

where it still enjoys a good deal of sympathy and support, especially among the Jewish workers. The ideology of the Bund has strong roots in a number of organizations; for example, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the Workmen's Circle, etc. The Bund sympathizers in the United States are not as anti-Zionist as the European Bundist had been, and they are following a political line which they themselves prefer to call non-Zionist. A few words should be said regarding the circumstances under which the Bund had to work in Poland, where it thrived.

Anti-Semitic tendencies of extreme-rightist Polish political movements cannot be denied. On the other hand, Poland has been a great center of Jewish culture; the Polish Republic offered certain conditions distinctly favorable to its development.* Among many Christians and Jews close cooperation and mutual understanding and sympathy had developed. However, in the late Thirties, the authoritarian and anti-Semitic tendencies gained the upper hand in the government.

Dr. Emanuel Scherer, the author of this chapter, is a prominent leader of the Bund. A member of its Central Committee in pre-war Poland and a Councilman of Warsaw, he was the Bund's representative in the Polish Parliament-in-exile (London 1943-45). A journalist and writer, he is the author of several books and pamphlets on the Bund's ideology. At present, he is spokesman for the World Coordinating Committee of the Bund and editor of the main Bundist organ, the monthly review *Unser Tsait*.

* The city of Vilna in Polish Lithuania was considered by the Jews and called in Yiddish "Second Jerusalem."

Chapter 8 — The Bund

The Bund, the first socialist party of the Jewish people, is known officially as *Der Algemeyner Yiddisher Arbeter Bund*; in English, as the General Jewish Workers Union. The founding of the Bund in 1897 was an event far more significant than the mere organization of another political party — it marked a turning point in modern Jewish history. The Bund presented the thesis to the Jews that they were equal citizens and should enjoy equal rights with their non-Jewish neighbors in the countries of their residence, and that the Jewish problem could be solved only within the framework of a new social order for all mankind.

Bringing, as it did, this completely new orientation into Jewish life, the Bund developed a whole system of social, political, economic, and cultural ideas which differed radically from those then prevalent among the Jewish people. Originally a clandestine organization arising from the peculiar conditions of Jewish life under tsarist Russia, the Bund grew rapidly in influence among the Jewish workers in Russia and Eastern Europe. But its new, clearcut philosophy also penetrated other Jewish communities to make a permanent contribution to modern Jewish thought. Today, after the upheavals of contemporary history and the tragedy of Jewish annihilation which so profoundly changed the character of world Jewry, the activities of the Bund and the impact of its philosophy are, nevertheless, integral parts of Jewish life in a number of countries. Even after the disaster in which most of its followers were among the six million Jewish victims of Nazi atrocities, the Bund still strongly believes in the validity and righteousness of its philosophy for the solution of the Jewish problem, a philosophy which opposes both Zionism and assimilationism.

To comprehend fully the Bundist solution of the Jewish problem, it is necessary to become familiar with the background and history of the movement.

I—Genesis

In September, 1897, after several years of intensive and difficult political campaigning among Jewish workers, a number of persons delegated from underground political organizations, trade unions, and clandestine periodicals assembled in Vilna, then part of tsarist Russia, and founded the Bund. At its first convention, it adopted the name of *Der Algemeyner Yiddisher Arbeter Bund in Russland un Poiln* (General Jewish Workers Union of Russia and Poland) by which, with a slight change a few years later (*Lite*—Lithuania—had been added), it was to become known to the Jews throughout the world. The following is a brief description of the first convention of the Bund by John Mill, one of the participants of that convention: *At the time that the First Convention of the Bund took place, there existed already in Lithuania, Poland, and White-Russia well-formed, well-disciplined organizations of Jewish socialists and workers. . . . When the organization extended the field of its activities, new problems—political, national and inter-party relations—arose and demanded a solution from the party itself and not merely from its local groups.*¹

The answer as outlined by the same author was given in the following words of Arkadi Kremer, the chairman of the first convention and one of the most prominent leaders of the Bund in subsequent years: *The purpose of the Bund as an organization comprising all Jewish socialist groups is not only to strive for general Russian political demands, but also to protect the special interests of the Jewish worker, i.e., to fight for his human dignity, for his rights as a citizen and to oppose all anti-Jewish persecutions. . . . It is also in the interest of the Jewish worker to develop such a party (i.e., a general Russian socialist party) and affiliate with it as a united, firm and autonomous organization with the right to arrive at its own conclusions regarding specifically Jewish problems and to publish its own literature for the Jewish masses.*²

The founding of the Bund coincided with the birth of other political trends among Jews. A few weeks earlier, political Zionism had come into being at the first Zionist Congress held in Basle, Switzerland. At about the same time, or somewhat later, other ideologies began to appear on the Jewish horizon.

Background

This was the time to remold the traditional outlook and men-

1)—John Mill, *Pioneers and Builders* (New York: "Der Wecker," 1946), Vol. I, p. 263 (Yiddish).

2)—Ibid., pp. 273-74.

tality of the Jewish people, indeed, a time for a rebirth, for a spiritual renaissance among the Jews. From within and from without new forces, new conceptions, new thoughts came into being. All over the vast areas of the immense tsarist empire, the entire socio-economic structure of its heterogeneous population was being transformed from a mere pre-capitalistic order into a full-fledged capitalistic one, which bore all the inevitable consequences: social differentiation, internal strife, aggravated class struggle.

At that time, on the threshold of the twentieth century, the Jewish population in tsarist Russia totaled about six million, over 50 per cent of world Jewry. (The number of Jews in the U. S. A. was then less than one million.) Including the Jews of the adjacent territories of Austria, Hungary, and Romania, the Jewish population in Eastern Europe constituted approximately 60-70 per cent of world Jewry. They lived there neither as immigrants nor as aliens. They had settled in those regions centuries ago. Even though their existence had become in the course of time dominated by present or imminent persecutions, it was, nevertheless, an existence brimming with vigor and with creativity.

Numerical strength alone, however, did not provide the great impetus to the new forces and new trends within the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. Their social structure, distinguished by its differentiation, was also a factor of major importance. Though there was no significant peasant group among the Jews in Eastern Europe, there were already present the social divisions into the various groups and classes as they exist in modern society. Above all, a proletariat had started to emerge as a new social and political force within the Jewish people. In this way, Jewry in Eastern Europe became more and more a modern community, the majority of which—a characteristic of all modern society—was made up of laboring elements, the so-called "lower" and "lower-middle" classes. In this respect, the Jews in Eastern Europe differed substantially from their brothers in Western Europe, who represented a quite homogeneous upper middle-class society. But it was this very socio-economic structure of Eastern European Jewry that encouraged the trends towards the rebirth of Jewish national life in the same way that the predominance of the middle and upper classes among Western Jewry encouraged the tendency towards assimilation.

There was, in addition, a particular characteristic, perhaps the most predominant one, that gave East European Jewry its distinct national identity: its common language, Yiddish, played an all important role in maintaining Jewish communal life and

in developing modern Jewish culture. Thus, Jews in Eastern Europe were united not merely by the age-old ties of the Jewish religion, but also by newly forged bonds of modern national life (social differentiation and common language). Consequently, when the heretofore strong influence of religion began to wane, Eastern European Jewry continued to live as a distinct people not only because of their heritage, but also because of their common language and culture. In short, the factors of numerical strength, language, social differentiation, and deeply rooted settlement had made the Jews in Eastern Europe the *core and center of the entire Jewish people*. Eastern Europe was the source of most of the present Jewish ideologies. It was there that these ideologies were tested and fought over. Eastern Europe was, in fact, the fountainhead of later developments of Jewish thought, and even of the Jewish people themselves, since the bulk of the present Jewish population in the United States and in many other lands originated from Eastern European Jewry. Its renaissance determined for years to come the ascendancy of Eastern European Jewry over the entire Jewish people.

A Revolution in Jewish Life

Against this background, the newly organized Bund began to develop its program. At first, the Bund was completely alone on the Jewish political scene. Zionism, though proclaimed in theory, did not begin to function as a movement until several years later. Thus, the Bund was not only the first Jewish *socialist* party, but actually the first Jewish political party, in general. More will be said about the Bundist ideology in the forthcoming chapters. In these opening remarks it should be pointed out that the Bund from its very inception had been a *workers' party*, based upon the principles of liberty and socialism, ideals for which it fought throughout its history. The mere founding of such a party under the adverse conditions of tsarist Russia was in itself a spiritual revolution in Jewish life. The Bund emerged from a society in which all classes had been permeated with indifference to active politics and to world affairs. The Bund called for activity; it appealed to the most oppressed among the oppressed Jewish people—the Jewish workers. A. Litvak, an outstanding Bundist writer, describes this new call of the Bund in the following impressive words: *The Jewish worker had faith in God, in the Messiah, in Rothschild; he placed his hope in all good and virtuous people. He did not believe, however, in his own strength. And the Bund bade him: Trust in yourself! Within yourself lies your salvation, and only within yourself! Moreover, the Bund proclaimed: Your re-*

*demption lies in struggle! Life is more beautiful when we struggle for it! Struggle is liberation from despotic shackles! Equality is achieved through struggle!*³

Having taught the Jewish workers to fight, the Bund stressed from the very beginning their solidarity with socialist workers of other nations, especially with Gentile workers in the country of its activity. This basic principle of the Bund was at first merely a propaganda line, for in 1897 there was no Russian socialist party with which the Bund could affiliate. Such a party was founded a year later and the Bund joined immediately as an autonomous organization of the Jewish workingmen. The further eventful developments within the Russian labor movement, its successive changes and internal strife, of course, influenced the relations of the Bund with the all-Russian Socialist Party. But despite the vicissitudes in these relations and, in subsequent years, in the relations with the Polish socialists, the concept of international workers' solidarity has always been, and still is, a pillar of Bundism. It was this spirit that aroused, and does so even today, the strongest opposition from the nationalist Jewish movements.

First Jewish Hero in Modern Times

Soon after its founding, the Bund underwent a life-and-death struggle for its very existence. Jewish conservatism fought the Bund from within while tsarist despotism attacked from without. In order to counteract the influence of the Bund among the workers, the tsarist police force organized a Jewish Independent Workers Party. In another effort to strangle the new party, a wave of persecutions was launched whose victims numbered leaders and many active workers in the movement. But even though the Bund suffered serious losses, its fame grew from year to year, its influence and organization continued to spread.

Under the guidance of the Bund, the Jewish worker gained self-confidence. From the very bottom of the social ladder, he rose to the summits of political and national importance. He became imbued with a deep sense of human and national dignity. For the first time in modern history, a new Jew appeared on the horizon—a Jew ready to live or die, if necessary, not as a helpless victim of strange and evil forces, but as a fighter against them. This spiritual revolution first manifested itself on the occasion of the May Day celebration of 1902 in Vilna, the birthplace of the Bund. A general strike, accompanied by a demonstration of approximately one thousand strikers, was

3)—A. Litvak, *Selected Works* (New York: Educational Committee of the Workmen's Circle, 1945), p. 159 (Yiddish).

called to protest the despotic regime of the Tsar. Suddenly, Cossacks attacked the demonstrators and arrested a number of participants, most of them Jews. The next day an unprecedented atrocity was committed: the governor of Vilna, von Wahl, ordered the flogging of the arrested revolutionaries under his personal direction.

J. K. Portney, the legendary pioneer and leader of the Bund, at first in tsarist Russia, then in Poland, known by the pseudonym of Noah, wrote a historic leaflet, published secretly by the Central Committee of the Bund, in response to this unparalleled outrage against the dignity of people whose only "crime" had been their devotion to the cause of liberty. The outrage provoked among the Jewish workers an intense desire for immediate revenge. This revenge soon came.

Young Hirsch Lekert, a Jewish shoemaker in Vilna, a brave and devoted member of the Bund movement, made an attempt on the governor's life, but succeeded only in wounding him. Lekert was arrested and sentenced to death by hanging. Until the very end he maintained a fighter's attitude and went down in history, literature and legend as the first Jewish hero in modern times. In the same tradition, three Jews died as heroes in that very city forty-odd years later. In September 1943, two Bundists, Abram Chwojnik and a young girl, Asie Byk, and one Communist, Yankel Kaplan, were publicly hanged by the Nazis for armed resistance during the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto.

Hirsch Lekert's act introduced the problem of terrorism into the ranks of the Bund, which has always been against this method of fight. The struggle of the masses and for the masses of the Jewish working people—this was the underlying motto of the Bund's program from its inception. Acts of terrorism, though accepted and practiced by an important section of the anti-tsarist revolutionary movement, were nevertheless considered erroneous and dangerous by the Bund. Therefore, under the influence of its several leading personalities, the most outstanding of whom was Vladimir Kossovsky (who died in New York in 1941), the Bund did not permit Hirsch Lekert's heroic deed to be transformed into a model for terrorism. But since his act was the first attempt on the life of a despotic official in modern Jewish history, Lekert's revenge achieved its aim: it exalted the fighting spirit of the Jewish masses for the days to come, and it taught the despots to respect the human dignity of its adversaries.

Pogroms—and First Armed Resistance

After 1902, in the course of further developments, the Bund as well as the entire socialist movement grew stronger. The tsarist

rulers reacted by organizing pogroms against the Jews. The massacre in Kishinev, in April, 1903, resulted in 47 Jewish dead and six hundred wounded. But this outrageous pogrom, planned by the government to frighten the Jewish masses and to divert the progressive forces of all Russia from the revolutionary struggle for liberty, became instead a signal for increased political activity and launched a new form of Jewish counteraction to pogroms: armed self-defense groups. Such groups, organized for the first time by the Bund, were established for the sole purpose of armed resistance against violent outbursts of anti-Semitism. Like the act of Hirsch Lekert, the formation of these groups signified that a new trend of thought and action had emerged among the Jewish people—the discarding of the passivity which had prevailed among persecuted Jews for many, many years. The self-defense groups of the Bund were organized in various subdivisions; they guarded Jewish meeting places, homes and districts in imminent danger from anti-Semitic gangs; they performed their duty with courage and self-sacrifice. While defending the lives of others, many a member of these groups gave his own life.

It should be stressed that self-defense was not a fight of Jews against Gentiles; it did not imply struggle between Jews on one side and non-Jews on the other. There were Gentiles who fought together with Jewish workers against the Russian pogromists. Actually, the self-defense movement against anti-Jewish outbreaks was part of the larger struggle carried on jointly by Jewish and non-Jewish socialists against their common foes: anti-Semitism, reaction, and despotism. This, too, heralded a new era in Jewish history.

Subsequently, the position of the Bund on active resistance and particularly on self-defense became a subject for new legends woven about the fearless defenders of Jewish life and Jewish dignity. Outstanding Jewish writers and poets such as Y. L. Peretz, A. Reisin, A. Vayter, Sh. Anski (author of the Bund's anthem, the *Shvueh*) and others were at that time attracted to the Bund's daring resistance against anti-Semitic violence. Now, in retrospect, one can discern in that *first armed resistance* against the barbaric forces of anti-Semitism the spiritual birth of what later became the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto.

