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Civil Rights and Multiculturalism

Simon Dubnov's Concept of Diaspora Nationalism

The Russian-Jewish historian Simon Dubnov was the first to ascribe to the Diaspora a major role in shaping Jewish identity. From his analysis of the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe, he developed the concept of "nationalism without a nation-state": Diaspora Nationalism. The minorities in supranational states were to enjoy the same civil rights as the majority. Their cultural rights were to be guaranteed through the creation of autonomous communities. The field of nationalism studies has largely ignored Dubnov's work. But his concept is quite relevant to contemporary multicultural European societies.

Before 1917, the Russian Empire was home to the largest part of the Jewish Diaspora. Most of these Jews had come under Russian rule due to the partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century.[1] At the start of the 19th century, the vast majority of the Tsar's Jewish subjects lived within the traditional setting of the Jewish shtetl in the Pale of Settlement, the group of western and southwestern provinces to which the Russia's Jews were confined.[2] Despite such restrictions on settlement and the isolated way of life prescribed by Jewish religious and communal law, there was at this time no substantial difference between the Jews and other subjects of the Russian Empire.[3]

The Russian Empire was a multiethnic entity, in which the population only grudgingly acquiesced to the efforts of the authorities to centralise and modernise the state, and in which the particularist and estate-based premodern order had by and large been retained. For that reason, the traditions of Jewish communal self-administration, which allowed the authorities access to the Jews only through Jewish religious leaders, was conform with the structures of the empire overall.

It was Catherine II (1729-1796) who had made an – unsuccessful – first effort to impose a rationalised, modern bureaucracy on various regions of her realm. Over the course of the 19th century, these efforts were intensified and, together with modernisation, urbanisation, acceleration, and industrialisation, led to the breakdown of traditional Jewish lifeworlds.[4] This painful development, however, did not unfold evenly, but instead re-

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[1] John D. Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews. The Origins of the "Jewish Question" in Russia 1772–1825* (DeKalb 1986).

[2] See the map "Jews in East Central Europe ca. 1900" in insert I.

[3] Manfred Hildermeier, "Die jüdische Frage im Zarenreich. Zum Problem der unterbliebenen Emanzipation", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 32 (1984), pp. 321–357.

[4] For a critique of this term, see: Frank Golczewski, "Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa?", in Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt, Eckhard Hübner, eds., *Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa* (Frankfurt am Main 2005), pp. 13–28.

sulted in considerable conflicts within Jewish communities and between Jews and the non-Jewish neighbours. In the collective memory of Russian Jews, specific events facilitated this process, or at least allowed it to seem clearer in hindsight. The conscription of Jewish boys into military service under Nicholas I would be one example.

In Jewish memory, this regulation, which the authorities used as an instrument of acculturation,[5] serves as an example of Russian anti-Jewish policies.[6] However, these efforts paid off, and these conscripts grew up to comprise an early cohort of acculturated Jews within the Russian Empire. In the era of Great Reforms under Alexander II, the drive towards acculturation crested again.[7] During this period, a policy of education and modernisation prevailed. As a reward for successful integration, the authorities held out certain privileges, such as the lifting of settlement restrictions.

The year 1881 marked a significant turning point in Russia's policy towards its Jews.[8] After the assassination of Alexander II a wave of pogroms shook the Pale of Settlement until 1884. The pogroms – in traditional Jewish historiography – showed the Jews the futility of acculturation. The consequences of this violence were the rise of the Jewish national movement[9] and the mass migration of Jews from the Russian Empire to Western Europe and beyond.[10] Between 1881 and 1904, roughly 1 million Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe to the west. Of these, 700,000 came from the Russian Empire and the rest from Romania and Habsburg Galicia. Some 850,000 East European Jews moved to the United States, 100,000 settled in England, and only about 30,000 remained in the German Empire. Another 20,000 Jewish immigrants spread out across the rest of Western Europe. The year 1881 marked the end of Russian policies designed to modernise and integrate the empire's Jewish subjects; instead, disenfranchisement and discrimination were taken to extremes. Representatives of the "lachrymose school" – to use Salo Baron's term – which considers the experience of the Jewish Diaspora a bitter history of persecution and disenfranchisement, see 1881 as the start of a war against the Jews that lasted decades.[11] According to this interpretation, the authorities incited the Russian lower classes against the Jews. The year 1881 therefore signals the start of the era of pogroms in Russia, an era that runs through the Kishinev (Chişinău) pogrom of 1903, the pogroms that followed the mobilisation for the Russo-Japanese war of 1904, and the October pogroms of 1905, to the large number of Jewish deaths that took place during the First World War and the Russian Civil War.[12]

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[5]   Adina Ofek, "Cantonists: Jewish Children as Soldiers in Tsar Nicholas's Army", *Modern Judaism*, 13 (1993), pp. 277–308.

[6]   Simon Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 9 (Berlin 1929), pp. 188–197.

[7]   John D. Klier, "The Jewish Question in the Reform Era Russian Press, 1855–1865", *The Russian Review*, 3 (1980), pp. 301–319.

[8]   Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics. Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge 1981).

[9]   Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 10, pp. 119–225. For a critique of this construction, see Anke Khil'brenner, "Lichnyi opyt istorikov kak 'stroitel'nyj material' formirovaniia kollektivnoi pamiati: pogromy 1881 g.", in Karl Ajmermacher a.o., eds., *Kul'tura i vlast' v usloviiakh kommunikatsionnoi revoliutsii. Forum nemetskikh i rossiiskikh kul'turologov.* (Moscow 2002), pp. 449–471.

[10] David Berger, ed*., The Legacy of Jewish Migration: 1881 and Its Impact* (New York 1983).

[11] Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 4 (New York 1957), p. 147.

