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Socialist Mass Politics through Sport: The Bund's Morgnshtern in Poland, 1926-1939

by Roni Gechtman

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The Morgnshtern, “Morning Star” in Yiddish, also known by its Polish name *Jutrznia*, was the sport arm of the General Jewish Workers’ League (the Bund) in the newly reconstituted Republic of Poland between the two World Wars.¹ The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the history of this hitherto forgotten Jewish sport organization that overshadowed other Jewish sport associations in Poland and elsewhere. The Morgnshtern attempted to put into practice socialist principles in the area of sport, in order to educate and mobilize the mass of young Polish-Jewish workers. Moreover, it participated in a wider international movement of working-class sport that thrived in the interwar period. This article presents the ideological principles that guided the Morgnshtern and analyzes the tensions between these principles and their realization in actual sport activities. The fact that so little is known about the Morgnshtern, it being relegated to one of the obscure episodes of Jewish history, is equally the consequence of the Holocaust that annihilated almost totally Poland’s three million Jews and of wider changes in the Jewish communities and the world’s political landscape after the Second World War. The Morgnshtern stood, after all, on the wrong side of history—being Marxist-Socialist yet staunchly Jewish. Thus neither the Zionists nor the Bolsheviks cared about it or had any use for it.

Founded more than one hundred years ago, in October 1897, the Bund began as an underground Marxist revolutionary party in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. Its members were mainly Jewish workers, organized in illegal trade unions, and young intellectuals. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the Bund was eliminated in

the Soviet Union, but it continued to function in the newly born Polish Republic. Immediately before the Second World War, the Bund won majority representation among Jewish voters in many municipal councils and in the communal (*kehile*) elections. By some estimates, it received the political support of about a third of Polish Jewry in general and an absolute majority of the Jewish vote in most of the big cities (including Warsaw and Lodz).

Although Polish Jewish workers did not experience any dramatic improvement in their material conditions in the period between the two world wars, the new political reality in Poland—a relative liberalization of the society—demanded new political strategies. While a full parliamentary system lasted only from the creation of the Polish Republic until May 1926, civil rights were granted during the whole interwar period. Despite certain restrictions and even sporadic hostile actions on the part of the authorities, the Bund was a legal party during the whole period of 1919 to 1939. Bundist trade unions could organize freely, and the party press was legal, though censored. This represented a completely new situation for the Bund, since these rights had not been in place in Czarist Russia, where the Bund had been active before the Great War, except in the short period 1905 to 1907. In the new Polish political order, and in order to achieve its political goals, the Bund was faced with the need to transform itself from a small revolutionary and conspiratorial party to a mass party. These changes were consciously undertaken, and it is possible to find many statements indicating this intention. For example, in March 1933, the newsletter of the Bundist youth movement in Poland stated that, 50 years after Karl Marx's death, the main difference between Marx's own time and the present was that the proletariat had become a strong and self-



Arbeter sportler, year 2, n. 8, Warsaw, March 5, 1930, front page: announcement of the Second Workers' Olympic Games, to be held a year later in Vienna. "Khaver [comrade], get ready for the 1931 Vienna Olympic Games! We must show the strength of our movement there." Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

conscious force. Inevitably, its class organizations encompassed every aspect of the worker's life, including socialist parties, trade unions, working youth movements and proletarian cultural institutions. This new strategy of "mass politics" included the organization of a whole series of institutions, publications, and events oriented to attracting and organizing young cadres and rank-and-file members. The socialist sport movement was part of this scheme. In this way, the sport organization Morgnshtern was established in the context of a wider Bundist strategy.²

What the Bund did not change was its fundamental political aim, to overthrow the capitalist system, of which the Polish regime was just another manifestation. Moreover, the Bund maintained its national program, which demanded cultural-national autonomy for the Jews in Poland, seeking in any future arrangement for the Jews an improvement of conditions in the place where they already lived. The potential realization of the Bund's national program would require a radical transformation of Poland into the state of all the national groups inhabiting the Polish territory rather than the nation-state of the ethnic Poles only. Its two central political goals automatically placed the Bund in opposition to the existing Polish regime.

Only in the late 1920s, a decade after the end of the Great War, did the Polish Bund complete its organizational transformation from a conspiratorial into a mass party—the organizational core of a whole Jewish socialist Yiddish subculture. By the 1930s, it was able to translate its day-to-day activities into an effective political force.³ Through its cultural and recreational activities, the Bund was in a position to recruit thousands of new members, especially young people, into its network of workers' clubs and organizations. These changes in party strategy implied a complete reorganization of its activity, and even of its very identity. If in the last period of the Czarist regime the main concerns had been problems such as persecution by the Czarist *Okbrana* (secret police) and communication between the leadership in exile or prison and the rank-and-file, by the late 1930s completely different concerns occupied the Polish party. Among them was the concern of canvassing enough money to pay the high rent for the buildings where its educational, cultural, and recreational activities took place.

The "Bundist subculture" comprised first of all the Jewish workers' unions (that predated the Bund's existence), which were engaged in struggles to improve labor conditions. In addition, the Bund sponsored a wide range of cultural and recreational activities: publication of a variety of newspapers and other periodicals, a network of Yiddish primary schools; workers' cultural clubs and libraries, children and youth movements, vocational theaters, and so on.⁴ The Bundist subculture was exceptional in being culturally—and proudly—Jewish (Yiddishist) and yet at the same time secular (e.g., many of the activities took place on Saturdays and other Jewish holidays). Thus, my argument is that the successful establishment of this well-developed network of trade unionist, cultural, and recreational institutions and activities constituted one of the main reasons behind the Bund's growth and electoral accomplishments in the late 1930s.⁵

The Morgnshtern was founded in 1926 as the Jewish section of the Socialist Workers' Sport International (SWSI). Although at first the Morgnshtern's objectives were not altogether clear and it did not yet have a solid organizational structure, it nevertheless achieved immediate popularity. Little documentation survives from the period before the first All-Polish Congress (*land tsuzamenfor*) in 1929. By the mid-1930s, the Morgnshtern had 5,000 members and more than 170 locals in cities and towns around Poland, being the largest (even though not the oldest) Jewish sport organization in Poland.⁶ Its Warsaw section alone boasted 1,855 members in February 1938.⁷ In particular, the Morgnshtern tried to attract young Jewish workers and employees through the Bundist trade unions.⁸

The existing scholarly literature almost completely ignores the Morgnshtern. This is not surprising, since as a possible object of historical study the Morgnshtern lies at the intersection of several neglected areas in historiography. First, until recently, very little academic work was done on the Polish Bund. Within Jewish studies, the role of the Bund was largely downplayed by Zionist historians, and, for reasons which I will not discuss here, non-Zionist historians gave much more attention to the Bund in the Russian Empire than to the Bund in independent Poland. Second, within Polish and east European history there is little room for the Bund, since its ideology challenged the very notion of the Polish nation-state as it was conceived in the interwar period.⁹ Third, the history of the labor movements focuses primarily on political or unionist struggle. While in the last few decades, with the emergence of labor history, more attention is being given



Hela Ryftin's gymnastics instructor certificate, issued by the Morgnshtern, 1932. Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

to the everyday life and culture of workers, there are still many areas about which more scholarly research needs to be done, especially in the case of eastern Europe. In the published works on the Bund, both scholarly and partisan, what predominates is the emphasis on politics to the detriment of the party's cultural and recreational activities. Indeed, it is safe to conclude that although an almost mandatory lip service was given to the importance of sport in the class struggle, on the whole no substantial work has been devoted to the subject of the Morgnshtern. Reflecting the prevalent Jewish attitudes toward sport, most of the existing studies of the Polish Bund mention it only in passing.¹⁰ Finally, there is a large and growing literature on the relation between sport and politics. However, most of this literature addresses the role of sport in the nation-state, its propagandistic function, and its use as a means of national integration, and how government activities are oriented to the control and promotion of sport. The area of workers' sport has so far not been adequately studied.¹¹

This article analyzes the activities of the Morgnshtern, as well as its conception of sport and of the relation between sport and working-class politics. The Morgnshtern was one of the largest Bundist institutions in Poland, representative of the Bundist subculture during the interwar era and a clear example of its new strategy of mass politics. I will show how the Morgnshtern reflected and put into practice the key Bundist principles in the specific area of sport: socialism, working-class consciousness, internationalism, Yiddish culture, and the rejection of militarism and nationalist-chauvinism, both Polish and Jewish. The Morgnshtern did not merely organize sport but did it according to the Bund's socialist principles. In the following sections I will analyze first the theory of workers' sport, then the politics, and finally the actual practice of sports in the Morgnshtern.

