokhov, "*Di geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur*," in *Shprakh-forshung*, 178-221; Ber Borokhov, letter to Niger, 10 May 2013, Borochoy Collection, box 2246, AJA; Ber Borokhov, "Introduction," "Linguistic and Bibliographic Comments," and "Dictionary,"

in *Antologye finef hundert yor yidishe poezye*, ed. M. Bassin, vol. 1 (New York, 1917), iii-vi, final pages i-xxii.

65 Ber Borokhov, "Plan," see the introduction, 138; Maks Vaynraykh, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh* (New York, 1973), vol. 1, see his reference to the field of Jewish interlinguistics, 173, pointing to Birnbaum in 1937, not Borokhov, as the first to argue for such a field, see also vol. 3, 148; Solomon Birnbaum, *Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar* (Toronto, first edn, 1979); Maks Vaynraykh, letter to Borokhov, Borokhov Collection, file 104 IV, 13B, Arkhion haavoda; Max Weinreich, *Geschichte der jiddischen Sprachforschung*, ed. Jerold Frakes (Atlanta, 1993); Sh. Niger, "B. Borokhovs 'Plan far a geshikhte fun yidish'," *Filologiske shriftn* 1 (1926): 21-28; cf. the absence of reference to Borokhov in much later presentations of the field of Jewish languages or interlinguistics: Paul Wexler, "Jewish Interlinguistics: Facts and Conceptual Framework," *Language* 57 (1981): 99-149; Joshua Fishman, "The Sociology of Jewish Languages from the Perspective of the General Sociology of Language: A Preliminary Formulation," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 30 (1981): 5-18.

66 Sh. Niger, "Briv fun Ber Borokhov," *YIVO-Bleter* 6 (1934): 5-24; Sh. Niger, "Briv fun Ber Borokhov," *Gedank un lebn* 5 (1948): 114-135, quotation, 116.

67 Mintz, *Naye tsaytn*, 442; Y. A. Yofe, "Borokhov, Ber," in *Algemeyne Entsiklopedye*, vol. 5 (New York, 1944), 208-209.

68 *Haveeda hashlishit shel poaley-tzion berusye, 1917(teudot)*, ed. M. Mintz (Tel-Aviv, 1976), 41, 70, 71, 76; Mintz, *Naye tsaytn*, 508-519.

69 Mintz, *Naye tsaytn*, 567.

70 Nakhmen Mayzl, “*Ber Borokhov – Filolog un literatur-forsher*,” in Ber Borokhov, *Shprakh-forshung*, 36-37; Shmuel Ayznshtadt, *Prakim betoldot tnuat hapoalim hayihudit*, vol. 3 (Tel-Aviv, 1974), 194, 197, 199; Abraham G. Duker, in Ber Borokhov, *Nationalism*, 16; the nature of Borokhov’s infection is not known, health conditions were poor, but the Spanish flu did not enter Russia before March 1918, and the epidemic reached Kiev in September 1918, Laura Spinrey, *Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How It Changed the World* (New York, 2017), 38, 42-43, 67, 126, 131, 167-168.

71 Zerubovl, in Stolartski, 22; Yankev Zerubovl, *In teg fun milkhome un revolutsye* (Tel-Aviv, 1966), 111, 123, 124; Yankev Kener, *Kvershnit* (New York, 1947), 322; Lyuba Borokhov, *Prakim*, 57, 58; Lyuba Borokhov, in Ber Borokhov, *Geklibene*, xxxii; Zerubovl, in Ber Borokhov, *Shprakh-forshung*, 46; Ber Borokhov’s letter to Lyuba in Stockholm, Sept 1917, regarding his visit to the Foreign Ministry in Petrograd and not locating his papers, *Igrot*, 680.

72 Matityahu Mintz, “Leon Khazanovitsh bepeterburg – yanuar 1918,” *Hametsukot, hatikvot, vehayiush shel yihudey rusya hasovyetit* (Tel-Aviv, 2015), 73-89, quotation p. 88; Yiddish original of letter, Matityahu Mintz, “*Gola veerets yisrael: Leon Khazanovitsh Bepetrograd, tkhilat 1918*,” *Iyonim betkumat yisrael* 7 (1997): 169-189, quotation p. 185; Kener, *Kvershnit*, 322.

