

# BUNDIST Counterculture in Interwar Poland



**Jack Jacobs**

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## Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland

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"[Jacobs's] intellectual integrity, the cogency of his analysis, and the thoroughness of his research make this book an invaluable contribution to our understanding of Jewish life and politics, indeed of life and politics in general, in that tragic historical episode known as interwar Poland."

—Yoav Peled, Tel Aviv University

In the years between the two world wars, the Jewish community of Poland—the largest in Europe—was the cultural heart of the Jewish diaspora. The Jewish Workers' Bund, which had a socialist, secularist, Yiddishist, and anti-Zionist orientation, won a series of important electoral battles in Poland on the eve of the Second World War and became a major political party. While many earlier works on the politics of Polish Jewry have suggested that Bundist victories were not of lasting significance or attributable to outside forces, Jack Jacobs argues convincingly that the electoral success of the Bund was linked to the work of the constellation of cultural and other organizations revolving around the party.

The Bund offered its constituents innovative, highly attractive, programs and a more enlightened perspective: from new sexual mores to sporting organizations and educational institutions. Drawing on meticulously researched archival materials, Jacobs shows how the growth of these successful programs translated into a stronger, more robust party. At the same time, he suggests the Bund's limitations, highlighting its failed women's movement. Jacobs provides a fascinating account of this countercultural movement and a thoughtful revision to the accepted view.

**Jack Jacobs** is professor of political science at the Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY), and professor of government at CUNY's John Jay College. He is the author of *On Socialists and "The Jewish Question" after Marx* and editor of *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*.

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