



The Jewish Labor Bund

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The Jewish Labor BUND and the State of Israel

An extraordinary session of the Executive of the BUND World Coordinating Committee, meeting in Brussels, Belgium, on June 12 - June 14, 1948 and at which were present representatives of the BUND organizations in the United States, France, Belgium, and other countries, after a thorough discussion and a great deal of deliberation adopted, with a single dissenting vote, the following statement concerning the State of Israel. This same statement was subsequently adopted by the BUND groups in France, Belgium, Italy, the D.P. camps of Austria, et. al. It is now being discussed and will most probably be accepted by various other BUND organizations.

STATEMENT

1. *The Jewish people now lives in a difficult, fateful period of its history.*

Deeply grieved and shaken after the murder of six million of their brethren, the masses of the Jewish people became enveloped by strong nationalist tendencies, which, used and fanned by skillful Zionist propaganda, caused among the Jews a psychosis of Zionist and Messianistic illusions. In these circumstances it became easy to propagandize the newly-established Jewish State as the ostensibly unique remedy for national uncertainty and desolation.

Yet the proclaiming of the State of Israel placed in a most precarious position the entire Jewish nation—the Jewish community in Palestine, the Jews in the Arab countries, and the Jewish population the world over.

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Bloody war rages in Palestine. The future of more than 600,000 Jews there is in grave danger. The accomplishments of the Jewish settlements and their very existence are at stake.

DIFFERENCES WITH ZIONISM REAFFIRMED

In this grave hour the BUND World Coordinating Committee wishes to state:

The important ideological differences which have caused the schism between the BUND and the Zionist movement in the past continue to divide the two factions. We are, however, deeply concerned with the fate of the Jewish community in Palestine, which constitutes a part of the living organism of our people. We are filled with apprehension and fear regarding the present tragic position of the Palestinian Jews and the bearing it may have upon the lives of Jews throughout the world. Moved by these sentiments and by the will to help prevent a catastrophic end, we state:

The heretofore negative attitude of the BUND toward the Zionist aim of statehood has become even more justified owing to the actual forms of the newly-proclaimed State of Israel. A result of a purely artificial division of the country, and having an impossibly long frontier, innumerable corridors and islands of Jewish and Arab minorities, ports without hinterlands, and hinterlands without ports, the country became from the very start a source of Irredentist movements, Jewish-Arab conflicts, and an open threat of war.

PEACE IN PALESTINE DEMANDED

2. The Jewish settlements are more important than the Jewish State. The interests of the settlements are — peace; the way to achieve statehood is — war.

The very establishment of the State of Israel marked the beginning of a bloody war in Palestine. In the present tense conditions prevailing in the world, this local fighting may become the start of a terrifying universal war.

We democratic Socialists, who fight against imperialism and for the establishment of peace and the brotherhood of peoples based upon liberty, security, and equality of all nations rejecting war as a means of settling national controversies, demand that all powers involved employ all necessary means to establish peace on the entire territory of Palestine.

But a true and lasting peace in Palestine depends, first of all, upon the peoples inhabiting the country and their mutual relationship. No solution based on force, no victory and rule of one faction over the other has a chance of acceptance. A freely accomplished understanding between the two nations is a necessary condition for the true, stable, and lasting solution of the present tragic Palestinian problem.

NATIONALISM SCORED

Aggressive nationalist tendencies within both camps, tendencies continually increasing in intensity, are the main obstacle in the path toward such a solution. The only way to establish a true peace and to form a basis for a just solution of the Palestine problem is the renunciation by both the Arabs and the Jews, of their respective nationalist ideals and their lust for unlimited power.

To defend their lives and their elementary human privileges is the natural right of every community and every individual — including, of course, the Jewish community in Palestine. But this right of self-defense must not be utilized in or identified with the struggle for Jewish statehood, or with sustaining such a struggle or the groups engaged in it. One must constantly keep in mind that the safety and the peaceful development of the Jewish settlements can indeed be secured by applying the right policies — policies aiming at democratic cooperation between the Jewish and Arab population within the framework of a common governmental structure which would ensure the fullest freedom of development both for the Jews and the Arabs.