According to James Riordan, the goal of workers' sport was

[to] give working people the chance to take part in healthy recreation and to do so in a socialist atmosphere. Worker sport differed from bourgeois sport because the former was open to all workers, women as well as men and black as well as white. It provided a socialist alternative to bourgeois competitive sport, to commercialism, chauvinism, and the obsession with stars and records. It replaced capitalist with socialist values and set the foundation for a true working-class culture. Worker sport, therefore, initially emphasised less-competitive physical activities, such as gymnastics, acrobatics, tumbling, pyramid forming, mass artistic displays, hiking, cycling, and swimming.¹²

Socialist or workers' sport was therefore more than the sport practiced by the workers, for it also saw itself as presenting a challenge to bourgeois sports, to bourgeois values, and ultimately to the bourgeois order. The theory of workers' sport that guided the Morgnshtern's sport activity was formulated by Julius Deutsch, chairman of the SWSI. Deutsch was a prominent Austrian socialist leader (a former Armed Forces Minister), dedicated since the mid-1920s to Austrian workers' sport, and later to the international workers' sport movement.¹³ In 1928, Deutsch published a short book, *Sport and Politics*, which was a kind of manifesto of workers' sport and

was soon translated into most of the European languages.¹⁴ This booklet (78 pages in the Yiddish version) became the authoritative source for the Morgnshtern and the Bund concerning everything related to sport.

Deutsch's political outlook was a typical product of central European Marxism, midway between orthodox-Kautskian Marxism and Austro-Marxism. In the first pages of the booklet, Deutsch set out the analytical bases for his study of sports. In typical fashion, the title of the first chapter is "Class Contradictions and Class Struggle" (Deutsch, pp. 5-9), and in it are found quotations from the following authorities, in this order: Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Otto Bauer, and Max Adler. Interwoven with the quotations, Deutsch's argument criticized the "dreams and fantasies" of the utopian socialists Fourier, Owen, Saint Simon, and "their students and mystifiers" who did not promote any substantial action. As a Marxist Deutsch believed that, together with unprecedented wealth, capitalism produces also the "angel of death" (*malekh hamoves* in the Yiddish translation) of the present mode of production: the mass of impoverished proletarians who would eventually be the "*kabronim*" (gravediggers) of capitalism (p. 6). Never before had the class struggle been so intense and ruthless as in the times of capitalism.

Still, and in spite of these predictable moves, Deutsch was neither deterministic nor overly optimistic. He believed that the socialists must organize the masses of workers, especially the proletarian youth, and prepare them for the class struggle through education, since "ignorant, unwise and obscurantist masses . . . will be neither revolutionary fighters nor socialist builders" (p. 12). The socialists must provide the masses with the intellectual and ethical tools that will allow them to be historical agents. The working class, and, he insisted, especially the proletarian youth, must master the knowledge that will empower them to replace



Men's and women's basketball teams. Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

the bourgeois order. For Deutsch, there was no greater error than to believe that the proletariat would bring the class struggle to a victorious end regardless of its moral and cultural situation. Nor was it right to expect that the working class would undergo moral and cultural changes only after socialism has triumphed over capitalism. Thus, according to Deutsch, the first task of the socialist movement is to free the proletariat from the prison of ignorance in which the bourgeois order maintains it, and to counteract the influence of bourgeois values transmitted through the media, the compulsory school system, the arts, and so on (pp. 13,16).

Deutsch contended that the importance of physical education was becoming increasingly clear, as was the decisive influence youth organizations and sport groups have over young people. For that reason the bourgeoisie was making great investments in an effort to influence youth by these means. Sports, according to Deutsch, played a leading role in bourgeois propaganda. While in the past only a few amateurs participated in sport, at the time sport had become an activity for the masses. Deutsch noted that in the present millions of workers practiced sport activities during their leisure time; however, the political representatives of the working class had not yet grasped the relation between sports and the class struggle (pp. 16-17). On the other hand, the bourgeoisie were perfectly aware of the advantages they could derive from sports in their own attempts to secure their position in the class struggle. Everywhere sports were organized to fit bourgeois interests. In schools, sports were used to educate youngsters in the spirit of capitalism and nationalism, and they continued to be a major influence after school age as well. When sports were practiced on a mass scale, the bourgeoisie tried to appropriate and control this practice (p. 19).

In this view, sport is a healthy activity for both men and women. Sport increases the physical as well as spiritual forces of the human being as a whole. The beneficial effects of sport activities on a mass scale would have a significant impact on the ongoing class struggle in society. Its practice is particularly important for workers, since it can help free their bodies from their oppressive and monotonous daily physical work:

For every person who undergoes oppression in the current economic system, sport represents a bit of redemption [*a shtik oisleizung*]. When the worker or employee casts off the chains of the monotonous and boring work [*eintonik nudner arbei*] which oppresses his body and steps into the sports-field, the human being inside him—that essential person that the capitalist system tried to destroy—awakes. When the woman throws away her rigid fashionable clothes in order to experience joyful movements in a light sport outfit, then she enhances her beauty and pours out the vitality which she earlier had to stifle under the burden of foolish so-called modesty [or chastity, *narisher kloyershter tsnies*]. (p. 18)

Class contradictions were evident in sport just as in the rest of society. In fact, Deutsch stressed that bourgeois sport reflected bourgeois culture and bourgeois ethical principles. Under bourgeois hegemony, sports were becoming increasingly competitive, individualistic, and professionalized, and winners were

rewarded with exaggeratedly high prizes. Indignant, Deutsch could not understand how a boxer in the United States could be earning a million dollars.¹⁵ Most of Deutsch's criticism is directed to the "whole market-driven ooh-haa fuss" (*buhadiker yerid-tararam*) around individual "rekordistn" (pp. 22-24). Bourgeois notions of quality and return in sport paralleled those of the stock market. "The record-fanaticism of bourgeois sports," says Deutsch,

is by no means fortuitous. Bourgeois sport is individualistic. This is its deepest essence. Bourgeois sport prefers the record of the individual, while mass sport stresses collective achievements. Bourgeois sport cannot be different. It is just the athletic expression of the general bourgeois mode of life, as everything else in the capitalist order. The more the stronger subdues the weaker, the more honor, glory and wealth he receives. It is exactly the same in capitalist life as in bourgeois sports. Everyone struggles for oneself alone and against all others. Bourgeois sport educates the character of each individual to fit the essence of capitalist life, and first and foremost it develops an unlimited selfishness. In the present economic order it is possible to buy everything with money. So why not buy athletes too? From record-gambling to professional games there is only one step. Just as the circus acrobat receives remuneration, so do athletes similarly able to perform tricks for the crowd [*kuntsn*]. (pp. 24-25)

Similar ideas were often echoed in the *Arbeter Sportler*, the Morgnshtern newspaper in 1929 and 1930. Record breaking in sport was linked to the wider enthusiasm of the bourgeois press with record breaking in general. For instance, the press in the United States applauded someone whose claim to fame was having stayed 61 hours under water. While this might be an incredible feat, remarked B. Kowarska in the *Arbeter sportler*, it was certainly not healthy. She concluded that, regardless of people's excitement over this kind of news, this was not sport, just like hunger striking or beer drinking were not sports.¹⁶ In fact, when records were set in workers' competitions they were registered, but record breaking was not pursued as an aim in itself. For instance, in an athletics event in Nuremberg in 1929 which counted with the participation of 3,000 male and female athletes from Germany and 10 other countries, no fewer than 16 records were broken. "Nuremberg once again proved," celebrated the Morgnshtern bulletin, "that there is no contradiction between mass sport and high performance."¹⁷

Deutsch did not condemn professional athletes as individuals; on the contrary, he believed that they might be honest people earning their living in an honorable way, like artists or musicians. But he asserted that, from an educational point of view, their performance was meaningless. The professional athlete could impress the audience but not act as their role model, since his or her achievements resulted from exceptional physical characteristics and specialized training. In any case, this special training was not desirable for everybody, because most professional athletes developed some muscles at the expense of others (p. 25).

