

## *Introduction*

### Between Past and Present

For generations, the year 1905 has loomed large in both Jewish and east European histories. The tumultuous, ever-changing series of events and counterevents, which engulfed and redefined society and life for so many of the Russian Empire's approximately 120 million residents, has long provided an abundance of raw material for historians, pundits, and politicians of various shapes and colors. Thus, such ostensibly divergent master narratives as those describing the Bolsheviks' rise to power and the Zionists' return of the Jews to the Holy Land pointed to the same strikes, democratic experiments, counterrevolutionary outbursts, and the Tsarist regime's ultimate return to power between 1904 and 1907 as the political baptism of two very different, yet essentially parallel, generational sagas, one Soviet and Russian, the other Zionist and Jewish.

Looking back on the collection of events that would later become defined and canonized as the Revolution of 1905, Lenin himself would declare that the events of 1905 had served as a "dress rehearsal" that had helped ensure "the victory of the October Revolution in 1917."<sup>1</sup> Roughly thirty years after the Revolution of 1905, in a radically different setting, the longtime hero of Labor Zionism and one of the founding members of the Poale Zion group in Warsaw, Yitzhak Tabenkin, would recall the impact of the Revolution of 1905 on the course of Jewish history in no less dramatic terms: "This is one of those periods in history designated as turning points, a *special* period in the life of the people—not just in the social perspective but also in all the transformations in the spiritual and cultural domain. And in that period, the years when the Second Aliya type was created were a *time of renaissance*. What an *outburst of forces!*"<sup>2</sup> Here, too, Tabenkin believed that he was taking part in a revolutionary project that was designed to create a new world on the ruins

of the old one. Nor was he alone. In time, such giants of the Zionist pantheon as David Ben-Gurion, Berl Katznelson, and others would all look back on the events of 1905, in general, and their own experiences in Warsaw, in particular, as watershed moments that would lead directly to the birth of the much-hallowed Second Aliyah and, some four decades later, the founding of the State of Israel.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the Zionist narrative of Jewish national redemption in Palestine and the Soviet story of the Bolshevik march of good versus evil would converge at the onset of the twentieth century in eastern Europe where the people—sometimes workers, sometimes Jews, sometimes Jewish workers—sought and fought to control their own fates. Moreover, while these two master narratives, one Bolshevik, the other Zionist, would certainly differ according to each particular ruling party's specific needs and demands, both narratives were similarly redemptive, romantic, and convincing. Indeed, both narratives told of how formerly powerless individuals and ragtag organizations joined together against astronomically low odds in a common struggle to do away with what appeared to many to be the last remnant of Europe's old regime, Tsarist Russia. In retrospect, good and evil, future and past, redemption and apocalypse were clear to all.

Nor did this fascination with the events of 1905 remain confined to relatively embattled societies such as the former Soviet Union and the young, fledgling Jewish society that would soon become the State of Israel. For many scholars in "the West," the Revolution of 1905 became a virgin, somewhat pure revolution that often represented the path not taken. Thus, while the American Revolution was later tainted by the violent taming of the West and the enslavement of hundreds of thousands of Africans, the French Revolution by the Reign of Terror, and the Bolshevik Revolution by what one scholar labeled "the Soviet tragedy," relatively few of the leaders or students of the "failed" Revolution of 1905 ever had to contend with the pleasures, privileges, and problematics of power.<sup>4</sup> As an arrested, ostensibly untainted revolution, the Revolution of 1905 provided historians and other observers with a series of counterfactual historical scenarios regarding what could have happened in the Russian Empire—and, de facto, throughout the remainder of the European continent—over the course of the brief yet unspeakably horrible twentieth century had the good Revolution of

1905 succeeded.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Revolution of 1905 became a pivotal marker for many students of Jewish, Russian, and east European histories as the eastern half of the European continent and its approximately five million Jewish residents stumbled, willy-nilly, into the modern era.

### Questions and Methods: Modern Jewish Politics as a Discourse of Order

With these and other issues in mind, this book will focus on several key questions regarding the intersection between Jewish society, Polish politics, and the Russian government in the city of Warsaw between the years 1904 and 1907. Among the many questions raised, I will focus on: Whether or not the urban environment is critical to our understanding of modern Jewish society and politics? Why did so many Jews flood the streets of Warsaw in support of various antigovernment organizations and movements, Jewish and non-Jewish? And, finally, how did the quasi-democratic reforms implemented by the Tsarist regime in 1905 and 1906 change the nature of political organization, action, and thinking among Jews and non-Jews? As a continuation of these questions, I also ask whether the Russian Empire's early experiments with democracy were destined to fail in the empire's ten Polish provinces; and, if so, whether the various designs for Jewish integration into liberal or socialist visions of new worlds were similarly predestined to collapse. Finally, through an intensive microstudy of modern Jewish society and politics in one specific location, I repeatedly try to ascertain what national rhetoric, organization, and action offered Jewish individuals that the politics of revolution and democracy ultimately were not able to provide. Were Jews, simply said, always a nation, the oldest of nations, unlike any other nation? Or, did other factors contribute to the rise and supremacy of national politics among so many Jews in early-twentieth-century Warsaw?

