

ERETZ YISRAEL IN OUR PROGRAM AND TACTICS

EDITOR'S NOTE—The essay "Eretz Yisrael in our Program and Tactics" is an excerpt from an address delivered in Kiev, September, 1917. This excerpt was taken from the minutes of the conference as recorded by S. Har.

After the Kerensky revolution Borochoff left America to attend the Conference of the Holland-Scandinavian Socialist Committee in Stockholm. He was then also invited by the Russian Poale Zion to attend its Third Conference. In accepting the invitation, Borochoff wrote to the Central Committee of the Russian Poale Zion that he had heard that the Russian Party had turned Bolshevik, whereas he himself was still a Social-Democrat. The Central Committee informed him that the rumors were exaggerated, and that many things would be clarified upon his return. As S. Har writes: "It seems that his fears were not without cause. There existed a chasm between Borochoff and his Russian comrades (Borochoff had been away from Russia for ten years), not so much with reference to his general views, as to his Jewish views which he expressed in his literary and Party activities in America."

Borochoff came to the convention and delivered this famous address. To the young reader it may seem to contain nothing revolutionary. But a thorough study of Borochoff's earlier theories will reveal the profound changes that had occurred within him.

With the exception of his unrealistic stand on the Jewish National Fund and the Zionist Congress, Borochoff formulated a new orientation. (The symptoms of this orientation were visible in almost all of Borochoff's writings during the World War.) The new terminology which he employed gave expression not only to Borochoff the thinker, but also to Borochoff the man of sentiment. Therein he proclaimed his faith in the Jewish cooperative colonization movement; he proclaimed anew the belief in Jewish Nationalism. Whereas formerly he had contended that we go to Palestine not only because of our historic and cultural ties with that land but chiefly because of the pressure of the objective forces, he now proclaimed as a justifiable motivating force our desire and longing for a Jewish National Home. *Eretz Yisrael*, unlike Palestine, is not only our "strategic base" but is our National Home. "We must not hesitate to proclaim loudly 'Jewish Nation,'" he said. "When we say 'Jewish Nation' we know that it has existed even before the class division in modern society.

We also know that the proletariat at one time will constitute the nation and that the working class is the one that creates the nation." How similar this is to Ben Gurion's maxim, *mimaamad l'am* (from class to nation)!

The effects of the speech are revealed in the following description written by S. Har. "The speech made a very strong impression and was received with great enthusiasm by most of the delegates at the convention . . . Among the leaders, however, there reigned confusion. Some of the leaders combated the new revolutionary orientation, quoting ancient statements from Borochoff's own teachings. In the midst of these polemics, many phrases were flung: 'Borochoff has betrayed his own theory'; 'we do not accept the new Borochoff'; 'we believe in the theory of the old one!'"

Though Borochoff was successful in persuading the convention to adopt his point of view, the further developments of the Russian Poale Zion widened the schism that existed between the followers of the old Borochoff and the adherents of the author of "Eretz Yisrael in Our Program and Tactics."

TIME IN its flight has not passed us by; it has brought to the fore new slogans and deeds. Some twelve years ago, our Party, the Poale Zion, made its first appearance as an organized body. Since then, the proletariat in general and the Jewish proletariat in particular have advanced.

Hitherto the proletariat sought to remove only its immediate obstacles; now, it strives to create a new society. Our program, too, must keep pace with our growing aspirations.

Our terminology must be made richer and more elastic. Formerly, we approached life in general from a naive, abstract point of view, and only our immediate demands were prompted by purely realistic conditions. Now, however, there have arisen in Jewish life cultural and aesthetic needs which demand immediate self-expression.

Socialism has several aspects. Economically; it means the socialization of the means of production; politically, the establishment of the dictatorship of the toiling masses; emotionally, the abolition of the reign of egotism and anarchy which characterizes the capitalistic system.

And so it is with Zionism. Economically, it means the concentration of the Jewish masses in Palestine; politically, the gaining of territorial autonomy; emotionally, the striving for a home.

Recent times have witnessed a desire on our part to give expression to these emotions. And we need not fear what our neighbors will say . . .