Bourgeois newspapers often declared that sport must be free from any political influence, yet, according to Deutsch, this was plain hypocrisy. For him, sports were inextricable from politics and from the class struggle. In fact, what was commonly referred to as "neutral sport" was in matter of fact bourgeois sport.

“It is not true that bourgeois sport is neutral,” claimed Deutsch, since bourgeois sport is “an element in that social order and those cultural notions, which is the historical task and moral obligation of the working class to destroy.”¹⁸ Moreover, bourgeois sport federations were at the time becoming increasingly nationalist and combative, and Deutsch pointed out that in many countries sport clubs were approaching fascist parties and even creating fascist militias. Religious organizations had also discovered the impact of sport and formed their own clubs. Bourgeois, nationalist, fascist, and religious sport organizations were successfully attracting “naïve” workers. In Germany, for example, the *Turnen* movement (gymnastics societies), which began in the early 1840s, was the precursor of and model for popular sports in Europe and North America. During the 1848 Revolution, members of the *Turnen* organizations around Germany founded guerrilla groups that fought in favor of democracy and republicanism. In the statutes of the German *Democratic Turnerbund*, it was stated that giving spiritual and physical education to all Germans would ensure the liberation of the fatherland and its unification as a free, democratic, and republican state. This spirit lasted into the 1860s and 1870s, but ended in the 1880s, when, in Deutsch’s words, “the bourgeoisie made peace with the nobility.” From this point on the *Turnen* movement gradually became reactionary. In 1892, the *Democratic Turnerbund* purged all members suspected of being social-democrats. As a consequence, a workers’ sport organization was founded, the *Arbeiter Turner-Bund* (renamed *Arbeiter Turn- und Sportbund* after World War I), with which the *Democratic Turnerbund* maintained a fierce struggle. This workers’ sport federation became the model for many others in other countries. After the Great War, the *Democratic Turnerbund* became aggressively nationalist,



“A eurhythmics class with instructor V. Schpaznkop.” Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

and during the Kapp-Putsch (in 1920) their sympathies lay with the military rebels against the newly born democratic regime.¹⁹

All the bourgeois sports organizations, including those who claimed to be neutral, had in common their nationalist spirit, in Deutsch's view. They tried to promote a false sense of harmony between labor and capital within the nation-state. Thus, they blamed the organized working class for disrupting the "national unity." However, one of the central principles of socialism was international working-class solidarity, which contradicted any nationalist propaganda. In addition, Deutsch noticed a clear contradiction between socialist peace politics and the capitalist imperialism of the European powers. In many countries, including some whose sport organizations were relatively less nationalist, like England and France, bourgeois sport organizations were preparing youngsters for the military service. In contrast, the socialist movement had to seek to protect the proletarian youth from the influence of the nationalist propaganda spread by bourgeois sport organizations. This was a central point in the Morgnshtern's criticism of the militarization and increasingly nationalist spirit of bourgeois sports in Poland, both in ethnic-Polish and in Jewish organizations. This question was discussed, for example, in the first Congress of the Morgnshtern in 1929.

From this analysis of the situation, Deutsch concluded that it was imperative to create separate proletarian sport organizations, which would address the physical education of the workers and develop sport activities under completely different principles and atmosphere. Unlike bourgeois sport, which reflects the values of capitalism and promotes individualism, competitiveness, nationalism, and economic profit, workers' sport must be "collectivist," and seek improvements in performance by means other than competition. Workers' sport should not focus exclusively on the training of young athletes who show the potential to be future champions, nor should it make record breaking its main goal. Instead of specialization and the development of certain muscles at the expense of the others, workers' sport must have as its ideal the harmonious development and strengthening of the whole body. Workers' sport should be practiced in a communal and friendly atmosphere and reject any manifestation of violence or brutality. Finally, the main objective of proletarian sport was to mobilize the masses. "For the socialists," Deutsch wrote, quoting from the debates in the Congress of SWSI, "sport is not an aim in itself, but it serves the aim of creating a socialist culture. It is necessary to inculcate in the masses the idea that it is not the individual but the whole society that creates and leads culture."²⁰

The independent organization of workers for sport activities, mainly through their union organizations, had intensified after the First World War, when workers' sport became a mass movement throughout Europe. In response, some factory owners began to organize sport clubs for the workers and employees in their premises. These clubs obviously claimed to be politically "neutral," unlike the workers' clubs. However, Deutsch argued that "in reality, these [clubs] were instruments oriented to influencing and leading workers and employees." They were economically dependent on the capitalists and factory owners, and often enjoyed better financial support and better sport facilities. In spite of this, factory-

based sport organizations were also granted state subsidies (from which workers' clubs were excluded for their "non-neutrality"). In parallel, the state itself also promoted sport organizations for state employees (e.g., for police officers, train workers, postal workers, etc.). By providing these controlled settings for sport participation of working-class athletes, capitalists and the state could effectively restrain the revolutionary potential intrinsic in independent workers' organizations. Deutsch maintained that, in this way, workers were systematically alienated from their own class interests.²¹

To sum up, according to the theory outlined by Deutsch and carried out by the workers' sport organizations of the SWSI—among them the Morgnshtern—workers must organize in separate organizations holding values opposed to those of hegemonic sport and bourgeois society. Workers should practice sport in a socialist way. In so doing, workers would also be preparing physically and mentally for the class struggle. In the following sections we will consider the Morgnshtern practice of socialist sport.

To understand the principles that guided the Morgnshtern as a Bundist and a sport organization, it may be worth having a look at the flier distributed by the members of Morgnshtern during the May Day demonstrations in 1930. There, the Morgnshtern decried the worsening situation of the Polish working class, since material conditions had reached their lowest point since the Great War, and fascism was advancing in Poland as everywhere else in Europe. The Morgnshtern called workers to make this May Day a day of struggle, both as Bundists and as Jewish worker-athletes.

This day we must demonstrate together with the whole working class,
and together with the party of the Jewish proletariat, the Bund.
For our right to life, for work, for freedom!
Against unemployment, against fascism, against reaction, against
militarism, against national oppression!
For the national rights of the Jewish worker, for a free and secular Jewish
culture!
We, as worker-athletes, also present our specific demands:
Against militarism in sport!
For equal rights for workers' sport in general, and for Jewish workers'
sport in particular!²²

The Morgnshtern demanded that all its sections prepare for May Day, organizing meetings and rallies for the proletarian holiday [*iontef*] and making all necessary arrangements so that participation in the demonstrations held together with Jewish and Polish socialists would be massive and impressive. Socialist symbols, aesthetic, and rhetoric were always a feature of Morgnshtern activities: Red flags decorated the meetings and public events, and the newsletters and bulletins often contained drawings of workers and factories.²³

Along with socialism, other elements of the Bund's ideology, like its national program, were advanced by the Morgnshtern through its particular vision of sport practice. In the first Congress of the SWSI attended by the Morgnshtern (in

Prague, 1929), its delegates demanded a direct representation, separate from the Polish Workers' Sport Federation (ZRSS). The ZRSS—one of the four workers' sport federations established along ethnic lines that existed in Poland at the time—was the organization of ethnic-Polish workers and responded to the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Refusing to support the Morgnshtern's claim, the ZRSS demanded to be recognized as the only representative of Poland in the SWSI. The Morgnshtern argued that Jewish athletes, like the members of other minorities (Germans, Ukrainian, etc.), were discriminated against by the Polish workers' clubs. Moreover, the Morgnshtern considered that having a separate representation was not only a question of prestige, but a fundamental issue. According to Bundist principles, Jews should manage their own cultural affairs in Poland (eventually, in a "cultural-national autonomy"). While the attainment of this goal in Poland would require an entire transformation of the society, it was nonetheless imperative that this autonomy be granted in the institutions of the Socialist International in order to prevent national oppression within the socialist movement itself. In the end, the SWSI Congress accepted the separate ethnic representations, but imposed on the four ethnic federations of Poland the creation of a Workers' Olympic Committee (and later a *Kartell*) in which they would loosely cooperate.²⁴