At its core, then, this study examines the intersection of the three great ideologies of the nineteenth century—socialism, liberalism, and nationalism—among Jews in one specific city, Warsaw, during one particular period, the Revolution of 1905 (1904–1907). Throughout this book, I argue that all three ideologies and the various political movements that they spawned should be seen as attempts to wield intellectual

and social order over a particularly chaotic world.<sup>6</sup> As such, I maintain that modern Jewish politics should be viewed as a discourse of order. Moreover, as a discourse of order, modern Jewish politics was intended to codify, comprehend, and control such fundamentally elusive social and political components as community and self in times of rapid social change, political upheaval, and pervasive uncertainty.<sup>7</sup> The ongoing search for community and the accompanying struggle to achieve order serve as the intellectual foundation and framework of this study.

If this study is about different, at times competing, attempts to instill order upon an inherently disorderly world, then that chaotic, practically incomprehensible environment is the great turn-of-the-century city of Warsaw. Firmly rooted in a particular time and place, this synchronic microstudy of Jewish society and politics in Warsaw points to the urban origins of modern Jewish culture and politics. The city of Warsaw was an arena that regularly defied comprehension, and the widespread turn to modern political ideologies and movements should be seen as part of a larger attempt to render the fundamentally new experience of life in the urban metropolis more understandable, more digestible, and, ultimately, more manageable.

The ongoing attempt to comprehend and thus to control life in the city underscores the extent to which modern Jewish politics was imbued with a deep ambivalence toward many aspects of the modern world. As such, I argue that all three modern ideologies and the various movements that they produced should be seen as both results of and responses to modernity. In an effort to explicate what I will refer to as the dialectics of Jewish modernity, I repeatedly discuss the many ways in which political movements—revolutionary, democratic, and national—used fundamentally new political, cultural, and social institutions to address and resolve the twin crises of urbanization and community.<sup>8</sup>

As part of my efforts to gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of what modern Jewish political ideologies and movements meant for Warsaw's 275,000 Jewish residents, I trace the path of modern Jewish politics in Warsaw first from its underground revolutionary phase; then into its liberal, democratic period; and, finally, culminating with the rise of national rhetoric and organization. In each particular stage, I argue that the possibilities and practices of Jewish politics were directly shaped and influenced by larger social and cultural forces. For

example, the very institutions and practices that fueled and favored the conspiratorial politics so characteristic of revolutionary activity later inhibited these organizations' attempts to transform themselves into large-scale, popularly supported political parties. Soon thereafter, the government's implementation of semidemocratic reforms and institutions in late 1905 and early 1906 gave birth to a new style of electoral politics that undermined previous support for revolutionary organizations. Finally, the very types of communities that these new democratic institutions and practices helped create subsequently led to the nationalization of the public sphere and the parallel demise of liberal, democratic visions for moderate, constitutional reform in the Russian Empire's Polish provinces.

Another integral part of my discussion of the various political ideologies and movements that arose at this time is my emphasis on the very culture of modern Jewish politics. As such, I repeatedly stress the common political culture that these organizations shared and not the ideologies or strategies that may have divided political parties.<sup>9</sup> By focusing on some of the more fundamental, basic units of society and culture that ostensibly rival political movements had in common, I hope to shift the larger academic debate on modern Jewish politics from a discussion of parties, members, and policies to one of structures and discourse. This structural-discursive analysis of modern Jewish politics also illustrates how particular developments and specific actions were, in many cases, the by-product of specific institutional pressures and cultural practices, and not the result of particularly prescient decisions made by exceptionally wise political heroes. Lastly, by emphasizing the influence of situations, structures, and language, and not the role of individuals, I consciously problematize the very question of Jewish agency and its place in the construction and study of a specifically Jewish history, the history of Jewish nationalism, and, indirectly, the study of other movements for national liberation and independence.<sup>10</sup>

Focusing on Jewish politics in Warsaw, the disputed capital of the Russian Empire's former Kingdom of Poland, also enables me to address the complex web of confrontation, isolation, and mimesis that was part and parcel of Jewish and non-Jewish politics and society in eastern Europe for generations. Indeed, few environments were more rife with potential ethnic conflict than the ten Polish provinces under direct

Russian rule after their reorganization in 1864 as Vistulaland. Here, too, however, the possibilities available to Jewish organizations were often determined by another set of external factors, the course of Polish politics and the whims of Russian bureaucrats. Throughout the period in question, Polish and Jewish political organizations and parties responded not only to a similar set of developments, practices, and possibilities but also to one another. Furthermore, while the ongoing, parallel development of Polish and Jewish politics ultimately led to the consolidation of ethno-linguistic communities, this was not the predetermined course of a uniquely east European history of hate but, rather, the result of specific social structures, cultural practices, and political strategies.

