The language choices of the Jewish National Enterprise and the Zionist movement in 1897

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The Language Choices of the Jewish National Enterprise and the Zionist movement in 1897

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

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by

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2009
The Thesis of Aleksandra Innokentievna Maslennikova is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2009
“The People and the Language”

The fate of my forebears, like ashes, is bitter and bleak. Almighty, I pray my grandchildren avoid its return. For me, mother tongue is a language I never could speak, And there is no hope I will ever be able to learn. So, what does it start with, this gloomy, calamitous thread: With mass executions or books piling torched on the floor? A language will die when the people who speak it are dead. A people will die when the language is spoken no more.

My rainy November is ceding to snowy frontiers. A house deserted is open for theft and abuse. Like some lonely tourist who wanders in sadness for years, I walk in the old Jewish quarters without any Jews. And why do I live, having long ago lost every shred Of grandfathers’ songs and traditional family lore? A language will die when the people who speak it are dead. A people will die when the language is spoken no more.

A poem forever unread gathers dust on a shelf. And gone are the charmingly innocent songs full of mirth So hear, o Israel, thy erring children yourself, Thy children who took their speech with them into the earth. The planet cannot switch rotation to clockwise instead. A spring that is already dry has no water to pour A language will die when the people who speak it are dead. A people will die when the language is spoken no more.

And yet, you should not cry in vain, for we still have no proof That death, in its duel with life, has secured the prize
As long as the fiddler continues to play on the roof
And children keep singing their chorus to silence the sighs.
As long as we look for a way through the fire we dread
And there is a student who finds ancient books to explore
A language will die when the people who speak it are dead.
A people will die when the language is spoken no more.

Aleksandr Gorodnitsky, 2007

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This study examines the languages of Jews in Europe and Palestine on the one hand, and the Jewish intelligentsia within the Zionist movement on the other. I compare the linguistic preferences of different social strata within European Jewry.

The Zionist movement claimed to address the needs and aspirations of the common people. However, in regard to the language issue, Zionism was far from being rooted in everyday practices of the Jewish common people.

The major conclusion from this study is twofold. Firstly, I argue that the choice of
German as the official language of the Zionist movement was stipulated by the political situation and considerations, particularly Germany’s geopolitical interests in Palestine. I suggest that in a different political situation, Russian would have been chosen as the official language of the movement, given the prominent role that Russian Zionists played in Zionist activities in general and on the Congresses in particular.

Secondly, I argue that the Zionist policy against Yiddish was a wrong move from the beginning. Instead of renouncing Yiddish at the First Congress and thereafter, the Zionists could have established this language as the official language of the Diaspora, of Jews dispersed outside Palestine. Thus, by the time of the birth of the State of Israel Jews would have not just cultivated the new, Eretz-Israeli culture and mentality with Hebrew as the national language, but would have also kept and maintained culture developed through the centuries along with its language, Yiddish.
Introduction.

Within the history of nationalism, the language issue has been given pride of place since the eighteenth century. According to the major theorists of nationalism, language, identity, and the nation are intrinsically interconnected. German romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had closely linked language and the construction of national identity. German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, in his influential writings, linked the identity of language and nationhood, claiming that a people cannot exist without its language. Likewise, Herder's contemporary, the famous philosopher, linguist, and statesman Wilhelm von Humboldt, called language “the spirit of the nation.” In the early nineteenth century, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, in his *Addresses to the German Nation*, formulated a chauvinistic idea of the superiority of the German language and German nation. Fichte emphasized that “men are formed by language far more than language is formed by men.” Although other European intellectuals espoused similar ideas at that time, Germans were especially keen to promote German as the language of sophistication and culture.

By the early twentieth century a shared opinion among the intellectuals was that language constituted an important factor in modern nationalism. At the same time, the particular role that language played in the emergence of a nation-state was a subject of continuing debates.

The Jewish people, built on cultural memory and language, lent itself as an especially illustrative case for the theorists of nationalism who linked peoplehood with language. As historian Simon Dubnow asserted, “we are the first spiritual nation and we
are autonomous in our culture and in our history. In short, our literature, history, language, and scholarship represent our nation.” Many intellectuals espoused the view that the interdependence of language and people characterized a linguistically homogeneous nation. In the case of Hebrew, the idea of a distinct national language rationalized the Zionist appeals for the revival of Hebrew as a national language. Indeed, in western Europe the processes of nation-building have often been accompanied by the standardization and homogenization of languages. The struggle of the Balkan peoples, such as Greeks, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, and Serbians, for national independence in the late nineteenth century elevated the status of their ethnic languages. This process influenced many Zionists in their aspiration for the revival of Hebrew.

In practice, however, the relationship between language and people was much more complex. In many cases, in order for a people to be formed, a single shared language was not a strict necessity. For example, in Belgium, as well as in Switzerland, people speaking different languages formed a single state. As I discuss at some length in the first chapter, Theodor Herzl initially considered Switzerland as a potential model for the future Jewish state. However, the Swiss model could not fulfill Herzl’s vision of the Jewish state that would unify different ethnic groups of Jews coming into a single nation-state. The three main ethnic groups inhabiting nineteenth-century Switzerland, Germans, French, and Italians, were more or less equally developed in a cultural sense. On the contrary, as I discuss in the first two chapters, the differences between the Jews living in Germany and in the Habsburg Empire and the Jews residing within the Pale of Settlement were much greater than in the case of Switzerland. Because of this cultural heterogeneity of Jews, language, along with religion, became a major unifying factor in the formation
of the Jewish nation-state.

The idea of the close ties between language and people was attractive to many theorists of the nationalist movements. From the revolutions of 1848 European nationalist movements had served as models for the Zionists. On the one hand, European nationalism was seen as an example of both the political revival of a people and the revival of a national language that Zionists could use as a cultural, political and rhetorical resource. On the other hand, the use of the European model brought about an important question: what should the language of the Jewish national enterprise be? Initially, Theodor Herzl himself was not quite sympathetic to the idea of attributing a great symbolic significance to the Hebrew language, or to the language issue in general. However, no matter how hard Herzl tried to put the language question aside from the questions of the movement's policy and politics, the language issue was becoming crucial for the Zionist movement. By the time Zionism turned into a full-blown political movement, language had become a major factor in the political legitimation of the Jewish nation-state.

At the time of the First Congress in 1897, Jews were culturally diverse and spoke many languages. The language alternatives for Zionist activists, including those of the proponents of the Jewish national enterprise and the founders of the Zionist movement, were European and Jewish languages. Potential choices among European languages included German, English, French, and Russian. The two possible choices among Jewish languages were Hebrew and Yiddish. In practice, the Zionists needed to appoint two languages: a European language, which would be the official language of the Zionist movement, and a Jewish language, which would be a language of the national enterprise
The present study focuses on Ashkenazic Jewry, based on the premise that Ashkenazic Jewry constituted an overwhelming majority and thus was in a position to influence the movement to a greater extent than the Sephardic part of the world Jewish population. Therefore, the languages discussed in the thesis are Hebrew, Yiddish, German, and Russian.
In Der Judenstaat of 1896, Theodor Herzl, with the Jewish nationalist movement on his mind, discussed Switzerland as a model of the federal state that maintained different national languages. Interestingly, he belittled the importance of language for national culture: “the nation will be recognized by its faith, not by its language… Every man can preserve the language in which they formulate their thoughts. Switzerland affords conclusive proof of the possibility of a federation of tongues.” In his discussion of the Jewish state, Herzl echoed the contemporary theories of the multinational states, such as Switzerland, Austria-Hungary, and the Russian Empire. In those political units, the national identities were downplayed, if not suppressed, whereas religion was seen as a fundamental unifying factor for nation building.

Somewhat surprisingly, the key figure in Hebrew revival, Eliezer Ben Yehuda, was a proponent of a similar multilingual concept of nationhood. In his article “A Burning Question,” published in the Hebrew journal Ha-Shahar back in 1879, Eliezer ben Yehuda argued that a nation did not necessarily require monolingualism. Resonating with Herzl, Eliezer ben Yehuda disagreed with the idea that language could constitute the core of the nationhood. However, unlike Herzl, Eliezer ben Yehuda took into account the role of Hebrew as a unifying language that can help building the Jewish nationhood. “We, the Hebrews, have an advantage over them [Swiss], for we possess now a language in which we can write anything we wish.”

Herzl was convinced, quite mistakenly, that in most cases the Jewish people spoke the languages of their neighbors. There is no doubt that Herzl acknowledged the
complexity of the language issue. He knew that Jews were dispersed over the world. Hence, no wonder that Herzl’s search for a solution shaped many of the assertions with regard to the national identity that have continued to challenge the Zionist movement for a long time, until nowadays. The solution to the language problem that Herzl proposed in Der Judenstaat was that the Jews should maintain the languages they had learned in their motherlands. The main language of the Jewish state should be the one that was mostly used and that was the most popular. He demanded to “give up using those miserable stunted jargons, those Ghetto languages… for these were the stealthy tongues of prisoners… and the language which proves itself to be of greatest utility for general intercourse will be adopted without compulsion as our national tongue.”

Although Herzl did not specify which language he had in mind in his pamphlet, it is quite clear that he meant one of the European languages, most obviously German. Hebrew as a national language was out of a question for Herzl. As he infamously noted, nobody could buy a railroad ticket using Hebrew, let alone speak it.

Herzl's ambivalence with regard to the role of language in the formation of national identity could attest to the fact that his views on the role of Hebrew in the conceptualization of the Jewish nation-state were rather flexible. Thus, three months after the publication of Der Judenstaat, Herzl authorized its Hebrew translator to include a rather strong statement in the introduction intended for the Hebrew readers. The statement read as follows: "the Jewish State could be established only in Palestine and that the national language could be only Hebrew." Interestingly enough, this statement appeared only in the Hebrew edition. Thus, rather than testifying to Herzl’s pronounced position on the role of the Hebrew language in the Jewish national enterprise, it was
apparently made as a propagandistic statement to win over the sympathies of advocates of the Hebrew revival.

