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## **A TEMPEST IN THREE TEAPOTS: YOM KIPPUR BALLS IN LONDON, NEW YORK, AND MONTREAL<sup>1</sup>**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In 1888, a group of London “free thinkers” hosted a Yom Kippur ball, the first ever of its kind. Held in a rented hall, the ball featured antireligious lectures, music, and refreshments for the duration of Yom Kippur [the Day of Atonement], from Kol Nidre to Neila. The advertised event aroused the ire of the local Jewish community.

Despite opposition and efforts to disrupt the event, the idea soon spread to America. A Yom Kippur ball was held in New York in 1889, and similar Yom Kippur events took place in subsequent years in Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and other Jewish centres in the New World. Rather than a one-time fringe event, these Yom Kippur Balls attracted prominent leaders from Jewish socialist circles and enjoyed mass support over a number of years. The annual event received coverage in the press, including the non-Jewish English-language dailies, the anglo-Jewish weeklies, and the Yiddish-language Orthodox, Socialist and anarchist periodicals.

The Yom Kippur ball tradition spanned almost two decades. Waning support, and a general decline in the anarchist movement, coupled with widespread anti-anarchist sentiment by the first years of the twentieth century, marked the decline of the Yom Kippur ball. By 1905, the Yom Kippur ball had generally been reduced to small local gatherings.

But not in Montreal, Canada: whereas in other Jewish centers such as London and New York the anarchist custom of holding an annual Yom Kippur ball had pretty much come and gone by 1905, Montreal free-thinkers held their first, and only Yom Kippur ball in 1905, a decade and a half later than its English and American counterparts.

The London and New York Yom Kippur Balls have received attention in widely read historical works such as Moses Rischin's *The Promised City*<sup>2</sup> and Irving Howe's *World of Our Fathers*<sup>3</sup>. These works have portrayed the Yom Kippur ball as a fleeting phenomenon centred first in London, and then in New York. Generally overlooked have been its later and smaller-scale manifestations in other, smaller Jewish centres such as Montreal.

This article will examine the development of the Yom Kippur ball as a movement, and detail the yet untold story of its short-lived manifestation in Montreal. It will call into question the characterization of the Yom Kippur ball as a passing fad, and present it instead as a fixture on the early radical scene in London and New York. It will discuss the various factors that led to the short life of the Yom Kippur ball in Montreal in contrast with London and New York.

By way of introduction in part I, I shall present some background on the Jewish anarchist movement and its activities. Part II will present an overview of the rise and decline of the Yom Kippur balls in London in New York. Part III will detail the Montreal context, and its Yom Kippur ball. In part IV, I shall conclude by offering an analysis of the triumph and subsequent defeat of this radical, antireligious movement.

## **BACKGROUND ON JEWISH ANARCHISM**

London served as a way-station for many of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants on their way to America, and a percolation site for the radical ideas that they brought with them

from their native homes. New York, with an enormous newly-arrived Jewish immigrant population inundating the established Jewish community, was fertile ground for the rise of the radical Jewish left wing. As the largest Jewish centre in Canada, Montreal, too, became a centre of Jewish radicalism.

The transition of mass Jewry from Eastern Europe to its colonies in England and America was marked by upheaval. For the new immigrants who found themselves uprooted from traditional Jewish life with its strong and organized presence, political radicalism served as one means of making sense of the new world. In the eyes of its leadership, the radical left-wing represented a viable affiliation for the Jewish immigrant masses, many of whom lacked a strong affiliation to Jewish observance now that they had left *di alte heym* — the “Old Home.”

A group of agitators, many of whom had had exposure to radicalism in Eastern Europe, conducted what was in essence a campaign of revolutionary proselytization. The underlying assumption of these efforts was that now that they had been freed of the chains of oppression, all Jews would cast off every last remnant of the Old World and join the effort to create an ideal society. Although initially these efforts were conducted in Russian, agitators among the largely Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jewish masses soon realized that the use of Yiddish would reach the widest audience. While their aspirations were avowedly internationalist, Yiddish served as the dominant language of the Jewish radical movements.

In the Eastern European Jewish immigrant colonies of England and America, anarchism represented an influential force within the left-wing. The 1880s and 1890s marked an era of struggle between socialists and anarchists as different factions vied for influence among the immigrant population. Jews played a significant role in the anarchist movements in England and America, and the Jewish anarchist movement attracted prominent non-Jewish anarchists such as Rudolf Rocker and Johann Most.<sup>4</sup>

During this time, anarchists were particularly active in the building of trade unions. They organized their own

institutions, including an active press. Although the socialist ideal of change through political action ultimately had a greater impact, the writings of anarchist thinkers<sup>5</sup> were widely studied in revolutionary circles.

As a movement for a violent and sudden transformation of society, anarchists agitated for the elimination of existing institutions of authority. Rejecting change through the ballot box, anarchists preached battling government and the existing social order through propaganda, agitation, and, if need be, violence.

Central to the Jewish anarchist program was the battle against religion. Socialists, while supporters of atheism, treated religion as a private concern and thus tended to resist direct confrontation and demonstrative antireligious agitation. The anarchists, in contrast, understood religion as a fundamental evil rather than a matter of personal conscience, and sought to battle it directly. Anarchists disseminated antireligious propaganda in the form of leaflets, and in the anarchist press; they organized lectures on the subject of religion; they sponsored antireligious gatherings. This agitation peaked on Rosh Hashana [the Jewish New Year] and Yom Kippur, the most sacred days of the Jewish year and a time when even the least observant of Jews was likely to be found in synagogue.

Not surprisingly, Yom Kippur, the most solemn day of the Jewish calendar which requires complete fasting, became the occasion for the most extreme and public expression of antireligious activism: the Yom Kippur ball.

## **II. LONDON AND NEW YORK BEGINNINGS: LONDON, ENGLAND, 1888**

The mass immigration from Eastern Europe produced a Jewish proletariat in England, with its centre in London. By the 1880s, London's East End had become an important socialist and trade union centre, with anarchists particularly active in the

forming of Jewish unions.<sup>6</sup> In 1885 a group of social democrats and anarchists founded a Yiddish-language newspaper, the *Arbayter Fraynd* [*Workers' Friend*].<sup>7</sup> It soon became a seat of anarchist activity, and was widely read in England, as well as in America. The editor of the *Arbeyter Fraynd* was Philip Krantz until 1890, when Saul Yanovsky took over.<sup>8</sup> In the same year, a club was started on Berner Street to be used for meetings, including antireligious lectures and discussions, and it soon took over the *Arbayter Fraynd*. After a power struggle between various left-wing factions in 1891, the newspaper was fully in anarchist hands. The *Arbayter Fraynd* represented the Jewish anarchists' most important organ of antireligious propaganda, in particular around the major Jewish holidays.<sup>9</sup>

In 1888, the *Arbayter Fraynd* promoted the first ever Yom Kippur ball. The organizers were local anarchists, and the event was apparently initiated by the newspaper's editor, Philip Krantz.<sup>10</sup> Three weeks before Yom Kippur, the following announcement appeared in the *Arbayter Fraynd*:

We hereby notify all our friends that we are preparing a dinner to be held in our club. This will take place in honour of the great festival of the slaughter of the fowl, Yom Kippur, when all asses and hypocrites beat their breast, repent of the sins they have committed, and fast. For one shilling you can receive a good dinner and spend a most enjoyable day in fine company. The dinner will be followed by singing and dancing. There will also be a number of brief lectures and recitations.... We will post bills for those who, sitting in the synagogues and sneaking out now and then for a smoke and a bite to eat, will not read this notice.<sup>11</sup>

The event faced opposition from unidentified sources; the week following the announcement, the *Arbayter Fraynd* reported that opponents of the ball broke into the Berner Street Club on the day the notice had appeared.<sup>12</sup> In response, anarchists distributed leaflets with the heading, "Down with superstition! Long live the spirit of freedom!" on the day before Yom Kippur.

The ball took place from Yom Kippur evening until 2:00 A.M. the next day. On Kol Nidre night, a noisy crowd gathered outside of the hall and attempted, unsuccessfully, to disrupt the proceedings. By early Yom Kippur morning, despite the angry mob outside, the hall was packed with people, and police were stationed in the street. Speeches against religion were held, followed by discussion, joyous singing, and recitations.

On Yom Kippur afternoon tables with refreshments were set up. Because of the unexpectedly high attendance the food was soon depleted and three individuals, including Philip Krantz himself,<sup>13</sup> had to leave the hall and obtain more food from a nearby restaurant and make their way back through a furious crowd. After the meal, speeches attacking religion were held, followed by discussion, further recitations and more singing. Later that evening, the police arrived to restore order around the club. Several participants in the event were arrested. Despite disruptions, the *Arbayter Fraynd* reported, "Thus the day, a day which can truly be called historic, passed in a festive manner."<sup>14</sup>

The first Yom Kippur ball ended on a victorious note. Attendance at the event had far surpassed the organizers' expectations, and the movement had gained support among the masses. The press coverage had, on the whole, been supportive, backing the organizers' right to hold the event.<sup>15</sup> The ball does not appear to have faced any organized opposition from the community, and the anglo-Jewish weekly, the *Jewish Chronicle*, remained silent.<sup>16</sup> Haphazard attempts to disrupt the gathering had failed. In the first round, anarchism had won, religion had lost.

## **BEGINNINGS II: NEW YORK, 1889-1890**

Within a year, the idea of the Yom Kippur ball had spread to the United States, where the anarchist movement was gaining ground.<sup>17</sup> Spurred by the events surrounding the Chicago Haymarket Affair,<sup>18</sup> a group of New York anarchists

formed the Pioneers of Liberty<sup>19</sup> on October 23, 1886, the evening of Yom Kippur. The Pioneers of Liberty sponsored mass demonstrations, organized unions, meetings, lectures, concerts and balls, as well as a library.<sup>20</sup> The group grew rapidly, and clubs were formed in other Jewish urban centers in America, including Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and New Haven.<sup>21</sup> The Pioneers of Liberty attracted such radicals as Yiddish poets David Edelstadt and Morris Rosenfeld, with anarchist journalist Saul Yanovsky<sup>22</sup> soon becoming one of its most prominent spokespeople.<sup>23</sup>

Like their *Arbayter Fraynd* colleagues, antireligious activity was central to the enlightenment activities of the Pioneers of Liberty. As the Pioneers of Liberty prepared to publish their own anarchist newspaper, the London *Arbayter Fraynd* served as the main Yiddish organ of socialist and anarchist propaganda among American anarchists. In 1889 the *Varhayt* [*Warheit/ Truth*], the first Yiddish American anarchist newspaper, was established.<sup>24</sup> A recurring topic in the pages of the *Varhayt* during its five month appearance was religion: its limitations, treacheries, and superfluousness in a free world. This antireligious propaganda was particularly acute during Passover. The *Varhayt* ceased publication before the onset of the High Holidays.