Lastly, throughout this study, I repeatedly ask what enabled national rhetoric, organization, and action to succeed where other political movements—most notably revolutionary and democratic ones—failed. Other factors, such as the implementation of martial law, the government's consolidation of power, and the periodic fear of antisemitic outbursts (pogroms), certainly influenced the nature and course of modern Jewish politics in Warsaw. That said, the rise and fall of revolutionary parties; the relatively short-lived popularity of liberal, democratic organizations; and the final rise of nationalism (Jewish and Polish) all had their roots in the particular political institutions, discourses, and practices that arose at this time and place. Ultimately, nationalism alone was best suited to the reigning institutional and cultural factors. Lastly, nationalism was best able to satisfy the needs of potential supporters by providing a specific worldview and modern political community that addressed successfully a slew of fundamentally new questions and crises that arose in the heart of modernity, the city. And thus, the city not only gave birth to modern Jewish politics but also had a say in the shape that this new political culture would take.

### Historiographical Subtexts:

#### Agency, Community, Politics, Poles, Nations, and Modernity

In addition to raising questions about the course of Jewish (and Polish) society and politics in turn-of-the-century Warsaw, I also engage a series of larger questions related to modern Jewish history and society

including, but not limited to, those regarding the role of agency in the writing of Jewish history, the relationship between Jewish communities and the urban environment, the very nature of Jewish politics, and relations between Poles and Jews. Alongside these central thematic questions from the realm of modern Jewish studies, I also engage questions of interest to scholars of nations and nationalism as well as larger issues regarding the path of modernity and the definition and fate of “Eastern Europe.”

*Modernity and Agency: Beyond the Katzian Model*

In one of the most definitive works of modern Jewish history written to date, the Hungarian-born, German-educated Israeli historian Jacob Katz laid out the foundations for the (European) Jewish entry into and mastery over the modern world. Focusing on the Jews of “the West,” but ever cognizant of the Jews of “the East,” Katz’s groundbreaking study, *Tradition and Crisis*, changed the way many thought about Jewish history and, in doing so, helped pave the way for generations of studies on Jews and modernity.<sup>11</sup> Dividing European Jewry between East and West, Katz claimed that intellectual changes related to religious belief and practice implemented in the mid-eighteenth century by Jewish leaders and thinkers (Moses Mendelssohn in Berlin and Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer, Ba’al Shem Tov [BESHT] in Poland) led to the creation of new social institutions and communities that challenged the traditional religious authorities and helped bring Jewish society out of its traditional phase and into the modern era.<sup>12</sup> More than anything else, Katz’s emphasis on religious and intellectual change put the very power of historical agency in the hands of individual Jews and, in doing so, made Jews the ultimate masters of Jewish history and fate.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, as a result of this paradigm, modernity, according to Katz, was not only something that Jews chose of their own volition but, as a result of this willful choice, it also became something that they were able to define and, in the process, to control.<sup>14</sup>

Sweeping, convincing, and daring, Katz’s argument has helped shape the writing of Jewish history in Israel and America for decades. Under Katz’s direct and indirect influence, generations of scholars have turned to the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) and to Hasidism as the key

aspects of Jewish society's encounter with modernity in both eastern and western Europe.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, this emphasis on the intellectual and religious roots of the Jewish encounter with modernity has led to a certain academic disinterest in social history and cultural affairs. As different practitioners of Jewish social and cultural history have noted, studies of the intellectual and religious aspects of the Jewish past remain the dominant paradigm in the field of modern Jewish history.<sup>16</sup>

This book will address this historiographical imbalance by questioning two fundamental tenets of Katz's thesis: that the Jewish entry into the modern era was marked primarily by intellectual and religious changes associated with the Haskalah and Hasidism, and that as a result of these particular changes modernity was something that Jews consciously chose, implicitly defined, and ultimately controlled. By focusing on the urban roots of modern Jewish society, politics, and community, this book will detail a series of intellectual constructs and political practices that were designed to wield control over a haphazard and fundamentally bewildering Jewish encounter with the heart of modernity, the city. Ultimately, I argue that modernity was not something that Jews defined, created, and controlled but, rather, something that they encountered, struggled with, and, in the end, attempted to master. Although seemingly minor, this turn to the realm of social history and the accompanying attempt to suspend dominant (Jewish) historiographical assumptions regarding Jewish agency are critical to gaining a deeper understanding of the Jewish search for order and community, the subsequent turn to modern political ideologies, and the inherently dialectical nature of modern Jewish politics in eastern Europe and beyond.

