

SPRACH- UND KULTURKONTAKTE IN EUROPAS MITTE. STUDIEN ZUR SLAWISTIK UND GERMANISTIK 7

Andrzej Kątny / Izabela Olszewska / <u>Aleksandra Twa</u>rdowska (eds.)

Ashkenazim and Sephardim: Language Miscellanea



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The collection of articles chosen by the editors presents a broad variety of issues connected with Jewish languages (Judeo-Spanish, Yiddish) and co-territorial languages used by Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews in different places and periods. Thus, the book contains both strictly linguistic and sociolinguistic descriptions (including the aspects of evaluating language, language in contact or linguistic identity), the presentation of languages in literary works (and their translations) from different periods, as well as lexicographical and cultural observations. This thematic variety shows opportunities for the research into the languages of both Jewish groups and inspires other scientific projects in this field.

The Editors

Andrzej Kątny is Professor of German linguistics at the University of Gdańsk (Poland). His research interests include German linguistics, Polish-German contrastive studies, and contact linguistics.

Izabela Olszewska is Assistant Professor at the Institute of German Philology at the University in Gdańsk (Poland). Her academic interests involve the language and culture of Ashkenazi Jews, Holocaust, media linguistics, and culture of remembrance.

Aleksandra Twardowska is Assistant Professor at the Department of Balkan Studies at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland). Her academic interests involve the language, culture and history of Balkan Jews, Jewish and Slavic anthroponomy, and Balkan languages.

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Herausgegeben von Andrzej Kątny und Stefan Michael Newerkla

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Izabela Olszewska and Aleksandra Twardowska

A Positive Image of Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish in the Jewish Press of the First Half of the 20th Century: An Overview

Abstract: The article presents discourse in the Jewish press on the question of the Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish languages and accordingly, their important roles in Ashkenazi (here precisely of so called *Westjuden*) and Sephardi environments. The positive image of the languages is illustrated in the press texts from Germany and Bosnia. Taking account of different social, political, cultural and linguistic conditions of both Jewish groups, the overview aims to find similar patterns in the presence of Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish in studied Jewish magazines.

Keywords: Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, Westjuden, Sephardi Jews, Germany, Bosnia, Jewish Press. Discourse in the Press

1 Introduction

"On the eve of the twentieth century, European Jewish culture was in a state of dramatic flux. Though never rigid, some of the most important emblems and agents of Jewish identity were now being reconsidered as cultural norms. The language one spoke, the food one ate, where one lived, how one dressed or self-identified, the class or professional status one might attain, the influence of communal loci power, the importance of religious practice: all these were increasingly matters of choice rather than convention."

This is what Sara Abrevaya Stein wrote (2004: 1) introducing her studies on the modern Jewish European press. On the other hand, in the after-empire period, as Abrevaya Stein indicates (2004: 207), the majority of the Jews in eastern and south eastern Europe still pointed to Jewish vernacular languages as their mother tongues, in spite of a growing degree of fluency in national languages. Unsurprisingly, we note more ambiguity in the status of both Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish among Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews in the first half of the 20th century: the languages in question were described as determinants of the Jewish nationality and Jewish culture, but some people underlined their decline, and we can even observe that there was a disrespectful attitude towards these languages even among their speakers, for example in the case of Judeo-Spanish (see Olszewska/Twardowska 2016: 79–103).

The aim of the article is to present an introductory sketch of the positive evaluation of both Diaspora languages as well as discourse in the Jewish press that

showed their important role in the Jewish culture and tradition. The chosen sources originate from the regions where the situation of Jewish citizens was much different in social, cultural, political and sociolinguistic terms: Germany and Bosnia (at that time a part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). The source material has been excerpted from the Jewish German language and bilingual Judeo-Spanish/Serbo-Croatian press of a socio-cultural type, which in line with its statutory objectives covered issues related to the Jews, their language and culture. First, let us briefly characterize the selected written sources.

The Jewish German language press of a socio-cultural type that brought up topics oscillating around the East European Jews, their language and culture included *Ost und West* [East and West]¹ (1901–1923), *Die Freistatt* [The Asylum] (1913–1914), *Der Jude* [The Jew] (1916–1928), *Der Morgen* [The Morning] (1925–1938) and *Die Welt* [The World] (1897–1914). The interest of the press in Eastern European Jewish topics was rooted in current socio-political and economic happenings, such as migrations of the Ostjuden to Western Europe and to the USA, contacts with the strange culture of the Ostjuden during the First World War or increasing anti-Semitism in Germany.

Ost und West, one of the oldest Jewish journals in Germany, published for 23 years, was a body of Alliance Israélite Universelle, the organization, which promoted positive ideals of Jewish emancipation and self-sufficiency through education and professional development. The aim of Ost und West was to inform the assimilated Jews about the cultural, literary and scientific achievements of the Ostjuden. Another example of a Jewish German language journal that covered topics related to Yiddish was Die Freistatt. According to the founders of the journal it was the general Jewish political and cultural review. Die Freistatt existed on the German language press market merely for two years. The aim of the monthly was to unite the assimilated German Jews. The journal categorically distanced itself from the Zionist views and, within the framework of the general Jewishness programme, opted for the necessity to accept the socio-cultural world of the Ostjuden. The monthly Der Jude, with its editor-in-chief Martin Buber, promoted the ideals of cultural Zionism and gave special attention to the topics related to the East European Jews. The monthly Der Morgen, founded by Julius Goldstein and published mainly in the interwar period, consisted of two parts: the main part, in which social, religious and political matters were discussed, and the other containing reviews and previews of publications.