The Bund in the First Russian Revolution

The tsarist government could not impede the progress of the Bund any more than it could stop the march of the whole revolutionary movement. On the contrary, the next years brought a continuous strengthening of that movement resulting finally in the Revolution of 1905. In that year the Bund's revolutionary

activities reached their peak with its participation in the revolutionary upheaval. In mass meetings, demonstrations, strikes, street fighting, barricades, the Bund played an important role, frequently a leading one. For the first time in modern history, tens of thousands of Jewish workers fought for liberty and paid a high price in their numbers of killed, wounded, and imprisoned. Several thousand Bundists were arrested by the tsarist police in a period of less than two years. A renewed and more violent wave of pogroms was launched by the government to suppress the revolution. As a result, Jewish and non-Jewish socialists faced a twofold task: to continue and further the anti-tsarist revolution while at the same time combating the counter-revolution set in motion by the pogroms. The Bund maintained and strengthened the armed resistance against the Black Hundreds and other onslaughts of anti-Semitism, while it was engaged actively in the revolution. Henceforth the Bund became the leading force among the Jewish people, and not only the Jewish workers living in the towns and cities of the Jewish Pale, but the majority of the Jewish population turned to the Bund for guidance. The spokesmen of the Bund were called upon to settle every kind of political, social, and economic problem, as well as personal disputes and controversies. At that time other Jewish parties and groups had already emerged. Several Zionist factions, trying to combine socialism with the ideal of a Jewish state, had begun to organize as an opposition to the ideology of the Bund. But none could attain, or even challenge, the overwhelming prestige of the Bund.

The reaction that set in after the defeat of the first Russian Revolution weakened its influence to some extent. The Bund suffered many losses, as did the whole defeated socialist and revolutionary movement. But the Bund was more successful than any other section of the socialist movement in Russia in keeping its organization alive and functioning, ready to act at a more opportune moment. After several years, the entire socialist movement, and the Bund with it, began again to rise in power and influence.

Under Communism and Fascism

Up to the outbreak of the first World War, the activities of the Bund served the needs of the Jews within the boundaries of tsarist Russia: Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukraine. Parallel to the Bund was the Jewish Social-Democratic Party, founded in 1905, which functioned independently in Galicia and Bukovina, provinces under Hapsburg rule. World War I, the Russian revolution of 1917, and the changed political frontiers established in 1918, divided the Bund into separate units for Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Soviet Russia, corresponding to

the new states. Galicia having been annexed to Poland, most of the members of the Jewish Social-Democratic Party joined the Bund in Poland; a small section, that of Bukovina, attached to Romania, became the core of the Bund in that country. For a short time following the end of World War I, all units of the Bund (in Poland, Soviet Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania) undertook manifold and intense activities in their respective countries.

The new turn of history put an end to all but one of the reconstituted Bund organizations. The Bolshevik revolution of November, 1917, and the subsequent Communist dictatorship, brutally liquidated the Bund in Russia. The ruthless regime of Soviet terror killed or imprisoned the leaders of the Bund who had remained in Russia and who had been faithful to their socialist and democratic principles to the last. Even those of the Bund in Russia who had transferred their allegiance to the Communist creed and had joined the Russian Communist Party later became victims of the Communist purges. Furthermore, when, in 1939, the Soviet army occupied part of Poland in accordance with the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, one of the first acts undertaken by the "liberators" was to imprison socialists, among them the Jewish socialists-Bundists. Many leading members of the Polish Bund, even of those who had never lived in Russia, were arrested and put to death. Thousands were deported to the ignominious forced-labor camps. The martyrdom of the two outstanding leaders of the Polish Bund, *Henryk Erlich* and *Victor Alter*, murdered by the Stalin police in December, 1941, evoked pain and anguish throughout the entire democratic world and has become the most glaring instance of the Bund's plight under the Soviet regime. On the other hand, the dictatorships established in Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania also suppressed the activities of the Bund parties. Thus, the Red as well as the Black dictatorships, regardless of differences in ideology and philosophy, both proved themselves mortal enemies of free, independent political thought also represented by the Bund. Both have destroyed this movement, having violently suppressed all possibilities for Jewish communal life. As a result, the Bund in Poland became the sole heir of what had once been the general Bund of tsarist Russia.

II—A Great Era in Jewish Life

In Poland, the Bund entered a new phase of its history, which proved to be one of the most creative periods in the entire history of Jewish political and cultural achievement. After 1918, the center of world Jewry shifted to Poland. Poland became the spiritual reservoir of the Jewish people, even though her Jewish population did not constitute a majority of world Jewry, as it once had in Russia. Actually, the quantitative center of Jewry shifted to the United States which had absorbed large numbers of Eastern European Jews fleeing from misery, pogroms, and persecution. When, in 1921, the United States entered upon a restrictive immigration policy, its Jewish population already exceeded that of any other country, including Poland. The Jews in America had not only the advantage of numbers. In time, they also attained a considerable measure of security and wealth and benefited from a higher standard of living than Eastern European Jews. Thus, they were in a position to offer financial and moral aid to their brethren abroad. This numerical and economic superiority of American Jews came to be felt more and more as the years passed.

The Role of Polish Jewry

But the settlement of nearly three and a half million Jews in Poland, notwithstanding its less fortunate political and economic status, was still regarded as the most nationally conscious, the most nationally constructive and creative member of world Jewry. The diversified ideologies and philosophies that had been born among Russian Jewry and spread throughout Jewish settlements the world over found their most perfect expression and embodiment in practical programs and activities among Polish Jews. This was true for all movements except assimilationism, which, though it had made some headway before 1918 in territories that were incorporated into independent Poland, was later restricted to a small segment of the Polish Jewish population. For despite some trend toward assimilation in actual practice (a practice recurring in Jewish history for the last two thousand years), assimilationism as an active political party ceased to exist. The struggle between Jewish ideologies in Poland was conducted exclusively on the basis of an affirmative approach towards the continued existence of Jews as a distinct national entity. It was this generally accepted attitude that made the Polish Jewish settlement unique in modern Jewish history and heightened its national potency and creativeness.

In a country dominated, like Poland, by reaction and anti-Semitism, Jewish life suffered hardship and adversity. The doctrine of equality of rights was, in fact, never fully applied to the Jews or other minorities. Discrimination in all endeavors and walks of life was the daily portion of the Jews. Persecution either in the "legal" form of economic boycott or in sporadic acts of anti-Semitic violence, mostly unpunished, or even pogroms, was a continuous element in everyday life. In addition, the 'thirties brought the threat and even the overt expression of the Hitler-like racial ideology, which increasingly became the official credo of both leading reactionary forces in Poland: the ruling Ozon camp, the Pilsudski camp (Marshall Rydz-Smigly and his followers) and their even more anti-Semitic opponents—the so-called National Democrats.

However, despite these harsh and continuously worsening conditions, Jews in Poland succeeded in maintaining and developing their national life. During the twenty years between the first and second World Wars, when civil rights of Polish Jews were being curtailed, their national cultural values and creativeness nevertheless reached a peak unprecedented in modern Jewish history. Jewish political thought was but one of the many fields of activity. In such fields as literature, press, education, theater, youth movements and sports, Polish Jewry far outranked other Jewish communities. In the same manner as Polish Jewry took the ascendancy among the entire Jewish people in its struggle for national survival, in the very same manner it established a powerful foundation for the three chief trends in present Jewish life: Bund, Zionism, and Orthodoxy. It was among the 3,500,000 Polish Jews that each of these three movements had its mainspring and its center. To the greatest extent, this is true of the Bund.

Organization and Activities of the Bund

The Bund in Poland was organized as a regular political party of Jewish labor and Jewish working people in general. It had branches in nearly all of the several hundred cities and towns in which Jews lived. Its strongholds were found in the great cities: Warsaw (app. 400,000 Jews, one-third of the entire population in 1939); Lodz (200,000 Jews out of a population of over 600,000); Vilna (60,000 Jews out of a population of over 200,000); Lublin; Bialystok; and in many others. But the Bund in Poland was much more than a mere political organization. Under its influence and guidance, a vigorous Bundist youth movement existed whose core was the Youth Bund *Tsukunft* (Future), the strongest organization among young Jewish workers and also one of the strongest within the

international Socialist youth movement in Europe. The Tsukunft was the only Jewish organization represented in the Administrative Committee of the Socialist Youth International. There also existed an influential Bundist children's organization, *Skif*; and a very active Bundist Sports Club affiliated with the Socialist Education International and the Socialist Sport International, respectively.

The press of the Bund consisted of an important daily Yiddish newspaper and several weeklies and monthlies in Yiddish and in Polish. As a matter of fact, the Bund was the only Jewish socialist party that published a daily newspaper (first the well-known *Lebensfragen*, then *Folkscajtung*) during the entire period of Poland's independence, ceasing publication only after the German bombs had destroyed the electric power plant of Warsaw, in September, 1939.

Special attention was given to the realm of education, whose medium was the mother tongue of the Jewish masses—Yiddish. Week after week, tens of thousands took advantage of the numerous courses, lectures, and other cultural activities of the Bund. Moreover, there was established a network of elementary and secondary schools with Yiddish as the language of instruction, in which the curriculum was a secular one and in accordance with the ideas of democracy, social progress, and the international brotherhood of men, features not generally prevalent in other schools. Those schools were maintained by the Jewish workers themselves, with financial aid from their friends in the United States and other countries. Constantly enduring repressions from the reactionary governments, these schools persisted because of the profound devotion they aroused among the Jewish working masses. In the forefront of this movement for Jewish secular education and culture, which eventually developed into a great cultural mass movement, was the Bund.

On the economic horizon, there existed a strong Federation of Jewish Trade Unions (100,000 members), affiliated with the General Federation of Labor in Poland. Jewish workers of all parties, as well as non-partisans, belonged to these unions. But the overwhelming majority was under the influence of the Bund, which controlled, according to accepted European standards, the Federation of Jewish Trade Unions. This was the strongest organization among Polish Jewry. The president of the Council of Jewish Trade Unions and its chief spokesman within the General Federation of Labor was Victor Alter, the previously mentioned leader of the Bund who was murdered later, together with Henryk Erlich, by the Soviet government.

Through the Intricacies of Polish-Jewish Politics

The strife among parties and ideologies was at all times acute and vigorous. The differences among them were deep and fundamental; they never could be and never were reconciled. Therefore there never was a united Jewish front during the entire period between the two world wars in the political or any other sense of the word. Time and again, the Zionists and orthodoxy, or some other combination of Jewish groups, united for some specific purpose, for example, elections. The Bund, however, rejected the very idea of joint action with pro-capitalistic parties, Jewish or non-Jewish, because such unity would contradict two basic principles underlying both the ideology and strategy of the Bund: 1)—Independent anti-capitalistic political action by the working people; 2)—International solidarity of Jewish and non-Jewish workingmen.

In accordance with these principles, the Bund did see fit to engage in joint action programs with socialist organizations of non-Jewish workers, particularly the Polish ones. In the area of economic struggle, Jews cooperated with their non-Jewish comrades in the ranks of the Federation of Labor of Poland. In the political arena, there were rather frequent instances of united action on the part of the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party, but these were limited; a firm political cooperation with Jewish workers had not been subscribed to by the Polish socialists. Even though this failure was an obstacle to the socialist movement in its fight against the nationalistic and anti-Semitic tendencies in Polish life, there were instances of successful action in combating anti-Semitism and nationalist chauvinism through joint demonstration and association of Polish and Jewish socialist parties. Such joint action was no small accomplishment, considering the specific nature of Polish politics. Indeed, the major Polish pro-capitalist parties were virtually all anti-Semitic, thus precluding any real cooperation between them and Jewish pro-capitalist groups. On the other hand, the Polish Communists who advocated Polish-Jewish workers' solidarity, were too weak to achieve it, even if they would have been politically reliable and honest. In terms of political organization, the non-socialist democrats were a negligible quantity among the Polish urban population. The Jews in Poland being almost completely an urban group, there was actually only one major Polish democratic force in the cities—the Polish Socialist Party. Obviously, no Jewish pro-capitalist group could possibly cooperate with Polish socialists. Hence, as far as the Jewish community was concerned, it was the Bund, as the leading Jewish socialist party, which was in the strongest position to urge and effectuate unity of action be-

tween Polish and Jewish workers. Albeit such unity was only temporary, and for a limited purpose, it nevertheless served as the only feasible means of expressing some solidarity between the two groups. In other words, Jewish socialism, as represented by the Bund, constituted on the Jewish side the only bridge that politically linked the Jewish and Polish masses. In a society dominated by forces of reaction and anti-Semitism, which tried its utmost to segregate Poles from Jews and used every available means to make Jews second-class citizens of Poland, the role of the Bund in attaining a measure of solidarity with Polish workers cannot be underestimated.

At first, a major part of the Jewish population in Poland responded for a time to the call of the general Zionist movement. (Labor Zionism, both left and right, never gained a strong foothold among Polish Jewry during the inter-war period.) It must, however, be understood that the influence which general Zionism exerted was derived not only from its struggle for a Jewish state. In Poland, general Zionism was a political party like the Bund and Orthodoxy. It was engaged in local and national politics, campaigning for its own candidates and platforms which promised, besides the goal of a national home in Palestine, solutions for local and national issues as they affected the needs and well-being of the Jews within the borders of Poland. But general Zionism had its success as long as oppressed Polish Jews saw some prospects for betterment of their conditions within the structure of the Polish state. However, as the dictatorial government of Poland turned more reactionary and anti-Semitic, particularly under the influence of Hitler Germany, it became evident that there was no hope at all for improvement within the capitalist order, which in Poland was tantamount to the reign of reaction and anti-Semitism. Thus, the struggle against anti-Semitism became a sheer impossibility unless carried on against capitalism and in cooperation with the anti-capitalist forces among the Polish working people. Since both general Zionism and Orthodoxy favored the pro-capitalist viewpoint, and even showed a conciliatory attitude towards the reactionary Polish government; since there were Zionists who compromised even with Polish anti-Semites for the evacuation of Jews from Poland on the basis of "common interest" (a completely unrealistic aim that was under the circumstances only helpful to the anti-Semites), many of the Zionist and orthodox followers turned to the Bund as the only party with a clearly defined program and a great record in a long struggle against capitalist reaction, for the rights of the Jewish people.

Bund—the Greatest Jewish Party

There had been little opportunity in the last years before the war for an open fight among the opposing parties, and for a comparison of their political influences. The dictatorship in Poland was growing more oppressive: after 1930, there was no real general election to the Polish congress (Sejm), and even the elections of 1930 were falsified and accompanied by violence. Later, the municipal elections were the only ones that gave the competing parties a chance to contend for votes; they were the only ones in which all parties, Jewish and non-Jewish, participated. The votes cast in these elections showed the Bund to be the strongest Jewish party in Poland. In a great many cities, particularly the larger ones, which for a long time had dominated the entire Jewish community, the Bund obtained either a plurality or a majority, in many instances, even a qualified majority of all Jewish party votes. For example, in Warsaw, twenty Jewish councilmen were elected in 1938, sixteen of whom were members of the Bund, and four were members of other parties. In Lodz, the second largest city of Poland, with a Jewish population of 200,000, the elections of 1938 brought similar results. The same was true in Vilna, Bialystok, Lublin, Grodno, Tarnow, Piotrkow, Radom, and many others. For the first time in Jewish history, Jewish socialism as represented by the Bund won significant electoral victories over all its opponents in Jewish ranks.

