Klezmer and the Kremlin:
Soviet Yiddish Folk Songs of the 1930s

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The thesis that since the late 1920s Soviet Jewish musicians were confronted with "the choice between rejecting the Jewish idiom or sinking into oblivion" and that "Jewish music per se declined during the late 1920s and 1930s and then vanished altogether" has been largely uncontested.[1] But there were many Jewish composers, performers, and ethnomusicologists in the Soviet Union who chose to continue in the Jewish idiom, contributing to a flourishing of Yiddish folk music and klezmer music. Performers of Yiddish folk song toured the country filling concert halls from Vitebsk to Moscow to Baku. The music of the Soviet Yiddish state theaters was feted from New York to Birobidzhan, and even featured at the 1939 New York World's Fair;[2] Jewish workers, farmers, house wives and political convicts hummed the lullabies their grandparents had sung to them, and chanted the newer Yiddish mass songs glorifying socialist construction; ethnomusicologists cooperated with the most prestigious Yiddish poets to collect and standardize the "new Soviet Yiddish folk music;" and adolescents fawned over the phonograph recordings of their favorite Yiddish folk singers.

Although this part of Soviet Jewish history has largely been forgotten as memories of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union have become conflated with the antisemitism of Stalin's final years, at the time, the achievements of Soviet Yiddish music were recognized throughout the world. The ethnomusicologist Lazare Saminsky,[3] for instance, wrote of Soviet Jewish composers that they "represent the true musical Israel of today; they are its best or even its only real voice."[4] The prominent Yiddish literary critic, Nakhman Mayzel,[5] also looked favorably toward Soviet Jewish musicians who, he believed, had not succumbed to what he called the "goyishe music" of Western Europe and America.[6]

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[1] Jack Miller, ed., *Jews in Soviet Culture* (New Brunswick, 1984), p. 73. See also Joachim Braun, *Jews in Soviet Music* (Jerusalem, 1977).

[2] For more on the Soviet State Yiddish Theater see Mordchai Altshuler, "Te'atron yidish ve-ha-tsibbur ha-yehudi bi-vrit ha-mo'atsot" (Yiddish theater and the Jewish audience in the Soviet Union), in *Ha-te'atron ha-yehudi bi-vrit ha-mo'atsot: mehqarim, 'iyunim, u-te'udot* (The Jewish theater in the Soviet Union: studies, essays, documents), Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 13-62; Jeffrey Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage* (Bloomington, 2000).

[3] Lazare Saminsky (1882-1959) composer, musicologist, and public figure active in Jewish musical affairs. He took part in ethnographic expeditions in the Caucasus and Urals and studied the origins of Jewish music. He emigrated from Russia in 1919 and settled in the USA.

[4] Lazare Saminsky, *Music of the Ghetto and the Bible* (New York, 1934), p. 128.

[5] Nakhman Mayzel (1887-1966)—editor, Yiddish scholar and literary critic. He was one of the founders of the Culture League in Kiev. From 1921 he headed the Cultural League in Warsaw. From 1925 to 1938 he edited the weekly *Literarishe bleter*. In 1937 he moved to the USA, where he edited *Yidishe kultur*. In 1964 he settled in Israel.

[6] Nakhman Mayzel, *Yidishe tematik un yidishe melodies bay bavuste muziker* (New York, 1952), p. 13.

While there was some scholarship on Jewish folk songs in the 1920s, Soviet Yiddish music reached its apogee between 1934 and 1941.[7] At that time the utopian dream of forging a New Soviet Man, who would rise above racial and ethnic distinctions to encompass the proletarian Everyman, gave way to a more pragmatic concern for the need to co-opt the national minorities and to project an image of multiculturalism both at home and abroad. Only the most self-deluded could fail to see that the state had not "withered away" and class-consciousness had not replaced national awareness. Already in 1934, at the First Writers' Congress, the Soviet writer Maksim Gorky had called for a return to folklore in Soviet writing. Writers and artists were encouraged to draw from the cultural traditions with which their people identified.[8]

It was in this context that the film-maker Sergei Eisenstein was commissioned to produce a film (released in 1938) glorifying the exploits of the thirteenth-century Novgorodian prince, Aleksandr Nevsky, whose defeat of the Teutonic Knights would clearly inspire Soviet citizens against the new Teutons, the Nazis. The revival of national themes was not restricted to Russian culture, but was evident in the culture of the Soviet minorities as well.[9]

In order to increase Soviet patriotic sentiments among the peoples of the country the regime used various forms of mass propaganda. In 1936 the state began to sponsor ten day dekadas featuring the folk life of its national minorities, and in 1937 the first All-Union Festival of Soviet Music was held in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Tbilisi. The second festival, held the next year, was extended to thirty cities and featured some six hundred concerts. Ironically, the Soviet regime found itself confronted with the task of resurrecting those folk traditions that had been placed on life-support after the murder of the native bards who had fallen victim to Stalin's purges.

Jewish folk culture was by no means immune to this development. In 1937 the Moscow State Yiddish Theater turned toward national folk themes with its production of Abraham Goldfaden's Shulamis, a play about love and war in post-biblical Judaea; the following year it even performed Goldfaden's Bar Kokhba, about the second-century Jewish rebellion against Roman rule.[10] These historical narratives allowed performers and writers to explore the themes of national emancipation and rebellion in formats that would have been impossible only two years before. Similarly, in 1939 Der Nister's epic novel of Jewish life in Berdichev, Family Mashber, was published. One of the most remarkable developments occurred in the field of Yiddish folk music.

Although historians of Soviet Jewish music have noted that "part of the Soviet nationality policy was to cultivate professional national styles of art,"[11] most have maintained that Jewish national art was excluded. Jewish

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[7] Articles on Jewish folk songs published in the Soviet Union in the 1920s include I. Goldberg, "Bamerkungen tsum poetishn stil in yidishn folklid" (Observations on the poetic style in Yiddish folksongs), *Tsaitshrift* (Minsk), No. 1, 1926, pp. 105-116; idem, "Di yidishe mishshprakhike un fremdshprakhike folklider" (The Yiddish mixed language and foreign language folksongs), ibid., No. 2-3, 1928, pp. 589-606; plus a collection evidently compiled in the late 1920s, S. Polonski, *30 lider far kinder* (30 songs for children), (Moscow—harkov-Minsk, 1930).

[8] For more on folklorism see Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 64-83; and Frank J. Miller, *Folklore for Stalin* (Armonk, NY, 1990).

[9] At the same time, popular Russian writers, such as Marfa Kriukova, revived traditional forms of storytelling to amalgamate the feats of polar explorers with peasant folk heroes; the Kazakh singer, Dzhambul Dzhabaev, used indigenous lyric forms and idioms to write hagiographical songs exalting Soviet commissars; and the Armenian playwright Deremik Demirchyan wrote his *Native Land*, which retold the story of the tenth-century Armenian ruler Gagik's heroic defense of Catholic Armenia against Byzantine invaders.For some examples of folk culture in the late 1930s see James von Geldern and Richard Stites, *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917-1953* (Bloomington, 1995), pp. 287-328.

[10] Mordechai Altshuler, op. cit. pp. 40-44; Veidlinger, op. cit., pp. 159-173.

[11] Miller, *Jews in Soviet Culture,* p. 80.

musicians, writes one commentator, were confronted with "the frustrated urge for their own national idiom whose expression had been violently disrupted and was under constant repression."[12]

This paper will examine the publications of a group of professional ethnomusicologists and amateur folk music collectors to see how folklorism was promoted within the Jewish context. Between 1934 and 1940, this group published five collections of Jewish folk music, containing a total of 1,070 songs (including variations), with a total print run of 17,300 copies. The five years under discussion, though, saw a transformation in Jewish music publishing: instead of using scientific methods to faithfully record songs from Jewish informants, later works inventively reconstructed Jewish folk material in accordance with Soviet principles for dissemination to Jewish recipients.

