Russian Jewry goes to the polls: an analysis of Jewish voting in the 
All-Russian Constituent Assembly Elections of 1917

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This article gauges Jewish public opinion in 1917 by analysing voting statistics for 
a range of elections, most important among them the elections to the All-Russian 
Constituent Assembly. The results of Jewish voting in 1917 suggest that in this 
revolutionary year the Jewish population in the territories of the former Russian 
Empire, when viewed as a whole, can be cast as neither thoroughly Zionist nor 
socialist. Even the horrors of the First World War – including widespread anti-
Jewish violence, accusations of espionage, and mass deportation – failed to 
rationalise the Jewish population dramatically. Continuing a trend originating with 
the First Duma elections in 1906, Jews voted in significant numbers for 
independent Jewish coalitions emphasising communal and religious autonomy for 
Russian Jewry within a generally liberal framework, and elected representatives 
who were prominent members of Jewish society. The war did, however, catalyse 
the Jewish shift out of the Russian liberal fold. Although the Russian Zionists ran 
independently from the Kadets beginning with the elections to the Second Duma 
in 1907, now a number of prominent non-nationalist Jews also left the Kadet party 
and were elected to represent Jewish national coalitions. Finally, this article 
explains how the correlation between nationality, class and party politics in much 
of the region of Jewish residence likely bolstered the appeal of Jewish parties and 
diminished that of their competitors.

Keywords: 1917; Jews; voting; All-Russian Constituent Assembly; Jewish 
Congress; Duma; Jewish nationalism; Zionism; Russian liberals; Kadets; Bund; 
Ukraine

The title of this paper is taken from Oliver Radkey’s seminal work Russia Goes to the 
Polls. In his original study and later revised edition Radkey compiled statistics from 
the elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly and used these numbers to 
gauge Russian public opinion in 1917.1 Although individuals with a personal stake in 
the convening or dismissal of the Constituent Assembly had previously drawn their 
own conclusions from the election results (for instance, the Socialist Revolutionary 
deputy Sviatitskii on the one hand, and Lenin on the other), Radkey was the first 
scholar detached enough from the events to try and make objective sense of the 
voting.2 Despite massive Jewish participation in the elections to the All-Russian 
Constituent Assembly, thus far no scholar has seriously attempted to analyse the elec-
tion results in order to determine Jewish public opinion during the period.

The existing scholarship on Russian Jewry pays little attention to Jewish participa-
tion in these and other elections held in 1917, partly because the Bolsheviks 
dismissed the institutions they were meant to create, and partly because such factors
as the Balfour declaration and anti-Jewish violence seemed to explain Zionist successes. Yet while the Zionists dominated the specifically Jewish elections held in 1917, such as those for the All-Russian Jewish Congress and local obshchiny, or kehillot (the newly reinstated organ of local Jewish self-government), only a small percentage of Jews – presumably the most politically active – participated in those elections. The elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, where Jewish participation was on a mass scale, tell a very different story, and in fact, suggest a continuation of trends in Jewish voting behaviour that began with the First Duma elections. Rather than a complete Zionist ascendancy in Jewish public opinion, the success of Jewish parties in the All-Russian Constituent Assembly elections reflected widespread cooperation between Jewish nationalist and non-nationalist groups, within a setting, the former Pale of Settlement, where economic and demographic factors reinforced voting by nationality. Most importantly, the declining appeal of Russian liberalism resulted in a significant political realignment among the majority of the Jewish population – from support for Russian liberalism of a generally Jewish nationalist type, to Jewish nationalism of a generally liberal type.

Voting in the All-Russian Constituent Assembly elections

After the February revolution of 1917, the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet were able to coexist (for a while) because of an agreement that all decisions relating to the political and social organisation of the new state would be left until after the convocation of an All-Russian Constituent Assembly. The desire for a popularly elected Constituent Assembly to resolve Russia’s problems long predates the February Revolution of 1917, but with the founding of the Provisional Government, the convocation of such an assembly became necessary for the establishment of a new legitimate state structure to replace the autocracy. Even more importantly, the agreement between the delegates of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and members of the Temporary Committee of the State Duma to hold elections to a Constituent Assembly created a framework where the caretaker government would be able to function on a day-to-day basis if it agreed to put off all important decisions until the convening of the new popularly elected body (an agreement that was maintained throughout all four Provisional Governments). The Bolsheviks also justified their October seizure of power on the basis that only they could ensure a fair and swift election to the Constituent Assembly. Although the agreement to leave all social, economic and state structural questions to the future Constituent Assembly achieved an uneasy truce between revolutionary, reformist and even conservative parties, this deferment also tied the hands of the Provisional Government to such a degree that the Bolsheviks later argued against establishing yet one more ineffective chamber.

The historical relevance of the elections to the Constituent Assembly, and the Bolsheviks’ dispersal of it after only two days of meeting, is still debated, in part because of the implications of that event on the course of Russian history. Whether the Constituent Assembly might have effectively resolved the many problems postponed pending its convocation and set Russia along a constitutional, democratic and, given the electoral results, moderately socialist path will forever remain unclear; but that the vote itself took place (for the most part) allows for a rare glimpse into the public mood at the time. Considering the elections to the Constituent Assembly were until that point the largest elections in world history, both geographically and by population, and were conducted in the context of ongoing war and increasing anarchy and civil
strife, the records have by no means been completely preserved and the results should be approached with caution. Voting in most districts occurred as scheduled on 12–14 (25–7) November 1917, but had to be postponed up to three months in some areas and completely failed to take place in others. Accepting the incompleteness of the picture, studying the Constituent Assembly results remains the best available way to gauge public opinion in 1917, and provides a picture of what the composition of a democratic government might have been (predominantly socialist in membership). Because the vast majority of Russia’s Jews lived in the western provinces where voting was relatively complete, what exists of the voting results for Jewish voters should be treated seriously.

The results of the election to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly point to a number of interesting political processes, some of which are also evident in the results of the elections to the All-Russian Jewish Congress, a proto-parliament planned collaboratively by the Jewish political parties. Parallel to the Russian process, a Jewish national assembly was the ultimate goal of Jewish political aspirations in 1917, but would only be convened after the All-Russian Jewish Congress determined the framework of Jewish self-government. 

The elections to the All-Russian Jewish Congress took place in November 1917 with the participation of the Zionists, the diaspora-nationalist Folkspartey, several Jewish socialist parties – the Bund, the United Jewish Socialist Workers’ Party (Fareynikte), and Poalei Tsiyon – the Orthodox party Akhdus, and the liberal Folksgruppe. The Zionists won an outright majority of the available seats, polling well over double the number of votes of those combined for the socialist parties. 

The Bolsheviks, and in particular the central Jewish Commissariat (Evkom), made it clear that they would not allow such a hostile Congress to convene, and therefore the organisers had no choice but to postpone its convocation, first from December to January, and then indefinitely.

