WHERE IS THE CAPITAL OF YIDDISHLAND?

Kalman Weiser | Delivered in Yiddish.

Yiddishists understood Yiddish as a global language and its secular culture as a global culture whose centre lay in eastern Europe. But where was the capital the “Yiddishland”? Following the First World War, litvish Vilna—home of YIVO—and poylish Warsaw—the metropolis of the modern Yiddish press, literature, and theatre—emerged as the leading candidates in the competition. Each city had its admirers and detractors who praised its virtues or condemned its vices in dozens of articles in the international Yiddish press. Their evaluations reflect local patriotism, personal frictions and ideological conflicts. But what does the competition teach us about the state of Yiddish in general and about Yiddishist hopes and fears for the future of the language?

Kalman Weiser is the Silber Family Professor of Modern Jewish Studies at York University in Toronto. His study Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland won the 2011 Canadian Jewish Book Award. He is the co-editor of Key Concepts in the Study of Antisemitism, which will appear at the end of 2020. He is currently writing a book about the relationships between Jewish scholars of Yiddish and German colleagues who became Nazis. But these days he spends most his time cooking and homeschooling his children. He is the recipient of the 2019-2020 Workmen’s Circle/Dr. Emanuel Patt Visiting Professorship in Eastern European Jewish Studies at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


A. Golomb, “Dos poylishe varshe un di litvishe vilne,” Literarishe bleter 22, 1924.

Samuel Kassow, “The uniqueness of Jewish Vilna” in Larisa Lempertiene, ed. Vilniaus Zydu intelektualinis