Twelve years ago, we clung to the epigram "Better a Jew without a beard than a beard without a Jew." Then we did not attach any significance to form and to the aesthetic aspects of life. It had to be that way, for then our battle was fought on two fronts: the *Bundist*¹ and the General Zionist.² Lest we be confused with the latter we had to be cautious in our terminology. But even then, we did not fear non-*Kosher* terms. Our program of that time always employed the term "Jewish Nation".³

But times have changed. The difference between our Party and the others is sufficiently clear. No one will mistake our identity. It is therefore an opportune time to introduce a newer and richer terminology. Now we can and must employ an emotional terminology. Now we can and must proclaim: "Eretz Yisrael⁴—a Jewish home!"

Our chief concern, however, is our program. The class interests of the Jewish proletariat remain unchanged. Our ultimate aim is Socialism; our immediate need is Zionism. The class struggle is the means to achieve both.

Our class struggle, however, is an abnormal one. It is largely thwarted by the prevailing conditions under which our people live and by the national struggle—the conflict between the forces of production and the conditions of production, as I have outlined elsewhere.⁵

¹ See footnote 2, p. 175.

² In the beginning of the Zionist movement, General Zionism was the main force embracing bourgeois as well as liberal elements. Nowadays, General Zionism is divided into two main groups: Group A includes the progressive and pro-labor Zionists; Group B, the reactionary and anti-labor elements.

³ In the earlier periods of the Jewish Socialist and Labor movements which were affected by cosmopolitan thought and phraseology, the term "Jewish Nation" was avoided. Kautsky's volume, *Are Jews a Race?*, is also characteristic of this cosmopolitan outlook on the Jewish people. Assimilationism and Reform-Judaism agreed upon and created an ideological philosophy that Jews are a religious group and not a nation.

⁴ Literally, Land of Israel. For the same reason as in (3), the term "Eretz Yisrael" was taboo; also because of the religious, historic and sentimental connotations. Even today the Yiddish daily, *The Forward*, which has of late accepted a positive attitude toward Zionism and Eretz Yisrael, still avoids the use of "Eretz Yisrael". Instead it always refers to it as "Palestina".

⁵ In his essays "Our Platform" and "The National Question and the Class Struggle".

In the past, the international Socialist proletariat was weak. It was not interested in foreign policy nor in the national problem. But times have changed. The Socialist conferences in Zimmerwald and Stockholm indicate a new epoch in the struggle of the world proletariat. But does the Jewish worker keep pace with these new trends? In spite of his enthusiasm and tremendous revolutionary energy, the Jewish worker exerts but little influence. He is as impotent as the rock-bound Prometheus. This tragic plight compels him to demand a home for the Jewish people. This home will serve as a strategic base for the creative efforts of the Jewish worker in all fields of human endeavor.

Years ago we said: Zionism is a *stychic* [natural, objective, or dynamic] process.⁶ Our only task is to remove all the obstacles which interfere with this process. And we left the creative work to the bourgeois Zionists.

⁶ The concept "*stychic process*" is found in all his major writings. In fact this concept constitutes a basic element of Borochoy's theory. The word *stychic* is derived from the Greek meaning "order". In religious literature this concept is frequently used to denote the elements of nature operating in the cosmos. In Russian Marxian and in sociological literature, the concept denotes processes which are not within the sphere of man's consciousness and will.

In his earlier writings, Borochoy contended that the immigration of Jews into Palestine and their concentration in it will come about not solely because of our Zionist aspirations or because of Jewry's sentimental attachments to its old home, but primarily because of the natural, objective, or dynamic tendencies of life which force the Jew to immigrate into Palestine.

A. Revusky, in his article, "Ber Borochoy and Present Jewish Realities" (*The Pioneer Woman Magazine*, February, 1936), explains this concept as follows:

There is no better example of a *stychic* process than the present Jewish immigration into Palestine, where individuals from different countries, each driven by his own misery, form a great mass force, molding a new commonwealth out of chaos. Germany with its barbaric Hitlerism; Poland with its economic crusade against Jewish existence; Yemen with its medieval persecutions—all are aspects of the same acute Jewish problem. They are creating a desperate demand for a new haven of refuge. In other countries where the attacks on Jewish positions are proceeding at a slower pace, large sections of the Jewish population are being up-rooted every year; and many others, threatened by extinction, are in dire need of a secure haven. All this helps to broaden the *stychic* process of Jewish immigration to Palestine and to lend it tremendous momentum.