Both the elections to the All-Russian Jewish Congress and to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly demonstrate that Jewish political leadership was far more factionalised than the Jewish population as a whole. Taking into account that some Russian Jews evidently considered themselves unrepresented by any of the parties (the All-Russian Jewish Congress elections failed to bring a majority of Jewish voters to the polls), the election results still demonstrate that the Jewish population was far less divided than the large number of parties might otherwise seem to indicate. Despite the fact that the creation of Jewish national coalitions resolved a good deal of ideological hair-splitting – as did the union of the Jewish Socialist Workers’ Party and the Zionist Socialist Workers’ Party into the Fareynikte – the number of Jewish parties that ran in the various elections is astounding. In some districts in the elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, over one third of the parties listed on the slate appealed only to Jewish voters. Examples include Zhitomir, where five out of 13 parties were Jewish, Gomel where four out of 11 parties were Jewish, and Poltava, where five out of 14 parties were Jewish. Voters could choose between two or more specifically Jewish parties or coalitions in a total of fourteen districts. Yet evidently, when voting took place in November and December 1917, the factionalised nature of Jewish political leadership did not carry over to the Jewish voting public as a whole. At the least, 622,797 people voted for Jewish parties in the Constituent Assembly elections. Of those who voted for Jewish parties, an overwhelming majority of 80% voted for Jewish national coalitions (see Tables 1 and 3). The combined votes for all of the Jewish socialist parties – the Fareynikte, Poalei Tsiyon and the Bund – accounted for less than 15% of the total vote for Jewish parties (although this figure
excludes votes for Bund–Menshevik coalitions). Due to the difficulties of establishing Jewish population figures by city in 1917, it is impossible to know the percentage of Jewish votes that went to Jewish parties, but indisputably, the great majority of votes for Jewish parties went to the national coalitions (see Table 4).15

As the Constituent Assembly election results make clear, Jews (workers and otherwise) supported the Jewish national coalitions in far greater numbers than they did the Jewish workers’ parties. Intuitively one might presume that support for the Jewish socialist parties would have been higher if not for the loss of Russia’s Polish provinces, and with them their industrialised cities such as Warsaw and Lodz with their large Jewish populations. Yet election results for the Polish Constituent Sejm in 1919 demonstrate that this was clearly not the case. Jews living in former Russian provinces voted overwhelmingly for a list dominated by Zionists known as the Temporary Jewish National Council, to a less extent for the Folkspartey (who in Poland ran separately from the Zionists) and non-Zionist Orthodox parties. The Bund and other Jewish socialist parties, on the other hand, proved exceptionally weak.16 As Ezra Mendelsohn points out, the 1919 elections contradicted Polish accusations of Jewish socialist and Bolshevik sympathies. “On the contrary, they demonstrated the moderate social views of a basically conservative population much more interested in protecting its civil and national rights than in promoting social change.”17 As a whole, Jews living in the territories of the former Russian Empire, when given the opportunity to participate in general elections, expressed only marginal support for the Jewish socialist parties and instead voted for parties and coalitions that principally demanded Jewish collective rights within a liberal framework.

Inter-party Jewish cooperation

Jewish coalitions received over half a million votes in the All-Russian Constituent Assembly elections, where, unlike the elections to the All-Russian Jewish Congress, voters had the opportunity to cast ballots for Russian parties. The few scholars who have commented on Jewish voting in the Constituent Assembly elections tend to regard the timing of the Balfour declaration, issued by the British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour on 2 November 1917, as a major factor contributing to what is seen as a Zionist victory, and indeed, that is how the elections were portrayed in the Jewish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recorded votes†</th>
<th>Percentage of total votes for Jewish parties†</th>
<th>Percentage of seats won by Jewish parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-socialist Jewish parties and coalitions</td>
<td>517,356</td>
<td>83.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish socialist parties</td>
<td>91,063</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14,378</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>622,797</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Voting records do not exist for a significant number of districts with major Jewish populations and active Jewish political parties. In other districts, such as Odessa, we possess only approximate figures. Thus, the percentages are probably more accurate than the total votes for each party which must be considered estimates of the recorded number of votes cast.

press in the west. Released just over a week before most voting was to take place, the Balfour declaration of British support for a Jewish national homeland in Palestine may have given the Zionists a much-needed boost to their campaign. Nevertheless, even ignoring the fact that the Zionists ran independently in very few places, to consider the Balfour declaration as such a decisive influence on the Jewish vote ignores a much more powerful process at work at least since 1907 – the erosion of Jewish support for Russian liberalism and especially for the Kadet Party.

The results of the Constituent Assembly elections reflect a change in priorities among Russian Jews, from the attainment of civil equality and the abolition of legal disadvantages, to the implementation of national rights and autonomy, both in Russia and in Palestine. In the months leading up to the Constituent Assembly elections, groups running under slogans of Jewish autonomy and national rights decided to reconcile their differences (which tended to be of emphasis) and, as a result, the Zionists, Orthodox groups and the Folkspartey ran as a coalition in most districts. The diaspora-nationalist Folkspartey was perhaps the foremost advocate of a Jewish national coalition to contest the All-Russian Constituent Assembly elections. As one folkist stated in Dos yidishe folksblat: “We must argue that we are one people, and reflect our national task in our name.” The Zionists stressed the importance of facilitating a national homeland in Palestine, but, like the folkists, demanded full national and local self-government for the Jews in Russia. The emerging Orthodox groups (including some Zionist and some non-Zionist) who joined these coalitions were concerned most with religious autonomy, but acknowledged a secular role for communal self-government as well. These non-socialist Jewish coalitions ran under titles such as the Jewish National Electoral Committee or the Jewish National Bloc, an extension of the practice begun in the Duma elections when Jews formed electoral committees to represent the Jews of a given locality and to nominate Jews as electors.

Jewish coalitions carried the Jewish vote in elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, and the Zionists were certainly their anchor in many districts, but there is also no doubt that the Zionists benefited from these strategic partnerships. Only three of the five representatives elected to the Constituent Assembly from these coalitions were affiliated with the Zionist movement; Iudel Brutskus (1870–1951) in Minsk, Jacob Maze (1859–1924) in Mogilev, and Moshe Nahum Syrkin (1878–1918) in Kiev. In Kherson, the renowned lawyer Oskar Osipovich Gruzenberg (1866–1940) won a seat as a member of the Folkspartey, running in the number one position for the Jewish National Bloc. In Mogilev, Naftali Markovich Fridman (1863–1921), a non-Zionist Kadet in the Fourth Duma, ran and won a seat for the Jewish National Committee. Also in Mogilev, Semyon Ansky (1863–1920), the famed playwright, folklorist and former narodnik, chose to run for the Socialist Revolutionary Party instead of the Jewish National Committee (he had left the Folkspartey in April), and Jews no doubt played a role in his election. As Vladimir Levin has demonstrated, in the elections to the First and Second Dumas, when Jews participated in large numbers, they voted for prominent Jews, paying little attention to party affiliation. According to Levin, “The political views of candidates were of minor importance, while the fact of their being Jewish and their prominence and popularity in local or central Jewish affairs played a decisive role.” Although Jews overwhelmingly supported Jewish national coalitions in the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, doing so did not necessarily represent a declaration of sympathy with Zionism, and most importantly, Jews apparently continued a long-standing pattern of voting for prominent Jews regardless of party affiliation.
Russian liberalism, Jewish nationalism and the elections