A common view of the nation-state shared by many intellectuals of fin-de-siècle Europe implied the principle of one nation — one state language — one country. Thus, it was obvious for the theorists of the Jewish nation-state that the language issue should be addressed and settled in the due course so to eliminate the vagueness of the possible linguistic pluralism. At the First Zionist Congress, which took place in Basel in 1897, Herzl, along with the Executive Committee, tried to provide ground for the concept of the monolingual policy of the Jewish state. Herzl and the majority of western and central European organizers of the Congress, including the famous physician Max Nordau, Hebrew journalist Saul R. Landau, and David Wolfsohn, belonged to the German-speaking world. Therefore, it is not surprising that the First Congress epitomized a certain German-Western style. This style was expressed in the sense that the most outspoken participants of the Congress used the western European and especially the German models, as the cultural resource in the discussion of the major issues at the Congress, addressing in particular German-speaking Jewry. Moreover, both Herzl’s books, The Jewish State and Altneuland of 1902, represented the visions of a Jewish State for western and central European Jewry. The latter, Ashkenazic Jewry, in 1900 was far more numerous than the tiny remnants of oriental and Sephardic Jewish population in the Muslim lands and the Balkans. However, the majority of Jews were eastern Europeans. Regardless of this fact and in spite of the considerable number of Russian representatives at the Congress, the Zionist movement in general and the First Congress in particular were shaped by German and western European cultural and political attitudes and
This Western style most explicitly manifested in the Zionists' choice of German as the official language of the movement. The locale for the Congress, which was held in the part of Switzerland that bordered Germany, further ensured and amplified the Germanic tenor of the Congress.

Addressing primarily western and central European Jews, Herzl presented German as the main solution to the language issue. For example, back in 1895 Herzl wrote in his diary:

I believe German will be our principal language...I draw this conclusion from our most widespread jargon, 'Judeo-German.' But over there we shall wean ourselves from this ghetto language, too, which used to be the stealthy tongue of prisoners. Our teachers will see to that.¹⁸

Herzl had never seriously contemplated holding the meeting in any language other than German, although he did not have anything in particular against the idea of having French or English as working languages of the Congress.¹⁹

The choice of German was determined by some additional factors as well, which were related to the language background of Jews, in both Europe and Palestine.²⁰ Firstly, Jews in western and central Europe were generally more assimilated and more inclined to the use of the European languages on the daily basis than Jews in eastern Europe. Yiddish, in this respect, was regarded by most of western and central European Jews not even as a language per se, but rather as a corrupted German dialect. Herzl, for example, did not see Yiddish as a true living language. Raised in a well-to-do secular home with German as the main language, he did not attribute any value to Yiddish culture.²¹

The second factor that contributed to the choice of German as the main language of the Congress was related to the fact that the German Jews were more integrated into
the dominant language than eastern European Jews. Jews in western and central Europe had modified Orthodox Judaism and became assimilated into the language and culture of Berlin and Vienna. In their transition from Yiddish to German, these Jews were led by maskilim, the major proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment movement, the Haskalah. Maskilim viewed linguistic acculturation as a prerequisite for Jews’ emancipation and integration into German society. For these progressive Jews, pure Hebrew would be used for religious matters, while pure German would replace Yiddish as a mother tongue, for profane matters.22 If a Jew wanted to be considered a German in the late nineteenth century, she or he had to speak German. The pace of the dominant language (in this case, German) acquisition differed depending on the place of residence, the social and economic class, the level of education, the attitude toward assimilation, and religious commitment.

In order to further assess the linguistic background of European Jewry, a brief sketch of the educational policies towards Jewish education in Western and Central Europe, particularly in Germany and Austria-Hungary, is necessary.

In the late nineteenth century maskilim established a new type of school in Berlin, Breslau, Seesen, Dessau, Wolfenbiittel, Cassel, and Hamburg. In these schools religious instruction was supplemented by secular teaching, and less time was allocated to the study of Hebrew, as parents did not feel that Hebrew was necessary for their children’s future lives.23 Nevertheless, by 1885, 71 textbooks on Hebrew had been published. Yet, the German rabbis were convinced that the “sole justification for teaching Hebrew to Jewish children is the fact that Hebrew is the language of the synagogue service.”24 Overall, most western European Jews shared the view that Hebrew was a dead language,
although as a “classical” language, like classical Greek and Latin, Hebrew continued to hold its prestige among educated Europeans.25

At the very end of the nineteenth century the Austrian-Hungarian government reduced the time allocated to religious instruction in the Jewish schools' curricula. Since the Hebrew language was part of the regular curriculum in Jewish religious schools and, above all, in hederim, the hours allocated for Hebrew were minimized to a great extent at that time.26 Yet, many parents strongly objected to a preponderance of Hebrew in their children’s educational curriculum for fear that it might lead to over-pressure. The common opinion on the subject was that “the children must learn at least enough Hebrew to be able to join in public worship.”27 As a result, by the end of the 1850s the private Jewish religious schools were already dying out in such provinces as Bohemia. At any one time between 1880 and 1914, hardly more than 425 Jewish children received the instruction offered by Prague’s Talmud-Torah school, compared to an average enrollment of nearly 3,000 Jewish pupils in the public primary and secondary schools. 28

The Jews of the Habsburg Empire shared much with the Jews who resided in Germany, as both were seeking entry into the dominant culture to a much greater degree than the eastern European Jews did.29 Importantly, contrary to the situation in Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest, the immigration of poor Russian Jews in Prague did not make them into a significant cultural factor in this city.30 Jews who wanted to enter gentile society in Prague had to choose between Czech and German affiliations. Although in Prague, as well as other central Bohemian cities, the Jewish residents were expected to know Czech, Prague's Jews often preferred the German language and secular German education. Such preponderance was the result of the wide use of German in government,
in trade and commerce, and in public education. The linguistic and cultural Germanization of the Bohemian Jews began in the 1850s, when the government established schools for Jews with German as the language of instruction. In the 1890 census, 73.8 percent of all civilian Jewish citizens of the city of Prague declared German as their everyday language. By contrast, though, in 1900, only 45.3 percent of all the citizens of Jewish origin still indicated German as their everyday language.

Education in Austria was multilingual, based on the major premise that instruction should be provided in the language that the child knew. Prague had a dual system of public schools, one with instruction in Czech and the other with instruction in German. However, the great majority of Prague Jews preferred German primary and secondary schools. In 1890, for example, 97 percent of the 1,863 Jewish pupils in the municipal primary schools attended German institutions.

Many western or central European Jewish intellectuals praised Germany as one of the most educated nations of the world and called for the dissemination of German culture throughout the world. For example, the Austrian Jewish novelist Karl Emil Franzos (1848-1904) insisted on the introduction of German culture to eastern European Jews, although by no means did he advocate the Germanization of the Jews. As Franzos argued, “the duty of German culture in the East is to awaken and promote the cultural strivings of the peoples there, to be like a pole in the garden, on which their own culture can grow and climb.” Another Austrian-Jewish intellectual and feminist, Bertha Pappenheim, agreed that German would be the most easily accessible “language of culture” for Yiddish-speaking Jews. She insisted that the mastery of the language spoken in one's surroundings should be the first priority of a Jew. Although Pappenheim did not
agree that Galician and other eastern European Jews should give up other languages in favor of German, she renounced Yiddish as a mere jargon.

As we see, by the time of the First Congress western and central European Jewry became, if not assimilated, at least acculturated to a great extent. As a result, the language of the Jewish communities in Germany and in the Habsburg Empire was the language of the dominant culture, in this case German. The causes of such transformations were not only political, but also educational, related to the educational policies and politics of both secular and traditional Jewish schools, and the poor condition of Jewish schools, where Jewish languages could be learned.
II. Russian Jewry and the First Zionist Congress.

The founders of the First Zionist Congress, particularly Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau, most likely had no realistic estimate of the percentage of Jews in the Russian Empire. Indeed, the first reasonably reliable empire-wide census of the Russian Empire’s population was held in 1897, but was published and became available only several years later. As the census testified, in the late nineteenth century the Russian Empire had the biggest Jewish population in the world. As many as 5,215,805, or 48.6 percent of the world’s Jews resided in Russia. In comparison, the second largest Jewish population in the world, in Austria-Hungary, totaled 1,860,106. Moreover, even the total of all Jews living in western Europe (885,286) was less than the total of Jewish population in Russia.37

Apparently, Herzl and other European Zionists underestimated the Jewish presence in Russia. Still, they did everything they could to make sure there would be minimal obstacles for eastern European Zionists to attend the Congress. When the plan to hold the Congress in Munich failed because of conflicts with the Jewish Communal Organization, Herzl started to look for alternatives. For him, the chief rationale for the choice of the meeting site would be its accessibility for eastern European Jews.38 Basel had many advantages, mainly because of passive character of its Jewish community, whose resistance or support for Zionism seemed to be very unlikely. From a political point of view, Basel was not as “infamous” as politically active Zurich, for example. As Michael Berkowitz emphasized, in this sense, the primary concern of Herzl and Nordau was to assure the presence of the Russian Jews at the Congress. Such precaution regarding location promised to cause less trouble for Russian Jews to get permission to
The skeptical report of Zionist activist Joshua Buchmil, who had been appointed by Herzl to recruit attendees for the Zionist Congress in Russia, gave an impression of the Russian Jewish population as quite small. Herzl asked Buchmil to speak directly with leading members of Hibbat Zion and encourage them to attend the Congress. Hibbat Zion, the Palestinophile movement, was formed back in 1880s. The movement regarded Leo Pinsker’s *Autoemancipation* of 1882 as its ideological basis, calling for self-liberation and establishment of a territorial center for the Jewish people. Herzl was unaware of Pinsker’s essay, as well as this movement, until 1896. After visiting the centers of Hibbat Zion – approximately two dozen cities and towns in the south and west of Russia – Buchmil estimated that no more than five to six delegates from Russia would be present at the Congress. Contrary to the expectations, more Russian Jews came to the Congress than Buchmil had anticipated. Out of 197 registered delegates of the Congress 66 were Russian Jews. However, many delegates and guests preferred to remain unlisted as Congress’ attendees and were hence unregistered, fearing reprisals from the Russian authorities. Hence, in reality, the number of Russian Jews at the Congress was even larger than official, perhaps constituting one half of all delegates in attendance. Forty-four representatives of Russian Jewry came directly from Russia, others, mostly university students, temporarily or permanently lived abroad at the time of the Congress.

