

**HIT HARD BY HITLERITE GENOCIDE IN EUROPE,
THE BUND NOW FACES ATTACKS BY PRO-ZIONISTS**

THE JEWISH BUND RE-FORMS ITS RANKS

By AL FINDLEY

The third world conference of the Jewish Bund, held in Montreal in the middle of April, represented a post-war consolidation of the remnants of this once-powerful organization, which has suffered extensively from the decimation of the Jewish peoples in Europe.

The Bund has a long and honorable tradition of service to, and struggle for, both socialism and the Jewish working class; this is a fact that is widely recognized regardless of differences with their point of view. Visible at the Montreal conference was the terrific impact of the destruction wrought by Hitler on the Jewish people. The Bund's base — the Yiddish-speaking masses of Eastern Europe, with their revolutionary struggle against capitalist poverty and discrimination—had been cut to pieces by the Nazi terror. The émigré branches of the Bund, which once were far-flung, have now become the Bund.

Divorced from its main base, the Bund became more pliable to pressures to conform to the reformist ideas of some of its "friends" who hold high places in the labor movement.

In addition, the Bund, which has traditionally been anti-Zionist, ran into another serious problem in the post-war period with the outburst of pro-Zionist sentiment among the Jews in connection with the struggle in Palestine and the establishment of the state of Israel. Insofar as this development was also due (at least in part) to reaction to the terrible fate of European Jewry, it represented another blow at the Bund resulting from Hitlerism—the other side of the coin of the decimation of the Bund's Jewish base.

Organizationally the third world conference marked a step forward for the Bund in this period. On a world scale, it now has one daily and 6 periodicals, some cultural institutions, and some newly organized units. Some of these play a role in Jewish life in their countries.

MAJORITY PRO-WEST

At the Montreal conference the organization took its stand on the main political questions of the world today.

The resolutions (now published in the Bund organ *Unser Tsait*) show that the majority right wing of the movement has unfortunately lined the Bund up quite clearly with social-democratic reformism and the U. S. war camp. But a left wing, which obtained the support of about 10 delegates, presented an alternative set of resolutions which put forward a more militant Marxist position of independent class action.

The right-wing majority resolution, ascribes the war threat in the world exclusively to Stalinist aggression and imperialism, and paints the organization of the Western military camp as solely a justified reaction to this threat. It states solidarity with the "demand that the Western powers should oppose the threatened Communist attack on Formosa" but "at the same time the democratic world [meaning the capitalist world] must do all that it can to save mankind from a third world war."

Otherwise it takes a slap at "those reactionary-capitalist and nationalist circles of the Western world that want or speculate about a preventive war," at the "remnants of capitalist imperialism," at "the Chiang Kai-sheks, the Syngman Rhee's, the Francos, and other such allies" who are a "hindrance in the fight of the democratic world against communism"; but at no point in this right-wing statement is even lip-service given to the idea that there is a connection between war and the drives of capitalism (as distinct from the "hindrance" of "bad" capitalists and bad allies). Instead, the resolution winds up with the pious avowal that "a lasting, permanent peace can, however, only be achieved in a world that has vanquished the various forms of totalitarianism and also capitalism" and has built socialism.

Even the right-wing resolution, how-

ever, inserts advocacy of an "understanding between the two blocs" to relieve tension, though "not at the price of appeasement."

'BEVANITE' WING

The left-wing minority, which can perhaps best be described as "Bevanite" in its political orientation, divided its political documents into three resolutions. In its general resolution on "The Problems of Socialism," it emphasized adherence to the basic ideas of class-struggle socialism: "... affirm that the Bund remains loyal to the fundamentals of socialism which have made the international working class into the decisive factor in changing the world, in the struggle against capitalism, national oppression, against imperialism and war. The basic ideas remain unbroken and have been strengthened by the reality of events that we have lived through and are living in at present."

The resolution stresses the independence of the socialist movement, the fight against imperialism and for proletarian democracy. It advocates that "an International of action should become a reality in our era of direct struggle for socialism."

In another point, the resolution advocates that the Bund "support and work together with all the forces of the proletarian movement that are opposed to both extremes—against reformism and against communism."