That most Jewish voters in 1917 supported Jewish national coalitions may seem unsurprising, but the election results represented the culmination of a progressive move by Jewish political leaders away from Russian liberalism rather than a quick and dramatic shift in loyalties brought about by externalities such as the Balfour declaration. This move away from Russian liberalism began as early as elections to the Second Duma when the Zionists first ran independently, and became especially acute during the war years when Russian liberals consistently failed adequately to defend the Jews or advocate for Jewish rights. After the February Revolution invalidated the ideology of the Octobrists (who believed that reform of the Empire should be based around the Tsar’s October Manifesto of 1905), the Kadets effectively became the party of the right and more stridently sought to uphold the “integrity” of the Empire. Ironically, before the outbreak of war, many Jewish nationalists were willing to support the Kadets even though they looked far from positively on the possibility of Jewish national rights, but when the party would not even consistently support Jewish civil rights, Jews threw their support en masse to Jewish national coalitions and parties.

By 1917 and the election to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, the appeal of Russian liberalism to Jews had all but ended due to a variety of reasons, including the Kadet coalition with Octobrists in the Progressive Bloc, the so-called “circulars affair” (discussed below) and the Kadets’ generally measured defence of the Jews during the war. During the First World War, when Jews fell victim to widespread violence, unsubstantiated accusations of treason and massive deportation at the hands of the military, the Kadets’ failure adequately to defend Russian Jewry, even symbolically, contributed to the declining appeal of Russian liberalism among Jews. In theory, Russian and Jewish liberalism, embodied in the Kadet Party, held a natural advantage in appealing to Jewish voters over other parties and ideologies. The Kadets favoured full Jewish equality, and unlike the socialist parties (both Jewish and non-Jewish) defended Jewish economic interests and the right to practise traditional Judaism. Furthermore, the fact that Jewish Kadets sat in all four Dumas indicated that at least Jews could participate in government as members of the Kadet Party.25

Events during the war catalysed the Jewish move away from Russian liberalism, a process that was to impact Jewish political opinion during the revolutionary period. Jewish disaffection with Russian liberalism during the war originated to a large extent with the Kadet Party’s own actions. In particular, Kadet conduct during the Fourth Duma (1912–17) served to undermine Jewish support for Russian liberals, who were far more courageous in representing Jewish interests during the reaction- ary Third Duma (1907–12).26 During the First World War, the program of the majority coalition of liberal and centrist conservatives, known as the Progressive Bloc, called for the government to incrementally abolish a number of anti-Jewish restrictions, but the “progressives” did little in the Fourth Duma to enhance the attraction of constitutionalism for Jews.27 In the eyes of the Jewish public, the Kadets in the Bloc (Jewish representatives included) consistently failed to defend Jewish interests for the sake of preserving their coalition with the Octobrists and other parties that included unreformed anti-Semites in their ranks.28 Officially, the Kadet Party defended the Jews against collective punishment and anti-Semitic demagoguery for “isolated cases of espionage.”29 It is, however, no surprise that many Jews saw the fallibility and inadequacy of such a defence.
The turning-point in the Fourth Duma leading to deep Jewish disillusionment with the Kadets was the so-called “circulars affair,” when two of the party’s Jewish Duma deputies, Fridman and Bomash, drew up an interpellation requiring the government to disclose whether two circulars accusing the Jews of hoarding, exacerbating the food crisis and fomenting revolution, had been withdrawn or were still guiding policy. Although the circulars were directly responsible for the arrest of hundreds of Jews, Fridman and Bomash were forced under pressure from their own party to withdraw their interpellation. Michael Hamm observes that during the war the Jewish question became “untimely” for the Kadets, who came to view its divisiveness as a liability outweighing the benefits of Jewish support. However, the convenient abandonment of the Jews came with costs, borne by both the Jewish Kadets and their party. As Hamm states,

The passivity and accommodation of the Jewish deputies, together with the profound suffering in the war-ravaged Pale, which in turn was aggravated by increased persecution by civilian and military authorities, brought about a new wave of resentment in the Jewish community.

The Kadets, although critical of the government for its anti-Jewish policies, consistently refused to place any blame on the general public or masses for anti-Jewish violence. In the face of compelling evidence of widespread anti-Semitism in the army, the Kadets continued to blame only the government, accusing it of directing the pogroms as a distraction from its failures. Even after the February Revolution, the Kadets preferred to blame the Bolsheviks or imaginary German agents for anti-Jewish violence rather than the people carrying out attacks (and during the civil war, when the Whites were responsible for far more pogroms than the Bolsheviks, the Kadets took to blaming the Jews themselves, internalising popular anti-Semitism).

As Russian liberalism weakened, Jewish nationalism strengthened, but of course Jews were not alone in their growing pessimism about the constitutional future of the so-called Russian Republic. Under Bolshevik rule, this public uncertainty only increased. In fact, despite the surprisingly high level of participation under such strenuous circumstances, one of the election’s notable features was the general abstention of voters among the urban intelligentsia who were the Kadets’ natural base, especially in the provincial cities, where many had come to see the Constituent Assembly elections as the legitimisation of mob rule. In contrast to the widespread abstention of the non-Jewish urban intelligentsia, Jewish voters shifted their loyalties (and in some provinces the urban intelligentsia was almost entirely Jewish) directly from the Kadet Party to Jewish national coalitions, a process evident in any comparison between the elections to the First Duma and the elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1917.

In the First Duma elections in 1906 (the elections with the widest franchise of the four Dumas), 12 Jewish members were elected, all of whom were members of the Union for the Attainment of Full Rights for the Jews in Russia. This Union was an umbrella group of Jewish nationalists, liberals and moderate socialists, who took the leading role in organising the Jewish electorate (the Bund and other Jewish socialist groups boycotted the vote). The Union was not officially affiliated with the Kadet Party, but most of its members were Kadets, and its platform reflected similar (and in parts identical) demands for constitutional democracy. Furthermore, due to the indirect electoral system whereby voters chose electors who then selected the Duma deputies, the Union for Full Rights depended heavily upon the Kadet Party’s cooperation in selecting Jewish Duma members. Within the Duma, nine of the Jewish members either joined
the Kadet faction or voted with it, and three joined the moderately socialist Trudovik faction. Of the Kadets, five were committed Zionists, two became founders of the liberal Jewish Folksgruppe and two could be fairly described as non-nationalist. Of the Trudoviks, one was a Zionist and two were at that time non-nationalists.36 Examining the Constituent Assembly electoral returns for the districts that elected Jewish representatives to the First Duma illustrates the extent to which Jewish support shifted from the Kadets to the Jewish coalitions. In every district that elected a Jewish member of the Kadet Party in the elections to the First Duma that was still geographically part of Russia in November 1917, the Kadet Party was outpolled by non-socialist Jewish national coalitions by significant margins.37