Soviet Folk Music Research

The most important ethnomusicologist of Jewish music in the Soviet Union was Moshe Beregovskii.[13] He published three collections of Jewish folk songs: Folklore Songs (1933), Jewish Musical Folklore (1934), and, together with Itzik Fefer, Yiddish Folk Songs (1938); and wrote many articles on Jewish folk music. [14]

In his introduction to Jewish Musical Folklore, written in classic Soviet rhetorical style, Beregovskii criticized those collections of Jewish folk music published in pre-revolutionary Russia and contemporary America for failing to embrace the folk music of the Jewish working class. His collection, he maintained, would show that only in the Soviet state, where minority nations are free to develop culturally and intellectually, could the hopes and dreams of the Jewish working class be expressed in native forms. Following the accepted Soviet approach to Jewish culture, he divided previous collections of Jewish folk music into two categories: those produced by "clerical Zionists," which highlight ancient liturgical Hebrew music over modern secular Yiddish folk music; and those produced by "petit-bourgeois liberal populists" with the romantic goal of discerning an elusive Jewish geist.[15]

Indeed the earliest collectors of Jewish folk music operated under the assumption that Jewish folk music was equivalent to the music of Judaism, that the only Jewish national forms were those of the synagogue. In the words

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Beregovskii (1892-1961) was born in a shtetl near Kiev. As the son of a cantor, he received training in Jewish music at an early age when he sang in a local synagogue choir. At the age of 13, Beregovskii left the shtetl for Kiev, where he attended a local gymnazium and studied music theory and cello. In 1912 he began playing in local orchestras, and in 1915 enrolled in the Kiev Conservatory, where he became interested in ethnomusicology. In 1918 he joined the Kiev Culture League, a leftist Jewish organization engaged in the promotion of Yiddish literature, art, theater, and music, under whose auspices he helped found a music school. After moving to Petrograd in 1922, Beregovskii continued his musical studies and made a living teaching music to children. After living briefly in Moscow, Beregovskii returned to Kiev in 1926. The next year he began working at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, where he headed the department of folk music at the Faculty of Jewish Culture (1927-1928), the Institute of Jewish Culture (1928-1936), and finally the Cabinet of Jewish Culture (1936-1949).

[14] Moshe Beregovskii, *Folklor-lider: naye materyaln-zamlung* (Moscow, 1933); *Yidisher muzik-- folklor* (Moscow, 1934); and Moshe Beregovskii and Itzik Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider* (Kiev: Melukhe-farlag far di natsionale minderhaytn in USSR, 1938). *Yidisher muzik-folklor* was originally intended to be the first of a five-volume collection of Jewish folk music. Segments of the other volumes were published posthumously. See Moshe Beregovskii, *Evreiskie narodnye pesni* (Moscow, 1962); *Evreiskaia narodnaia instrumental'naia muzyka* (Moscow, 1987); and *Old Jewish folk Music: The Collections and Writings of Moshe Beregovski*, edited and translated by Mark Slobin, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982). For some of his critical writings see *Yidishe instrumentale folks-muzik* (Kiev, 1937); and "Kegnzaytike virkungen tsvishn dem ukraynishn un yidishn muzik-folklor," *Visnshaft un Revolutsye* (Kiev), no. 6 (1935), pp. 79-101. For biographical information on Beregovskii, additional material from his folk music collections, and the text to a play he wrote see *Arfy na verbakh: prizvanie i sud'ba Moiseia Beregovskogo* (Moscow: Evreiskii universitet; Jerusalem: Gesharim, 1994).

[15] Beregovski, *Old Jewish Folk Music*, pp. 19-31. Another contemporary work that criticized Jewish "bourgeois" folklore studies was the book of Aizik Rozenzweig, *Sotsiale diferentsiatsie inem yidishn folklor-lid* (Social differentiation in Yiddish folk song), published by the Institute of Jewish Culture of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) (Kiev, 1934).

of Moisei Berlin,[16] a maskil (Jewish proponent of the Enlightenment), writing in 1861, there are "no songs that are sung by the [Jewish] people for entertainment... they have only synagogal music."[17] Nearly seventy years later, the eminent Jewish ethno-musicologist Abraham Zevi Idelsohn,[18] would equate Jewish music with religious song by defining Jewish music as "the song of Judaism through the lips of the Jew."[19] He further wrote of Jewish folk music that

If by folk song we understand words and tunes of war and drink, of carnality and frivolity, then the Jews have no folk-songs. Jewish folk song, like Jewish life in the last two thousand years, nestles in the shadow of religion and ethics."[20]

Indeed, of the 1,283 songs included in the three volumes of Idelsohn's 1932 collection of Eastern European Jewish music, less than 2 percent deal with the concerns of the working masses, while nearly three quarters are drawn from either synagogal music or Hasidic chant.[21]

In contrast to those who equated the Jewish religion with the Jewish people, were a group of collectors who sought to subordinate the religious element to the national element. These collectors, who were predominantly influenced by enlightened thought, hoped that by presenting a normalized portrait of Jewish culture they could persuade their readers that the Jewish people are a nation on par with the recognized nations in whose midst they live. As nationalist movements swept through Eastern Europe, intellectual promoters of national identity searched among the peoples they claimed to represent for examples of genuine folk expressions that would attest to their people's creative impulse and national spirit. Following the examples of their Central European neighbors, Jewish intellectuals, like Yehudah Leib Gordon, Shlomo An-sky, and Khaim Nakhman Bialik began to publish the legends and fables of the Jewish people as a testament to the richness of secular Jewish culture. It was not long before others engaged in the collection and publication of Jewish folk music with similar goals. Jewish Folk Songs in Russia, for instance, compiled in 1900 by the historians Shaul Ginzburg [22] and Pesakh Marek,[23] epitomizes the national biases against which the Soviet-era collectors polemicized. The editors introduced their collection with an essay that pays homage to Herderian notions of nationality:

It is hardly necessary at present to expatiate on the importance of studying folk songs to understand the spiritual existence, daily life, and history of every nation. Herder showed in his Stimmen der Völker that national poetry provides the most important basis with which to comprehend the national psyche.[24]

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[16] See Ilia Lurie and Arkadii Zeltser, "Moses Berlin and the Lubavich Hasidim: A Landmark in the Conflict between Haskala and Hasidism," *Shvut*, 5(21) (1997), pp. 32-64.

[17] M. Berlin, *Ocherk etnografii evreiskogo narodonaseleniia v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1861), p. 78. See also Fritz Mordechai Kaufmann, *Die Schönsten lieder der Ostjuden* (The beautiful songs of Jews of Eastern Europe) (Berlin, 1920).

[18] Abraham Zevi Idelsohn (1882-1938)—cantor, composer, and founder of Jewish musicology. He made a major contribution to music in Jerusalem when he founded an institute for Jewish music and the first music school. In 1922 he moved to the USA and in 1937 to South Africa.

[19] A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development* (New York, 1944), p. 24.

[20] Ibid., p. 358.

[21] A. Z. Idelsohn, *Hebraisch-Orientalischer Melodienschatz*, (1932; reprint, New York: K'tav Publishing House, 1973): vols. VIII-X.

[22] Shaul Ginzburg (1866-1940)—journalist and historian of Russian Jewry. From 1892 he wrote for the Russian-language Jewish journal *Voskhod.* In 1903 he founded the first daily Yiddish newspaper in Russia. He emigrated from the USSR in 1930 and settled in New York in 1933.

[23] Pesakh Marek (1862-1920)—historian and folklorist. He was one fo the founders of the Palestinophile group *Bnei Zion.* He began writing for *Voskhod* in 1888. He wrote, inter alia, on Jewish education and the history of the Jews of Poland and Russia.

[24] S. M. Ginzburg, and P. S. Marek, *Evreiskiia narodnyia pesni v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1901), p. iii.

The authors hoped that their collection of 376 songs would demonstrate the breadth of Jewish creativity and help delineate the Jewish geist. Yehuda Leib Cahan[25] compiled a two-volume collection of Yiddish folk songs in 1912 with similar goals. Influenced by Yitzhak Leib Peretz, Cahan turned to Jewish folk music to celebrate the "authentic" spirit of the Jewish people in its most pristine state. In the sixty page introduction to his collection, Cahan romanticized the music of the Eastern European shtetl as a true reflection of the Jewish geist:

there [in Eastern Europe], where the spirit of the new age has not yet reached the lowest level of the folk--there one can still hear the soft, bitter-sweet tone of the Jewish folk song, there genuine folk songs still reign in all their glory and splendor.[26]

The national-enlightenment spirit that motivated some of the earliest collections of Jewish folk music soon inspired a flourishing of Jewish amateur organizations and societies with similar goals. The members of these societies hoped that their work would stimulate the academic study of Jewish culture. They believed that critical investigations into the history of the Jews would help eliminate ignorance and prejudice, and eventually stimulate enlightened reform both within the Jewish community and among the governments under whom the Jews lived. In conjunction with the new Jewish historiography, they sought to show that the Jewish people have a national existence tied to, but not identical to, the history of Judaism. Organizations such as the Jewish Folk Music Society of St. Petersburg encouraged the collection, publication, and scholarly study of Jewish folk music. Its members Zinovii Kiselgof[27] and Iulii Engel[28] took part in a number of ethnographic expeditions to the Pale of Jewish Settlement in the 1910s, the most notable of which was Shlomo An-sky's 1912-1914 expedition to Volhynia and Podolia.[29] Although the society was disbanded in 1919, its identification of Jewish folkloric motifs provided an integral basis for subsequent work, and many of its members went on to become important composers of Jewish music.[30]

"The ideologues of the Jewish bourgeoisie," Beregovskii wrote in reference to these ethnomusicologists, "turned to ethnography and folklorism as a means to effect 'national regeneration, national consciousness, and unification,' as a means to 'cement' and 'strengthen' the national organism without class differences."[31] It was these traditions that Beregovskii fought against in his 1934 work Jewish Musical Folklore. Rather than search for the Jewish geist, Beregovskii hoped to show that Jewish folk songs anticipated and embraced the socialist revolution. Beregovskii, though, was not convinced that the folk were capable of spontaneously generating appropriate revolutionary songs. He thus identified two categories of workers' songs: songs created before the rise of organized socialist movements, and

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[25] Yehuda Leib Cahan (1881-1937)—philologist and folklorist. He was a pioneer collector of Jewish folk songs. He lived in Vilna, Warsaw, and then moved to the USA in 1904. In 1929 Cahan published a collection of Jewish folk tales. In 1930 he organized a congress of collectors of Jewish folklore in Vilno.

