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 Borochov 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, Borochov 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 Borochov and his Russian comrades (Borochov 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."

Borochov 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 Borochov'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, Borochov formulated a new orientation. (The symptoms of this orientation were visible in almost all of Borochov's writings during the World War.) The new terminology which he employed gave expression not only to Borochov the thinker, but also to Borochov 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, mimanaad 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 Borochov's own teachings. In the midst of these polemics, many phrases were flung: 'Borochov has betrayed his own theory'; 'we do not accept the new Borochov'; 'we believe in the theory of the old one'!

Though Borochov 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 Borochov 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 and the General Zionist. 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”. 

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 Yisrael—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.

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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 phyletology, the term “Jewish Nation” was avoided. Kautsky’s volume, ‘Die Judenfrage’, 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, which has of late adopted a positive attitude toward Zionism and Eretz Yisrael, still avoids the use of “Eretz Yisrael”. Instead it always refers to it as “Palestine”.
4. In his essays “Our Platform” and “The National Question and the Class Struggle”.
5. The concept “strophic process” is found in all his major writings. In fact this concept constitutes a basic element of Borechow’s theory of Jewish nationalism, which 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 Marxism and in sociological literature, the concept denotes processes which are not within the sphere of man’s consciousness and will.
6. In his earlier writings, Borechow contended that the immigration of Jews into Palestine and their concentration in it will come about not solely because of Zionism’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. Borechow, in his article, “The Borechow and Present Jewish Realities” (The Pioneer Woman Magazine, February, 1936), explains this concept as follows: There is no better example of a strophic process than the present Jewish immigration into Palestine, where individuals from different countries, driven by their own misery, form a great mass force, molding a new commonwealth out of chaos. Germany with its barbaric militarism; Poland with its economic crusade against Jewish existence; Yemen with its medieval persecutions—all are aspects of the same acute Jewish problem. They are where the masses of Jewish people are seeking a solution at a slower pace, large sections of the Jewish population are being uprooted every year; and many others, threatened by extinction, are in dire need of a secure haven. All this helps to broaden the strophic process of Jewish immigration to Palestine and to lend it tremendous momentum.

The phenomenon of the present Palestinian immigration, overflowing 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 strophic process anticipated by Borechow thirty years ago. Can it be denied that it is the strophic process which is responsible for the scope of present-day Palestine, and that our organized activities play merely an auxiliary role in the world? 

Borechow’s strong belief in strophic process does not imply inactivity. It is not to be confused with fatalism. Any interpretation which is guilty of such a charge is based on malice or lack of understanding. As Borechow himself repeatedly stated, processes that are taking place in a human environment are of the organic kind. They do not exclude organized activity...
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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 social force in our life. The history of the immigration movement into Palestine contains in its records both the human material whose driving force was the time was Hitler, and the heroic movement of the Second Aliya (immigration stream) during the period 1903-1914) which had the choice of emigrating to America or Palestine but voluntarily chose the latter.

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.

The assertion made by some that Borchow 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, 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 "historical necessity", concentration of capital, and the laws of proletarianization. In my opinion, all were correct; for after all, these preconceptions, 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 his 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 Weltreich, April 8, 1917.)

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". Borchow, 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.

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139 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.

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

15 See footnote 3, p. 91.

16 See footnote 4, p. 116.

17 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. Revesky's Jews in Palestine, pp. 322-3.
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 Congress as long as it is a Party tribunal. We will, however, participate in a World Jewish Congress because it will be a national tribunal, 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. This "later" Borochov was an anti-Congressist. Some self-styled Borchovists (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 working-class cannot participate in it. With reference to the principle of class collaboration, Borochov the anti-Congressist said:

The traditional attitude of the American Poale Zion is that even though Socialists-Zionists constitute a separate Party, they must nevertheless participate in the World Zionist Congress and in all its institutions. The Russian Poale Zion, on the other hand, 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. In order 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 Jews? 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 bourgeois organization or as our own Poale Zion institution and an all-inclusive organization of the Jewish masses.