In Minsk, where the Kadet member elected to the First Duma, Semyon Rozenbaum (1860–1934), was an active Zionist, the Jewish National Electoral Committee polled in the Constituent Assembly elections over six times the number of votes as the Kadets. Similarly in Vitebsk, where the Zionist Kadet Grigorii (Zvi Hirsh) Bruk (1869–1922) was elected to the First Duma, Bruk ran in 1917 for the Jewish National Electoral Committee and polled over three times the votes as the Kadets. It is understandable that areas with historically strong Zionist support that had previously elected Zionist representatives as Duma members would vote heavily in favour of Zionists and Jewish nationalists who had left the Kadet Party. But in districts such as Kiev, which in 1906 elected two Jewish Duma members – one Kadet and one Trudovik – both of whom were non-nationalists, over 90,000 people voted for the Jewish Bloc in 1917. Although Zionist criticism of the Kadets intensified with each Duma election, due to the system of indirect elections the Zionists could not fight the Kadets head-on in the Pale as their support was needed in the assemblies of electors if Jews hoped to elect any Jewish candidate at all.38 The direct electoral system to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, in contrast, freed the Zionists and all Jewish nationalists of this restraint.39 Thus, in areas with large Jewish concentrations, the creation of a separate Jewish national list (and direct elections) amounted essentially to a split in the Kadet Party, and the prominent Jews in the Kadet party took their supporters with them.

Combining the Kadet vote and the vote for non-socialist Jewish parties (as presented in Table 2) may be a crude manner of determining the strength of the Kadet

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Table 2. Comparison between strength of non-socialist Jewish national coalitions and Kadets in 1917 All-Russian Constituent Assembly Elections in cities which elected Jewish Kadets in 1906.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Jewish parties†</th>
<th>Kadets</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>% of total in district</td>
<td>Votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekaterinoslav</td>
<td>37,032</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>27,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrograd</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>246,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poltava</td>
<td>20,170</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>18,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minsk</td>
<td>65,046</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>10,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>90,829</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitebsk</td>
<td>24,790</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>8132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Reflects votes for non-socialist Jewish national coalitions and parties only (i.e. excludes Poalei Tsion and Fareynikte; Jewish National Electoral Committee in Ekaterinoslav, Minsk and Vitebsk; Jewish Bloc in Kiev; Jewish National Electoral Committee and Folksparthe in Poltava.

Source: Spirin, Rossiia 1917 god: Iz istorii bor’by politicheskikh partii, 276, 281–2, 289, 291, 298–9, 302.
Party if the separate Jewish coalitions had not opposed them. It is, however, difficult to see with whom else non-socialist Jewish nationalists would have cast their votes. This is particularly true in districts such as Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, and Minsk, where votes for the Jewish coalitions must be considered a wholly liberal vote, as voters also had the option of voting for an array of Jewish socialist parties – the Bund, Poalei Tsiyon and the Fareynikte. Furthermore, results to municipal Duma elections demonstrate the same trend. In Minsk, the “Jewish non-socialist bloc” won 16 seats in the city Duma compared to the Kadet Party’s three. The strength of the Jewish “non-socialists” in Minsk is particularly telling as Minsk was part of the heart of the region where Jewish workers first established militant trade unions known as kases, which acted as the pioneers of the Jewish labour movement.

In the Constituent Assembly elections, Jewish socialist votes were split among a number of Jewish and non-Jewish social democratic and populist parties, but non-socialist Jewish voters overwhelmingly voted for the Jewish, non-socialist, national coalitions and not the Kadet Party. The results of the elections ultimately proved irrelevant, and in any event, the Kadets would have been weak in the Constituent Assembly even with liberal Jewish support. Nevertheless, the Jewish national coalitions in these districts undoubtedly cost the Kadets seats. For many Russians, some Jews included, voting for the Kadets represented a last effort to prevent social and political disintegration. For those who voted for the Jewish coalitions and national lists, direct representation of their interests was of greater importance.

Jewish voting in comparative context

The Jewish population of Russia was physically reshaped by the experience of war and the new freedom of movement that followed the February revolution. In November 1917, Russian Poland (the provinces making up the Congress Kingdom, after 1863 the Vistula Region) lay beyond the front, as did much of the Baltic region and part of the former Pale of Settlement. Although Russia lost what amounted to Poland, Lithuania and parts of Belorussia, a considerable portion of the Jewish population from these areas remained in Russia, having been previously deported from the front area or having left during the Russian retreat from Poland and Galicia in 1915 (when the Russians first took Galicia from Austria many Jews fled west). The army forced Jews east out of Volhynia, as well as many Belorussian towns and much of the Baltic region. In some cases, such as Kaunas (Kovno) and much of the Kurland provinces, all of the Jewish population was forced east. Thus, perhaps ironically, Russia’s loss of these provinces did not result in the loss of their whole Jewish population. In fact, while many restrictions on Jewish settlement remained, two-fifths of Jews displaced in 1915 moved to Russian areas previously closed to them. When all restrictions on Jewish residence were repealed by the Provisional Government in March 1917, Jews moved in even greater numbers into cities where their residence was previously restricted.

It is therefore important to remember that the voting in 1917 took place after a period of dramatic dislocation for many Jews. Peter Gatrell argues that both massive civilian displacements during the war as well as inter-ethnic relations in the new “polyglot” cities populated by refugees served to bolster group identity among minorities. Although the Jewish evacuees and refugees originated from areas of highly concentrated Jewish population, Jews did not live in isolation in the Pale of Settlement, nor did they lack a clearly defined separate identity. Nonetheless, it is
logical that Jewish group solidarity would be reinforced both by the crisis and dislocation, and the work of organising relief may well have further inclined Jewish activists to the cause of nationalism, or at least national unity.

The year 1917 was the pinnacle of Jewish national politics in Russia. All of the Jewish parties were actively attempting to win adherents, and cooperation through Jewish coalitions was the rule of the day. Jews were bombarded with electoral material about Jewish autonomy, an All-Russian Jewish Congress, local self-government, and the need to create new “national” institutions. Furthermore, due to the First World War, over the course of the previous three years Jewish communal organisations took on a proto-governmental character and touched hundreds of thousands of Jews by providing relief to refugees. In such a context, an autonomist Jewish political life seemed natural to most Jews, especially when considered alongside such factors as the declining appeal of Russian liberalism and the growing nationalism of surrounding populations. Yet Jewish national coalitions may also have attracted Jewish voters because in the areas where most Jews voted, social and economic factors reinforced voting along national lines.

