

# YIDDISH ANARCHISM

## New Scholarship on a Forgotten Tradition

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, 2019 | CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**10:00am | CHECK IN/COFFEE**

**10:30am | INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

**11:00am – 12:30pm | PANEL 1**

***“Place, Protest, and Poetry: Foundations of Yiddish Anarchism”***

**Kenyon Zimmer, “The Lost World of Yiddish Anarchism: An Introduction”**

A brief survey of the history of the Yiddish-speaking anarchist movement from its emergence in the 1880s to the Second World War, primarily focusing on New York City. It will introduce prominent figures like Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, David Edelstadt, Saul Yanovsky, and labor leader Morris Sigman, as well as the leading Yiddish anarchist newspaper, the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime (Free Voice of Labor)*.

**Tom Goyens, “Radical Neighbors: New York's German and Yiddish Anarchists, 1880–1906”**

The close relationship between the German anarchist movement in New York and the emerging Jewish movement during the 1880s and 1890s enabled anarchism to expand into the 20th century. Increased immigration from Russia and Eastern Europe allowed a spatial and linguistic proximity that did not exist between, say, German and Italian radicals. During the 1890s, the German movement aged and splintered, but the youthful Jewish movement expanded out of its ethnic confines.

**Anna Elena Torres, “The Horizon Blossoms and the Borders Vanish’: Anarchist Aesthetics in Yiddish Poetry”**

From the avant-garde manifestos of Warsaw and Moscow to elegies for Sacco and Vanzetti, Yiddish Modernist writing has been deeply informed by anarchist thought and aesthetics. This talk will explore how Modernists reinvented tropes from the earlier Proletarian (*svetshop*) generation of writers and developed new anarchist critiques and visions.

**12:30pm – 2:00pm | LUNCH BREAK**

**2:00pm – 3:30pm | PANEL 2**

***“Against Tsar and Commissar: Russian Revolutions and Yiddish Anarchism”***

**Mark Grueter, “The Russian-Jewish Anarchist Movement in the 1910s”**

Jewish anarchists played a major role in inspiring and leading the overlooked Russian-speaking anarchist movement in the United States. This included participation in anarchist Union of Russian Workers (URW); the national strike movement of the 1910s; work in mutual aid societies such as the Anarchist Red Cross and the Workmen’s Circle (Arbeter Ring); as well as organizing in the garment industry unions.

**Nina Gurianova, “Moscow Anarchists: The Brothers Gordin and the Newspaper *Anarkhia*, 1917–1918”**

This presentation is focused on the Gordin brothers and their role in setting up the newspaper *Anarkhia* in the rich context of Moscow anarchist groups and movements during the period of the Russian Revolution. The newspaper editorials by the Gordins allow us to discuss the particular aspects of what can be called a “Jewish trend” within anarchism in revolutionary Moscow.

**Tony Michels, “Anarchists and the Movement for Soviet Political Prisoners in the 1920s”**

This paper examines the international campaign on behalf of Soviet political prisoners that burst into American public life in the 1920s. The campaign was initiated in Berlin by exiled Russian revolutionaries (Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, and anarchists) who turned to socialists abroad with pleas for aid and calls to action. Although they found relatively little support in Europe, the Berlin exiles met with success in the United States.

**4:00pm – 5:30pm | PANEL 3**

***“Language, Identity, and Culture: Transformations of Yiddish Anarchism”***

**Reynolds Hahamovitch, “The ‘Time of Storms’—New York Yiddish Anarchists from Kishinev to the 1905 Revolution”**

**Abstract:** The Kishinev Pogrom of 1903 created rifts among Jewish anarchists in America, with many refusing to privilege violence against Jews as more important than any other form of violent oppression. It was only the onset of the hundreds of pogroms in the Russian Revolution of 1905 that forced Yiddish anarchists to come to terms with anti-Jewish

violence, a tumultuous change that brought a new phase of political and cultural activity within Yiddish anarchism.

**Lilian Türk, “Abba Gordin and the Dispute on Religious Anarchism in *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*”**

Yiddish anarchism was perceived as an explicitly anti-religious and atheist part of the multi-faceted Jewish labor movement—but there were differing currents. Abba Gordin (1887–1964) wrote on anarchism as the essence of Jewishness, and sparked a debate in *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (*Free Voice of Labor*) between 1937 and 1945 on religion and politics.

**Diana Clarke, “Postvernacular Anarchisms: The Politics of Flagging with Yiddish”**

From the radical queer chicken farm Linke Fligl, to the punk band Koyt Far Dayn Fardakht, this talk will examine the function of Yiddish in contemporary anarchist and anarchist-adjacent projects at the intersection of organizing, art, and politics. What is the role of postvernacular Yiddish—that is, Yiddish which is not a necessary language for communication, but rather an element of performance—in anarchism today?

**5:30pm – 7:00pm | DINNER BREAK**

**7:00pm – 8:00pm | KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**Anatole Dolgoff, “Disobedient Jews”**

Sam and Esther Dolgoff spent seventy-some years in the radical movement, from the World War One-era until their deaths in 1990 and 1989. The range of people they came to know during a lifetime of anarchism—some intimately, while others from close association with their friends, rivals, and enemies—was enormous as well. Anatole Dolgoff’s biography *Left of the Left* is a chronicle of their lives and associations, and he will share his stories of growing up among first- and second-generation of Yiddish speaking anarchists.