[26] Y. L. Cahan, *Yudishe folkslider mit melodien* (New York , 1912), p. vi.

[27] Zinovii Kiselgof (1874-1939)—pedagogue and student of Jewish folklore. Under the Soviets he was head of a Jewish school and orphanage in Leningrad. He was arrested in 1938 and released the next year.

[28] Iulii Engel (1868-1927)—composer, music critic, and folklorist. He studied at the Moscow Conservatory. He published a three-volume collection of Yiddish folk songs. Engle went on concert tour as a lecturer and popularizer of Jewish music. In 1908 he became an honorary member of the Society for Jewish Music in St. Petersburg. And chairman of the Moscow branch of the Society. He lived in Germany from 1922 to 1924., when he moved to Palestine.

[29] See Benjamin Lukin, "Ot narodnichestva k narodu (S.A. An-skii – etnograf vostochno-evropeikogo evreistva" (From populism to the people: An-sky – Ethnographer of East European Jewry) in D. Eliashevich, ed. *Evrei v Rossii: istoriia i kul'tura—sbronik nauchnych trudov* (The Jews In Russia: history and culture—a collection of scholarly works) (St. Petersburg, 1995), pp. 125-161.

[30] For more on the amateur organizations that flourished during this period see Chistoph Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Tsarist Russia, 1900-1914: The Modernization of Russian Jewry* (New York: New York University Press, 1995); and Mark Kiel, "A Twice Lost Legacy: Ideology, Culture and the Pursuit of Jewish Folklore in Russia Until Stalinization (1930-1931)" (Phd diss., Jewish Theological Seminary, 1991).

[31] Beregovski, *Old Jewish Folk Music*, p. 19.

songs created under the guidance of politically conscious workers. The first category reflects "the preproletarian psychology of Jewish workers," whereas the second reflects "class psychology, recognizing its possibilities, optimism, and belief that the future belongs to it."[32]

Another distinction, to which Beregovskii only alludes, is that the latter category are composed for the folk rather than by the folk. Cahan and other academic folklorists had recently criticized the revolutionary Yiddish folk music collection, Work and Freedom, compiled by Shmuel Leman in Warsaw,[33] for including songs that were composed by professional poets for the purpose of agitation. In his introduction to Jewish Musical Folklore, Beregovskii defended the collection on the grounds that folk music is an ethnographic form of art associated with pre-capitalist societies. Once capitalism infiltrates a society, "proletarian 'written' music" takes its place.

This line of reasoning followed closely socialist realist themes of the 1930s. As Katerina Clark has observed, much Soviet literature of the 1930s was structured around a plot in which a naive simpleton with a "spontaneous" enthusiasm for social equality receives mentoring from a trained Bolshevik that allows the simpleton to channel his spontaneous rage into "revolutionary consciousness."[34] This theme echoed Lenin's call for a "revolutionary vanguard" to channel the workers' sentiments into political action. The "true" expression of folk ideologies, it was contended, does not arise spontaneously among the people; rather it must be taught by trained agitators.

Although Beregovskii used his introduction to Jewish Musical Folklore to argue for the merits of including "written" music in folk music collections, he himself included few songs that did not have genuine folk origins. Seventeen songs with lyrics composed by professional poets (mostly by the revolutionary poets Morris Winchevsky[35] and David Edelstadt[36]) were included, but all had been set to music by amateurs and had spread through oral transmission. The remaining 123 examples – lyrics and music – seem to have originated in genuine worker circles. These songs were drawn from the collections of the Institute of Jewish Culture, which by the beginning of World War II, included twelve hundred recordings of about three thousand songs, and notations to an additional four thousand songs. Many of these recordings and transcriptions came from the archive of the Jewish Folk Music Society of St. Petersburg, which the institute acquired in 1930. This archive included wax cylinder recordings from the 1912-1914 ethnographic expedition led by An-sky. In 1929 the institute had also acquired 29 wax cylinders of recordings made by the Jewish musicologist Iulii Engel during his 1912 ethnographic expedition. The rest of the institute's collection came from original ethnographic field work conducted under the supervision of Beregovskii. Beginning in 1928, Beregovskii led a series of ethnographic expeditions to collective farms, factories, and homes in Kiev, Odessa, Belaia Tserkov, Uman, Skvir, and Zhitomir to systematically transcribe Yiddish folk songs and klezmer music. Jewish Musical Folklore represents the fruits of these expeditions.[37]

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[32] Ibid., p. 31.

[33] Shmuel Leman, *Arbayt un frayhayt* (Warsaw, 1921). See also Abrasha Veyner, *Unzer gezang* (Warsaw, 1930).

[34] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago, 1981), p. 86.

[35] Morris Winchevsky (Lipe Novakhovich) (1956-1932)—poet, prose writer, and publicist. In his youth he was close to the Narodniki (Russian populists). In 1884 he founded and began editing the first socialist newspaper in Yiddish, *Der polisher yidl*. In 1892 he was on of the founders of the Yiddish journal *Di tsukunft*. Two years later he moved to the USA. Winchevsky wrote many songs about the workers' fight for their rights, which became very popular. In 1924-1925 he visited the USSR, where he was treated as a guest of honor.

[36] David Edelstadt (1866-1892)—Yiddish socialist poet. In 1882 he moved to the USA, where he worked in sweatshops and joined the anarchist movement which had great influence among Jewish workers. He became the Yiddish bard of the movement and editor of its Yiddish weekly. His songs depict injustice in the present and hope for a better life under socialism.

[37] Eighty percent (112 of 140) of the songs were transcribed under Beregovskii's supervision from the institute's recordings (including 21 songs from the An-sky expedition). The others weres taken from transcriptions by other ethnomusicologists. The

Jewish Musical Folklore truly represents a novel development in Jewish ethnomusicological work, as it was the first collection to include many of the worker and strike songs that had become popular in the early revolutionary era. The songs are divided into seven categories: 1) work, exploitation, and poverty; 2) strikes; 3) struggles and victims; 4) revolution; 5) artisans; 6) daily life and family; and 7) conscription and war. Beregovskii's stated purpose, though, was not simply to revive these songs as ethnographic relics – indeed, such a goal would be considered nostalgic and even counter-revolutionary in the context of the Soviet 1930s. In the era of socialist realism, spontaneous expressions of revolutionary ardor were politically suspect. Beregovskii therefore needed to justify his project on the grounds that the material he was presenting could be used for "socialist reworking and dialectic resolution."[38] In order to create a new Soviet folklore that incorporates the ideology of "conscious workers" and functions as propaganda, an authentic foundation of folk motifs was needed to serve as building blocks. Beregovskii's work in the late 1920s and early 1930s played a fundamental role in the identification of musical folklore among the Jewish working-class of Russia, and laid the foundations for the composition of new Soviet Yiddish folk songs.

Three years after releasing Jewish Musical Folklore, Beregovskii published a short critical essay, Jewish Instrumental Folk Music, in which he expanded upon his annotations to the earlier volume, detailed the research methods he was employing at the Cabinet of Jewish Culture,[39] and identified several issues that he hoped to investigate in the future. Beregovskii also included in this publication a survey of 110 questions that his researchers were addressing to their informants. Beregovskii hoped that the answers to this questionnaire would provide a sufficient database with which to conduct scientific research into the musical life of Eastern European Jewry.[40] In the words of Mark Slobin, Beregovskii's work was "the only corpus of research on its topic that stands up to present-day ethnomusicological standards of fieldwork, transcriptions, and analysis."[41] Despite his ambitious research agenda, Beregovskii's 1934 collection remained the last genuinely ethnological collection of Jewish folk music published in the Soviet Union. Although the years 1938-1940 would see the publication of no fewer that four compilations of Yiddish folk music, none were motivated by the academic and scientific principles of ethnomusicology that informed Beregovskii's early work.

2. Musical Folklore and Propaganda

The replacement of scientific ethnomusicological work with propaganda was a direct result of the policies of the newly created (in January 1936) Committee of Artistic Affairs of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. As early as 1930, the Commissariat of Enlightenment had begun to take an active role in the promotion and sponsorship of Jewish musical associations,[42] but it was not until 1936-1937 that the state consolidated its control over the composition, publication, and performance of Jewish music.

