

## FIGHTING IN THE GHETTO

*Following are excerpts from the book FIVE YEARS IN THE WARSAW GHETTO, by BERNARD GOLDSZTEJN, one of the leaders of the underground BUND movement under Nazi occupation. The book, containing nearly 500 pages of text and numerous photographs, was published in Yiddish by the FARLAG UNSER TSAIT, New York, in 1947.*

\*\*\*Every battle station became an isolated, besieged fortress, surrounded by fire, enveloped in clouds of smoke. With pistols, hand grenades, and incendiary bottles, with damp clothes upon their lips—to escape the dense, choking smoke—the fighters defended themselves against the devilish supremacy of the enemy armed with most modern instruments of murder. All remaining inhabitants of the ghetto, without exception, were drawn into battle—literally all: young and old, weak and strong. Those hidden in the bunkers came outside to fight, some armed, or wielding any possible tool which might help in the defense against the bloody enemy. Whoever was capable of even the smallest effort helped the organized fighting groups in any manner he could—maintaining liaison between one house and another, handing over food, carrying a bit of water or ammunition, preparing the way of retreat over attics, through cellars, and across dug-outs and holes in the ground. The ghetto fighters were equipped in advance with German uniforms and helmets, and this ruse helped them on many occasions either to approach the enemy more closely at certain points and harass him more effectively with their fire; or, in other sectors, to retreat, the disguise facilitating the reaching of safer positions by foiling German attempts at pursuit.

The ghetto was a sea of flames; every day the Germans shelled it from big guns and showered incendiary bombs upon single blocks of houses—notably

those blocks where they noticed particular activity of the defenders, particular tenacity of the fighters. The sidewalks melted into puddles of tar, it was impossible to move past the houses; a hail of bullets and grenades covered the streets. Surrounded by fire, choked by smoke, dozens upon dozens jumped into the flames rather than falling into the bloody hands of the enemy. A cannonade of shots, explosions, of falling burning galleries, roofs, parts of walls, thundered throughout the ghetto; clouds of smoke and pillars of fire rose to the blue skies of the world... At night a terrifying silence prevailed; but the darkness was illuminated by the burning houses.\*\*\*

\*\*\*The appeals/by the underground BUND and by the Jewish Battle Organization/reached the outside world; let them know, we thought, that these were already the last days of agony, let them, at least, take vengeance in the future. The mighty Allied armies stood fortified on all fighting fronts, courageously struggling against the enemy—but the front of the Warsaw ghetto remained isolated, its brave soldiers were burned in the rubble; their desperate calling for help was stifled amidst the clouds of smoke, deafened by the thunder of cannon...\*\*\*

\*\*\*Bright flames enveloped the ghetto; every bunker, every house was fought for; the ranks of the fighters became thinner and thinner; as a bunker fell, nobody allowed himself to be taken alive—after firing the last round, after losing all chance to kill another German, the remnants took their own lives. The Germans filled every hole which could possibly lead to a resistance hiding place with poison gas. Burned by fires, choked by gas and smoke, decimated by shells and bullets, the small handful of those remaining alive began seeking ways to escape from this hell.\*\*\*

## Jewish Labor BUND and the Jewish-Arab War in Palestine

November 21, 1947, the day on which the United Nations decided upon the partition-plan and the creation of an independent Jewish State in Palestine, marks the beginning of a new bloody chapter in the history of Jewish-Arab relations. Since that day shooting and blood-shedding did not cease in the Holy Land. The Jewish-Arab War, though not formally declared, is in full swing. Every day adds new casualties to the total of wounded and dead Jews and Arabs. More than two thousand dead are already listed.