To take one example, western Ukraine was the region of the Russian Empire with the closest correlation between class and ethnicity, a fact reflected in the make-up of the political parties active in that area. In western Ukraine, Ukrainian speakers made up the peasantry and majority of the population, Russian speakers dominated the small proletariat, Poles and Russians were landowners, and Jews were concentrated in the urban centres as merchants and artisans. Correspondingly, as nationalist Ukrainian parties were either peasant-based populist parties or socialist, they won the vast majority of the vote. Bolshevik support was primarily Russian, as was support in the cities for the Kadet Party. As the Kadets were outflanked on the left by the socialist parties and on the right by the Octobrists, from 1907 onwards the party was strong only in the “second curia” in cities and towns, made up primarily of rent-payers and small property and business owners, and in many western Ukrainian and Belorussian cities and towns this meant Jews (in the Kiev and Volhynia provinces, for example, Jews made up respectively 96% and 82% of the merchant class). Nonetheless, instead of the Kadets, Jews in 1917 voted for Jewish parties, coalitions and lists of notables. Nowhere is this trend clearer than in the municipal Duma elections. Jewish parties probably obtained somewhere between 3 and 4% of municipal Duma seats in the European provinces. In the provincial capitals of European Russia, however, Jewish parties obtained over one third of all seats won by all national and religious parties, a number completely disproportionate to their share of the general population, but consistent with their demographic representation in cities and towns.

The electoral victory by the Ukrainian nationalist agrarian socialist parties in the All-Russian Constituent Assembly elections has spurred something of a debate about whether we can read widespread Ukrainian national self-consciousness among the peasantry in these results. Steven Guthier explains the massive success of the Ukrainian parties as resulting from the fact that “the major social issues commanding the attention of the peasantry could be readily forged into national issues as well,” and argues that the results of the Constituent Assembly elections suggest that a popular base supporting Ukrainian national consciousness was already well established in 1917. Ronald Suny, on the other hand, sees in the Ukrainian nationalist success “ethnic awareness” rather than “full-blown political nationalism.” According to Suny, the fact that Ukrainian peasants voted for Ukrainian parties does not mean that they accepted the national or nationalist aspects of their programmes. Suny explains:
While the election results show that peasants in Ukraine preferred parties and leaders of their own ethnicity, people who could speak to them in their own language and promised to secure their local interests, they do not provide sufficient evidence either that the peasantry conceived of itself as a single nationality or that it could be effectively mobilised to defend ideals of national autonomy or independence.53

We cannot determine whether Jewish voting represented “ethnic awareness” or “political nationalism,” but we must consider the possibility that the rise of Jewish national sentiment (at least as reflected in Jewish voting) similarly represented a simple preference by Jews in the cities and towns for candidates who could speak their own language and secure their local interests, reinforced by the fact that other parties were closely identified with other national groups.54 Yet in 1917, Jews voted for Jewish parties even when not necessarily in their best interest. Poltava Province, for instance, was perhaps the most Ukrainian province in Ukraine and the stronghold of Ukrainian autonomism, and the city of Poltava was the only significantly sized Ukrainian city with a slim Ukrainian majority population (the rest was split approximately evenly between Russians and Jews).55 In such a place, logically the 20% Jewish population would benefit most from cooperating with the 20% Russian population, most effectively by operating within the Kadet Party. Instead, Jews could choose between five specifically Jewish parties, plus a coalition of the Bund, Mensheviks and Polish Social Democrats. In the province as a whole, the Kadets and the Jewish Electoral Committee in coalition with the Folkspartey each received the number of votes equal to the respective number of Russian and Jewish residents of the city.56 In short, Jews voted for the non-socialist Jewish coalition, Russians voted for the Kadets, and neither won a seat. Again, the evidence points to an important continuity with the earlier Jewish electoral experience, as well as an important change. In the elections to the imperial Dumas, as Levin makes clear, Jews could only win representatives in areas where nationality, class and party conflict coincided, as in those places, Jews could cooperate with the Kadets and liberal Russian elements to defend their mutual interests.57 In 1917, while this pattern for the most part remained true, Jews were willing to forsake cooperation with the Kadets in order at least to attempt to elect representatives who would defend their civil and national rights more forcefully. Jewish voting thereby even contradicted the expectations of contemporary observers. Abraham Revutskii, a prominent member of Poalei Tsiyon who briefly served as Minister for Jewish Affairs in the independent Ukrainian National Republic, incorrectly claimed that the “Jewish urban bourgeoisie” along with the Jewish intelligentsia, “perceived the Ukrainian movement as a serious threat to their interests and as militantly opposed to all that they had achieved [in the February Revolution]. A real opportunity to assimilate into the dominant Russian culture was more important to them than abstract ideas.”58

In actual fact, the picture that emerges from the various election results in the provinces of European Russia where Jews were heavily concentrated in towns surrounded by a different linguistic group suggests that, similar to the Ukrainian peasants, Jewish parties may have attracted supporters owing to the alignment of social, economic and national interests. But for Jews, ethnic or religious particularism, autonomist inclinations, or nationalism (however it might be phrased) seems to have outweighed Jewish vested interest in allying with the Russian minority in the cities.59 In this formulation, the impact on Jews of being surrounded by another autonomist movement sympathetic, at least initially, to Jewish autonomist aims should not be discounted. As Henry Abramson points out, some Ukrainian political groups advocated Jewish autonomy in
the pre-revolutionary period, even before some Jewish parties, and the Ukrainian nationalist devotion to the principle of Jewish autonomy (still unspecified) impressed many Jews. The Ukrainian nationalists who in March 1917 established the Central Rada, a large parliamentary assembly created without the authority of the Provisional Government, made efforts to include representation by the other nationalities and claimed only to want autonomy within a federated Russia. In fact, the Provisional Government only recognised the Rada on condition that it postpone any further demands for autonomy until after the convocation of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly. Interestingly, the four provinces Guthier identifies as the “core of Ukrainian nationalist strength in 1917” could also be accurately described as the Jewish nationalist heartland. Thus, Jewish voting may additionally reflect the general Jewish political reorientation from Russian to Ukrainian allegiances which took place over the summer, and reversed dramatically when the Ukrainian national movement abandoned federalism as a goal. Surrounded by an autonomist movement growing ever more strident in its demands, it would be surprising if Jews did not take up similar claims and vote along similar lines.

Conclusion

When given the opportunity to participate in elections intended to reshape Russian political and social life permanently, Jews, like other national groups, sought through their votes to influence what form the new state would take. The large number of Jewish parties vying for Jewish votes in 1917 reflected ideological divisions among the most politically active segment of the Jewish population. This political fractiousness, however, for the most part did not carry over to the Jewish masses, who overwhelmingly voted for Jewish national coalitions favouring Jewish civil equality and collective rights within a generally liberal framework. A combination of disillusionment with Russian liberalism and the basic desire for representation by one’s own kind influenced Jewish voting in 1917, as these factors had similarly influenced