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collection is annotated with a list of informants and remarks on the process of transcription. The inclusion of multiple versions of the same song and ellipses within songs also indicate that the work is based on genuine ethnographic sources.

[38] Beregovski, *Old Jewish Folk Music*, p. 36.

[39] On the "Cabinet," see A. Greenbaum, *Jewish Scholarship and Scholarly Institutions in Soviet Russia, 1918-1953* (Jerusalem, 1978).

[40] Beregovskii, *Yidishe instrumentale folks-muzik.*

[41] Mark Slobin, "A Fresh Look at Beregovski's Folk Music Research," *Ethnomusicology* 30 (Spring/Summer 1986), p. 254.

[42] *Der emes,* 14 May 1930.

This change was stimulated by the 1936 tour to Moscow of the Jewish Vocal Ensemble, Idvocans, an autonomous a capella group that was formed in 1929 in Kiev by Yehoshua Sheynen.[43] During its visit, the Committee of Artistic Affairs convened a conference to discuss the future of the group. The meeting concluded with the declaration that the group needed to work toward creating a new revolutionary Soviet folklore, perhaps by combining Jewish music with the music of other national minorities. The prose writer David Bergelson, who attended the conference, commented that "the group neglects the folk songs of the new Soviet man," while others criticized it for its adherence to bourgeois musical forms.[44] When the troupe returned to Moscow in 1937 it had responded to these critiques by expanding its repertoire to include an international program and a program of classical vocal music in addition to its cycle of Yiddish folk songs. Although it had been forced to temper its Judaic sources, its most popular songs remained Yiddish classics familiar to its audiences.[45]

During Idvocans' 1937 tour, the Committee of Artistic Affairs convened another conference on the topic of Jewish music. Although Chairman of the Committee for Artistic Affairs Platon Kerzhentsev,[46] praised the troupe for embracing the new Soviet folklore,[47] Beregovskii criticized it for retaining only a small repertoire. He pointed out that the Institute of Jewish Culture had collected thousands of Jewish folk songs, yet Idvocans' repertoire encompassed only fifty of the most popular Yiddish songs. The conference concluded with all participants agreeing that new Yiddish folk songs embracing the ideals of the Soviet Union should be made available for troupes like Idvocans.[48] In order to facilitate the inculcation of appropriate ideologies into Jewish folk music, ethnomusicologists were encouraged to collaborate with professional writers. In return the state pledged its support for Jewish musical production, and ordered the State Music Publishing House to print Jewish folk songs.[49]

The most important result of these conferences was the publication of a series of works on Jewish folk music that brought together professional musicologists with communist poets. The first new collaborative effort was a collection of 244 Yiddish folk songs and 52 instrumental pieces published in 1938 by Beregovskii together with Itzik Fefer under the title Yiddish Folk Songs.[50]

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[43] Yehoshua Sheynen (1890-1948)—choral director, composer, and pedagogue. In 1929 Sheynin published two collection of Jewish folk songs arranged for choir. The same year he established the Jewish vocal ensemble Idvocans (abbreviation *of Yidisher vocal ansamble*), which in 1931 became the All-Ukrainian State Jewish Choir, and in 1934 - the All-Ukrainian State Honored Choir Idvocans. The Chopin was liquidated in 1939.

[44]*Der emes*, 9 February 1936.

[45]Ibid., 18 March 1937; 21 March 1937.

[46] Platon Kerzhentsev (Lebedev) (1881-1940) – government and Party official (Party member from 1940),. 1928-1930 – deputy head of agitprop (agitational propaganda) department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party, 1936-1938 – chairman of the Committee for Artistic Affairs.

[47]*Der emes*, 24 April 1937.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid., 18 July 1937.

[50] Itzik Fefer (1900-1952) was one of the Soviet Union's most prominent communist poets. A former Bundist, Fefer changed loyalties and fought for the Bolsheviks in the Civil War. He made his poetry debut in 1919 and continued to publish numerous poems glorifying the Soviet regime throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

The next year Yekhezkel Dobrushin[51] released his Soviet Yiddish Folk Songs, [52]including twenty-four examples, with a remarkable print run of 10,000 copies. In 1940 Dobrushin collaborated with Abram Yuditskii[53] on a second compilation of 589 Jewish folk songs, entitled Yiddish Folk Songs.[54] The same year another collaborative collection of seventy-three Jewish folk songs, also entitled Yiddish Folk Songs,[55] was published by Moisei Khashchevatskii[56] and Der Nister.[57]

The publications of 1938-1940 were informed by the policies laid out by the Committee of Artistic Affairs in its 1937 conference on Jewish music: their goal was to spread communist ideals and Soviet mores to the masses through the composition and dissemination of new Yiddish folk music. Thus when Beregovskii published his 1938 collection of Jewish folk music, the goal of ethnographic documentation had been replaced with that of propaganda. The new collection was published without any introduction, conclusion, annotations, lists of informants, or any other information regarding sources or methodology. In contrast to the 1934 work, the new edition did not even purport to present the results of a scientific investigation. Instead, the collection was published with the goal of popularizing traditional folk songs deemed appropriate for the new era, and of introducing new "Soviet folk songs" to the populace. Fefer did not even have any credentials in ethnomusicology; his task was to render popular songs appropriate for Soviet audiences and probably to compose the lyrics to new songs that could be introduced to the masses.

Similar policies informed the other three collections: none represented scientific attempts to collect and analyze the songs of the people. The Beregovskii-Fefer collection was the only collection of the four to include musical transcriptions; the remaining three presented only the lyrics, as though the only significance of Jewish folk songs were their political and social commentary. In stark contrast to academic ethnomusicological work, the purpose of the collections published between 1938 and 1940 was to disseminate new songs to the people rather than to amass old songs from the people. Although songs of romance, joy, and daily life dominate the collections, political songs form a significant proportion.

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[51] Yekhezkel Dobrushin (1883-1953) was one of the most prolific Yiddish literary critics and dramatists of his generation and a staunch defender of the party line in Yiddish literary circles. He had first been introduced to socialist circles in the early 1900s when he was studying at the Sorbonne in Paris. He returned to Russia in 1909 and in 1916 helped found the Kiev Culture League. In 1920 Dobrushin moved to Moscow where he became secretary of the Yiddish Writers Union and an ardent promoter of the new Soviet Yiddish literature and theater.

[52] Dobrushkin, *Sovetishe yidishe folks-lider* (Moscow, 1939).

[53] Abram Yuditskii (1886-1943) was a respected folklorist, historian, and literary critic. Prior to the 1917 revolution, Yuditskii was active as a Bundist pamphleteer, serving as a contributor and editor for several socialist journals in St. Petersburg, Vilna, and Minsk. In 1920 he began working on Jewish Culture at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, under whose auspices he authored numerous works on Soviet Yiddish writers, including monographs on Shmuel Halkin, David Bergelson, and Der Nister. In the early 1930s he began work on a historical study of Jewish revolutionary movements, and in 1940 published his *Studies on Ancient Jewish History*. Yuditskii also wrote extensively on Jewish folklore.

[54] Yekhezkel Dobrushin and Abram Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider* (Moscow, 1940).

[55] Moisei Khashchevatskii and Der Nister, *Yidishe folkslider* (Odessa, 1940).

[56] Moisei Khashchevatskii (1897-1943?)—a Yiddish Soviet poet, translator into Yiddish of the works of Lermontov, Pushkin, and Byron. Between 1934 and 1939 Khashchevatskii published no less than twenty books, including studies of Yiddish drama, literature, and music; collections of his own poetry; and a travel description of the Jewish Autonomous Region

[57] Der Nister (Pinkhas Kahanovich, 1884-1950), was another one of the most prominent Soviet Yiddish writers and poets. By the 1917 revolution Der Nister was already recognized as a leading Yiddish poet. After participating in some of the avant-garde literary groups that emerged out of Kiev, Der Nister fled the Soviet Union in 1922, settling in Hamburg. In 1925, convinced that the Soviet Union offered unequaled opportunities for Yiddish writers, he returned to Kiev. During the 1930s, Der Nister remained largely aloof from the politics of Yiddish culture; he spent most of the decade working on his magnum opus, *The Family Mashber*, the first volume of which was finally published in 1939.

The authors sought to use genuinely popular Yiddish folk songs to show the hopelessness and bankruptcy of traditional Jewish life and to popularize newly composed songs that confirmed the revolution's role in resurrecting the Jewish people. The themes of the first group of songs can be divided into four general categories: poverty, work, military life/history, and religion.