The left-wing position taken up by the group shares not only the virtues of Bevanism but also many of its weaknesses, most particularly in foreign policy and with respect to Stalinism. With regard to the "extremes" just quoted, for example, the resolution proposes to "slowly bridge the gap that divides the working-class movement itself into rival camps." This equivocal attitude toward Stalinism strongly affects also the left wing's resolution on the war question.

Where the right wing had pushed the Bund into support of the capitalist war camp, the left wing reacts with a counter-position of neutralist "coexistence," associated with no analysis of Stalinism or of Stalinist imperialism and no clear differentiation from the latter. It limits its programmatic proposals mainly to the neutralist platform of negotiated deal, opposition to atomic weapons, anti-capitalist-colonialism, etc.

Both wings came out strongly against German rearmament, mainly on ground of the danger of renewed German militarism and Nazism, but neither recognized in any way the right of the German people to achieve their own sovereignty including an army.

The positive features of the left wing's "Bevanism" in foreign policy show in its refusal to support the capitalist military alliance, and in its opposition to capitalism as a cause of war, while its illusions show in its failure to take as clear a stand in opposition to Stalinist imperialism.

JEWISH QUESTION

On the Jewish question, the conference was unanimous. The Bund declared that the Jews were a world people "united by a common history and cultural heritage, by the conscious feeling of belonging to one people, by tradition and language, by the dangers of reaction, anti-Semitism and similar problems." This, of course, is the basis of the Bund's traditional position as a separate Jewish-socialist movement, though other socialists have long questioned this separateness.

The Bund conference called for:

strengthening Jewish national life all over the world; concern for Yiddish; Jewish secular culture and education; struggle against assimilation.

It denounced Zionism, among other things, for its pessimistic approach to the possibilities of Jewish national culture outside of Israel and for the fact that "Zionism wants to transform all Jewish settlements [outside Israel] into colonies, into a hinterland for the state of Israel."

PLATFORM ON ISRAEL

The conference stated the importance of the creation of the state of Israel. The fact itself is neither hailed nor decried. The resolution says Israel "could play a positive role in Jewish life, but first it must do the following: (1) stop considering Israel as the state of all Jews; (2) the interests of the Jews in Israel to be subordinated to the interests of the Jews the world over; (3) Israel should apply the principle of democracy—the self-same one we demand where we are a minority—in Israel both to Jews and non-Jews; (4) remove all Israeli obstacles to peace with the Arabs; (5) Yiddish should be taught in all educational institutions and have full rights and freedom in public life."

Israel has not solved the Jewish problem (the Bund went on to say) and in some respects has made it worse and, of course, more complicated. The greatest danger for Israel is a renewed Arab-Israeli war. Zionist nationalism on the one side and Arab nationalism and reaction on the other side are obstacles, each in its own way, to a peace. In the interests of peace Israel should recognize the rights of the Arab refugees to repatriation and compensation. The resolution also calls for an eventual Jewish-Arab federation of the Near East.

The statement sums up its proposals for Jewish workers in three points: (1) "Here-ness," meaning concentration on the problems of the workers wherever the Jews are, as against making Israel the center of all Jewish activity; (2) socialism; (3) national will to live.

Only a combination of these three, the Bund declares, can assure the continued existence of the Jewish people.

OUT OF THE MUDPOT

Of course, the Bund's position on the Jewish question is highly controversial from every standpoint, and one would certainly expect the Zionists to criticize it, as is their right. For the most part, the Bund and its resolution were duly attacked, but to only a small extent were their ideas discussed. Some sneered that the Bund had left only its anti-Zionism. Few discussed its particular concept of the Jews as a world people. Few Zionists took up its challenging statement that Israel did not solve the Jewish problem.

The low point of the attack on the Bund came from the Jewish *Daily Forward*. The *Forward* was once a socialist organ, having been founded by people associated with the Bund.

The *Forward's* editor, Hillel Rogoff, violently attacked the Bund as "traitors" who are "echoing Arab propaganda," etc. The vicious slander was due to the fact that the Bund had dared to criticize Israel. (In the writing habits of many pro-Zionists, any criticism of Israel whatsoever is "Arab propaganda," just as in the Stalinist system, any criticism of the Russian holy of holies is "fascist propaganda," or whatever the current focus of abuse may be.)