Table 3. Votes and seats obtained by Jewish parties in the elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Party</th>
<th>Recorded votes</th>
<th>Percentage of total votes for Jewish parties</th>
<th>Number of seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bund(^{63})</td>
<td>32,986</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish List(^{64})</td>
<td>12,422</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish National Bloc/Electoral Committee(^{65})</td>
<td>498,913</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish People’s Party(^{66})</td>
<td>8459</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jewish Public Figure”(^{67})</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poalei Tsiyon</td>
<td>22,881</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Jewish Socialist Workers’ Party(^{68})</td>
<td>35,196</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zionists(^{69})</td>
<td>9984</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>622,797</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Spirin, *Rossiia 1917 god*, 273–328; Sviatitskii, “Izdeliia vyborov vo Vserossiiskoe Uchreditel’noe Sobranie, Predislovie,” 105–19; Pokrovskii and Iakovlev, 1917 g. v dokumentakh i materialakh, 116–38; Evreiskoe naselenie Rossii po dannym perepisi 1897 g. i po noveishim istochnikam.
Jewish voting in the imperial Duma elections. Yet perhaps the most important conclusion to draw from Jewish voting in 1917 is that while the large number of Jews who voted for Jewish parties indicates a broad and popular Jewish national consciousness, the voting does not necessarily reflect mass commitment to Zionism or even Jewish nationalism. To vote for the Jewish National Electoral Committee or the Jewish National Bloc in 1917 meant to vote for a list of Jewish candidates whose priority in the All-Russian Constituent Assembly would be Jewish advocacy and defence, not merely civil equality for all (such as the Kadets) or class struggle (such as the socialists, Jewish and otherwise). After the brutal hardship Jews endured during the war years, Russian Jewry understandably turned to candidates who claimed to put their interests first.

Notes on contributor

After two years as the Alexander Grass Postdoctoral Associate in Jewish History at the University of Florida, Simon Rabinovitch will begin September 2009 as Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Boston University. His published articles examine Jewish nationalist thought, folkloristics and ethnography. He is currently working on a monograph examining the Jewish autonomist movement in late imperial and revolutionary Russia, as well as the anthologies Diasporic Nationalism in Modern Jewish Thought (Brandeis University Press) and with David Rechter Modern Jewish Politics: Ideologies, Identities and the Jewish Question (University of Wisconsin Press).

Notes

1. See Radkey, Russia Goes to the Polls.
2. See Sviatitskii, “Itogi vyborov vo Vserossiiskoe Uchreditel’noe Sobranie, Predislovie,” 115–19. Lenin used Sviatitskii’s article as the basis for his own study.
3. On the origins of the idea of an All-Russian Constituent Assembly, see Protasov, Vserossiiskoe uchreditel’noe sobranie, 11–32.
5. See Radkey, The Sickle under the Hammer, 280.
6. A number of factors prevent a complete picture of the results, both logistical and political. Disruptions in the telegraph system created communication problems between central electoral commissions and the local district commissions. Furthermore, the new Bolshevik regime made no effort to cooperate with these commissions whose members had been appointed by the Provisional Government. At the height of the campaign, the Council of People’s Commissars even liquidated the All-Russian Electoral Commission, destroying not just the electoral machinery, but much of the historical record along with it. Because of Bolshevik suppression of the press, records do not necessarily even exist for results which at the time must have been known locally. Protasov, “The All-Russian Constituent Assembly and the Democratic Alternative,” 257; Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls*, 5.

7. As observed by Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls*, 3–4; “It is true that it was held during one of the great crises of Russian history, and hence reflected a mood less stable than that which would have prevailed in normal times; yet merely to record the will of a great people at a crucial stage of its development is to preserve something of enduring value, quite apart from the disclosure of certain tendencies in the vast Eurasian Empire which are in no sense transitory but are of permanent significance.”


9. Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics*, 79. State Archives of the Russian Federation, Moscow (GARF), fond 9528, devoted to the All-Russian Jewish Congress, lacks the rather important component of complete election results but does include some interesting, if random, materials relating to the campaign.

10. As Mikhail Beizer points out, the All-Russian Jewish Congress was *Evkom*’s first target in its attack on autonomist Jewish communal institutions, Beizer, *Evrei Leningrada*, 60. To underscore their intentions regarding any possible non-socialist Jewish congress, in April 1918 the Bolsheviks arrested its primary organiser, Meir Kreinin on charges of “aiding the bourgeoisie in its struggle against the Soviets,” *Jewish Chronicle*, April 12, 1918, 8. The Bolsheviks took similar measures against the Electoral Committee of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly.

11. Elections to local Jewish communal governments throughout Russia in 1917 and Jewish elections in Ukraine in 1918 seem to suggest a similar trend, albeit less decisively. See Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics*, 78–9. In December 1917 the Jewish parties in Ukraine made plans for a Provisional Jewish National Assembly (known as the *Forparlament*, or Pre-parliament) and elections were held during the Pavlo Skoropads’kyi regime (the so-called Hetmanate government). The Pre-Parliament was to be comprised of representatives from each of the Jewish parties and representatives elected by about 200 kehillot. Among the kehillot that managed to conduct and ratify elections in the fall of 1918, approximately 40% of votes went to Zionists: Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 74, 93–9.

12. Altshuler, “Ha-Nisayon le-argen kinus kelal-Yehudi be-Rusyah ahar ha-Mahpekha,” 85, calculates that in Moscow less than 13% of eligible voters took part, and in Petrograd and Odessa approximately a third participated in each. Altshuler’s calculations of voter participation are somewhat lower than what appeared in the Jewish press because his approximations of Jewish population are higher. For example, *Evreiskaia nedelia*, 18 January 1918, nos 1–2, 20 reported that 44% of eligible voters took part in Odessa. Approximately 270,000 Jews voted in the elections for the Ukrainian Jewish Pre-Parliament, but it is similarly difficult to assess proportional voter turnout; Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 95.

13. Poltava’s large population of Jewish refugees, displaced from other areas of the Pale during the war, may partially account for its political diversity.

14. By far the most complete tabulation of results is produced in Spirin, *Rossiia 1917 god*, 273–328. Other sources which include statistics and analysis of election results include Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls*; Spirin, *Krushenie pomeshchich’ikh i burzhuaznykh partii v Rossi*; Sviatitskii, “Itogi vyborov vo Vserossiiskoe Uchreditel’noe Sboranie,” 104–19. Many of the later studies build on the original computations of Sviatitskii, who was an SR deputy. Spirin uses local newspapers as well as archival holdings in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus to supplement Sviatitskii’s calculations, whereas Radkey primarily uses local newspapers only.
15. It is impossible to know the number of eligible Jewish voters living in Russian territory in November–December 1917, but the population was considerably diminished by the loss of Poland and the Baltic region, which were at the time controlled by Germany. Using a median from the 1897 and 1926 censuses, Altshuler approximates that in 1918, 400,000 Jews lived in Belorussia, constituting 10% of the population, and one and a half million Jews lived in Ukraine, constituting 7% of the population, Altshuler, “The Attitude of the Communist Party of Russia to Jewish National Survival,” 75. The Jewish Statistical Society approximated that 3,387,000 Jews lived in European Russia in 1917 (a figure that is almost certainly too high), Ettinger, “The Jews in Russia at the Outbreak of the Revolution,” 15.