PALESTINE NOT A SOLUTION

3. Safe from the threat of war, bent upon a peaceful co-existence beside the Arab population, and freed from its Zionist illusions, the Jewish community in Palestine could truly contribute its share in the struggle for our national existence, and thereby play an important part in the development of the Jews. But even in that case — and even if it were endowed with a state of its own — the Jewish community in Palestine would always comprise but a small minority of the Jews throughout the world. The vast majority of the Jewish nation will continue to dwell — as it dwells now, after 50 years of political Zionism — outside the boundaries of Palestine. Thus Palestine cannot possibly solve the Jewish problem, in any case. The fight against anti-Semitism, for full equality, and for the full national and cultural development of the Jewish people must be waged — as it has been until now — side by side with the democratic and Socialist elements of the non-Jewish population in those countries and in those areas where more than 90% of the Jewish nation now live. The positive part which could be played by the Jewish settlements in Palestine in the national and cultural development of the Jews is now being undermined by the Zionists' promotion of the Hebrew language, which causes a rift between the Jews in Palestine and the Jews in the so-called Diaspora.

DANGEROUS ASPECTS OF THE JEWISH STATE

The national importance of the Palestinian Jews as a whole was basically damaged by the establishment of the Jewish state, which caused large parts of the Jew-

ish people to fall prey to poisonous chauvinistic tendencies. Because of the proclamation of the State of Israel, a great many Jews are now inclined to slight the future and the development of the Jews in the so-called Diaspora, while the atmosphere in the Jewish communities becomes more and more favorable for the development of political brigandry, terror, the extremes of home-grown Jewish fascism, nationalism, and reactionary trends. Moreover, the tendency to regard all Jewish settlements throughout the world as but a second-rate hinterland of the State of Israel is constantly growing. Finally, the drive to capture all phases of Jewish life by terrorist and totalitarian methods — a tendency shared by Communists and Zionists alike — takes on more dangerous forms every day.

ROLE OF FOREIGN POWERS

The propaganda seeking to tie the future of the Jewish community in Palestine with the policies of the Soviet Union, practiced by the entire Communist camp and an important faction of the Zionist movement, is false and illusory. Such a line of reasoning may lead Jewish life as a whole to catastrophic results. The present support lent by the Soviet Union to the Zionist cause is dictated solely by the imperialistic aims of Soviet foreign policy and not by the best interests of the Jewish people.

The positive attitude of the United States to the newly-established Jewish State is, on the other hand, a result of the contest for power waged by the two major American parties. The recently-adopted bill concerning the admittance of 205,000 D.P.'s from the camps, which contains anti-Jewish discriminatory rules, is a clear indication of how little the two political parties are really concerned with the true interests of the Jewish population.

Great Britain — moved by the controversial exigencies of her foreign policy and by provocative actions on the part of extremist Zionist groups headed by the Irgun and Stern gangs — adopted an attitude of unilateral help for and collaboration with the Arab camp, thereby taking upon her shoulders part of the responsibility for the present gory developments in Palestine. While we protest against this attitude, we refuse to be identified with the irresponsible demagogic campaign waged against the British Government and

the Labor Party by the Zionists on one hand and the Communists on the other, a campaign which damages the cause of the Jewish people and the ideals of international Socialism.

COOPERATION IS BASIC SOLUTION

4. A true and final solution to the Palestinian problem can be found only according to the universal humanistic principles of justice, democracy, and international solidarity.

In accordance with these principles, true internal peace must be established and secured in Palestine, after which the country should become politically independent. The government, created on the basis of full internal democracy, oriented toward international democratic Socialism, based upon constitutional equal rights for both peoples — rights guaranteed by the United Nations — should be a truly common government of the country's entire Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants.

Free immigration, devoid of any discrimination on the basis of religion or nationality, and regulated by general rules, should be ensured. Yet these immigration rules must not constitute the least obstacle for the struggle to open the gates of all democratic countries to the uprooted Jews.

The full formal and actual rights of the Yiddish language in the political, social, and cultural activities of the Jewish community in Palestine must likewise be assured.

