

forever and ever,  
*O Captain, My Captain!*

YSCADAL

V'YSKADASH: Honored and hallowed be your name  
forever and ever,  
Frederick Douglass,  
John Brown!

World, white world—take heed  
in my grief I am not alone:  
for in my tears, in the midst of my  
own crying

I hear the mighty weeping of the  
Negro people!—

*Amen.*

AMEN!

### CHICAGO PROGRESSIVE JEWS ON THE ENERGY CRISIS

“ANTI-Semitism, Racism and the Energy Crisis” was the heading of a full-page ad March 14 in *The Sentinel*, Chicago Jewish weekly, with 101 signatories, including such writers for JEWISH CURRENTS as Jack Weinman and Eli Picheny and subscribers to it as Geraldine Revzin, Zolman Emyanitoff, Blanche and Philip S. Brail, Mabel and Boris H. Brail, Celia and Harry Farmilant, Anne and Harry Gaynor, Sid Orlov, Evelyn and Erwin Salk, Leo Sigunick and Judith and Irving Steinberg.

The ad noted that “signs appear in a closed gasoline station in suburban St. Louis, ‘Don’t blame us for high prices, blame the Jews’ . . . ‘The Zionists put us out of business.’ Auto bumper stickers in Los Angeles bear the slogan, ‘We need oil, not Jews.’ Right-wing newspapers circulating in the tens of thousand blare the false message of Jewish responsibility for the U.S. oil shortage, and this despite the fact that less than 10% of the oil consumed here originated in Arab countries.”

The sponsoring group, Ad Hoc Committee on Anti-Semitism, Racism and the Energy Crisis, “proposes the following specific program: 1) The profiteering oil monopolies must be curbed. . . . We urge a roll-back of oil prices to Jan., 1971 levels . . . 2) We welcome the success of the initial negotiations between Israel and Egypt which have led to a military disengagement . . . 3) We urge governmental agencies to rigorously prosecute instigators and disseminators of racist anti-Semitic propaganda who violate the U.S. Civil Rights Act . . . We call upon all concerned Americans, including the Jewish people, Blacks, other minorities and Labor, to unite in a powerful coalition to solve our nation’s critical problems and to combat those who fan the flames of anti-Semitism and racism.”

Those wishing to imitate this program in other cities and/or support the Chicago group may write to the secretary, Mr. Elias Picheny, Suite 16G, 3180 N. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Ill. 60656.

## The Bund Revisited: IV

### After World War II

By LOUIS HARAP

WHEN peace came in 1945, only a small remnant of the centuries-old Yiddish-speaking community of Eastern Europe survived the Hitler Holocaust. The working class Jewish constituency of the Bund in Poland was reduced to a symbolic few. After the war, these Bundists cooperated with Jewish Communists in promoting Jewish schools and culture in Yiddish.

Extraordinarily generous provisions were provided by the Polish Communist regime. The Bund put out its own Yiddish *Di Folkszaytung* and Polish *Glos Bundu*, but its position on national cultural autonomy was vigorously opposed by the Jewish Communists, who charged the Bund with nationalism. The Cold War had begun, and the Polish Bundists found

themselves on one side, and the Bund in the rest of the world, mainly U.S. and France, on the other side. In 1948 the Bund in Poland decided to cut its ties with the Bund elsewhere, and also with the Socialist parties’ conference in London, which had excluded left Socialist parties.

Discussion took place toward organic unity with the Jewish Communists, and in Jan., 1949, the Polish Bund dissolved itself in favor of individual Bundists applying for admission into the Polish Workers Party, and the policy of national cultural autonomy was renounced. Henceforth, whatever existence the Bund was to have, it would have in the capitalist world.

When the ashes had settled on the devastation of European Jewry after World War II, the remnants of the Bund were scattered over many countries, including Israel, and on five continents. We can follow the post-war fortunes of the Bund in its main lines through the official Yiddish Bund publication, *Unzer Tsait* (Our Time), published in New York, and the remainder of our account will for the most part be based on issues from 1948-1950 and 1972-73, and mainly upon the resolutions passed at world conferences of the Bund.