*On Communities and Cities:  
What Have We Learned from Dubnow?*

In turning my attention to Jewish history in the urban arena, I am not only problematizing Katz but also questioning another fundamental tenet and looming master of modern Jewish history, namely, the central role of Jewish communal institutions as envisioned and codified by the historian, ideologue, and politician Simon Dubnow.<sup>17</sup> Written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Dubnow's corpus helped lay the foundations for a long-standing emphasis on the very



concept of “the Jewish community” and the prominent role played by communal institutions in Jewish history and historiography. As another definitive scholar of modern Jewish history, the late Jonathan Frankel, has noted: “Dubnov now emphasized communal history, the forms of autonomous self-government which had sustained the Jewish people through the millennia of exile [sic].” Nor was Dubnov’s work without influence. Frankel, again, refers to Dubnov’s critical role by claiming that “in an extraordinary burst of energy and creativity during the decade 1888–1898, he [Dubnov] laid down the basic guidelines for his own work during the rest of his life and for that of mainstream historians over a number of generations.”<sup>18</sup> Here, too, I maintain that the turn to the concept of the Jewish community and the central place afforded to communal institutions in the construction of Jewish history are similarly motivated by a desire to lend a semblance of order to the past and, in Dubnov’s case, a sense of control over an exceptionally precarious present.

Moreover, under the influence of Dubnov’s theory of Jewish communal autonomy, historians of the Jews and a past that was consciously written as “Jewish history” (including Baron, Ben-Sasson, Ettinger, and Halpern; and, a generation later, Bartal, Zipperstein, and others) have repeatedly highlighted the central role of the Jewish community and communal bodies such as *Va’ad Arba Aratsot*, *Va’ad Medinat Lita*, and various successor institutions (both large and small) in the Russian Empire.<sup>19</sup> As a result of this emphasis, the history of East European Jewry has often been written as one that revolves around institutions and the men who administered them. Most importantly, this concentration on institutions and organizations has lent an almost universal sense of order, continuity, and destiny to both the corpus and the course of Jewish history in eastern Europe, from shtetl to state.

In the wake of these and other methodological and ideological factors, different works on local, urban histories of Jews often assume a seemingly automatic association of Jewish communal institutions with the rather ill-defined yet practically omnipresent concept of “the Jewish community.” This frequent association of communal institutions with the concept of community has contributed to another Achilles’ heel in the academic literature on Jews in Europe’s eastern half, the widespread conflation of “the Jewish community” with the city. Thus, in

many cases the concept of “a Jewish community” is often presented as one that embraces practically all aspects of life among Jews in different cities and towns.<sup>20</sup> While certainly interrelated, the Jewish community and the urban environment were not one and the same, and the two concepts need to be separated and dissected to be understood properly.

In the case of Warsaw, these historiographical trends have led many to write about life among Jews in this particular city as though it were primarily a collection of communal institutions and societies. While this is most apparent in the case of Guterman’s work, Levinson, Shatzky, and others have also turned to Jewish communal institutions for social, political, and historiographical order.<sup>21</sup> Other histories and popular works dedicated to memorializing and, at times, sacralizing various Jewish communities in eastern Europe, in particular after their near decimation during the Holocaust, take similarly positivistic and holistic approaches toward Jewish society and history. Here, as well, these interpretations emphasize the central role of Jewish communal institutions; a seemingly permanent, all-encompassing concept of community; and the men who guided them.<sup>22</sup>

In an effort to go beyond this narrative of community and the inherent structure and sense of permanence that it helps create, if not impose, this study will focus on life among Jews beyond communal institutions and elite biographies. My efforts to problematize the Jewish narrative of community and continuity is particularly relevant to life in a large urban center like Warsaw and to the various attempts to reconstruct a sense of community and belonging at the onset of the twentieth century.

*Modern Jewish Politics in Polish Lands:  
Going Beyond Parties, Members, and Ideologies*

Although ostensibly situated beyond the academic interests of Katz and Dubnow, most studies of modern Jewish politics are imbued with Katzian notions regarding the primacy of Jewish agency as well as an overtly Dubnowian subtext of Jewish nationhood. Moreover, under the influence of both Dubnow’s historical framework and Cold War concepts of East and West, the bulk of what has been written about Jews in the Russian Empire, in general, and Jewish politics until 1914,

in particular, has focused primarily on “the Jews of Russia.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, Frankel’s magisterial study as well as critical works by Lederhendler, Nathans, and others look at political developments among Jews in the Russian Empire within a predominantly Russian cultural and political context.<sup>24</sup> In many cases, the experiences of the over one million Jews living in the Russian Empire’s ten Polish provinces and other heavily Polish areas in the Pale of Settlement (such as Białystok) are either quietly overlooked or simply subsumed into the larger, somewhat misleading concept of “Russian Jewry.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, while Polish historians of the fifties, sixties, and seventies wrote extensively about specific aspects of Polish history and society in the early twentieth century, ideological and linguistic factors severely limited the place of the Jews in these studies.<sup>26</sup> Recent studies by Dynner, Guesnet, Jagodzińska, and Wodziński have helped correct this academic imbalance, and this book should be seen as part of this growing discussion of local Jewish societies and histories within the imperial context.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, focusing on Jewish society and politics in Polish lands not only helps me evade the long shadow of an imperial Russian Jewish body but also enables me to focus on the critical intersection of Polish and Jewish societies in Warsaw. This focus on events in the empire’s provinces is particularly relevant in a period like that surrounding the Revolution of 1905 when centrifugal forces threatened to tear the empire apart.

