



The Jewish Labor Bund

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NEW YEAR'S DAY REFLECTIONS

As another year passes, it may be fitting to sketch a few remarks concerning the period now ending. It is obviously impossible to summarize the events of 1948 on the pages of our BULLETIN; some general remarks might, however, be in order.

The most dangerous characteristic of the year 1948 was the steadily growing tension between the West and the East, an aspect of international relations which several times during the past twelve months almost brought mankind to the abyss of a new war. Even though the outbreak of a shooting war was prevented, the Cold War is continuously undermining our precarious peace. The events of the year 1948 made it obvious to the whole world short of its Communist figment that this regrettable state of affairs is caused mainly by the unrestricted application of power politics on the part of the Kremlin bosses. In 1947, and even at the beginning of 1948, there were some optimistic people who sincerely believed that in the countries of Eastern Europe, the meeting ground of the Soviet Union and many millions of neighboring people, a middle way between a totalitarian regime and the democratic assurances provided in the respective international treaties will be worked out. There were even people who dreamed that such a compromise applied in the countries under Russian

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domination will gradually influence the course of events in Soviet Russia proper, and will in effect soften the Bolshevik dictatorship. 1948 put an end to all these hopes and illusions.

The Communist upheaval in Czechoslovakia was the most obvious point in case. The population of Czechoslovakia, traditionally pro-Russian, was obviously friendly toward the Soviet Union. The vast majority of Czechoslovak political parties recognized the necessity of reconstructing the economy as well as the entire life of Czechoslovakia on socialist foundations. Even such an assured development toward socialism, however, did not save Czechoslovakia's de-

mocracy from being ruthlessly destroyed by the country's Communists, who were backed by the military power of Soviet Russia.

And so it became quite obvious that no middle way was possible under Communist domination. At the end of 1948 the last remaining shreds of independent socialist movements were erased in all countries behind the Iron Curtain. People who once loudly preached the necessity of an independent course toward socialism, adjusted to the needs of their specific countries, are now mercilessly purged. All countries under Russian domination now become more and more like a typical Russian province and are now almost ripe to enlarge the number of the allegedly independent Soviet republics under Stalin's rule. In this respect at least the passing year did not leave any illusions as to the inevitable line of development in all the unhappy countries that came under Soviet control.

There is no doubt about the significance of the year 1948 in Jewish life. On May 15th of that year the State of Israel was proclaimed in Tel Aviv. This remarkable event unleashed a torrent of nationalist and chauvinist sentiments in the Jewish communities the world over. The majority of the Jews became intoxicated with their newly-won statehood. The excitement was so overwhelming that the Zionist-minded Jews closed their eyes to the fact that only a small fraction of all the world's Jewry dwell in the State of Israel. An all-embracing campaign was begun by the Zionists to elicit all possible material and spiritual aid to supply and fortify the State of Israel. For a moment it seemed that the Jewish communities all over the world were willing to reduce themselves to

mere colonies for the 700,000 Jews in the State of Israel and that the remaining 10 million Jews, who dwell outside the boundaries of the State of Israel, were satisfied to sacrifice their own needs of cultural and national advancement in their respective countries for the sake of the Israeli citizens. Only in the last quarter of the year 1948 could some signs of recuperation on the part of the Jews be witnessed. A few voices calling for restraint were raised. Here and there defence committees of prominent non-Zionist elements were created, but, so far, they are a drop in the sea of nationalist hysteria.

Two most encouraging events should, however, be recorded, both of which aimed at the furthering of Jewish national advancement in all countries of the world rather than limiting themselves to the newly created Jewish state. They were the World Congress for Yiddish Culture and the Second World Conference of the Jewish Labor BUND, both held in the fall of 1948 in New York.

The continued existence of Jewish D. P. camps at the sites of the former Nazi death camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy is a stain on the conscience of the democratic world. The year 1948 did not bring to these unfortunate victims of Nazi bestiality the end of their untold hardships and suffering. Most Jews heatedly engaged in the controversy concerning the new State of Israel did not heed the cries of these hapless remnants, did not pay much attention to their plight and their needs. The democratic countries of the world, and in the first place the United States of America, likewise did not see fit to act on behalf of these stricken victims of their erstwhile enemy. In this respect the year 1948 was indeed a failure.