This is not to say that Jewish anarchists were without a local means of disseminating antireligious materials. On every Rosh Hashana between 1889 and 1893, the Pioneers of Liberty issued a series of antireligious pamphlets under the title, *Tfilot Zakot: Devotional Prayers on the Days of Awe, Sabbath, Holidays, and Every Day of the Year*. The papers were sold for one cent and were distributed by the thousands on New York's Lower East Side and in other Jewish cities. Each of the five issues featured vociferous antireligious propaganda in the form of articles attacking religion as well as parodies.<sup>25</sup> The second, 1889 issue of the *Tfilot Zakot*, by far the most extreme antireligious propaganda disseminated up to that point,<sup>26</sup> featured an announcement of, and open invitation to, the first annual anarchist Yom Kippur ball in the United States.

Meanwhile, the London *Arbayer Fraynd* featured the announcement for the New York ball during the four week period prior to Yom Kippur.<sup>27</sup> The German-language socialist *New Yorker Volks Zeitung*<sup>28</sup> devoted a number of articles to the subject of religion, and printed announcements of the ball. In addition, thousands of handbills advertising the ball were circulated on New York's Lower East Side. These read: "Down with fanaticism! Long live free thought!" While distributed primarily in factories, the more bold handed them out near local synagogues.<sup>29</sup>

Members of "Downtown" Orthodox Jewry and the "Uptown" German-Jewish "Yahudi" establishment leapt to the attack. Responses from the American anglo-Jewish press to the announcement of the Yom Kippur ball were immediate and acrimonious. The *American Hebrew*<sup>30</sup> and the Cincinnati-based *American Israelite*<sup>31</sup> strongly condemned the event and its organizers, as did Kasriel Sarasohn's long-running conservative Yiddish daily, the *Yidishes Tageblatt*.<sup>32</sup> "Uptown" and "Downtown" banded together in an attempt to prevent the ball from taking place. The Orthodox Jews appealed to the Jewish coroner of the city of New York, Ferdinand Levy, to intercede with the municipal authorities.<sup>33</sup> At the last minute, the ball was moved to a smaller locale, the Social Democrat-owned Fourth Street Labour Lyceum.

Despite police intervention the hall was packed. The evening's program included recitations, a buffet and dancing in addition to speeches by German anarchist Johann Most and others. The chairperson for the evening was "Mr. Hillkovitch," none other than future prominent American Socialist, Morris Hillquit.<sup>34</sup> The following day, the celebration lasted from morning through evening despite noisy protest in the streets.<sup>35</sup> The response in the Jewish press ranged from enthusiastic support in the Socialist *Folkstsaytung*<sup>36</sup> to strong opposition in Sarasohn's conservative *Yidishes Tageblatt*.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, Yom Kippur balls took place on a smaller scale in Philadelphia and Boston.<sup>38</sup>



The uproar evoked by the disruption of the Yom Kippur ball brought with it certain unexpected benefits to the Pioneers of Liberty and the anarchist cause. The events provided the cause with increased visibility.<sup>39</sup> The ball also endeared the anarchist group to a number of radicals, and brought new supporters and members into the fold of the Pioneers of Liberty. “Perhaps,” as anarchist activist Kopeloff later mused, “the Pioneers gained more [from the ball being disrupted] than if it had actually been permitted to take place.”<sup>40</sup>

In 1890, the Pioneers of Liberty founded a lasting anarchist newspaper, the Yiddish language *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* [*Freie Arbeiter Stimme/ Free Workers Voice*].<sup>41</sup> The issue of religion was high on the newspaper’s agenda, with its peak in antireligious propaganda during Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.<sup>42</sup> The *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* took an active role in the promotion of the 1890 Pioneers of Liberty Yom Kippur ball.

The Yom Kippur ball of 1890 was to be bigger and better. With their own organ behind them, the organizers felt confident that the event would not only take place, but draw unprecedented crowds. The ball was to be held at the Labor Lyceum in the neighbouring city of Brooklyn,<sup>43</sup> and handbills announcing the ball were distributed several days in advance. The tickets, which cost ten cents, read:

Grand Yom Kippur ball. With Theatre.

Arranged with the consent of all new rabbis of liberty.

Koll Nydre [sic] Night and Day.

In the year 6651 [sic], after the invention of Jewish idols, and 1890, after the birth of the false Messiah, in the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum...

The Koll Nydre will be offered by [Johann] Most.

Music, dancing, buffet, “Marseillaise,” and other hymns against Satan.<sup>44</sup>

The event, however, faced mass opposition from all sectors of Jewish life, and was finally shut down by the police.<sup>45</sup> The *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* offered harsh editorial comment in protest.<sup>46</sup> The anarchists held a mass public meeting at Cooper Union to protest the suppression of the event with over two thousand people in attendance. The response of the New York socialist press was generally positive,<sup>47</sup> while the stance of the socialist *Arbeter Tsaytung*, under the leadership of Philip Krantz,<sup>48</sup> was ambivalent.<sup>49</sup> In the end, despite its disruption, the second New York Yom Kippur ball ended on an overall note of victory. Although the event itself had not taken place, thousands of supporters had rallied behind the organizers.

## **ACCOUNTING FOR THE IMPACT OF THE YOM KIPPUR BALLS**

The impact of the Yom Kippur balls far outweighed the scale of the events themselves. As we have seen, the actual balls themselves involved a relatively minor element of the Jewish communities in which they took place, and yet the response was enormous.

One factor which serves to explain this discrepancy is the novelty of the event, which took place in a newly developing immigrant community where traditional power structures were being challenged by new ones. Religious observance, as the cornerstone of traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe, proved to be most vulnerable. After all, the Yom Kippur ball questioned, rejected and replaced the most sacred event in Jewish life, and it did so in a new and unprecedented way: a publicized mass gathering featuring food, drink, merriment, and antireligious speeches. Although even in the most traditional of settings individuals and small groups had opted not to observe Yom Kippur, the Yom Kippur ball represents the first public display on this scale. Never in the “Old Home” in

Europe had such an event taken place. The Yom Kippur ball was strictly an invention of the “New Home.” Another factor to account for the impact of the event is the sheer energy and enthusiasm of its anarchist activists.<sup>50</sup>

The Yom Kippur ball served several functions. For the already affiliated, the Yom Kippur ball provided the radical Jew with a shared community on Yom Kippur. When most everyone else was in synagogue, where else could the anarchist, who had rejected Jewish observance, find the company of other likeminded Jews? For the yet unaffiliated, the Yom Kippur ball provided the displaced immigrant with an alternative to the synagogue on the day of the Jewish calendar in which he was most likely to attend services, and introduced him to anarchist thought. A speech on the topic of religion on the program on every Yom Kippur ball, coupled with recitations, singing, refreshments, and an overall mood of enthusiasm not only spread the message but attracted new adherents to the fold.

As a public event, the Yom Kippur ball served as a mass antireligious demonstration. Perceived as a direct attack on the Jewish establishment as a whole, the response on the part of the majority Jewish community was virulent. Wide efforts made to impede the event, from mob disruptions to the involvement of the police and major politicians, brought extensive press coverage. Simply put, the Yom Kippur ball served as a prime recruitment tool within an anarchist propaganda campaign. No anarchist organizer, it seemed, could hope for better publicity. At least for a time.

The Yom Kippur ball ultimately proved to be as ephemeral as the era of flux which spawned it. Labour historian Melech Epstein attributes the decline of anarchist strength to the onset of “normality” among the Jewish population; as the Jews acclimatized economically, socially, and politically, they gravitated towards less radical expressions of socialism.<sup>51</sup> Still, as we shall find, contradicting forces simultaneously led to the demise of the Yom Kippur ball in its London and New York centers. The marginalization of anarchism among the

immigrant masses themselves does not adequately account for the decline of the Yom Kippur ball; direct anti-anarchist activity represents a significant factor in its fall.

## **DECLINE: LONDON and NEW YORK, 1891-1908**

The London Yom Kippur ball movement continued into the first decade of the twentieth century in the face of increasing opposition and violence. The *Arbayter Fraynd* publicized Yom Kippur balls on and off through 1905.<sup>52</sup> In 1904, the Yom Kippur entertainment in London's East End sparked a riot which involved the police, and the disruptions inspired the creation of an association devoted specifically to antireligious and atheist propaganda.<sup>53</sup> In 1905, the event featured a concert, and anarchist speaker Rudolf Rocker. The *Arbayter Fraynd* reported that despite protests and fights in the streets, the anarchist Kol Nidre open meeting in the center of the Jewish ghetto inexplicably went on undisturbed.<sup>54</sup>

With a marked rise in anti-anarchist sentiment, the London Yom Kippur ball movement began to wane. The Yom Kippur balls which took place in 1905 and 1906 were far smaller and less publicized.<sup>55</sup> With an increase in public antipathy and police action, the Yom Kippur ball phenomenon abated and then finally disappeared.

The New York Yom Kippur ball did not die as natural a death. The movement continued off and on for over a decade before an abrupt demise. According to reports in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Yom Kippur events organized by the Pioneers of Liberty took place without opposition in 1891<sup>56</sup> while Yom Kippur balls were organized in other American cities, including Providence, Philadelphia and Newark with overall success.<sup>57</sup>

The year 1893 marked an upsurge in anarchist activity which coincided with a period of economic depression.<sup>58</sup> In 1893 the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* advertised its "annual concert and ball in conjunction with a pleasant amusing [sic] and tasteful buffet"

to take place in Clarendon Hall over the entirety of Yom Kippur.<sup>59</sup> The event itself was disrupted, with an estimated mob of five to six thousand people surrounding the hall, and the police intervening and making arrests. Anti-anarchist activity increased. 1893 marked the last of the *Tfilot Zakot* and the beginning of a six-year hiatus in the publication of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*.<sup>60</sup>

By 1900, however, the movement seemed to be gaining momentum again. In that year, some months after the revival of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* under Saul Yanovsky, the newspaper announced: “Yom Kippur for Kol Nidre all freethinkers will gather in the lovely Clarendon Hall where singing, recitations, and performances fitting for this occasion will be held.”<sup>61</sup> The event was well attended and featured speeches by Johann Most, Yanovsky, and others as well as entertainment, with no mention of outside interference or disturbance.<sup>62</sup>

And yet this was the last full-scale public Yom Kippur ball of its kind to be held in New York.

Historians such as Elias Tcherikover and Irving Howe present the decline of the Yom Kippur ball movement as an inevitability. According to Tcherikover, “In due time the anarchists gave up the practice of public balls.”<sup>63</sup> Regarding the 1890 Yom Kippur ball, Howe writes,

The consequences of such tomfoolery were or should have been predictable. Many immigrants, although no longer Orthodox, still maintained a sense of piety toward religious occasions, and the anarchist assault came to be seen as a threat to their very being...<sup>64</sup>

The end of this practice was, in fact, far more sudden, and its downfall hastened by external factors beyond the control of the anarchist organizers. In 1901, the Yom Kippur ball movement did not seem to have been terminated, judging from the following announcement prominently featured in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* on September 13:

In the majestic London Theatre this Yom Kippur for Kol Nidre Sunday the 22nd of

September will gather all Yiddish-speaking freethinkers in order to demonstrate that free thought is not dead in New York.