The Morgnshtern distanced itself from the Polish ZRSS also with regards to their relations to the communist Red Sport International (RSI). In its newsletter, the Morgnshtern displayed a derisive attitude toward the RSI, but at the same time it believed that both international sport organizations should collaborate. In contrast, the ZRSS consistently opposed any collaboration with the Moscow-based International, and in 1937 it decided to boycott the Third Workers' Olympic



Warsaw Morgnshtern football team. Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

Games in Antwerp, in protest against the participation of Soviet athletes.²⁵ Despite these relatively minor disagreements, the Morgnshtern had a positive attitude toward Polish socialist organizations and constantly sought cooperation with them. The Morgnshtern press usually carried news from the Polish workers' sport movement besides the information about the different sections of the Morgnshtern itself.²⁶

As the Polish government became increasingly reactionary and anti-Semitic, the Morgnshtern found itself the target of state repression. Thirty-two sections of the Morgnshtern in different towns were closed by the administrative authorities in the years 1929 to 1934.²⁷ In 1937, the Polish government refused, without offering any explanation, to issue passports to the 300 athletes of the Morgnshtern delegation to the Third Workers' Olympic Games in Antwerp, thus frustrating years of preparation and materials investments in preparation for this event.²⁸ In April 1938, the Warsaw boxing federation excluded the Morgnshtern and its members, as a "punishment" because the 1937 annual report of the Warsaw section of the Morgnshtern was published only in Yiddish and not in Polish. While the Morgnshtern and the Bundist press regarded this as an act of anti-Semitism, violating the right of Jews to manage their affairs in their own language, the

following year's report included a summary in Polish.²⁹

As we have seen, most of the political dialogue in which the Morgnshtern was engaged was with other organizations related to the SWSI, and, more tensely, with the communist Red Sport International, which the Morgnshtern treated with more contempt than real hostility. In the Morgnshtern press (unlike in the general Bundist press), religious Jews were rarely mentioned. Though decidedly Jewish, the Morgnshtern was a completely secular institution. Many of the Morgnshtern activities were held on Saturdays—like most of the Bund's activities in general—which was understandable in an organization composed of workers with little leisure time during the week. As a secular organization, the Morgnshtern also took advantage of Jewish



Gymnastics. Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

religious holidays for programming sport events and tournaments, arousing the protests of the rest of the Jewish community. For example, in 1937 the Morgnshtern organized a tournament during *roshe shone*, the Jewish religious New Year, in which various sections from different cities and towns participated.³⁰

Bundists rejected Jewish nationalism like any other nationalism. Morgnshtern ignored, most of the time, the Zionist organizations, though sporadically attacking them aggressively with raw anti-Zionist rhetoric. For instance, the *Arbeter Sportler* claimed that Warsaw Maccabi was sponsored by the *shvartz-meyediker* (i.e., Black-Hundred) Zionist newspaper *Haint*. The Black Hundreds was a Russian nationalist and reactionary organization in turn-of-the-century Czarist Russia, characterized by its extreme anti-Semitism. The *Arbeter sportler* requested that the Vilna section of Maccabi (described as truly Yiddishist and thus not chauvinist) quit the Maccabi federation and join instead a truly Jewish and democratic (workers') federation.³¹ The Morgnshtern followed only Bundist ideology, seeing Zionism as a manifestation of bourgeois chauvinism. It was openly hostile not only toward Maccabi, but also toward Hapoel, the Zionist-socialist sport organization. The Morgnshtern criticized Hapoel's efforts to be part of both the SWSI and the Maccabi World Federation and its intention to participate in the Maccabi Games in Palestine in 1932.³² According to the Morgnshtern, this collaboration with bourgeois and nationalist sport contradicted the principles of SWSI. The Morgnshtern newspaper, the *Arbeter sportler*, called the members of Hapoel *koisl-maarovi-sotsialistn*, that is, 'Western-Wall socialists,' willing to reconvert to Judaism.³³ The Yiddish editor of Julius Deutsch's *Sport and Politics* "corrected" Deutsch's reference to the activities of the Hapoel in Palestine with an ironic remark "The facts provided by the author—that Hapoel also comprises



The cyclists group. Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

Arab members—are as accurate as the fact that Jewish trade-unions in Palestine struggle for, and together with, the Arab workers.”³⁴

The ironic tone was obvious to any Bundist reader who knew that the Histadrut, the Zionist workers’ federation, not only did not represent Arab workers but, on the contrary, actively tried to take jobs from Arab workers and give them to Jews. The relations between Zionist and Bundist athletes were openly hostile. During an event organized by the Morgnshtern in 1929, which coincided with a game in which the Maccabi football team confronted a Polish Workers’ club, the members of the Morgnshtern cheered the Polish club in what the Morgnshtern press described as a “spontaneous demonstration against Zionism and nationalism.”³⁵ Nine years later, in a Ping-Pong tournament, the Warsaw Hapoel team did not show up for its game against a Polish club named PZL, to preclude the Morgnshtern from achieving second place in the competition.³⁶

The biggest event in the Morgnshtern calendar was the *Turnfest*. This German term does not appear in Yiddish dictionaries, yet it was one of the most common in the Morgnshtern jargon. The *Turnfest* was rooted in German tradition. Famous *Turnfeste* were celebrated in Mainz in 1842, in Hanau in 1843, and every year up to 1848 in the German South West, “home of German and radical movements.” Later on this “institution” passed from the radical and democratic to the socialist sport movement.³⁷ For Deutsch, the proletarian *Turnfeste* was a cultural holiday, in which the harmonic movement of thousands of gymnasts represented in its fullest form the proletarian force, unity, and sense of solidarity.³⁸



The Morgnshtern athletic delegation to the Second Workers’ Olympic Games, Vienna 1931, marching by the Austrian Parliament. Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

The Morgnshtern-*Turnfeste* was very popular among Bundists in Poland. In Warsaw, they were celebrated since 1926, and every year they were held in a larger place. For example, the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the Morgnshtern on April 14, 1936 (a Friday night and the eve of the last day of Passover), were such a success that the whole program was performed once again two weeks later (this time, on the Saturday immediately before May Day) for the thousands of people who could not be present the first time. Two days before the first event, the tickets were sold out. A Finn gymnastics instructor, Olli Lehtinen, was hired especially for that event.³⁹ The Bundist press raved about the gymnastic quality shown in the event.⁴⁰ The Morgnshtern leaders enthusiastically concluded that by then the Morgnshtern was not only the biggest sport organization in all of Poland (and not just among the Polish Jews), but also the best one. The popularity of the Morgnshtern greatly rose at the time, paralleling the growth of the Bund in municipal and community elections. In the aftermath of the 1936 Tenth Anniversary *Turnfest* 600 new members joined the Warsaw Morgnshtern, an unprecedented number.⁴¹ From that year on, the Warsaw Morgnshtern programmed its annual *Turnfest* to be performed twice.⁴²

It is possible to find in the Bundist and Morgnshtern press many reports on *Turnfeste* held by every single Morgnshtern section throughout Poland. The largest were, naturally, those in Warsaw and Lodz. The program of the 1932 *Turnfest* of the Morgnshtern in Kutno gives us a sense of what these *Turnfeste* might have looked like. During the event, all the different gymnastic groups, from the youngest to the oldest and alternating groups of males and females, performed gymnastic exercises in various styles. The last groups to perform were the most proficient adult men—performing the same program presented by the Morgnshtern one year earlier in the Workers' Olympic Games in Vienna—and adult women, who performed a series of exercises to the rhythm of popular Jewish songs (*der rebe elimeilekh* and others). In the last part, all groups together performed a gymnastic piece called *der eibikere korbn* ("The Eternal Victim"), which represented "a symbolic image of the struggle between labor and capital."⁴³