The Jewish population the world over is appalled by this bloody result of the first steps by the Zionist

Movement toward achieving its goal—to establish an independent Jewish State. It is now more apparent than ever before that, as far as human lives are concerned, the Zionist ideal is a very costly undertaking. However, this new acknowledgment did not yet lead to decreasing the Zionist influence over the majority of the Jewish population. As usual in cases of clashes between two nationalistic-minded camps, the bloodshed in Palestine worked like oil spilled on fire. Not only hatred toward the Arabs, but also hatred toward the British Labor Government became even more widespread among the Jews. The entire political and psycho-

logical machinery of war-times is now working full blast inside the Jewish Community.

The Jewish Socialist faction alone, organized in the BUND and various other Jewish Socialist formations, remains immune to the war-like nationalistic attitude of the Zionist-dominated Jewish population. The BUND organizations and groups in various countries are strongly opposed to the indiscriminate Arab-baiting, which is now in vogue among the Jews. The Jewish Socialist Movement under the BUND banner is the only one trying to bar the currents of hatred against the British Socialist Government which the Zionists are disseminating in such abundance. In fact, the BUND rank and file are not caught by the general nationalistic hysteria and remain opposed to the creation of a *separate* Jewish State in Palestine.

This does not mean, however, that the Jewish Socialists are not deeply grieved because of the thousands of Palestine casualties incurred since the partition decision of the United Nations. Every single human life sacrificed at the shrine of the Jewish State in Palestine increases the Jewish Socialists' sorrow and their feeling that a new national calamity is being committed. Many Jewish Socialists are therefore engaged in bringing help to the victims of the Jewish-Arab War. This participation of the Jewish Socialists in rescue work for the Palestine casualties does not diminish, however, their political antagonism to Zionism in general and to the prolongation of the Jewish-Arab War in particular.

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Professor L. Hersch, of the University of Geneva, Switzerland, one of the oldest Bundist leaders alive and a world-famous Jewish scientist, recently published a series of articles in the Paris Jewish Daily *Unser Shtime*, under the headline "Is partition of Palestine salvation or a catastrophe?" In these articles he came to the conclusion that the partition of Palestine and the creation of an independent Jewish State would lead to a new catastrophe, not only for the Jews in Palestine, but for the Jews all over the world as well. The author of these articles does not at all believe in the possibility of a peaceful Arab-Jewish co-existence in the event that the planned partition did take place. He advocates a round-table Jewish-Arab Conference in order to stop the clashes and to establish a joint truly democratic Jewish-Arab State in an independent Palestine.

We shall quote below a few passages from the pamphlet *Jewish Future* by Dr. Emanuel Scherer, pub-

lished recently in London by the International Publishing Company :

"Palestine does not offer a solution of the Jewish question. Assuming for the sake of argument that the present Jewish population in Palestine could be doubled or trebled—an assumption which is in practice without foundation—it would then still constitute a very small minority of the Jews throughout the world, a minority unable to solve the problems of the overwhelming majority of Jewish people outside Palestine.

"There is no other solution for the Jews in Palestine, as elsewhere, than to co-operate with the non-Jewish democratic forces. The democratic trends among the Arab population are very weak. But, weak or strong, the possibility of a true, strong and stable Jewish-Arab co-operation is dependent upon a new attitude on the part of the Jewish population. Without going into details, its essential foundation must be that, accepting for the future the Arab majority in Palestine, the Jews should have a guarantee of real security, of equal rights and of complete freedom to develop their own national and cultural life."

The BUND Organization in France, with its headquarters in Paris, recently issued a statement condemning the partition plans of the United Nations, pointing out that those plans do not take under consideration the urgent need to reconcile the two nationalities in Palestine, who must find ways and means for peaceful cooperation and mutual advancement. This statement is basically against the creation of an independent Jewish State in Palestine, which, it claims, is in no way a solution of the Jewish problem, and can only aggravate the situation and add to the difficulties of the Jewish displaced persons who must be re-established in various countries according to their free will.