One additional outcome of these and other historiographical assumptions is that studies of Jewish politics in Polish lands often focus on the period after the establishment of the independent Polish Commonwealth in 1918. Like Mendelsohn’s groundbreaking studies on interwar history and society, many works focus on the so-called Golden Age of Jewish and Polish politics, the interwar years.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, other than Zimmerman’s study of relations between the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the Bund (the General Jewish Labor Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), and Wodziński’s work on Hasidic politics, relatively few works look at Jewish politics in pre-1914 Congress Poland.<sup>29</sup> By examining Jewish politics in the heart of Congress Poland, Warsaw, this study is designed to overcome both Dubnowian and Cold War influences on dominant historiographical conceptions of Jewish community and politics in eastern Europe. Here, as well, my hope is that a shift in the geographic focus in the study of Jewish politics will shed new

light on some of the more gnawing questions troubling the study of Jewish history, the history of Zionism, and the State of Israel.

In addition to geographic and chronological oversights, many studies of Jewish politics suffer from one additional pitfall, an overconcentration on parties, ideologies, and leaders. While such an approach may seem logical it does not mean that this academic discourse is without its own blind spots. Seminal works by definitive historians like Kolatt, Vital, and others look at specific organizations and institutions, the leaders that led them, and the platforms that were advocated as the body and soul of Jewish politics.<sup>30</sup> However, much like the histories of Jewish communal institutions and organizations, these histories of specific party leaders, structures, and organizations also lend a sense of order, autonomy, and, at times, destiny to the practice of Jewish politics.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Lederhendler's pathbreaking study speaks of *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics* as if there was a specific road to "Modern Jewish Politics," one which, like most other roads, led to a particular (political) place.<sup>32</sup> Finally, in many cases the ultimate destination of this and other roads "to modern Jewish politics" are, more often than not, today's state of Israel. Although this study points in the same direction, I repeatedly try to suspend this sense of historical destiny by illustrating how, when, and why Jewish history took this particular path.

Thus, instead of focusing on parties, platforms, and leaders, I analyze the very structures, practices, and discourses that helped create modern Jewish politics. Realizing that numbers are oftentimes misleading and inaccurate, I have shied away from giving definitive figures for specific parties at particular moments and have, instead, examined the common building-blocks of different political organizations. Moreover, understanding that histories of specific parties or individuals often lend themselves to somewhat triumphalist readings of the past, I have concentrated on the intersection of the three main political ideologies—socialism, liberalism, and nationalism—and not the rags-to-riches path of any one specific party or leader, from Płóńsk to Palestine.<sup>33</sup> More than anything else, this is a story that I try to tell as it moves forward and not as one might read it backward. Finally, in an effort to avoid potentially teleologically redemptive narratives of Jewish politics between eastern Europe and the Middle East (or, alternatively, to the golden land of America), I have chosen to focus on a specific period and a geographic area.<sup>34</sup>

*Jews and Poles in the Russian Empire:  
Toward a New Understanding of Subject Nations*

The field of Jewish politics is not the only realm in which the present weighs heavily upon the representation of the past. The study of Polish Jewry is also influenced by the needs of two clumsy, at times angry, historiographical schools: one Jewish, the other Polish.<sup>35</sup> On one side of this divide, the traditional Jewish school of Polish Jewish history has been one in which predominantly Jewish scholars have often presented Poland as a cursed land of antisemitism, pogroms, and exclusion in which anti-Jewish animus was not only dominant but, at times, perfected.<sup>36</sup> On the other side of this divide, many Polish scholars have tried either to justify the animosity between Poles and Jews by pointing to the role that prominent Jews supposedly played in the implementation and administration of Polish Communism (often embodied in the notorious image of the *żydokomuna* [Judeo-Communism]) or to minimize tensions by highlighting the actions of those Poles who risked their lives to save Jews during the German Occupation.<sup>37</sup> Although recent scholarship has attempted to correct this image, the historiographical record on Poles and Jews is still heavily influenced by needs of the present.<sup>38</sup>