Another highlight in the history of the Morgnshtern, as well as the entire SWSI, were the International Workers' Olympic Games. These massive events are today almost completely forgotten. Still, in the 1920s and 1930s their popularity matched that of the "bourgeois" or "official" Olympic Games (organized by the International Olympic Committee, or IOC). James Riordan claims that "[t]he dominant class controls how books and mass media portray (or ignore) sports, and, as a result, workers sport has been neglected as if it never existed."⁴⁴ The Second Workers' Olympiad took place in Vienna in 1931, counting with the participation of 100,000 worker-athletes from 26 countries. For comparison, in the IOC-organized Olympic Games in Los Angeles, in 1932, only 1,408 athletes participated. The Vienna Workers' Olympiad attracted 250,000 spectators, and it easily surpassed its rival, the IOC Olympic Games, not only in the number of competitors and spectators but also in the many cultural events it included.⁴⁵ Unlike the bourgeois Olympic Games, which encouraged competition along national lines, the Workers' Olympiad stressed workers' internationalism, solidarity

and peace. While IOC Olympic Games restricted entry on the grounds of sporting ability, the workers' games invited *all* athletes, encouraging mass participation. Many of the athletes in the IOC Games came from well-to-do and privileged families because of the combination of amateur rules and high performance. The IOC itself was dominated by the bourgeois and aristocrats. Some of the IOC leaders were against women's participation, accepted the superiority of whites over blacks, and eventually collaborated with the Nazi Germany. "By contrast, the Worker Olympics were explicitly against chauvinism, racism, sexism, and social exclusivity; they were truly amateur, organized for the edification and enjoyment of working women and men."⁴⁶

The Morgnshtern preparations for the Vienna Olympiad began no less than two years before the event, and its members were called to collaborate to alleviate the heavy financial burden this signified by giving 10 groszy each month.⁴⁷ The Morgnshtern sent 300 worker-athletes, who proudly marched along the avenues of "Red Vienna" displaying their Yiddish banners. An even more monumental Workers' Olympiad was planned for Barcelona in 1936, in opposition to the Nazi Olympics in Berlin. The Barcelona Workers' Games never took place because of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War almost right when the Olympiad was scheduled to begin. Thus, the Third Workers' Olympic Games were rescheduled for a year later in Antwerp. However, as I mentioned above, and despite intensive preparations, the Polish government banned the Morgnshtern from participating in this event. What from the perspective of the workers was a festive and celebratory mass event constituted a clear threat for the capitalist and militarized nation-state.

The large majority of the Morgnshtern membership belonged to its noncompetitive sections.⁴⁸ Indeed, the Morgnshtern actively tried to emphasize participation in noncompetitive activities. The most popular activity was consistently gymnastics, and after it, eurhythmics (*ritmika*), which was overwhelmingly female-dominated. The incentive for the participants in these activities was not competition but self-improvement, that is, to improve constantly the *level* or the quality of their performance. The Yiddish word *nivo* ("level") appears again and again in the Warsaw Morgnshtern annual reports (*barikhtn*). The incentive for the Morgnshtern leaders was to provide physical education to the masses of workers and employees. The *ritmika* report for 1937 stated its aim as the "democratization" of physical activity by giving children who cannot otherwise afford it access to physical education.⁴⁹ In the summer, the Morgnshtern rented a swimming pool during certain hours to offer swimming lessons to its members.⁵⁰ A popular winter activity was *glitsbn* ("ice-skating"), and lessons were also offered, especially for children. Every year following 1933, the Warsaw Morgnshtern rented a skating rink. This activity grew so popular that in 1937 a larger place had to be rented, holding 700 to 800 skaters. For the 20 days that the ice-skating season lasted, 8,500 one-day tickets and 400 season passes were sold. Among the participants, only 30 percent were Morgnshtern members. On one single holiday no fewer than a thousand people enjoyed themselves *glitsbn*, and for the first time ever the Morgnshtern winter-sport section did not end the year with a deficit.⁵¹



Paul Neuman and a group of Warsaw gymnasts. Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

In its early years, while the Morgnshtern actively opposed competitive or violent sports, it had at the same time to deal with their increasing popularity, in Poland as everywhere else.⁵² In the 1929 Congress of the Workers' Sport International, the Morgnshtern proposed a total ban on boxing in all the federations affiliated with the SWSI. Since boxing was very popular among workers in other countries, the Congress decided to create a commission to study the issue and seek the opinion of physicians.⁵³ In the same Congress, the Morgnshtern delegates also proposed that new rules be set for the game of football (soccer in North America) in order to diminish the escalating violence and competitiveness in this game. The proposal (presented together with the representatives of Austria and Switzerland) was that in football competitions, the winning team would be decided not only on the basis of goals scored but also through a system of points rewarding "aesthetic and fair play" and "nice combinations." In this way, workers' football would avoid the increasing brutality of bourgeois football, and would be played according to humanist and socialist principles. The idea was to transform football into "a truly collective and wholesome popular game in accordance with our socialist and collectivist *Weltanschauung*." A "passionate argument" arose in the Congress around this issue. The Austrian representatives thought that football should be used as a means to bring the proletarian masses into workers' sport organizations. Besides, football was so popular among workers that if the workers' organization would not organize it, they would lose their members to the bourgeois clubs. In contrast, the Czech federation did not want to include football among its activities because it considered it an "immoral" sport for its competitiveness and brutality.⁵⁴

A related argument took place inside the Morgnshtern: As early as 1924, the Vilna Bund organized a debate in the form of a public trial on the "football psychosis."⁵⁵ However, it seems that—as many times before and after—purist

ideals were set aside under the pressure from below. Still, the ambivalence underlying the debate on the status and legitimacy of football is easily noticeable in the *Arbeter sportler* during the two years of its existence: in almost every issue, the first pages contained theoretical and technical articles promoting activities such as gymnastics, athletics, swimming, and ice-skating, while the last pages were full of enthusiastic (and often illustrated with photographs) reports about football: about the Morgnshtern football teams in the various towns and cities, about football teams from other sections of the SWSI, and about the Polish football league.⁵⁶ The tension between noncompetitive physical activities and competitive games (especially the “football question”) was resolved by the Central Organizing Committee of the Morgnshtern in 1930. In a text both included in the *Arbeter sportler* and distributed separately, the leaders of the Morgnshtern stated that

football—with the appropriate approach, organization and treatment—can help unfold the collective and solidarity senses of the athlete. Football greatly captures the interest of the young workers and it is possible to use it to draw the great mass of young workers into the socialist movement. Hence, we call all our branches to organize football teams and to make them compete in the general and regional football leagues.⁵⁷

Following this precedent, other competitive sports were gradually incorporated into Morgnshtern activities, including Ping-Pong, handball, basketball, volleyball, and even boxing. Interestingly enough, the 1937 report of the boxing section of the Warsaw Morgnshtern is written in a clearly apologetic tone, remarking that the physicians consulted by the SWSI commission had affirmed that boxing was not unhealthy. In response to the criticism that boxing is violent and unaesthetic, the author of the report argued that the ancient Greeks had practiced this sport, which teaches the hard facts of life and develops the



Managing Committee of Warsaw Morgnshtern, 1937. Standing first on the right, Yisroel Zajd. Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

instincts.⁵⁸ On the contrary, athletics, strongly promoted in the *Arbeter sportler* in the early 1930s, virtually disappeared from the Morgnshtern, and in the late 1930s the Warsaw athletic section did not function for several years.⁵⁹ To be sure, regardless of these changes the noncompetitive activities always attracted the participation of larger numbers of people.