3. Soviet Folk Music Collections
A. Pre-revolutionary Themes

The themes of poverty, work, and struggle are among the most prominent themes within the collections, comprising 19 percent of the Beregovskii-Fefer work (47 songs); 14 percent of the Dobrushin-Yuditskii work (83 songs); and 33 percent of the Khashchevatskii-Der Nister collection (24 songs) [see Diagram]. Like the stories of Sholem Aleichem, Mendele Mokher Sforim, and Yitzhak Leib Peretz, the songs of hardship mocked the poverty of the pre-revolutionary shtetl, and implicitly called for some type of social justice – a goal in general accordance with communist precepts. Among the most popular of these songs were "Potatoes," which mocks the diet of the poverty-stricken Jews,[58] and "Rent Money," which protests the substandard dwellings for which exorbitant rents were charged. "Rent Money" appears in several different versions in three Soviet compilation, and was popular wherever in the world Yiddish-speakers lived. It was a standard of the Idvocans group, who recorded its adaptation on phonograph. The empathy the song evokes for the poor tenant who is being exploited by his bourgeois landlord appealed to socialist sentiments; yet zealots of socialist realism sometimes criticized its pessimistic tone:

Dire-gelt un oy-oy-oy!	Rent money and oy oy oy,
Dire-gelt un bozhe moy,	Rent money and oh my God,
Dire-gelt un gorodovoy,	Rent money; watch out for the cop,
Dire-gelt muz men tsoln.	Rent money must be paid.
Kumt arayn der balebos	The landlord comes
Mit dem grobn shtenk,	In his hand a note:
Un az me git im keyn dire-gelt,	If you don't pay rent
Shtelt er aroys di betn.	I'll sell your bed...
Farvos zol ikh aykh gebn dire-gelt,	Why must I pay rent,
Az di kikh iz zebrokhn?	When the kitchen is out-of-order?
Farvos zol ikh aykh gebn diregelt,	Why must I pay rent,
Az ikh hob nit af vos tsu kohn?	When I have nothing to cook on?[59]

The poverty of shtetl life was often associated with the plight of the Jewish petty artisan. The most prominent theme in these songs was the fate of the luftmentsh (Yiddish, literally "a person of air," meaning a person without a definite occupation). Although those seeking to construct new positive heroes sometimes deemed the quaint existence, futile

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[58] Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider,* p. 11; Dobrushin and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 323. English translation from Ruth Rubin, *Voices of a People: Yiddish Folk Song* (New York, 1963), p. 279

[59] Dobrushin and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 324; Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-- lider*, pp. 25-26; Khashchevatskii and Der Nister, *Yidishe folkslider*, pp. 68-69. For an English translation see Rubin, *Voices of a People,* pp. 279-280.

dreams, and humorous fate of the luftmentsh counter-revolutionary, the luftmentsh retained his preeminent position in Jewish music throughout the 1930s. His presence was perpetually felt in popular pre-revolutionary worker songs that mocked the inability of the luftmentsh to find a niche for himself in the capitalist system. The most popular of these songs was "I am a little tailor" which satirizes the inability of the tailor to perform his work:

Bin ikh mir a shnayderl,	I am a little tailor,
A nodl kon ikh nit haltn in hant!	But can't hold a needle in my hand,
Shtel ikh mir aroys a viveske,	So I put out my shingle
Az ikh pres gevant…	That I press cloth…[60]

The song was so popular that luftmentshen engaging in other ventures began to compose their own verses based on the same theme. For instance, Khashchevatskii's collection contains verses about a cobbler and fiddler in addition to the ubiquitous tailor, while Beregovskii includes verses about a writer, musician, and seamstress. The variety of forms indicates that the song was widely sung and not simply copied from book to book or from a common source.

A similar song poked fun at the luftmentsh who contemplates engaging in a variety of occupations, only to realize that he lacks the skills or resources for every one. The singer finds that he is simply unemployable:

Zol ikh zayn a rov,	I ought to become a rabbi,
Kon ikh nisht keyn toyre,	But I know no Torah.
Zol ikh zayn a soykher,	I ought to become a merchant,
Hob ikh nisht keyn skhoyre…	But I have no merchandise...
Zol ikh zayn a shoykhet,	I ought to become a slaughterer,
Hob ikh nisht keyn khalef,	But I have no slaughtering knife.
Zol ikh zayn a melamed,	I ought to become a scholar,
Kon ikh nisht keyn alef.	But I don't know the alphabet.[61]

Historical songs, usually about military service in the tsarist army, account for 7 percent of the Beregovskii-Fefer collection (17 songs); 6 percent of the Dobrushin-Yuditskii collection (37 songs); and 7 percent of the Khashchevatskii-Der Nister collection (5 songs) [see Diagram]. Typically these songs lamented the twenty-five years of service to which Jewish children were subjected under Nicholas I. (This does not count the six years of forced military training during which many of the youth succumbed to the pressure to convert to Russian Orthodoxy). Many of these songs lamented the fate of Jewish boys who were captured and handed over to the authorities by agents of the Jewish community seeking to fulfill the disproportionate military quota for Jews:

Firt men mikh arayn	I am brought into
In dem ershtn kheyder,	The first room,
Heyst men mir dort oyston	There they order me
Mayne eygene kleyder.	To take off my own clothes.
Un oy vey, un oy vey	And oy vey, and oy vey
Iz tsu mir gor,	That's it for me,
Vos ikh bin alt gevorn	Until I am
Eyn un tsvantsik yor!	Twenty-one [sic] years older!

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[60] Khashchevatskii, and Der Nister, *Yidishe folkslider*, 49-50; and Beregovskii and Fefer, pp. 16-17. For an English translation see Rubin, *Voices of a People*, p. 60.

[61] Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 44-45.

Un oy vey, un oy vey	And oy vey, and oy vey
Iz tsu mayn velt,	Is my world,
Vos ikh darf dem keyser dinen	That I must serve the tsar
Gor on a groshn gelt!	For not even a penny of pay!

Firt men mikh arayn	I am brought into
In tsveytn kheyder,	The second room,
Heyst men mir onton	They order me to dress
Yevonishe kleyder.	In military clothes.[62]

Other military songs focused on the irony of serving an oppressive tsar:

Vemen veln mir dinen, brider?	Who will we serve, brothers?
Vemen veln mir dinen, brider?	Who will we serve, brothers?
Dem rusishn keyser, brider,	The Russian tsar, brothers!
Dem rusishn keyser, brider,	The Russian tsar, brothers!
Dem rusishn keyser dinen iz nit gut,	It's no good to serve the Russian Tsar
Vayl er tut zikh bodn in undzer blut.	Because he bathes in our blood.[63]

The final category of traditional songs to be discussed here are songs that in the Soviet period were characterized as anti-religious. This category includes not only songs specifically criticizing traditional Jewish practice but also those songs with anti-religious connotations. The Dobrushin-Yuditskii collection, for instance, includes 14 songs (2 percent of the collection) that specifically mock Jewish practice, but anti-religious themes punctuate many more songs throughout the work. Beregovskii and Fefer include a category entitled "humor and satire," which is composed of 14 songs (6 percent of the collection), all of which mock religion in some form or other. Once again, anti-religious themes can be found in other songs as well.

The Khashchevatskii-Der Nister collection has no section dedicated to songs about religion, but is also punctuated with critiques of traditional religious practice. Finally, the deliberate neglect of liturgical music, songs about Jewish festivals, and Hasidic melodies gives these compilations an anti-religious connotation.

Many of the "anti-religious" songs were directed at the Hasidim. Hasidic rebbes were criticized in particular for trying to hold back progress and for preventing their followers from benefiting from technological innovations. One song, for instance, implies that the rebbes believe their alleged supernatural powers render technology superfluous:

Kum aher, du filozof,	Come here, you philosopher,
Mit dayn ketsishn moykhl,	With your kitten's brain,
Kum aher tsum rebns tish	Come here to the rebbe's table
Un lern zikh do seykhl.	And learn some sense.

A dampfish hostu oysgetrakht	You invented a steamship
Un nevst dermit zikh iber;	And crossed over with it.
Der rebe shpreyt zayn tikhl oys	The rebbe spreads his kerchief

| Un geyt dem yam ariber. | And walks over the sea.[64] |

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[62]Dobrushin and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 307. For a different version see Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 104-105.

[63]Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 100-101. For a different version see Khashchevatskii and Der Nister, *Yidishe folkslider*, p. 90.

[64]Dobrushin and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 240; Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 378-379.