¹ The titles and quotes from the Jewish German language press were translated by I.O. and from Serbo-Croatian and Judeo-Spanish by A.T.

The written sources of Judeo-Spanish and Sephardi culture after 1914 are articles from the Jewish weeklies published in Sarajevo and read in entire Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are two periodicals (out of seven published in Bosnia before World War II) presenting a positive image of the language of the Sephardim: *Jevrejski život* [The Jewish Life] (1924–1927) and *Jevrejski glas* [The Jewish Voice] (1928–1941).

Jevrejski život was a body of the Sephardic Movement in Bosnia. The clash of Zionism and the Sephardi movement is one of the most interesting phases of pre-war Jewish history in Bosnia (see Loker 1997). We can observe the beginnings of the Sephardic Movement at the end of the 19th century when the appearance of this national ideology coincided with the outset of the west-ernization of the Sephardim. In Bosnia it gained strength especially in the 20s of the 20th century, first, under the influence of Vienna and then Zagreb association "Esperansa". The Bosnian propagators of the Sephardic Movement were not against the fundamental ideology of Zionism, but they put effort into the emancipation of the Sephardim which should go along with the preservation of the Sephardi identity and tradition. Jevrejski glas was supposed to be a rostrum which would combine the profiles of both fractions – Zionist and pro-Sephardic.

Jevrejski život and Jevrejski glas were bilingual. Their articles were printed in Serbo-Croatian and Judeo-Spanish. The linguistic policy of the magazines also shows the sociolinguistic situation in the Bosnian Sephardic community: the years 1918–1941 are the period during which Bosnia was a part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and all the Jews were rightful citizens. It is the period of the assimilation of most Sephardic Jews, their participation in public life and, in linguistic terms, the period of language shift and bilingualism during which they acquired the Serbo-Croatian language.

2 Language of the Ostjuden as a Topic in the Jewish Press in Germany

The Yiddish language as "Umgangssprache der osteuropäischen Juden" (Ami 1914: 567), that is "colloquial language of the East European Jews" or "tatsächlich die gegenwärtige Volkssprache der Judenheit par excellence" (Schach 1901: 179) i.e. "actually the modern language of Jews par excellence" was not merely a means of communication but also a determinant of their affiliation to a given social group and a characteristic sign of its culture. Its function of creating and strengthening the Jewish identity was underlined in the press: "This language became our little homeland. Every word we uttered there was a reminder and

a guarantee of possessing a homeland [...]" (Kaznelson 1923: 440). In the discourse of the press the Yiddish language was general present. It was practically mentioned with regard to all aspects of social life – education, religion, identity and literature. The discussion on Yiddish in the Jewish German language press focused first of all on general language characterization, cultural and social events, the Yiddish press and literature, as well as linguistic and ethnological analysis.

As stated by Aschheim (1982: 115): "Nineteenth-century German Jews had consistently regarded Yiddish as a tasteless, mongrel Jargon, a bastardized vulgarization of German, the embodiment of a narrow, obscurantist ghetto spirit". During World War I, however, Jews from the German army fighting in Eastern Europe were confronted with millions of Yiddish-speaking Jews and since then we could see a noticeable increase of interest in the Yiddish language among assimilated Westjuden.2 The Jewish German language press underlined the role of Yiddish in creating and strengthening the Jewish identity. It was the very titles that already included, in accordance with their communicative function, basic information referring to the perception of the Ostjuden culture and language in the press. Most of the titles were of informative character, for example: "Der deutsch-juedische Jargon und seine Literatur" [German-Jewish Jargon and Its Literature] (Schach 1901); "Jiddisch" [Yiddish] (Calvary 1916); "Unsere Stellung zum Jiddischen" [Our Position Concerning Yiddish] (Bergmann 1914); there were also titles incorporating language parallels -"Jüdisch-Deutsch und Jüdisch-Spanisch" [German-Jewish and Judeo-Spanish] (Perles 1925), alarming titles - "Grenzsperre" [Border Blockade] (Kaufmann 1916), intriguing titles – "Gedanken zum jetzigen Problem" [Reflections on the Current Problem] (Paquet 1916), or titles incorporating family names – "Leon Perez. Ein moderner jüdischer Dichter" [Leon Perez. A Modern Jewish Poet] (Eliaschoff 1901).

² The ethnonyms *Westjuden* and *Ostjuden* coined by Natan Birnbaum, one of outstanding Jewish thinkers at the turn of the century, started to function as terms defining two separate types of European Jews. Birnbaum, named a "living exponent of Jewish intellectual history", was a prime mediator and interpreter of Ostjudentum to West European Jewishness (see Aschheim 1982: 114). The term *Ostjuden* denotes the Jews originating from Eastern Europe and living in line with old tradition, while the ethnonym *Westjuden* – the assimilated West European Jews. Cf. the leaflet *Was sind die Ostjuden? Zur ersten Information* (1916) or press materials: Acher (1904), Acher (1913), Birnbaum (1913).