The election results at that time were the most eloquent, though not the sole evidence that the masses of the Jewish people, not merely the workers, had turned to the Bund for political guidance. Another evidence thereof was the strike initiated by the Bund on March 17, 1936 in protest against the pogrom in Przytyk. The strike turned into a general strike on the part of the entire Jewish population and was met with sympathy by many Polish workers. The response to the ramified activities of the Bund in all areas of Jewish life and the wholehearted reaction to its ideology also bore witness to the political landslide within the Jewish people: *the shift of their majority to the Bund.*

This was perhaps the most significant fact at the close of a great era in Jewish life. In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War II, when three and a half million Jews of Poland, the spiritual center of the entire Jewish people, demonstrated their capabilities in the struggle for their national survival in the country of their origin, it was the uncompromisingly socialist Bund that was chosen by the majority of Jews to lead the fight of and for the Jewish masses.

III—*The Catastrophe, Its Impact and Evaluation*

From the climax of its national rebirth, which coincided with the culmination of the Bund's progress, the Jewish people of Poland, and later of nearly all of Europe, suddenly fell into the very abyss of the Nazi inferno. Words cannot express the agony they endured. Tortured behind the walls and barbed wire of the ghettos, shot, gassed, electrocuted or massacred in some barbaric-modern way, the Jews fell victims to a crime of dimensions transcending the grasp of the human mind. For the Jews in Poland, World War II was a war of total annihilation. Over three million Polish Jews, together with three million Jews from other European countries, were brutally murdered. Before the close of the war, the great, almost one-thousand-year-old Jewish community of Poland had ceased to exist. It had died a hero's and martyr's death.

Underground Struggle and Armed Resistance

Confronted from the very beginning with the superhuman task of opposing the subhuman forces of the mechanized Nazi barbarians, the Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland organized an underground movement. This is not the place properly to depict this sublime but most tragic chapter of Jewish history. But within the framework of our present paper, it is necessary for subsequent conclusions to mention several momentous facts. It was quite natural that the Bund which had played a leading role in pre-war Poland would be the first to organize an underground Jewish movement. The Bund's cherished tradition of clandestine work in tsarist Russia was an invaluable experience for the revival of the underground struggle—this time against Hitler Germany. Subsequently, other political parties, particularly various Zionist groups, and, after June, 1941, the Communists, also joined the ranks of the underground movement.

The Jewish underground worked under conditions which made daily existence inhumanly cruel. Yet, even though there were countless victims, there seemed to be a chance for survival. "We shall survive," read a dispatch relayed abroad at the beginning of 1941 from behind the Nazi ghetto wall of Warsaw through the secret channels of the Bund underground. Belief in the ability to survive was the consensus among Polish Jewry at that time.

As soon as the information of the first mass slaughters of Jews, perpetrated in strict concealment and far from Jewish settlements, reached Warsaw and gave away the fact that the objective of the Germans was the complete extermination of Jewry, the Bund began preparations and issued calls for armed

resistance. Then, after a period of political and organizational coordination among the groups in the Jewish underground, the Ghetto of Warsaw was prepared for the next German onslaught which culminated in the now famous Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto. Heroic armed revolts occurred also in other ghettos and in concentration camps, including Bialystok, Bendin, Poniatow, and Treblinka.

The Act of Szmul Zygielbojm

The annihilation of the Jews by the Nazis and the Jewish armed resistance took place in the open for the whole world to see. All responsible leaders of the Western Allies, as well as those of the East, were well informed of the abominable crimes perpetrated against the Jews. More than once, heartrending SOS messages from the tortured and tormented were forwarded abroad through underground channels. There was, in addition, an act—the only one of this kind in the annals of the war years—to move the conscience of the world: the suicide of Szmul M. Zygielbojm, representative of the Bund in the National Council of the Polish Government in Exile. Zygielbojm took his life in free London, hoping by his final sacrifice to move those who were in a position to rescue the remnants of Polish Jewry. His last words, addressed "to the Polish government and people, to the governments and peoples of the Allied states, to the conscience of the world," read in part: *By my death I wish to express my strongest protest against the inactivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people. I know how little human life is worth, especially today. But as I was unable to do anything during my life, perhaps by my death I shall contribute to destroying the indifference of those who are able and should act in order to save now, maybe at the last moment, this handful of Polish Jews, who are still alive, from certain annihilation.*⁴

Three Interpretations

Zygielbojm's final sacrifice did not help. Nothing helped. The powerful anti-Hitler coalition, the democracies of the West and the Soviets of the East, did not undertake any extraordinary ways and means to cope with the unprecedented crime of genocide. The ineffective response of the outside world to the incessant daily slaughtering of thousands and thousands of innocent men, women, and children—a response expressed merely by protests on paper but not by effective deeds—emphasized even

4)—Szmul M. Zygielbojm's last letter, left in his apartment at 12 Porchester Square, London, dated May 11, 1943. Original in Polish. Quoted in full by the New York Times, June 4, 1943.

more the greatness of the Jewish national tragedy. For, in addition to the catastrophe endured, the Jewish people were deeply grieved by the shocking inadequacy of outside help to protect them and alleviate their great suffering. But nothing was done. It is this hurt, the unheeded call for succor to the world democracies, that constitutes the moral aspect of the Jewish national catastrophe.

The Zionist movement took advantage of this situation. The just accusation of the world's indifference to the destruction of the Jews was converted, by Zionist propaganda, into a conception of permanent distrust (by the Jews) of the entire Gentile world. The non-Jewish world spells extermination; if not today, then tomorrow; if not tomorrow, the day after. This is essentially the basis of current, and also past, Zionist thinking. Not infrequently do we hear from them the despondent comparison: Treblinka, Maidanek, Auschwitz have become symbols of Jewish destiny in the Diaspora.

In a different way, the Communists, too, exploit the Jewish tragedy. For them, it has become an instrument which serves to undermine the faith in everything that Western democracies do and may achieve and which directs the hope and salvation of the desperate Jews towards Moscow.

Bundists disagree with both the Zionist and the Communist interpretation of the great Jewish tragedy. It is not true, as the Communists claim, that the guilt for the passive attitude of the world toward the extermination of the Jews lies solely within the Western democracies. Let us not forget that the Soviet Union signed the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, which encouraged Hitler to launch the second World War. Had this war been prevented, the Jewish tragedy, too, would not have taken place. In addition, during the first two years of Hitler's war, Soviet Russia maintained its neutrality, not protesting the atrocities of Nazi Germany, particularly the crimes perpetrated against the Jews. True, it cannot be denied that, after the German invasion of Russia on June 22, 1941, the Soviets fought heroically and contributed much to the victory of the anti-Hitler coalition. But so also did the Western democracies, and some of them from 1939 on, without having waited until German invasion. The Soviets did nothing of a particular nature to protect the Jewish population from annihilation by the Nazi murderers.

Nor is the Zionist contention true that this Jewish tragedy constitutes the last stage of Jewish fate in the Diaspora. The tragedy was *not* the result of the lack of a Jewish state. Such annihilation could have also happened in Israel had not Hitler been stopped at El-Alamein, where he suffered a defeat pre-

cisely at the hands of Gentiles. Furthermore, twice before in history the Jews suffered a national disaster exactly at times when they had their own state, which was destroyed (the first and second destructions of the Temple).

The mass murder of the Jewish people in Poland (and in other Nazi-occupied lands) was an unforeseen cataclysm, resulting from the fascist successes attained first on the internal political scene and from military victories subsequently achieved on the battle fronts. The prevention of a repetition of such a cataclysm does not lie within the field of purely Jewish political activity, but within the realm of international world politics. Thus, in accordance with its general socialist outlook, the Bund opposes the idea that Jews should "divorce" themselves from the world in retaliation for having been slighted during the years of catastrophe. Yes, we should not forget the crimes perpetrated against us during the years of mass murder, but primarily so that we may be able to contribute to the betterment of the world. The Bund, notwithstanding the catastrophe which has befallen the Jewish people, still staunchly believes in the possibility of such betterment.

The Aftermath

Statistically speaking, the six million murdered Jews of Europe constituted more than a third of the Jewish population throughout the world. Any nation sustaining such a loss would undergo a calamity beyond repair, since it is far greater than any military defeat. In the case of the Jewish people, the loss is much greater than the horrifying figure of six million murdered, or a third of the Jewish nation, for, as pointed out before, the murdered Jews comprised the spiritual center of world Jewry. The impact of this destruction is so far-reaching that it is not possible to comprehend its full dimensions. Obviously, there can be no adequate compensation and no party can, in the near future, restore the truncated tree of Jewish life to health. This no Jew, regardless of political belief, can deny. Ever since the end of the war, Jews representing all ideologies are faced with the problem of survival as Jews, a problem unknown to any of the war-scarred nations, at least to such a great extent.

The Bund had been stricken by the catastrophe with particular force. Not that the other Jewish parties were spared. But the particular violence of the impact on the Bund is due to the fact that the Bund, as an organized entity more than any other Jewish party, concentrated its activity in Eastern Europe, and in the inter-war period in Poland. To be sure, the ideological strength and inspiration emanating from the program and activities of the Bund reached wide circles of Jews

in the Western countries, and exerted particular influence among the working masses in the American Jewish community. But this remained an influence of an *ideological* character only. In other words, while Bundism as an ideology had long before 1939 extended beyond the limits of Eastern Europe and had influenced the Jewish masses also in the countries of the West, the Bund itself had, up to the end of World War II, restricted its organization and political activities to the Eastern-European Jewry, particularly to Poland.

Now, after the great losses in Poland, the political and ideological task confronting the Bund was the removal of the distinction between the universal socialist ideology of the Bund and its local organization, hitherto limited to one country. This meant the transformation of the Bund into an organization no longer restricted to one country in particular, but, in conformity with Bundist ideology, embracing Jewish working people throughout the world.

New Form of the Bund Organization

The burden of this difficult task has been taken over by members of the Bund in various countries. Survivors of the Jewish catastrophe, who found refuge in the democratic Western countries, particularly in the United States, have joined with Bund followers who have been residents in these countries for some time, and together they have formed Bund organizations in their respective lands. The delegates of these various organizations and groups, representing eighteen countries of the old and the new worlds, assembled at the First World Conference of the Bund in May, 1947, in Brussels to form the World Coordinating Committee of the Bundist and Affiliated Jewish Socialist Organizations.

This World Coordinating Committee of the Bund, as it is called in brief, has not removed from the affiliated organizations their self-determination as far as local policies and activities are concerned. The Coordinating Committee is in charge of all common interests of Bundists—ideological, political, and practical—regardless of the countries of their residence. It also continues to represent the ideology of the Bund under the post-war conditions of Jewish life. The headquarters is located in New York; the European secretariat in Paris is in charge of Bund matters in Europe.

As already stated, the Bund has always considered itself a part of the international socialist movement. This very attitude has remained a pillar of Bundism. Accordingly, the World Coordinating Committee of the Bund sought and obtained admission to the so-called Comisco (Committee for the International Socialist Conference). Now that a regular Socialist Interna-

tional has been reconstituted, the International Jewish Labor Bund is—as the Polish Bund was before 1939—a full member of the supreme authority of the international socialist movement.

Some Basic Quotations

In October, 1948, a second World Conference of the Bund, called by its Coordinating Committee, was held in New York, a few months after the proclamation of the State of Israel. In view of that fact, the conference had to reconsider the attitude of the Bund towards Zionism in general, and the concept of the Jewish state in particular. The following chapters will dwell on the details of this problem and its relation to the "Jewish question."

At the First World Conference of the Bund (May 4-11, 1947), a comprehensive "Statement on Jewish Problems" concerning a great number of questions vital to contemporary Jewish life was unanimously adopted. Among others, it formulated the attitude of the Bund towards Zionism as follows: *Zionism cannot solve the problem of the great majority of the Jewish people, who live, and will continue to live, outside the boundaries of Palestine. . . . The Conference resolves that the struggle against the theory and practices of Zionism must not be diminished.*⁵

The first sentence of this quotation expressed what has always been one of the Bund's main assertions against Zionism. Essentially, it rests entirely on a fact, which, strictly speaking, cannot be disputed: *the great majority of the Jewish people live, and will continue to live, outside Palestine.* A year after the adoption of this resolution the State of Israel was proclaimed. But this did not affect the full validity of this argument, and the second World Conference of the Bund held after the formation of the State of Israel found no need to abandon it. It was, however, necessary to re-examine the Bund's whole attitude towards Zionism, in view of the situation in Palestine. On this problem, the Second World Conference of the Bund (October, 1948), adopted the following conclusions: *The Conference considers, as before, the following as the basic principles of Bundist activities:—a)—The Jewish people is, and will remain, a people of the world, nine-tenths of its members dwelling outside Palestine;—b)—The State of Israel, being the result of an artificial partition of Palestine and being established by a bloody struggle between Jews and Arabs, is not only far from solving the Jewish problem all over the*

5)—"Statement on Jewish Problems," The Jewish Labor Bund Bulletin, No. 1 (October, 1947).

world, but also jeopardizes the great and important accomplishments of the Jewish community in Palestine, even its very physical existence.— . . . Jewish socialists and democrats . . . should . . . work for peace with the surrounding Arab states and for cooperation with the Palestinian Arab population . . . through the establishment of a common Jewish-Arab state based on the principles of democratic federalism.⁶—In a later chapter, dealing comprehensively with the attitude of the Bund towards Zionism we shall elaborate on these quotations.

Declaration of Socialist Principles

Another important question of Bundist ideology was the position of the Bund on postwar policy. The Bund, always striving for a proper synthesis of liberty and socialism, had been brought into conflict with the theory and practice of bolshevism and its later version of communism. At the First World Conference of the Bund, there was no doubt of its democratic and socialistic stand. At that time, however, there was the bitter plight of the remnants of the Polish Bund (which still attempted to achieve something under the new "People's Democracy," which could be considered only as a political sub-existence of a temporary character), but nonetheless this shadow of an existence prevented the conference from expressing its true attitude publicly. Several months later the mutilated Polish Bund was liquidated by the Communist rulers of Poland together with all vestiges of the Polish Socialist movement. Thus, the Second World Conference of the Bund could explicitly state its already commonly known position of democratic socialism.

These are some excerpts from the pertinent resolution, the declaration of socialist principles adopted by the Second World Conference of the Bund in New York in October 1948: — *The post-war world is faced with the problems of rebuilding the war-ravaged countries, of providing a life of freedom and prosperity for the masses, of establishing an order of lasting peace. The progress of humanity is, however, endangered from two quarters. On the one hand, various capitalist forces— notably reactionary American capitalist groups— attempt to drag the world backwards, to its pre-war state, to new dangers of reaction and fascism. On the other hand, the world is menaced by the forces of Communism, led by the formidable military might of the Soviet Union, forces whose slogans are against fascism and imperialism, but whose victory would cause the Soviet form of brutal, totalitarian rule to spread over*

6)—"The Jews in the World and the Tasks Ahead," The Jewish Labor Bund Bulletin, No. 11 (November, 1948).