[12] John D. Klier, Schlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms. Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge 1992).

Thus, 1881 stands not only for the politicisation of Russia's Jews, it is considered a milestone in the history of the Jewish-American Diaspora. Even if this interpretation is simplistic in searching for the reasons for Russian Jewry's political awakening only in the antisemitic policies of the Russian authorities and the anti-Jewish violence of the Russian population, it is primarily during the last decades of the 19th century that the development of ideologies and identities on the Jewish road to modernity became particularly dynamic. Less appreciated than the year 1881 – but no less important for Jewish history of ideas – is the year 1897, when several camps in modern Jewish politics assumed definite shape. The Russian-Jewish historian Simon Dubnov notes in his memoirs:

> The year 1897 led to a change in the life of Russian Jewish society. The stagnation of society that had lasted 15 years now gave way to national and social movements. As a result of the Basel Congress, Zionist circles were set up everywhere. Herzl's young Zionism created a stir on the Jewish street, in circles and gatherings. At the same time, the Bund was formed, the organisation of the Jewish Social Democrats, which was forced to operate illegally under the then conditions of the police state. Amid these currents, an ideology broke new ground, which I took up in my Letters on Old and New Judaism and gradually developed.[13]

Simon Dubnov was born in 1860 in the traditional Jewish shtetl of Mstislavl' (today Mstsslau, Belarus), then a part of the Pale of Settlement. In the 1880s, he made a name for himself in St. Petersburg as a Jewish journalist and literary critic who promoted the acculturation of Jews into their Russian environment. In the 1890s, he dedicated himself to researching Jewish history. In this context, he developed an understanding of history and the world that was profoundly influenced by Jewish nationalism. Accordingly, he became the history teacher and the national historiographer of the Russian Jews.

Dubnov's *Letters on Old and New Judaism* (1897–1902) can be considered the core of his ideology, which can be called "Diaspora Nationalism".[14] This term was not coined by Dubnov. His concept of national history was based on what he referred to as a "sociological view" of Jewish history.[15] He called the political programme derived from this concept "autonomism",[16] which is also how Dubnov's contemporaries knew it. The analytical term Diaspora Nationalism refers to both, the historiographical concept and the political programme, and thus establishes the connection between history and politics characteristic of Dubnov's work. The ostensible contradiction between Diaspora and nationalism makes Dubnov's understanding of the world interesting. The notion Diaspora Nationalism reveals Dubnov's re-assessment of tradition-

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[13] Simon Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens. Erinnerungen und Gedanken. Materialien zur Geschichte meiner Zeit*, 3 (Göttingen 2005), p. 341.

[14] Simon Dubnov, *Pis'ma o starom i novom evreistve (1897–1907)* (St. Petersburg 1907). This 1907 compilation served as the basis of this analysis. An English edition of *Pis'ma o starom i novom evreistve* – "Letters on Old and New Judaism" – forms a section of Koppel S. Pinson, ed. Simon Dubnow, *Nationalism and History Essays On Old And New Judaism* (Philadelphia 1958).

[15] Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 1, pp. 8–23.

[16] Dubnow, "Letters on Old and New Judaism", pp. 131-143.

al ideas – such as a positive understanding of the traditionally negatively connoted Diaspora – and makes equally clear his novel understanding of the concept of nationalism: Dubnov synthesises the promise of modernity with his reading of history into an understanding of nationalism that runs counter to the 19th-century European faith in progress, which despite, or precisely because of, his borrowings from pre-modern times, appears quite paradoxically to be modern.

Foundations: Diaspora Nationalism and History

In his Letters, Simon Dubnov rehabilitates the Diaspora, to which the Jewish people had been subjected since the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE).[17] Contrary to the conventional tendency in Jewish intellectual history at the time, Dubnov did not understand the scattering of the Jews as God's punishment, but as a historical reality dating back almost 2,000 years. The Diaspora had significantly influenced Jewish life and had turned the "chosen people" into a collective personality, which Dubnov referred to as the "light to the nations". As Jewish national attributes had developed during the Jews' struggle for existence since Biblical times, for such an evolutionary thinker as Dubnov, the Jews were the most "developed" of all peoples and for that reason the most "historical" one.

By the standards of historiography at the time, this reading was revolutionary, for statehood was seen as the sine qua non of historicity. The foundation of Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism in the age of national historiographies was to refer to a people without a state as the "most historical" (historicissimus) of all peoples.[18] The transnational and transterritorial lifeworld of the East European Jews within the heterogeneous communities of Eastern Europe is handed down in the leitmotiv of the Diaspora. Dubnov elevates it to the vision of a modern democratic future.

Despite the lack of a territory, Dubnov treats the Jewish nation like other national historiographers treat their objects of investigation, basing his analysis on the experience of the Jews in the multiethnic Russian Empire. He integrates the history of the Russian Jews, which he places at the centre of his work, into two larger frames of reference: He vertically anchors the history of the Russian Jews in 4,000 years of Jewish national history, while horizontally interpreting it in 19th-century Eastern Europe, where numerous stateless nations were struggling for their right of self-administration.[19]

19th-century Eastern Europe was characterised by various processes of national awakenings, which were subjecting the three large multiethnic empires – the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian – to centrifugal forces. Dubnov referred to these national awakenings as the nationalisation (natsionalizatsiia)[20] of minorities. These processes

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[17] Anke Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus. Zur Geschichtskonstruktion Simon Dubnows* (Göttingen 2007), pp. 119–131.

[18] Dubnow, *Grundlagen*, p. 41,

[19] Benjamin Nathans, "On Russian-Jewish Historiography", in Thomas Sanders, ed., *Historiography of Imperial Russia. The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State* (New York 1999), pp. 397–432, here, p. 411.