2.1 A General Characterization and Evaluation of Yiddish in the Press

According to Best (1998: 14) the word *Jiddisch* derives from the Middle-High German adjective 'jidish', i.e. 'Jewish'. Initially the meaning of 'Jewish' and 'Yiddish' was the same. In the dictionary of German Jews *Jüdischen Lexikon* from 1927 under the entry 'Jewish language' Yiddish is explained as 'jüdischdeutsch'. In press articles from the first half of the 20th century there appeared a synonymous expression – 'jüdisch-deutsch' which means the Jewish-German language. Other used terms were: a jargon, the language/dialect of the Ostjuden, a mixed language or idiom. The press also used pejorative Yiddish expressions that functioned among the assimilated Westjuden, for instance *Lallen* 'mumble', *Kauderwelsch* 'obscure jargon' or *mauscheln* 'gibberish':³

"Anyway he [Graetz] did not see among the Hassidim anything more than a system of stupefaction, he sneered at 'a complicated and funny method' of Polish teachers of Talmud, he specified their way of thinking as inappropriate, their language as a disgusting mixed language, hideous mumble, incoherent jargon [...]." (Meisl 1917: 475)

or: "The jargon of Russian Jews is not a 'gibberish' "5 (Schach 1901: 179).

Press articles alluded to the origin of the Yiddish language, its cultural connections and its role in the lives of the East European Jews since migration at beginning of century. The texts were informative and opinion-forming:

"Jargon is a living language of a wide social group. It does not irritate the ear as the speech of the South German cattle traders does. It is not ugly. It does sound hard indeed like any national language but it attracts with its freshness. It is robust, sarcastic, vivid, concise and temperamental. Language that like no other suits the Jewish nation." (Schach 1901: 179)

As it was already mentioned, the interest in Yiddish increased after 1914. On the battle field the assimilated German Jewry came across Yiddish language and culture that were alien to them:

³ Other Yiddish and Ladino expressions in the Jewish press, cf. Olszewska/Twardowska (2016).

⁴ Gm. "So sah er bei den Chassidim nichts als ein 'Verdummungssystem', spottete über die 'kniffige, witzelnde Methode' der polnischen Talmudlehrer, bezeichnete ihr Denken als 'verkehrt', ihre Sprache als eine 'häßliche Mischsprache', 'ein widriges Lallen und Stammeln', ein 'Kauderwelsch' [...]."

⁵ Gm. "Der Jargon der russischen Juden ist kein 'Mauscheln."

"The language of Ostjuden, that is Yiddish, is less familiar to you than some exotic dialect. [...] This rich knowledge of the nation, economy and society and even the literature in Yiddish, old legends, Jewish songs or proverbs, folklore and poetry written in this language are still inaccessible to you." (Kaufmann 1916: 14)

2.2 Yiddish in the Linguistic Context

In the press Yiddish was also characterized in the linguistic context. We come across information referring to the origin of Yiddish, its history, linguistic and cultural connections and the fact that "Yiddish is a mixed language caused a great deal of difficulty to Jewish philologists" (Ami 1914: 556).

The origins of Yiddish as a mix-language and its components were described in the Jewish press:

"The Jewish language consists mostly of Germanic words, its forms are almost with no exception Germanic. Above that it betrays many Semitic (Hebrew and Aramaic) words and forms. Particularly syntax and style is Semitic. Yiddish also partly took over Slavic, Romanian and Hungarian words and forms and in recent days also English in the United States. Eventually we find in Yiddish a small but highly interesting group of Roman elements (Old-French, Italian and Portuguese) [...]." (Ami 1914: 566)

Important events were reported (events related to the status of Yiddish in the contemporary Jewish world), for instance the Czerniowitz Language Conference, which was the first international conference on the role and significance of Yiddish. It was held in the town of Czerniowitz in Ukraine in 1908. The aim of the debate was to acknowledge Yiddish as the national language of Jews. The conference was an important stage in the development of the Yiddishist movement:

⁶ Gm. "Die Sprache der Ostjuden, das Jiddische, ist ihnen unbekannter als ein exotischer Dialekt. [...] Das reichhaltige, in dieser Sprache vorliegende statistische, volks-, wirtschafts- und gesellschaftskundliche Wissen, oder gar die Quellen des jiddischen Schriftwerks, die alten Legenden, die Volkslieder, die Gleichnisse und Sprichwörter, die Folklore und die im 19. Jahrhundert hochauf sprießende erzählende und dramatische Dichtung sind ihnen noch immer verschlossen."

⁷ Gm. "Große Schwierigkeiten erwachsen den j\u00fcdischen Philologen aus dem Umstand, daß das J\u00fcdische eine Mischsprache ist."

⁸ Gm. "Das Jüdische besteht überwiegend aus germanischen Wörtern, seine Formen sind fast durchweg germanisch. Außerdem weist es sehr viele semitische (hebräischaramäische) Wörter und Formen auf. Besonders semitisch ist der Satzbau und der Stil. Zum Teil hat das Jüdische auch slawische, rumänische, ungarische Wörter und Formen aufgenommen, in letzter Zeit in Amerika auch englische. Schließlich finden wir im Jüdischen eine kleine, aber um so interessantere Gruppe von romanischen (altfranzösischen, italienischen und portugiesischen) Elementen [...]."