*new lands and peoples. The Socialist camp is the only one which can possibly remove the dangers of both capitalism and Communism and which moves along the true path to economic, social, and cultural development, to a system of lasting peace, to a life of true liberty, equality and solidarity.—Socialism's aim is to free the working population from every type of exploitation and, at the same time, to ensure the freedom and full development of every individual, people, and national group. The way to accomplish this is to attain, defend, and expand the democratic rights and freedoms of the individual and society. Within the framework of this democratic socialism, which is to be realized according to the majority rule of the people, the Bund remains an adherent of an independent and vigorous Socialist policy.—Socialism and Communism represent two opposing socio-political systems and movements. The totalitarian character of the Communist movement precludes the possibility of its lasting voluntary collaboration with the Socialists. The Communists do not truly want cooperation; rather, they want to bring about the destruction of the Socialist parties. Measures such as the so-called "united front" or "organic unity" with the Communists are now but a tool serving the needs of Soviet power politics.—Communism is particularly dangerous for the existence and the future of the Jewish people. Communist dictatorship has brought about the national and cultural atrophy of the once considerable Jewish community in Russia and its isolation from the other parts of the Jewish people. A similar fate awaits the Jewish population in the other countries of Eastern Europe which are within the Soviet sphere. The national existence of the Jewish people and its national creativeness are possible only in conditions of true freedom and democracy. Its full and free development will be assured only in a system of democratic socialism.*⁷

We now turn to an analysis of the Bund's fundamental concepts as they appear now after the two far-reaching historic phenomena: the great Jewish catastrophe and the establishment of the State of Israel.

IV—Nationhood Without Statehood

The very wording "nationhood without statehood" sounds strange. It might also be formulated: peoplehood without statehood, but it would still appear odd to an English-speaking non-Jew. Indeed, the meanings of such words like nation, nationhood, statehood, peoplehood are in common English usage

7)—"Declaration of Socialist Principles," The Jewish Labor Bund Bulletin, No. 12 (December, 1948).

quite similar, and to speak of "nationhood" (or, for that matter, "nationality," or "peoplehood") "without statehood" seems at first sight contradictory. Thus, we must employ a circumlocution to express what for a long time has been, and still is, the very essence of the dispute on the Jewish question.⁸

Are the Jews a Nation?

The question here does not concern the Israelis, the Jews of the new State of Israel. Their nationhood is now beyond doubt. The question revolves about the Jews who today live outside Israel, who will not live there tomorrow, and who do not intend to go there. In other words, the question concerns those Jews who in fact comprise the overwhelming majority of world Jewry. Do also these Jews constitute a nation? This is an age-long dispute among Jews and Gentiles of different political beliefs, as well as among Jews themselves. Material published on this subject would fill a whole library. As for the position of the Bund, its very founding expressed tacitly the conception some years later, in 1901, voiced publicly: Jews do constitute a nation; they are not a race nor a community of co-religionists, they are a nation.

Those who negate the existence of a Jewish nation belong to various schools of thought. Let us refer to all of them as "negationists," because, despite their differences in other areas, they have in common the same approach: they all proceed to the problem according to one or another single pattern or stereotype. Varying one from another in some details, they nevertheless remain stereotypes which are generally constructed in the following way. First, a number of nations, commonly defined as such, are considered. By this very first step, the Jews will already be excluded from the nations that will serve to establish some common denominators of nationality. The second step in this procedure consists of inferences drawn from the examples selected as to the essentials determining a nation. These inferences usually include occupancy of one territory and common usage of one language. At the third step, the stereotype is applied to the Jewish people. Since the Jewish nation does not fit the readymade pattern, the conclusion is drawn: the Jews do not fit into the general

8)—In the discussion which follows the terms "nation," "nationality," and in some cases "peoplehood" are used interchangeably. Efforts to distinguish between the concept of nation (identical with state) and that of nationality (not necessarily connected with statehood) have generally been unsuccessful in theory and even more so in common usage. The terms "state-nation," "cultural nation," "nationhood without statehood" will better serve the purpose of clarifying the Bund's approach to the Jewish national problem.

pattern of a nation, *ergo* they are not a nation—a piece of bold reasoning unsupported by laws of logic. For, as we have seen, the proposition is based upon assumptions, without reckoning with the Jews, assumptions that had determined *a priori* what was to be proved.

This false method of dealing with the intricate question of a four-thousand-year-old people has indeed become a simple cliché, used and abused by almost everyone who has wanted to prove "scientifically" that the Jews are not a nation. Rarely has it occurred to these theoreticians that, if the Jewish people do not conform to the pattern of nationhood as outlined in the procedure above, it may well be that the wrong pattern has been applied, rather than that the *actual* existence of the Jewish people and its peoplehood should be denied.

Among the "negationists," who include both right and left-wingers, one can also find the principal leaders of communism. Indeed, the latter are perhaps the foremost representatives of the *negationist* school of thought on the question of whether the Jews constitute a nation. Evidence thereof may be found in the early writings of Lenin and Stalin, whose venomous polemics against the Bund are still part of the international communist credo. In his attacks on the Bund, Lenin contended that Jews were not a nation, because they had neither a common language nor a territory of their own. Stalin emerges even more clearly as an exploiter of the typical stereotype. In his articles on *Marxism and the National Question*, which first appeared in 1913, he enumerated one by one the characteristic features which constitute a modern nation. Without exception, the traits of nationhood were derived by the illogical reasoning described earlier, by excluding at the start people, like the Jews, whom Stalin did not want to recognize as a nation. A few quotations will illustrate Stalin's stereotyped theory. *What is a nation?* Stalin asks. And after having dwelt on several features of a nation, he concludes: *A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture. . . . It is only when all these characteristics are present that we have a nation.*⁹ With such a pattern of nationhood to go by, there is no difficulty in denying the Jews the characteristics, and subsequently, the rights of a nation—a program which Stalin first adopted theoretically and later put into practice.¹⁰

9)—Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, Marxist-Leninist Library, No. 12* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1942), pp. 5, 8, 9.

10)—The Jewish people were not the only ones to be denied nationality according to Stalin's pattern. By his standards, or stereotype, one could

The Language

The Bund has emphatically rejected all of these stereotype-theories. Admittedly, the Jews do not conform to certain characteristics found among many nations. They have no territory of their own. (We are dealing here with Jews *outside* Palestine.) Even the other general feature of most nations—the common language—does not fully apply to the Jews. Until 1939, a clear majority of the Jewish people spoke Yiddish, a language whose cultural and literary traditions equal or surpass many modern languages. A great Yiddish literature has developed, which has encompassed all forms of literary endeavor known in modern times. Still, it cannot be denied that even before 1939 many Jews, albeit a minority of the Jewish people, did not consider Yiddish as their mother tongue. Now, after the annihilation of six million Jews, most of whom were Yiddish-speaking, the ratio of the Yiddish-speaking people to all the Jews of the world is considerably smaller than before. Yet, even now, of the ten to eleven million Jews remaining after the great catastrophe, there is probably still a majority who speak or, at least, understand Yiddish. At any rate, Yiddish is still the only language spoken by many Jews of many countries and it is certainly one that is understood by more people than quite a number of other languages in this polyglot world.

The Bund has always put great weight and emphasis on the national-cultural importance of Yiddish. It was actually the Bund which substantially contributed to the increased social prestige of Yiddish, which the "upper classes" once despised as a language spoken by the masses. (Czech, too, was once looked down upon by the assimilated Czech nobility as a language of and for the peasants.) To a great extent, thanks to the Bund's activity, Yiddish won more esteem as the language itself grew in influence and creativity. In striving for Yiddish as the national language of the dispersed Jewish people, the Bund has also had to contend with the confusion among Jews, and also among Gentiles, caused by the Zionist attitude toward Hebrew. This hitherto dead language, artificially revived by the Zionists, has become the official language of the State of

not regard as nations the peoples of Canada, South Africa, Belgium, and Switzerland, all of whom do not represent a community of language, having two or more mother tongues. On the other hand, several individual countries of Latin America should be counted as one, since their peoples speak the same language. Furthermore, the existence of common language with other English speaking peoples would even question the nationhood of the United States, on the basis of Stalin's definition! Thus we have here a curious example of how theory by stereotype can talk actually existing nations out of existence.

Israel, where Yiddish is barely tolerated. But the widely heralded success story of Hebrew and its linguistic gains apply to only a small percentage of the entire Jewish people. It must also be pointed out that whatever success the Hebrew language has had, this was paid for by the damage it has caused, and still is causing, by undermining the position of Yiddish among the incomparably larger number of Jews throughout the world.

Community of Fate

Yet, with this unreservedly affirmative attitude in support of Yiddish, the Bundist conception of the Jewish nation does not rest upon language. Within this conception, Yiddish represents an important cultural factor. But there is a general link connecting Jewish people, though less evident at a superficial glance. This link is, in fact, a whole combination of factors, which originated far back in the Jewish past, underwent various transformations through millennia of Jewish history, and remains in effect until now. These factors may be summarized as community of fate.

Community of fate exists in the case of all nationalities. Actually, it is the community of fate which permanently binds different groups of people and which has, through age-old and varied operation, produced different effects on various peoples. It has shaped them in many ways until the differences crystallized into what we recognize as nations. Whatever these differences may have been in appearance and effect, they are the result only of the phenomenon of community of fate which extends from the distant past, through the present, into the future, and is the earmark of every people. Community of fate, therefore, constitutes the very foundation for the development of all nations. In short: the community of fate, being the only element present within all nations, is thereby the only one that does not preclude *a priori* nationhood to any people.

There is no doubt about the existence of community of fate with regard to the Jewish people. Thousands of years of Jewish history have proved it. The last decade has reaffirmed it in the most tragic chapter of Jewish history. It has been this community of fate that has put its mark on the life of Jews in spite of their dispersion throughout many countries by having produced and reproduced a somehow related community of a Jewish character. Both the primary phenomenon of community of fate and the secondary one of a somewhat similar character have formed the Jewish people and have given them a distinctiveness which is characteristic of separate nations. To be sure, community of fate does not mean that all individuals belonging to the same people are actually and personal-

ly bound by the same fate. Nor does community of character imply identity of personal characteristics among the individual members of the same nation. We must differentiate community from identity, and this distinction applies to both the community of character and that of fate. In a wider sense, all human beings constitute a community of some fundamental characteristics, representing mankind, but this fact does not exclude the tremendous range of differences among them. The same is true of the relative community of a national character, in this case—the Jewish national character.

There are also substantial differences within the community of fate affecting the actual lot of the various individuals, groups or classes, forming the respective people. The differences in the fortunes of the different groups of the same people are often more effective and more evident than the common fate of the whole nation. This is generally true of all modern nations, particularly of those living in normal conditions and during periods of peace. As to the Jews, there was a time during the Nazi-occupation when community of fate was practically tantamount to identity of fate—a tragic fate. But, with the exception of such periods, the Jewish *people's* community of fate did not, and does not, imply an equality of fortune for all Jewish individuals or groups. In consequence, there has been also within the ranks of the Jewish people a need for an internal struggle among the antagonistic Jewish parties and ideologies, which have reflected the different reactions of Jews themselves to the various evils of social injustice and inequality.

Returning to the question of Jewish nationality, it may be pertinent to cite Otto Bauer. This outstanding socialist leader and theoretician, whose book on the national problem¹¹ is generally recognized as the classic work on matters concerning origin, essence, and inner conflicts of nationalities, declared that his theory of nationality did apply to the Jews. As a matter of fact, his brilliant definition that *a nation is the aggregate of people bound into a community of character by a community of fate* does not necessarily link the existence of a nation with a community of one territory or one language. Consequently, he admitted years ago the existence of the Jewish nationhood despite an absence of statehood. (This was, incidentally, the main reason why he was bitterly attacked by Stalin in the latter's previously mentioned book.) *The Jews*, Bauer said, *have no common language, and nevertheless they are a nation.*

11)—Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie (The National Question and Social-Democracy)* (Vienna: Volksbuchhandlung, 2nd edition 1924).

Yet he failed to draw the necessary conclusions therefrom, underestimating the inner strength of those very factors which produced the Jewish nation, and which he himself had so illuminatingly revealed. These factors — the community of fate as a foundation of the community of character—have proved to be much stronger than assumed by Otto Bauer. Contrary to his prediction that “in general, capitalist society makes it impossible for them [the Jews] to continue as a nation,” they have continued as such. During the half century that has elapsed since Bauer's prediction, we have witnessed a development of Jewish national culture. Though the trends towards assimilation have been quite powerful among the Western Jews, East European Jewish nationalism gained more ground in the West than Western assimilationism did in the East—a course of development in evidence even before the rise of German Nazism.

Jewish Consciousness

The two factors contributing jointly to the formation of the Jewish nation, the community of fate and that of character, are *objective phenomena* of man's history. So, consequently, is their product—Jewish nationality itself. However, since this may imply an automatic inclusion of all Jews into the Jewish nation, it is necessary to make some qualifying remarks. With regards to the question of *who* partakes of the nationality, the answer must be based not solely upon the objective ties of community of fate and character, but also upon the individual's own sentiment, upon his conscious acceptance of being, and willingness to be, a Jew. There are people who are Jews only by origin, or only by birth; but who do not consider themselves Jews. They are regarded by anti-Semites as Jews, just the same, perhaps as more “dangerous” Jews, since they may more easily enter into the community of Gentiles. To us, as to all democratic-minded people, they belong not to the nationality into which they have been born by chance, but to that to which they feel bound by their own free will. In other words, it is the *subjective* consciousness and determination which must be added to the objective factors in order that a Jew by ancestry be properly considered a member of the Jewish people, of the Jewish nationality.

In this respect, there is a substantial difference between the constituent factors of the Jewish nationality and those of most other nationalities. For example, lack of national consciousness does not deprive the Frenchman of the nationality he attained by birth; in the case of the Jew it does. Of course the Jew, too, attains state-nationality by birth (or naturalization), but if, in

addition thereto, he is to be considered a Jew and a member of the Jewish people, *he himself must determine it*. In view of this, one can say: The Jews are a nation formed as all nations by history; but the continued existence of this nation depends to an unusual degree upon the free will of its individual members.

We should quote here Harold J. Laski who goes so far in stressing the subjective factor of nationality—of any nationality—that he eliminates completely the objective conception of this phenomenon. *Nationality, he says, is a subjective conception that eludes definition in scientific terms. . . . Every factor to which nationality has been traced, race, language, common political allegiance, shows an excessive simplification which betrays scientific exactitude. It is true that nationality is born of a common historic tradition, of achievement and suffering commonly shared; it is true, also, that language and race, and even a common political allegiance, have played their part in its formation. . . . But the fact remains that nationality is a psychological phenomenon rather than a juridical principle.*¹² If such is the case of any nationality, how much more is this true of the Jewish people.

Worldwide Nationality: Scope and Limits

Constituting a nationhood without statehood, the Jews are, in a way, simultaneously both *more* and *less* than the common state-nationalities. They are more, because the Jewish nation is not confined to the territorial limits of one state. Jewish people are dispersed throughout numerous countries. The world is the limit of the Jewish people.

This brings us to the problem of the mutual relationship between a state and a stateless nation. The problem itself is not new. The distinction between nations and states has long been familiar in modern political thought. Many a scholar and political leader has accepted their separate existence. More than thirty years ago, Thomas G. Masaryk, the first President of Czechoslovakia and an authority on these matters, wrote: *Today we are forced to acknowledge the existence of nations and we are obliged to make a distinction between states and nations.*¹³ The chief point in this general distinction, which also applies to the Jewish people, is the fact that the Jewish nation is dispersed throughout many countries of the world.

12)—Harold J. Laski, *Liberty in the Modern State* (New York: The Viking Press, 1949), p. 160.

13)—T. G. Masaryk, *The Problem of Small Nations in the European Crisis* (London: Council for the Study of International Relations, 1916), pp. 11-12.

This being so, the Jewish world-wide nationality (or world-nationality) is, though territorially more, politically less than a state-nation. This can be seen in several aspects.