In May, 1947, the surviving Bund leaders gathered their forces to assemble the First Bund World Coordinating Committee Conference in Brussels. This meeting reaffirmed Bund principles and voted to join the International Socialist Conference (successor to the Second International), established a world headquarters in New York, where the largest number of Bundists was now located, and a European Secretariat in Paris, and organized itself as the executive committee of the surviving Bund movement. By the time of the Second World Conference in 1948 in New

York, Israel had emerged and the Bund, which had opposed the establishment of Israel, had to come to grips with the new reality of the Jewish state, and to take its position in the Cold War.

*Considering that Zionism had* been among the main antagonists of the Bund for decades, the creation of Israel was a major challenge to the Bund. For here was a community of Jews actually formed into a state, and not merely an autonomous national assembly. For half a century the Bund had maintained that the Jews were a "world nation without territory" in consonance with Otto Bauer's definition of a nation as "a community of fate."

The ideologies of the Bund and Zionism were in several respects direct contraries. The Zionists agitated for the "ingathering of the exiles" in Israel; the Bundists regarded the Jews as an autonomous nationality in the various states where they lived and were at home, and should remain there while cultivating their Jewish national life in the Yiddish language.

The Zionists regarded Jewish history after the fall of the Temple as a disgraceful interval in Jewish history from which they dissociated themselves, and established Hebrew as the national language. The Bund embraced the entire Jewish tradition and regarded Yiddish as the national language. The Zionists maintained that the solution of the Jewish Question on a world scale lay in the creation of a Jewish state; the Bund believed that the creation of a Jewish state would not solve the Jewish problem, but that only a democratic socialism on a world scale could achieve full equality for the Jews.

The Bund was not swept off its feet by the creation of Israel, but clung to its basic position. Israel was

only one part of the world Jewish problem, the Bund asserted, and not the central aspect, as the Zionist held. The main resolution passed at the World Coordinating Committee meeting in Oct., 1948 spelled out the Bund's policy on Israel: the Jews remain a world people; not only is the creation of Israel no solution to the Jewish problem, but it puts the achievement of Israel in peril from the enveloping Arab states.

The task of Jews everywhere is, as always, to struggle together with non-Jewish democratic and socialist forces for their common goals, and for free Jewish development; to fight against assimilation, and for Jewish culture in Yiddish. The resolution warns against "negative relations" with Israel, and urges help in the fight for peace with the Arabs, and the ultimate achievement of federation of Israel with the surrounding Arab states. The Bund also appealed for the recognition of Yiddish in Israel as a national language, and that Yiddish be taught there.

A minority resolution, in which one-fifth of the 50 delegates concurred, was substantially the same except for some different emphases, such as that Israel was now an "important" part of the Jewish people, that Israel was justified in resisting the British mandate and the British-supported Arabs; warning Jews against "illusions" that the existence of Israel had solved the Jewish Question, and that Jews outside Israel should establish the closest relations with Israel, while rejecting the Zionists' attempt to monopolize Jewish efforts outside Israel, to the detriment of Jewish activists inside their own countries.

*In considering the position of the* Bund on the Cold War, it should be recalled that there were strong anti-Communist (that is, anti-Bolshevik)

forces in the Bund leadership since the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party Congress in 1903, when the Bund left the party. After rejoining the party in 1906, the Bund maintained an independent position on a number of issues, but tended to be allied with the Mensheviks, finally joining them in 1912, when the Mensheviks accepted national cultural autonomy.

The majority, which at first favored joining the Comintern and then refused to accept all the conditions of membership, dwindled with time. Some left wingers left the Bund for the Communist Party. In any case, between the two world wars the Bund settled into an anti-Communist stance. The murder of Erlich and Alter intensified this position, to which the Bund has adhered since.