"Certain Jewish writers including the well-known and recognised, but also amateurs – gathered in Czerniowitz to offer a decisive solution to the issue of the Jewish language. After discussions, both extensive and shorter, the conclusion [...] was made that the only national language of Jews is no less than a Jewish 'jargon." (Coralnik 1908: 619/620)

2.3 The Yiddish Press and Literature

On the one hand, the information relating to the Yiddish press and literature proves the existence of a strong Ostjuden culture in Germany; despite the dependence on other countries and cultures and the fact that, as we read in *Der Jude*: "Yiddish as a language is exceptionally young" (Paquet 1916: 506). On the other hand, the fact of frequent touching upon themes referring to Ostjuden was an attempt to improve their image in the society of German Jewry. The weekly *Die Welt* was issued in Yiddish, so the unassimilated Eastern European Jews could get informed about various events in the world. *Ost und West* featured the column "Revue der Presse" covering the review of the Jewish press, also in Yiddish. Ost und West also published entire texts referring to the Yiddish press, for example "Die hebräische und jargonische Presse im Jahre 1908" [Hebrew and Jargon Press in 1908] (Lin 1909), "Die ostjüdische Presse" [The Yiddish Press] (Lin 1907). One could also learn where new magazines in Yiddish were published.

The German-Jewish press informed about cultural events involving Yiddish, for example theatrical performances, the cultivation of Jewish traditions or reported on the socio-cultural lives of the East European Jews in general. Editorial staff encouraged the readers to participate in concerts of Jewish songs and poems, and in Ostjuden cultural meetings, during which one could learn about, for instance, Yiddish schools. Moreover, in line with their character, the magazines published information on literary achievements of the Eastern European Jews, for instance the information about new books or German translations of Yiddish books. They also covered translations of famous Jewish authors, such as: "Mendel Moicher Seforim or Scholem Aleichem [who] in their creation

⁹ Gm. "Einige jüdische Schriftsteller, darunter auch solche von Namen und Wert, und einige Amateurs des Jargons, haben sich in Czernowitz versammelt, um die Sprachfrage im Judentum endgültig zu entscheiden. Jargons, haben sich in Czernowitz versammelt, um die Sprachfrage im Judentum endgültig zu entscheiden. Und nach längeren oder kürzeren Debatten wurde eine Resolution eingebracht und angenommen [...], daß die einzige Nationalsprache der Juden der jüdische 'Jargon' sei."

abundantly drew from the Yiddish language and culture, which cannot be mistaken with any German high culture"¹⁰ (Calvary 1916: 31).

2.4 Yiddish Ethnology and Anthropology

The German language Jewish press described the strange culture of the Ostjuden making use of texts on tradition and religious practices. Much attention was devoted to describing the culture of Ostjuden, their customs, everyday life or religion, mainly through the comparison of the Westjuden and Ostjuden: "Deutsche Juden und polnische Juden" [German and Polish Jews] (Berger 1916). We also find a number of texts that offer a general characterization of the Ostjuden, for instance in the article "Zur jüdischen Sprach- und Volkskunde" [On the Jewish Language and Ethnology] (Ami 1914), or "Aus dem religiösen Leben der Ostjuden" [From the Religious Life of the Ostjuden] (Rappaport 1917/1918). Jewish holidays, for example, were described in the following words:

"The one who participates in any holiday or an ordinary Sabbath among Ostjuden and who experiences the accompanying joy of spirit and feels joyful atmosphere can affirm the living force that comes out of the spirit. This person knows that all the riches and material goods of this world mean almost nothing in the face of unlimited happiness of 'being a Jew'. Jewishness is not a burden imposing religious rules or a customary imperative." (Rappaport 1917/1918: 340)

Apart from the descriptions of the culture of Ostjuden, which were practically noted in all texts analyzed in this article, much attention was devoted to the characterization of the Yiddish language in ethnological and anthropological contexts.

Die Welt, for example, featured information referring to the activity of the Jewish Ethnological Society, *Ost und West* printed the characterization of Jewish legends and tales. It was already in 1905 that one could read in *Ost und West*: "In the new year that is just commencing our editorial staff intends to intensify

¹⁰ Gm. "So verschiedene Schriftsteller wie Mendel Moicher Seforim und Scholem Aleichem haben ganz aus jiddischem Lebensgefühl und jiddischer Sprache heraus ihre Formen geschaffen, unverwechselbar mit irgendwelcher hochdeutschen Kunst."

¹¹ Gm. "Wer je einen Feiertag oder einen gewöhnlichen Sabbat unter den Ostjuden und die unter ihnen herrschende Seelenfreude und heitere ungetrübte Stimmung miterlebt und mitempfunden hat, kann die lebendige Kraft beurteilen, die aus diesem Geiste strömt. Er weiß es, wie wenig sämtliche Reichtümer und Güter dieser Welt gegenüber dem unbegrenzten Glück, 'ein Jüd zu sein', bedeuten. Das Judentum ist hier nicht eine beschwerende Last, welche ein religiöses Gebot oder ein sittlicher Imperativ zu tragen gebieten."

work on Jewish ethnology" and make it more familiar, because: "We Jews are shamefully behind in this respect. It is high time we got to work" (Redaktion von *Ost und West* 1905: 1 and 3). The collection was described as "imposing" and included Jewish songs, tunes, proverbs, legends, fairy tales, depictions of folk costumes, customs, folk medicine or beliefs "reflecting the worldview, way of life and spirit of the nation" (Redaktion 1905: 3).