17. Ibid.

18. In his influential work Zvi Gitelman calls the impact of the Balfour declaration “tremendous,” and states that “The revolution had aroused these [Jewish] parties to an unprecedented flurry of activity, but it was the brief letter sent by Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild on November 2, 1917, stating that ‘His Majesty’s government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people,’ which affected their fortunes most profoundly,” see Gitelman, Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics, 75. See also the Jewish Chronicle and Zionist Review. The Jewish Chronicle, February 1, 1918, 8, stated of the Petrograd communal elections, “The great Zionist success was undoubtedly a result of the effect which the British Declaration regarding Palestine has made on the public.”


20. Russian documentation, beginning with that of Sviatitskii, referred to these coalitions as Jewish nationalist parties, and the vote for non-socialist Jewish parties generally as “nationalist.” I refer to these coalitions as Jewish “national” coalitions and parties, both because their composition was not entirely nationalist, and national is the term that they consistently incorporated into their names.

21. A list of the names of every representative elected to the Constituent Assembly plus their party and district is included in Pokrovskii and Iakovlev, 1917 g. v dokumentakh i materialakh, 116–38.

22. Levin, “Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections,” 240, 250, 247; according to Levin, the huge number of non-partisan electors demonstrates the extent to which, despite politicisation, “the majority of the Jewish population continued to consider Jewry a unified entity and adhered to the traditional and deeply-rooted idea of the solidarity of Jews in the face of Gentiles.”


24. Again the elections to the Polish Sejm in 1919 seem generally to support this pattern. Because the Fokspartey and non-Zionist Orthodox League ran separately in the elections to the Polish Sejm, and the national coalition was more clearly Zionist (though it was for Jewish national autonomy in Poland and included some prominent independents), it is also possible to somewhat better gauge Zionist support. While the Temporary Jewish National Council won a plurality of the votes for Jewish parties, it did not win a majority. The Fokspartey won approximately a third the number votes as the National Council and a plurality of votes in Warsaw. The Orthodox League won just over half the number of votes as the National Council. Furthermore, Zionist support was much stronger in the previously Austrian western Galicia than the previously Russian Polish provinces. See Mendelsohn, Zionism in Poland, 107–8.

25. It must be noted that from the Second Duma onward, few options existed for elected Jewish members other than joining the Kadet faction.

26. Due to Vinaver’s personal advocacy with the Kadet parliamentary leadership, a statement proposing Jewish emancipation was read into the official record in 1909. The Kadets with the support of some other representatives also introduced a bill in 1910 calling for the abolition of the Pale of Settlement. The 165 members who tabled the bill did so in order to make a public statement of liberal support for the Jews, as they knew the legislation would not pass. See Orbach, “The Jewish People’s Group and Jewish Politics,” 8. Despite the limited franchise, there were two Jewish deputies in the Third Duma, Naftali Fridman and Lazar Nisselovitch (1856–1914). For a first-hand account of their efforts, see Nisselowitsch, Die Judenfrage in Russland, especially 41–5.
27. See Politicheskie partii Rossii, 73. The Bloc was made up of six Duma caucuses. The Kadets, Progressists and Left Octobrists were on most issues considered the Bloc’s “liberal” wing, while the Centrists, Zemstvo Octobrists, and Progressive Nationalists constituted the Bloc’s conservatives. For a description of the caucuses which composed the Progressive Bloc, see Hamm, “Liberal Politics in Wartime Russia,” 453–68. On the Kadet and Octobrist policies in general on the eve of the war, see Haimson, “The Problem of Political and Social Stability in Urban Russia on the Eve of War and Revolution Revisited,” 860–3. On the Progressive Bloc, see 866–73. As Haimson observes, the Progressive Bloc was reluctant during the war to oppose the Tsar in a meaningful way for fear of impeding the war effort.

28. See “Progressivnyi blok i evreiskii vopros,” Evreiskaia nedel’ia, no. 15 (30 August 1915): 1–3. Considerable dissatisfaction with the Kadets’ participation in the Progressive Bloc also came generally from party members who believed that the Kadets were sacrificing their liberal principles and agenda and were becoming indistinguishable from Octobrists: Stockdale, Paul Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia, 229. See also Pearson, “Miliukov and the Sixth Kadet Congress,” 210–29.


30. This affair is described in detail in Hamm, “Liberalism and the Jewish Question: The Progressive Bloc,” 163–72. The circulars affair, the actions of the Jewish Duma members and the Kadet party were covered in-depth during the winter and spring of 1916 in Evreiskaia zhizn and Evreiskaia nedel’ia. See also L.M. Bramson, “Primenenie na praktike Shcherbatovskogo tsirkuliara o rashirenii ‘cherty’,” Novyi put’, no. 1 (21 January 1916): 4–9.

31. Central State Historical Archives of St Petersburg (TsGIA SPb) fond 2049, opis 1, delo 192.


33. At their Conference in Kharkov in November 1919 the Kadets openly blamed widespread anti-Jewish violence on Jewish support for the Bolsheviks; see Rosenberg, Liberals in the Russian Revolution, 426. See also Budnitskii, Rossiiskie evrei mezhdu krasnymi i belymi, 344–67.

34. Protasov, “The All-Russian Constituent Assembly and the Democratic Alternative,” 259–61. As Dando, “A Map of the Election to the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917,” 316, suggests, the Kadets may have fared poorly in terms of popular support, but the fact that their two million votes were heavily concentrated in the urban areas of western Russia, the very same areas of the strongest Bolshevik support, contributed to their under-representation in the apportionment of seats in the Constituent Assembly.


37. The one partial exception was Petrograd, where Jewish nationalists chose to support the Kadet Party instead of running against it.

38. See Levin, “Russian Jewry and the Duma Elections,” 246. The Zionists were also hurt by the break-up of the Union for Full Rights and performed dismally in the Second Duma elections, their first attempt at independent politics in Russia; see Levin, “Jewish Politics at the Crossroads,” 129–46.

39. The complete electoral rules were published by the Provisional Government’s Constituent Assembly Commission as “Polozhenie o vyborakh v Uchreditel’noe Sobranie. S Nakaza, raspisania chisla chlenov Uchreditel’nogo Sobrania i postanovlenii Vremennogo Pravitel’stva,” (Petrograd, 1917).

40. Some Jewish socialists indeed voted for the Mensheviks, SRs and Bolsheviks instead of the Jewish socialist parties, but it would be extremely unlikely that Jewish socialists voted for the Kadets.


42. Mendelsohn, “The Russian Jewish Labor Movement and Others,” 88. Mendelsohn calls this area the “North-West,” and includes also Vilna, Bialystok Grodno and Kovno. This was one of the least industrialised areas of European Russia and the majority of Jewish workers were employed in small shop-like factories, although some were also employed in
larger factories, such as those making matches and cigarettes (90). See also Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale*, x–xi, 16, 64. The voting statistics for Minsk may reflect the impact of the emigration movement, as the vast majority of those Jews who left Russia around the turn of the century were the very same artisan workers who had planted the seeds of the Russian Jewish labour movement.


45. Ibid., 146.

46. Ibid., 141–70, passim.


48. For the resolutions and platform of the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1917, see *Programmnye dokumenty natsional’nykh politicheskikh partii i organizatsii Rossii*, 138–48.