Thus, the 1948 Bund Conference regarded itself as belonging to a "third force" between the "expansionist" Communists and the capitalists with the U.S. at the head. The danger to the progress of mankind and to peace, the Bund held, stemmed from both sides. The Bund hailed the victory of the British Labor Party as a giant step toward democratic world socialism and considered support of the Marshall Plan obligatory for the rebuilding of Europe.

Communism the Bund considered a danger to the future of the Jewish people because it threatened to cause the atrophy of Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union. Only the achievement of world democratic socialism, which the Bund differentiates from Communism, could bring freedom and security to all Jews.

The resolution further maintained that, although the danger of war threatened from both sides, "aggressive Soviet imperialism" and not U.S. imperialism had become the greater danger because it was not subject to

check from the workers and the masses, as, the resolution asserted, is the case with the workers and masses of the capitalist imperialist countries. The conference also resolved that the just-passed McCarran anti-communist act was a "grave error" because it gives the democratic world the "wrong impression" of America, and because the Constitution and existing laws already afford sufficient protection against Communist propaganda. The only greeting during the conference was to the newly-formed Bund chapter in Israel, but not to Israel itself.

*A further step in the post-war reconstruction* of the Bund was the first conference of Bund groups in the U.S. and Canada, held in New York in the fall of 1950. Bundism had been reinforced in the U.S. by immigration from Poland, especially since 1939, and by the immigration of survivors from the concentration camps. While the significance of the conference was mainly organizational, several aspects stand out.

The temperature of the Cold War was apparent in the major report by the top Bund leader, Dr. Emanuel Scherer, which went beyond the 1948 resolution. "Just as Hitler before 1939, so today Stalin is the greatest danger to peace in the world." While fascism and communism differ in their economic base, said Scherer, they are alike in their "immorality and aggressive military imperialism." Both "appeasement" of the Soviet Union and a pacifist position, he said, deliver the world to the mercies of the Soviets, so that rearmament, military preparedness and a western military alliance are unavoidable measures of defense against Soviet aggression. Scherer quite explicitly, however, rejects the "preventive war" talk that was current at the time.

On the American scene the con-

ference discussion centered on the opportunities opened to the Bund by the post-war interest in and activity about Jewish life in all lands. The First World Coordinating Conference in 1947 had judged that the U.S. would now become "the most important center of Jewish national renaissance." The Bund in the U.S. should fight against assimilationism and for the "free development, deepening and expansion of Yiddish culture," fight for the rights of the Yiddish language, for Jewish people's schools in Yiddish, for democratic Kehillas and other autonomous Jewish activities, and for secularism.

But a second report, by Dr. Emanuel Pat, aroused the ire of the old line Bundist leaders, for they scented compromise in Pat's critical remarks. Pat did indeed criticize the Bund for its insufficient attention to American Jewish problems, and charged that the Bund had not fully examined its relations to organizations in which Bund members were influential, such as the Workmen's Circle and the Jewish Labor Committee. He chided the Bund for its opposition to the creation of Israel, and for the fact that the Bund's relationship to Israel is not positive, and that the Bund had not related itself properly to the democratic socialist movement in Israel. He regarded American Jewish interest in both America and Israel as of equal importance, and called for a "synthesis of *duh un dortn*" (here—U.S.—and there—Israel), and support for the democratic socialist movement in Israel.

The two leading Bund theoreticians, Dr. Emanuel Scherer and E. Nowogrudsky, made it clear in the ensuing discussion that they rejected Pat's criticism on the score of Israel. Both men asserted that Pat was treading on dangerous ground when he asserted that Americans must fight for

Jews "*duh un dortn*," for the Bund theory holds that their fight is "*duh*," here on home ground. The Bundist who suggests this dual aim, said Nowogrudsky, is already on the way to Zionism. The resolutions passed by the conference show that the leadership was firmly in the hands of the old guard.