Other anti-religious songs spurned the role of the divine in worldly affairs, proclaiming instead the all-encompassing influence of the working class:

Mir darfn nit keyn keyser,	We don't need any tsar,
Mir darfn nit keyn got.	We don't need any God,
Mir veln bafrayen	We will celebrate
Rabochi narod.	The working people.[65]

Anti-religious connotations can also be discerned in the differences between songs included in both Beregovskii's 1934 collection and his 1938 collection. In his 1938 collection, Beregovskii removed religious references from songs that had previously appeared in his earlier collection. Although the few references to God in the 1934 collection were either bitter or ironic, even these seemed too offensive four years later. The New Soviet Jew was not expected to love or disdain the divine, but simply to disregard it. For instance, the song "Don't Bring Me Food and Drink, Mama" appeared in 1934 as:

Keyn esn un keyn trinken, mama	Don't bring me food and drink, mama,
Ikh gey arum shtendik, shtendik veynendik	I go around always, always, weeping.
Ikh freg nor ba dir, tayere got	I ask you, dear God,
Farvos zol zayn mayn khosn a soldat?	Why must my fiancé be a soldier?
Ikh vel zikh tsushteln a leyterl	I'll put up a ladder
Un ikh vel aroyfkrikhn tsu got	And climb up to God
Ikh vel im nor fregn ayne tsvey-dray verten	I'll just ask him a couple of words
Farvos zol zany mayn khosn a soldat?	Why must my fiancé be a soldier? [66]

In the 1938 version the appeals to God were removed, and instead the petitioner asks a rhetorical question that receives no answer:

Keyn esn un keyn trinken, mama, nem mikh nit,	Don't bring me food and drink, mama,
Ikh bin mit mayne heyse trern, oy vey, zat.	I am fed up with my fervent tears, oy vey.
Ikh freg un freg, un keyner entfert nit,	I ask and ask and nobody answers,
Farvos zol zayn mayn khosn a soldat?	Why must my fiancé be a soldier?[67]

Other songs reflected the New Soviet Jew's alleged disregard for the Sabbath. The New Soviet Jew, it was hoped, would live according to nature's calendar, paying no attention to religious holy days. One song for instance, proudly proclaims:

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[65]Khashchevatskii and Der Nister, *Yidishe folkslider*, p. 104; Dobrushin and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 367.

[66]Beregovski, *Old Jewish Folk Music*, p. 165 (music), p. 233 (lyrics), p. 266 (English translation).

[67]Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider* , p. 111.

Hob ikh mir a tatn,	I have a father,
Shpant er ayn di ferd,	He harnesses the horses
Un afile shabes	Even on the Sabbath
Akert er di erd. [68]	He plows the land. [68]

These songs of poverty, work, military life, and religious resentment invariably painted a dismal picture of life in tsarist Russia. They were simple ditties; classic examples of what Soviet writers would term the "pre-proletarian psychology of Jewish workers." They represented the people's spontaneous expressions of frustration in a humorous light; "laughter through tears" to borrow Sholem Aleichem's famous phrase. There is little doubt that many of these songs were genuinely popular and accurately reflected the sentiments of the people who sang them. Indeed, they drew from pre-revolutionary folk material expressing the frustrations of the working class and bitterness towards the perceived oppressors (usually the tsar, the landlord, the boss, or sometimes the rabbinical authorities). In fact, many of these songs had appeared previously in the folk music collections against which Beregovskii railed in his introduction to Jewish Musical Folklore and were already well known among Jewish audiences worldwide. [69] Although, they formed a significant proportion of the folk material collected in the late 1930s, they presented only the denigration of the old lifestyle.

B. New Themes

Once the life of the old shtetl had been destroyed to the satisfaction of communist zealots, it was deemed necessary to devote resources to the construction of a new life. The songs of the New Soviet Jew would need to express these sentiments in more "conscious" terminology. They would need to express the hopes and aspirations of Soviet Jews, who have moved beyond their shtetl existence to find new lives in the industrialized communist world. The new Soviet folk songs were intended to agitate, to impel their audiences to live their lives in accordance with Soviet mores of the late 1930s. The remainder of songs to be discussed here deal with the glorification of life in the Soviet Union. Four themes were particularly stressed: 1) factory work; 2) collective farms; 3) equality; and 4) Stalin.

Throughout the 1930s rapid industrialization was promoted as a triumphal achievement of Soviet modernization. Stakhanovites and udarniki, members of shock brigades, were celebrated as manifestations of the New Soviet Man. [70] Like all people of the Soviet empire, Jewish artisans were enticed to abandon their workshops for factory floors, where they could leave their daily struggles to eke out a living and participate instead in the greater goal of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. With the move toward industrial production, many Jews clung tenaciously to their traditional occupations, merely transposing their work from the workbench to the factory. Thus Jews, who had long been known for being tailors, continued to concentrate in the sewing industry. This switch to a mechanized

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[68] Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, 460-461. For a similar songs see Dobrushin and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 426.

[69] Among songs related to work, hardship and poverty, "Dire gelt," "Of bri," "Zuntig bulbes," "Hamavdl beyn koydesh lekhol," "Kum nor aher," "Bin ikh mir a shnayderl," "Kh'ob dir gezogt," "Di baleboste geyt arayn," "Eyder ikh leyg mikh shlofen," "Zits ikh mir bay der arbeyt," and "Tsi hot ir gehert" had all been previously published in Y. L. Cahan, *Yidishe folkslider mit melodien* (New York: The International Library Publishing Co., 1912). "Of bri," "Slushay ver iz do," "Hamavdl beyn koydesh lekhol," "Got du got derbaremdiker," "Hob ikh mir a boyd," and others had previously been published in Ginzburg and Marek, *Evreiskiia narodnyia pesni*.

[70] For Stakhanovism see Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the politics of productivity in the USSR* (Cambridge, 1988). For the culture of industrialization in general see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995).

occupational realm was reflected in new versions of old folk songs. For instance, the famous folk ditty "With a Needle, Without a Needle," in which a poor solitary tailor proudly sews his own Sabbath clothing, was reoriented for the modern factory worker. The song appeared in Beregovskii's 1934 collection as:

Mit a nodl, on a nodl	With a needle, without a needle,
Ney ikh mir bekoved godl	I sew with great pride.
Zitsn zikh ikh mir a fis of a fis	I sit with my legs crossed
Vayl mayn arbet is tsuker zis.	Because my work is sugar sweet.
Ikh ney un ney a gantse vokh	I sew and sew a whole week
Un ney mir oys a parizer lokh	And sew a Parisian hole.
Tsien tsi ikh mir di fastrige	I pull together my basting
Un ikh es mir di mamelige	And eat grits.
Shabes gey ikh aroys vi in posek shteyt	On the Sabbath I go out like the Bible says
In di eygene bgodim vos 'khob aleyn geneyt.	In my own clothes, that I sewed myself.[71]

In later collections, including the 1938 Beregovskii-Fefer work, the allusion to the Sabbath and the Bible had been removed, and the song had been reoriented toward the life of the factory worker:

Mashines klapn, royshn, klingn	Machines clatter, roar and ring
A nay lidl vel ikh zingen.	A new song I will sing.
Mit a nodl, on a nodl,	With a needle, without a needle,
Ney ikh mir bekoved godl.	I sew with great pride.
A lidl zingt der nayer neyer,	The new sewer sings a song
A shnaydersh lidl fun konveyer.	A tailor's song of the conveyer...
Neyt zshe, vayber, neyt geshmak,	Sew then, women, sew with spirit
A pidzshak nokh a pidzshak.	Jacket after jacket.[72]

Another work song included in Dobrushin's 1939 collection purports to have been transcribed from a "worker from factory number 4" in Bobruisk. The song praises Stalin in the hopes of exciting fellow Stakhanovites:

Az ikh vel bazingen Stalinen dem groysn,	I will sing to the great Stalin,
Vi motorn veln mayne lider royshn.	Like a motor my songs will roar.
Mayne lider, az Stakhanovtses veln hern,	When Stakhanovites hear my songs,
Vet zey in hartsn likhtik, varem vern.	Their hearts will be radiant and warm.[73]

Songs about Jewish life on collective farms were even more common than those extolling factory work. The promotion of Jewish settlement on the land, which had started in tsarist times, was expanded into a full-fledged campaign under the Bolsheviks. The campaign began in the mid 1920s under the auspices of the Committee for the Settlement of Jews on the Land (KOMZET), and soon achieved genuine popularity both within and beyond the Soviet Union. Many Jews and non-Jews alike saw agricultural settlement as a panacea for the economic stress plaguing the Jewish population. They, like their labor Zionist opponents, attributed Jewish poverty to centuries of detachment from the soil and a

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[71] Beregovski, *Old Jewish Folk Music*, pp. 137-38 (music), p. 221 (lyrics), p. 259 (English translation).

[72] Dobrushin and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 464. See also Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 468. For an English translation see Rubin, *Voices of a People*, p. 407.