[20] On the concept of natsionalizatsiia, see Dubnow, "Letters on Old and New Judaism", pp. 131-143; Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus*, p. 93.

spanned all the stages of national movements from their intellectual beginnings (the Jews), to mass movements and uprisings (the Poles), and the formation of states (the Serbs). For Dubnov, Russia's Jews were just another one of these minorities. Accordingly, the multiethnic Russian Empire became the general framework of his construction. Unlike the existence of that part of the Diaspora subjected to the homogenising pressures of the nation-states of Western Europe, the situation of the Jews in the Russian Empire amid such a diverse menagerie of religious and ethnic minorities could be better characterised as autonomous national life. In this sense, the Jews were an "imperial population".[21]

Dubnov's historicism took the East European Jewish experience and created from it a vision of the Jewish people's future. Derived from this historical experience, Dubnov's goal was not a nation-state (not even a Zionist one) but a form of national life based on self-determination for extremely diverse peoples within supranational states.

For Dubnov, state and nation were separate matters. He described the individual and its relationship to nation and state by referring to a dualist principle. According to him, the nation was derived from the inner connection of individuals to a collective body. The state, however, was an "artificial", "legal", or "socio-political" institution held together by an "external bond".[22]

If the national community was responsible for the organisation of its education, culture, and edification, then the state was to guarantee individual civil rights. The individual was a part of the state in the sense that there was a legal bond guaranteeing individual rights and imposing certain duties. At the same time, the individual was an organic component of the collective body of the nation, which influenced the individual's culture and conveyed the feeling of rootedness and belonging. Under these conditions, nation and state did not have to be one and the same thing.

Against the backdrop of the multiethnic Russian Empire, the formation of new nation-states in Eastern Europe threatened Dubnov's vision, because nation-states encouraged a certain "national egotism"[23] among the most populous nation. It was for this reason that Dubnov, drawing on the historical experience of the Diaspora, created a vision of coexistence among various autonomous peoples**,** of a peaceful and free Eastern Europe beyond the "prisons of nations".

According to Dubnov, the institution that was to mediate between the members of the collective body was not the state, but the community. In the history of the Diaspora, the community is of special importance.[24] It enabled continuity and stability of Jewish life in the absence of a state and was therefore a key prerequisite of Jewish life in the Diaspora.[25] As such, the community is denoted by the Hebrew term *kehilla*. The *kehilla* kept up the most important institutions of Jewish life for the individual: the ceme-

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[21] Dan Diner, "Editorial", *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 1 (2002), pp. 9–14, here p. 11; Anke Hilbrenner, "Jüdische Geschichte", *Digitales Handbuch zur Geschichte und Kultur Russlands und Osteuropas* <http://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/2055/1/Hilbrenner_JuedGeschichte.pdf>, Ch. 2.2. "Imperiale Bevölkerung".

[22] Dubnow, *Grundlagen*, p. 44.

[23] Dubnow, "Letters on Old and New Judaism", pp. 116-130.

[24] Hilbrenner, "Jüdische Geschichte".

[25] Verena Dohrn, "Die jüdische Gemeinde (kehilla) und die Stadt unter russischem Recht", in *Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa*, pp. 65–84; Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia 1844–1917* (Jerusalem 1981).

tery, the synagogue, the ritual bath, an authority offering protection from the outside
world, and a legal body that ensured adherence to religious law and could be consult-
ed in the event of problems. The communities assumed the functions of maintaining
general order, raising taxes, administering justice, regulating the economy, providing
education and social services, and organising cultural life. In the communities, the
Jewish population was able to maintain its existence relatively independent of the
surrounding majority population. The community authorities were elected, but the
structure of the community was nonetheless oligarchic and patriarchal. The politically
connoted term *kahal* was used to refer to the community authorities.

The *kahal* supervised the community and in return offered physical and legal protec-
tion. The most effective means available to the communal authorities for maintaining
social discipline was the *kherem*, or ban, which could be used as a form of punish-
ment. Furthermore, the community presided over the right to settle and to lease land,
the *hazakah*. The community's contacts with the outside world were handled by an
intercessor, the *shtadlan*.

In Eastern Europe, the community and Jewish life remained stable well into the 19th
century, even if religious divisions, pogroms, economic problems, and state bans
triggered severe crises at various times. Because the entire system of communal self-
administration was founded on religious law, the community was thrown into an
existential crisis by secularisation. At the outset of the modern era, the Jewish com-
munity was subjected to criticism from nearly all sides. Adherents of the Jewish En-
lightenment, and later Jewish Socialists, denounced the way, the Jewish authorities
ruled the communities as oligarchic, patriarchal, and exploitative.

Antisemites suspected that the community was in fact a "state within a state", with
whose help non-Jews were exploited.[26] These communities, which in the minds of
anti-Jewish conspiracy theorists were united in a large and secret "world kahal",
worked in turn for a "worldwide Jewish conspiracy". In their efforts to modernise the
state, the non-Jewish authorities attempted to dissolve the community as a remnant of
the estate-based system. Only religious Jews refrained from calling the community
into question.

The Diaspora Nationalists for their part saw in this institution a suitable instrument for
leading Jews of the Diaspora into modernity.[27] Simon Dubnov was the first to reha-
bilitate the community, which he referred to using the political term kahal. To him, it
was a "substitute for government, for a state, and for a citzenship"[28] as well as a terri-
tory of the Diaspora.[29] The community became the supporting element of Dubnov's
vision of Jewish national life in the Diaspora. Through it, the individual would par-
take of his cultural and national rights. Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism was accord-
ingly a dual concept in the political sense as well. As a citizen, the individual realised
his civil rights and duties and, as a member of the community, was a part of the nation
and participated in its cultural and autonomous life. At the state level, the nation was

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[26] One source for this is the apostate Jakov Brafman's work of antisemitic slander, *Kniga Ka-
   gala*, 1-2 (St. Petersburg ²1882) (¹1869); Jacob Katz, *A State Within a State. The History of
   an Anti-Semitic Slogan* (Jerusalem 1969).
[27] Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus*, pp. 167–186.
[28] Dubnow, "Letters on Old and New Judaism", p. 138.
[29] Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus*, pp. 133–147.

in turn to be represented in an assembly of communities consisting of delegates sent by the individual communities.