JEWES UNDER THE ISLAM

There are many Jewish communities in the countries of the Middle East and in other Islamic nations. The most populous among them are the Jewish communities in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Trans-Jordan, and others. It is believed that the Jewish communities scattered throughout the Islamic countries count about a million people. This number is by no means a negligible part of the world's Jews, after 6½ million of their brethren perished during the bleak years of the Second World War due to the bestiality of Nazi Germany.

The establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine and the bloody events which accompanied the proclamation of the State of Israel placed the Jews in the Islamic countries in a very precarious position. The inflamed nationalist sentiments on the part of both the Arabs and the Jews, an atmosphere of war with the usual mutual complaints and accusations, increased feelings of hatred against one another, and the feverish search for alleged foreign agents and traitors, all created a situation long wished-for by the numerous Jew-baiters within the Islamic nations. Under such circumstances it was indeed an easy job for them to arouse the Islamic mob against their Jewish neighbors, a state of affairs which already led not only to hostile acts against individuals of Jewish extraction, but to veritable pogroms such as those in Cairo, with scores of casualties, demolished Jewish dwellings, plunder of Jewish stores, and all other infamous anti-Jewish practices.

And thus it came about that the legal representatives of the Egyptian Jews issued a strongly-worded anti-Zionist proclamation full of patriotic assurances

and promises of help for the Egyptian war against the State of Israel. The Egyptian Jews went even so far as raising special funds to provide the Egyptian Army with means to combat the Jewish soldiers of the State of Israel. A pathetic spectacle. All these carefully calculated steps did not extinguish the flames of hatred against the Jewish communities in the Islamic countries. The plain truth is that the lives and the property of the million Jews in these countries are most seriously endangered.

It is small wonder that the Zionist leaders, striving to achieve their goal, did not take under consideration the repercussions of their actions upon the million Jews in the Islamic countries. The idea of independent statehood had always made Zionism blind to the lot of the living Jews. The most that can be expected from the Zionists with regard to the recent Jewish pogroms in Egypt is a reaffirmation of their belief that there is no peaceful haven for the Jews other than the State of Israel. Zionism always maintained that it was necessary that all Jews, wherever they were, settle in Palestine.

It is not sufficient to condemn, however strongly, the bloody outbreaks against the Jews in the Islamic countries; the meaningless utterances of government spokesmen in the countries concerned decrying the anti-Jewish events are of little value indeed. We call the attention of the entire democratic world to the plight of the Jews in the Islamic countries and demand that the utmost be done to prevent new bloodshed and a new tragedy reminiscent of the horrible deeds committed by Hitlerite Germany under the very eyes of world public opinion.

BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

The Liquidation of the Socialist Movement in Poland

The inevitable development toward one-party Communist regimes in all countries under Soviet domination has finally embraced Poland. The last shreds of independent Socialist thought and an independent Socialist movement in Poland are now obliterated. All the innumerable attempts of the Polish Socialists since 1945 to adapt themselves to the conditions of Communist domination imposed by Soviet Russia had little effect. The long list of Socialist self-mortification and self-criticism, of all manner of indignities and adulation for the Kremlin and for its Warsaw hirelings, were of no avail. Contrary to all their promises and solemn declarations, the Communist rulers of Poland finally liquidated the Polish Socialist Party. As usual, they disguised this political murder of an independent Socialist movement by a mock unity and "merger" with the Communists, a move allegedly "desired" by the Socialist rank and file and endorsed by the Socialist leaders—under the prodding of police bayonets. On December 15, 1948, a carefully prepared national convention of Communists and Socialists was held in Warsaw. The purpose of this convention was to proclaim the "merger", which it did. The Socialist movement of Poland became defunct.

The time is not yet ripe to disclose all the horrible details that accompanied the ignoble end of the Socialist movement of Poland. If this were done, many people still alive would become exposed to the vengeance of the Communist turnkeys. Suffice it to state that in a single week in October, 1948, 1422 Socialist members were purged in order to smooth the way for the "merger" in the Lublin province alone. And needless to add, the number and the influence of the former Socialists in the new United Party which emerged after the convention are negligible. The ruling body of the party, called after the Moscow fashion Politbureau, is composed of eleven members, of which number only three are former Socialists. And even the three Socialists were chosen and appointed by the Communist bosses because of their well-established ability to follow directives.