Morgnshtern competitive sports teams tended more and more to participate in the general leagues in Poland, together with nonworkers' clubs. Some of these teams reached remarkable achievements. In 1937, the Ping-Pong team was formed in Warsaw, and in its very first year it became champion in the second category in the Warsaw area, competing the following year in the first category. One of the members of the team, *khaver* ("comrade") Beker, did not lose a single point in all of the tournament, and another, *khaver* Roizen, got third place in the individual national championship. As a result, he participated as a member of the Polish national team in the World Championship in London in 1938.⁶⁰ Another renowned Morgnshtern athlete was *khaver* Eliezer Aikhel, "a true amateur athlete," who was also editor of the sports news section (*Folkstsaitung far sport*) of the *Naye folkstsaitung*, which came out every second Monday after the *Arbeter sportler* was closed down.⁶¹ Aikhel won both the 800- and 5,000-meter races in the 1938 Warsaw Workers' Sport Competition, and the 1,500-meter race in 1939.⁶²

The tendency in the Morgnshtern football teams during the 1930s was toward an increase in their commitment to competition in the general leagues. In the early 1930s, there were several Morgnshtern football teams in the Warsaw area alone, some representing different Jewish workers' unions. The *Naye folkstsaitung* sponsored the football tournament among the various Warsaw teams, offering as a prize the "*Naye folkstsaitung* trophy." The trophy was a bronze sculpture of a worker by the Polish sculptor Stanislaw Zarnowski. The winner of the tournament was the Czarny, the football team of the union of commerce employees. Two thousand people came to see this tournament.⁶³ The journalists of the Morgnshtern press covered each game using the enthusiastic style that became typical of this kind of reporting even to our own day, but at the same time implying the authors' values. On the subject of the game between the football teams of the Warsaw (Central) Morgnshtern and the Kraft-Morgnshtern, we learn that

Kraft played with extraordinary ambition [*mit oisergeveinlekker ambitsie*] and dominated the field throughout the game. It was possible to see among the players a friendly, collective and cooperative style of play [*a khaverish un colectiv tsuzamenshpiln*]; on the other hand, the Morgnshtern played chaotically, without any system, purposelessly kicking the ball around [*stam gekopet di pilke arain*] and reaching nowhere.⁶⁴

Regardless of style and aesthetic, the Morgnshtern team won 1:0. They managed to score a goal in a "suicidal" shot at the last minute of the game, when both teams were exhausted, to the great consternation of our unnamed reporter, who as early as the 1920s preferred controlled and tactical play. The reporter of the *Arbeter sportler* claimed that the Kraft deserved at least a draw.

But the *Naye folkstsaitung* tournament, which aspired to become a local tradition, did not survive much longer. As we have seen, the tendency during the

1930s was to unify the various football teams and promote mainly the strongest among them (the Czarny), so as to make it more competitive in the general Polish League. The Czarny ascended from Class C to Class B in 1930 and later to Class A of the Warsaw region (part of the Second League at the national level). In 1937, after a very bad season, it went down back to Class B. The following year Czarny achieved in this category only a disappointing third place, and could never make it back to the Second League.⁶⁵



One of the earliest pictures of a football team. On the back, there is the following inscription: "The first workers' football team of Morgnshtern in Warsaw; 1924 or 1927." Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York.

In 1938 and 1939, the *Naye folkstsaitung* renewed the initiative of a Morgnshtern tournament, this time in the form of a men's and women's gymnastic competition between the Morgnshtern clubs of Warsaw and Lodz. This event took place twice, in late 1938 and in January 1939. Both times the Warsaw athletes won over their peers from Lodz.⁶⁶

In July 1939, the German instructor Paul Neuman departed from Poland, after many years of productive work and having become the most popular figure in the Morgnshtern.⁶⁷ That same month, a new football team was organized in the Warsaw Morgnshtern. In July and the beginning of August it played several friendly games with other Morgnshtern teams from Warsaw and Vilna. The new team had three excellent scorers, the *khaveirim* Bucek, Weller, and Rubinstein. The team showed great promise. On August 8, 1939, it won two games against the older and strongest Morgnshtern teams, Czarny and Veker.⁶⁸ This is the last entry in the notes of Yisroel Zajd recording the activities of the Morgnshtern in Poland. Two weeks later, Germany signed the Riventrop-Molotov Treaty with the Soviet Union, and in another week Germany invaded Poland. By mid-September, Warsaw was under nazi occupation. Neuman's was a one-way trip.

We cannot be sure of his fate, as a socialist German, during wartime. As for the Morgnshtern membership, they shared the fate of the rest of Polish Jewry.

The Holocaust of European Jewry resulted in the murder of close to 90 percent of Polish Jewry. The Bund, as a mass movement, disappeared in the Holocaust, together with all its organizations, the Morgnshtern among them. With the disappearance of its constituency, there was little room for the development of the Bund after the war, since the Bund's major stress had been the idea of *doykait*, that is, that Polish Jews must find a solution to their problems in the place where they lived, that is, in Poland. After the war, only small groups of Bundists remained, concentrated especially in the largest cities of the American continent (New York, Buenos Aires, Toronto, Los Angeles, Mexico City), living in a social, cultural, and political reality radically different from that in interwar Poland.

Throughout the Morgnshtern's existence, it produced no formulation equivalent to Max Nordau's famous call to create a *Muskuljudentum* (muscular Judaism):

We must again create a strong, muscular Judaism. We shall renew our youth in our old age, and with broad chest, powerful limbs, and valiant gaze—we shall be warriors. For us Jews, sport has a great educational significance. It has to bring about the health not only of the body but also of the spirit.⁶⁹

The Morgnshtern membership, male and female Jewish workers, did not need to prove their muscular and physical skills to counteract a certain abstract conception of Jews as spiritual or intellectual persons. As workers, they were routinely engaged in physical work in any case. Moreover, neither the Morgnshtern nor the Bund wanted to transform the Jews into a warrior-people: they rejected both nationalism and war. On the contrary, the Bund used sport politically to further its project of international solidarity and the creation of a healthier and fairer society common to both Jews and non-Jews.

One of the intriguing questions that still has to be answered is why not only Morgnshtern but also workers' sport in general disappeared after the Second World War. There are several probable explanations that may be advanced, and a detailed discussion is clearly beyond the scope of this paper. What may be safely claimed is that the death of workers' sport and the concomitant hegemony of competitive sports mirrored the broader changes taking place in the international order. The idea of "nation-state" consolidated itself as the normative political formation to the exclusion of internationalist projects. The Soviet-bloc nations favored elite over popular sports, using international competitions as an arena of ideological struggle.⁷⁰ The process of decolonization made international competitions truly global instead of limited to a small group of (European) countries and a specific social class; and professional sport became inextricably tied to corporate interest, advertising, and mass media hype.