First, the Jews of one country are much more loosely connected with the Jews of other countries than are the members of one state-nation. Secondly, there are among the Jews of various countries manifold differences, often very substantial, that do not manifest themselves within the framework of state-nationalities; these are the differences arising from living under diverse, often divergent, political, economic, social, cultural, and even natural conditions. Thirdly, Jews of various countries have different loyalties, different allegiances. We are not now concerned as to whether these allegiances are in conflict with one another, for such problems are subject to changeable politics. But what stands above the changes is the fact that the Jewish world-nationality *is* divided by as many allegiances as there are countries in which the Jews live. This is again a feature unknown, at least to such a wide extent, to state-nationalities. All in all, the Jewish world-nationality is spiritually broader, but politically narrower than the state-nationalities.

The following point should be stressed: the statelessness of the Jewish people, taken as a whole, *does not signify homelessness*. The Bund rejects emphatically the idea that the Jew has no fatherland, that he is a stranger everywhere except in Palestine. The countries in which the Jews live and work and to which they feel attached are the homes—and the states—of these respective Jews. To make it clear before we go into details, in a later chapter: Israel is the home and state for the Jews living *there*, but *not* for the entire Jewish people, according to this conception.

The Jewish world-nationality has *no political body which is authorized to represent the entire Jewish people*. The scope of the Jewish nationality is strictly defined and limited by the fact that Jewish individuals and Jewish communities belong to different political state-nationalities and owe them full allegiance.

Normal Phenomenon Within a Unique History

Jewish world-nationality has still another feature. It is a community whose members differ considerably among themselves in the degree and even in the very meaning of their "Jewishness." Some are more, others less Jewish conscious. Some feel themselves more, others less connected with the Jews of other countries. Some identify "Jewishness" with religion, with Judaism (orthodox or reform), others are non-religious, being, so to say, non-Judaist Jews, bound strongly to the Jewish

nationality by the ties of a common language, modern Jewish culture, and national Jewish consciousness. On the other hand, there are also those whose only link with the Jewish people is knowledge of their having been born Jewish. In their daily lives, these people have nothing in common with any form of Jewish life. They are, so to speak, on the very fringe of the Jewish people, or perhaps already beyond it. Yet, even these individuals belong to the Jewish nation as long as they themselves are determined to belong to it.

This Jewish nation is truly a peculiar community. It includes Jews all over the world—people of different countries, even of different types of “Jewishness.” The character, indeed, the very existence of such a nation today does not conform to the general experience and history of most peoples. But, neither does Jewish history. Professor Liebmann Hersch of the University of Geneva, in a recent survey of Jewish history, has pointed out: *The period when the entire Jewish nation was united in a truly independent state of its own was limited to eighty years (the combined reigns of David and Solomon), or only about two per cent of the period described in Jewish history. The centuries before this short period and the centuries after it were periods when the Jews had lived either in disunity, under foreign rule, or in exile.*¹⁴

Professor Hersch stressed as untrue the general contention that *everything great and important in Jewish culture was created at the time of the Jews' independence as a separate state; and that Jewish national values declined with the decline of Jewish statehood. . . . It is noteworthy that the most creative forces of Jewish antiquity blossomed in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., precisely during the decadence of the State of Judah, and even flourished later in Babylonian exile. . . . It might also be interesting to recall the views of Jewish spiritual leaders at crucial moments of our history. Thus, the prophet Samuel spoke out against a Jewish kingdom, which under the circumstances of the time was the only conceivable way of government. The later prophets were even stronger in their opposition to a Jewish state in so far as it went, in their opinion, against justice, ethics, and fairness.*¹⁴

In short, what we aim to define as nationhood without statehood, a concept which seems to be a unique Jewish phenomenon, is actually, within Jewish history, not a unique but rather a normal development.

14)—L. Hersch, “The Independent State in Jewish History,” *Unser Tsait*, Nos. 4-5, 1949 (New York) (Yiddish).

V—Neither Assimilationism . . .

It is this position of being a nationality without a state that constitutes what is known as the Jewish question or the Jewish problem. There are several aspects of this problem depending on conditions in the different countries in which the Jews live, as well as on the differing notions of “Jewishness.” In a country where there is oppression of Jews, one aspect of the problem may be seen; in a democratic country another may be evidenced. The problem is understood in one way by those who consider Jews a religious group but not a people, and in another way by those to whom Jews are a nationality with a distinct national culture. However, despite all these variations, there is something common to all solutions of the Jewish problem, in so far as they emanate from Jews themselves—that is, obviously, the general struggle against anti-Semitism, oppression, or discrimination, for equal rights of Jews. As soon as one draws nearer to the very meaning of these aims and the means of achieving them, the substantial differences appear at once.

The Bund is equally opposed to the diverse aims and methods of both Zionism and Assimilationism. As for the religious ideology in Jewish life, it has today forfeited more and more its character of an independent political trend and has become increasingly linked either with the Zionist or with the assimilationist philosophy. Thus, the subsequent pages about assimilationism and Zionism apply on the whole also to the religious counterparts of these trends.

It should be said here for clarification that the Bund holds that the traditional democratic concept of separation of religion from the state should also apply to the Jewish nation. Within its ranks, the Bund has always fought against the intrusion of religious matters, which it considers a question of personal belief, upon the affairs of the whole Jewish community. In our times, there exists no longer the old religiously homogenous Jewish people. Jews are now divided also on religious lines, a great many of them being Jewish-conscious, without any adherence to the Jewish religion. It is the modernized secular Jewish nation and the modern secular Jewish national culture for which the Bund has always fought. From the beginning, these very aims have brought the Bund into sharp opposition to the Jewish orthodoxy, which has tried to turn back the clock of Jewish history.

The Jewish people cannot, and will not, return to the past ages of religious domination over its life. Such a reversal would obviously be no answer to the Jewish question nowadays. Pure

and simple orthodoxy does not even venture to offer any solution within the realm of man's free action.

The trends of assimilationism and Zionism do offer solutions to the Jewish problem, albeit not valid ones, in our opinion. Both ideologies encompass substantially different aims and arise from different outlooks. There is a sharp hostility between them on the surface. But underneath this surface and behind the façade of their antagonistic aims, both ideologies have something in common, namely, ultimate goals which, if achieved, would put an end to the Jewish problem by ending the very existence of the Jews as a distinct people in the Diaspora. In the case of Zionism, this would come about by the immigration to Israel of all nationally conscious Jews; in the case of assimilationism—by complete integration of the dispersed Jews with the dominant peoples of their respective countries. At any rate, whatever the differences between Zionism and assimilationism, the full accomplishment of their ultimate aims would in each case mean the end of Jewish nationhood without statehood. As Professor Arnold J. Toynbee has put it: *The Zionists agree with the Assimilationists in wishing to cure the Jews of being a "peculiar people." They part company with them, however, in their estimate of the Assimilationist's prescription, which they regard as inadequate.*¹⁵

Inconsistent with Its Own Purposes

Let us first examine the theory of assimilationism. It demands that Jews voluntarily disappear as a distinct people by integrating themselves with their respective majority-nations. The word "voluntarily" should be stressed. This is precisely what distinguishes the Jewish assimilationist from the old-fashioned, pre-Nazi Gentile chauvinist, who also desired the assimilation of Jews, but used methods of discrimination, oppression, and even sometimes persecution to attain this end. Being *Jewish* and on the whole rather democratic-minded, the assimilationist is naturally bound to strive for a voluntary assimilation of Jews, under conditions of granting Jews all rights equal to other citizens of the country.

But here a question arises at once: Why should Jews give up their age-old national identity that has contributed something valuable to the world's wisdom and civilization, precisely at the moment when they can enjoy real freedom and democracy? Is this demand humanly justified? Is it acceptable to a people with a sense of national dignity?

Assimilation is not a new solution presented to Jewish people.

15)—Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 138.

On the contrary, it has a long, long history. For many past centuries, not a few left the Jewish fold to join the Gentiles. What they achieved personally is irrelevant. The essential feature of assimilation is the fact that at times it worked as an escape for a certain number of Jewish individuals, but never as a general solution for the Jewish people.

The Jews living today are descendants of those past Jewish generations who suffered the torments of persecution, hardened, and determined to endure as Jews. Their very heritage, therefore, militates against assimilation. Moreover, and more important, assimilation, as presented to Jews today, is inconsistent with its own purposes. In the old days, assimilation of the Jew meant that he got rid of his religion and became converted to Christianity. If this act was not rejected by the Christian community, the assimilation became definitive, and opened to those concerned the gates for real, irrevocable integration with the neighboring people. Today, assimilationism, if we do not reckon with its few extremists, advocates assimilation without conversion. Accordingly, Jews are, or have to become, in the United States—Americans, in Great Britain—Englishmen, in France—Frenchmen, distinguished from their fellow-citizens merely by their Jewish faith. In reality, this "merely" means much or nothing, and, in either case, it contributes *ex definitione* to the very failure of assimilationism. If it means much, *i.e.*, if the Jewish faith of the would-be assimilated Jew is not an empty word but an integral part of his spiritual life, then the desired assimilation must turn out to be a delusion. Jewish religion for those who truly follow its teachings becomes an insuperable obstacle to real assimilation. If, on the other hand, the Jewish faith of the would-be assimilated Jew means virtually nothing and is a word drained of significance, then the "American of Jewish faith" is in reality an American of no faith at all. In this case, the assimilation may be perfected indeed, but the assimilationist conception of Jews as a religious group has no substance.

In Contrast to Facts

The aim as well as the premise of assimilationism, the identification of Jewishness with religion, stand in sharp contrast to the very facts. Even today, after the annihilation of six million European Jews, a large proportion of remaining world Jewry is Jewish not by religion alone or not by religion at all, but by a secular Jewish culture, and by a determination to be and to remain a distinct nationality. If one adheres to the assimilationist theory that Jews are merely a religious sect, one faces a very strange dilemma: either to admit that these

numerous Jews who are Jewish by language, culture, and national sentiment, but not by their religion, *are* Jews—an admission damaging to the assimilationist theory; or to deny to these Jews real Jewishness, which indeed would be in accordance with “theory,” but in defiance of evidence, leaving wholly unanswered the question of how to determine the peoplehood of many Jews throughout the world.

Furthermore, there is one tragic proof against assimilationism—the experience of Germany. The Jews in Germany were, before 1933, perhaps the most assimilated of the Jewish people. For a great many of them there was very little substance, if any, left of Jewishness. Others were not even “Germans of Jewish faith,” but simply Germans whose Jewish ancestry was either forgotten or concealed by conversion. Yet Nazi Germany destroyed these achievements of assimilationism long before it killed the assimilated Jews themselves. By one stroke, a long era of assimilationism was ended. It has been tragically shown that assimilationism is, at its best, a one-way street for some Jews, who are left without any assurance as to their acceptability and even assimilability to the non-Jewish neighbors. Albert Einstein once wrote: *The assimilation of the Jews to the European nations among whom they lived, in language, in customs, and, to some extent, even in the form of religious organization, could not eradicate the feeling of a lack of kinship between them and those among whom they lived.*¹⁶ Apart from the conclusions drawn from this statement, conclusions that are questionable, it is noteworthy that Einstein derives this unassimilability of the Jewish people from a general law governing all matter. *This lack of kinship (between Jews and non-Jews), he wrote, is referable to the law of the conservation of energy. Nationalities do not want to be fused.*¹⁶ The same thought on Jewish national perseverance was expressed in poetic form in the following lines of George Crabbe:

*A people still, whose common ties are gone,
Who, mixed with every race, are lost in none.*¹⁷

Why Is It a Failure?

Nations do not voluntarily die wholesale. But that is exactly what assimilationism demands of the Jews, one of the oldest and most persistent among the nations of the world—to die as a national entity, to melt away its national identity. Past historic experience has disproved its workability or desirability.

16)—Albert Einstein, *About Zionism* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931).

17)—George Crabbe, *The Borough*, 1810.

Assimilationism carries its inevitable failure within its own body. Escapism from Jewish fate which is the real, though frequently concealed, mainspring of assimilationism will, of course, always attract a greater or lesser number of individuals. But its aims are not thereby attained. To be successful, assimilationism must be total, *i.e.*, it must affect all Jewish people, and disintegrate all their national characteristics. As long as there exists even a minority of Jews who would maintain their Jewish national distinctiveness, the assimilation of the Jewish people is not accomplished, nor is the assimilation of those who did attain some degree of integration with the Gentiles certain or secure. In fact, assimilationism cannot achieve more than a partial assimilation of Jews, partial both numerically and qualitatively. However, it is precisely here, in this implicit limitation of its area, that assimilationism is doomed. In addition to all the inconsistencies and fallacies of assimilationism, one point more is at issue: Why should the Jews nationally perish? If not for the reason of yielding to undemocratic pressure, why should they?

VI— . . . Nor Zionism

At the very start of its reasoning, Zionism differs from that of the Bund. Zionism does not accept the concept of Jewish nationhood without statehood as a basic and permanent fact of Jewish life. On the contrary, the very essence of Zionism consists in transforming the Jewish people into a state-nation. Accordingly, the recently formed State of Israel is regarded as the “great beginning” of this complete transformation which will end with turning all, or at least the majority of all, world Jewry into one nation of Israelites.

A Few Objections

The position of the Bund on this aim and its underlying concepts embrace several aspects. There is first of all the question of the Bund's relation to the Jewish state itself. The very idea of a Jewish state has always been rejected by the Bund, but not because a state in itself is wrong. The Bund is not anarchistic and does not deny the necessity and advantages of well-organized free states. But historic destiny has made the Jewish people into a stateless nation and—whether we like it or not—it is bound to stay so. Besides, the Jewish state has been built against the will of the majority of the population in Palestine; it will perpetuate a dangerous conflict between Jews and Arabs; it will increase the chauvinist feeling and excesses

among both sectors of Palestine's population and, in addition to all this, even at its best, it cannot solve the Jewish problem in general. These, in brief, have been some of the Bund's main arguments against Zionism.

Now, the State of Israel is a fact. What seemed to be a dream, even to many a Zionist, has come true. But what was said about the limitations and consequences of a Jewish state before its establishment is, on the whole, still true now after its creation. There is no end to the hostility between Israel and the Arabs. Whatever the formal pacts and relations between both, whoever may be the victor in the conflict at one moment or another, the tens of millions of Arabs surrounding Israel will inevitably be on the ascendant, in the long run of the perennial Jewish-Arab dispute. The armed vigilance of Israel cannot secure its position within Arab encompassment. But even if Israel shows its full ability to resist the dangers of its present position, one thing is certain at any rate: the Bund's main objection against Zionism—that Palestine does not solve the Jewish problem—stands affirmed and reaffirmed by all experience.

The Governing Facts and Figures

The longer the State of Israel exists, the more one sees its failure as a solution to the problems of the Jewish people outside Palestine. What was before a theory of the limited absorptive capacity of Palestine has now become a point of unarguable evidence. At the time this is being written, there are in Israel about one and a half million Jews. The great influx of immigrants has up to now more than doubled the Jewish population of Israel since the proclamation of the new state. This is an extremely large increase indeed, particularly for such a tiny country. But if we look into the single factors of such a great immigration, we see among them the unforeseen decrease of the Arab population in Israel. The empty homes and idle working places left behind by the hundreds of thousands of Arabs who left the country have considerably increased the absorptive capacity of Israel. Yet, even with this unexpected opportunity for settling new immigrants, the present greatly increased Jewish population of Palestine is still, roughly speaking, not larger (and will not be much larger) than the previous combined Jewish and Arab population of the same territories before the creation of the state.