Equal rights and a national life in the Diaspora mediated by the community was the central message of the political ideology Dubnov called autonomism. Autonomism was, so to speak, the "political arm" of his understanding of history. It was represented in the Russian democratic movement of 1905 by the People's Party, the *Folkspartey*.[30]

Politics: Diaspora Nationalism in the Democratic Movement of 1905

The politicisation of Russian Jews gained enormous momentum through the revolution and the democratic movement of 1905.[31] After the disastrous course of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and the brutal dispersal of demonstrators in the Bloody Sunday incident (January 22, 1905), the number of people calling for the modernisation of the Russian Empire grew steadily. The liberal opposition advocated primarily a constitution and a parliament. The peasants were still dissatisfied with the implementation of agricultural reforms. In the cities, the nascent working class was beginning to organise.

It was in this setting that the radical forces of the intelligentsiia also began to agitate. Liberals and radicals agreed on some issues concerning social modernisation, for example, women's rights. In addition, problems with the nationalities on the empire's periphery were severely destabilising the Russian Empire. The nationality question was one of the great unsolved problems in the tsarist "prison of nations". Poles, Ukrainians, Finns, the peoples of the Caucasus, and many others among Tsar Nicholas II's non-Russian subjects used the revolutionary unrest, which first broke out in the empire's major population centres, in order to demand their right to national self-determination.[32]
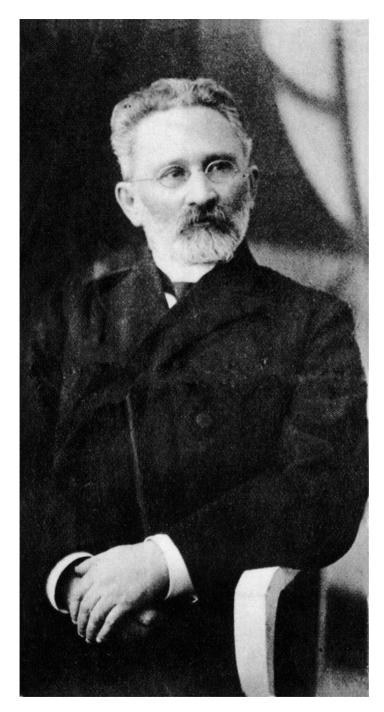
In their search for allies, the Great Russian opposition movements accommodated in part the national demands of the non-Russians. Almost all parties that had come into existence after the October Manifesto of 1905 and the promise of parliamentary representation, including those that had previously operated in the underground, were aware that any post-revolutionary "new order" would have to solve the nationalities question. During the Revolution of 1905, the political public had become sensitised to concepts such as "civilised nation", "national rights", "language rights", and "national education". Russia's Jews were also able to profit from this. According to their own self-perception, they were one nation among many, and the Great Russians also saw them as such. Therefore, it was also time for the Jewish nation to claim their right to self-determination. The Jews were thus part of the all-Russian democracy movement, with the Jewish general public being as differentiated as the opposition in general.[33]

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[30] Ibid., pp. 193–206.

[31] Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905. A Short History* (Stanford 2004).

[32] Andreas Kappeler, *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich. Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall* (München ²2001), pp. 268–277.

[33] Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 10, p. 387.

Simon Dubnov, Odessa 1913

In this context, Simon Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism, nominally only on the periphery of the political spectrum, became a driving force behind the entire Jewish emancipation movement. In response to the political disenfranchisement of the Jews, which had steadily assumed new dimensions since 1881, and the anti-Jewish violence since the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, which had intensified due to mobilisation for the Russo-Japanese War and the revolutionary unrest, the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights for the Jewish People in Russia* (Soiuz dlia dostizheniia polnopraviia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii) was founded in Vil'na (Vilnius) in 1905. In Yiddish, the members of this association were ironically called the "attainers" (dergreykher).[34] The *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights* became part of the *Union of Unions* and thus an institutional part of the all-Russian democracy movement of 1905.

Dubnov incorporated the right to national cultural self-determination into the programme of the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*. This was to be realised through the autonomy of communities and the recognition of Jewish schools as well as the national languages of Yiddish and Hebrew. His theory of autonomism became the political programme of the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*. Initially the Jewish and the all-Russian democracy movements sought to create a united front. However, over the course of the revolution, from 1905 to 1907, differences within the Union for the Attainment of Full Rights became ever more clear.

The differentiation of the Jewish political movement into several parties with different political concepts was part of the general politicisation of Russian society. The Jewish social democrats of the *General Jewish Workers Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia*, best known as the *Bund*, soon broke with Dubnov's ideology. Unlike the Bundists, Dubnov was convinced that the nationalities question, and not class antagonisms, was the most pressing problem facing Russian Jewry and Russian history. Although the Bund continued to adhere to the principle of national cultural autonomy, it distanced itself from the bourgeois liberal views that Dubnov articulated in the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*.