The BUND Movement in the United States,—its New York Organization—after a prolonged debate published a resolution against the partition decision of the United Nations, stating its fidelity to the traditional anti-Zionist attitude of the BUND and calling for Jewish-Arab collaboration in an independent Palestine, where the rights of both main nationalities would be internationally guaranteed. In conclusion this resolution states again that there is only one true solution of the Jewish problem—the establishment of a socialist way of life, which will put an end, once and for all, to all the hardships and persecution suffered by the Jews as well as by other minorities. This resolution of the New York BUND Organization, therefore, brings to the attention of the Jewish working population the undeniable fact that the British Socialist Government

is engaged in a gigantic task of rebuilding Britain on foundations of Socialism and Democracy. Socialists all over the world who are against the totalitarian misdeemeanors should do their utmost to support the British Socialist Government. Its success will also pave the way to solving the Jewish problem.

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A recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the mutual coordinating body of the BUND organizations and groups in various countries declared that its affili-

## The Youth Movement of the BUND in Various Countries

The moment the BUND organizations reappeared in public life after the terrible destruction wrought by the war upon the Jewish people, the BUND's youth organizations — the CUKUNFT and the SKIF — also resumed their activities. In addition to the organizations which had existed before the war — like those in Poland, France, and Belgium, new CUKUNFT groups were organized in a number of countries.

### Coordinating Committee of the CUKUNFT

At the time of the BUND world conference deliberations in Brussels, May 5 - 12, 1947, a meeting of the delegates active in the youth movement also took place. Delegates of the CUKUNFT organizations of Poland, France, and Belgium, of the CUKUNFT Group in London, as well as representatives of the Foreign CUKUNFT Delegation in America were present at this meeting.

At the meeting it was unanimously decided to parallel the formation of the BUND World Coordinating Committee with a similar body of the CUKUNFT. An executive committee of three, located in New York, was decided upon, and a European secretariat was established in London.

### The CUKUNFT Organization in Poland

In July, 1945, the activities of the CUKUNFT in Poland were taken up anew. The CUKUNFT group in Lodz was the first to reorganize, and a series of groups in Tarnow, Warsaw, and in the new communities of Lower Silesia soon followed suit. To date the organization numbers several score groups. The organ of the Polish CUKUNFT, YUGNT VEKER, resumed publication in October, 1946. The monthly appears regularly since; it is interestingly illustrated and edited.

ated organizations would not undertake in connection with the events in Palestine any steps which could be interpreted as a positive attitude toward the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine or as a lessening of our opposition to the Zionist ideals.

A small minority among the BUND members in various countries is of the opinion that the creation of an independent Jewish State in Palestine, under the prevailing circumstances, is indispensable. But even this minority remains strongly opposed to the Zionist ideology as a whole.

The CUKUNFT membership is divided into cells, each cell conducting its educational work in a systematic manner. In addition, every group maintains its own clubhouse, library, dramatic club, glee club, etc. The membership takes a special interest in the work of its parent organization, the Polish BUND, and actively supports all its public activities.

Since the resumption of the CUKUNFT work, both the summer and winter camps of the organization, famous in pre-war Poland, were again called into being. Several hundred youthful members found recreation at the summer camp in 1947.

### The CUKUNFT in Paris

The Paris CUKUNFT Organization resumed its activities immediately after the liberation. The group is divided into five cells, where problems of Socialism, Jewish problems, and contemporary politics are systematically discussed. The organization conducts an extensive program of excursions and camps. Thus 75 young people attended the summer camp in 1947, in the Pyrenees.

The organization also sponsors various recreational and sport activities of its members. Courses of instruction in the Yiddish language were organized through the efforts of this group. The interests of its members, 40% of whom are orphans, are also cared for by the organization.

### The CUKUNFT in Brussels

The CUKUNFT Organization in Brussels was built little by little, mainly through the efforts of a group of former members of the Polish CUKUNFT who, after having been liberated from the Nazi camps of death, made their home in Belgium. The periodic activities of the group comprise weekly public lectures as well as discussions in the various cells.