Since we have already reported all the Bund's references to the Arabs, the reader can judge for himself how depreaved the *Forward's* calumny is.

But the editor of the *Forward* set no bounds to his indignation. This very democratic person declared in print that if he had but known that the Bund would adopt such a resolution, he would not have reported their conference in his paper nor given them publicity. True to this declaration, in the following week's round-up of activities of Jewish organi-

zations, there was no report on Bund activities.

The especially interesting fact to be noted at this point (in case we have given a false impression) is that the *Forward* does not consider itself Zionist, unlike so much of the Jewish press, and Rogoff personally has never called himself a Zionist. His furious reaction to the Bund criticism is not a reaction to criticism of Zionism but to criticism of Israel. In such circles there have been similar frenetic reactions to any criticism of Israel even by pro-Zionists; here the state (Israel) has been separated off in its inviolable sanctity even from the Zionism which gave it birth.

HONEY-AND-MOLASSES

A real Zionist, Dr. Margoshes of the Jewish *Day*, took an entirely different tack in discussing the Bund conference. Far from denouncing the Bundists he practically offered them a membership card in the Zionist organization. There are really no differences left between us Zionists and the Bundist anti-Zionists, declared the good doctor. We both agree that the Jews are a nation, that Israel is an important fact, we both recognize the importance of Jewish settlements outside Israel; and as for other matters, they are secondary.

In understanding this honey-and-molasses approach of Margoshes, it must be remembered that the main American leaders of Zionism (represented by Margoshes) are at loggerheads on the tenets of their creed with Ben-Gurion and his supporters. Ben-Gurion, the Israelis and a majority of the world Zionist movement insist that real Zionists must emigrate to Israel or have this perspective; they demand emigration from the U. S. and especially demand that Zionist leaders show the way.

The American Zionists, while giving lip-service to the idea of emigration and the "Ingathering of the Exiles" from the diaspora, have steadily refused to emigrate or to put emigration in first place, arguing that a Zionist can remain in his present country (namely, America) and play a role as a Zionist—the role of "philanthropic Zionism" or cultural-community activity.

Thus the American Zionists have been fighting a rearguard battle in the Zionist movement for some recognition of settlements outside Israel. Despite the fact that they too place Israel in the center and are in favor of focusing most of the Jewish activities around Israel, they need some justification for not embarking on a policy of speeding up emigration—an emigration which they know will not take place from the U. S. no matter how much they urge it.

STRANGE SPECTACLE

So the kernel of seriousness in Margoshes' reaction to the Bund is the same kernel as that which causes Ben-Gurion to denounce the Americans as having abandoned Zionism. The hard-shell Zionists accuse the people like Margoshes of having given up Zionism, and Margoshes soft-soaps the Bundists with talk about "no difference." What this reflects is mainly the ambiguous position of the American brand of Zionist leaders.

Hence we have the otherwise strange spectacle of the Zionist spokesman Margoshes greeting the anti-Zionist Bundists with soft invitations, while the "non-Zionist" Rogoff abuses them with reprehensible obloquy. As we have pointed out, to Rogoff and his friends the real crime of the Bundists was that a Jewish organization should dare to criticize Israel. Rogoff therefore had no need to discuss the Bund's ideas in any loyal or semi-decent fashion.

Rogoff and the rest of his renegades from socialism who run the *Forward* are, naturally, continually talking about "democracy" and usually make it the main test for everything. They support Washington and its Syngman Rhee's in the name of the same democracy. But where is their democracy, i.e., freedom of discussion, with relation to Israel?

Among such people criticism of Israel is permitted, but only in private. So the great democrats put a news blackout on the Bund.

The Bund met this censorship with a protest meeting and tried to muster its friends and former supporters in the Workmen's Circle and Forward Association to reverse Rogoff's diktat.

A victory for the Bund will be a good thing, not only for the sake of freedom of discussion in Jewish circles on Israeli problems, but also because it can be helpful to the Israelis themselves. After all, like all human beings, they are not immune to mistakes, even from within the standpoint of Zionism itself, being so close to their problem that vision may be narrowed. As always, freedom of criticism is a necessity even from the point of view of those who are criticized.