However, the following week, on September 20, the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* abruptly announced that there would be no Yom Kippur event that year:

Being certain that the planned Yom Kippur gathering will be disrupted, we have decided not to hold such an event this year. We are certain that the Jewish scoundrels, who have certainly been impatiently awaiting 'a little fun' with the anarchists will be much aggrieved that we have come to this decision.<sup>65</sup>

This sudden turnabout can be directly attributed to one event: the assassination of the President of the United States by anarchist Leon Czolgosz. After having been shot at close range on September 6, President William McKinley died of his gunshot wounds on September 14, 1901. The assassination brought with it an upsurge of attacks against anarchists: anarchist headquarters were vandalized, suspected anarchist sympathizers were attacked, and many anarchists were arrested and imprisoned.<sup>66</sup> Although the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* makes no direct mention of the assassination, Yanovsky does discuss the aftermath of attacks by local "hooligans."<sup>67</sup>

The following year, there is no mention of Yom Kippur events. A column in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* suggests to its readers:

Do not give any indication that these Days of Awe are any different for you from the rest of the year. Do not hold any balls, but do not become pious either. If only every freethinker could go about his regular business... we would be much closer to our goal!<sup>68</sup>

Several months later, federal legislation was passed to bar anarchists from entering the United States. Although public

Yom Kippur gatherings did take place in 1903 and 1904, these were the last of their kind held in the city of New York proper.

By 1905, much of the steam had gone out of the antireligious movement among New York Jews. The previous antireligious venom was lacking in the pages of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*,<sup>69</sup> and the New York Yom Kippur ball had become a Yom Kippur picnic held in Long Island, far outside New York's Lower East Side.<sup>70, 71</sup> By 1909, the New York anarchist Yom Kippur observance seems to have become a means of addressing problems of indigestion and loitering among non-observant Jews on Yom Kippur.<sup>72</sup> By 1910, the anarchists had repudiated many of their major tenets.<sup>73</sup>

### III. MONTREAL

The first and only Montreal Yom Kippur Ball took place in 1905. The event shared similarities with what we have seen up to this point: the ball featured speeches, refreshments, and met opposition in the “established” Jewish community and in the press. Notable, though, is the late date of the event, and the fact that it was a one-time phenomenon.

How did this event come about in Montreal and why, unlike in London, New York, and other Jewish centers, did it only take place so late and only once? Some background comments are necessary before proceeding to answer this question.

Montreal absorbed the majority of Jewish immigrants to Canada, and acted as Canada's largest Jewish center during the peak years of Jewish immigration from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries.<sup>74</sup> By the early years of the twentieth century, it had become a hub of radicalism, and served as the Canadian headquarters for Jewish leftist political movements, including the Socialist Zionist Poale Zion, and labour organizations such as the ILGWU (International Ladies

Garment Workers Union). In many ways, Montreal was the Canadian equivalent to New York or London as far as Eastern European Jewish immigrant activity was concerned. And yet, there were marked differences.

As historian Eugene Orenstein points out, in his essay “Yiddish Culture in Canada Yesterday and Today,”<sup>75</sup> mass Jewish immigration to Canada in general, and to Montreal in particular, took place a generation later than in the United States. In the late 1880s, when the anarchist movement was in full swing in London and in New York City, Montreal’s Jewish population numbered in the hundreds; only after 1900 did the Jewish population of Montreal number in the tens of thousands.<sup>76</sup>

Many developments within the Montreal Jewish community took place at least a decade later than in the United States. The first Jewish periodical in Canada, an anglo-weekly based in Montreal called the *Jewish Times*, was not founded until 1897, decades after the first Anglo-Jewish American periodicals. Canada’s first lasting Yiddish language daily, the *Keneder Adler*, was founded in Montreal in 1907, over twenty years after the first lasting Yiddish daily in New York. Organized manifestations of radicalism do not appear in Montreal until some fifteen years after either London or New York. The Jewish radicals who did become active in Montreal were, in general, more likely to be nationalist in orientation than the cosmopolitan socialists and anarchists who had been active in New York or London two decades earlier.<sup>77</sup>

Canadian Jewry did not share the sizable pre-existing Jewish “establishment” which dominated in England and in the United States before the onset of mass immigration from Eastern Europe. In 1900, on the eve of mass Eastern European Jewish immigration to Canada, the English-speaking Canadian Jewish community of Montreal numbered a few thousand, and consisted of an anglicized elite minority,<sup>78</sup> and a majority who were themselves relatively recent immigrants from Eastern Europe by way of England or the United States.<sup>79</sup>



Eastern European immigrants to Montreal thus lacked a preexisting network of Jewish organizations and institutions which existed, for example, in New York City.

While the tiny, anglicized Jewish elite in Montreal would share some of the trepidation and acculturation impulses of its American counterpart in relation to their immigrant brethren, it was soon overwhelmed by a mass of newly arrived Yiddish and Russian speaking Eastern European Jews. These Jews would create a vast network of their own organizations and associations. In contrast to the chasm which separated the established German Jews from the new Eastern European immigrants in New York, the split between “Uptown” and “Downtown”<sup>80</sup> in Montreal was, to a large extent, a question of degree of acculturation of the same stream of Eastern European Jewish immigration.<sup>81</sup>

A number of the Jews who settled after 1900 had arrived in Montreal via London or New York, and had been influenced by the radical socialist and anarchist movements. As their number grew, one finds the beginnings of a radical revolutionary movement in Montreal. Among the skilled garment workers imported from New York to Montreal by the nascent garment industry<sup>82</sup> were a number of active anarchists. Montreal anarchists distributed the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* and anarchist pamphlets, organized lecturers from New York, and were active in the building of unions.<sup>83</sup> In many ways, the Montreal anarchist movement was a satellite of nearby New York.

Jewish radical activity began to crystallize after 1905. This year marked a number of firsts in the Canadian Jewish radical movement, among them the founding of the first Canadian chapter of Socialist Zionist Poale Zion in Montreal, the first May Day parade,<sup>84</sup> and the first Yom Kippur ball. Two institutions were key in the early development of Jewish radicalism in Montreal: the Jewish book shop and the Poale Zion party.

Canadian historian Israel Medres, in his article “How the Immigrants Found Their Intellectual Atmosphere,”<sup>85</sup> describes the rudimentary nature of Jewish organizational life

in Montreal when the book shop served as a cultural center for Montreal's Yiddish-speaking radical intelligentsia. Several of these book shops were located along "the Main," or Saint Lawrence Boulevard [Saint Laurent], Montreal's equivalent to London's East End or New York's Lower East Side. They stocked Yiddish newspapers from the *Forverts* to the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, as well as a selection of books, from sentimental novels or modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature, to anarchist propaganda.

The first of these book shops was owned by Hirsch Hershman, a recent immigrant with strong anarchist inclinations who had been active in the labour movement in New York before arriving in Montreal.<sup>86</sup> Opened in 1902, the book shop struggled in its early years until 1905, when mass immigration from Eastern Europe brought a wave of new customers.<sup>87</sup> According to Medres's account in *Montreal fun nekhtn* (*Montreal of Yesterday*), a second bookshop on "the Main" catered specifically to the more radical elements of the Jewish immigrant community. This bookshop sold antireligious literature about "the escapades of the most extreme radicals, the anarchists, which in those days included festivities on Yom Kippur."<sup>88</sup>

Shops such as Hershman's were gathering sites for Jewish radicals, albeit on a very small scale. The older generation would gather to buy a newspaper and drink seltzer, while the younger "more enlightened" and radical minded immigrants, many of whom had already been exposed to radical and socialist ideas, would come and discuss politics. Medres writes:

Each store had its specialty on the line of "cultural dissemination." In one place, the favourite theme might be anarchism, due no doubt to the prevalence of anarchistic pamphlets and literature on the shelves. The store-keeper was himself a specialist in this line of literature... When the storekeeper was asked for a glass of soda water or a package of cigarettes by a customer he would take his time and lend an ear to the discussions

that were being waged, and would throw in his comment as well. The cigarettes would wait while he championed the teachings of Karl Marx, Peter Kropotkin, Rudolf Rocker, Johann Most, or Emma Goldman.<sup>89</sup>

Many “one time anarchists,” writes Medres, would spend hours discussing the pros and cons of anarchism in the book shops. The bookshops would arrange for speakers to come from New York to lecture on socialist and anarchist topics, and the impending social revolution.<sup>90</sup> The Jewish book shop served as a hub of radical activity during the contentious Jewish holidays. Writes Medres,

The [book shop] debates were particularly lively when Erev Yom Tov [the eve of the holiday] came around. ... On Erev Yom Kippur the subject for debate would be whether a true anarchist should stage an anti-religious demonstration by means of a dance, or a feast in the restaurant or ignore the event completely.<sup>91</sup>

The Poale Zion and its socialist Zionist forerunners were likewise significant to the development of Jewish radical activity. Upon its establishment in Montreal in 1905, the Poale Zion soon became a center of radicalism. Poale Zion members would attend open lectures organized by already established anarchist and Social Democrat unions.<sup>92</sup>

In the rudimentary state of Jewish radicalism, there was a good deal of overlap between the burgeoning socialist Zionist movement and other radical left-wing movements. It was not uncommon for members of the Poale Zion to be active anarchists; one of Montreal’s most active anarchists, Hayman Lazarus, was a pioneer Poale Zionist, and an active trade unionist.<sup>93</sup> As historian B. G. Sack writes: “Perhaps the greatest achievement in the early days of [the Poale Zion’s] existence was its influence within those strongholds of radicalism where Jewish tradition or national consciousness were shunned and scorned as reactionary.”<sup>94</sup> From the onset,

Montreal Jewish radicalism tended towards a combination of socialism and Zionism.

Despite the activism of its proponents, anarchism among Montreal Jews represented a marginal phenomenon. As in England and America, the majority of Montreal Jewry did not subscribe to the radical extremism of the anarchists. As Medres describes, even the second Jewish bookshop on “the Main,” with its radical orientation, was soon selling traditional Jewish objects such as prayer shawls for the high holidays; as he writes, “Once more radicalism was forced to retreat under the pressure of traditional Judaism exerted by the immigrant Jews on Main Street.”<sup>95</sup> In addition, Montreal lacked the strong radical base and the sheer numbers of the anarchist movements in London or New York.

The rise of antireligious Jewish radicalism was not welcomed by the “established” Jewish community, however small. The voice of this community was represented by the conservative “Uptown” anglo-Jewish weekly, the *Jewish Times*.<sup>96</sup> The coverage of Jewish holiday observance in the *Jewish Times* promoted observance and opposed antireligious behaviour. This stance was particularly marked in its coverage of the High Holidays. A column entitled “the Day of Atonement” which appeared in the *Jewish Times* in October of 1900, glowingly describes the mass observance of Yom Kippur in Montreal with its overflowing synagogues.<sup>97</sup> An article which appeared in the *Jewish Times* in September of 1902 entitled “The New Year” states:

Marvellous must be the hold of Judaism on its votaries when it can compel even the indifferent to pay respect to this season of religious revival. The Jew who does not heed even the call of these days has indeed forfeited his religious birthright; for all practical reasons he ceases to be a member of the Brotherhood of Israel.<sup>98</sup>

During the week of Yom Kippur 1901, several articles critical of anarchism appeared in the *Jewish Times*.