As part of my efforts to move beyond this binary division (and intellectual impasse) of Poles versus Jews and to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the nature of relations between the two groups, as well as their place in the study, definition, and construction of a specifically “Eastern Europe,” I look at the various ways in which particular visions of Polish-Jewish harmony (and discord) were imagined and dismantled. Through this analysis, I illustrate how the construction of modern ethno-linguistic nations in the Russian Empire’s Polish provinces was neither an eternal, always existing fact, nor the result of a set of predetermined historical developments. Rather, it was the result of a particular set of structural and discursive developments, accompanying political decisions, and their implementation among Jews and Poles in a certain place and at a particular time. As part of my analysis of the image of “the Jews” that crystallized during the debates to the first two Dumas, I show how many of the same motifs that would later be associated with the *żydokomuna* were already integral parts of Polish

political discourse by early 1907, well before many of the more infamous “Jewish Communists” were even born or had developed a political consciousness.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to deconstructing primordial and essentialist conceptions regarding the supposedly eternal division between Poles and Jews, I also demonstrate not only how both communities passed through common experiences but also how these parallel paths often reinforced the development of two remarkably similar, if albeit increasingly divided, communities. Poles and Jews grew side by side in the city of Warsaw, were intimately aware of developments in each particular camp, and, in many cases, specific decisions were made in response to steps taken (both real and imagined) by the other party. By emphasizing these common processes, accompanying responses, and angry exchanges, I demonstrate how Polish and Jewish histories should also be seen as two interrelated societies that represent separate, if not always equal, parts of a larger cultural-political constellation.

Lastly, throughout this book, I show how the construction of ethno-linguistic communities in Warsaw was very often the result of specific responses to particular political realities and not the end result of well-planned, carefully implemented political designs. This interpretation helps recast the context in which decisions were taken, processes set in motion, and dies cast. Indeed, just as modernity and the encounter with the modern world were not processes that Jews always controlled, the construction of nations and their accompanying definitions of belonging and exclusion, two quintessentially modern phenomena, were not developments that many Poles and Jews were always conscious of and in control of.<sup>40</sup> Sometimes history just happens.

### *Like All Other Nations? Jewish and Other Nationalisms*

The study of Poles and Jews as (modern) nations leads me to another key issue raised in this book, nations and nationalisms. Although many Jewish and Polish historians often view their own particular nations as eternal ones, my discussion of the different intellectual, cultural, and political developments that coalesced in this period demonstrates how nations were constructed in eastern Europe as a result of specific institutional and discursive developments. As such, I claim that nations are

not only part and parcel of the modern era but also developments that grew out of the very confrontation with the modern world.

This position challenges both primordial and traditionalist schools of nationalism such as those espoused by John Armstrong and Anthony Smith, which claim that nations are rooted in already-existing groups (referred to by Smith as *ethnie*), and that these bodies serve as the core for future nations.<sup>41</sup> Although preferred by many advocates of particular nations and their specific nationalisms, Smith's theory fails to explain fully several key questions. For one, Smith's theory of *ethnie* does not adequately explain why some *ethnie* survive and go on to become nations while others simply fade away.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Smith's theory implies that all *ethnie* are proto-nations waiting to develop into maturity. Unfortunately, such an interpretation leads to the conclusion that the integration or assimilation of members of any one *ethnie* into another *ethnie* is close to impossible. When applied to the case of Jews in Europe, Smith's theory fails to allow for the possibility that Jews could have integrated into any European society, Polish, German, British, or other. Most importantly, Smith's theory of *ethnie* implies that "the Jews" were, essentially, a nation in waiting, and that all that was needed was their own midwife of history. However, as this study shows, many Jews in turn-of-the-century Warsaw were far from certain about what "the Jews" really were (and were not), and, as a result, they spent a fair amount of time debating what Jews and "the Jews" could and could not become.

In direct contradistinction to both the primordial and traditionalist schools of nations and nationalisms, a careful examination of the institutions, practices, and rhetoric implemented by both Jews and Poles in the wake of the quasi-democratic reforms of 1905 and 1906 shows how the advent of participatory politics led to the politicization of ethnicity, the construction of ethno-linguistic communities, and the crystallization of modern, politicized nations in turn-of-the-century eastern Europe. In this sense, my study draws from theories of nations and nationalisms advocated by Elie Kedourie and Benedict Anderson. My interpretation of the connection between modern means of communication and organization and the development of nations is also influenced by ideas regarding the construction and transformation of the public sphere as suggested by Jürgen Habermas, Partha Chatterjee, Pheng Cheah, and others.<sup>43</sup> In the case of Warsaw, the crisis of urban-

ization, accompanied by the rise of modern social, cultural, and political structures, the types of communities they helped construct, and the very discourses they facilitated, were all necessary and critical factors that contributed to the construction of two separate, parallel nations in Warsaw, one Jewish, the other Polish.