The phenomenon of the present Palestine immigration, over-flooding the facilities of organized Zionism and always meeting greater restrictions imposed on it by the present mandatory rulers of the country, is exactly the kind of a *stychic* process anticipated by Borochoy thirty years ago. Can it be denied that it is the *stychic* process which is responsible for the scope of present-day Palestine, and that our organized activities play merely an auxiliary role in this great historic drama which unfolds itself before the astonishing eyes of the world?

Borochoy's strong belief in *stychic* process does not imply inactivity. It is not to be confused with fatalism. Any interpretation which is guilty of such confusion is based on malice or lack of understanding. As Borochoy himself repeatedly stated, processes that are taking place in a human environment are of the organic kind. They do not exclude organized activity of

There are two types of natural processes: the mechanical and the organic.⁷ We erred formerly when we contended that natural emigration waves are already under way. General Zionists were closer to the truth when they said that for the present only the organic process has begun. It is clear now that what motivated our previous mechanical conception was our reaction to the Zionists' assertion that the will⁸ of our nation is the *sole* determining factor in Zionism.

Our experiments in Palestine have taught us a new lesson. Colonization in Palestine is an especially difficult task. But in spite of the difficulties and temporary failures, colonization in Palestine is developing and is gradually approaching the Socialist ideal. I refer, of course, to the co-operatives⁹ and particularly to

individuals. Quite the contrary, this organized pioneering activity is strongly spurred by the conviction that it is much more than a product of multiple individual whims, that it is basically rooted in a strong historical necessity.

This thesis was accepted by certain factions in the Socialist-Zionist movement, and rejected or minimized by others. It is not the task of the editor to solve this age-long philosophic battle, which of the two—man's *will* or *circumstances*—operates as the determining factor in our social life. The history of the immigration movement into Palestine contains in its records both the human material whose driving force to Palestine was Hitler, and the heroic movement of the *Second Aliya* ("immigration stream" during the period 1905-1914) which had the choice of emigrating to America or Palestine but voluntarily chose the latter.

⁷ By "organic process" is meant that process which is directed by man's consciousness and free will. By "mechanical process" is meant those forces which operate apart from man's efforts.

⁸ The assertion made by some that Borochof was a *thorough* materialist is questionable in the light of his later writings of which the following citation is characteristic:

Men, at different times, have in their own way envisioned "the days to come". Some envisioned it through the power of prophecy; others, at a later period, envisioned it through mystical ecstasy; and still later, others have envisioned it by cabalistic calculations. The great revolutionists of England and France have by means of their "common sense" and "mathematical proof" predetermined that "day to come". Marx did it on the basis of his "historic necessity", concentration of capital, and the laws of proletarianization. In my opinion, all were correct; for after all, these predeterminations, whether made by mystics, logicians, or scientists, were guided by the powerful voice of man's *will*. They dreamed because they wished, and all of them wished freedom, fraternity, and equality. Each conceived it differently, in accordance with the spirit of his time; each interpreted it differently in accordance with his particular terminology; yet, each desired the same. And today we witness the fact that the will for independence rules the world—that is the *will* of which it was said "where there is a will there is a way". ("The Hagada of a Freethinker", *Die Wahrheit*, April 8, 1917.)

⁹ It will not be an historical error to state that the co-operative movement developed in spite of the ill-natured opposition or indifference of orthodox-Socialists, who regarded the co-operative movement as Utopian or even harmful to the cause of the "class struggle". Borochof, in his early years, did not look with great favor upon the co-operative movement, but in his later years he modified his views as this article indicates.

those pursuing the Oppenheimer¹⁰ plan. Co-operative colonization in which the Jewish worker plays a very great role is also the way to a Socialist society in Palestine. While this colonization is not in itself Socialism, it does teach the Jewish proletariat the elementary lessons of self-help.