The BUND World Coordinating Committee gives vent to its firm conviction that the realization of these principles and guarantees enumerated above is the true and just solution of the Palestinian problem — a solution which is in full accord with both the well-understood interests of the Jewish people and the general ideals of international democratic Socialism.

COMMUNITY OF INTEREST WITH SOCIALISM EMPHASIZED

5. As a result of the past 2,000 years of Jewish history, the Jews have become a nation of the world. The wheels of history cannot be turned backwards. The Jewish people, strewn throughout the world, can continue to exist and to best develop its national and cultural values in conditions of liberty, equality, eco-

conomic security, and tolerance — conditions which shall most securely be realized by democratic Socialism. The struggle waged by the international Socialist movement for liberty and Socialism and the victory of that movement will cause the defeat of anti-Semitism and of all

forms of national oppression and discrimination. A Socialist victory will create new and better social and political conditions, in which both Jews and non-Jews will be able to lead and enjoy a free, peaceful, and successful life — everywhere in the world.

We Will Not Be Bullied

The statement concerning the establishment of the State of Israel, adopted by the Executive Session of the BUND World Coordinating Committee and reprinted in the current issue of the *Bulletin*, has already aroused against us all evil forces of Jewish nationalism. A veritable deluge of condemning articles was let loose. The entire Jewish press, dailies, weeklies, and scores of other publications, united in taking the BUND to task as a traitor to the Jewish cause. All shades of Jewish public opinion united in mobilizing the Jewish communities against us — simply because we dare criticize the wisdom of the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine.

The circumstances of this anti-BUND propaganda within the Jewish communities resemble strikingly the

past developments in all countries remaining in the grip of extreme nationalistic factions. Be this as it may, we wish to assure our political antagonists that we shall not allow them to terrorize us into silence. For half a century the BUND fearlessly expressed its Socialist views in the face of serious attempts to silence it on the part of the old Czarist regime and the reactionary pre-war Polish Government. We shall remain true to this old tradition of the BUND. As we have in the past, we shall continue to subscribe to the spirit of international Socialism. As in the past, our public statements shall be guided solely by our Socialist ideals. We shall not be diverted by any temporary nationalist trend, be it even as strong and triumphant as the wave of Jewish nationalism witnessed by the present days.

ARAB REFUGEES

The United Nations now face a new problem, one caused by recent developments in Palestine. Almost the entire Arab population in the part of the country assigned to the State of Israel left their homes to escape the horrors of war. It is estimated that close to 400,000 people of Arab origin — men, women, and children — are now living as refugees, without shelter, adequate food, or medical supplies. These people wish to return, provided the Government of Israel will permit them to go back to their former homes.

For more than two thousand years the appalling plight of exile and homelessness was too often the fate of the Jews, wherever they might have dwelt. Anti-Semitism, discriminatory practices, and almost every war in history added to the number of displaced Jews. During World War I, the Czarist regime of Russia forcibly deported many hundred thousands of Jews. During World War II, Hitler's henchmen deported the Jews from all countries subjugated by the Germans' military might. 200,000 Jews, victims of the war, are held even now, three years after the end of hostilities, in the former concentration camps of Europe as D.P.'s,

exposed to all the suffering and humiliation of their uncertain status.

For the first time in two thousand years the Jews themselves now have to handle the problem of displaced persons of non-Jewish faith. Yet it appears that 2,000 years of suffering and of untold hardships caused by the misery of numerous deportations were entirely forgotten as soon as circumstances caused a fraction of the Jewish population to be placed in a position of self-government. True to its Zionist self, the Jewish Government of the State of Israel appears ready to forfeit the moral rights of the Jewish D.P.'s in Europe and elsewhere by refusing to permit the Arab refugees to return to their homes in Palestine. Nationalism is short-sighted, and Jewish nationalism is not excepted from this affliction. In the long run, the future of the Jews in Palestine depends upon the establishment of peaceful relations with the Arab population and with the neighboring Arab states. What could contribute more to the establishment of these peaceful relations than a humane approach on the part of the Israeli Government toward the Arab displaced persons craving to return home?