[73] Dobrushin, *Sovetishe yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 27-28.

neglect of organic labor on the land. While the movement achieved only modest results on the ground, its real success was in revolutionizing cultural themes and stereotypes: the Jewish farmer came to replace the urban luftmentsh as the protagonist of countless books, plays, movies, and songs.[74] Dobrushin and Yuditskii included twenty-four songs about collective farms, while Beregovskii and Fefer included seven [see Diagram]. One of the most famous of these new labor songs was "When You Go To Sevastopol" which glorified the collective farm Dzhankoi, one of several Jewish collective farms erected in the Crimea.[75] Other songs celebrated those who made collectivization possible, while ignoring the millions of lives lost in the process:

Khaveyrim un khavertes,	Comrades, men and women,
Kolvirtnikes un kolvirtnitses	Collective farmers, men and women,
Fun gantsn Ratnfarband,	From the entire Soviet Union,
Tsuzamen lomir geyn ale banand	Let us all go together
Mit freylekhe lider un gezang	With joyous songs and chants,
Dem khaver Stalinen gekhn a dank,	And give thanks to Comrade Stalin
Vos hot undz in kolvirtn bazetst,	Who settled us in collective farms.
Zayn nomen zol zayn hoykh geshetst!	His name should be highly valued![76]

In 1928 a campaign was begun to encourage Jewish settlement in Birobidzhan, a desolate region in the Far East, which was officially named the Jewish Autonomous Region on May 7, 1934.[77] Although actual Jewish migration to the region lagged far behind its supporter's hopes, promotion of the Birobidzhan project was a momentous undertaking. Songs glorifying the Soviet Jewish Autonomous Region were considered to be an important means of encouraging migration to this substitute Zion. Children were taught marching songs at school that proclaimed "We are all friends here/ We all speak the same language" in "Biro, biro, biro, biro, biro Birobidzhan," while parents soothed their infants to sleep with the lullaby, "Sleep Soundly in Mongol Land," a reference to the region's proximity to the Mongolian border.[78] Typically Birobidzhan songs were structured around a narrative in which a migrant would tell of his alleged conversion from a luftmentsh in the shtetl to a productive worker in Birobidzhan. One song, for instance, written in first person, purports to be an account of how a simpleton from the shtetl left his hometown for Birobidzhan where he now lives luxuriously and "at one with nature" while factory machines produce immense wealth for the people:

Kh'bin durkhgeforn gants Sibir,	I traveled through all of Siberia
Farbay taykhn, berg, Ural…	Past rivers, mountains, the Urals...
Vi derlebt men tsu kumen keyn Birobidhzan,	To live to see Birobidzhan,
Far mir iz dort der bester plan…	For me that is the best plan...
Ikhh gey in vald klaybn nis,	I go to the forest to gather nuts,
Ikh shlep mit zikh gantse zek.	I take a whole sack with me.

[74] For the movement to settle Jews on the land see Allan Laine Kagedan, *Soviet Zion: The Quest for a Russian Jewish Homeland* (New York, 1994).

[75] Dobrushin and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 423-24; Beregovskii and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 452-53; Khashchevatskii and Der Nister, *Yidishe folkslider*, pp. 115-16; Rubin, *Voices of a People*, p. 410.

[76] Dobrushin and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 438.

[77] For more on Birobidzhan see: Jacob Lvavi (Babitzky), *Ha-hityashvut ha-yehudit be-birobidzhan* (The Jewish colonization in Birobidjan) (Jerusalem, 1965); Robert Weinberg, *Stalin's Forgotten Zion; Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland: An Illustrated History, 1928-1996* (Berkeley, 1998).

[78] "Ruth Rubin Collection," Library of Congress Music Section, LWO 12393 R29 A2.

Ikh shtey bam Amur un khap zikh fish,	I stand by the Amur and catch fish
Tsum guts iz nito keyn ek…	There is no end to the goodness...
Git a kuk a shnayder-fabrik,	Take a look at the textile factory,
Me neyt alts, ney un ney,	It sews everything, sews and sews,
Mashines naye, dos lebn iz a mekhaye,	New machines, life is a pleasure,
Es lebt zikh gut un fray.	Life is good and free. [79]

Similar depictions of pastoral bliss permeated socialist realist paintings, films and novels.

In addition to serving in the factories and collective farms, the New Soviet Jew was expected to fight in the Red Army.[80] In contrast to the tsarist army, which was portrayed as an oppressive institution whose draft was feared by parents and children alike, all Soviet citizens were expected to feel nothing but pride and joy when their children leave for the barracks. Parents were taught lullabies promising their children a rewarding career as a Red Army soldier:

Kemfn zoltsu,	You must fight
Kind mayn liber,	Child, my love
Far sovetnmakht,	For Soviet power.
Zayn vestu	You will become
A held, a giber,	A hero, a champion
Mit dayn zig in shlakht.	With your victory in battle.[81]

Another category of songs presented integrative propaganda rather than agitational propaganda in that they aimed to convince the audience to accept social myths as reality. This was a common attribute of socialist realist art: audiences were subjected to an idealized portrait of the surrounding world, which, it was hoped, would become so infused within the collective psyche that the myth would be confused with reality. One of the dominant themes of socialist realist art in general, and Jewish music in particular, was the betterment of life. Stalin's famous 1936 statement that "life is getting better; life is getting happier," inspired not only Russian mass songs,[82] but also formed a predominant theme in Yiddish music. In the midst of the Great Terror of 1937-1939, as millions of innocent victims were disappearing into the Gulag whirlwind, Yiddish songs proclaimed:

Mir fayern dem Oktiaber-yontev,	We celebrate the October holiday,
Es falt der ershter shney,	The first snow falls,
Mir hobn far keynem keyn moyre nit,	We have no fear of anything
Es firt undz di partey…	The Party guides us...
Dos lebn iz gevorn beser,	Life is getting better,
Dos lebn iz gevorn freylekh,	Life is getting happier,
Gey ikh mir a tantsl	I do a little jig
Mit mayn troyke meydlekh.	With my troika of girls.[83]

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[79] Dobrushin, and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, 466-68. For an alternative version see Rubin, *Voices of a People*, pp. 412-413.

[80] A whole book of Yiddish songs about the Red Army *Yidishe folks-lider vegn der royter armey* (Yiddish folk songs about the Red Army) was being prepared for print in Minski in 1938), edited by Zelig Akselrod, prepared by the Foklore Section of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Belorussian S.S.R.. However, it was not published. Proofs of the collection are located in the Central Archive of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus. (Copy of the collection is located in the archive of the Centre for Research and Documentation of East European Jewry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, file No. 1,635).

[81] Dobrushin, and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 409.

[82] See James von Geldern, and Richard Stites, *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays and Folklore, 1917-1953* (Bloomington, 1995), p. 237.

[83] Beregovskii, and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 442-43; Dobrushin, and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 464.

One of the most popular such songs was "The Past was a Time," which Khashchevatskii claims to have recorded on an expedition to the Kalinindorf Jewish district in Ukraine.

Amol iz geven a tsayt,   The past was a time
Zaynen geven asakh oremlayt,   When there was lots of poverty.
Un haynt zaynen mir ale raykh,   But today we are all rich,
Un keyner iz tsu undz nit glaykh.   And none of us unequal.
Tra-la-la.   Tra-la-la.

Farmeglekh zaynen mir yetst,   We are now all well-to-do,
Tsayt mir hobn Nikolayen aropgezetst.   Since we deposed Nicholas.
Mir zaynen beemes ale raykh,   We are all really rich,
Un keyner iz tsu undz nit glaykh.   And none of us unequal.
Tra-la-la.   Tra-la-la.

Es haybt zikh a zavod nokh a zavod,   Factory after factory springs up,
Un of a pustn ort vaksn oys a shtot.   And a city arises on an empty lot.
Mir zaynen haynt ale raykh,   Today we are all rich,
Un keyner iz tsu undz nit glaykh.   And none of us unequal.
Tra-la-la.   Tra-la-la.

Es vaksn di kolvirtn umetum,   Collective farms grow everywhere,
Un groys iz undzer yontov, undzer rum.   And great is our festivity, our glory.
Mir zaynen haynt ale raykh,   Today we are all rich,
Un keyner iz tsu undz nit glaykh.   And none of us unequal.
Tra-la-la.   Tra-la-la.[84]

These songs rejoiced at the Soviet Union's alleged fulfillment of all the goals of the revolution as expressed by Lenin in the Spring of 1917: land, bread, and peace. The fulfillment of these promises echoed and reinforced Stalin's declaration that socialism had been "achieved and won." However, while the promise of land, bread, and peace may have rallied the Russian workers and peasants to the Bolsheviks in the revolutionary era, the Jewish population was more enticed by the promise of equality. It was the alleged fulfillment of this promise about which Jews sung to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the revolution:

Mir zaynen shoyn mit mentshn glaykh   We are now all equal people
Shoyn tsvantsik yor.   For twenty years already.
Mir zaynen fray, mir zaynen raykh,   We are free, we are rich
Shoyn tsvantsik yor.   For twenty years already.
Di felder zaynen raykh mir broyt   The fields are rich with bread
Shoyn tsvantsik yor.   For twenty years already.
Nito keyn tsores un nit keyn noyt   There is no sorrow or hardship here
Shoyn tsvantsik yor.   For twenty years already.
M'iz ale glaykh—der Rus, der Yid,   We are all equal--the Russian and the Jew
Shoyn tsvantsik yor.   For twenty years already.
M'iz ale glaykh on untersheyd   We are all equal without difference
Shoyn tsvantsik yor.   For twenty years already .
Un ruik shlofn mir banakht   In peace we sleep at night
Shoyn tsvantsik yor.   For twenty years already.
Mit alts bazorgt di ratnmakht   Soviet power provides for all

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[84] Beregovskii, and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 446-47; Khashchevatskii, and Der Nister, *Yidishe folkslider*, pp. 113-14; Dobrushin, and Yuditskii, *Yidishe Folks-Lider*, p. 428.