Today, the Jewish population of Israel is a little more than ten per cent of world Jewry. There are almost four times as many Jews in the United States as in Palestine. Even if we admit the supposition that the Zionists will succeed in increasing the present Jewish population in Israel during the next few

years, the Jews in Israel will still constitute only a small minority of the Jewish people throughout the world. Actually, there is no hope at all for concentrating the majority of the Jewish people in Israel, and that means inevitably no hope for converting the bulk of Jewry into a state-nation. The number of Jews who are beyond Israel's immigration-reservoir, at least within the limits of all foreseeable probabilities, adds up as follows:

- 1) — About 6,000,000 Jews of both North and South America;
- 2) — About 1,000,000 Jews of various countries in Western Europe and other parts of the democratic world (Australia, South Africa);
- 3) — 2,000,000 Jews of Soviet Russia;
- 4) — About 500,000 Jews in Russian satellite countries, particularly Romania and Hungary, both of which have already closely followed the Russians in prohibiting emigration.

All together, the total comes to 9,500,000 Jews who cannot figure as *would-be* immigrants to Israel either because they do not want to leave the countries of their present residence or because they are not allowed to leave. According to the *American Jewish Year Book of 1952*, the present world Jewish population numbers over 11,500,000.¹⁸ Since approximately 1,500,000 live already in Palestine, and ca. 9,500,000 are beyond the Jewish immigration reservoir, there remain 500,000, roughly five per cent of world Jewry, to furnish Israel with possible immigrants. There is still some doubt as to the possibility of exhausting even this strictly limited immigration reservoir. Some portion probably will not immigrate to Israel for reasons that are here irrelevant, thus increasing the overwhelming majority of the Jewish people who are outside the sphere of immigration to Palestine. All in all, even if Israel had a greater absorptive capacity than it actually has, its potential population is still limited to a maximum of 20 per cent of world Jewry.

In connection therewith, another point of major importance should be stressed. The greater part of the immigration reservoir of Israel consists of Oriental Jews, who have lived for generations in Arab countries under conditions completely different from those of European or American Jews, and in a culture of a lower technological level. On the other hand, the 80 per cent of the world's Jewish population who cannot be reckoned as Israel's immigrants belonging to the Western civilization area, are of the same flesh and blood as most of the

18)—*American Jewish Year Book, Vol. 53, 1952. Prepared by the American Jewish Committee (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952). pp. 231-238.*

pioneers and builders of Israel. Certainly, the quality of the immigration will be of equal decisiveness as its quantity in molding the Israel population, and a mass influx of Jewish Orientals will, no doubt, put its mark on the future development of Israel and increase the pressure towards its oriental-ization and alienation from world Jewry.

No Solution to the Jewish Problem

This language of harsh figures narrowly delimits Israel's future. To avoid such delimitation, it can be argued, as many Zionists do, that changing conditions will compel also the well-situated Jews of America and other parts of the world to leave for Palestine. Theoretically, one cannot, of course, exclude once and for all the possibility of a deterioration of the conditions of Jewish life in the United States or elsewhere. But it is utterly illusive to assume that, under political circumstances that would compel Jews to leave the United States as a result of reaction, anti-Semitism or fascism, Israel itself could escape ruin and disaster. Israel's chances for survival, however limited and poor, depend upon the prosperity and democratic progress of Jews and non-Jews in our Western world. Israel, the creation of which is largely due to the recent Jewish catastrophe, and the growth of which is limited to about 20 per cent of world Jewry as a result of the same catastrophe, could not survive any new Jewish catastrophe or substantial deterioration of Jewish life in the Diaspora. Israel's existence and future is linked with the fate of the overwhelming majority of world Jewry which will remain in their present countries.

Thus, Israel is in no position at all to solve the problems of the vast majority of the Jewish people. What Zionism fought for and what it has really achieved are two different things. It strove for an all-Jewish liberation. What it has accomplished by the State of Israel is, at best, a risky liberation of a small minority of the Jewish people who have become Israelis. The establishment of the State of Israel, as the existence of the Mandate before, still leaves the Jews all over the world with their own problems in their individual countries. These problems will have to be solved *on the spot*, where the Jews live and will continue to live, not in the distant and tiny land of Israel.

Two Incompatible Aims

Can both aims be conciliated—statism in Israel and care for the Jewish majority outside Palestine? Superficially, they seem merely complementary, but in effect they are strongly antagonistic.

First, the Jewish state is the alpha and omega of the whole

Zionist program and ideology. Some Zionists may concede or acquiesce to the facts and needs of the Jewish people outside Palestine, but on the whole they will never admit the equal importance of Israel and of the Jewish people outside it. It is the all-pervading idea of Israel's supremacy over all other Jewish problems that is the essence of Zionism, and this creates the antagonism between the interests of Israel and those of the Jewish people throughout the world.

Secondly, there is the fact of limited national energy which is not strong enough to meet simultaneously two such difficult tasks as the struggle for Israel and the striving for maintenance and development of Jewish national culture in the countries where the Jews live in compact masses. Both these tasks involve the overcoming of so many risks and obstacles and the expending of so much energy that, with Zionist insistence upon priority for the cause of Israel, very little, if anything, is left for Jewish causes elsewhere in the world. The bill for the State of Israel is being paid at the material and spiritual cost of the needs, problems, interests, and future of Jewish life throughout the world.

Thirdly, there is the ever-spreading cultural chasm between Jewish statism and Jewish diasporism.¹⁹ The State of Israel is building a new culture based upon the revival of ancient Hebrew, a language not spoken and not understood by most Jews outside Palestine (and, incidentally, by most newcomers in Israel). But while the latter can be and really are forced into acceptance of Hebrew, the former cannot. Israel has no power over them. For their part, the Zionists exert themselves to "Zionize," and that means also to "Hebraize" the Jews outside Israel. But the most they can accomplish in this respect is putting a hair-thin Hebrew varnish over a tiny segment of the dispersed Jewish people, while the bulk of them, in fact nearly all of them, will continue to live practically untouched by the Hebrew culture of Israel. The only possible result of Zionist efforts with regard to Hebrew among world Jewry is the weakening of Yiddish and the increased confusion on questions of Jewish language, culture, and national life in general.

On the whole, the line of development of the large mass of dis-

19)—By "Jewish diasporism" we mean not only the pure fact of the Jewish people's dispersion throughout the world (Diaspora), but also the very attitude of affirmation toward this historic fact and building upon it the concepts of the Jewish future. Diasporism itself can be either national, that is, linked with the will of Jewish national survival, as it is in the case of the Bund, or assimilatory, that is, combined with the will to dissolve the Jewish nationality. In either case, "diasporism" is the antonym for "Jewish Statism" which is another word for Zionism and Israel.

persed world Jewry, whom history has severed from statehood, is bound to go its way, determined by processes and forces taking place *on the spot*, in the countries where the Jews live. There can be no return to Hebrew among world Jewry. And the longer the State of Israel will exist, the more its new Hebrew culture will develop, the deeper must inevitably grow the actual difference and division between the Jews throughout the world and those in Palestine. What is yet still only a nucleus of a new Hebrew nation threatens to expand itself into a fullfledged new national unit, separated from the entire Jewish people not only by physical distance, but also by all the characteristics of a different nationhood. In addition to creating this split among the Jewish people into two different nationalities, there is also another unfortunate contingency that may arise from the further development of Zionism. If Zionism will continue its present policy of exhausting the resources and vitality of the Jewish communities and subordinating their interests to the needs of Israel; if Israel and the Zionist movement will adhere to their present theory and practice of "Hebraizing" the Jews and will continue to maintain sufficient power to execute this policy inside and outside Palestine—then its result may be some small advantage to Israel; at any rate, an advantage confined to the state of a small minority of the entire Jewish people. But the mass of the Jewish people might be forced to pay for it by complete national disappearance, or disintegration. Thus, a small section of the Jewish people will become "Israelized" and the great majority might become "Gentilized." In other words, the Jews who have maintained nationhood without statehood for nearly two millennia might have to decay as a great and quite numerous world nation as a result of the statehood attained by a small minority of the Jewish people.

All this is no mere speculation or a cry in the wilderness. Firstly, when one speaks of Jewish political thought, one has also to consider problems which are less conspicuous. Secondly, there are already some indications to the effect that Jewish statehood in Israel might be helpful to Jewish assimilation outside Palestine. Many a fervent sympathizer of Zionism today combines support for the Jewish state with the implicit or even explicit notion that, with the existence of Israel, all Jews throughout the world will face the alternative of settling in Palestine or assimilating and giving up Jewishness. Arthur Koestler has become a recent and most eloquent advocate of this Janus-faced Zionist-assimilationism.²⁰

20)—Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfillment* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949).

Though there are many among the outstanding Zionist leaders who would overtly reject this point of view, in policy and practice, they contribute to its advancement. The deeds and the professed ultimate aims, as executed or expressed by the most authoritative leaders of Israel, point undeviatingly toward the position of milking dry world Jewry for the benefit of Israel even at the cost of undermining the whole future of Jewish national existence outside Palestine. Recently, David Ben Gurion, repeatedly professed that the aim of Israel and of Zionism as a whole has not yet been fulfilled by the mere fact of statehood. Nor has it been accomplished, he said, by bringing to Israel hundreds of thousands of Jews from the D. P. camps of Europe and from the Arab countries or elsewhere, where Jews were or felt themselves endangered. In one of several statements of this kind, Ben Gurion, who is also the head of Mapai, the Labor-Zionist Party, declared: *Although we realized our dream of establishing a Jewish state, we are still at the beginning. Today there are only 900,000 Jews in Israel, while the greater part of the Jewish people is still abroad. Our next task will not be easier than the creation of the Jewish state. It consists in bringing all Jews to Israel. . . . We appeal chiefly to the youth of the United States and of other countries to help us achieve this great mission. We appeal to the parents to help us bring their children here. Even if they decline to help, we will bring the youth to Israel.*²¹

The above quoted lines give the full meaning, the full program of Zionism, otherwise described in the Hebrew phrase, *Kibbutz Galuyot*, which means ingathering of all Jewry from exile, in other words, transforming all Jews into actual or potential residents of Israel. As a matter of fact, the draft of Israel's Constitution also expresses this very attitude. Yet, this very aim contradicts conclusively the concept of the permanent maintenance of Jewish nationality outside Palestine. And this is also an essential reason why the Bund does not see any possibility of reconciling the two conflicting ideas: absorption of Jewry into *statehood* and maintaining Jewry as a *world-nationality*. The incongruity of these two ideas is apparent. One can choose, and adhere to, only one of them.

Palestine—from a non-Zionist Viewpoint

Since the Jewish people all over the world is not now, and will not be in the foreseeable future, a part of Israel's state-nation, and since, on the other hand, Israel is an existent state, how then is it possible to harmonize the national efforts of

21)—From David Ben Gurion's address to a visiting delegation of American Zionists in Tel-Aviv, August 31, 1949 (Jewish Telegraphic Agency Bulletin, New York, Sept. 1, 1949).

the Jewish community in Palestine with those of the Jewish communities in other countries? Such reconciliation would be possible if the Jews in Israel would re-evaluate their attitude toward world Jewry and toward their Arab neighbors in accordance with what they really are and rightly can be, and not with what Zionists claim them to be. This means the acceptance of such principles as outlined below, which are in part a summary and in part a necessary conclusion derived from our previous remarks:

1—*Jews in Israel should accept the fact of the Jewish world-wide nationality and readjust to it their whole policy.*

2—*There is no room for the national superiority complex (expressed in such famous catchwords as "one Jew in Palestine is worth fifty in the Diaspora"), which now prevails in Israel with regard to other Jewish communities; no room for the ideas of "ingathering the exiles," of rejecting the Diaspora; or for considering Israel as the home for all the Jewish people. The notion of Israel's supremacy to world Jewry is wrong. Its complete reversal should be the guiding principle of Jewish life in Palestine. The recognition of the supremacy of world Jewry over the Jewish community in Israel would, after all, correspond to the fact that Israel's Jewry is today, and will be in the future, only a small minority in relation to world Jewry.*

3—*The persecution of Yiddish and the violent Hebraization which are now the guiding principles of Israel's whole national-cultural policy should be replaced by full recognition of, and real equality for, Yiddish in Palestine. In this way, Yiddish would resume its rightful and natural position among the Jews in Israel, a position to which it is entitled and which it lost only because of the exertion of pressure and of violence. The Jewish people as a whole would be thus better protected from the cultural split to which Zionism leads.*

4—*The Jewish community in Palestine can build a lasting peace and a secure future only by a policy of equality for, and cooperation with, the Arabs. A truly democratic Jewish-Arab federation should become the direct and real aim of Israel's Jews. The very goal of such federation would weaken the national chauvinistic forces among both parties. Its realization would be a better and surer safeguard for peace, security, and national development of the Jews in Palestine (and of the Arabs as well) than anything else which the State of Israel can now offer. Furthermore, this aim also more correctly reflects the ideas of democracy, the mixed character of Palestine's population, and the general tendencies of our time toward federalism and regionalism.*

5—*The Jews in Palestine, developing their national life and future along these lines, and contributing thus to the maintenance of the Jewish nationality throughout the world, should confine themselves to what they really can do in solving their own problems. Within this framework, the majority of the Jews in Israel should and could fully apply the ideas of international socialism to all the people of that region. But they should discard the unfounded Zionist claim of solving the problems of the Jews in other countries, or the Jewish problem in general.*

VII—*The Solution*

Having discussed the Bund's position against both assimilationism and Zionism, we now turn to an analysis of the Bund's affirmative stand on the Jewish question.

The ideological basis of the Bund is predicated upon the two factors in Jewish history denied by Assimilationism and Zionism: 1)—The continued existence of a Jewish nationality without statehood, created by the vicissitudes of history; 2)—The fact that the overwhelming majority of the Jewish people live, and will continue to live, as a world-wide community, dispersed throughout many countries.

The first logical consequence of these two facts may be stated as follows: Since there is no possibility of resettling and concentrating the Jewish people as a whole, or at least its majority, on one territory of its own, then the Jewish question, which is obviously the question pertaining to the whole Jewish people, can be resolved only on the spot, where the Jews really live and will continue to live.

"Hereness"

This is, indeed, a major point in the Bund's solution of the Jewish problem, expressed in Yiddish by the word that has become a classic in Jewish political thought: *de-ee-kayt*, "hereness," i.e., the fact of belonging entirely to the country where the Jews live and intend to remain. It also implies the readiness to fight on the spot for what are regarded as the rights and interests of the Jewish people.

What is the significance of this principle of "hereness" in terms of pure ideology? First of all, it clearly locates the territory in which the Jewish problem is to be solved, namely the very territory, or rather territories, where the majority of Jews now live. There is either no need or no possibility of emigration in so far as the great majority of the Jewish people is concerned. The most urgent problem, the long protracted resettlement of the unfortunate Jewish D.P.'s, is already solved. After that, the

drift toward emigration will be limited to some minor sections of world Jewry which should, of course, have the right and possibility to emigrate. Indeed, the right to emigrate is an essential part of man's freedom. This right, however, by its very nature, should protect the would-be emigrant from having imposed upon him a country of resettlement other than one of his own choice. In the case of Jews, this means that their emigration should not necessarily be limited to Israel. Jews should have the right to determine freely the country of their desired resettlement, be it Palestine or any other land. Recently, Zionists have paid lip-service to this principle, while actually pressing for a Jewish emigration to Palestine only. However, fateful as this whole problem of emigration may still be for some parts of world Jewry, it does not affect the bulk of the Jewish people. As far as the majority of the Jewish people is concerned, no change of territory, but mainly changes *within* the territories now inhabited by Jews, are required to solve the Jewish problem.