Bar Ami (1907: 15) wrote in the introduction to one of the initial articles in the series "Aus der jüdischen Sagen- und Märchenwelt" [From the World of Jewish Legend and Fairy-Tale]: "I took down the following tales many years ago after they were told to me by a Hassidic story teller. The introduction [...] perfectly reflects both naive and mystic world-view of the Hassidim. The translation into German renders the original as close as possible." 12

In the context of the Yiddish language we also come across some information on Jewish proverbs. The proverbs of the Ostjuden, especially in *Ost und West*, were described both broadly and in detail, for instance thematically, cf. "Die Bernsteinische Bibliothek" [Bernstein's Library], "Der Jude und seine Umwelt im jüdischen Sprichwort" [The Jew and His Environment in Jewish Proverbs], "Die Frau im jüdischen Sprichwort" [The Woman in Jewish Proverbs] or "Das Geld im jüdischen Sprichworte" [Money in Jewish Proverbs]. Bernstein's library was described by Segel (1901: 357): "One of the most extraordinary and most interesting collections of books in Europe is the one belonging to the private assemblage of Ignaz Bernstein in Warsaw. […] The library encompasses 4761 titles […]."

Texts about folk songs, apart from the information on proverbs, were wide-spread – one of the most renowned researchers of the Jewish folklore, Arno Nadel wrote: "Some songs were very old – many had been created hundreds of years before. Almost all of them were in the old or new Jewish-German language, a so-called jargon [...]" (Nadel 1916/1917: 112). The evening parties of cultural societies (so-called Jüdischer Liederabend) were organized to

¹² Gm. "Die folgenden Sagen sind von mir vor mehreren Jahren nach dem Vortrage eines chassidischen M\u00e4rchenerz\u00e4hlers aufgezeichnet worden. Die vorangehende Einleitung bildet gleichsam ein Pr\u00e4ludium und spiegelt trefflich die naive und zugleich von einem gewissen mystischen Schwung beseelte Anschauungsweise der Chassidim wieder. Die Uebertragung ins Hochdeutsche schliesst sich m\u00f6glichst wortgetreu dem Original an."

¹³ Gm. "Eine der merkwürdigsten und interessantesten Büchersammlungen in Europa bildet diejenige eines Privatmannes, Herrn Ignaz Bernstein in Warschau [...]. Eine Bibliothek, die 4761 Titel umfasst [...]."

present "Jewish songs which were considered to have become extinct a long time ago." ([anonym] 1907: 71/72)

3 The Sephardi Press in Bosnia after World War I

Sarah Abrevaya Stein writes about the Judeo-Spanish press in the Ottoman Empire:

"The earliest editors of the Ladino¹⁴ press not only created new genres of texts, but also envisioned new kinds of Ladino readers. [...] At least theoretically, [...] Ladino newspapers [...] were designed to reach all readers of Ladino, regardless of age, gender, religious status, educational background, class or professional standing." (Abrevaya Stein 2004: 61)

She assigns that role to the magazines like El Tiempo published in the area of today's Turkey in the second half of the 19th century, but it is also valid in the case of the Bosnian-Sephardi press of the 20th century. In 1900/1901 Abraham Cappon, the editor of the self-published La Alborada, the first Judeo-Spanish magazine in Bosnia, who was aware of the fact that the majority of the Sephardim in Bosnia fluently spoke only Judeo-Spanish, intended to create modern local Judeo-Spanish readers from all social strata. As he failed in his efforts, because of the lack of funds, he admitted: "[...] and even though I did what I could to make this magazine available for as wide circle of readers as possible, not many people appreciated my goals" (Vidaković-Petrov 1986: 53). Later on, after World War I, the editorial board of Jevrejski život and Jevrejski glas made a gesture towards the Sephardi readers. Newspapers were run in a professional way, supported financially and published in different political, social and cultural conditions. According to Krinka Vidaković-Petrov (see 1986: 55, 2013: 31, 32) Jevrejski život and Jevrejski glas had to deal with two issues which were major for the local Jewish community in that period: of joining the Zionist movement or submitting to acculturation. Another question concerned the position of Sephardi and Judeo-Spanish tradition in the stream of changes. Jevrejski život, which was a body of the Sephardi Movement in Bosnia, showed loyalty towards the Sephardi heritage and language. The importance of the language was shown in the press sources in various ways: from its positive evaluation, the publication of various genres of Judeo-Spanish texts, to the support of cultural events linked to Sephardi/ Judeo-Spanish tradition.

¹⁴ Abrevaya Stein uses the term *Ladino* for the vernacular of the Sephardim.

3.1 A General Characterization and Positive Evaluation of Judeo-Spanish

The Sephardic Jews' language in selected press articles is given different names: lingva žudia, lingua žudia-spaniol, lingua espanjola, judío-español, žudio-espanjol, španjolski jezik, španjolski žargon, jevrejsko-španjolski, sefardski idiom, jevrejsko-španski idiom. The sources most often call the Sephardic Jews' speech 'a language' but the terms 'an idiom' and 'a jargon' are also used. We should also note that, as indicated by the way they were used, the terms 'a jargon' and 'an idiom' do not seem to have any negative connotations. The debate in the Jewish press in Bosnia focused mainly on the range of representative and communicative functions of the language, while it was always highlighted that the language was closely connected with the Sephardic tradition. When we think of how the condition of the language at that time was described, the opinions were various: from the view displaying a constantly present role of the language as a means of communication, to the opinion showing its decadence and slow decline. The selected sources that underlined the important role of the language often represented sentimental perception of it, idealizing its roles of a language of tradition, a factor uniting the closest community and a still vital language of communication. They said that Judeo-Spanish was: "[...] the Jewish language with innovations, the adapted and rich language, with nuances and dialects"15 (Attijas 1927: 3). The loyal attitude towards the language, as mentioned above, was characteristic of the discourse in Jevrejski život, which due to its ideology and political views focused on the Sephardi issues.