Moreover, while I do not claim that “the Jewish people” were invented *ex nihilo* by an assortment of frustrated intellectuals, politicians, and historians, I do argue that ethnicity is not destiny.<sup>44</sup> Something happened in and around the Revolution of 1905 that irrevocably altered reigning conceptions and practices of community and self. Although this decidedly modern view of nations and nationalisms challenges key works on Jewish history by Israel Bartal, Gideon Shimoni, and others, my emphasis on the impact of particular ideas, cultural institutions, and political practices that coalesced in a specific time and place underscores the inherently modern aspects of nationalism.<sup>45</sup> Ultimately, these socio-political bodies (nations) were neither permanent, preexisting collective entities nor the result of a set of predetermined historical developments but, rather, specific constructs that arose as a result of a particular set of circumstances and institutions. The development, imagination, and serialization of these new socio-political constructs occupies the better part of this study.

### *The Dialectics of Jewish Modernity*

Lastly, Jewish politics, in general, and Jewish nationalism, in particular, not only were quintessential by-products of the modern age and modern means of organization, communication, and action but also were responses to and reactions against key aspects of modernity, including life in the city and a series of questions regarding the fate of the individual and the nature of community in this radically new environment. By examining different responses to these and related questions, I show how many of the new political movements and their central representatives were less than optimistic about the world that they had inherited and far more interested in using modern means of communication and organization to resolve key problems that they associated with modernity. The repeated drive for social, political, and personal order in and over the city emphasizes the extent to which the Jewish encounter with



modernity often led to the adoption of modern political ideologies and movements that were imbued with a distinctly antimodern spirit. Unlike Katzian or Dubnowian master narratives, which revolve around intellectual or communal histories that inevitably lead to collective regeneration and redemption, my turn to social structures and reigning discourses highlights a much more ambivalent encounter with (and not construction of) modernity. In doing so, I raise difficult questions regarding the very origins, nature, and course of modern Jewish society and politics.<sup>46</sup> Little, in fact, epitomizes the dialectics of Jewish modernity more than the efforts by different leaders and organizations to redefine and transform the modern world from an unbound, undefined, and threatening myriad of practically incomprehensible phenomena to a bound, defined, and controlled intellectual, cultural, and political construct, the nation.

### Six Chapters: The Setting, the City, Revolution, the Public Sphere, Democracy, and Antisemitism

The six substantive chapters that compose this book trace the Jewish search for community in Warsaw from the end of the nineteenth century to the demise of the revolutionary era in 1907. Although chronologically oriented, each chapter addresses a specific theme as well as a set of questions designed to elucidate key aspects of the chapter's main theme. Chapter 1 consists of an integrative historical analysis of the main forces that form the core of this cultural history: the city of Warsaw, the city's Jewish residents, their Polish neighbors, and the Russian imperial context. Designed to lend historical background to different developments taking place over the course of the nineteenth century, this chapter charts Warsaw's growth as an industrial center; discusses key developments in Polish society, including changing visions of community and nation; explores the trials and tribulations of new, burgeoning Jewish communities in Warsaw; and examines various attempts by Russian government officials to wield control over the provincial center of Warsaw and its increasingly restless inhabitants. This historical discussion concludes with a brief summary of events of the Revolution of 1905 throughout the empire. In addition to providing historical context,

this opening chapter also helps set the stage for many of the themes analyzed throughout this book, including the transformation of Warsaw from a local center to an urban metropolis, the prevailing sense of crisis that arose regarding the urban environment, how this crisis shaped the nature and direction of community and politics among Jews and Poles, and the influence of these social and political struggles on reciprocal images and relations between the two groups.

In the second chapter, I examine various representations of disorder and confusion in Warsaw in an attempt to challenge the historiographical concept of an urban Jewish community and to place the origins of modern Jewish politics within the context of the modern city. By focusing on the experiences of new arrivals (in-migrants), the plight of other marginal members of Jewish society, a widespread level of mistrust, and practically uncontrollable displays of violence and crime, chapter 2 takes a hard look at life in the city.

In addition to setting the foundations for this study, my thematically driven analysis of urban life in this chapter is rooted in three methodological assumptions that help shape the book. First, I illustrate how the officially recognized Jewish community (*gmina*) and its various institutions in no way reflected the daily experiences of Warsaw's 275,000 Jewish residents. Second, by looking at the role played by the recently legalized and incredibly popular daily press, I demonstrate how a specific image of the city was created and then disseminated to tens of thousands (if not hundreds of thousands) of readers and other observers. Lastly, this particular image of the urban arena highlights not only the unprecedented size and scale of problems in the city but also the growing challenge to traditional Jewish institutions and organizations. As a result of this perceived crisis, the press and other new bodies were able to create new institutions and practices that would fill the gaping void left by the city.

One of the first expressions of the widespread need for new forms of communal organization and belonging in the city was the newfound popularity of various revolutionary organizations among Jews in Warsaw. By focusing on questions of community, chapter 3 presents revolutionary activity in general, and support for such activity among Jews in particular, as part of larger processes surrounding the collapse of community in the urban arena and the fervent search for new forms

of belonging. Through this analysis of Jewish support for revolutionary activity, I also try to shed light on the conundrum regarding Jewish participation in revolutionary organizations in eastern Europe and beyond.