Anti-Semitism: New Character—New Approach

One of the most important of these is the abolition of a menace that endangers the very existence of the Jewish people—the menace arising from hostile, reactionary anti-Semitic forces. Anti-Semitism is a phenomenon the form, expression, and purpose of which have changed many times during its long history (unlike its arguments which have not changed very much since the times of Appian). What, however, is essentially and particularly new in contemporary anti-Semitism is that, since the coming of Hitlerism, it has shown a terrific, unprecedented power of destruction. To put it bluntly, anti-Semitism, which had once been chiefly a sort of reactionary policy, has been transformed by Nazism into a force which expresses itself in open anti-Jewish warfare, a warfare that preceded what later became Hitler's total war for world domination. After the death of Hitler and the military defeat of Nazi Germany, the bloody character they have given to anti-Semitism has remained. The extreme barbarization of anti-Semitism, as perpetrated with such cold-blooded cruelty by German Nazism, is the cursed heritage that remains as the new permanent feature of international anti-Semitism. Simple discrimination, defamation, restriction—these and other traditional means of political and social degradation of the Jews—are now expressions of an obsolete, old-fashioned anti-Semitism. And the more anti-Semitism gains strength and influence anywhere, the more clearly does it show a Hitler-like aspect—a movement of war and annihilation, first against the Jews, then against all who

stand for humanity, liberalism, and democracy. Everything which war implies nowadays is involved in this newly assumed character of contemporary anti-Semitism. If not halted at the beginning of its warpath, if permitted to grow strong, anti-Semitism, whatever its outward appearance for the time being, will eventually reveal its new warlike tendency.

The difference between the old and the new anti-Semitism, so clearly typified by the difference between the tsarist pogroms and the Nazi death factories, demands a new approach in combating this old evil. The waging of a war of aggression has now been branded a crime and outlawed by all civilized mankind. This should also be the attitude toward anti-Semitism, since its aims and methods are essentially those of an unprovoked war of aggression and destruction.

Under these circumstances, there is no longer any justification for regarding anti-Semitism as merely a reactionary political trend entitled to all rights of free propaganda. Such an attitude is an anachronism. Instead, anti-Semitism should be identified as a kind of criminal action leading straight to aggressive warfare and potential mass-murder. Recognition of anti-Semitism as such entails more than outlawing its propaganda and practices. With the stigma of potential genocide it should penetrate our education and our culture; so in the course of time anti-Semitism would become an outcast from all peaceful and democratic countries. Only thus will all society definitely overcome the general poisoning effects of anti-Semitism, and the Jewish people will be made really free from fear and discrimination and able to develop their own cultural life in a truly democratic society. In a sense, repudiation and prohibition of anti-Semitic propaganda and infiltration are the means to a thoroughly effective and full democratic equality between Jews and non-Jews. The removal of the threat of anti-Semitism will equalize the Jews with the non-Jews by giving the Jews the same security against discrimination and defamation enjoyed by the non-Jews.

The National Program of the Bund

Combating discriminatory practices and anti-Semitism in general—however important this may be—cannot supersede a full program for free national development of the Jewish people. True enough, in some countries where the Jewish population is small and not concentrated in large units, and is unwilling or even incapable of living as an individual cultural entity, such a particular program may be needless. But there are a number of countries where the Jewish population is large, concentrated, and conscious of its nationality, and where it needs a program for developing its own national culture.

The dominant peoples, among whom the Jews live today, encourage cultural growth and progress with the full assistance of all the means at the disposal of the modern state. This is rightly so. The development of various national cultures is, indeed, the duty and function of every nation. By analogy, it is also the function and right of the Jewish people. However, since the overwhelming majority of Jews live, and will continue to live, without a national state of its own (Israel being a state only of the people living there), it should have another institutional medium for taking care of Jewish cultural matters. In other words, Jews should form some legal body especially organized for the purpose of promoting the cause of Jewish culture.

More specifically, in the world of today, even the smallest collective activity stipulates some kind of an organization. The rich, manifold, and all-embracing cultural life of a people, which calls for the most diverse efforts of countless individuals and groups, would be unthinkable without an adequate organization. In this regard, the Jewish people are no exception. They need an institution which would do for the culture of the Jewish people what the state does for the culture of the dominant people in each country. This is in essence the thought underlying the Bund's concept of Jewish national-cultural autonomy. This concept has stamped itself on Jewish life; in fact, it has made Jewish history. The idea of national-cultural autonomy for the Jews, in countries where they lived in compact masses, has become an essential part of the Bund's affirmative answer to the Jewish question. Originally, this idea was formulated by the Bund in tsarist Russia as far back as 1901. Later, it was expanded by the Bund into a full Jewish national program comprising the following demands:

- 1—Equal civil and political rights for Jews;
- 2—Recognition by the state of Yiddish as the mother-tongue of the Jewish population;
- 3—National-cultural autonomy.

The Meaning of National-Cultural Autonomy

The first two points need no explanation. As to the third, Vladimir Medem, one of the leading theoreticians of the Bund (who died in New York in 1923), defined national-cultural autonomy as follows: *What is national-cultural autonomy? It is an improved principle of territorial autonomy. . . . The self-governing unit in the case of national (-cultural) autonomy is not the population of a given area, but the total number of individuals who belong to a given nationality, even though they live dispersed throughout an "alien" territory. Thus, instead of*

*the residential-area-principle underlying territorial autonomy, here is the so-called personal principle. . . .*²²

A few points should be clarified:

First, national-cultural autonomy limits its competence to the realm of Jewish culture. All the manifold political, social, and economic problems of the country are outside the aims and tasks of the autonomy and are the concern of all people, Gentiles and Jews alike. Even the fundamental principles which should govern all cultural activities within the given country, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, belong to the common decision of the entire population and its institutions. Only matters of the specific character which make the Jewish culture a national one and different from others belong to the Jews themselves and to their self-governing institutions.

But—and this is the second point to be clarified—we already know that the Bund's concept of the Jewish nationality rests upon the principle, and the fact, that the Jewish people are divided into different classes and groups representing various ideologies. This internal social and political differentiation and struggle are essential for the flourishing of modern Jewish life, for its creativeness and its future. In a sense, the division within the Jewish people is even deeper than among many other nations. For, as already described, there is a cleavage even on the problem of Jewish language. The Bund strives to strengthen the position of Yiddish, Zionists do the same for Hebrew. Furthermore, the Bund strives for modern Jewish culture, a culture that draws from the Jewish past, transforming it into a secular pattern. On the other hand, most of the other trends among the Jews incline toward a religious (orthodox, conservative, or reform) Jewish culture. Therefore, how can the proposed Jewish national-cultural autonomy function amid such divergent viewpoints? National-cultural autonomy, according to the Bund's concept, provides the framework for concentrating, not eliminating, all the productive forces of Jewish cultural life, and making the most efficient use of them. It does not create national monolithism. On the contrary, it furnishes a wide arena for working out freely the opposing cultural trends prevalent among the Jewish people.

The third point in this idea of Jewish national-cultural autonomy is that the concept of autonomy, perhaps the most fundamental of all principles underlying a truly democratic way of life, harmoniously combines a *dual task* on which virtually the whole future of democracy depends: granting individual freedom without jeopardizing the need for organization, which

22)—Vladimir Medem, On the Twentieth Anniversary of His Death, *Selected Works* (New York: 1943), pp. 252-53 (Yiddish).

tends to limit individual liberty. Within the Bund's concept of national-cultural autonomy, it is the Jewish individual who decides for himself whether he belongs to the Jewish people and wishes to share with others the responsibilities for the Jewish national (*i.e.*, cultural) future on the spot, in the country where he lives. The autonomous organization of the Jewish community thus rests upon the liberty and self-determination of the individual Jew.

By the same token, there is nothing in the Bund's national program of a compulsory character: Jewish national life, its maintenance, development, and future depend here solely upon the willingness and determination of the Jews themselves. In contrast to this, no other Jewish ideology has evolved a program which is to such a wide extent devoid of the elements of compulsion. The assimilationists, striving for complete integration of the Jews with the dominant peoples, deny any rights for Jewish national culture, which constitutes in fact a coercion by omission. The Zionists hold that only the power (and that implies the compelling power) of statehood can secure the Jewish national future. The Bund alone believes that real freedom and internal autonomy being granted, the external forces of anti-Semitism being barred, Jews can live and survive as a distinct people in the Diaspora.

Obviously, and this is the last but not the least substantially pertinent point, an order of genuine democracy is the prerequisite for the realization of the Bund's concept of Jewish national-cultural autonomy, and of Jewish national development in general. The struggle for the rights of the Jewish people is inextricably interwoven with the struggle of all progressive labor and socialist forces for an order of freedom for all, security for all, and for the betterment of all mankind's social and economic status. The national program of the Bund as set forth herein is an essential part, but nevertheless no more than a part, of its general socialist ideology. The Bund does not see any other possibility of solving the Jewish problem than in an order of freedom and socialism. It would, for instance, be both a folly and a fallacy to expect an autonomous national development of the Jewish people within a country under a full or partial dictatorship, whatever its philosophy. It was, therefore, not by mere chance that the profoundly democratic national program of the Bund came at once into conflict with the dictatorial concepts of Russian bolshevism.

The Problem in the Western Democracies

However, before turning to the problems of the Bund's general socialist philosophy, one more particular question should be considered. This question has been posed as follows: With

most of the Eastern European Jews annihilated by Nazi Germany, with their remnants enslaved and denationalized by the communist dictatorships, and with the other part of the dispersed Jewish people, particularly in the United States, living in conditions substantially different from those prevailing now or before in Eastern Europe, how does the Bund's national program stand up under these changed conditions of post-war Jewish life?

In the Western world, Jews now live in an order of freedom and democracy. It is still an imperfect democracy. Nevertheless, within its framework, the equal rights of the Jews are legally and actually recognized. Thus, the first two of the three demands included in the original program of the Bund (see page 182) are here fulfilled to a considerable degree. But there is still, obviously, a necessity for vigilance that these equal rights are not violated, and there is still a continuous need to defend them against reactionary incursions. Though the forces of anti-Semitism are stymied, they are not disarmed, and they lurk for a chance to attack. Therefore, even with the principle of equality realized, the need for the struggle against reaction and anti-Semitism (and the outlawing of the latter) still exists. And the struggle should be carried on until a social order will be established which will abolish poverty, insure freedom and social equality for all, and which alone can create the social, political, and cultural climate for the extirpation of anti-Semitism from the human mind. Thus, even though an essential part of the original national program of the Bund has been fulfilled in the democratic Western world, there still remains the unfinished task of securing these rights, already attained, by striving for guarantees that will fortify the real equality of all people, Jews and non-Jews.

As for the third point of the Bund's national program, the problem of national-cultural autonomy for the Jews in the Western democracies, we should first make the qualification that this question affects only those countries where Jews live in compact masses such as the United States. With regard to the very content of the national-cultural autonomy, this postulate means: For the Jewish masses living among Gentiles, the only way to maintain and develop Jewish cultural identity is through free, legalized participation by all concerned, *i.e.*, the Jews themselves. Today, this is valid, not only for the greatest of all Jewish communities, that in the United States, but also for some smaller Jewish communities in other countries of the world.

There is, however, one significant difference between the conditions in Eastern Europe (present and past) and those pre-

vailing today, for example, in the United States. Under the former autocratic and present dictatorial governments of Eastern Europe, it has always been the oppressive regime which rendered impossible a free autonomous development of the Jewish national minority; in contrast, in the democratic countries, like the United States, it is chiefly the *Jews themselves* who can determine and choose the autonomous way of their own cultural development. Here, the general framework of the state, its democratic laws and structure, and its way of life, have shifted the decision on Jewish survival and autonomy first of all to the Jews themselves.

The problem of Jewish cultural autonomy became thus essentially transformed in the United States. What was once, and still is in Eastern Europe, a matter of *state* policy, depending solely upon the exterior (and mostly hostile) forces of the non-Jewish world, has now become in the United States mostly an *internal* affair of the Jewish people. This is a change that marks a considerable step towards the solution of the Jewish problem. The individual Jews, who may assert by their own free will their belonging to the Jewish people, are also free to decide on the survival of Jewish nationhood in the United States, and to contribute to this task within that democratic autonomous framework which they alone can choose.

The Responsibility of American Jewry

American Jews have been able to develop a rich national culture of their own: a great Yiddish literature and press, a modern national life of their own in general. Now that the thousand-year-old history of Eastern European Jewry has so tragically ended, the Jewish masses in the United States are those upon whom the future of Jewish peoplehood throughout the world depends; they ought to take over the heritage of the six million murdered European Jews. To this end, American Jews should increase their national activities on the spot, on American soil. It is not enough for them to give aid to the Jewish communities elsewhere in the world. Aid to the oppressed and needy Jews in other countries should not become to the American Jews the only matter of Jewish national interest. The ardor shown in supporting any of the many appeals of Israel could often be better utilized for the cause of Jewish future in America itself. For, while helping to transform deserts into settlements in Palestine, American Jews might transform their own once-flourishing cultural settlement into a national desert.

This should not happen here. Support to other Jewish communities must not supersede meeting the needs of Jewish life

in this country. Otherwise, the harm to Jewish national life here is greater than the gains achieved abroad. In the long run, the general cause of Jewish peoplehood will be jeopardized. American Jews can effectively help their brethren abroad only if they keep their own Jewish nationality alive *here*, in America.

Inasmuch as Israel, with its ten or twenty per cent of world Jewry, is unable to solve the problems of the Jewish people, it is the great Jewish community of the United States which from now on holds within itself the future of Jewish nationhood. American Jews now constitute roughly seventy-five per cent of the Jewish population in the free Western world. By virtue of their numerical strength and other potentialities, it is the American Jews who must make the decision whether the Jewish people is to survive as a distinct nationality among Gentiles. For the first time since Jews have become a stateless people, the majority of the Jewish people, *i.e.*, those who live and will continue to live in the United States and other democratic countries, are now comparatively free to determine their own national future by their own will. The Jewish people are, so to speak, autonomous to decide whether, and how, to live on as a distinct people among their Gentile neighbors.