Despite the considerable presence of Russians at the Congress, its representatives’ role at the sessions was not very active. Thus, the influence of the Russian delegation on the decisions of the Congress was not significant.
According to a Russian representative at the Congress, a Hebrew writer and a member of Hibbat Zion, Mordechai Kohen, the Russian delegation did not make itself particularly prominent at the Congress, despite its considerable size. The main reason, as he emphasized, was their ignorance of Congress-Deutsch, or German. Their activity was expressed in internal work rather than public speeches. For example, he wrote that in subsequent years, “when the Russian Jews learned more “Congress-Deutsch,” in which the sessions were conducted, and became accustomed to parliamentary procedures… they were no longer such “model boys” as they had been at the First Congress.” Mordechai Kohen continued that few Russian delegates addressed the First Congress. David Farbshtein of Warsaw reported on the economic condition of Jews, and Gregory Belkovsky reported on the conditions of Jews in Bulgaria. Other most prominent Russian delegates mentioned by Mordechai Kohen included Leo Motzkin, Herman Shapiro, Vladislav Temkin, and Jacob Bernstein-Kogan. They participated only in discussions, speaking primarily in Russian. At the end of the Congress a very emotional speech was made by Max Mandelstam.

The lack of competency in German, though one of the reasons why Russian delegates were not very active in the Congress, was not the only reason for the meagre impact of the Russian representatives on the Congress’ outcomes. Another reason that inhibited Russian delegates was the fear of possible problems with Russian authorities.

True, the argument that the lack of confidence in German was the primary reason of non-active participation of the Russian delegates in most of the Congress’s public forums seems to be correct and quite obvious. Indeed, the teaching of foreign languages in Russia was on a very low level, both in Jewish and non-Jewish schools. In religious
Jewish schools, like hederim and yeshivot, foreign languages were not offered. In the
Crown Jewish schools, foreign languages were taught ineffectively and insufficiently. The
instruction in such Jewish schools was always conducted in Russian. Shmuel Ussishkin,
son of the famous Russian Zionist Menachem Ussishkin, recalls that they had good
teachers at the Iglitski Jewish Gymnasium in Odessa, but it was “rather the exception” in
the whole Pale of Settlement.\(^{45}\) The gymnasium curriculum included six years of German
and five years of French. However, as Shmuel Ussishkin noted, “the results were very
miserable, and graduates of the schools, except for students who had private tutors at
home, knew very little and could not speak, read or write adequately. They had almost no
idea about German or French literature.”\(^{46}\) The Gohman Commerce School in Odessa
was another exception. Jewish writer Saul Borovoi, who studied there, recalled with
pleasure his teachers of foreign languages. German was taught by a polyglot from Riga, a
passionate proponent of the importance of studying foreign languages. However, in lower
grades the teachers of foreign languages were “uneducated and uncultured.”\(^ {47}\)

In his report, Mordechai Kohen mentioned the most prominent Russian delegates.
Against his assertions, however, each of them knew German if not fluently, at least at the
conversational level. Students who could not get a good education at home because of the
deplorable school situation in Russia would go abroad, if they could afford this. They
also learned foreign languages abroad, to complete their education. After completing
studies abroad they would return home and take their final exams in Russian gymnasia
and universities as non-attending students. For example, Russian Zionists including Leo
Motzkin, Shmarya Levin, Chaim Weizman, Viktor Jacobson, Joseph Lurie, and Nachman
Syrkin, all studied at the University of Berlin. Leo Motzkin was sent to Berlin when he
was fifteen years old. Herman Shapiro was born to an orthodox family and became a rabbi, however, he later received a university education in Heidelberg. Shapiro even published several scientific works in German. Most importantly, he played an active role in promoting Hebrew literature and published scientific articles in Hebrew. In fact, of all the mentioned Russian delegates, only the engineer Vladimir Temkin, a graduate of the Technological Institute in St. Petersburg, had never been abroad prior to attending the First Congress. However, even he probably knew German, as he was appointed a Congress secretary, recording in Russian the Congress sessions.

It is worth noting that by no means were the aforementioned delegates representative of the Russian Jews, as far as their command of the German language is concerned. Studying abroad was expensive and not possible for lower-class Jews as well as for most of the middle-class. Still, most of the Russian delegates, as intellectuals, were able to study in Russian schools or in government-sponsored Jewish schools with more or less decent secular instruction. The quota system of education for Jews was established only in 1887, ten years before the First Congress. Therefore, it could not affect considerably the level of education of the Russian delegates at the Congress, as they all attended schools before the quota system was introduced.

For Russian Jews there were two options for obtaining education: Jewish schools, including religious and secular institutions, and Russian schools. As for Russian gymnasia, governmental or private, only well-to-do families could afford sending their children to these schools. The Jewish masses could not afford this anyway, and they largely regarded Russian schools with suspicion.

Back in 1844 the Russian government began to establish special schools for Jews,
with the purpose of Russification. In the mid-nineteenth century Jewish intelligentsia was largely sympathetic towards the Russian schools. The number of Jewish male students in Russian gymnasiums increased from 159 (1.25% of total) in 1853 to 2,363 (13.2%) in 1873.  

Those Jews who could afford it sent their children to Russian gymnasia, either governmental or private. The liberal Jewish families with some means strove to give their children secondary and higher education, which afterwards provided the right of residence outside the Pale of Settlement and the reduction of military service terms. From 1878 to 1899 the number of Jewish students attending general, national, and municipal primary schools within the Pale of Settlement totaled 69,358, or 25.7 percent of all Jewish children of school age. Higher Russian educational institutions included 1,856 Jewish students, or 14.5 percent in 1886; however, by 1902 the number had dropped to 1,250, or 7 percent.

Knowledge of the Russian language among the Jews of the Russian Empire spread widely in the mid-nineteenth century, primarily because of the dissemination of the Haskalah. The Russo-Jewish intellectuals replaced the classical German enlightenment model with one adapted to Russian conditions, acknowledging the Russian language and culture. These Jewish intellectuals propelled the idea that the Jews “regarded themselves as Russians of mosaic faith.” As the Jewish-Russian newspaper Razsvet proclaimed, “Our fatherland is Russia. So, just as her air is ours, so too, must her language be ours.” According to the expectations of the time, the government was supposedly prepared to lighten Jewish liabilities on the premise that the Jews would become more assimilated and acquire western knowledge, including knowledge of the
Russian language.\textsuperscript{55}

The followers of the Russian \textit{Haskalah} movement, who strove to introduce secular education into the realms of Jewish life within the Pale of Settlement, were mainly well-educated, middle-class Jews. To them, education was primarily a means for the improvement of Jewish life in eastern Europe. Moreover, they advocated secular education for both sexes. The application of populist ideas by the representatives of the new Russian Jewish intelligentsia who were concerned with common people’ needs included the efforts to raise the economical and cultural level of the Jewish masses. An illustrative example of these activities was the Society for the Dissemination of Education among Jews in Russia (OPE), which began its work in 1863. Thus, the Society’s proclaimed goal was to “further the knowledge of Russian among Jews; to publish and to help others to publish works both in Russian and in the Jewish languages, with the aim of disseminating education among Jews; and to encourage and subsidize young people who devoted themselves to study and education.”\textsuperscript{56}

The popularity of \textit{maskilic} ideas and the responses to the liberal policies of the government varied from region to region. The extent of modernization depended significantly on the degree and the persistence of tradition in a particular Jewish community. The enlightenment ideals were particularly vital in the cities like Odessa, a trade center, which had an international community, with commercial opportunities and liberal atmosphere. However, mainly the children from \textit{maskilic} families benefited directly from the movement's efforts. For many other Russian Jews, however, secular education was more an aspiration than a possible accomplishment.\textsuperscript{57}

The religious Jewish schools, \textit{hederim}, continued to dominate the field of primary
education for Jewish masses, despite persecution by the Russian authorities in the 1880s. In 1897 at the meeting of the Jewish Student Circle in St. Petersburg Law School, one of the school’s students, Jacob Frumkin, presented a report on Jewish education in Russia. As Frumkin noted, only some hederim had actually adopted modern methods of instruction. There, children were taught grammar, and the study of Hebrew was modeled on the standard learning of foreign languages. However, most hederim used outdated teaching methods. As a high school student in Kovno, Frumkin referred to his experience as a tutor of Russian language and other subjects for yeshivah students over the objections of the leaders of yeshivot. The latter forbade their students to concern themselves with anything except the subjects offered at yeshivot. Those who were found to be taking lessons beyond the yeshivot curriculum were expelled from the school and sent back to their parents. Most of the representatives of the Jewish religious Orthodoxy were concerned with the problem of combining general secular education with traditional Jewish education in the religious schools such as hederim and yeshivot. The major problem was that general secular education often led to the alienation from the Jewish traditions.

In the articles collected in the volume Questions of Jewish Life of 1886, Russian Jewish jurist and publicist Menashe Morgulis pointed out, however, that given all the criticism of the traditional heder by the Jewish intellectuals, the Russian government-sponsored Jewish schools did not enjoy popularity among broad Jewish masses. This happened not only because Jews were afraid that their children would be forced to convert to Christianity, but also because these schools did not meet the needs of the community. In particular, hederim provided cheap childcare, so children could arrive
early and stay until late in the evening, while the general secular schools let children go in the early afternoon. As Morgulis pointed out, “if Jews refused to modernize, it was not because of their backwardness, but because they had more to gain by remaining unchanged.” At the same time, Jewish public opinion was much more tolerant towards Russian-sponsored educational schemes intended for Jewish women. Jewish parents were less concerned about their daughters' education than about their sons' education. As a result, in 1890s Jewish women were more exposed to secular education than Jewish men.

Therefore, as one can see, Russian Jewry was in general less assimilated and less absorbed into dominant language and culture than Jews in western and central European lands. Within the Pale of Settlement, Jews mostly lived among Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, and Poles, rather than among ethnic Russians. Moreover, in many small towns, Jews were the single largest group in the population. Even in major cities within the Pale, such as Kiev and Odessa, ethnic Russians accounted for just half of the total population. Therefore, the results of the 1897 census in Russia are not surprising. According to the returns, only 1.4 percent of the Russian Jews claimed Russian as their native language, while 97.1 percent claimed Yiddish as their native language (defined as “Jewish language” in the census).