At their party congress in Helsingfors (Helsinki) in November 1906, the Zionists also renounced the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*. They put forward the vision of a Jewish state in Palestine in order to adequately represent their voters' concerns in the Russia Empire. However, they retained Dubnov's national programme for the Diaspora, which they now called "work in the present".[35] When the Zionists founded their own party, the anti-Zionists around Maxim Vinaver felt compelled to do the same. They organised themselves in the *Jewish People's Group*. From the rubble of the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights*, which for two years had represented Jewish national interests in a time of political change, there emerged Dubnov's *Folkspartey*.[36]

The differentiation of Jewish national politics into various currents ran parallel to that of the all-Russian democratic movement. At this point, the anti-tsarist forces broke up

[34] Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, pp. 162–168; G. R. Aronso, "V Borbe za grazhdanskie i natsional'nye prava (Obshchestvennye techeniia v russkom evreistve)", in Soiuz russkikh evreev, ed., *Kniga o russkom evreistve. Ot 1860-ch godov do revoliutsii 1917 g.*, (New York 1960) (reprint: Jerusalem and Moscow 2002), pp. 211–238, here: p. 226f; Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, *The Tsars and the Jews. Reform, Reaction and Anti-Semitism in Imperial Russia 1772–1917* (Chur a.o. 1993).

[35] Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness* (New York 1987).

[36] Semen Dubnov, *Volkspartei. Evreiskaia Narodnaia Partiia* (S.-Peterburg 1907), p. 8f.

as well. In 1905, a series of political parties representing various political directions were founded. This division of revolutionary forces enabled the triumph of the autocracy, which reinstated the old order. Even though the tsarist authorities granted only a "pseudo-constitutionalism", the Duma and the parties represented there became a stage for rehearsing political participation.[37]

In the programme of the *Folkspartey*, Simon Dubnov demanded that the national rights of the Jewish people be guaranteed from the local to the state level through self-administered communities:

> In our autonomy programme, the Folkspartey proposes to utilise the idea of communal self-administration, which has been sanctified by the historical experience of many generations.... The cell of self-administration in our times can only be a free community of the people with a democratically elected leadership that administers its cultural institutions, cooperatives, and welfare organisations.[38]

The Jewish community was to be represented at the overall state level by the *Union of Jewish Communities* (Soiuz evreiskikh obshchin). This body would have had the task of guaranteeing the freedom to use the national language and the autonomy of the schools.[39] By using the Russian term *obshchina*, Dubnov picked up on Russian concepts of community. By choosing *Union of Jewish Communities* for the name of the national assembly on the all-Russian level, Dubnov also recalled the unions of the democracy movement of 1905. Furthermore, the *Folkspartey* completed its turn towards the use of Yiddish, even though it refrained from making any absolute claims in language policy. From 1905 until the end of his life, Russian was Dubnov's preferred language. His own position was that all of the languages spoken by Jews were in fact Jewish languages. Nonetheless, the party programme was printed in Yiddish in the Petersburg daily *Der fraynd*.[40]

The *Folkspartey*, however, did not meet with political success. All of the Jewish parties that had emerged from the *Union for the Attainment of Full Rights* had integrated Dubnov's national demands into their programmes. With that, his autonomy programme enjoyed unparalleled success in the East European Diaspora. However, his party became superfluous.

At the end of 1911, the *Folkspartey* was reorganised under the name *United National Group*. Among the new members was the Jewish narodnik (radical populist) and future social revolutionary S. An-skii. As a result, the left gained in influence. The importance of Yiddish as a national language was more strongly articulated. And the *United National Group* was also sympathetic to the systematic colonisation of Palestine.[41]

The First World War at the latest pushed Dubnov's vision of an autonomous Jewish life in a modern "multinational state" to its limits. On the one hand, Jewish soldiers of

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[37] Max Weber, *Russlands Übergang zum Scheinkonstitutionalismus* (Tübingen 1906).
[38] Dubnov, *Volkspartei*, p. 12.
[39] Ibid., p. 13.
[40] "Di folks-partey", *Der fraynd*, (12 February 1907).
[41] Sophie Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnov. Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish History* (Bloomington 1991) [¹1950], p. 157.

the various warring parties died in the struggle. Jews killed Jews. On the other hand, the war became a tragedy for Jewish civilians, above all in the Russian Empire: The eastern front ran through the Pale of Settlement throughout the war. The Russian government suspected the Jews of collective disloyalty and expelled them from the army rear areas. Once again, the Jews of the Russian Empire were not treated as citizens. Amid this calamity, it was clear that within the multiethnic Russian Empire only Russians were considered loyal subjects. Jews fell victim to violent attacks by soldiers of all warring parties, above all, however, by their own neighbours: Russians, Poles and Ukrainians.[42]

The First World War, and then the Russian Civil War constituted a major disaster for the Jews.[43] Since 1881, the situation of Russia's Jews had deteriorated steadily. The lack of perspective and the experience with constant insinuations of disloyalty showed Dubnov that a national and egalitarian existence was impossible for the Jewish people within the Russian Empire. From then on, he took part in the struggle for an international solution to the question of an autonomous national existence for the Jewish people. Dubnov understood the horrors and destruction of the First World War as the end of the old Europe. The East European Jewish Diaspora was home to his historical and political vision of Diaspora Nationalism. The end of Europe therefore seemed to him the end of the world:

> After many centuries of civilisational development, we are today in a period of chaos, which is giving birth to a new world. Will this world be better or worse than the preceding one? Are we experiencing the downfall of European civilisation or the dark hour before the break of dawn?[44]

The old Eastern Europe, with its multiethnic empires and transnational and transterritorial population groups, was lost. Instead, Eastern Europe adopted from the west the myth of the nation-state as the path to modernity. Dubnov's vision of a modern Jewish Diaspora Nation in a supranational state system had been overtaken by events. In the new Europe, his theory of autonomism, which had been developed under the conditions of the Russian Empire, seemed nothing more than an anachronism.

