

Bernard Goldstein's memoir describes a hard world of taverns, toughs, thieves, and prostitutes; of slaughterhouse workers, handcart porters, and wagon drivers; and of fist- and gunfights with everyone from antisemites and Communists to hostile police, which is to say that it depicts a totally different view of life in prewar Poland than the one usually portrayed. As such, the book offers a corrective view in the form of social history, one that commands attention and demands respect for the vitality and activism of the generation of Polish Jews so brutally annihilated by the barbarism of the Nazis.

In Warsaw, a city with over 300,000 Jews (one-third of the population), Goldstein was the Jewish Labor Bund's "enforcer," organizer, and head of their militia—carrying out the daily, on-the-street organization of unions; fighting off Communists, Polish antisemitic hooligans, and antagonistic police; marshaling and protecting demonstrations; and even settling family disputes, some of them arising from the new secular, socialist culture being fostered by the Bund.

Goldstein's is a portrait of tough Jews willing to do battle—worldly, modern individuals dedicated to their folk culture and the survival of their people. It provides a representation of life in Poland before the great catastrophe of World War II, a life of flowering literary activity, secular political journalism, successful political struggle, immersion in modern politics, fights for worker rights and benefits, a strong social-democratic labor movement, creation of a secular school system in Yiddish, and a youth movement that later provided the heroic fighters for the courageous Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

"Marvin S. Zuckerman's translation will do enormous good for historians in Poland. Many of them will be able to read Goldstein's book, informing themselves not only about the Bund, but about prewar Warsaw, including Prague, Targowek, and Powazki. For most people, it is easier to read English than Yiddish, and because it is originally in Yiddish, this important book is very little known."

—Dr. Martyna Rusiniak-Karwat, Polish Academy of Sciences

"A fine translation of an important memoir, notable for its richly detailed descriptions of Jewish working class characters, and containing useful footnotes written specifically for this edition."

—Jack Jacobs, John Jay College and the Graduate Center City University of New York

Zuckerman, Ed.

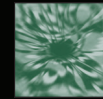
Twenty Years with the Jewish Labor Bund

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by Bernard Goldstein
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