Certainly, among the Russo-Jewish intelligentsia, the assimilation process was spreading and the Haskalah movement gained many followers in this stratum of society. Some members of the intelligentsia had enough knowledge of German to participate in the Congress. However, they were an exception, and other Russian delegates could mostly communicate well only in Russian. The Jewish masses, on the other hand, were illiterate in Russian and often did not speak Russian at all, using Yiddish as their main,
everyday language. The main reason for this linguistic division was the state of Jewish education in Russia and stricter adherence to the traditional, Orthodox Judaism. In the meantime, because of such deplorable situation with education in Russia and some other, particularly political reasons, the Russian delegation did not play a prominent role at the Congress sessions, and thus did not affect much the decisions and discussions held at the Congress, including those dealing with language issue.
III. Hebrew Reborn in Palestine.

The attempts to introduce colloquial Hebrew in Europe were scarce and failed in most of the cases. In the meantime, in Palestine the process was gaining ground, more or less successfully, starting in the early 1880s. Western and central European Zionists were apparently ignorant of the extent of these linguistic developments in Palestine. They seemed to be ignorant not only of the linguistic transformations within Palestinian Jewry, but also of the very existence of the Jewish settlements in Palestine in general.

By the 1890s, Palestine's population was 200,000, with Jews constituting only 10 percent out of the total population. Some Jews had remained in the area after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, but most of the Palestinian Jews were immigrants from Europe. Most of the Jews resided in Jerusalem and Safed. The Old Yishuv, the Jewish community of Palestine before the First Aliyah, was composed mainly of Sephardim and Ashkenazim, as well as smaller communities, such as Karaites. The communities were discerned primarily by the language they spoke. The Sephardic community included Sephardim proper, who spoke Ladino, and Moghrabim, who spoke Arabic. The Ashkenazic Jews brought with them many languages, but on the whole they spoke Yiddish. At the end of the nineteenth century the Ashkenazim constituted about 60 per cent of the Jews residing in Palestine. By the turn of twentieth century Ladino had declined as a spoken language, being a mother tongue of only one third of the Jewish population of Jerusalem.64

Each group of immigrants came into contact with three main languages in Palestine: Arabic, the language of the Arab population, Turkish, the language of the government and administration, and Ladino, the language of Sephardim. Elements of all
three languages penetrated Yiddish. Although Ladino was the language of the group closely related to the Jews arriving from Europe, it was Arabic, not Ladino, which mainly influenced Yiddish in Palestine. The dominance of Arabic elements in Palestinian Yiddish, as compared to the adoptions from Ladino, can be explained by the close economic ties between Ashkenazic Jews and Arabs. By the end of nineteenth century, knowledge of Arabic increased considerably among Palestinian Jews, thus contributing to more linguistic influences on Jewish languages.

Hebrew was often used by the Jews who would speak different languages to communicate with each other. As the reports of the British Consular representatives commissioned in the 1870s witnessed, Hebrew also played an important role as a language for wide communication in Jerusalem. A good knowledge of Hebrew gave a major advantage, being used, for example, in fund-raising campaigns, to represent a community abroad. The British consulate in Jerusalem even established the position of the Hebrew dragoman (translator) at that time. Thus, in 1878 a Hebrew dragoman James Finn testified:

Pure Hebrew, the learned world in Europe is greatly mistaken in designating this as dead language. In Jerusalem it is the living tongue of everyday utility... for in what else could Jewish strangers from opposite ends of earth converse to each other? In our consular office, Hebrew was often heard spoken...

However, the most important language in the life of Jewish settlements was Yiddish. The Jerusalem-born educator in Palestine David Yellin pointed out that by the end of the nineteenth century both the Sephardic Jews and Christians in Jerusalem, who were engaged in business, would speak Yiddish fluently, especially in those districts
where the stores were mostly owned by Ashkenazim. David Yellin himself was fluent in Arabic, as well as in several European languages, but insisted on the importance of the Hebrew revival. The memoirs of Abraham Frumkin, son of the Jerusalem publisher Dov Frumkin, give a glimpse of the linguistic portrait of an average Jewish family in Palestine in the 1870s:

Yiddish was the spoken language of our house. The occasion to speak Hebrew...was seldom at hand. It was used only when one had to carry on conversation with Sephardim, not knowing his language, Spanyolish. Another language, which was the second spoken by us was... Ladino. It happened only because we had Sephardi servant [and his aunt was married to a Sephardi]. I know Arabic, which I spoke fluently while still a child. I acquired it without slightest effort on my part. We spent part of our life in the street, we mingled with Arabs...  

Eighteen years before the First Zionist Congress, Eliezer ben Yehuda made his first appeal for the Hebrew revival in an article “A Burning Question,” which coincided with his and his family's move to Palestine. In this article, published in Ha-Shahar, he explicitly connected the rebuilding of the country with the revival of Hebrew. For Eliezer ben Yehuda one could not be done without the other:

If I did not believe in the redemption of the Jewish people, I would have no use for the Hebrew language . . . With the death of the nation [the Hebrew language] has died, and with its revival it will live too!  

Connecting Eretz Israel to the Hebrew revival could be also seen as a way to explain, if not rationalize, the failure of the Hebrew enterprise in Europe. This first and foremost meaning of the article had often been disregarded. Eliezer Ben Yehuda was convinced that all the efforts to revive Hebrew in Europe although being worthy, were condemned to failure.

For Eliezer ben Yehuda the linguistic and the political rebirth of the Jewish nation
were tightly interconnected. According to him, only the territorial national center could enhance the development of the national language. Moreover, Eliezer ben Yehuda encouraged Zionist activists to consider the cultivation of the Hebrew language as an outcome, rather than as a prerequisite of the national enterprise.\textsuperscript{71}

Within a few years, Eliezer ben Yehuda initiated several Hebrew language organizations in order to encourage Hebrew learning, focused primarily on the rules for spelling, grammar, usage, and linguistic disputes. These organizations did not concern themselves explicitly with the broader questions of the status and the role of the Hebrew language in the life of the Jewish community. Rather, they endorsed an agenda aimed primarily at the corpus of the language. This strategy turned out to be a heavy omission, though. The first language society, called \textit{Safa Brura} (The Clear Language Society), was founded in 1889. This society was often jokingly referred to as \textit{Safa Arura} (The Cursed Language Society), due to inability of its members to reach an agreement about linguistic issues. The society, however, was the first one to encourage women’s active participation in the Hebrew revival, by hiring women who knew the basics of Hebrew to teach the language in Palestine to newcomers.\textsuperscript{72}

In 1890, Eliezer ben Yehuda founded the Committee of the Hebrew Language in Jerusalem. The Committee became the major force in the movement for the Hebrew language revival. Besides Eliezer ben Yehuda, the Committee included David Yellin, Jewish theologian Chaim Herschensohn, and Russian scholar Abraham Moshe Luncz. The Committee worked in close connection with \textit{Safa Brura}. The goal of both foundations was to “stimulate the spreading of Hebrew, including colloquial Hebrew, in all the layers of the society.” The Committee set up single unified rules of grammar and
decided which new words should or should not enter the language. The struggle with extensive borrowing of foreign words was one of the major Committee's activities. Also the items on the Committee’s agenda included the development of the rules for pronunciation, which was politically a very sensitive matter. Thus, the Committee promoted the Sephardi pronunciation, adopted in 1907. The rationale was that the Sephardi dialect most accurately reflected the biblical Hebrew. It was not chosen because it was the “most popular style of Hebrew,” as the Academy of the Hebrew language stated later. Other activities included the establishment in 1884 of the first European-style newspaper in Jerusalem published in Hebrew, Hazvi. The newspaper introduced secular issues and techniques of modern journalism into the Hebrew journalistic world. It published news, promoted the conversational Hebrew through examples, and gave updates on words borrowed from Arabic and other languages.

The most difficult task, however, was to persuade people to use the language in their daily lives. Eliezer Ben Yehuda understood all too well that the most efficient way to introduce a language was through the schools. A Russian Zionist leader and advocate of “Practical Zionism” Menachem Ussishkin wrote a comprehensive report on education in Palestine, after his trip to the country in 1903. In his report Ussishkin mentioned two types of educational institutions in the Jewish settlements, both urban and rural. On the one hand, there were religious traditional schools such as hederim, yeshivot, and Talmud-Torah schools. On the other hand, there were kindergartens and schools for secular education. Most of the Jewish children in Palestine attended religious schools, which could be found in every city and in a few moshavot, such as Petah Tikva, Ekron, Mishmar Hayarden, and Yesod-Hamaale. Often the teaching methods in these schools were
outdated, similar to the situation in the Jewish religious schools in Europe. Another problem was that after graduation, students always returned to the ethnic and language group to which they belonged and from which they came, staying in isolation from each other thereafter. As Ussishkin noted, both during the education period and after the completion of education, there was no single language that could unite these students into one single linguistic group.

The second type of schools included the secular ones, which were open for girls as well as for boys. These schools were available in every moshava, except for those mentioned above, and in almost every city. At the time, most secular schools were founded by the European philanthropic organizations like Alliance Israélite Universelle, Eveline de Rothschild, and the Hilfsverein institutions. In addition to Jewish studies, including religion and Jewish history, the subjects taught included the major European languages as well as Arabic. All these schools were offering education in the language of their “home” country. For example, the language curriculum of the secular schools of the Alliance Israelite differed depending on the country, as well as the needs and the customs of each region. Particular importance was attached to the study of the European languages, according to the needs of each group of students.

In the opinion of most of the local Jewish contemporaries, with regard to methods, the students’ outreach, and the program of classes offered, the Eveline de Rothschild School was the best institution for girls in Palestine. The dominant language at the school was still English, and for a long time Hebrew was not taught at all there.