Small as the *Yishub*¹¹ is, the Jews enjoy an autonomous life and have their own courts, post-offices, and banking system.¹² Jewish labor has gradually become enrooted even in such a small *Yishub*. The Jewish working class is not as yet large; it nevertheless plays a prominent role. Its organizations and institutions, such as the *Hashomer*¹³ and the "Palestine Workers' Fund",¹⁴ are publicly recognized.

It is important to note that Palestine is a semi-agrarian country, and hence it is adapted to the Jewish city-bred immigrant. Palestine is also the center of Jewish public interest. It may also be said that Palestine is the cynosure of all Jewish eyes—its every activity commands the attention of friend and foe. In the last analysis this is the best guarantee for Palestine's proper development.

Many point out the obstacles which we encounter in our colonization work. Some say that the Turkish law hinders our work, others contend that Palestine is insignificantly small, and still others charge us with the odious crime of wishing to oppress and expel the Arabs from Palestine.¹⁵

According to the latest investigations (for example, Ben Zvi's), Palestine's boundaries include some eighty or ninety

¹⁰ Franz Oppenheimer, a German-Jewish economist, devised a plan for co-operative colonization in Palestine, the central idea being that the members of the colony be treated as ordinary workers under the guidance of experts. When the members of the colony will have undergone the necessary training, they are to manage and administrate the work themselves. This experiment was first tried in Merchavia in 1909, having received the approval of the Ninth Zionist Congress of the same year.

¹¹ *Yishub*—literally, settlement; in Zionist literature it refers to the Jewish community in Palestine.

¹² During the World War, the Jewish Community in Palestine had a monetary system of its own.

¹³ See footnote 5, p. 91.

¹⁴ See footnote 4, p. 116.

¹⁵ This is a charge often made by Communists and Arab reactionaries. Even the official government report of Palestine refuted the charges that Jews are responsible for allegedly landless Arabs. See A. Revusky's *Jews in Palestine*, pp. 332-3.

thousand square kilometers, a land capacity sufficient to hold tens of millions of inhabitants. But even in its present limited boundaries, Palestine's twenty-seven thousand square kilometers can accommodate up to nine million people, whereas now it is even short of a half-million. It is understood, of course, that the Turkish rule and the prevailing system will cease. The War will create a change.

When the waste lands are prepared for colonization, when modern technique is introduced, and when the other obstacles are removed, there will be sufficient land to accommodate both the Jews and the Arabs. Normal relations between the Jews and Arabs will and must prevail.

I repeat that we must originate independent activities in Palestine. We cannot merely content ourselves, as we have done until now, with the work of bourgeois Zionists and with our critical attitude towards it.

We must define anew our stand towards the various Zionist institutions. We cannot participate in the Zionist Congress¹⁶ as long as it is a Party tribune. We will, however, participate in a World Jewish Congress because it will be a national tribune, having a semi-parliamentary status.

¹⁶ Among the numerous schisms in the Poale Zion movement (1905-1920) one occurred on the question of participation in the Zionist Congress. The "later" Borochoy was an anti-Congressist. Some self-styled Borochoyists (e. g. the left Poale Zion) maintain to this very day the attitude that Socialists cannot and must not practice class collaboration. Since the Zionist Congress includes non-Socialist elements they contend that the proletariat cannot participate in it. With reference to the principle of class-collaboration, Borochoy the anti-Congressist said:

The traditional attitude of the American Poale Zion is that even though Socialist-Zionists constitute a separate Party, they must nevertheless participate in the World Zionist Congress and in all its institutions. The Russian Poale Zion consider themselves as a separate proletarian organization and regard the Zionist Congress and its institutions as purely bourgeois instruments. . . .

But this has nothing to do with the question whether or not we participate in the Congress. Even if the Congress is a bourgeois institution, the Poale Zion may deem it expedient to participate in it for tactical reasons, i. e., to influence bourgeois Zionism along our lines. The dispute regarding the Zionist Congress is but one small aspect of the entire question: How should the Poale Zion regard the Zionist organization—as a bourgeois organization or as an all-inclusive movement which embraces all classes of Jewry? Workers may participate even in certain bourgeois organizations, if participation benefits the working class. But the chief difference is as to whether we regard the Zionist Congress as a strange and bourgeois organization or as our own Poale Zion institution and an all-inclusive organization of the Jewish masses. ("Zionists and Poale Zionists", *Die Wahrheit*, 1915.)