In them anarchism was dismissed as impractical, associated with European anti-semitism, and blamed for the wider movement away from Judaism. One piece concludes with a strong admonition of Jewish radicals, “for they ceased to be Jews when they became anarchists.”<sup>99</sup> Several weeks later, one finds an article praising the end of public infractions of Yom Kippur observance in New York City which had taken place some years prior.<sup>100</sup>

Until 1905, the *Jewish Times* makes no mention of local anarchist activity among Canadian Jewry. It makes no mention of an announcement of any Yom Kippur ball. The paper did, on request, reprint resolutions adopted by Chicago’s largest orthodox synagogue attacking the activity of

an organization which styles itself ‘Russian Jewish Socialists and Revolutionists,’ the members of which, however, are in no sense of the word Jews, and belong to an organization which has among its principal objects the one to hold a dance on Kol Nidre evening ...<sup>101</sup>

As can be expected, the *Jewish Times* would not report favourably on the anarchist Yom Kippur ball which took place that October.

## **THE MONTREAL YOM KIPPUR BALL**

Canadian Jewish historian B. G. Sack, in his *Canadian Jews - Early in This Century*, provides the following account of Montreal’s Yom Kippur ball:

In Montreal, for instance, a group of Jewish anarchists, emulating their free-thinking socialist confreres of New York or Chicago, arranged a Yom Kippur dance at St. Joseph Hall. They distributed circulars inviting the Jewish people to partake of dancing and refreshments on Yom Kippur day. Pious Jews on their way to synagogue were both horrified and infuriated at the

distributors of the handbills. This flagrant violation of religious sentiments led to a skirmish, which ended only after the police intervened and the subsequent airing of the incident in court.<sup>102</sup>

Various press accounts provide details of the Montreal Yom Kippur ball.<sup>103</sup> The event took place on October 9, 1905 at St. Joseph's Hall, on St. Catherine street and Sanguinet in Montreal's East End. The hosts were a society of socialists and freethinkers which called itself "The Group of Worker's Friends." The event was billed as "a protest against superstition," and the following invitations were distributed in front of local synagogues on Rosh Hashana:

All free-thinking persons of Montreal are asked to come on the Day of Atonement to St. Joseph's Hall where friend [Comrade] Abrahams will lecture on the 'Theme of Religion.' Entertainment the whole day. Admission free.<sup>104</sup>

Some eighty people gathered in the hall on Yom Kippur morning. When the main speaker, Mr. Abrahams<sup>105</sup> was late in holding his lecture, some of those present at the event began to consume the refreshments. A group of Jews present left in anger, and a crowd soon entered the premises and proceeded to disrupt the event. The hall was badly damaged, and tobacco, food, and money stolen. The police were summoned, and the angry mob left the site. Soon a second antagonistic group entered the hall and a fight broke out. When the organizers were unable to stop the fighting, they called the police. One man, Harry Rabinovitch,<sup>106</sup> was arrested and brought to the local police station, and the event continued under the guard of a single police officer. Mr. Rabinovitch was charged with obstruction and assault of Benjamin Jauff, one of the speakers at the event,<sup>107</sup> by punching him in the forehead with his fist outside of the hall. The case was heard in Recorder's court the next day, and the accused released for lack of evidence.

The Montreal Yom Kippur ball received coverage in the *Jewish Times*, as well as in all of Montreal's major dailies, both

English and French. Much of this coverage is of the disruption of the event, and subsequent arrest and court case. Headlines include: “Row at St. Joseph’s Hall” (*The Montreal Star*, Oct. 10); “Riot at meeting... One man arrested” (*Montreal Gazette*, Oct. 10); “Une rixe entre juifs” (*La Presse*, Oct. 9); and “Desecration of the Day of Atonement. A Socialist Gathering Broken Up” (*Jewish Times*, Oct. 20).

The initial reports in the Montreal press reflect confusion about the nature of the event. The *Star* and *La Presse* mistakenly attribute the violent break up of the meeting to the fact that the food served at the event was not kosher:

In the midst of [the consumption of the food] there appeared about thirty people, who were evidently not kindly disposed toward their free-thinking brethren, and believing that some of the articles of diet were not in accordance with the Jewish faith, they proceeded to enter a forcible protest.<sup>108</sup>

The next day, the *Star* reported that the root of the trouble was “what was considered profane treatment of the Day of Atonement by the unorthodox body.”<sup>109</sup>

These various reports of the event point to one main difference between the Montreal Yom Kippur ball and its counterparts in New York and London: organization, or, more specifically, lack thereof. The “Group of Worker’s Friends” does not seem to have represented an established organization within the Montreal Jewish radical scene.<sup>110</sup> The three individuals mentioned in accounts of the Montreal Yom Kippur ball—Mr. Abrahams, Mr. Jauff, and Mr. Rabinovitch—lacked the prominence of the personalities behind the London and New York events. The event was marked by general confusion and pandemonium, and seems to have been fairly easily disrupted.

Attempts to suppress the Montreal Yom Kippur ball were limited to haphazard disruptions during the ball itself. According to the reports in the *Star* and the *Gazette*, only after some of the celebrants began to partake of refreshments did a

group in attendance who were not “free-thinkers” leave the hall to spread the news that “a meeting was being held as an insult to their religion.” The crowd which invaded the hall had more than the sanctity of religion in mind; upon entry, they began to break chairs and steal food and tobacco from the bar until they easily dispersed when the police was called. When the noisy crowd returned and a fight broke out which the staff on hand was unable to control, the police were called a second time, again by the organizers themselves. By the time the police arrived, the bar had been wrecked, and all the money from the cash register stolen. Upon the arrest of Mr. Rabinovitch, the fighting stopped. According to the *Gazette’s* report, the invaders left with lit cigars and cigarettes.

In contrast to the wide efforts to halt the Yom Kippur balls in London and New York, the Montreal ball was impeded by spontaneous hooliganism with no one claiming responsibility. The event’s opponents do not seem to have constituted a unified and coordinated force. With the exception of Mr. Rabinovitch, no names are mentioned in conjunction with the disruptions, and it seems unlikely that Mr. Rabinovitch represented the leader of any anti-ball protest. According to the press accounts, he denied any affiliation with the ball, testifying in court that had not set out to oppose the event; he had unwittingly wound up at the site of the Yom Kippur ball, and had found himself suddenly under arrest and accused of striking a man he had never laid eyes on before.

In contrast to what transpired in New York, there do not seem to have been any organized efforts or appeals to suppress the event ahead of time. There is likewise no indication that efforts were made to involve outside legal forces to prohibit the ball from taking place. When the police were summoned, it was by the staff on hand at the event, and not by its opponents. Thus, although the event was effectively sabotaged, one cannot speak of a cohesive anti-Yom Kippur ball movement.

Unlike the wide and virulent campaign to halt the New York Yom Kippur balls, the breakup of the Montreal event, it



was agreed on all sides, was not to be condoned. The Court, in addition to dismissing Rabinovitch, stated that, “the conveners... were within their rights in holding[the event].” Even the *Jewish Times*, while generally unsympathetic to the cause, acknowledged the rights of individuals in a free country to air their views and hold gatherings within the law, and condemned those who disrupted the events at the hall.<sup>111</sup>

Despite its disorganization, the event evoked strong responses from all elements of Montreal Jewry, with the ensuing court case acting as an intensifier. According to *La Presse*, “Toute la colonie juive de la ville avait évahi la salle du tribunal”,<sup>112</sup> and much lively discussion ensued. The *Montreal Gazette* refers to the aftermath of the event as a “religious war,” with “free-thinkers” in support of the ball in one camp, and its opponents in the other.

In the first “camp,” the Jewish Socialists and “free-thinkers” claimed the invasion of their hall to have been an infraction of the laws of the country and of individual rights; in the second “camp,” their opponents claimed that the event represented an insult to the Jewish religion. The comments of a group of socialists gathered at Hershman’s bookstore are quoted in the *Gazette*, the *Star*, and the *Jewish Times*:

We are free-thinkers and Socialists, and we have a right to do as we please, provided we do not disturb others. We did not compel anyone to enter and our gathering could not be an insult to anyone who minded his own business. We have a number of friends here: why there are 3,000 Socialist papers sold every day in this city. We want to educate the people. We are followers of Ingersoll and Tolstoy. We read Spencer. We know something.

In the meantime, a group gathered at the home of Mr. Rabinovitch the evening after the trial are cited as stating, “It was a fight in a good cause. These men had no right to insult us. They are blasphemers and neither Jew nor Gentile would stand for their insults.”<sup>113</sup>

The stance of the “Jewish establishment” can be found in an editorial in the *Jewish Times* entitled “Yom Kippur Outrage.” It in many ways parallels the response of the *American Israelite*: the ball is to be condemned. Still, the best course of action would have been to have ignored the celebration of this radical fringe elements entirely: “It is to be regretted that any notice was taken of the Yom Kippur desecration meeting...To notice them only magnifies their insignificance.”<sup>114</sup> Still, in contrast to the fierce opposition to antireligious behaviour expressed by the American anglo-Jewish periodicals, the opposition of the *Jewish Times* was limited and mild. This was likely due, at least in part, to the finite nature of the ball itself.

Key to the disorganized and shortlived quality of the Montreal Yom Kippur ball was the issue of dissemination; unlike their counterparts in London and New York, the Montreal anarchists lacked an avowedly radical organ. The *Keneder Adler*, Canada’s first lasting Yiddish newspaper, did not come into existence until two years after the event.<sup>115</sup> As we shall see, it would largely share the stance of the *Jewish Times* on antireligious activity and the Yom Kippur ball.

Founded as a weekly in Montreal in August of 1907, the *Keneder Adler* [*Canadian Eagle*] became a Yiddish daily in October of 1908. Many of the *Adler*’s associates had radical inclinations: book shop owner Hirsh Hershman was a regular contributor; Wohliner, the paper’s editor until 1909, was an active labour Zionist who had begun his literary career in the anarchist *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, and was active in New York anarchist circles.<sup>116</sup> Although the *Adler* expressed clear Socialist inclinations and was, for example, sympathetic to the plight of workers in its coverage of strikes, its stance on religious observance was consistently traditional and antiradical. David Rome writes:

Although the Adler editors were not religiously observant as a group, they were profoundly steeped in the tradition... their poems and articles

reminiscent of the holy days as observed in the old home, related to the ideas of the present time, were frequently published in the *Adler* by [contributors] Schneour, Yampolsky, Bercovici and Goldstein, not to mention of H. Hirsch, who conducted a veritable political campaign against secularism.<sup>117</sup>

The *Keneder Adler* did not, and could not, serve as the Montreal radical left-wing equivalent of the anarchist London *Arbayter Fraynd* and New York *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, or even of the openly Socialist *Forverts*. The *Adler*'s publisher, Hirsh Wolofsky, simultaneously a businessman and an active figure in key institutions in the Montreal Jewish community,<sup>118</sup> created a popular newspaper that addressed the widest possible readership. This readership included both workers and bosses, both secular and observant Jews. Rather than represent any one stance, the *Adler* strove to supply Canadian Jews with an organ to inform, educate, entertain, and represent their general interests, and to strengthen and ultimately to consolidate the Yiddish-speaking immigrant community in Montreal, and in Canada as a whole.<sup>119</sup> While the *Adler* geared itself towards the Yiddish-speaking "Downtown" Jewish community, and on key issues identified itself against the acculturated "Uptown" and its press, the *Jewish Times*,<sup>120</sup> its stance remained moderate.<sup>121</sup>

From the onset, the *Adler* maintained a middle ground and tended toward the traditional in matters related to religion. The reason was simple: Montreal, even as Canada's largest Yiddish center, boasted a far smaller Yiddish population than its New York counterpart, and a limited potential readership.<sup>122</sup> Unlike the *Forverts*, the *Adler* had to appeal to the broadest possible reading public. Its publisher could not afford to antagonize readers by taking a divisive radical antireligious position like the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*. In addition, Montreal Jewry found itself in a more precarious situation as a largely newly arrived Yiddish-speaking community wedged between

the French-Catholic majority and small English-Protestant elite. Divisiveness was not on the *Adler's* agenda.