Diaspora Nationalism in a New Era

After 1917–1918, the Russian Jewry that had formed the basis of Dubnov's political vision did in fact no longer exist. Many of the Russian-speaking Jews had left the former multiethnic Russian Empire. Others had become Polish, Lithuanian, or Latvian Jews through the restructuring of East Central Europe. The establishment of nation-states on the territory of the former multiethnic empires was understood to represent

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[42] Eric Lohr, "The Russian Army and the Jews. Mass Deportation, Hostages, and Violence during World War I", *The Russian Review*, 60 (2001), pp. 404–419.

[43] Oleg Budnitskii, *Russiiskie evrei mezhdu krasnymi i belymi, 1917–1920* (Moscow 2005); Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 10, pp. 509–518.

[44] Preface to the 1923 Russian edition of Simon Dubow's "Neuerster Geschichte", cited after: Verena Dohrn, Anke Hilbrenner, "Einführung: Simon Dubnow in Berlin", in Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, 3, pp. 11–48, here: p. 26.

the "modernisation" of Eastern Europe. The respective majority population in each of these new states celebrated this epochal change as liberation. But while the turning point of 1917 had eliminated the multiethnic empires, the problems of many East European peoples were exacerbated.[45] The minorities within the borders of the new nation-states became the target of homogenising pressure from the new capitals.[46]

As a result of this "modernisation", there emerged a Europe full of "irredentisms, revanchisms, and an overwhelming desire [to get rid of] the disruptive, the non-belonging, the Other".[47] This new, seemingly modern Eastern Europe defied Dubnov's understanding of the pioneering transnational and transterritorial historical reality of the Russian-Jewish Diaspora. Nonetheless, Diaspora Nationalism experienced a kind of revival during the interwar period. In Lithuania, Dubnov's ideas on Jewish autonomy were realised by means of a complex system of legally recognised kehillot (communities) during the first years of independence.[48]

From these communities, a Jewish national assembly was elected. Together with the minister for Jewish affairs, this assembly, which existed from 1920 to 1924, was to administer the institutions of autonomy. The rights and duties of the communities were recorded in the kehillot-statute of 1920. The communities, which elected their authorities on the basis of democratic principles, were to collect taxes and plan a budget for religious affairs, welfare, social aid, and educational institutions. Every Lithuanian who was registered as a Jew in his personal documents was automatically a member of a Jewish community. However, as early as 1923, the heyday of Jewish autonomy in Lithuania was already coming to an end.[49]

In reconstituted Poland, the political authorities wasted no time in turning on their non-Polish minorities.[50] Here, individual personalities and influential Jewish parties contributed to the spread of Dubnov's concepts of autonomy. As had been the case within the Russian party landscape after 1905, it was mainly the Zionists and Bundists from Poland's formerly Russian lands who seized the political initiative among the country's Jews. Both had integrated Dubnovian concepts of autonomy into their programmes before the First World War. Among the Jewish Social Democrats from the Bund, Dubnov's ideas remained secondary to class antagonism, although the Bund had a clear Yiddishist orientation and represented national-cultural autonomy for the

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[45] Dittmar Dahlmann, Anke Hilbrenner, eds., *Zwischen großen Erwartungen und bösem Erwachen. Juden, Politik und Antisemitismus in Ost- und Südosteuropa 1918–1945* (Paderborn 2007).

[46] Karl Schlögel, "Planet der Nomaden", *Die Mitte liegt ostwärts* (München, Wien 2002), pp. 65–123, here, p. 86; Dan Diner, *Das Jahrhundert verstehen. Eine universalhistorische Deutung* (München 1999), pp. 79–135.

[47] Schlögel, *Planet*, p. 86.

[48] Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life*, p. 143.

[49] Eglė Bendikaitė, "Zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit: Die Politik gegenüber den Juden in Litauen in der Zwischenkriegszeit", in Dahlmann, Hilbrenner, *Zwischen großen Erwartungen*, pp. 101–120, pp. 105–106; Matthias Niendorf, "Stationen jüdischen Lebens in Litauen", in Engel-Braunschmidt, *Jüdische Welten*, pp. 101–126, pp. 118–119; Šarūnas Liekis, *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925*, (Vilnius 2003). See the articles by Bendikaite and Steffen in this volume, pp. 171–178, and pp. 199–217.

[50] Albert S. Kotowski, "'Polska dla Polaków': Über den Antisemitismus in Polen in der Zwischenkriegszeit", in Dahlmann, *Zwischen großen Erwartungen*, pp. 77–100; Klaus-Peter Friedrich, "Von der żydokomuna zur Lösung einer 'jüdischen Frage' durch Auswanderung: Die politische Instrumentalisierung ethnischer und kultureller Differenzen in Polen 1917/1918 bis 1939", in ibid., pp. 53–76, here: p. 59.

Jewish working class.[51] Among the Zionists, Diaspora Nationalism was still called "work in the present".[52]

In addition, the *Jewish People's Party*, known as the *Folkisten*, was active in Poland. This party was founded in 1917 as an offshoot of Dubnov's *Folkspartey*. The *Folkisten* were seen as a petit-bourgeois party that appealed mainly to artisans and merchants. Especially in the first years after the war, the *Folkisten* were considered a significant political force. While they had fewer followers than their competitors, they had numerous writers, journalists, and intellectuals among their ranks. They consequently controlled a number of newspapers whose readership far exceeded their actual following. However, their success was limited to Vilnius and Warsaw. Furthermore, the party split in 1926 due to differences between local politicians, namely Noach Pryłucki, a publisher in Warsaw, and Tsemach Szabad, a doctor in Vilnius. As a result, the *Folkisten* in Vilnius leaned more strongly towards the Zionists.