It was also believed that Judeo-Spanish (as a so-called "segundo hebreo" – 'the second Hebrew'), integrated all Sephardic communities in the region and differentiated them from other groups of the Diaspora and, last but not least, as it was a particular determinant of the Jewish identity, it was often called "a national language" ¹⁶ ("A las komunidades…" 1927: 2).

At the beginning of the 20th century in the discourse on the language of Balkan Sephardic Jews this language was very often described as a language of a family circle: "language after the mother" ("Una nočada literaria" 1925: 2), "we heard this language from the cradle" (Bitton 1939: 5). These expressions are

¹⁵ JSp. "[...] lingva žudia de novideades, lingva akomodada i rika, tiene niansas i dialektos."

¹⁶ JSp."lingua nasionala."

¹⁷ Serb.-Cr."maternji jezik", "[...] smo čuli taj jezik još od naše koljevke."

associated with two features of the language: during that period it mostly functioned as the language of the closest environment (a home, backyard, district) and also happened to be the first language of its users. At the same time, it was shown that there were still Jewish citizens in Yugoslavia for who Judeo-Spanish could be the only language of communication. The articles from the 1920s mentioned readers in Bosnia and so-called Southern Serbia (today's Macedonia) "[...] who still speak *espanjol* and only a bit in Serbo-Croatian" ("Muestras publikasjones..." 1924: 2).

At the same time, even the supporters of the Sephardic Movement had to face the fact that in the 1920s the Judeo-Spanish language in the Balkans started to compete with the languages of the surroundings (Serbo-Croatian and others) and with the need for promoting the Hebrew language (in relation to Zionist trends). Nevertheless, the intellectuals of the Sephardic fraction like Eliezer Levi often had doubts about the role of Hebrew as the national language of the Jewry. It was believed that the Judeo-Spanish language still had the advantage over Hebrew in that its "spirit harmonized with Sephardic mentality", whereas Hebrew was not a language close to the Sephardic Diaspora and it would be difficult to learn it (E. Levi 1927b: 2).

Bosnian Jewish press often published calls for other practical solutions to preserve Judeo-Spanish and Sephardi culture among the readers of the weeklies. For example: Jevrejski glas and Jevrejski život published several calls from the associations "La Benevolencija" and "La Lira" for the Jewish inhabitants of Bosnia to gather Judeo-Spanish folklore texts and traditional songs (see, for example: "Glavna skupština..." 1931: 4). After the Sephardi Youth Congress in 1927 Jevrejski život called for gathering of grammatical and lexical corpus of Judeo-Spanish and informed about a newly formed committee for Judeo-Spanish. One of the goals of the committee was to publish Judeo-Spanish grammar and dictionary ("Rezolucije" 1927: 4). Unfortunately, according to our knowledge, it never happened before the outbreak of World War II. Unlike in the Jewish press from Germany referring to Yiddish, there were very few attempts at a linguistic description of Judeo-Spanish in Bosnia. Jevrejski glas published an article in the form of a short etymological dictionary of Hebrew borrowings in the language (Maestro 1929: 6-7). In 1930 the same weekly contained a resume of Kalmi Baruh's (a Sephardi Hispanist from Bosnia) doctoral dissertation on phonology in Judeo-Spanish in Bosnia (E. Levi 1930: 8).

¹⁸ JSp. "[...] ke konosen espanjol i solo poko serbo-kroato."

3.2 Sephardi Events and Organizations in the Press

The press always informed (in both the Serbo-Croatian or Judeo-Spanish language) about cultural and social events connected to Sephardi culture, such as public lectures (for example, Laura Papo-Bohoreta's lecture¹⁹ about Sephardi women) evening-time tea parties (so called *čajanke*) with singing of Sephardi traditional *romansas* (songs of epic character) and *kantikas* (lyrical songs), etc. Sometimes the magazines called for the readers to take an active part in the events in order to have an opportunity to show still present connection to the Judeo-Spanish tradition:

"We are talking about a decision of the new 'La Lira' committee [...] popularization of our literary works, no matter if they are a product of popular wisdom or fruits of our poets and writers [...]. We do not want to lament over the loss of our literary treasure [...] we see it as a tiny light in our cultural twilight. [...] on the 27th of this month [...] a night of *romansas* will be held, in which everybody who knows *romansas* and knows how to sing them can take part."²⁰ ("Nueva actividad..." 1932: 7)

Furthermore, every premiere of Bohoreta's play was noted and acclaimed, for instance in an article by Benjamin Pinto about the premiere of "La Madrasta i el nombre le abasta" [Mother-In-Law and Her Name Says Enough], where he devotes much attention to Laura Papo's contribution to fostering the Sephardi culture and the vivid Judeo-Spanish language which she uses in her comedies:

"All the more she is one of rare experts or connoisseurs of our *mahalas*, our customs, language, our folklore in general, her knowledge is on expert level and she saves it in various literary forms, at least she keeps and fosters it on paper. [...] she gave us so many vivid and interesting linguistic combinations, many images, metaphors, the power of sayings and proverbs [...]." (Pinto 1935: 2–3)

¹⁹ Laura Papo, pseudonym "Bohoreta" (1891–1942) – one of very few Sephardi women actively present in the public Jewish discourse in the former Yugoslavia. She was a poet, playwright and short story writer, as well as a collector of Sephardi folklore samples from Bosnia. Before War World II she published only in the Jewish press (see: Nezirović 1992: 503–525, 548–549, 585–599; Vidaković-Petrov 1986: 100–104, 119, 120; Večerina Tomaić 2016).