If we look to the *Adler's* columns during the High Holidays in 1908, the first full year of its publication, we find an abundance of nostalgic reminiscences of Yom Kippur in the Old Country, and praise for the freedom offered to worship freely in the New Country. These are coupled with an unambiguous lack of sympathy for antireligious activity. Three years after the fact, it seems, the Yom Kippur ball still loomed in the consciousness of Montreal Jewry.

An editorial entitled “Yom Kippur Sentiments and Yom Kippur Scandals” reflects the *Adler's* stance on antireligious radicalism. Wohliner discussed the differences between High Holiday observance in the Old Country, and in the New Country. He lamented an increased proportion of irreligious and antireligious behaviour among Jews in America, and drew the conclusion that “this is perhaps why Yom Kippur scandals never take place there, and take place so often here.” In Europe, Wohliner continued, there is an underlying respect for the religion even among the most radical atheists, that is lacking in America; in Europe, a person understands that “Yom Kippur demonstrations, Yom Kippur balls and public Yom Kippur feasts do not serve to show anyone anything. He is *mentsh* [decent] enough not to trod on someone else’s feelings.” In America, in contrast, the atheist “lacks education, intelligence and understanding. He acts like a hero who equates his Yom Kippur feast with an act of heroism. His Yom Kippur demonstrations often smack of ignorance.” Still, the column ends with a criticism of those who attack these Yom Kippur activities: these are not the devout Jews who are too busy observing the holiday to take notice of the nonobservance of others; rather, “pogroms against the socialist and anarchist clubs are undertaken by people who themselves spend little time in synagogue and know absolutely nothing about serious religious sentiment.”<sup>123</sup>

In the *Adler's* High Holiday editorials the following year, there is little mention of potential antireligious activity.

Although a column entitled “Days-of-Awe Jews” discusses the possibility of increased numbers of freethinkers among Jews, the assumption was that a Jew “goes to synagogue, because everyone goes... because—how does one not go to synagogue?”<sup>124</sup> An editorial the following week entitled “Yom Kippur” opens: “All Jews, from small to great, know well what ‘Yom Kippur’ means... Nothing but the holiness of the day enters one’s thoughts.”<sup>125</sup>

The Montreal Yom Kippur ball movement thus ended as quickly as it had begun, collapsing almost two decades of London and New York Yom Kippur ball activity into one year. With the most extreme anarchist antireligious agitation facing its demise by 1905, the Montreal Yom Kippur ball movement was stillborn.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The rise and fall of the Yom Kippur ball can be attributed to wider changing trends. Like antireligious agitation in general, the Yom Kippur ball movement can be understood as a fleeting product of upheaval among the Jewish immigrant masses: in a time of displacement and new freedom, many Jews turned radical; as they adjusted and acculturated many turned away from the radical left-wing in favour of the more mainstream socialist movement. Even the more radical elements understood that extreme antireligious agitation, by alienating a significant proportion of the Jewish masses, ultimately brought more harm than good to the radical agenda.

Still, as we have seen, the Yom Kippur ball did not simply fall prey to gradual transformation. Its demise, in particular in New York, was sudden. This premature death can be attributed directly to the development of anti-anarchist sentiment in the first decade of the century. With anarchist activity pursued by the authorities, supporters left the movement in droves. Police action and threats of violence drove the movement

further underground. Under these conditions, the Yom Kippur ball, which relied on publicity, could not continue. Ultimately, declining interest in radicalism coupled with strong widespread anti-anarchist sentiment led to the downfall of the Yom Kippur ball.

Significant to the success of the Yom Kippur ball were three factors. First, the Yom Kippur ball required organized agitation among the masses. The first balls in London and New York had prominent radicals such as Philip Krantz and Morris Hillquit behind them. When the Yom Kippur ball movement lost its leaders to the Socialist mainstream, it lost direction.

Second, the Yom Kippur balls relied heavily on a means of disseminating propaganda. Ideally this took the form of an enduring anarchist organ such as the London *Arbayter Fraynd* or the New York *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*. The press served as a forum for disseminating the message, riling up its readership, and responding to attacks.

Third, the events thrived on publicity through opposition by one segment of the Jewish establishment. Had the events been ignored completely, the Yom Kippur balls would likely have gone unnoticed among the masses and remained a fringe phenomenon. Not only did the anti-Yom Kippur ball activity provide increased visibility, it encouraged what one might term a “good guys versus bad guys” mentality, with the anarchists coming out on top.

The one-time appearance of the Montreal ball can be attributed directly to the absence of these three features. As we have seen, the Montreal ball lacked organization and leadership. The movement behind the ball did not have an anarchist organ to publicize its anarchist agenda. The ball itself was plagued by disorder, with opposition to it haphazard and uncoordinated. The event itself ended in pandemonium, and without any follow-up. How could such an event sustain itself?

With the growth of the Jewish labour movement after 1905 in England, the United States, and Canada, the anarchist torch was passed to more mainstream socialists. Although

isolated Yom Kippur balls did take place at much later dates in such disparate places as Havana, Cuba, the continuity was lacking.<sup>126</sup>

The anarchist Yom Kippur ball burned brightly for a short time and faded away. Today it remains an oddity of history. At the time it almost entered the mainstream.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>I would like to thank Professor Arthur A. Goren, under whose tutelage I originally wrote this paper at Columbia University. It was he who suggested the title. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup>Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York Jews 1870–1914* (Cambridge, Mass., London, England: Harvard UP, 1962, 1977), pp. 154–155.

<sup>3</sup>Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Schocken, 1976, 1989), pp. 105–107.

<sup>4</sup>Rudolf Rocker (1873–1958) was a German-Christian anarchist who became a disciple of Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin. Rocker had settled in London's Jewish East End in 1898, where he became editor of the *Arbayer Fraynd* (see note 7), and a leading anarchist. Ed., "Rocker, Rudolf," *Encyclopedia Judaica* Vol. 10 (Jerusalem: Keter and Macmillan, 1971), p. 214.

Johann (Joseph) Most (1846–1906) was a German anarchist who left London for New York in 1892 and was editor of the anarchist German-language newspaper, the *Freiheit* (see note 43). Both were frequent speakers at anarchist events, including the Yom Kippur balls. Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A* (KTAV, 1969), pp. 195–198, Kevin Kenny, "Most, Johann (Joseph)," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven & New York: Yale UP, 1995), pp. 775–776.

<sup>5</sup>These thinkers included Russian anarchist authors Prince Peter Aleksevitch Kropotkin (1842–1921) and Mikhail Aleksandrovitch Bakunin (1814–1876), French socialist and writer, Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), and others. Their ideas were disseminated and studied in informal reading circles, in Russian or later to a larger extent, in Yiddish.

<sup>6</sup>For an overview of Jewish socialism and anarchist in London, see Lloyd P. Gartner, “Movements of Improvement,” *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870–1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960), Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 1998), pp. 176–179.

Neither Gartner nor Alderman make mention of the London Yom Kippur balls, although Gartner does mention another mass antireligious demonstration known as the “synagogue parade” which involved the participation of thousands of London Jews in 1889. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England*, pp. 115–116.

<sup>7</sup>The *Arbayter Fraynt* began as a monthly, and appeared as a weekly the following year. Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p. 177.

<sup>8</sup>Philip Krantz (1858–1922) was a Russian Jew who had learned Yiddish in London under the tutelage of Yiddish poet, Morris Vinchevsky (1856–1932). Vinchevsky was a regular contributor to the newspaper until he left for America in 1894. In 1890, Philip Krantz resigned as editor and left for America. There he became one of the founders of the Socialist New York *Arbeter Tsaytung* (see note 48). Eliye Shulman, “Krantz, Filip,” *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*. Vol. 8. Niger, Sh., et al., eds. (New York: Alveltlekhn yidishn kultur-kongres, 1956–1981), pp. 243–249, Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870–1914*, p. 110.

Prominent anarchist activist and journalist Saul Yanovsky arrived in London from New York in 1890, and acted as editor until 1895. See note 21.

<sup>9</sup>For examples of High Holiday antireligious propaganda in the *Arbayter Fraynd*, see: Sept. 27, Oct. 4, 11, 1889; Sept. 19, 1890; Sept. 23, Oct. 7, 1892; Sept. 28, 1894; Sept. 1, 8, 15, 1899; Sept. 11, 18, Oct. 2, 1903; Aug. 19, Sept. 2, 16, 1904; Sept. 15, 1905;

<sup>10</sup>Journalist S. Lubash pinpointed Krantz as initiator of the event in articles which appeared in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* and the *Arbayter Tsaytung* Oct. 10, 1890 and Oct. 24, 1890, respectively. Also cited in Elias Tcherikover, ed., *The Early Jewish Labour Movement in the United States*. Trans. Aaron Antonovsky. (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1961), p. 270.

<sup>11</sup>Cited in Tcherikover, *The Early Jewish Labour Movement in the United States*, p. 253.

<sup>12</sup>*Arbayter Fraynd*, Aug. 31, 1888.

<sup>13</sup>See note 10.



<sup>14</sup>This account of the ball is taken from the *Arbayter Fraynd*, Sept. 21, 1889.

<sup>15</sup>According to the account in the *Arbayter Fraynd*, the English press, including the English language *Sun*, expressed criticism of the police intervention (*Arbayter Fraynd*, Sept. 21, 1889).

<sup>16</sup>I did not come across any information indicating organized opposition from the London Jewish community. The London anglo-Jewish weekly, the *Jewish Chronicle* makes no mention of the event at all.

<sup>17</sup>For an overview of the development of the Jewish anarchist movement in New York by one of its activists, including a detailed first-hand account of the Yom Kippur balls of 1889 and 1890, see Kopeloff, *A mol in Amerike: zikhroynes fun dem yidishn lebn in Amerike in di yorn 1883–1904* (Warsaw: *Farlag* Kh. Bjoza, 1928), especially pp. 230–275. See also Joseph Cohen, *Di anarkhistishe bavegung in Amerike* (Jubilee Issue of the Radical Library, Branch 273, Workman’s Circle, Philadelphia, PA, 1905, 1945), especially pp. 70–79. For an early historical survey of the Jewish anarchist scene, see Herz Burgin, *Di geshikhte fun der idisher arbeter bavegung in Amerike, Rusland un England* (New York: *Fareynikte idishe geveershafn*, 1915), pp. 126, 139, 141. See also: Epstein, “The Anarchists”, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A* (KTAV, 1969) and Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, pp. 105–107.

<sup>18</sup>In May of 1886, police stormed a demonstration held near Haymarket Square agitating for an eight-hour work day. At a protest meeting, a bomb was thrown and a police officer killed. Four anarchists were convicted.

