

JEWISH STUDIES

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The Yiddish Press and the Transformation of Low-rung Eastern European Jews

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Abstract: The traditional Eastern European Jewry was segregated and impoverished in general, but the separation and isolation began to collapse under the impact from its inner ideological movements and the outer major events between 1881 and 1925, and it came to embrace the open and civilized modern urban life. In this tremendous social transformation and cultural conflict, the development and prosperity of the Yiddish press was a remarkable manifestation of Eastern European Jewish culture. This essay attempts to explore the role the Yiddish press has played in the transfiguration and maintains that Yiddish journalism as mass medium is both a result from and generative mechanism of the modernization of Eastern European Jewry, the two of which have promoted each other and accomplished their mission.

Key Words: Yiddish press, Eastern European Jewry, modernity, transformation