²⁰ JSp. "Se trata aki de una dečizion del nuevo komite de "la Lira" [...] el popularizamiento de de nuestras ovras literarias, sejan ejas el producto del ženio del puevlo, sejan ejas frutos de nuestros poetas i eskriptores [...]. No keremos lamentar por el deperdimiento de nuestro tesoro literario [...] lo tratamos komo una čika luz en nuestra skuridad kulturala. [...] al 27 del mez koriente [...] esto va ser una noće de romansas en la kuala van tomar parte akejos ke las konosen i las saven kantar."

²¹ Serb.-Cr. "Tim više je ona jedan od rijetkih poznavalaca naših mahala, naših običaja, našeg jezika, našeg folklora uopće, da je to njeno poznavanje stručno i znalačko i da

The weeklies also informed about meetings or congresses organized by Sephardi associations. Not only local, but also those involved in a wider range of activity, like "Esperansa" formed in Vienna in order to maintain Sephardi tradition (Esperanzista 1924: 2). A special event held in Sarajevo in 1927 – the Sephardi Youth Congress – drew much attention of the local Jewish press and many articles were devoted to it. There was a journalistic debate not only about the question of the Sephardi movement in general, but also about Judeo-Spanish itself, which was one of the congress's topics. Especially *Jevrejski život* published many articles about resolutions of the congress related to the language, its condition and future, which was a call for the preservation of the language, and according to the editors was a very important question for the local Sephardi group and the Sephardi Movement in general:

"The Sephardi Youth Congress finds the Judeo-Spanish language, which still is a maternal language of a big part of the Sephardi Jewry and has its own historical, cultural and national value, a component of the Sephardic ideology and an important factor of the Sephardic Movement."²² ("Rezolucije" 1927: 4)

3.3 Texts in Judeo-Spanish

There were many samples of Judeo-Spanish texts printed in the local press in the 1920s. The editorial board of the weekly *Jevrejski život*, active in dealing with Judeo-Spanish language issues, during the first year decided to publish more texts in the language, which was doubtless connected to the ideology of the Sephardi Movement. The second reason for the decision was practical: as the editors wrote, not so many Bosnian (and Macedonian) Sephardim spoke Serbo-Croatian at that time, so Judeo-Spanish columns were useful for that group of readers. The linguistic policy of the magazine was presented in the essay "Muestras publikasjones en espanjol" [Our Publications in Spanish], which says:

"The editorial board of *Jevrejski život* made a new decision. It is a novelty which in the city of Sarajevo, as well in the provinces (especially in South Serbia) will be surely well received by the readers of our magazine: our publications in Spanish, which are translated texts, as well as original ones. The original Spanish texts which will surely appear

ga u raznim literarnim formama bilježi i to makar na papiru održava i čuva. [...] dala nam toliko živopisnih interesantnih jezičkih kombinacija, mnoge slike, metafore, silu izreka i poslovica [...]."

²² Serb.-Cr. "Konferencija sefardske omladine smatra špansko-jevrejski jezik, koji je još uvijek maternji jezik velikog dijela sefardskog jevrejstva, a ima i svoju istorijsku, kulturnu i nacionalnu vrijednost, sastavnim dijelom sefardske ideologije i važnim faktorom u sefardskom pokretu."

with time and which are going to be widely read, will be cherished and promoted by the editors in a first place." ("Muestras publikasjones..." 1924: 2)

There were many types of Judeo-Spanish texts in the Bosnian Jewish press. They included some journalistic writing of social and political manifestos and programmes, for example those aiming at Zionist Sephardic Youth (I. Levi, Kamhi 1927: 2) or pre-electoral texts about the political condition of the Bosnian Sephardi minority ("Kon ožos avjertos" 1928: 1). Also cultural essays were printed, such as Kalmi Baruh's "Una nočada literaria" [Literary Evening], the text about Hayim Nachman Bialik and his poetry (Baruh 1925: 2).

Another category includes texts of Sephardi/Judeo-Spanish culture, like contemporary Judeo-Spanish prose and poetry by local but acclaimed Sephardi authors who appeared in *Jevrejski život* in the 1920s with their contribution to the Sephardi local cultural life. The weekly published: Laura Papo-Bohoreta, Avram Romano-Buki, Benjamin Pinto and others.²⁴ As Muhamed Nezirović observed, the cooperation of the magazine with the local authors was in fact an ideological programme and it was a huge success. The authors were indeed widely read and a new local Sephardi literary activity started (see 1992: 556).