73 letter of Z. Reyzen and M. Vaynraykh, 17 Jan 1926, file IV-104-34-104A, Makhon Lavon.

74 1) A receipt signed in the name of YIVO by E. Tcherikower; 2) A letter written by Z. Akerman to Poaley-tzion leaders Loker, Nir, and Revutski, summarizing the transfer, the receipt, and the list of contents of the papers (he wrote that he gave Tcherikower the

documents); and 3) A list of contents of Borokhov's *filologishe* and literary materials, written in the same handwriting as the receipt signed by Tcherikower, summarized in Table 1 to this article. The first two items, dated, Berlin, 7 July 1928, are in file IV-104-34-104A, the third in file IV-104-34-104B, Makhon Lavon.

75 Tsherikover, "*Ber Borokhov*," part 2, 52 (1927), 1024.

76 Zerubovl, "*Ber Borokhov un zayn yidish-forshung*," 47.

77 See Table 1; personal communication, Marek Web, YIVO Archives, March 2015, after examining the list of items identified in Vilnius in recent years.

78 Loker, in B. Borokhov, *Geklibene*, vi-vii.

79 L. Levita and Sh. Rekhov, in B. Borokhov, *Ktavim*, 3, pages *khet-tet*; B. Borokhov, "*Di ufgabn*," in *Shprakh-forshung*, 53-75; "The Tasks of Yiddish Philology," *Science in Context* 20, no. 2 (2007): 355-373, Engl. transl. Jacob Engelhardt and Dalit Berman; "The Aims of Yiddish Philology," *Jewish Frontier* XLVII, no. 6 June-July (1980): 15, 18-20, Abbreviated Engl. transl. Dovid Katz.

80 B. Borokhov, "*Di geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur*," in *Shprakh-forshung*, 217, originally published in *Literatur un lebn* (New York, 1915); quotations from letter number 4 to Sh. Niger, 14 Dec 1912, Sh. Niger, "*Briv*," *YIVO-Bleter* 6 (1934): 13; B. Borokhov, letter to Niger, 11 Mar 1913, in *Shprakh-forshung*, 413-415.

81 Mayzl, "*Ber Borokhov*," in *Shprakh-forshung*, 32-33, quotes from Y. Shatzky's article about Y. L. Cahan, in *Yorbukh fun Amopteyl fun YIVO* 1 (1938): 27-28.

82 Woodruff Smith, *Politics and the Sciences of Culture in Germany, 1840-1920* (New York, 1991), 25-27, 38, 61-62, 73.

83 Mitchell Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (Stanford, CA, 2000), 3-27, 56-73, 139-148, 217-224.

84 The last quotation is from B. Borokhov, “*Di ufgabn*,” in *Shprakh-forshung*, 53; on the gravestone the word *har* is misspelled, the letter *dalet* appears instead of a *hey*; the original gravestone is in the holdings of Yad Tabenkin, Ramat Ef-Al, the Institute for the Study of the Kibbutz Movement, in Tel-Aviv, Israel. The remains of Borokhov were brought to Israel, upon the initiative of President Y. Ben-tsvi, addressed to President Brezhnev of the Soviet Union. The committee for arrangements was headed by Z. Shazar. Burial took place in the cemetery of Kibbutz Kinneret, April 1963, alongside other Zionist leaders. A new Hebrew language stone was erected, without the original Yiddish texts, *Ber Borokhov in der heym* (Tel-Aviv, 1965): 6, 16, 17, 37; photographs of the original stone, 66, 77, 78; see Figure 1; see also M. Sh., “*Vu iz ahingekumen Borokhovs yidishe matseyve?*” (Where Did Borokhov’s Yiddish Gravestone End Up?), *Di prese* (Buenos-Aires, Argentina), July 20, 1993.

85 Sh. Nigier, “*Briv vegn der alter un der nayer yidisher literatur*,” in *Bleter geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur*, ed. H. Leyvik (New York, 1959): 296.