By the time of the Bund's 75th anniversary in 1972, it was clear that the organization had undergone no significant change in orientation in the 1950's and 1960's. That gala occasion was celebrated at the Fifth World Coordinating Committee Conference in New York in April, 1972, to which delegates came from 12 countries. The Bund's continuing belief in socialism was symbolized by red covers on *Unzer Tsait* throughout the year. The basic platform of the Bund was reasserted: combating assimilation, opposition to Zionism as nationalistic, promotion of Yiddish as the national language, autonomous development of Jewish culture in Yiddish, belief that the Jewish Question will not be solved finally until socialism is achieved, and joint struggles with non-Jewish workers and socialists for its achievement.

**The conference resolutions applied these principles to current issues.** By now the Bund acknowledged that Israel is an "important" event for the Jewish people, but it opposed the urging of Zionist leaders that Israel should be the potential home for all the world's Jews. The Bund further urged that full democratic rights be accorded to non-Jews in Israel, that Israel remove all the barriers to peace with the Arabs, that Israel remove all obstacles to the use of Yiddish, and that Yiddish be given full rights in public life.

The resolution recognized the "great achievements" of Israel, but deplored

its "false and harmful orientation to the politics of Zionism." The Bund criticized the "Hebraization" of Jewish culture in Israel and the negative attitude toward Yiddish literature and culture, as well as the official status of the religious approach to civil life. Criticizing the oppression of the Arabs within Israel, the resolution pointed to the official Egyptian offer of Feb., 1971 to recognize Israel in spite of the barriers set up by Arab extremists. Annexationism is a dangerous policy for Israel, concludes the resolution, and the path to peace lies in fulfillment of the 1967 United Nations Resolution 242.

The position on Soviet Jews and their emigration to Israel is consistent with Bund principles. The resolution on this question calls attention to "national-cultural" discrimination against Jews in the Soviet Union in all phases of Jewish expression, despite formal Soviet recognition of the Jewish nationality in passports. The Bund therefore demanded Soviet provision for Jewish cultural life and religious freedom for Jews. The Bund favored emigration of Jews as a human right not only for Soviet Jews but for all Soviet citizens. The Bund criticized the Israeli and Zionist leadership for agitating exclusively for emigration while ignoring the struggle for Jewish national rights within the Soviet Union for the majority of Soviet Jews, who will remain there. The resolution deplored the fact that most American Jews have, under Zionist inspiration, given up the struggle for national rights for Soviet Jews because they are wholly preoccupied with supporting emigration to Israel.

Implacable opposition to Communism and the Communist states persists in the Bund, as expressed, for instance, in its view that it is a "tragedy" that in Vietnam it is "commu-

## HARRY LEVITAN HONORED

Renowned in Philadelphia for decades as a civil liberties and labor lawyer, Harry Levitan was honored by the Philadelphia Lawyers Guild at a dinner March 16. With 300 admirers crowding the University Museum quarters to capacity, tributes were paid to Levitan by veterans of progressive legal battles, Arthur Kinoy and William Kunstler of New York and Joseph Forer of Washington. D.C. Enthusiasm ran high.

A telegram for the occasion sent by our Editor, Morris U. Schappes, read:

"The wretched of the earth in Philadelphia have found in Harry Levitan a People's Defender, a man made fearless by his social idealism in the pursuit of social progress. I salute him. We of JEWISH CURRENTS are honored to have him as one of our Life Subscribers."

Congratulations are also in order to Elsie Levitan, his wife, known to our readers for her reviews, articles and poems.

nism and not democratic socialism" that is the "leading force in the fight against colonialism and domestic reaction." The Bund favored quick withdrawal from all Southeast Asia (this is April, 1972); it also protested economic and political exploitation of the "Third World" and advocated full disarmament under international controls. Finally, the Bund called on all socialists in the "democratic lands" to put more "dynamism and vigor" into their struggle for "structural reforms that would open the way to the free socialist society."

(To be concluded)