Naturally the Jewish counterpart of the Socialist movement of Poland, the BUND, shared the fate of the Polish Socialist Party and did not escape annihilation. Even since it became known that the fate of independent Socialism in Poland was sealed and that its merger with the Communists was but a matter of time, those elements in the BUND who had proven likely to obey orders well, took over the lead of the party. On October 23 a conference of the BUND was held in Lodz with a single task—to prepare the remnants of the former BUND movement for the so-called unity with the Communists. In a resolution adopted at this conference sufficient tribute was paid to the Communist requirements of upbraiding the socialist past of the BUND, and readiness was expressed in no uncertain terms to dissolve the BUND into the Communist current. Naturally, the conference in question did not spare the dissidents and brand-marked them as enemies to the cause of the working population.

Yet the majority of the BUND members, of its rank and file, members of the BUND City Committees, of the Jewish Socialist Youth Movement "Zukunft" including its leaders, emphatically refused to follow the lead into ignoble oblivion by merging with the Communists. They decided to remain faithful to the old banner of the BUND and its independent socialist traditions. They knew perfectly well what was in store for them as a penalty for their rebellion, yet they chose the bitter life of emigrants rather than slavery in a Communist Poland. They performed miracles of bravery in their efforts to escape the fate to which they were doomed if they remained in Poland.

If such evidence is still needed, the liquidation of the BUND in Poland, forced upon its members with customary Communist brutality, is an additional confirmation that the BUND—as the Socialist movement in general—can exist and thrive only under conditions of democracy and freedom.

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THE POLISH SOCIALIST PARTY TRIAL

The World Coordinating Committee of BUND and Related Jewish Socialist Organizations released the following statement of protest against the trial of Polish Socialist in Communist dominated Poland:

During the process of liquidating the Socialist labor movements in all countries of the Soviet sphere of influence, a great many Socialist leaders who had shown unshaken devotion and unfaltering adherence to the ideals of their old parties were thrown into prison. Poland was no exception. One of the most flagrantly arbitrary act of enforced justice now prevalent in the country was the recent trial instituted against a group of Polish Socialist Party (PPS) leaders headed by that party's Secretary General of long standing, Kazimierz Puzak.

In this connection the BUND Coordinating Committee states:

More than three years after the conclusion of the war, the Communist rulers of Poland engineered a trial, before a military tribunal, of a group of devoted leaders of the Polish Socialist Party. This trial is a shocking example of violating the most elementary principles of justice and fairness by the Communist minority dictatorship.

The trial and the sentences pronounced against the arrested leaders of the Polish Socialist movement represent an attempt on the part of the Communist rulers not only to wreak their vengeance upon those who refused to bow to the usurpers of power, but also

to intimidate the sections of the population which are not willing to go along with the dictatorial practices of the regime.

The trial, instituted on the eve of the complete liquidation of the Polish Socialist Party, is an integral part of the entire system of coercion and force designed to erase the last vestiges of an independent Socialist movement in Poland.

True to the BUND tradition of opposing all persecution of Socialists, no matter what their political shade, the BUND World Coordinating Committee voices its forceful protest against the sentencing to long terms in prison of old-time, tried Socialist fighters, particularly the Secretary General of the PPS, the former prisoner of the tsarist Schlisselburg citadel, one of the most important underground leaders at the time of Nazi occupation—Kazimierz Puzak; the former member of the Socialist Youth International Bureau, Ludwik Kohn; and others.

At the same time the Coordinating Committee expresses its pain and indignation at the torturing to death in Communist prisons of the old-time trade union leader and well-known Socialist Antoni Zdanowski and woman Socialist leader Janina Pajdak.

The BUND World Coordinating Committee expresses its hope that the working population of Poland will not allow itself to be subjugated by its Communist enslavers and that it will find a course of action leading to the re-establishment of democratic Socialism in that country.