How different is the above from the early writings of Borochoy, the champion of the Zionist Congress! In "Our Platform" (1905) Borochoy vigorously attacked those Socialists and Socialist-Zionists who preached against participation in the Congress. To the charges that were advanced that the Zionist Congress had no right to speak in the name of World Jewry, Borochoy said:

Because the immigration into Palestine embraces more and more the interest

We are sympathetic to the Jewish National Fund,¹⁷ and as individuals we may even give it our support. But our official fund is the Palestine Workers' Fund, which deserves our full support. Similarly we must support the co-operative colonization movement.

In short, we must initiate a Socialist program of activities in Palestine. Then the Jewish worker, like the rock-bound Prometheus, will free himself from the vultures that torture him and will snatch the heavenly fires for himself and for the Jewish people.

of the Jewish masses, the voluntary Zionist institutions have a right to speak in the name of the Jewish nation and thereby influence its course. To those protagonists who maintained that there was no sense to the participation of the Jewish proletariat in the Zionist Congress because, unlike a parliament, it had no means of compelling, Borochoy replied:

. . . Police and prison are not the only means to compel obedience. . . . When there exists a relationship between economic interests, courts and police are not essential. . . . The voluntary initiative of social forces which find expression in the Zionist organization can achieve all that is necessary in the way of the regulation of immigration.

¹⁷ The objects of the Jewish National Fund as redefined by the resolution of the London Zionist Conference in 1920 are:

- (1) To acquire the land in Palestine with the voluntary contributions of the Jewish people, such land to be the common property of the Jewish people.
- (2) To lease the land exclusively on hereditary leasehold for cultivation or building thereon.
- (3) To facilitate the settlement of working farmers.
- (4) To ensure the cultivation of the land by Jews.
- (5) To combat speculation in land values.

Why then does Borochoy say that "as individuals we may even give it our support"? This may be explained by the fact that Borochoy in common with other, so-called orthodox Socialists, believe that institutions not created or solely controlled by the worker could not be considered his own. In the early stages of the Jewish National Fund (it was established in 1901), there were some Poale Zionists who opposed it or, at best, were indifferent to it. That the Jewish National Fund would be that agency which would enable the establishment of the more than 100 *moshavim* (co-operative small-holder settlements) and *kvutzot* (collective land settlements, or communes) which primarily benefit the worker (and, employing Borochoy's own concept, creating for him "the strategic base") Borochoy could not at that time foresee. Later, however, Borochoy modified his stand somewhat. Today the Left Poale Zion alone still cling to this anachronistic concept, though they, too, do not hesitate to share in the benefits of the Jewish National Fund. In spite of their theoretical opposition some of their members are settled on Jewish National Fund land.

In saying, "We are sympathetic to the Jewish National Fund", Borochoy already displayed an altered viewpoint. Admittedly, the Jewish National Fund, too, had changed. In the pre-war days there were some cases where the Jewish National Fund aided Jewish colonists who boycotted organized Jewish labor. It was only later that the principle of "Jewish labor on Jewish National Fund land" was incorporated. This may partly explain Borochoy's previous contention that the Jewish worker can rely only on his own institutions. As said before, with the change in policy of the Jewish National Fund, Borochoy, too, modified his views. The following citation clearly indicates it:

The Jewish National Fund strives to redeem the land of Palestine not for the individual Jew, but for the Jewish people; not as the private property of the rich Jew, but as the national property of the entire people. The original purpose of the Jewish National Fund was that the land which it was to acquire and all the buildings, machines, and inventory thereon should belong to the entire people. In the course of time, the Jewish National Fund incorporated another aim in its program, and that is, that all the work performed on its land should be done by Jewish labor. These, then, are the two basic principles of the Jewish National Fund—the nationalization of the land and the nationalization of the labor on it. (From the article, "The Jewish National Fund", *Die Wahrheit*, December 24, 1916.)