Eliezer Ben Yehuda was able to convince the Alliance Israelite Universelle School in Jerusalem to allow him to teach Hebrew to the pupils. His teaching method was
“Hebrew by Hebrew,” that is to say, a total-immersion system of learning. This method made sense in teaching a language which had to unite such a diverse and dispersed population. It would not make much sense to teach Hebrew in one of the European languages, as well as in what was called “ghetto” languages, since the students’ linguistic background was too diverse. In the school of Rishon le Zion, Eliezer Ben Yehuda succeeded in making Hebrew the only language of instruction, so that in 1886 this school became the first modern all-Hebrew elementary school in Palestine. Given that the textbooks on most subjects were not available in Hebrew, the teachers had to write them, simultaneously with instruction.

Still, by the early twentieth century Hebrew was far from gaining pride of place in the Jewish educational system in Palestine. As Ussishkin noted in his report, in only one school, in Jaffa, did students have a considerable knowledge of Hebrew, and this school stood apart from the others he visited during his trip to Palestine. Not only were very few students proficient in Hebrew, as Ussishkin marked in his report, but there was also a considerable shortage of teachers who could speak Hebrew fluently. Hebrew still remained an alien language for most if not all of them. Another problem was that there was no unified program of Hebrew education, as every school had its own official language, and the programs, teaching styles, goals, and sources of income differed from school to school. Ussishkin concluded that a national education system had not yet been established in Palestine, and that the foundation stone of such a system should be Hebrew as the only dominant language in all schools, both urban and rural. He admitted that this would be hard to implement, but it was still possible to realize such a policy, since, as he pointed out, in the previous twenty years Jews in Palestine had “prepared the subject in
enough extent.”

At the time of the First Congress few western Zionists were aware of the Jewish settlements in Palestine, let alone of the Hebrew promotion activities of people like Eliezer ben Yehuda. The Russian Zionists were better informed about these developments. Most of the eastern European Zionists belonged to the Odessa Committee, which played a significant role in establishing and supporting agricultural Jewish settlements in Palestine and Syria. The Committee sent its representatives to Palestine on a regular basis and constantly published reports informing about the situation in the country. With time, western Zionist activists became less theoretically inclined and more occupied with the practices and particular local experiences of the Hebrew revival. Then, events in Palestine became a regular item on the discussion agenda of every Zionist organ. However, the representation of Palestine, particularly of the Jewish settlements there, as described by the Zionists, did not entirely correspond to reality. As Michael Berkowitz pointed out, the Zionists tended to see and represent Jewish settlement in Palestine as a part of the “Western Jewish consciousness,” which often led to major misrepresentations.
IV. Discussion of Hebrew at the First Zionist Congress.

Before the question of the Hebrew language and literature became a central issue on the official agenda of the Congress, it was primarily discussed during the informal after-hours meetings. During the First Zionist Congress one such informal evening meeting was focused on the Jewish folk-literature. The meeting started in German and Russian, and was followed by reading aloud from a variety of Hebrew works ranging from lyric poetry to scientific popularizations, with a spontaneous discussion led in Hebrew. Due to the private style of the discussion and its informality, many strong advocates of the “Cultural Zionism” considered this meeting, as well as other extracurricular activities taking place during the Congress, as evidence of Zionism's lack of commitment to cultural issues.

Marcus Ehrenpreis, a modern rabbi and a Hebraist educated in the German universities, presented the first major “cultural” speech at the Congress, which he delivered in German. Addressing the assembly with a speech on the problems of New Hebrew literature, he emphasized the development and dissemination of Hebrew language and literature among the Jews. As he pointed out, such activities could have a major effect and a means to “nurture the national spirit” among the Jews, “preparing” the cultural ground for the Jewish people. Ehrenpreis was convinced that “Hebrew culture” – defined in opposition to Yiddish, or Golus, culture – with Hebrew as its main and foremost language, would be the unifying force and a common ground for the new Jewish civilization, outside and within Palestine.

Ehrenpreis saw the “new Hebrew literature” as an intrinsic part of the developing
Hebrew culture. The “new Hebrew literature” had in fact already come into existence and had been flourishing, with Hebrew newspapers like *Ha-Shahar* and Hebrew writers like Abraham Mapu and Nahman Bialik. However, it remained unnoticed by much of the European public, apparently because of its scarcity. In the eyes of many educated Jews, the new Hebrew literature, which was actively promoted by the activists of the Haskalah movement, often could not compete with foreign literature, such as Russian or European. With respect to traditional preferences, an average Jew from *shtetl*, a small Jewish town, would not be very interested in the new Hebrew literature, preferring to study the sacred texts in Hebrew while conversing in Yiddish. Ultimately, the noncompetitive character of modern Hebrew literature provided a weak incentive for the new generation to learn Hebrew. The memories of Shmuel Ussishkin give a perfect illustration of this. As he admitted in his recollections, he felt that Hebrew literature, which was introduced to him by his father, could not compete, in his view, with the “rich and extensive [Russian] literature.” He pointed out that his experience was rather typical in that he knew “more or less how to read and write in Hebrew,” but Hebrew literature – whether the original or translated – “paled in comparison to Russian literature.”

Furthermore, modern literature in Hebrew had been mostly circulated among the writers themselves, the educated Jews and some of the Jewish intelligentsia, and was not easily available to the general public. The readers of the literature in Hebrew were mostly the writers in Hebrew, and vice versa. Hebrew literature’s audience was in fact a very tiny and close-knit circle of personally interconnected friends and colleagues, rather than a “public” per se. Ehrenpreis was well aware of this situation, and suggested that the First Congress undertake a two-step effort in order to distribute Hebrew literature more widely,
so as to reach a broader audience. The first phase would involve the establishment of the “general Hebrew-speaking society,” which would run free courses in Hebrew in most of the countries of the Jewish dispersion. The second step would include the foundation of a special commission for Hebrew literature, which should be formed on the basis of elections and as a part of the Executive Committee of the World Zionist Organization.

The suggested commission was indeed established during the First Congress. Its members included such distinguished Zionists as Ehrenpreis himself, the advocate of “Cultural Zionism” Ahad Ha'am, Hebrew journalist Nahum Sokolow, Russian scholar Armand Kaminka, and later Eliezer ben Yehuda. The Commission intended to encourage and support the younger generation of Hebrew writers and scholars, as well as organize and support Hebrew periodicals. In this way the Commission’s members hoped not only to promote Hebrew literature per se, but also to enhance the role of the Hebrew language in Europe, as well as in Palestine. Yet, despite the fact that the Commission was established on a permanent basis, it soon encountered many difficulties that hindered its work. Although Ehrenpreis blamed Herzl for the initial ineffectiveness of the early Zionist cultural committees, including this Hebrew literature project, the main reason was logistical. The membership was widely dispersed. Thus, Ehrenpreis himself lived in Diakovar (Croatia), whereas Ahad Ha'am lived in Odessa, Sokolow lived in Warsaw, and ben Yehuda lived in Palestine. In addition, the budget of the Commission was limited. Moreover, every member was preoccupied with his field and considered that field most important, ignoring the other niches. Thus, Ahad Ha'am and Sokolow were mostly interested in developing the Hebrew newspapers Hashiloah and Hamelitz much more than in the large-scale cultural measures for a movement that lacked the institutional
means to enact them anyway. The same might be said about Eliezer ben Yehuda's concentration on the Hebrew revival, and Kaminka's preoccupation with scientific literature and its popularization in Hebrew.  

In his speech delivered at the Congress, Ehrenpreis demanded that all Jews have access to free Hebrew courses, “helping to set the program of cultural Zionism on a potential collision course with the orthodox establishment.” However, it is not clear from his talk how he wanted to collaborate with the Orthodox establishment. When the Congress resolved to establish the Hebrew association, in order to advise schools on the issues of advancement of the Hebrew language and literature, the Orthodox delegates showed their concern and immediately demanded the Congress’s assurance that the Zionist movement would not interfere with the matters concerning religion. Yet, the rabbis apparently had not been offered an “opportunity to respond.” In fact, readers of the Congress' proceedings did not even consider them Ehrenpreis' opponents. Overall, according to Berkowitz, there was an attempt by the organizers to create an impression of harmony on the question of the national language among the delegates.

Meanwhile, the majority of secular Jews most often associated Hebrew with Judaic liturgical rites, which were of little importance to them, or which they often did not understand at all. Challenging their attitude, Ehrenpreis pointed out that Hebraism “was not a variety of orthodoxy or reaction, and it was well within the realms of the ideals of progress and modernity.” It is thus not surprising that after such remarks Kulturisten, proponents of “Cultural Zionism,” were seen as mostly secular-oriented.

It is important to note that the attitude and knowledge of Zionists concerning Hebrew would change in the next decades. For example, David Yellin pointed out in his
Zionist Work in Palestine (1911) that at the end of the nineteenth century Yiddish “was not able entirely to oust the national language [Hebrew].” He continued:

Daily the Jew expressed his aspirations and emotions, his devotion to God, only in Hebrew; all his intellectual treasures he preserved in Hebrew, and in this language he wrote letters to his friends. He even Hebraized foreign languages, by employing them in a Hebraic script... 

However, back in the year of 1897, the western and central European Zionist activists, were largely skeptical of the idea that the Hebrew language should play a major role in unifying and consolidating the Jewish community and the Jewish nation-state. This might be explained by the fact that they were rather ignorant of the reality regarding Jewish languages, or, when they were aware of it, they felt impelled to turn the reality into the opposite. As has been discussed before, Herzl and most of his followers believed that Hebrew played a rather negligible role in the Jewish community. Herzl and Nordau believed that Hebrew, as a dead language not in daily use among the people, did not have much potential to become a vital factor for the unification of Jews. Herzl believed that Jews could no longer speak to each other in this language. The founders of the Zionist movement, including Herzl and Max Nordau, could not understand Hebrew themselves. 

The Jewish writer Mordechai Kohen was the only delegate who addressed the Congress in Hebrew. His speech was short but emotionally appealing. He went straight to the point by saying in the opening remarks:

This time I decided to address to you not in language of the country where I was born, but in language of the country where my people was born... that's why let it to be pronounced in this hall and let it be known to everybody: there is the language of the people of Israel and it will revive in Eretz Israel.
Except for Kohen and Menachem Ussishkin, who was elected as secretary of the Congress for record-keeping in Hebrew, and the Hebrew writers, the majority of the delegates of the Congress were not able to express themselves in Hebrew. The examples of Nachman Syrkin and Shmuel Ussishkin are illuminating in this respect. Syrkin received his early education from a rabbi, who tutored him at home. When Syrkin was admitted to the local gymnasium in Minsk, his Hebrew education was not terminated at this point, as private teachers continued to come to the house. However, this private tutoring in Hebrew was often insufficient and of poor quality. As Shmuel Ussishkin recalled, having a private Hebrew tutor was common in elite Jewish families that belonged to the Jewish intelligentsia in Russia. His father tried to introduce Hebrew as a primary language for his son, which in itself was quite an exceptional case among early Zionists at the time. Still, Shmuel admitted that this endeavor was an ultimate failure. “As in the case with other children, it was Russian that became my first language.”