<sup>19</sup>The Pioneers of Freedom are not to be confused with the Knights of Freedom, an anarchist group composed largely of English anarchists living in the United States and affiliated with the London *Arbayter Fraynd*.

<sup>20</sup>The Berger Street Club on Orchard Street hosted activities including English classes, and Sunday “conversations with music and dance.” Free lectures for the public were hosted on a regular basis. “*Di ‘riter der frayhayt’ in amerike*,” *Arbayter Fraynd*, Sept. 13, 1889. According to Burgin, these events attracted two to three hundred men and women. Burgin, *Di geshikhte fun der idisher arbeter bavegung*, p. 127. By August of 1889, a mass meeting featuring prominent German anarchist Johann Most as speaker attracted an audience of several hundred. *Arbayter Fraynd*, Aug. 13, 1889.

<sup>21</sup>Kopeloff, *A mol in Amerike: zikhroynes fun dem yidishn lebn in Amerike in di yorn 1883–1904*, p. 233.

<sup>22</sup>Saul Yanovsky (1864–1939) had arrived in New York from his native Pinsk in 1885. He had been an active member of the Russian Progressive Association, and became an anarchist in the wake of the Chicago Haymarket tragedy. In 1890, Yanovsky settled in London, where he served as editor of the *Arbayter Fraynd* after Philip Glantz's departure for America. Upon his return to New York in 1895, Yanovsky edited a number of anarchist periodicals, as well as contributing to the *Tsunkunft* journal and the Jewish Daily *Forverts*. In 1899, he assumed editorship of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, and remained its editor until 1919. Borekh Tshubinski, "Yanovski, Shaul-yoysef," *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*. Vol. 4, pp. 186–189, Hutchins Hapgood, "The Anarchist Papers," *Spirit of the Ghetto*. Ed. Moses Rischin (Cambridge, MA, London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1967).

<sup>23</sup>For an overview of antireligious activities among Jewish anarchists in the Jewish immigrant community in America, see Tcherikover, *The Early Jewish Labour Movement in the United States*, pp. 246–271.

<sup>24</sup>The weekly *Varhayt* [*Warheit*; Truth] was edited by J. Jaffe, and appeared for twenty issues from February 15 to July 12, 1889. For an announcement of the endeavour, see "Varhaytsfund," *Arbayter Fraynd*, Oct. 18, 1889.

<sup>25</sup>The *Tfilot Zakot* were issued anonymously. Burgin suggests that they were authored by poet David Edelstadt, and others. Burgin, *Digeshikhte fun der idisher Arbayter bavegung*, p. 141.

<sup>26</sup>According to Davidson's *Studies in Jewish Parody*, previous socialist antireligious propaganda, "appear[s] quite inoffensive in comparison with the brazen blasphemy of the anonymous parodies published by the Pioneers of Freedom of New York under the title of *Tephillah Zakkah...*" Israel Davidson, *Parody in Jewish Literature* (New York: Columbia UP, 1907), p. 83, fn. 71.

<sup>27</sup>The announcement reads:

To the friends of the 'Arbayter Fraynd' in the New York area: A monster concert, ball and raffle will take place on Saturday evening, the 26th of October, in the excellent Clarendon Hall ... for the patronage of the London 'Arbayter Fraynd,' Organized by the group, 'Knights of Freedom' and the Jewish Section of the Socialist Workers'

Party in New York. All goal-oriented workers are invited  
to take part in this evening!

<sup>28</sup>*Volks Zeitung*, Oct. 5, 1889. The German-language *New Yorker Volks Zeitung*, New York's first radical daily, appeared in 1878 and existed until 1932. It appeared as a weekly from 1934–1949 as the *Neue Volkszeitung*. See Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 520.

<sup>29</sup>The handbill reads:

Down with fanaticism! Long live free thought!  
*Invitation card* — *Yom Kippur Family Entertainment*,  
Arranged after the latest style by the “Pioneers of Liberty”  
section of the International Labor Association on Erev  
Yom Kippur, the 4th, and on Yom Kippur, the 5th of  
October  
(From Kol Nidre evening until Neilah on the morrow)  
In Clarendon Hall, 114 and 118 East Thirteenth Street  
Music: German and Russian singing societies. — Yom  
Kippur Dance. — Kol Nidre Speakers! J. Most, followed  
by others. — Dramatic performance, Vaudeville: “After  
the Spree.” — Grand raffle. — Buffet.  
Admission free. Hat checks 10 cents.  
Laborers, whirl as kapores. Religion and Capital.

Translated in the *American Israelite*, October 3, 1889.

<sup>30</sup>An editorial in the *American Hebrew* on Sept. 27, 1889 refers to the upcoming ball as “one of the most shocking examples of malicious imbecility which it has been our ill-fortune ever to look upon” and calls for the city’s Jews, if not the mayor himself, to stop the event. The newspaper did not offer coverage of the event itself. The newspaper had often made statements critical of the radicalism of the new Russian immigrants. See, for example, “Religion and Anarchy,” *American Hebrew*, Aug. 17, 1888.

On September 29, the New York correspondent reported:  
The mixed multitude of socialists, anarchists, and nihilists lodged here by the incoming tides of Jewish-Russian immigration is beginning to make its presence felt, and will, I fear, prove a source of great trouble in the future. ...

To give the reader “a good idea of the moral degradation of these people,” the author provides a translation of the announcement of the ball

being circulated on the Lower East Side (cited in note 29). The article concludes: “And now a cable dispatch from Odessa notifies us that there is a party of 1000 Jews from Odessa on its way to these shores. Will they swell the ranks of the ultra-pious, or the ultra-impious?” *American Israelite*, Oct. 3, 1889.

<sup>32</sup>Sarasohn reprinted the *American Hebrew*'s editorial and added his own vitriolic commentary. *Yidishes Tageblatt*, Oct. 7, 1889. For an English rendition, see Tcherikover, *The Early Jewish Labour Movement in the United States*, p. 259.

The *Yiddishes Tageblatt*, established in 1885 by Kasriel Sarasohn, was the first successful Yiddish language daily in the United States. Its approach was politically and religiously conservative. Ed., “Yidishes Tageblatt,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* Vol. 16, p. 833.

<sup>33</sup>According to the account in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, the Orthodox Jews held a meeting and appealed to the Jewish coroner of the city of New York, Ferdinand Levy, to intercede with the municipal authorities. Levy petitioned the police to compel the owner of Clarendon Hall to break his contract with the Pioneers of Liberty. The owner, a saloon keeper who had frequent dealings with the police, complied, and was forced to compensate the Pioneers of Liberty for breach of contract, a cost assumed by the opponents of the ball. *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Sept. 12, 1890. In response, the Pioneers of Liberty issued a handbill on the eve of Yom Kippur attacking the opponents of the ball and stating that the event was still on. For the text of this handbill, see Tcherikover, 259.

<sup>34</sup>“A Yom Kippur mit klep un tents,” *Folkstsaytung*, Oct. 11, 1890. Morris Hillquit (Morris Hillkovitch) (1869–1933), lawyer and prominent political leader, would assume leadership of the Socialist Party of America together with Meyer London. Irwin Yellowitz, “Hillquit, Morris,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* Vol. 8, pp. 494–495. According to Kopeloff, Hillquit was an active promoter of the first Yom Kippur ball. Kopeloff, *A mol in Amerike: zikhroynes fun dem yidishn lebn in Amerike in di yorn 1883–1904*, p.238.

<sup>35</sup>Kopeloff provides a detailed account of the events: on the eve of Yom Kippur thousands of men, women, and children packed the streets around Clarendon Hall along with curious onlookers who had come from synagogue, and a group of opponents. When the owner informed the crowd

that the hall had been closed, there was a cry of protest, and the police was called to disperse the crowd. The mass change of location took place just as services at a nearby synagogue were closing, and some of the emerging worshippers attempted to block the “free thinkers” from entering the Labor Lyceum. When a fight broke out, the police took over the entrance and turned hundreds of people away. Kopeloff, *A mol in Amerike: zikhroynes fun dem yidishn lebn in Amerike in di yorn 1883–1904*, pp. 236–238. According to the account in the *Folktsaytung*, despite the intervention, the hall was packed. The evening’s program included recitations, a buffet and dancing in addition to speeches by Johann Most and others. A speech denounced those involved in the disruption of the ball, and a resolution was adopted condemning the owner of Clarendon Hall. “*A Yom Kippur mit klep un tents,*” *Folktsaytung*, Oct. 11, 1890.

<sup>36</sup>“*A Yom Kippur mit klep un tents,*” *Folktsaytung*, Oct. 11, 1890.

<sup>37</sup>Sarasohn’s conservative *Yidishes Tageblatt* published a scathing attack on the radicals involved with the ball. He praised the role of the police, and condemned the Socialist *Folktsaytung* for its support of the ball and articles on religion. *Yidishes Tageblatt*, Oct. 7, 1889. The *Folktsaytung* retaliated with attacks on Sarasohn and M. Wechsler, editor of the *Yidische Tsaytung*. The resulting libel suit launched by Sarasohn was later dismissed in court. Tcherikover, *The Early Jewish Labour Movement in the United States*, pp. 260–261.

<sup>38</sup>Although a Philadelphia Yom Kippur “entertainment” had been organized too late to be advertised in the press, the hall was packed. Admission to the Kol Nidre event was ten cents, and an additional five cents for a meal which included free beer. It was apparently on this last point that opponents of the event, led by Coroner Levy, attempted to disrupt the proceedings; three Jews from the Orthodox camp went to court and falsely accused the organizers of illegally selling beer at the event. One organizer was arrested, and released on bail. “*Di arbeter bavegung,*” *Arbayter Fraynd*, Nov. 1, 1889. Meanwhile, a Yom Kippur ball in Boston was condemned by the community at large, with the Moses Montefiore Association refusing charity to anyone who had attended the event. Tcherikover, *The Early Jewish Labour Movement in the United States*, p. 261.

<sup>39</sup>In addition to the publicity in the press, the Pioneers of Liberty took advantage of the opportunity to issue propaganda. After the evening’s events, a group of anarchist sympathizers, including Kopeloff, gathered and

overnight issued a protest leaflet which was distributed to local Jews on their way to synagogue on Yom Kippur morning. Kopeloff, *A mol in Amerike: zikhroynes fun dem yidishn lebn in Amerike in di yorn 1883–1904*, p. 238.

<sup>40</sup>Kopeloff outlines the benefits to the cause, among them the monies the Pioneers of Liberty received from Clarendon Hall due to breach of contract. Kopeloff, *A mol in Amerike: zikhroynes fun dem yidishn lebn in Amerike in di yorn 1883–1904*, pp. 237–238.

<sup>41</sup>The *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* appeared between 1890 and 1893, and was edited by Jacob Merison, reappearing in 1899 with Saul Yanovsky as publisher. Yanovsky acted as publisher until 1919, and under him circulation peaked at 30,000 just before the First World War. Ceasing publication in 1977, the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* would become the longest lasting periodical of its kind in the United States. For an overview of its tumultuous existence in the 1890s, see Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A.*, pp. 203–207.