Based on long-overlooked police, court, and other government records, the first part of this chapter examines the social structure and political culture of different revolutionary organizations in Warsaw. Through this analysis, I detail a unique underground world in which youth, conspiracy, and intimacy prevailed. The second part of this chapter looks at the language, teleology, and conceptions of community that various revolutionary organizations attempted to implement, and the extent to which these intellectual and cultural constructs took hold among potential supporters. While successful on many levels, these organizations soon found themselves confused as the rules of political engagement and activity changed over the course of 1905, 1906, and 1907. Thus, the last section of this chapter traces the different attempts by the Bund, the PPS, and other parties to bridge the transition from illegal, clandestine organizations to mass-based political parties. Ironically, many of the same factors that led to the early success of these groups in the days of illegal, conspiratorial activity would later serve as impediments to their attempted transition to become popularly supported organizations in the era of participatory politics. The new rules of political organization and activity would demand new ways of thinking and acting, and not all groups were able to make this transition successfully.

Where underground politics stumbled, new public institutions and organizations flourished. The larger transformation from the politics of underground activity to popular politics was rooted in a series of new institutions and structures that helped construct a specifically Jewish public sphere in Warsaw. By closely examining the critical role played by coffeehouses, Yiddish theater, and the daily press in Yiddish, chapter 4 argues that the shape and borders of community in Warsaw were rooted in the very institutions that helped create the new Jewish public sphere. Although there were other aspects to the public sphere in Warsaw, these three institutions were central to the reconstruction of reigning concepts of organization and community in the age of popular culture and participatory politics.

While the coffeehouse, the theater, and the daily press helped reconstruct popular concepts of public space and community, the experience

of semidemocratic elections in 1906 and again in 1907 contributed to the crystallization and consolidation of these concepts. In chapter 5, I follow the political debates aired in the Jewish political sphere during the elections to the first two Russian State Dumas and show how the very practice of participatory politics led to the solidification of specific lines of inclusion and exclusion in Warsaw and, de facto, throughout the area. The first half of this chapter looks at the organizations and policies that competed for the two seats in Warsaw's urban curia in the elections to the First Duma in early 1906. Through an analysis of political debates, I demonstrate how the very nature of participatory politics, as well as the electoral process itself, contributed to the reinforcement of specific, ethno-linguistic concepts of community. The second half of this chapter shows how the politicization of ethnicity was further exacerbated by the disappointing results of the elections to the First Duma. In response to these electoral losses, Jewish leaders were particularly critical of those Jews who dared to cross the line advocated by new communal and political leaders in the elections to the Second Duma. The move toward popular politics and the accompanying need for large-scale mobilization demanded an increased degree of individual loyalty and collective discipline, and various spokesmen were fervent in their position that Warsaw's Jewish voters learn to behave accordingly.

Jews, of course, were not the only ones who lived in Warsaw. Alongside Warsaw's 275,000 Jewish residents lived close to a half-million ethnic Poles. The last chapter in this book examines the changing nature of politics and society among Poles in Warsaw through an examination of the image of "the Jews" that coalesced in the elections to the first two Dumas. Through this analysis of the image and place of "the Jews" in the Polish political discourse, I demonstrate not only how both Poles and Jews passed through similar processes of politicization and encampment but also how these parallel developments often reinforced one another in an ongoing, reciprocal process of isolation, confrontation, and mimesis.

This analysis of the image of "the Jews" in the Polish political sphere revolves around several key aspects of this figure that would, in one way or another, prove pivotal to the course of modern Polish and Jewish politics over the course of the twentieth century. Throughout this chapter, I show how the image of "the Jews" was composed of three

key motifs that included an inherently hostile, anti-Polish drive bent on the destruction of Poland and the enslavement of Poles; the seemingly natural tendency of “the Jews” to ally themselves with other anti-Polish forces of domination, like Russian bureaucrats, and disorder, such as different socialist parties; and the inherent illegitimacy of coalitions between “the Jews” and different liberal groups, as well as the accompanying charges that such groups were either controlled by Jews or, in fact, crypto-Jews masquerading as Poles. Although some of these concepts would change over time, these key aspects of the image of “the Jews” were all integrated into mainstream political thought and debate during the elections to the first two Dumas.

Finally, the prominent place of “the Jews” in Polish politics helps explain the ultimate course of Jewish politics. Indeed, just as democratic practices took the wind out of the revolution’s sails, and as the need for collective organization helped reinforce the construction of communities rooted in an ethno-linguistic plane, the turn to the politics of hate among so many voices in the Polish political sphere lent a harsh blow to Polish and Jewish visions of Jewish integration into Polish society. Labeled as traitors, suspected of hostile intentions, and periodically threatened with political violence, more and more Jews turned to their own politics of isolation and, at times, hate, to create communities that were equally tenable and potentially redemptive in confusing and angry times.