1. I want to thank the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York for granting me access to its unique collection, to which the Bund Archive has been recently added. I also wish to acknowledge the invaluable help of archivist Leo Greenbaum and to thank Adriana Benzaquen, Jack Jacobs, and Anat Helman for their comments on an earlier version of this article. All the pictures presented in this article were reproduced with the permission and cooperation of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research of New York. All translations from Yiddish texts are mine. In writing this article, I was fortunate to be able to draw extensively from the materials gathered in the Zajd Collection in the YIVO's Bund Archive (hereafter cited as Zajd Collection and box number, e.g., Zajd Collection 1520). Yisroel Zajd was the last secretary of the Executive Committee of Morgnshtern in Poland and a central figure in the Warsaw Morgnshtern. After his death, his friend H. Bachrach sent all of Zajd's research materials to the Bund Archives in New York. See H. Bachrach, "Yisroel Zajd," *Unzer tsait*, June-July 1986: 45. I dedicate this paper to Yisroel Zajd's memory.
2. See Elbe, "sotsialistishe sportier," *Yugnt veker: organ gevidmet di interesn fin arbeter-yugnt*, year 12, n. 5 (190), Warsaw, March 1, 1933: 5. Similar ideas were expressed in the first All-Polish Congress of the Morgnshtern in April 1929, where activities like those of the Morgnshtern were depicted as "a revolution in the Jewish street;" see *Arbeter sportler* (hereafter *AS*) 1, 1/7/1929, "nokh unzer land-tszamenfor," 2-4.
3. It is not an unrelated coincidence that around that time, in 1929, the Bund joined the Second (Social-Democratic) International, after more than a decade of internal debates on whether the Bund should join the Second or the Third (Communist) International (the Comintern). Unable to make a decision and refusing to accept the conditions imposed by Moscow on Comintern parties, for most of the 1920s the Bund, together with the Austrian Socialist Party and other smaller ones, formed the Second-and-a-Half International, characterized as being at the same time revolutionary and democratic. Upon joining the Second International, the Bund immediately became part of the left and revolutionary opposition within it. For a detailed discussion see B. K. Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility: The General Jewish Workers Bund of Poland 1917-1943* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), 104-122, 184-194.
4. To be sure, not all these organizations and activities were entirely new, and many had roots in older organizations already existing in Czarist Russia, before and during World War I. However, the Russian Bund was illegal during most of its existence under the Czars, and for this reason, the various organizations of Jewish workers in the Russian Empire, if legal, were only informally linked to the clandestine Bund. In independent Poland, on the contrary, the connection between these organizations and the Bund was open.
5. No convincing historical explanation has been advanced so far as to why the Bund did so well in the years immediately before the Holocaust. D. Blatman links the Bund's electoral success in the late 1930s to the party's turn toward reformist social democracy at the beginning of that decade. See "The Bund in Poland, 1935-1939," *Polin* 9 (1996), 59-60. I find this explanation inadequate, since it does not reflect the actual character of the Bund in the 1930s and its consistent rejection of reformist politics.
6. Yisroel Zajd produced two lists of Morgnshtern locals, both including typewritten entries and handwritten additions: The first lists 147 typewritten place-names (8 of them in the Warsaw area) and 24 added by hand (Zajd Collection 1518), and the second lists 164 (typewritten) plus 7 additions (Zajd Collection 1520).
7. *Arbeter-gez. far fizisher dertsung 'morgnshtern' in poiln—varshever opteilung, a yor arbet: tetikait-barikht far der tsait fin* 1.II.37-1.II.38. Warsaw, 25/2/1938, Zajd Collection 1518 (printed; hereafter, *Barikht* 1937), 2.
8. For example, Czarny, the most successful football team of the Morgnshtern, was originally the club of the union of Jewish employees in commerce; see "unzer sport in varshe," *AS* 4 (9), 5/4/1930, 14-15. Under the Morgnshtern's aegis, the members of the union of Yiddish printers in Warsaw formed two gymnastics teams and organized sports activities on

- weekends ("sport in di profesionele farainen," *ibid.*). Similar activities were organized by the metal workers' union and the hairdressers' union; see *ibid.* and "varshe," *AS* 1(6), 1/1/1930, 14.
9. Even though, for instance, more than 30 percent of the citizens of Poland at the time belonged to one or other minority, the idea of the nation-state as the main form of political organization remains an hegemonic principle, both in politics and in mainstream historical studies. This principle is rarely challenged in the case of Poland, which has indeed become ethnically homogeneous only after the Second World War—at an extremely high human cost.
 10. See J. S. Hertz, *di geshikhte fun a yugnt: der kleiner bund—yugnt bund tsukunft in poiln* (New York: Farlag Unser Tsait, 1946), 445-448; *id.*, ed., *geshikhte fun bund*, vol. V (New York: Farlag Unser Tsait, 1981), 135-139; Z. Barzilai, *tmuat ha-bund be-folin bein shtei milkhamot ha-olam* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 1994); H. Minczeles, *Histoire générale du Bund: Un mouvement révolutionnaire juif* (Paris: Austral, 1995), 392. Johnpoll, *op. cit.*, does not mention the Morgnshtern at all.
 11. A refreshing exception is the seminal collection recently edited by A. Krüger and J. Riordan, *The Story of Worker Sport* (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1996) (hereafter *SWS*). Even in this case, not much space is dedicated to Poland: three paragraphs in the appendix, referring only to the ethnic Polish workers' organization and not to those of the Jewish, Ukrainian, and German minorities, each of which developed important independent workers' sport federations; see 178.
 12. J. Riordan, "Introduction," in *SWS*, vii.
 13. See R. Krammer, "Austria: 'New Times Are With Us,'" *SWS*, 87,94.
 14. J. Deutsch, *sport un politik*, Kh. Pidzic (ed.) (Warsaw: Farlag Arbeter Sportler, 1930). I have used mainly this Yiddish version, which was produced and used by the Morgnshtern, instead of the German original, *Sport und politik: im auftrage der socialistischen arbeiter-sport-internationale* (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz nachfolger, 1928). All the references here arc from the Yiddish version. Pidzic, probably the most senior Morgnshtern leader, states in his introduction that the Yiddish translation was financed by the SWSI, and that the booklet had already been published in most other European languages; see p. vii. Few copies of this booklet seem to have survived in any language.
 15. The *Arbeter sportler* critically referred to boxer G. Tooney from the United States, who earned \$1,750,000 during 1927 and 1928, suggesting that it was immoral that a single person (even if he was not strictly a capitalist or oppressor) could earn so much money. Noting that Tooney was paid \$25,000 for an article in a newspaper, the *AS* questions the quality of his writing: "He is the best boxer among the journalists." As a measure of comparison, the 1929 Nobel prize was worth \$50,000. "We can see that Thomas Mann is a dog in comparison to a box champion," the *AS* commented. The *AS* also condemned the tendency in the United States toward spending huge amounts of money building stadiums. This represented the opposite of the ideals of socialist sport: Enormous resources were being used so that an inactive crowd could watch two individuals actually engaged in physical activity. See "fun der velt sport," *AS* 2 (7), 1/2/1930, 12.
 16. B. K. [B. Kovarska], "hura, record!" *AS* 1 (6), 1/1/1930,7.
 17. "di dergreikhungen fun arbeter laikht-atletn in nirenberg," *AS* 3, 1/9/1929,5.
 18. Deutsch, 26. For related views expressed by Wiktor Alter, one of the two higher Bundist leaders at the time, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of Morgnshtern, see V. Alter, "sportler, zeit frei un trei," *AS* 6 (11), 25/7/1930,3.
 19. Deutsch, 27-31. Eventually, the German *Turnen* developed an increasingly eugenicist approach, and many of its members and branches joined the Nazi movement and even the Nazi storm troopers (SA); see A. Krüger, "The German Way of Worker Sport," *SWS*, 16-19.
 20. Deutsch, 32-39. See also "nokh unzer land tsuzamenfor," *AS* 1, 1/7/1929,4.
 21. Deutsch, 42-43.
 22. "khaverim, greit aikh tsum 1-tn mai," *AS* 4 (9), 5/4/1930,12.