<sup>42</sup>For examples of High Holiday antireligious propaganda in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, see: Sept. 12, 19, 26, Oct. 3, 10, 1890; Oct. 2, 9, 1891; Sept. 29, 1893; Oct. 6, 1899; Sept. 21, 1900; Oct. 14, 1905.

<sup>43</sup>The Labor Lyceum was owned by Labor Party of Brooklyn. In all likelihood, the organizers felt assured that the owners of the hall, the five thousand members of the Labor Party of Brooklyn, would not be easily intimidated and renege on their contract. Tcherikover posits that the organizers hoped that the distance of the location from the East Side would limit interference. Tcherikover, *The Early Jewish Labour Movement in the United States*, p. 261). In addition, the jurisdiction of the New York City police did not extend to Brooklyn, which was its own separate municipality with its own mayor and police force (Brooklyn did not become a borough of New York until 1898).

<sup>44</sup>The English translation is from the *New York Sun*, Sept. 24, 1890.

<sup>45</sup>The organizers were appealed to directly not to hold the ball. This effort was followed by unsuccessful efforts to obtain a court injunction to prohibit the owners of the hall from letting their hall, with local butcher Moses May acting as complainant. Coroner Levy consulted with the Superintendent of the Police. Meanwhile, two local rabbis, Maurice Friedlander and William Sparger, unsuccessfully submitted affidavits for an injunction with a claim that the ball would amount to a “disturbance of the public peace,” one of the few legal grounds for prohibiting an assembly.

Finally a delegation headed by Levy appealed directly to the Mayor of the City of Brooklyn. Levy's liberal translation of the call for the ball which had appeared in the *Tfila Zaka*, with added references to "bombs and dynamite," had the desired effect: the Mayor was finally convinced to suppress the event entirely, and issued an order prohibiting the anarchist Jews from meeting in the Lyceum. The hall was to be closed and guarded by police. In the end, the police terminated the ball by taking over the hall and turning away thousands of people. For detailed accounts of the events, see: "Mayor Chapin Stopped It," *New York Sun*, Sept. 24, 1890, "*Oyf der vokh*," *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Sept. 26, 1890, Kopeloff, *A mol in Amerike: zikhroynes fun dem yidishn lebn in Amerike in di yorn 1883–1904*, pp. 270–271. Cohen, *Di anarkhistiche bavegung in Amerike*, p. 71.

<sup>46</sup>"*Oyf der vokh*," *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Oct. 3, 10, 1890.

<sup>47</sup>Johann Most's German language anarchist *Freiheit* expressed its support of the anarchists. *Freiheit*, Oct. 11, 1890. The German language Socialist *Volkszeitung*, in an article called "Amerika Wird Russisch," likewise questioned the closing down of the event. Sept. 24, 1890.

<sup>48</sup>Founded by Ab. Cahan, Louis Miller, and Philip Krantz, and sponsored by the United Hebrew Trades, the *Arbeter Tsaytung* appeared from March, 1890 through 1902. Involved with *Arbeter Tsaytung* were two prominent socialists who had left the anarchist fold: Philip Krantz and Morris Hillkovitch (Hillquit). While both newspapers shared a socialist, revolutionary, and internationalist program, the *Arbeter Tsaytung* did not share the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*'s radical anarchist and anti-religious stance. From the onset, the socialist writers of the *Arbeter Tsaytung* had made an effort to distinguish themselves from their anarchist counterparts, and expressed open criticism of the anarchists and their methods. Tony Michels, "Socialist Politics and the Making of Yiddish Culture in New York City, 1890–1923" (unpublished dissertation thesis Stanford University, 1998), pp. 20–24.

<sup>49</sup>The *Arbeter Tsaytung* did not announce the Yom Kippur ball, and its editor Philip Krantz expressed sentiments ranging from mild support to open criticism of the anarchist activity. See Krantz's editorials on Aug. 8, 1890 and Sept. 19, 1890. In his article, "*Der Yom Kippur ball un di ortodoksn*," Krantz states that while he supports the right of the anarchists to stage a Yom Kippur ball, he questions the usefulness of staging such an event in the bringing of social change. *Arbeter Tsaytung*, Oct. 3, 1890.

<sup>50</sup>Kopeloff identifies this factor as key to the influence of the anarchists on the radical scene. Kopeloff, *A mol in Amerike: zikhroynes fun dem yidishn lebn in Amerike in di yorn 1883–1904*, p. 232.

<sup>51</sup>Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A*, p. 215.

<sup>52</sup>*The Arbayer Fraynd* features a glowing report of that year's Yom Kippur ball of 1892. "Vi di anarkhistn hobn farbrakht Yom Kippur." *Arbayer Fraynd*, Oct. 7, 1892. On Sept. 15 and 22, 1893, the *Arbayer Fraynd* advertises a concert, ball, and performance of "Di tsvey yetoymin" [the Two Orphans]. Ads for Yom Kippur balls which appeared in *der Arbayer Fraynd* on Sept. 1, 8, 13, 1899 advertised a concert, ball, and the performance of a play titled, "der hipocrit." The front page of the *Arbayer Fraynd* of Oct. 2, 1903 advertised theatre but no ball.

<sup>53</sup>"Undzer notitsn," *Arbayer Fraynd*, Sept. 30, 1904.

<sup>54</sup>"Undzer notitsn," *Arbayer Fraynd*, Oct. 13, 1905.

<sup>55</sup>In 1906, two events were organized by *Arbayer Fraynd*: a Kol Nidre lecture and concert, and a Yom Kippur day concert and public meeting, and yet the *Arbayer Fraynd* dedicated little space to Yom Kippur, and information on the Yom Kippur activities did not appear until just one day before the holiday. The police were busy maintaining order and "searching for bombs" in the various synagogues in London's East End as the Yom Kippur events went off without a hitch. *Arbayer Fraynd*, Oct. 5, 1906. In contrast, ads for a concert, lecture and ball appear in the *Arbayer Fraynd* on Sept. 6 and 13, 1907. In 1908, the *Arbayer Fraynd* announcement of a "magnificent concert, sketch, and ball on Kol Nidre, and a concert and public meeting on Yom Kippur day" did not appear until just three days before Yom Kippur. *Arbayer Fraynd*, Oct. 2, 1908.

<sup>56</sup>"Der Yom Kippur bal in New York," *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Oct. 16, 1891

<sup>57</sup>"Yom Kippur unterhaltung"; "Finsternish un fanatizm"; "A Yom Kippur deonstrazyon [sic] hot dokh shtatgefunden," *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Oct. 16, 1891; *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* Sept. 23, 30, 1891.

<sup>58</sup>Despite an overall pattern of decline, writes Epstein, periods of economic depression (i.e. 1893, 1906–1908) brought intermittent and short-lived revivals in anarchist sentiment. Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A*, p. 215.

<sup>59</sup>*Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Sept. 22, 1893.



<sup>60</sup>The *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* ceased publication due to outside pressure, in particular police persecution. “*Undzer notitsn*,” *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Sept. 29, 1893. I was unable to locate evidence of Yom Kippur balls between 1891 and 1900. This indicates that if Yom Kippur events did take place, they did so on a smaller scale with far less publicity.

<sup>61</sup>*Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Aug. 31, 1900.

<sup>62</sup>“*Oyf der vokh*,” *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Oct. 12, 1900.

<sup>63</sup>Tcherikover, *The Early Jewish Labor Movement in the United States*, p. 266.

<sup>64</sup>Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 106.

<sup>65</sup>“*Oyf der vokh*,” *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Sept. 20, 1901.

<sup>66</sup>For a brief discussion on the repercussions of McKinley’s assassination on New York anarchists, see David A. Balcom, “Anarchism,” *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, p. 37.

<sup>67</sup>“*Oyf der vokh*,” *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Oct. 27, 1901.

<sup>68</sup>“*Yomim noroyim*,” *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Sept. 19, 1902.

<sup>69</sup>“There must be an end to the expression that religion is a private matter, once and for all it must be regarded as a crime against Socialism,” reads one of the few comments on religion in the “*Undzer notitsn*” column. *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, October 14, 1905.

<sup>70</sup>An announcement reads: Remember! All of progressive New York is meeting every year at the Yom Kippur Picnic of the Progressive Library in majestic Liberty Park in Evergreen, Long Island. *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Sept. 10, 17, 1906. Similar ads appeared in 1907 and 1908. *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Sept. 7, 1907; Oct. 3, 1908.

<sup>71</sup>Based on a bilingual poster announcing the event, a Yom Kippur ball was organized in Chicago in 1906 by the “Edelstadt Group.” Poster housed in the “Anarchist” file at the YIVO Institute, New York). I also found a small add in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* for a Yom Kippur gathering in Philadelphia. *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Oct. 7, 1905.

<sup>72</sup>An announcement in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* reads:

Attention: It has been brought to our attention that thousands of freethinkers are filling all cheap restaurants and are simply becoming ill from the foods to which they are not accustomed because all restaurants are closed on the East Side.

For this reason, the organizers made “special arrangements” for lunch and dinner to be available at the event for twenty five cents, adding, “We are therefore anticipating a great crowd who would rather spend the day in the park than to hang around in the streets. And with it you will also be supporting a noble cause.” *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, Sept. 4, 1909.

<sup>73</sup>The repudiated tenets included a call for violent action and opposition to action within the existing political system. Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A.*, pp. 218–219.

<sup>74</sup>For an overview of Jewish settlement in Montreal, see “Introduction,” *Renewing Our Days: Montreal Jews in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Ira Robinson and Mervin Butovsky (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1995).

<sup>75</sup>Eugene Orenstein, “Yiddish culture in Canada Yesterday and Today,” *The Canadian Cultural Mosaic*. Ed. M. Weinfeld, W. Shaffir, I. Cotler (Rexdale, Canada: John Wiley and Sons, 1981).

<sup>76</sup>For statistics of Jewish immigration to Montreal, see Louis Rosenberg, *Canada’s Jews — A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1939). Reissued as: *Canada’s Jews: A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, ed. Morton Weinfeld. (Montreal & Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), p. 12. Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto, Canada: Lester Publishing Ltd., 1992), pp. 129–131, 158.

<sup>77</sup>See Simon Belkin, *Di Poale Tzion Bavegung in Kanade., 1904–1920*. (Montreal: Northern Printing, 1956) p. xiv.

<sup>78</sup>In Montreal, a tiny “old guard” had been adopted into the society of the English-Protestant elite, and had enjoyed the rights and freedoms of emancipated members, first of the British Empire, and subsequently as citizens of Canada. For an in-depth analysis of this, see Michael Brown, “British Roots,” *Jew or Juif?* (Philadelphia, New York, Jerusalem: JPS, 1986), pp. 7–67.

<sup>79</sup>The paradigm of three waves of Jewish immigration — Sephardi, German, and Eastern European — does not apply as neatly to the Canadian context as it does to the American. Canada did not experience an immigration of German Jews, and lacked the strong tradition of Reform Jewry. The European Jewish immigrants who began to arrive in the 1850s and 1860s were generally Eastern European, Yiddish-speaking Jews. See Tulchinsky,

*Taking Root*, pp. xvi–xxiii, Erna Paris, *Jews: An Account of Their Experience in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 27–30.