Shoyn tsvantsik yor.	For twenty years already. [85]

Soviet Jewish parents were even expected to lull their children to sleep with political platitudes, as in the following lullaby from Dobrushin's 1939 collection:

Shlof, mayn kind, makh dayne eygelekh tsu,	Sleep, my child, close your eyes,
In a land geborn bistu,	You were born in a land,
Vu ale lebn un otemen fray,	Where everybody lives and breathes free.
Zolstu ir zany shtendik getray,	You must always be loyal to her,
Zolstu ir zany shtendik ibergegebn	You must always entrust her
Mit gantsn layb un gantsn lebn.	With your entire body and your entire life.
Shlof mayn kind, shlof, nit veyn,	Sleep my child, sleep. Don't cry,
Far sovetishe kinder iz veynen nit sheyn.	It's not nice for Soviet children to cry.
Sovetishe kinder darfn freylekh zayn.	Soviet children must be happy.[86]

It is not only the young who were supposed to cherish Soviet power. Another song in Dobrushin's collections, which he claims to have transcribed from a 113 year-old man from Odessa, teaches the reader that the elderly, too, have a stake in the Soviet future. Making reference to the 1936 constitution, the informant sings:

Di naye konstitutsie, vos er hot gegebn,	The new constitution that he has given
Iz farn likhtikn goldenem lebn.	Provides us with a bright and golden life.
Fun ale 170 milion mentshn biz eynem,	From all 170 million people to a single soul
Er hot nit fargesn in keynem, in keynem.	He has forgotten noone, noone.
Far Stalinen dem firer, zol lebn,	For Stalin, the leader, it's worth living
Afile ikh, vos ikh bin 113 yor alt,	Even I, who am 113 years old,
Bin greyt opgebn dos lebn,	Am ready to devote my life
Afile di minut, bald!	Even this minute, soon!
Dem libn Stalin vil ikh a matone gebn,	I want to give a present to the beloved Stalin
Er zol mayne yorn derlebn.	That he should live to be as old as I.[87]

The central image in all of Soviet society was that of "Papa Stalin," whose ubiquitous presence in Russian culture was matched in Jewish culture, including song.[88] Among hagiographical Yiddish songs extolling Stalin's alleged virtues, the dictator was especially praised for emancipating the Jews and for promoting the brotherhood of all Soviet peoples, for bringing freedom to all:

Er iz der kligster of der erd,	He is the smartest on the earth,
Er iz der hekhster fun di berg.	He is the highest of the mountains.
Ale zingen mir di lid,--	We all sing the song,
Der Uzbek un der Tadzshik,	The Uzbek, and the Tadzhik,
Der Ukrainer, der Yid,--	The Ukrainian, and the Jew,
Vegn Stalinen di lid.	The song about Stalin.[89]

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[85] Dobrushin, and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 439; Khashchevatskii, and Der Nister, *Yidishe folkslider*, p. 120; Beregovskii, and Fefer, *Yidishe folks-lider*, pp. 474-75.

[86] Dobrushin, *Sovetishe yidishe folks-lider*, p. 20.

[87] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[88] In 1940 a collection titled *Yidishe folks-lider vegn Stalinen* (Yiddish folk songs about Stalin) was published in Moscow, with preface by Dobrushin. Ten thousand copies were printed.

[89] Dobrushin, and Yuditskii, *Yidishe folks-lider*, p. 397.

Stalin! Fun knekhtshaft hostu felker bafrayt,	Stalin! You freed the people from slavery,
Oykh dos Yidishe folk in di rekht oysgeglaykht;	And enlightened the Jewish people with justice;
Mit hamer un hak in der hant	With hammer and ax in our hands
Mir boyen dos gliklekhe land!	We're building a joyous land![90]

Songs explicitly glorifying the Soviet Union are a notable and often disturbing innovation in Yiddish folk song collections. It is unclear to what extent these songs were actually sung by the populace. In his 1939 collection, Dobrushin claims to have transcribed many of the songs from informants, most of whom are named. This practice authenticates the examples as legitimate expressions of popular moods. The assumption that Dobrushin was accurately recording the voices of the people, though, does not necessarily imply that these voices stemmed from spontaneous expressions. Throughout the 1930s, workers, collective farmers, and schoolchildren were taught appropriate revolutionary songs by Bolshevik agitators and teachers. Indeed, it was the stated purpose of the song collections of the late 1930s to expand upon the repertoires of agitators. When Dobrushin published his next collection in 1940 the pretense of presenting the results of ethnographic work was dropped. Although in his introduction Dobrushin claimed to be recording authentic songs of the people, his collection provided no evidence of provenance. The same can be said for the Fefer-Beregovskii work and the Khashchevatskii-Der Nister work. Beregovskii, in particular, was a professional ethnomusicologist who had just written a treatise on methods of field research the year before publishing his collection. His failure to apply these research methods to his own work combined with his collaboration with a professional writer suggests that at least some of the material presented in Yiddish Folk Songs was composed and not just transcribed. The controversies that surrounded Idvocans' tour to Moscow in 1937 and the resulting conferences calling for a rejuvenation of Jewish folk music further suggest that the folk music compilations of the late 1930s were deliberate attempts to modernize Jewish folk motifs by conforming them to Soviet norms.

This hypothesis does not preclude the possibility that Soviet Yiddish songs were genuinely popular among the people. In fact, in the 1950s and 1960s when the ethnomusicologist Ruth Rubin recorded songs remembered by Russian-Jewish immigrants to Canada and America, many of her informants sung Soviet songs about Birobidzhan and factory work, and at least one remembered a song in praise of Stalin. The majority of songs she recorded, though, were based on universal themes of romance, joy, and daily struggle.[91] Indeed, these simple ditties remained the most popular songs in the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s. With the exception of Dobrushin's 1939 work, which was dedicated exclusively to Soviet Yiddish music, each of the collections under discussion included a majority of apolitical songs. Thirty-two percent of the Beregovskii-Fefer collection (78 songs) was dedicated to songs of love and marriage, six percent (15 songs) was dedicated to family life, and 14 percent (33 songs) to lullabies and children's ditties. Dobrushin and Yuditskii dedicated 31 percent of their collection to love songs (182 songs), 9 percent to songs about

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[90] Ibid., p. 469.

[91] The Ruth Rubin recordings have been deposited in the Library of Congress. For Soviet songs see LWO 12393 R16 B1; LWO 12393 R20 A2; and LWO 12393 R29 A2.

family life (52 songs), and 11 percent (66 songs) to lullabies and children's songs. In both cases, love songs outnumber every other category including Soviet songs [see Diagram] These songs also continued to dominate the repertoires of professional singers. Popular performing artists, like Mikhail Aleksandrovich (b. 1914), Zinovii Shulman (1904-1976), Mikhail Epelbaum (1894-1957), Anna Guzik (1909-1994), and Sidi Tal (1912-1983), continued to perform Yiddish songs of romance and bring joy to adoring audiences in concert halls throughout the Soviet Union and even to release phonographic recordings of popular Yiddish songs like "Dance a Little With Me," "A Groom Without a Bride," "Play, Musicians," and "An Old Lullaby."[92] Despite the efforts of Soviet writers to invent a politicized repertoire of new Yiddish folk music, humorous and sentimental songs poking fun at daily struggles and celebrating the simple joys of life continued to fill Jewish homes, concert halls, and even published collections of Yiddish folk music.

Diagram

Thematic Classification of Yiddish Folk Songs

	Beregovskii-Fefer (1938)	Dobrushin (1939)	Dobrushin-Yuditskii (1940)	Khashchevatskii-Der Nister (1940)
love/weddings	78 (32%)	0	182 (31%)	0
lullabies/children	33 (14%)	0	66 (11%)	19 (26%)
poverty/work	47 (19%)	0	83 (14%)	24 (33%)
family/daily life	15 (6%)	0	52 (9%)	8 (11%)
war/history	17 (7%)	0	37 (6%)	5 (7%)
Soviet songs, thereof: collective farms Red Army Stalin* other**	20 (8%) 7 2 2 9	24 (100%) 4 3 12 5	112 (19%) 24 11 25 52	8 (11%) 1 2 2 3
other	34 (14%)	0	57 (10%)	9 (12%)

* Includes only songs fully devoted to praise of Stalin. Songs merely mentioning Stalin are included in other categories.
** Includes songs about equality, freedom, daily life, and Birobidzhan.

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[92] All these recordings can be found in the National Sound Archives of Israel.