23. See, for example, *ibid.* In the front page of this issue of the AS appears the slogan “From the Working-Place to Red Sports” between two drawings, one of workers leaving the factory and another of athletes practicing sport.
24. “der 5-ter congress fun sport-international,” *AS* 4, 1/10/1929, 1-2; “der ‘morgnshtern’ oifn congres,” *AS* 5, 1/11/1929, 6; see also A. Krüger, “Worker Sport ‘round the World,” *SWS*, 178.
25. “der barikht fun V-tn congres fun s.a.s.a.,” *AS* 5, 1/11/1929, 2-4; and *Barikht 1937*, 6. Incidentally, the SWSI’s differences with the RSI were not only political (social democracy as opposed to communism). Unlike the SWSI, the RSI gave preponderance to competitive and record breaking sport, and after 1933, it advanced the slogan of “closing the gap and overtaking the sports performances of the bourgeois countries.” Besides, the RSI supported competitions with bourgeois teams, while the SWSI opposed them; F. Nitsch, “The Two International Worker Sport Organisations: Socialist Worker Sports International and Red Sport International,” *SWS*, 170.
26. See, e.g., “fun polishn arbeter-sport,” *AS* 2, 1/8/1929, 9; and in the same page, “fun unzer bavegung.”
27. Hertz, *gesbikhte fun a yugnt*, 445.
28. See *ibid.*, 447, and *Barikht 1937*, 5. It is not possible to discern whether certain repressive actions by the state against the Morgnshtern corresponded with anti-Semitic, antisocialist or antiminorities motives. In 1929, the Morgnshtern was not prevented from sending its representatives to the SWSI Congress, while the Ukrainian representatives were not allowed to leave Poland to attend it; “der ‘morgnshtern’ oifn congres,” *AS* 5, 1/11/1929, 6.
29. Compare *Barikht 1937* with *Arbeter-gezelschaft far fizisher dertsung ‘morgnshtern’ in poln—varshever opteilung, 1938 yor barikht.* Warsaw, 27/1/1939. Zajd Collection 1518 (printed; hereafter, *Barikht 1938*).
30. See *Barikht 1937*, 12, including quotations from the reactions in the “the Jewish bourgeois press” (especially the Zionist Moment).
31. See “dos emese ponim fun varshever ‘macabi’: vuhin geit der vilner ‘macabi,’” *AS* 5, 1/11/1929, 7.
32. On the negotiations between hapoel and Maccabi over the participation in the 1932 and 1935 Maccabiah Games in Palestine, see George Eisen, “The Maccabiah Games: A History of the Jewish Olympics,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1979. Also, H. Kaufman, “Ha-eimut b’tekufat Ha-mandat, bein hit’agdut Hapoel ubein Histadrut macabi b’sugiat Ha-hishtatfut Hamaccabiot.” *B’Tenuah* 2/3 (1994): 51-72.
33. “tsuzamenarbet tsvishn ‘hapoel’ and ‘macabi,’” *AS* 6 (11), 25/7/1930, 9.
34. See Pidzic, introduction to Deutsch, i-ii.
35. “der turnir fun der ‘nayer folksaitung’ in varshe,” *AS* 4, 1/10/1929, 8-9.
36. Entry for 14/2/1938 of the typewritten notes covering day-by-day Morgnshtern events in 1938, nd., Zajd Collection 1516.
37. *Turnfeste* is the plural form of *Turnfest*. See Krüger, “The German Way,” 3.
38. Deutsch, op. cit., 38.
39. Lehtinen was a member of the most important workers’ club in Finland. The instructor communicated through a translator, because he did not know a single word of Yiddish before his arrival in Warsaw. Workers’ sport was very popular in Finland, and this event was covered by the Finnish newspaper *Suomi Socialdemocrat*, Z. F. (Zalmen Friedrich), “ir hot zikh nisht tsu farshehen far kein shum sport-organisatie,” *Nayer folksaitung* (hereafter *NF*), 10/4/36, 10. To improve the level of performance, the Morgnshtern hired instructors from Finland and Germany, the two countries where workers’ sport had reached the highest quality. Probably the most popular among these instructors was Paul Neuman, a German from Danzig and the former leading instructor of the Danzig section of the German *Arbeiter Turn- und Sportbund*, exiled from Germany after the Nazis took power; see *Barikht 1936*, 2.

40. "4000 mentshn oifn grandiozn iontef fun 'morgenshtern,'" *NF*, 15/4/36, 5; Z. Fridrikh, "shturmisher dergalg fun yubileum-fest fun 'morgenshtern,'" *NF*, 19/4/36, 6-7.
41. *Arbeter-gezelshaft far fizisber dertsung 'morgenshtern' in poiln—varsbever opteilung, tetikait-barikht tsu der algemeiner farzamlung far der tsait fun 1.2.36-1.2.37*. Warsaw, 25/2/1938. Zajd Collection 1518 (typewritten; hereafter, *Barikht 1936*), 1.
42. *Barikht 1938*, 22-24. The report includes quotations from the Bundist press as well as from the Polish socialist newspaper *Robotnik* praising the quality of the event.
43. "Program IV Dorocznego Zimowego Popisu Gimnastycznego," 30/1/1932, Zajd Collection 1516.
44. Riordan, "Introduction," vii.
45. The First Workers' Olympiad in Frankfurt in 1925 included a concert by a choir of 1,200 singers, and a festive drama performance in which 60,000 actors represented the "Worker's Struggle for the Earth"; Krüger, "The German Way," 17.
46. Riordan, loc. cit.
47. This was a very small amount of money: at that time the Morgenshtern newspaper *Arbeter sportler*, of 12-14 pages, cost 25 groszy; "vin 1929-vin 1931," *AS* 2, 1/8/1929,2-3.
48. For example, by February 1937, 1,261 out of the 1,554 members registered in the various Morgenshtern activities in Warsaw practiced noncompetitive sport: gymnastics (924), eurhythmics (*ritmika*) (168), swimming, cycling, etc; *Barikht 1936*. Similar figures were reported in *Barikht 1937* and *Barikht 1938*.
49. *Barikht 1937*, 18-19.
50. The swimming section taught 40 members to swim in the summer of 1936, 50 in 1937, and 70 in 1938. That year there was an attempt to organize a class for advanced swimmers; see *Barikht 1936*, 7, *Barikht 1937*, 25, *Barikht 1938*, 20.
51. *Barikht 1936*, 8; *Barikht 1937*, 24.
52. Note the change in the name of the German Workers' Sport Federation, from *Arbeiter Turner-Bund* to *Arbeiter Turn- und Sportbund Turner* in German meaning the practice of (noncompetitive) gymnastics, while *Sport* refers to competitive sports and ball games. This change reflected the recognition of the increasing popularity of "English" sports, especially football. All other workers' sport organizations in the various countries underwent a similar process; see Krüger, "The German Way," 8, 12; Riordan, "Introduction," ix; Nitsch, "The Two International Worker Sport Organisations," 170.
53. "der 'morgenshtern' oifn congres," *AS* 5, 1/11/1929,5-6.
54. "der barikht fun V-tn congres fun s.a.s.a.," *AS* 5, 1/11/1929,2-4; "der 'morgenshtern' oifn congres," *ibid.*, 6; "futbol darf nisht zain bloiz a shpil fun shisn goln," *AS* 6 (11), 25/7/1930,9.
55. Entry for Vilna, typewritten alphabetical reports on the Morgenshtern sections in the different cities and towns in Poland, Zajd Collection 1516.
56. Especially the Polish First League, and the always exciting Krakow derby between Wisla and Cracovia; see, e.g., "vos hert zikh in der futbol lige," *AS* 3, 1/9/1929,9; "vos hert-zikh in der futbol-lige," *AS* 4, 1/10/1929,6.
57. *di tsentrale farvaltung*, "arbeter gezelshaft far fizisher dertsung 'morgenshtern': yidishe seksie in poiln, fun sotsialistishn arbeter sport-internatsaional," *AS* 3 (8), 5/3/1930, 2.
58. *Barikht 1937*, 21-22.
59. *Barikht 1937*, 25.
60. *Ibid.*, 23-24.
61. *The Naye folksaitung* was the Bund's daily newspaper.
62. P. Sh., "unzer aikhel," *NF* 11/7/1938; entry for 26/6/1939, album with typewritten notes covering day-by-day events in 1939, n.d., Zajd Collection 1516 (hereafter *Zajd notes 1939*).

63. "varshever turnei fun der 'n. folkstsaitung," *AS* 3, 1/9/1929,1; "der turnir fun der 'nayer folkstsaitung' in varshe," *AS* 4, 1/10/1929,8-9.
64. Ibid.
65. "algemeine farzamlung fun varshever futbol-farband: 'tsharni' ariber in clas B," *AS* 2 (7), 1/2/1930, 9; *Barikht 1937*, 23; *Barikht 1938*, 18-19.
66. *Barikht 1938*, 10-11,28-32; entry for 16/1/1939, *Zajd notes 1939*.
67. Entries for 16/7/1939, 17/7/1939, *Zajd notes 1939*.
68. Ibid., entries for 25/7/1939, 1/8/1939, and 8/8/1939.
69. Quoted in B. Postal et al., *Encyclopedia of Jews in Sports* (New York Bloch, 1965).
70. J. Riordan, "Rewriting Soviet Sports History," *Journal of Sport History* 20, no. 3 (Winter 1993), [248-252](#).