Within Poland's political spectrum, the role of the *Jewish People's Party* remained marginal. The reasons for this seem to lie in part in the lack of unity and in part in the presence of Diaspora Nationalism's basic principles in the programmes of its more successful competitors.[53]

A *Jewish People's Party* also existed in the Weimar Republic. However, this party represented a highly diluted form of Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism. The different programmatic contents of the various people's parties had to do with the different self-perceptions of the Jews in Eastern and Western Europe. German and East European Jews did in fact differ radically from one another with regard to their feeling of belonging to Jewry, on the one hand, and to the country they inhabited, on the other.

Most East European Jews understood themselves as a part of the Jewish nation, which was a minority in the countries of Eastern Europe. By virtue of their nationality, they felt connected to the Jewish people within the worldwide Diaspora. Since Emancipation, the German Jews had considered themselves to be "citizens of the Jewish faith". Their loyalty extended to their German homeland; they felt themselves to be part of the German nation and not the Jewish nation, which was spread around the world. To them, Judaism was a confession. They sought to solve their problems as Germans, not as a part of an all-Jewish collective, and they answered German-Jewish questions exclusively for themselves as citizens of Germany. Their answers frequently had no validity for "foreign" Jews, with whom they may have shared a common faith, but not a common ethnicity.[54] Nonetheless, the *Jewish People's Party* in Germany picked up on East European ideas and was therefore especially attractive to Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.[55]

With the triumphal procession of the principle of the nation-state in East Central and Eastern Europe, the concepts of identity of West European Jews appeared to prevail.

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[51] Gertrud Pickhan, *'Gegen den Strom'. Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund 'Bund' in Polen 1918–1939* (Stuttgart and Munich 2001); Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939* (Berlin et al. 1983), pp. 280–284.

[52] Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland. The Formative Years, 1915–1926* (New Haven and London 1981), especially p. 24, 33.

[53] Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life*, p. 143; Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland*, pp. 287–288.

[54] Yfaat Weiss, *Deutsche und polnische Juden vor dem Holocaust. Jüdische Identität zwischen Staatsbürgerschaft und Ethnizität 1933–1940* (München 2000), pp. 125–134.

[55] Michael Brenner, "Die Jüdische Volkspartei – National-Jewish Communal Politics during the Weimar Republic", *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 35 (1990), pp. 219–243.

This and the Sovietisation of the tsarist empire stripped Simon Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism of its future potential. But Dubnov adapted his vision of autonomous Jewish life in the Diaspora to the conditions of an interwar Europe based on nation-states. He modified his transterritorial and supranational autonomy programme. The all-Russian Jewish national assembly was replaced by the League of Nations, which was to guarantee the rights of national minorities. He invoked the Versailles Minority Treaties, in which the ethnic minorities were recognised and the League of Nations guaranteed their protection. In addition, he demanded the creation of an international Jewish organisation, which would appear for this body to defend the rights of the Jews in the various nation states. At a 1927 Zurich conference on minority rights, he was able to introduce his modern Jewish Diaspora Nationalism to an international audience.[56]

Diaspora Nationalism: An Anachronism?

However, when confronted with the gathering crisis of the new East Central and Southeastern European states, the League of Nations remained ineffective as an instrument of the new Europe. The newly established nation-states turned on their structural heterogeneity, which had remained a feature of East Central and Southeastern Europe. The Jews, who represented this historically developed, structurally rooted diversity in a special way through their transterritorial and transnationally formed lifeworlds, were the first victims of these homogenising efforts. The ethno-national, religious heterogeneity of Eastern and Southeastern Europe ran counter to the allegedly modernising potential of the nation-state. Nonetheless, the principle of the nation-state was implemented. Thus the great seminal catastrophe of the First World War led to a crisis-ridden interwar period, which reached its climax in the genocides of the war years carried out or incited by the Germans during the Second World War.

Ultimately, the Second World War brought a violent end to the ethno-national and religious heterogeneity of large parts of Eastern Central and Southeastern Europe. The prewar fiction of ethnically homogenous nation-states thus became postwar reality.[57]

The annihilation of European Jews by National-Socialist Germany claimed most of its victims from among Eastern Europe's Jews. Precisely the East European Diaspora, which had been of such fundamental importance for the political ideology of Diaspora Nationalism, was annihilated in the Shoah. Simon Dubnov, the spiritual father of Diaspora Nationalism, was himself murdered in the Riga ghetto in December 1941.[58]

The Shoah destroyed the lives and lifeworlds of the East European Jews. The survivors immigrated to the United States, Latin America, and Israel, where they encountered new possibilities for identity. Jewish difference and otherness, as implied by Diaspora Nationalism, were considered dangerous and undesirable in light of what these new immigrants had experienced and survived. Not only was the political significance of Diaspora Nationalism marginalised after 1945, so was its treatment in historiography.

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[56] "Die Jüdische Rechtsschutzkonferenz", *Jüdische Rundschau*, 23 August 1927; "Professor S. Dubnow über die Aufgabe der Konferenz zum Schutze der jüdischern Rechte, Berlin, 5. Juli 1927*", Jüdische Telegraphen Agentur*, (6 July 1927).

[57] Anke Hilbrenner, Dittmar Dahlmann, "Einführung: Antisemitismus und Ausgrenzung der Juden in Ost- und Südosteuropa in der Zwischenkriegszeit", in idem, eds., *Zwischen großen Erwartungen*, pp. 7–11.

[58] Anke Hilbrenner, Nicolas Berg, "Der Tod Simon Dubnows in Riga 1941. Quellen, Zeugnisse, Erinnerungen", *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts*, 1 (2002), pp. 457–472.