In a way, this right of self-determination has in essence been the guiding principle of the Bund's national program. The Bund has never demanded that the countries in which Jews live should take measures that would automatically provide for the maintenance of a separate Jewish nationality. What the Bund did demand of the countries, and what it intended to achieve by its national program, was to give the Jewish people the legal democratic rights and institutions to develop their national-cultural identity. What it demanded from, expected from, and urged the Jewish people to do was to fight for these rights and opportunities and, if achieved, to put them to use for the continued development of Jewish national culture as a distinct factor contributing to man's civilization. With these rights and opportunities now to a great extent attained in American democracy, it depends mostly on American Jews themselves to maintain their nationhood as voluntarily under freedom as their ancestors did under conditions of the most severe persecution and oppression.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the more freedom and democracy we achieve, the closer we come to the point where Jews are really free from oppression or persecution; and the more, in turn, the Jewish people are freed from hostile outside interference, the closer we come to the transformation of the Jewish problem

into a problem to be solved by the Jews themselves, wherever they live. Indeed, this is the primary goal of the Bundist solution of the Jewish question. It strives for conditions in which the Jews can freely manage their own affairs with all due allegiance to their countries and to all humanity, and with the same respect paid to the rights of the Jewish people by their respective countries and by all humanity. In other words, it is the aim and underlying idea of the Bund's national program *to make the Jews free to live in Jewish peoplehood within the statehood of their residence and allegiance.*

Even though a great deal has been achieved in this direction in the United States, there is still much to be done to complete this program. Moreover, according to the Bund's ideology, the *full* solution of the Jewish problem, a solution which, we must reiterate, can be achieved only on the spot, where the Jews live, demands such an improvement of society which only the order of free democratic socialism can bring into being. Thus, the national program of the Bund becomes integrated with its general socialist aim and outlook.

VIII—*The Socialist Foundation*

The Bund existed as a socialist political organization even before its national Jewish program was adopted. When this program was included in the Bund's platform, it became at once an organic part of the Bund's socialist ideology. As a Jewish party, the Bund has never permitted itself to become more Jewish than socialist, lest such domination lead to national chauvinism. As a socialist party, the Bund has not sought to evade its Jewishness, for such evasion would do injustice both to the Jewish people and to the cause of true socialism. "Jewish socialism," as the Bund's ideology is sometimes called, is a system of thought and action in which *Jewishness* and *Socialism* form one logical and even psychological entity, as expressed in the classic phrase: "The Bund fights for the national and social liberation of the Jewish masses."

Principal Ideas

Since the founding of the Bund some fifty-odd years ago, we have witnessed many radical and even revolutionary changes in the conditions, policies, activities, and ideas of international socialism. All the changes have, obviously, been reflected in the Bund's attitude toward the current problems of its policy. But there have always been certain fundamental features which have, despite changing conditions, remained steadfast to the very nature of socialism to which the Bund gives its allegiance.

Three of these features are of major importance for the comprehension of the Bund's ideology. All three being closely interwoven and of equal importance, we do not attempt to grade their order.

One is socialism's fighting spirit, that quality in socialism which never loses sight of the ultimate goal of the movement. *Fighting Socialism*, the title of a book written by Victor Alter, expresses what the Bund considers to be an essential element of socialism. It signifies the struggle against both capitalism and communism, because the former is incongruous with the socio-economic aim of socialism, and the latter cannot be reconciled with socialism's humanitarian and democratic concepts. Thus socialism, and to clarify its distinction from communism we say *democratic socialism*, is regarded by the Bund as the only way that leads between the two extremes of capitalism and communism to an order combining respect for individual freedom with a classless society of a planned economy controlled by the people and working for the benefit of everyone.

A further element essential to this concept of socialism is the spirit of internationalism. It has been precisely this aspect of socialism which has undergone some of the greatest changes. The old slogan that "workingmen have no fatherland" has become obsolete. Socialists have proved themselves among the most effective fighters for freedom of their nations. They are now forcefully defending the cause of their countries and their people. Yet this affirmative attitude toward one's own country and people is not necessarily inconsistent with the concept of socialist internationalism. Socialist internationalism considers each nation within the community of all mankind and has due respect for all nations and peoples of the world. In a way, it is not as much the *positive* attitude toward one's own people as it is the *negative* one toward the rights of other peoples that makes the difference between a nationalistic attitude and that of an internationalist brotherhood of peoples.

Genuine internationalism actually means democracy as applied to the mutual relations of the various peoples of the world. It is, therefore, incompatible with any form of dictatorship, even one so profuse in internationalistic verbiage as communism: the principle of one supreme country, one supreme government, and one supreme ruler whose acceptance has become compulsory for all communist parties and has virtually turned them into agents of a foreign nationalism. This is the exact opposite of real internationalism, which by definition implies equality of all and precludes the subjugation of the world by any country, even a democratic one, if such a subjugation could be possible.

At present, we may point to two outstanding events which exemplify most clearly the difference between socialist internationalism and the perverted form practiced by the Communists. One event is the liberation of India by the former British Labor Government; the second, the attempts by the Soviet Union to grasp hold of Tito-Communist Yugoslavia. It may be appropriate to point out here that the British Labor Party has become the most exemplary model of the practical combination of socialism's fighting spirit, its solicitude for its own people, respect for the freedom of other nations, and free international brotherhood.

These are, in brief, the principles underlying the Bund's concept of socialism. They are mirrored in the Bund's attitude on matters of world policy and on the current problems of the Jewish people. We have considered both positions separately; now let us examine them in their common relationship as they appear in the monistic concept of the socialist philosophy of the Bund.

Socialism and Nationalism

It is natural that the Bund should react with special sensitivity to the various types of discrimination or attacks leveled against the Jewish people, its own people. Interest for one's own people, and a desire to protect its freedom against persecution are both essential and necessary responsibilities of every socialist party. But the significant question here is to determine the borderline between such natural regard for the interests of one's own people and proper consideration for the justified interests of other peoples. Actually, this is the same question that affects the connections of individuals, the only difference being that, while the relationship among individuals is regulated by government and society, there is no power to regulate the claims of various people as presented by their socialist parties. It is the party itself that determines what "freedom and rights" mean for its own people, and what are the freedom and rights of other peoples. Each party freely decides this question for itself. And this means that every single socialist and every socialist organization must call forth the inner strength to resist the temptations of nationalistic philosophy. The Bund has been able to avoid this pitfall. Struggling with all its determination for the freedom and well-being of its own people, the Bund considers it its duty to remain always faithful to the ideal of freedom of all mankind, of all peoples. Whenever and wherever struggles for freedom broke out, the Bund considered them as part of its own struggle. Madrid or Vienna, Matteotti or Sacco and Vanzetti—these belonged to the

Bund as well as to the world. The Bund has never built a wall between "our" freedom and "theirs." We may well mention here one of the underground organs of the Bund in Nazi-occupied Poland which bore the name: *For Our and Your Freedom*. Accordingly, the Bund has never demanded rights for the Jewish people at the expense of the rights of others. As we have seen, its Jewish-national program contains no element that can be construed as restricting the freedom and the rights of others.

It is in these very points, in the desire not only to preach to others but also to practice true internationalism, that the Bund shows its spirit as a party of unwavering socialism. True, this is the socialism of a weak and dependent people, but it is nevertheless a socialism that does not, and does not want to, descend into nationalistic opportunism. It is this anti-nationalistic (not to be confused with anti-national) attitude which the Bund derives from its socialist philosophy that determines its position not only in regard to Zionism in general but also to that particular brand called socialist Zionism. The Bund firmly believes that in any combination of socialism with Zionism, socialism is inevitably relegated by Zionism to a subservient role. The result of such a combination is a one hundred per cent Zionism trailed by a nationalistic (not merely national) brand of socialism. For, whenever and wherever nationalistic philosophy (the very essence of Zionism) is coupled with socialism, the irresistible outcome is always the outweighing of nationalism over socialism.

The question then arises: why is it possible for a non-Jewish socialist to assume a pro-Zionist attitude and not to run the risk, by that fact alone, of being accused of nationalism? The answer is quite simple if we only look into its essentials. When socialists and socialist parties in various countries voice opinions favoring the Jewish state and the Zionist solution of the Jewish problem, these questions are, for them, of little importance in their actual daily activities and current political struggles. They are not called upon to work, to build, to declare themselves daily for the Jewish state. Thus, these people find it easy to state their sympathy with the Zionist aims. These socialists show their socialism not by adopting a positive or a negative view toward the Jewish state, but by the activities making up 99 per cent, if not more, of their life, their work, and their struggle: the fight against their own—and the world's—reactionary groups, against capitalism, against communism, for freedom, for justice, for all the tasks of democratic socialism. If, however, an affirmative attitude toward Zionism does not change the political character of the non-Jewish socialist

parties, the matter appears in quite a different light in our own case, in the case of Jewish socialists. As far as the Bund is concerned, its main field of action is Jewish life. Jewish aims, Jewish hardships, Jewish interests occupy as much the first place of its socialist activity as do, for instance, the parallel French problems in the life of a sympathizer of Zionism among the French democrats and socialists. Zionism and the Jewish state cannot, therefore, in the case of the Bund, become merely the subject of political declarations followed by a series of activities wholly unrelated to it. With regard to Jewish problems and Jewish affairs, every view the Bund adopts must be carried out to the limit, and must constantly influence its actions. Were the Bund to become an adherent of Zionism, it would have to fight for Zionist ideals, to include them in its political program and daily activities, *i.e.*,—to lose its identity. This is the logic of the situation, the objective compulsion of life. Leon Blum, for instance, was a good French socialist despite his positive attitude toward Zionism; but he could not have been simultaneously a French socialist and a French nationalist. The Bund, too, is in a similar position. It can be either Jewish-socialist or Jewish-nationalist, but never both.

One Common Cause

It is the national chauvinism of other peoples that has inflicted the greatest misfortune upon the Jews. True, the whole world has suffered from it, but the Jews most severely, for in its most bestial form—Nazi-nationalism—it annihilated the greater part of the Jewish people, of the Jewish socialist movement, of generations of Jewish creativeness. The Jews suffered in such vast proportions only because they were the weakest of the weak. But the Jewish people cannot escape their weakness. They cannot become a powerful people (at least in the military and political sense). Nor can they become a territorial-political state, for the simple, already verified reason that the territory of the world Jewry is not Israel, but the whole world. Furthermore, even the tiny territory in Palestine predestines the Jews living there to a politically and economically weak and dependent position. In such a situation, where both the political might and the military strength of the Jewish people and all its parts are so very limited, the orientation of Jews towards a national chauvinism of their own is both senseless and wicked. It is senseless because national chauvinism in a physically weak people is as foolish as a dwarf's belief of his strength; it is wicked because national chauvinism is under all circumstances a dreadful poison which sickens the relations between individuals and between peoples. The future

of the Jewish people, a people subject to all the threats of evil and reaction in the world, depends entirely on the struggle for the ideas of freedom, international brotherhood, and economic security—the ideas of democracy and socialism. The Bund calls on the Jewish people to participate in this struggle on the side of all the truly progressive and democratic-socialist forces in the non-Jewish world.

Jews are willy-nilly a world-nationality. Their cause, the whole Jewish problem, is but a part of the vast and broad problem of reshaping the order of the world in which we live. Accordingly, the Bund says to the Jews: the cause of all peoples' rights and freedom and justice is *our* cause. To the non-Jews the Bund says: the cause of free Jewish life where Jews reside is *your* cause. Altogether, it is the great struggle for one common cause, for everybody's freedom and justice, that points the difficult but only real way to a good future for all people, and the only chance for survival of the Jewish people.

IX—Recapitulation

The Bund, founded in 1897, constitutes a movement and ideology of high-principled international democratic socialism adjusted to the specific conditions of Jewish life and history. Like other socialist parties, the Bund, from its outset, found that its people—the Jewish masses—had been shaped by history into a certain national pattern. But, while most peoples of the world have been concentrated in territories of their own (the question of political sovereignty is here irrelevant), the territory of the Jewish people, as determined by the course of history long before the Bund was founded, has been limited not to one defined area, but to the world at large. Consequently, worldhood, rather than statehood or territory-hood, is the historical framework of the Jewish people. It is only within this factual framework that all the needs of the Jewish people, constituting the so-called Jewish problem, can, and must, be solved.

Generally speaking, socialist parties, striving to satisfy the needs of their peoples, have been confronted by three theoretically possible solutions. They can choose to remain within their actually inherited territory; they can seek to enlarge it; or to diminish it. To diminish one's own national territory implies acceptance of its whole or partial subjugation to a foreign rule. It may also mean its disintegration. Obviously, it harms the people concerned. To increase one's own national territory implies, as a rule, harm to other people at whose expense such territorial aggrandizement takes place. Evidently, this is the

manifestation of imperialist policy. The final choice, that of remaining within one's own area and trying, within these limits, to raise the material and spiritual standards of life, is the only one among the three possible solutions which is consistent with the principles of true humanity and which permits a socialist to combine regard for his own people with due respect for the rights of others.

The Bund, too, has been confronted with the same three choices of meeting the problems of its people—the Jewish people. Only, in this case, the three choices, in adaptation to the peculiarities of Jewish life, have been somewhat changed and therefore their true essence is less easily discernible because of their specifically Jewish appearance. The three choices, as they appear in their Jewish pattern, are the following:

One, the choice of solving the Jewish problem by diminishing Jewish peoplehood until its full disappearance as a distinct national entity, as advocated by the adherents of assimilationism. This may serve as an escape for a number of individuals. However, as previously discussed, it is no solution for an entire people which is unwilling, and by no means obliged, to wipe out its fruitful historic existence.

Two, the choice of solving the Jewish problem by territorial changes, advocated by Zionism. This brings the Jews into permanent conflict with millions of other people in and around Palestine. In addition, it cannot seriously pretend to solve the problem of the vast majority of the Jewish people, who will continue to live all over the world. In general, socialists should not, and mostly do not, accept this approach to solving national problems, particularly if, as shown in the foregoing chapters, it is no solution at all.

Three, the choice of keeping Jewish peoplehood within the countries where Jews live and will remain. This is the way of maintaining, improving, and raising the valuable qualities of Jewish nationality without detriment to any other people. It is the way of liberating Jews from any reactionary menace and oppression and making them free, *i.e.*, autonomous, to live as Jews, to develop their own standards of modern Jewish culture and to contribute in this distinct manner to the culture and progress of the world.

This is, to recapitulate, the Bund's approach to the Jewish problem. It conforms fully to the ideals and tasks of socialists throughout the world. Indeed, none among all the socialist parties desires the dissolution of their own people. Socialists everywhere strive for the continued existence and betterment of their own peoples, which can be achieved by furthering national interest in a true democratic and socialist spirit with-

out infringing on the rights and interests of other peoples. The Bund, too, struggles for the maintenance of its people within the countries of their residence, and claims therefore only those rights, freedoms, and safeguards that belong to the very substance of socialism and democracy.

In assuming this position, the Bund stands on solid ground. For, despite the changes of recent years, the Jewish tragedy during World War II, and the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jewish people—whether we like it or not—will, in its vast majority, remain outside Jewish statehood. It is this vast majority of non-Israeli Jews that actually will determine the future of the Jewish people. Their problems can be solved only on the spot, in the countries where the Jews live, and only in alliance with the democratic and labor forces of their fellow-citizens through the worldwide struggle for an order of democracy and socialism, an order which alone can secure for every individual and every people real freedom and actual possibility to build up their own human and national dignity.

Jews are — and will continue to be — a dispersed, worldwide community. The Jewish problem is, therefore, a problem of Jews living among non-Jews, and of non-Jews living with Jews. Neither the groups nor their problems can be separated. They are all interdependent. In terms of Jewish ideology, this means: Only a new world order of freedom and security for all will bring to the Jewish people full liberation, full security, and a real chance for survival.

Although much has been achieved to this effect in some democratic countries, there is still a long way to travel toward this final solution. Indeed, much optimism is required to believe in this ultimate fulfillment. And, in fact, a feeling of optimism pervades the Bund's ideology. Yet, despite the tragic past—and perhaps because of it—it should be realized that it is only within the materialization of the optimistic ideology for all mankind that the Jews can have a future at all.

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Religious Political Movements

IV