Also in the 1930s, every week *Jevrejski glas* in a section "Para noče de šabat" [For the Sabbath Evening] published short texts and anecdotes by other local authors hidden behind pseudonyms such as: Cadik, Unu di Bjelava, Miko, Lević, Josefiko, Jafi and Jakoviku.²⁵ These texts only of amateurish character appeared as a result of a call of the weekly for every reader to create the content of the column:

"Starting from today, in every issue of our weekly we will present the events, anecdotes, dialogues, proverbs etc. from our life. With this we want to bring not only entertainment for our readers and make them laugh, but also we want to preserve in script the spirit

²³ JSp. "La Redaksjon del "Jevrejski život" tomo una mueva dečizjon. Una novita, kuala en la sivtat de Sarajevo komo i en la Provinsja i espesjalmente de la Serbia del Sud mas ke seguro se va resivir kon la simpatia de parte de los meldadores del muestro organo: muestras publikasjones en espanjol, ke es trezlados i lavoros originales. Los originales de espanjol kualos seguro kon tempo van apareser i van estar bien meldados, la Redaksjon los va mas ke todo presiar i protežar."

²⁴ See stories by Avram Romano-Buki, i.e.: "La možer mala" (1927: 5–6), "Muy lonđe" (1929: 2–4), Laura Papo Bohoreta, i.e.: "Madres" (1924: 3), Benjamin Pinto, i.e.: "Kol Nidre..." (1924: 4).

²⁵ See short stories by Cadik, i.e: "Tija Lunača" (1931: 5), Miko, i.e.: "Las ebonoras de tija Bonača" (1931: 4), Josefiko, i.e.: "Tardi di vjarnis" (1931: 7), Jafi, i.e.: "La oja di tija Strulača" (1936: 4).

of our *maales* (neighbourhoods), our language, our expressions and way of thinking, shortly speaking – our folklore. At the same time we call our readers to help us out with this goal." 26 ("Para noče de šabat" 1931: 7)

Apart from the column mentioned above, both magazines printed many samples of Sephardi folklore in regular columns, such as "El tesoro literario sefardi" [Literary Sephradi Treasure], "Romanse bosanskih Sefarada" [Romansas of the Bosnian Sephardim], "Sentensjas" [Sayings], "Palabras de savjos" [Words of Sages], "Španjolske izreke i poslovice" [Spanish Sayings and Proverbs] The editors also published texts from Judeo-Spanish folklore: *romansas* and *kantikas*, para-liturgical songs, proverbs and even Judeo-Spanish jokes in the column "Malo humora" [A Little Bit of Humour].

Like in the Jewish press in Germany Bosnian weeklies offered many translated texts. They published texts of non-Sephardi authors translated into Judeo-Spanish, for instance works of famous Ashkenazi writers, including Isaac Leib Peretz, Sholem Aleichem or Hayim Nachman Bialik, as well as non-Jewish authors like the Serbian poet Jovan Jovanović Zmaj translated by Laura Papo Bohoreta.²⁷

5 Conclusion

As the short overview of press materials indicates, both Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish were important subjects of the discourse in the press. The main component of building the positive image and importance of both languages in the assimilated (or semi-assimilated) Jewish society was press information in the form of articles, reviews, informative notes on language or translations of literary texts. Everything was supplemented with readers' comments. The characteristic feature of the discourse in the press was that Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish were treated as the main elements of the Jewish identity.

²⁶ JSp.: "De oj adelantre, en kada numero de nuestra gazeta vamos trajer akontesimientos, aneksotas, dialogos, proverbios etc. de nuestra vida. Kon esto no keremos azer solo pasatiempo a muestros lektores i daldes okazion para reir, sino konservar en eskrita el esperitu de muestras maales, muestra lingua, muestras ekspresiones i modo de pensar, en kurto dičo muestro folklor. En esteso tiempo jamamos a todos muestros lektores de ajudarmos en esto ečo".

²⁷ See translated works by Isaac Leib Peretz, i.e.: "Los tres prezentes. La balansia de la žustisia" (1927: 2), Sholem Aleichem, i.e.: "Dos almas" (1927: 3), Hayim Nachman Bialik, i.e.: "Si tu keres konoser" (1926: 3), Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, i.e.: "Lem Edim" (1927: 2).

Undoubtedly, we can observe a number of basic differences between these two kinds of sources: the presented Bosnian press (unlike the German press writing about Yiddish) was written and printed for those who still used the Diaspora language, in this case Judeo-Spanish. As far as the German press is concerned, the majority of readers did not speak Yiddish. This is the reason why we find Yiddish literary texts translated into German in the German press and, by contrast, Yiddish, German and other literary texts translated into Judeo-Spanish in the Bosnian press. For the same reason numerous articles on linguistic description of Yiddish in the German press are presented and at the same time, we can find very few essays on Judeo-Spanish. On the other hand, the Sephardi readers in Bosnia (unlike the Jews in Germany) were often encouraged to take an active part in the attempts at the cultivation of Judeo-Spanish language in the started process of decline. As for the German speaking readers of the press in Germany, the primary aim of the discourse in the press was that the *Westjuden* sensed the unity of Yiddish and general Jewish culture.

Nevertheless, some of the topics are common in both types of press – for instance a positive evaluation of the languages appeared in German and Bosnian magazines. Additionally, the attention was often focused on cultural and social events and organizations connected to Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish cultures as well as Yiddish/Judeo-Spanish folklore. Despite the fact that the presented press was published in different regions and was dedicated to different target readers, we can state that one could see a positive image of Yiddish in the press of assimilated Jews and of Judeo-Spanish in the press under the influence of the Sephardic Movement. A further comparative analysis of the status of both languages in the press discourse can be a fascinating and topic deserving more attention.

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