One for the reasons for this failure was the fact that at home and in everyday situations they did not speak Hebrew. Moreover, the teachers, as Ussishkin attested in his recollections, “did not succeed in making him love their studies.” Coming mostly from small towns, the teachers themselves often lacked education, and could not stimulate the child’s interest in studying Hebrew.

Despite the multilingual diversity at the Congress, the delegates were filled with the feeling of the exceptional friendship and the solidarity that were central and crucial features of the Zionist experience and were strongly enhanced at subsequent congresses. “We already knew that we were brothers ... all at once we understood every language. Amid the multi-toned confusion of modern languages, only one call rose up from us: Ivri
onochi! [I am a Hebrew!]"
V. How Jewish Intellectuals Viewed Yiddish, *Mama Loshen* and *Loshen Kodesh*.

The position of the Zionist movement towards Yiddish was a central issue of yet another speech presented at the First Congress, delivered by Austrian journalist and Secretary General of the Congress Nathan Birnbaum. In this speech, Zionism as a Cultural Movement, Birnbaum pointed out the distinguished role that Hebrew literature played in the conceptualization of the Zionist movement and the Jewish nationalist idea. Birnbaum blamed Yiddish literature for being “over-interconnected with European culture,” therefore not able to truly represent what was unique about Jewish culture. According to Birnbaum, Yiddish literature was more embedded in European civilization than in Jewish culture, having being burdened with materialistic concerns rather than filled with spirituality. As Birnbaum concluded, the Hebraists were more capable of preserving and developing authentic Jewish national ethnicity than Yiddishists. The reason, to Birnbaum, was that “their [Hebraists] goal was a complete, new national life for Jews on an equal footing with that of other nations.”

Ironically, though, after alienating himself from Herzl in 1898, Birnbaum disavowed the Zionist movement, being disappointed with its negative attitude towards Diaspora Jewry, and gravitated toward Yiddish nationalism.

Herzl, in his turn, insisted that Yiddish was a hallmark of the Jews’ “imprisonment” that would be swept away when Jews would gain ultimate national autonomy. Using the “imprisonment” rhetoric, he brings to my mind the Biblical story of the Jews becoming “free people” after Moses led them through the desert for forty years. Also, this rhetoric brings the association with the emerging new generation, which would
get rid of all rudiments of the Jewish “slavery,” including the jargons that contaminated the Jewish language. Probably, Herzl bore in his mind the possibility of such associations which would be attractive to the contemporary young generations. Indeed, the vast majority of Jewish European intelligentsia shared the view that Yiddish was a bastardized, corrupted, and spoiled form of the German language, reflecting the backwardness of the Jewish masses. Ahad Ha’am explicitly connected the “exile languages” with the broken “exile” literature. He wrote that “all the literature of the Diaspora does not express the true Hebrew genius, and has no connection with the earlier literature, because the heavy yoke of exile crushed the creative faculty and made it sterile.”

There was a different view, however, according to which Yiddish was seen as the purest of the existent German dialects, equal to European languages and thus the distinguished feature of German culture. Max Adalbert Klausner, an editor of the Berlin liberal weekly Israelitische Wochenschrift, was one of the foremost advocates of this view. He argued that the German Jews were the “founders and creators of the modern German language.” Klausner was convinced that the Jews in medieval Germany spoke pure German, and that their Yiddish-speaking descendants in eastern Europe and elsewhere nurtured and cultivated the German language after having been expelled from the German territories. He explicitly called Yiddish “the most spoken and the most distinguished of the German dialects.” While his opponents called Yiddish a “heinously mutilated language,” Klausner argued that what they mistook for mutilation of New High German was actually a historic monument to Middle High German. As he explained, New High German was the language “impoverished” in comparison to
Yiddish, which had preserved the “unstunted” merits of Middle High German. Likewise, the German Orthodox Rabbi and theologian Joseph Wohlgemuth claimed that Yiddish had “faithfully” preserved “German linguistic wealth” where modern German had lost Germanic words, substituting them with the adopted elements of Greek and Latin. However, he strongly disagreed with the claim that Yiddish was once the mother tongue of the western European Jews. To Wohlgemuth, the Jews in Germany spoke “pure and unadulterated German,” while only in the seventeenth century the Polish immigration brought up Yiddish to Germany.

The debates on Yiddish concerned not only its linguistic features and origins, but also Yiddish culture in general. Thus, Jewish writer Pappenheim, for example, regarded this “Zhargon” as the protector of “the linguistic wealth of Old German.” At the same time she also referred to Yiddish as Weiberdeutsch (women's German), thus acknowledging the contribution of Jewish women to the development of the language. Pappenheim denied calling Yiddish the “language of culture” in general. Still, she was a rare exception among Jewish intellectuals in her acknowledgement of the role of Yiddish in Jewish society. As Elizabeth Loentz pointed out, Pappenheim’s attitude towards Yiddish “ranged from its rejection as an uneducated Mischsprache (hodgepodge of languages) or “ghetto language” to a reverent nostalgia for it as language of the disappearing traditional female Jewish religious culture.”

What did Yiddish culture represent at the time of the First Congress? Yiddish culture in the Diaspora was divided into two large camps. On the one side was Judaism. One of its main streams in the Yiddish terrain was Hasidism, a movement that belonged to Orthodox Judaism. This movement never took a real hold in Germany, but it blazed a
broad trail across eastern Europe, mainly Russia. Hasidic leaders expressed themselves in Yiddish, introducing new words and expressions. For the proponents of Hasidism, Yiddish signified the celebration of Jewish spiritual life. In the second half of the nineteenth century, on the other side appeared ethnic secularists, later called Yiddishists. Represented by writers like Sholom Aleichem and Yiddish-related organizations like Workmen's Circle schools in New York, the Yiddishists promoted the Yiddish language, literature, theater, and other Yiddish cultural activities. Both Yiddishists and Hasidim were attempting to disentangle the major question of just to what extent were Jews to be part of the wider world, and to what extent were they to be distinguished from it, and how.

The main function of Yiddish was to unite its Jewish speakers dispersed over the world and at the same time to distinguish them from their Christian neighbors. In this sense Yiddish played an exceptional role as a language preserving the “Jewishness” of the Jewish people in the Diaspora. The whole point behind cultivating Yiddish was the acknowledged need and the desire to talk in a language distinct from what Jews referred to goyish, to distinguish Jewish from Christian. By way of a metaphor, it may be said that while Judaism performed the function of the internal wall of a fortress, Yiddish represented its external wall, which defended not only Jews in eastern Europe but also the other eastern European emigrants from dissolving in the dominant society.

Within eastern European, and to a lesser extent western and central European Jewry, bilingualism was the norm. Hebrew and Yiddish were both used by the whole community, in regard to the Jewish male population. Such bilingualism of a community is a phenomenon that sociolinguists call diglossia. These two languages supplemented
each other, at the same time forming a certain hierarchy with relation to each other. They divided the entirety of the linguistic terrain into separate spheres, with one set of concepts derived from Hebrew and another from Yiddish. Hebrew remained a more or less accessible language and a ready source of quotations, examples, and phrases, while Yiddish helped its speakers to “understand” Hebrew. Words and phrases slipped from the prayers into the younger language, thus forming a peculiar linguistic intertwining, the Hebrew–Yiddish braid. Thus, Yiddish was often called the “handmaiden of Hebrew,” while Hebrew has been termed the “library of Yiddish.”

In his 1959 essay on the “internal bilingualism” of Ashkenazic Jewry, Max Weinreich, a linguist specializing in the Yiddish language, suggested a distinction between two kinds of bilingualism in the Jewish community. The first one, “internal bilingualism,” reflected the relationship between two Jewish languages, for instance Hebrew and Yiddish, within the Ashkenazic community. These two languages played different social roles, as Weinreich argued: Yiddish was the spoken language, while Hebrew was the language of writing the sacred books. Here is another example: there were two alternatives for the word “guest”: the German-derived *Gast* and the Hebrew-derived *oyrech*. The second one would be usually used in the phrase *Oyrech auf Shabes* (“guest for Sabbath”), hence having a more explicit religious meaning. The second kind, “external bilingualism,” was manifested in the Jews’ use and knowledge of the two languages: Yiddish and the language of the dominant non-Jewish population (e.g., Polish or Russian). The character of openness of Yiddish to neighboring languages changed throughout time, increasing by the turn of the twentieth century.

As the Jewish proverb runs, God speaks Yiddish during the week and Hebrew on
the Sabbath. Yiddish and Hebrew, two distinct and separate linguistic systems, were thus inseparably interconnected.
VI. Conclusion.

Many early Zionists initially failed to renounce certain instances of the prejudice and stereotypes that they claimed to be combating. For example, the Zionists claimed to respect Jewish traditions, but at the same time they remained scornful of Yiddish culture and implicitly referred to the dirty, chaotic shtetl, a small Jewish town, as a foil to idealized images of the city of Basel. They spoke vehemently about solidarity, while addressing the eastern Jewish masses, at the same time dissociating themselves from what they saw as the moral debasement of the objects of their charity.\textsuperscript{113} This ambiguity manifested itself in the Austrian and German Zionists’ stance toward the language issue: Zionism, which was presented as an alternative to assimilation, was the movement initially following assimilationist ideals.

Herzl affirmed that the Zionist movement’s claims were of universal value, and frequently emphasized this point. Although the movement's all-inclusive character tended to be exaggerated, it is important to realize that no other Jewish institution or organization embraced the whole of the people to such an extent as the Zionists did, or at least claimed to do. However, while Herzl proclaimed the movement to be all-inclusive, his and other Zionists’ promotion of German as the official language of the movement in 1897 led to the gradual alienation of part of his potential followers from the movement’s cause, especially among the Jewish masses.\textsuperscript{114} Herzl himself appeared to be well aware of this problem. In order not to lose Orthodox Jewry entirely, he would leave the religious and cultural questions, including the issue of Hebrew, out of the Congress’ agenda.