53. Ibid.

54. Peled, *Class and Ethnicity in the Pale*, 28, suggests that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jews and Russians in the cities and towns of the Pale of Settlement were heading down very different paths of economic development. In essence, Russian workers were employed in large, technologically advanced, and strategically important factories (and mines), whereas Jews were almost entirely employed by other Jews in small un-mechanised workshops (for considerably lower wages). Peled connects the development of Jewish nationalism in late imperial Russia to discontent with the declining economic situation of Jewish workers, fostering class and national consciousness that became one and the same (and as such, Peled’s argument is essentially the same that Gutier makes about the Ukrainian peasantry and national sentiment).

55. Voters could choose between a strongly Ukrainian autonomist joint list of Ukrainian and Russian SR candidates and a second list of Ukrainian SRs (UPSR) and the All-Ukrainian Peasants’ Union (Selians’ka Spilka). Approximately 80% of votes were cast for one of these two lists, and of those votes, almost 80% were cast for the more nationalist-oriented Ukrainian Peasants’ Union. See Spirin, *Rossiia 1917 god*, 302. The results in Poltava Province are also perhaps the most complete and official record in the elections. As Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls*, 31–2, states, “a rare exception to the rule.”

56. The voting breakdown for the city itself did not survive, but we know that 28,154 votes were cast in the city, and in all probability, a significant percentage of the Jewish votes (as well as Kadet votes) in the province as a whole were cast in the city. See Spirin, *Rossiia 1917 god*, 302.


59. Voting in Ukraine took place in the period between the Third Universal declaring a Ukrainian National Republic in Federation with Russia and the invasion of Ukraine by the Red Army, followed by the declaration of Ukrainian independence in the Fourth Universal of January 1918.


61. The nearly 1000 member Central Rada created a smaller legislative council known as the Mala (Little) Rada, which in turn created a General Secretariat as its executive cabinet. Jewish socialists were allocated 4% of the seats in the Central Rada and all Jewish parties combined were allocated a full quarter of the seats in the Mala Rada. The Second Universal, issued 16 July, recognised an agreement made between the General Secretariat and the Provisional Government in Petrograd that the organisational framework of an autonomous Ukraine would be established with consultation and agreement by non-Ukrainian minorities. See Liber, “Ukrainian Nationalism and the 1918 Law on National-Personal Autonomy,” 26–7. See also Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 471–7; and Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 345–53.
63. Includes only the votes from districts where the Bund ran independently from the Menshevik Party: Ekaterinoslav, Kiev and Kamienets-Podolskii.
64. Ran only in Poltava (12,100 votes) and Kamienets-Podolskii (322 votes).
65. Names differed slightly depending on region. Jewish National Electoral Committee: Kishinev, Vitebsk, Zhitomir, Ekaterinoslav, Minsk, Gomel, Kamienets-Podolskii, Poltava. Jewish National Committee: Chernigov. Jewish National Bloc: Kiev and Kharkov. Jewish Bloc: Odessa and Nikolaev. Jewish Nationalists: Simferopol and Sevastopol. Sviatitskii states that Jewish nationalists won a total 550,075 votes and won a total of six seats in the gubernias of Kiev, Kherson, Mogilev and Minsk; however, in his partial breakdown of seats elected by gubernia he only accounts for five of these seats. Because of the incompleteness of results Spirin does not provide a breakdown of total votes and seats by party, but adding the totals he provides yields a result of 498,913 votes and the election of Jewish nationalist deputies in Kiev, Minsk, Gomel and Odessa. We know thanks to Pokrovskii and Jakovlev, however, that exactly five deputies from these coalitions were confirmed elected, from the cities of Minsk, Kiev, Kherson (Odessa) and two from Mogilev. Sviatitskii’s sixth “Jewish nationalist” elected may refer to a Jewish representative of another party such as Ansky or David Lvovich, or may otherwise be an error.
66. Includes only the votes from districts where the folkists ran independently from national coalitions: Vitebsk, Zhitomir (includes votes from the city only, not the total for the district) and the Gomel “Idishe Folksparney and Non-Party Democratic Committee.”
67. One individual who ran in Zhitomir, garnering 1943 votes in the town and 13 votes in the garrison. Total votes for the district of Zhitomir are unknown.
68. Also known as Farerynikte, or S.S. and E.S. Includes 14,115 votes for Jewish Socialists in Kiev and 917 votes for SERP, which ran independently in Kharkov. Excludes votes in Petrograd, where the party ran on a joint list with the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers’ Party and the Ukrainian SR Party.
69. Includes only votes from the districts where the Zionists ran independently from national coalitions: Tiflis, Baku (city only), Batum (city and garrison) and the garrison at Kamienets-Podolskii. In Tiflis, Baku and Batum the Zionists were the only Jewish party.
70. Cities were selected based on availability of data. It is impossible to know the exact Jewish population by city in absolute numbers or as a percentage of the total in 1917. In the 20 years after the complete census of 1897 Jewish population figures were affected by emigration from the Russian Empire (at least one and a quarter million people), immigration to larger cities by Jews in smaller towns, dislocation due to war, and of course birthrate. In 1923, the Soviet Union conducted an urban census applying primarily to cities and industrial settlements (under more stable conditions than the first Soviet census of 1920, but 1923 was not a complete census like that of 1926). Schwartz, “A History of Russian and Soviet Censuses,” 53. Between 1917 and 1923, the Jewish population of many towns appears relatively steady, although the approximate number of Jews as a percentage of the population in many cases decreased. Thus, to arrive at the approximate Jewish populations as percentages of the total, I used a median figure between the 1897 and 1923 censuses. These medians are based on Jewish population in the city and surrounding area that tends to be somewhat higher than for the city alone. Population figures must be considered very rough approximations. For a discussion of the demographics of Jewish urbanisation and the redistribution of the Jewish population in the late imperial and Soviet periods, see Lewis et al., Nationality and Population Change in Russia and the USSR, 173–7 and 238–47.
71. 1897 figure.
72. 1897 figure. The electoral results suggest the proportion of Jews grew by 1917.
73. Estimating the Jewish population of Kiev in 1917 is even more difficult than for other cities because of the distortion caused by the lifting of residential restrictions in 1917. The Jewish population was approximately 12% in 1897 and grew in proportion to the city population but experienced a massive upsurge following the revolution (the Jewish population of Kiev grew from approximately 50,792 to 111,040 between 1910 and 1920; see Evreiskoe naseleienie SSSR, 15). The proportion of Jews in Kiev and its surrounding regions grew to 30.3% by 1923.
74. Kishinev voted in the All-Russian Constituent Assembly elections but in 1918 was incorporated into Romania. Thus, only the population figures for 1897 are available.
East European Jewish Affairs 223

75. The fact that the combined percentage of votes for Jewish parties in Mogilev exceeds the Jewish population in the city reflects non-Jews who voted for the Bund–Menshevik list.

76. 1897 figure.

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