A NEW BOOK ABOUT THE WARSAW GHETTO

The Stars Bear Witness, by Bernard Goldstein (Translated and edited by Leonard Shatzkin) is scheduled for publication by the Viking Press next April. The author lived in the Warsaw Ghetto during most of the German occupation. As a mainstay of the prewar Jewish labor movement, he was a logical leader in the struggle to survive after the Ghetto had been sealed off by the Germans. This book is his clear,

dignified, factual, and horribly moving account of what happened to him and what happened to his people and his doomed community: the fabric of their lives; the forces working for and against them; the raids, the deportations, the bunkers.

Goldstein was almost the only leader of the Jewish community surviving at the time of the Russian "liberation." He soon found that this liberation was but

another destroying tyranny, that he and other freedom-loving Poles were once more fugitives. He took the only course left to him, and made a cloak-and-dagger escape to America by way of Czechoslovakia. In his book he has created a record for free people all over the world to read and remember.

There are but a few witnesses of Bernard Goldstein's activities in occupied Warsaw who have survived the ruthless persecution of the Nazis. One of the author's companions during an unsuccessful attempt to swim across the Vistula River at the time of the Warsaw uprising recently turned up in Paris. The text of a letter received from him by Goldstein follows:

Dear Bernard,

I learned by accident that you survived and that you are now in New York. I am very happy on that account. I will never forget that evening of October 2, 1944. You came to me at Marszlkowsko St. 74, introduced yourself and asked to go with me to the Vistula

River by way of the sewer. I can still see you in the sewer when we were stripped naked. One of the two Greeks for whom you were so eagerly pleading to have them join us, was shot in the river, and the other was lucky enough to swim over to the Saska Pepa. I was wounded then.

Imagine that one of the two sisters in whose apartment we stayed before we entered the sewer, and to whom you offered money, is now in Paris too.

Bernard, let me know if there is a possibility for me to leave Paris for America with your assistance through the Bund in Paris.

Again I turn to you to take me over the water. This water is greater, yes, but then the stake was bigger.

Please reply as soon as possible, even if you cannot do anything.

Yours respectfully,

s/Gutek

The Sewer Guide

Statement of Jewish Socialist Organization in England

The Committee of the Jewish Socialist Organization in England, at its meeting of September 19, 1948, unanimously adopted a statement on British policy in Palestine, in which the group voices its opposition to "any criticism of the British Government due to its actions regarding the Pauestine problem." The statement contains a detailed analysis of the Labor Government's stand throughout the Palestine developments. It shows that the attitude of the British Government "coincides with the views hitherto held by Jewish Socialists who are not Zionsts, viz., that the solution of the Palestine problem can be found exclusively on the basis of an understanding between the Jewish and Arab population of the country."

After showing that this view was also at the roots of British actions in Palestine, the statement goes on to say that it would be absurd if Jewish Socialists now turned against the British for unsuccessfully attempting to realize a stand which they, the Jewish Socialists, had subscribed to for many

years. Similarly, any attempt to criticize Great Britain for failing to break her existing treaties with the Arab countries merely because the Zionists pursue a policy which must of necessity mobilize Arab nationalist elements against the militant Jewish nationalism is groundless, the statement continues.

**** "Ever since 1945 all factions of the Zionist movement**** developed a terrorist course of action which cost the lives of hundreds of innocent British soldiers as well as of Arabs and Jews, a course of action which at times manifested itself in particularly repulsive forms, such as the bombing of the King David Hotel, the hanging of two British soldiers, and the murder of Prince Bernadotte. **** During the terrorist campaign in Palestine, British forces included a crack army of 100,000, important military aviation units, etc. Had Britain wanted to retaliate in kind to the Jewish terror, she could have easily uprooted it to the end. Only the humanitarian attitude of the

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government prevented it from adopting a course of action which any other government would have undertaken in similar circumstances. **** Any criticism of the present British Government's actions in Palestine

and in connection with the Palestine problem coming from Jewish Socialists would be an act of political carelessness and would represent support of the criminal policies of Jewish nationalism."

FROM OUR MOVEMENT

France—A membership meeting of the BUND Organization in Paris, attended by 300 persons, after listening to reports on the Second World Conference of the BUND by members of the French delegation to the Conference, voted to accept the resolutions and statements adopted at the gathering in New York. The voting followed a thorough and lively discussion on all topics raised at the Conference. Only a small minority of the membership voted against the resolution of acceptance.