Why, then, did Herzl and his German and Austrian adherents insist on choosing German as the official language of the movement? Certainly, Herzl was concerned about
the “Jewish question,” and the aim of the movement was to solve it. However, at the same time, Herzl did not seem to be concerned about whether or not the Jewish masses themselves would follow Zionism. The Zionist movement sought to become the authorized representative of the Jewish people in the eyes of the world, and this “externalist” orientation of Zionism, at least as Herzl himself had envisioned it, predetermined the choice of German rather than one of the Jewish languages, to represent Jews’ interests to the outer world.

The common opinion in the contemporary historiography of Zionism is expressed, for example, by the author of *The Class Origins of Zionist Ideology* of 1972. There, the author states that Zionism, in the beginning sponsored mainly by “non Jewish agents of imperialism” (meaning European philanthropists), was later developed by “representatives of the bourgeoisie such as Herzl.” Leaving aside the ideological agenda of such a statement, it should be noted that overall the idea sounds persuasive. Zionism was far from rising from the depths of the people. The language of the Jewish national enterprise was not the same as the language of the Zionist movement. Neither one represented mother tongues of Jews dispersed throughout the world. The solution of the language issue was in many crucial ways shaped by this elitist intelligentsia agenda of the movement. Later the language issue even enforced this trend.

In its beginning the Zionist movement did not have many followers among eastern European Jewry of the low strata of society who were not quite compelled by the Zionism’s cause. Despite the rapid spread of the Zionist movement, only a minority of Russian Jews would associate themselves with the Zionist movement – about 60,000 in the best years, only 8,000 out of this number being the active promoters of the Zionist
ideas. Such a modest success of the movement among the Jewish people, especially in Russia, could be explained, at least partially, by the peculiarities of the official Zionists’ stance towards the language issue, and the language policies this implied. At the turn of the twentieth century the General Jewish Labor Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia (the Bund), was much more popular and successful than Zionism in capturing the hearts and minds of the Jewish youth in eastern Europe. The program of the Bund, elaborated at the Sixth Convention in 1905, vouched for the full civilian and political rights of Jewish workers, for the right of Jews to use their language in court and before state authorities and administration, and for their national and cultural independence. True, it does not seem to differ from the goals and aspirations of Zionists, in the sense of protecting Jews as a people, not just religious community. However, with regard to language the Bund presented a completely different program that acknowledged the Yiddish culture of the Jewish people. As Chaim Weizman reported to Herzl in 1903, “the larger part of the contemporary younger generation [in the East] is anti-Zionist, not from a desire to assimilate as in Western Europe, but through revolutionary conviction epitomized by the Bund.”

However, the western Zionists did not regard language as having that much ideological importance. The main reason to them why Zionism failed to compete with revolutionary movements in eastern Europe was that Zionism was perceived as being dominated by religious parties.

The revolution in Greece, which was accompanied by the cultural revival and included resuscitation of an ancient language, provided the Zionist movement with a new context and a new cultural reference. From the perspective of many activists of the Zionist movement, the new Hellenistic culture did not succeed in resurrecting the cultural
status of Greece, at least in the eyes of cultured Europeans. How could, one may ask, one be certain then that the new “Jewish culture” would become a source of pride and respect, and not a testimony to the Wagnerian claim that Jews possessed “no unique, creative spirit?” Moreover, Herzl felt that the emphasis on Hebrew culture would not help to promote the Jewish national idea: Hebraization was too elitist and esoteric a concept to be able to cultivate national consciousness among the common Jewish people. Indeed, all too often Modern Hebrew seemed to be promoted mainly by the close-knit circle of Jewish writers failing to reach any broader audience. David Yellin once compared the fate of the Hebrew language in golus to “the fate of a date-tree, which has been plucked up from its roots and replanted high on the Alps, without glass-covering above and without artificial warmth below.”

The hope that Hebrew would (and could) provide a vital, inspirational ideal which would shape both the distinctive Jewish national spirit and the polity of the Jewish state was constantly challenged until the time when the First World War erupted. Various criticisms were voiced by Orthodox Jewry, representatives of the Jewish left, and advocates of Yiddish culture. Later Hebrew was propelled as a “high” and classical language, comparable (and indeed compared) to the models provided by the classical languages, such as Greek or Roman. Interestingly enough, this view of Hebrew as a “high value” language became finally accepted by both the Jewish intelligentsia and the masses. Later, this became one of the factors that helped Zionists to introduce Hebrew as a renewed language of the people, during the later stages of the Zionist movement’s development.

In The Class Origins of Zionist Ideology, the author called Zionism an “ideology
imported from the West, where Jews tended to be merchants or bankers, to the East, where the great majority of Jews were manual workers.\textsuperscript{120} As this study demonstrated, this “import from the West to the East” had major consequences for language. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, Germany, with its awakened appetite for colonial division of the world, became one of major players on the geopolitical world map. In Germany’s drive into the Near East, particularly into the territories of the Ottoman Empire, the Zionists saw an opportunity that was not to be missed. The political Zionism of Herzl was shaped by the role of “public relations” and by political negotiations of the time. To a certain extent Herzl succeeded in giving Zionism the shape of the European political movement, on the premise that only in such a form the modern Western world would accept it. As Herzl remarked to the Grand Duke of Baden, the uncle of the Kaiser, the Zionists would colonize Palestine “as representative of Western colonization,” making it a political factor in favor of Germany.\textsuperscript{121}

By renouncing the Yiddish language at the very beginning of the Jewish national enterprise, most explicitly at the First Zionist Congress, the Zionists passed a sentence upon its future. The founders of the Zionist movement were not concerned much about maintaining Jewish cultural inheritance based on Yiddish. They did not see many reasons to maintain Yiddish. Yiddish culture died out because of the decisions made at the First Congress and because of the underestimation of the cultural meaning of Yiddish and the preoccupation with the revival of Hebrew. The more comprehensive policy for the Zionist movement would be to keep the two Jewish languages for the national enterprise: one, Hebrew, for nation-building and the second one, Yiddish, for the Diaspora, particularly
Ashkenazic Jewry.

In hindsight, a wiser policy would have been to allow an equal representation of the two Jewish languages, Hebrew and Yiddish. I agree that the call for the revival of Hebrew and the encouragement of its use on a daily basis was a right strategic decision of the movement’s leaders in this particular historical moment. However, the Zionist policy regarding Yiddish turned out to be an essential miscalculation of the movement, which led to a loss of cultural heritage. This strategic mistake was partially caused by the ignorance of many Zionists, especially western and central European ones, of the linguistic situation within Jewry. Importantly, the Jewish Enlightenment movement, in whose spirit most of Zionists were educated, played a huge role in cultivating disdainful attitude towards Yiddish.

Yiddish became a national language which belongs to nowhere, as if it were the spoken and written version of the people's displacement. Yiddish was often considered “Jargon,” “spoiled German,” the language of uneducated balagoles (carriers), and shtetl matchmakers. Yiddish was considered a “language of exile,” primarily by intelligentsia. However, was not Judaism itself defined by exile?

The individual choice of language is highly personal. At the same time, this choice is greatly influenced by the religious background of the family, as well as by an individual’s secular education and his or her place of residence. The various national educational policies towards the instruction of Hebrew and Yiddish in Jewish schools
affected the multilingual background of Jewish masses and Zionists. Finally, the person’s position with regard to the Jewish national idea and his or her “Jewishness” in general, influenced the choice between the European and Jewish languages. The renewal of the Jewish nation was the first and foremost goal of the Zionists, and language was the means by which they strove to achieve it. For Zionists, the choice of language was greatly affected by the political realities in Europe. With time, the language issue itself became a powerful political force within the movement. As the philosopher and linguist Noam Chomsky noted in his *Language and Responsibility* (1979), the “questions of language are basically questions of power.”
References

1 The verses are taken from the poem *In Search of Yiddish*. The poem was not published, but was used in the documentary *In Search of Yiddish*. Aleksandr Gorodnitsky. BOSFILM, 2008. DVD.

2 Wilhelm Humboldt, *Humanist without Portfolio: An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt* (Detroit, 1963), 277.

3 Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (Chicago, 1922), 62.

4 In fact, at the time of the emergence of the Zionist Movement, there were debates on whether Jews should be considered as a people or religious community. The present study adheres to the definition of *nation* as a people who share common customs, origins, history, and frequently language. *Nation-state*, in turn, can be defined as a political unit consisting of an autonomous state inhabited predominantly by a people sharing a common culture, history, and language.


6 Belgium became independent in 1830, while Switzerland adopted the Swiss Federal constitution in 1848 which provided federal layout.

7 The Pale of Settlement included following areas: in Lithuania the provinces (gubernias) of Vilnius, Grodno, Kovno; in White Russia provinces of Minsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev; in southwestern Russia — Volhynia, Podolia, Kiev (except city of Kiev), Chernigov, Poltava; in southern Russia — Bessarabia, Chersonese, Ekaterinoslav, Taurida; in Poland – of Warsaw, Kalisz, Kielce, Lomza, Lublin, Petrikau, Polotzk, Radom, Suwalki, Siedlec. According to a very rough data compiled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, by 1880 a total of 59,779 Jews resided in the provinces of European Russia outside the Pale, not including Siberia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Baltic provinces. By 1897, the year of the first census, the number of these Jews climbed to 128,343. See Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, 2002), 83.

8 Here I distinguish between the Jewish national enterprise and the Zionist movement. The Jewish national enterprise, as I understand it, started with the activity of Ben Yehuda in 1881 in Palestine regarding revival of the Hebrew language. With the first Zionist Congresses the Zionist activists joined Jewish enterprise in Palestine, establishing Jewish moshavot and kibbutzim there, Jewish universities and cultivating Hebrew culture. However, I do not limit the Jewish national enterprise to Palestine work only, since Zionists tried to cultivate Hebrew culture outside Palestine, too. As for the Zionist movement, I regard it here mainly as official representative organ of the world Jewry, the World Zionist Organization.
By 1900 Ashkenazic Jews constituted the majority of world Jewry (90.9%). According to Arthur Ruppin, that year Ashkenazim totaled 9,550,00, while the whole population was of 10,500,000. Arthur Ruppin, *Sociologia Shel Hayehudim*, Vol.1 (Tel-Aviv, 1930), 58.