Modern nationalism studies makes no mention of Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism. The paradigm of "state" seems to be too central to 19th- and 20th-century national thought for an alternative concept to be considered. What is distinct about Dubnov's understanding of history is that he did not tailor his national history to ideas of a clearly delimited, homogeneous nation-state, but to the reality of the Jewish people as a plural transterritorial nation in the Diaspora. The development of history as a modern academic discipline in the 19th century paralleled – by no coincidence – the rise of the concepts of "nation" and "state", in which the idea of developed civilisation was expressed.

The absence of homogenous nation-states appeared to contemporaries and historians of the 20th century as characteristic of a typical feature of East European backwardness. Making this "backwardness" a point of departure for a modern vision of self-determination for the Jewish people was difficult to convey not only within the discipline of general history, but also within Jewish Studies. Dubnov's Diaspora Nationalism as the essence of the eastern Jewish experience attracted scant attention within Jewish historiography as well.[59]

This disregard of East European Jewries within Jewish historiography may well have to do with the fact that Jewish history had traditionally understood itself to be primarily a history of ideas. The rise of modern Jewish historiography is inextricably linked to the "science of Judaism" (Wissenschaft des Judentums), which developed in Berlin in the first half of the 19th century. Ismar Schorsch considers the translation of Judaism into rational terms to be a process of "westernisation": The "science of Judaism" allowed the concepts, ideas, and values of an ancient oriental religion to be translated into "western" categories. This translation led to a different understanding of Judaism and new possibilities of Jewish self-perception in modernity. The "westernisation" of Ashkenazi Judaism through the "science of Judaism" was, according to Schorsch, the essence of the intellectual Jewish renaissance in the 19th century.[60] In this "westernisation" process, the East European Jewish experience was almost inevitably ignored.

This optimistic assessment of western modernity also had an impact on the famous Jewish social historian Salo Baron, who, like Dubnov before him, also championed a positive appraisal of the Diaspora. Baron, however, had no sympathy for Dubnov's call for the right of difference. For Baron, the Jews were part of a modern society; their self-evident right was to insist on equality and not on their otherness.[61] While Dubnov claimed the right of difference for the East European Jews, Baron, only a few years later, understood American Jews to be a part of the American people. Baron influenced subsequent generations of historians. So it hardly comes as a surprise that one of his students, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, mentions Dubnov only in passing in his own work on modern Jewish historiography.[62]

That is to say, although Dubnov had developed a Jewish view of history that legitimised the Diaspora in historical terms, he remained marginalised in the historiograph-

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[59] For exceptions to this rule, see: Robert M. Seltzer, Simon Dubnow: *A Critical Biography of his Early Years* (Ann Arbor 1973); Avraham Greenbaum, Kristi Groberg, eds., *A Missionary for History. Essays in Honor of Simon Dubnov* (Minneapolis 1998); bibliography in Hilbrenner, *Diaspora-Nationalismus*, pp. 11–35.

[60] Ismar Schorsch, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness in Modern Judaism", *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 28 (1983), pp. 413–437, especially p. 413.

[61] Salo W. Baron, "The Modern Age", in Leo W. Schwarz, ed., *Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People* (New York 1956), pp. 315–483, pp. 358–359.

[62] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Erinnere Dich! Jüdische Geschichte und jüdisches Gedächtnis* (Berlin 1996).

ical discourse that took place in the defence of the Diaspora. It seems less extraordi-
nary that the Zionist historiography of the "Jerusalem school" would want to have
nothing to do with Dubnov's concept of Diaspora Nationalism. From the Zionists'
point of view, the inescapable conclusion of Dubnov's concept of nation would be to
recognise the need for a nation-state. However, Dubnov never did so.[63]

Only after the division of Europe had come to an end in 1990 did it become clear that
the historical reality of Eastern Europe stood in opposition to the western tradition of
homogenous nation-states and their self-perception as the Latin occident. The East
European heritage includes heterogeneity and diversity, cultures of Diasporas, migra-
tion and minorities that insist on their rights to difference. The nation-state, as a ho-
mogenising force with its offers of assimilation, cannot do them justice.

Alternative political concepts will have to meet these challenges. The Jewish experi-
ence can offer a novel approach to the problems of the present. However, it also
heightens our understanding of the European past. Dan Diner has rightly pointed out
that Jewish history has a pioneering role within historiography. It is precisely the
transnational and transterritorial character of Jewish history that does justice to East-
ern Europe's history of heterogeneity and difference.[64]

By his "sociological view" of history, Dubnov does not understand history as a narrative
of state action or great personalities. He puts the weak and powerless at the centre of his
work. His narrative emphasises that those belonging to minority groups have the right to
be different and to live differently. Their needs are not subordinate to the supposedly
overriding interests of the majority. Surprisingly, this approach does justice to the mod-
ern individual and his diverse identities, which can change depending on the situation.

Dubnov's approach corresponds to the heterogeneous system of communities and
regions of Eastern Europe. The Cold War long obscured our view of these complex
societies. It was only with the break up of the multinational states of the Soviet Union
and Yugoslavia that ethno-political conflicts flared up once again and revealed their
ethnic, religious, and social dimensions. Crisis management based on the idea of a
modern, homogenous nation-state will fail. In particular, such concepts cannot be
applied to the former border regions of the multiethnic empires, such as the Caucasus
and Southeastern Europe with their own "imperial populations", which in some ways
recall the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. Against this backdrop, it is not
surprising that Diaspora Nationalism has become the subject of newfound interest.

Translated from German by Jonathan Lutes and Luisa Zielinski

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[63] Uri Ram, "Narration, Erziehung und die Erfindung des jüdischen Nationalismus", *Öster-
reichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 2 (1994), pp. 151–177.

[64] Dan Diner, "Zweierlei Emanzipation. Westliche Juden und Ostjuden gegenübergesellt", in
Gedächtniszeiten. Über jüdische und andere Geschichten (München 2003), pp. 246–262.