New York—After listening to reports on the Second World Conference, a general meeting of the New York BUND Organization unanimously accepted the reports and all the resolutions and statements adopted at the Conference. The meeting also unanimously voted an appeal to the membership to broaden the group's activities in the spirit of the World Conference resolutions.

The New York BUND Organization commemorated the 10th anniversary of B. Vladeck's death (Boruch Charney, 1886-1938). Comrades Lazar Epstein and B. Tabachinsky addressed a special gathering summoned by the BUND and dedicated to the memory of B. Charney Vladeck.

A double issue of the monthly "Unser Tsait", published by the BUND World Coordinating Committee, brought a detailed report of the proceedings of the Second World Conference of the BUND and published the full text of resolutions and statements adopted.

Canada

The arrival of many young Jewish workers from the former concentration camps of Germany and Austria markedly influenced the activities of the BUND organizations in Montreal and Toronto. The mem-

bership increased and new opportunities for further advancement were created. The BUND Organization in Montreal was able to raise a substantial fund to establish a BUND Club. Comrade Leo Finkelstein, who visited Montreal on a lecture tour, was enthusiastically received. The BUND World Coordinating Committee Executive Office in New York sent a special representative, A. Stolar, to Canada, in order to establish contact with the new arrivals from the European concentration camps.

Argentina

The BUND group in Buenos Aires recently succeeded in establishing a Jewish library dedicated to the memory of our late Shloime Mendelson. The new cultural institution is well furnished with a variety of accommodations for numerous readers and students of Jewish literature and history.

Mexico City

The Bundists in Mexico raised a special fund for the activities of the BUND World Coordinating Committee. The following comrades took part in the campaign — J. Zacarias, Dr. Feliks Gutman, S. Yezior, H. Grinstein, H. Kushner, M. Grinstein, M. Rubinstein, J. Krishtal, S. Zwas, T. Maisel, J. Eisen, N. Aks, J. Proshnitzki, L. Leventhal, R. Weisfeld. Dr. A. Kings, J. Rothenberg, J. Sapsik, M. Zhatizki, M. Diner, N. Davidson, M. Ferdman, J. Uzevowitz, N. Chervonogura.

Sweden — First National Conference of the BUND Organization

The first national conference of the BUND in Sweden was held in Stockholm with 25 delegates from seven BUND groups attending. In addition to the dele-

gates from the organizations in Stockholm, Eskilstuna, Malmo, Uppsala, Tralleborg, Vetlande, and Nesie, a number of guests from cities where no BUND organizations exist also came to attend the conference.

The first day of the conference was devoted to discussions on the world political situation and the Palestine problem. Reports from the local organizations were given on the second day, followed by a debate on the past activities and future tasks. The cordial relations of the BUND in Sweden with the American Jewish Labor Committee, the BUND World Coordinating Committee, and the Swedish Social Democratic Party were stressed. The need for expanded activities both in the political and cultural fields was also discussed at the gathering.

At the closing of the Conference a political resolution was adopted unanimously, while the statement on Palestine adopted by the World Coordinating Committee Executive Session was accepted by a vote of 13 to 6, with one abstention. Resolutions of greetings to the Coordinating Committee and to all BUND organizations as well as to the World Congress for Yiddish Culture were also voted.

The Jewish Labor BUND at the COMISCO Session

The BUND World Coordinating Committee was represented at the December 1948 plenary session of the Committee of International Socialist Conferences (COMISCO) by Comrade Rafal Ryba. The BUND delegate appealed on several occasions for constructive help to political refugees, and the session resolved to demand that they be accorded asylum and the right to work. A special fund for political refugees was also created.

The meeting also debated several political problems of the day, such as the attitude toward the Franco regime, the situation in Greece, the existence of two separate Socialist groups in Italy, the possibility of admitting to the Conference representatives of East European Socialist groups operating in exile, et al. It was resolved to call the next international Socialist conference for next April, in Denmark.

**WORLD COORDINATING COMMITTEE of
BUNDIST and AFFILIATED JEWISH
SOCIALIST ORGANIZATIONS**

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