Theodor Herzl, Sylvie d’Avigdor, and Jacob De Haas, *A Jewish State, an Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question* (New York, 1917), 38.


Russia had largest representation at the Congress. Approximately, out of 197 registered delegates at the Congress, 66 were Russian Jews. It will be discussed more deeply in next chapter.


Certainly, Herzl did not make decisions regarding organization of the Congress on his own. Besides individuals like Max Nordau, Max Bodenheimer, Reverend W. Hechler, and David Wolfsohn Herzl had initiated several organizations to help him prepare the Congress. For example, Herzl had the Executive Committee, which particularly decided the location of the Congress in favor of Basel. However, along throughout his diaries Herzl complains that he does all the work, and he has to make all decisions. One of Herzl’s assistants in the ideological preparations for the Congress, Yehoshua Thon, testified on their group’s meetings: “we consulted, resolved, decided, and then we left, each of us going for his own business. Herzl was always one to remain in the room and finish the work. The organization of Congress was his solo performance.” Yehoshua Thon, *Theodor Herzl* (Berlin, 1914), 26.

Although Herzl was born in Budapest and spent his childhood there, he did not
indentify himself as Hungarian. Largely such inclination to German culture was influenced by atmosphere and tradition in the family. Herzl’s education was mainly in the hands of his mother, passionate Germanophile, “coupled with disdain for Jewishness in general and her in particular.” More about the language identity of Herzl see Ernst Pawel, *The Labyrinth of Exile: A Life of Theodor Herzl* (New York, 1992), 10. Also Steven Beller, *Theodore Herzl* (London, 1991) would be a good reference.

22 Elizabeth Loentz, *Let me Continue to Speak the Truth, Bertha Pappenheim as Author and Activist* (Cincinnati, 2007), 26.


26 A heder was religious school for boys up to age 13.


31 *Ibid*, 34.


37 Most of the figures (except for those for England, Russia and the United States) were based on the census of 1890 and 1891. It gives figure of 5,700,000 for the Russian Jewish population. The figure which I provide is taken from census of the Russian population in 1897 directly. “Statistics of Jews,” *American Jewish Year Book*, 1 (1899-1900): 283-285.


40 Yehoshua Buchmil was a leader of *Avenir d’Israel*, a small Jewish nationalist group located in France. This group was made mostly of Russian Jews and regarded itself as branch of *Hibbat Zion*. After failed attempt to connect with Hibbat Zion leaders, Buchmil turned to Herzl and succeeded.


42 There is some dispute as to the exact number of participants at the First Zionist Congress. Another source states the approximate figure of 200 from seventeen countries, 69 of whom were delegates from various Zionist societies and the remainder were individual invitees. Considering such similarity in data and presence of the Palestinophile societies, I would suppose that the Russian representatives were those mainly from the Zionist societies. Nahum Sokolow in his *History of Zionism* mentions 220 Jews from all the countries. Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism* (London, 1919), 122. “Zionist work in Palestine” lists 204 delegates.


48 In 1890 the Odessa committee sent him to Palestine to purchase the land. Although he didn't know Yiddish or Hebrew, and he knew only Russian, Temkin was able to set up friendly relations with local Jewish leaders who spoke Russian, by his oratorical talents, impressive appearance etc. He made equally great impression he made upon Arabs. Frumkin, *Russian Jewry*, 185.

49 At the same time take a glance at Nahman Syrkin's experience. He had minimal financial help from parents who had five more sons and daughters to be educated. Nevertheless he managed to study in Berlin University in 1888. Carole Kessner, *Marie Syrkin: Values beyond the Self* (Waltham, 2008), 21.

Ussishkin, *Ima Odesah*, 68.

Frumkin, *Russian Jewry*, 412-413. According to the census of the Jewish Colonization Society, founded by Baron de Hirsh in 1891 to assist and promote the emigration of Jews from any parts of Europe or Asia.


Ellen Eisenberg, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies* (Syracuse, 1995), 8.


Susan Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl* (Ithaca, 1990), 34.

Frumkin, *Russian Jewry*, 412-413. According to the census of the Jewish Colonization Society, founded by Baron de Hirsh in 1891 to assist and promote the emigration of Jews from any parts of Europe or Asia.

Jacob G. Frumkin graduated from secondary school in Kovno in 1897 and was admitted to law school in Petersburg. There he soon joined Jewish student circle, members of which were to become famous Jewish leaders, scientists, philosophers. He presented there report “Heders, Jewish Elementary Religious Schools.” Before that he visited numbers of schools during trip to Kovno. Jacob Frumkin, *Russian Jewry* (New Jersey, 1966).


The First General Census of the Russian Empire of 1897. Table XIII. *Breakdown of population by mother tongue*. (in Russian) Vol. 1-50. Saint-Petersburg: 1903-1905. In census the nationality was not mentioned, only the religion. Jews in the census were at times counted by religion and at times by language, and the two categories are not identical. Of the 5,216,000 Jews identified by religion, 3% listed a language other than Yiddish as their mother tongue (including Westernized Jews and those who spoke Turkic languages in the Caucasus); of the 5,063,000 Jews identified as such because
they were Yiddish-speakers, 0.2% did not declare Judaism to be their religion (presumably converts).


66 Spolsky, The Languages, 53.

67 James Finn, Stirring Times or Records from Jerusalem: Consular Chronicles of 1853-1856 (London, 1878), 127-128. Spolsky, Languages, 53.


69 Abraham Frumkin, In the Springtime of Jewish Socialism (New York, 1940). The quote is transl. and cited in Spolsky, The Languages, 53.

70 Weinstein, Yiddish, 115.

71 Kuzar, Hebrew and Zionism, 81.

72 Iris Parush, Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society (Waltham, 2004), 225.

73 Practical Zionism made emphasis on practical side, such as organizing Jewish immigration to Palestine, rural settlements and educational institutions.

74 Menahem M. Ussishkin, Sefer Ussishkin (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1934), 168-169.

75 Alliance Israelite Universelle, an international Jewish organization, was founded in Paris in 1860. Its official goal is “to protect Jewish rights as citizens of countries where they live and to promote education and professional development among Jews around the world.”

The Hilfsverein Der Deutschen Juden was a German-Jewish philanthropic society which was actively involved in Jewish education in Palestine.


77 Ussishkin, Sefer, 171.

78 Berkowitz, Zionist Culture, 144.

79 Ibid, 55.

80 Ibid, 55.
81 Ibid, 46-47.

82 Ussishkin, Ima Odesah, 42.

83 Berkowitz, Zionist Culture, 55.

84 Ibid, 47.

85 Ibid, 48-49.

86 Ibid, 48-49.

87 Ibid, 46-47.

88 The term Kulturisten was later applied to the advocates of the “Cultural policy” in the Zionist movement.

89 Israel Cohen, Zionist Work in Palestine (London, 1911)

90 See Herzl, A Jewish state, 38.

91 This led to some difficulties concerning cultural activities. Although Hatikvah firmly occupied the place of favorite song at the congress, Herzl and Nordau decided to hold a contest for an official anthem for the movement. Primarily it was because of shady character of the creator of Hatikvah, who hardly suited for “the honor of national poet.” The results of the Zionist anthem contest were quite disappointing: Herzl and Nordau apparently couldn't read the Hebrew submissions. They obviously spent hours poring over those offerings they could read in German, French, English, Italian. Hatikvah remained people's choice. Berkowitz, Zionist Culture, 23.

92 See the Website (in Russian) devoted to First Zionist Congress: http://alvishnev8391.narod.ru/congress.htm; http://62.0.35.69/il4u/history/maor/2/2-1.html Cited are the records of the First Congress (in Hebrew), 132—133.

93 Kessner, Marie Syrkin, 16.

94 Ussishkin, Ima Odesah 20, 42.

95 Ussishkin, Ima Odesah 20, 42.

96 Ibid.

97 Berkowitz, Zionist Culture, 19.

98 Ibid, 52.


M. A. Klausner made first attempt to produce German verse version of the Hebrew Bible. He expressed his opinion on Yiddish in the article “Language and Nationality,” *Im Deutschen Reich* (1903): 44-60.


Joseph Wohlgemuth was a philosopher of religion. He founded the journal *Jeschurun* and was a member of the faculty of the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary.


On the “retirement” of Yiddish from the stage I would like to attach the poem by Russian Jewish poet Aleksandr Gorognitsky (2001):

Go outside and hear how the chatter has been diminished:
   Yiddish is over, that is the matter, Yiddish is finished.
   In Czech Hradčany, Minsk and Vienna, Vilna and Poland,
   Yiddish once rang in colorful manner: Why did it all end?
   Ripped from the book of new generations, that page is buried,
   Which tells how Itzik, losing his patience, wants to get married.
   Let their life be without strife and sing them like a
   Tum balalaika, shpil balalaika, Shtil, balalaika.
All those who cherished verbal resplendence have turned to ashes.
   Silenced by death, they left to descendants
Nothing more precious than dusty books filled with bygone myths.
End of the sonnet: Yiddish is finished, Yiddish is done with – Peace be upon it!

114 Of course, with appointing of any other language there would be the possibility of
loosing part of the followers, since the Jewry was dispersed all over the world and had
no less than twenty different Jewish languages at that time. The Jewish intelligentsia
also spoke the language of the country where it resided. Keep in mind that, in the
beginning, Herzl did not consider German as a temporary step. Moreover, the majority
constituted the Ashkenazim (with their language Yiddish), and most of the Jews
resided in the Russian Empire.


116 Jacob Goldstein, “The Attitude of the Jewish and the Russian Intelligentsia to Zionism
in the Initial Period (1897-1904),” The Slavonic and East European Review 64.4

117 Berkowitz, Zionist Culture, 88.

118 Ibid, 52-53.

Work in Palestine, 143; Berkowitz, Zionist Culture, 51-53.


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Additional Bibliography