<sup>80</sup>Much of the historiography of Canadian Jewry, likely under the influence of the works of American Jewish historians, has posited an “Uptown”/“Downtown” divide. For example, in a chapter titled “Immigrants: ‘Uptown’ and ‘Downtown’ Montreal,” Erna Paris presents a sharp split between the “Uptown” and “Downtown” Jews, with “Uptowners” identified with assimilation or “Canadianization” and “Downtown” with Yiddish and left-wing culture. Paris, *Jews*, pp. 30–31.

<sup>81</sup>As Keinosuke Oiwa posits, “Uptown” tended to be more of a location on a new immigrants’s “Mental Map” than a true divide; the “Uptowner” tended to be the immigrant who had been in the city for a few years and had acculturated somewhat. He still, however, spoke Yiddish and shared many of the values of his “Downtown” counterparts. See Keinosuke Oiwa, “Tradition and Social Change: An Ideological Analysis of the Montreal Jewish Immigrant Ghetto in the Early Twentieth Century.” (unpublished dissertation thesis Cornell University, 1988), especially pp. 38–45.

<sup>82</sup>The garment industry in Montreal, like in London and New York, was a heavily Jewish industry. Oiwa refers to the garment industry in Montreal as “the most important economic basis of the Jewish community.” Most of its bosses were Jews, and it employed a majority of Jewish immigrants into the twentieth century. Oiwa, *Tradition and Social Change*, p. 186.

<sup>83</sup>Israel Medresh, “The Extremists,” *Montreal of Yesterday: Jewish Life in Montreal, 1900–1920*. Trans. Vivian Felsen (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2000), pp. 52–53.

<sup>84</sup>The May Day parade was an annual labour parade sponsored by the left-wing. According to Medres, the first May Day parade in Montreal was organized by local anarchists. Israel Medresh, “The Extremists,” *Montreal of Yesterday: Jewish Life in Montreal, 1900–1920*, pp. 53

<sup>85</sup>Israel Medres, “How the Immigrants Found their Intellectual Atmosphere,” *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, April 3, 1936.

<sup>86</sup>Hirsh Hershman was an activist in Montreal Jewish life. In 1905 he founded one of the first, albeit short lived, Yiddish newspapers in Canada, the *Telegraph*. He was active in the 1907 Montreal tailors’ strike, led by The United Garment Workers’ Union. He was a regular contributor to the *Keneder Adler* after its founding. This same Hershman’s book shop

would act as a precursor of Montreal's popular Jewish Public Library, established in 1914. He would be a central figure in the establishment of Montreal's Jewish People's Schools in 1914, and he would become one of the founders of the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1919. David Rome, "H. Hershman" in *The Immigration Story 1*. Canadian Jewish Archives Number 36 (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1986), pp. 30–38. According to Rome, Hershman and English anarchist thinker Rudolf Rocker shared a close friendship that spanned over fifty years. David Rome, *Men of the Yiddish Press*. Canadian Jewish Archives Number 42. (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1989), p. 72.

<sup>87</sup>See Belkin, *Di Poale Tsion Bavegung in Kanade, 1904–1920*, pp. 120–121.

<sup>88</sup>Israel Medresh, "The Second Jewish Bookstore," *Montreal of Yesterday: Jewish Life in Montreal, 1900–1920*, pp. 62.

<sup>89</sup>Medres, "How the Immigrants Found their Intellectual Atmosphere."

<sup>90</sup>According to Rome, the first lecturer from New York invited to Hershman's bookshop delivered three talks on anarchism. David Rome, *On Our Forerunners—At Work: Epilogue, Notes on the Twentieth Century* Canadian Jewish Archives Number 10. (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1978), p. 107.

<sup>91</sup>Medres, "How the Immigrants Found their Intellectual Atmosphere."

<sup>92</sup>For more on the early development of the Poale Zion in Montreal (1905-1910), see Belkin, *Di Poale Tsion Bavegung in Kanade*, pp. 28–34.

<sup>93</sup>Yud Lamed Shapiro, "Eyner fun unzere rishonim," *Idisher Kemfer*, Jan. 9, 1959.

<sup>94</sup>Benjamin Gutl Sack, *Canadian Jews—Early in This Century*. Canadian Jewish Archives Number 4. (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1975), pp. 30–31.

<sup>95</sup>Israel Medresh, "The Second Jewish Bookstore," *Montreal of Yesterday: Jewish Life in Montreal, 1900–1920*, pp. 62.

<sup>96</sup>The *Jewish Times* first was published bimonthly beginning in December of 1897. It was founded by two descendants of Canadian pioneer Jewish families: Lyon Cohen, later to be founding president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, and Sam Jacobs, a future member of parliament. Its name

changed to “the *Canadian Jewish Times*” in 1909. In April 1914, the *Jewish Times* was liquidated and sold to Hirsch Wolofsky (founder and publisher of the *Keneder Adler*. See note 109). It became the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. Lewis Levendel, *A Century of the Canadian Jewish Press: 1880s–1980s* (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 1989), pp. 1–9.

<sup>97</sup>*Jewish Times*, Oct. 12, 1900.

<sup>98</sup>*Jewish Times*, Sept. 26, 1902.

<sup>98</sup>*Jewish Times*, Sept. 27, 1901.

<sup>100</sup>Entitled “Free Thinkers Starve,” the article describes an East Side coffee-shop keeper who kept his restaurant open on Kol Nidre and was “liberally patronized by “advanced thinkers — all Jews.” The owner was taught a “lesson” by some younger Jews who tackled their task “so thoroughly that when the performance was over, it required a magnifying glass to find the remains of the furniture, windowpanes, food-stuffs, and chinaware.” The following year, states the article, the owner had the “good sense” to post a large sign stating the shop would be closed on account of the holidays. *Jewish Times*, Oct. 11, 1901, signed: – Observer in N. Y.

<sup>101</sup>*Jewish Times*, Oct. 6, 1905.

<sup>102</sup>Sack, *Canadian Jews—Early in This Century*, pp. 30–31. This is the only account of the Montreal Yom Kippur ball of 1905 that I have encountered in a secondary source. All additional details provided in this paper are based on accounts in the press.

<sup>103</sup>*Montreal Star*, Oct. 9, 10, 1905; *Montreal Gazette*, Oct. 10, 1905; *La Presse*, Oct. 9, 10, 1905; *Jewish Times*, Oct. 20, 1905. These articles comprise the source for the details on the ball provided in this paper.

<sup>104</sup>Cited in the *Montreal Star*, Oct. 10, 1905. The hand bills “printed in Hebrew [Yiddish],” announcing the event were translated and presented as evidence in the court.

<sup>105</sup>I have not been able to determine the identity of Comrade Abrahams.

<sup>106</sup>I have not been able to find further information on Harry Rabinovitch.

<sup>107</sup>Nor have I succeeded in finding further information on Mr. Jauff.

<sup>108</sup>*Montreal Star*, Oct. 9, 1905.

<sup>109</sup>*Montreal Star*, Oct. 10, 1905.

<sup>110</sup>I have found no mention of this group other than in conjunction with the Yom Kippur ball. In all likelihood, the group was formed for the express purpose of organizing the event.

<sup>111</sup>*Jewish Times*, Oct. 20, 1905.

<sup>112</sup>*La Presse*, Oct. 10, 1905.

<sup>113</sup>*Montreal Gazette*, Oct. 10, 1905.

<sup>114</sup>*Jewish Times*, Oct. 20, 1905.

<sup>115</sup>For an overview of the attempts to establish a Yiddish press in Montreal beginning in the 1880s, see: Eli Gottesman, *Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory, 1960* (Ottawa: Mortimer Limited, 1963), p. 76, Avraham Rhinewine, *Der id in kanade*. Vol. 1–2 (Toronto, Canada: Farlag “kanade,” 1925–1927), pp. 210–211, David Rome, ed. *The Canadian Story of Reuben Brainin, Part 1*. Canadian Jewish Archives, Number 47 (Montreal, Canada: National Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1993), pp. 87–88, Hirsch Wolofsky, “25 yor ‘Keneder Odler.’” *Yoyvl bukh fun ‘Keneder Adler’*. (Montreal, Canada, July 8, 1932), p. 23, Benjamin Gutl Sack, *Canadian Jews—Early in This Century*, p. 46, Wolofsky, Hirsch. *Journey of My Life*. Trans. A. M. Klein. (Montreal, Canada: The Eagle Publishing Co. Ltd, 1945), p. 52.

<sup>116</sup>Wohliner (the pseudonym of Eliezer Landau) (1877–1942) was a journalist, writer, and editor. Born in Ukraine, Wohliner came to America in 1902 as part of a group which planned to found a commune, and settled in Montreal. He worked in a factory, and began his literary career in 1903, when he published poetry and prose in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*. He was active in the New York anarchist group, as well as literary editor of the *Forverts*. Landau was an active worker in the Poale Zion. He lived on and off in Montreal until 1912. Khayim Leyb Fox, *100 Yor Yidishe un Hebreyshe Literatur in Kanade* (Montreal, Canada: *Kh. Fox bukh fond komitet*, 1980), pp. 101–102; *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*, vol. 3, p. 246.

<sup>117</sup>Rome, *Men of the Yiddish Press*, p. 16.

<sup>118</sup>Hirsch Wolofsky was born in 1878 in Poland, where he received a traditional religious education. He came to Montreal via London in 1900. In addition to a career as a wholesaler, Wolofsky held various leadership positions in the Montreal Jewish community, including acting as vice-president of the American Union of Polish Jews, the Zionist

organization, and, later, of the Canadian Jewish Congress. He founded and acted as managing editor of the *Adler* until his death in 1949, continually contributing a wide array of written material to the newspaper. Fox, *100 yor yidish un hebreyishe literatur in kanade*, p. 102, *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*, pp. 263–264, Medres, *Montreal fun nekhtn*, p. 65. For Wolofsky’s own memoirs, see: Hirsch Wolofsky, *Mayn Lebns-Rayze* (Montreal: “*Keneder Odler*,” 1946). Translated as *Journey of My Life: A Book of Memoirs*. Trans. A. M. Klein (Montreal, Canada: Eagle Publishing Co., 1945).

<sup>119</sup>Medres, “The Keneder Adler,” “The City,” *Montreal of Yesterday*, pp. 73–74, 79–81.

<sup>120</sup>At the same time, the *Jewish Times* dismissed the *Adler*. Oiwa, “Tradition and Social Change,” p. 134.

<sup>121</sup>In its early years, the newspaper was so moderate that Dr. Khayim Zhitlovsky, in one of his political talks in Montreal, asserted that the paper ought to have been called “*ganz*” [goose], instead of “*adler*” [eagle]. Y. Khaykin, “*Yidishe bleter in amerike* (New York: Y. Khykin, 1946), p. 201.

<sup>122</sup>Medres, “The Keneder Adler,” *Montreal of Yesterday*, pp. 74–75.

<sup>123</sup>*Keneder Adler*, Oct. 4, 1908.

<sup>124</sup>*Keneder Adler*, Sept. 18, 1909.

<sup>125</sup>*Keneder Adler*, Sept. 25, 1909.

<sup>126</sup>Robert M. Levine makes mention of a Yom Kippur Ball in Havana held by the socialist Kultur Ferein in 1925. Robert M. Levine, *Tropical Diaspora: The Jewish Experience in Cuba* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1993), p. 46.