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hand, American Jews cannot be expected to play the fool as damage is done both to Israel and the Zionist movement as a result of the new government's policies.

The most important arena in which American Jews can do something about the present situation is the upcoming World Zionist Congress (WZC), scheduled to open in February in Jerusalem. The WZC will determine the future of the powerful World Zionist Organization (WZO) and as each party in the Knesset receives twice the delegates to the WZC as they have in Israel's Parliament, the largest delegation to the Congress, that of Israel, will be controlled by the Likud and its allies.

The future of the World Zionist Organization will therefore largely lie with the second largest delegation — the Americans. The only real way American Zionists can vote against Menachem Begin's take-over of the World Zionist apparatus is to vote for American Zionist organizations affiliated to the opposition in Israel.

It seems to me that the organization that has taken the most principled stand against the Likud is Americans for Progressive Israel/Hashomer Hatzair, affiliated with Israel's Mapam Party. In addition the Labor Zionist Alliance should be seriously considered despite the failings of the Labor government that Begin replaced.

Many people active in the Jewish counter-politics/counter-culture have refused to take part in WZO activities in the past either because of the WZO's overwhelming political bureaucracy or because they found the WZO's Jerusalem program implausible as a minimum program for Zionists. The time for ideological purity on these matters is past with the danger of a Likud take-over of the WZO. That is, unless one wants most Israel information and shlichim in America to come from Mr. Begin's camp for the next four years.

The danger is clear and present. The first step in responding to it is to vote against Likud and for groups such as Americans for Progressive Israel and the Labor Zionist Alliance in the upcoming World Zionist elections.

— M.C.

WE SKIP A SEASON, BUT NOT AN ISSUE

With this issue, RESPONSE attempts to come into harmony with the changing of the seasons and bring forth the magazine in the middle of the designated season instead of at its end or thereafter. Thus there is not now nor will there ever be a Summer, 1977 issue of RESPONSE, but we still maintain our numbering sequence with No. 34. Subscribers need not fear — your subscriptions are keyed to numbers and not to seasons.

BER BOROCHOV

Towards a Portrait of a Socialist Zionist

For Nadia Borochoy Ovsey on her 94th birthday.

Introduction¹

Not long after he became a political exile from Czarist Russia in 1907, Ber Borochoy, a young man in his mid-twenties, attended a lecture by Vladimir Illych Lenin in Liege, Belgium. At the close of Lenin's talk, Borochoy stood up and began presenting the case for Socialist Zionism. In reply the man who was to lead the Bolsheviks to power in 1917 laughed and told Borochoy that he was trying to be both "here and there." You, Lenin said, are trying to sit on two chairs at once. The problem is, you are not even on the two chairs, you are on the empty space between them.²

Borochoy, the founder of Marxist Zionism, no doubt understood the full significance of Lenin's words. In Borochoy's view, Marxists and socialists had failed to adequately come to grips with the question of nationalism. If, according to Marx, communism was a spectre haunting Europe, for Borochoy nationalism was a spectre haunting socialism.

The task Ber Borochoy set for himself shortly after the turn of the 20th century was to synthesize socialism and nationalism. His main concern was the Jewish problem and a solution to it that would be at once socialist and nationalist. He was unwilling to grant Lenin's premise that one must choose to sit *either* on the chair of socialism *or* the chair of nationalism, but not on both. As far as the Jewish question was concerned either chair in isolation seemed insecure to him, to say the least. For Borochoy there was indeed a space between the two chairs — a space to be filled by a socialist movement for Jewish national self-determination in Palestine.

This year marks Borochoy's 60th *yahrzeit* and 1981 marks the 100th anniversary of his birth. While many articles have been written



Borochov (top right) discussing philosophy with two cousins in Poltava, 1900.

about his Socialist Zionism, since his untimely death in 1917, a complete study of Borochov's life and ideas is yet to be written, and material available about him in English is scarce. This essay, while having no aspirations to being definitive, aims at drawing a sketch of the life and key ideas of a man who, as a theoretician and political activist, had a profound effect on the early Socialist and Labor Zionist movement. It also hopes to stimulate an interest in Socialist Zionist thought and history in general and Borochov in particular.

Young "Borya"

Ber Borochov was born on June 21, 1881 in Volotonoshi in the Ukraine. Two months later his parents moved back to their hometown of Poltava (also in the Ukraine) where he was to grow up.

The time and place of his birth are quite significant. In that same year Czar Alexander II was assassinated by populist radicals. It was the beginning of a decade of pogroms that would turn people like Y. L. Pinsker and Moshe Leib Lilienblum into Zionists and led to the formation of Russian Zionist groups such as the *Hovevei Zion*.

Nineteen years earlier a German Jewish socialist named Moses Hess wrote a little noticed book entitled *Rome and Jerusalem* calling for a socialist Jewish state in Palestine. Five years before Borochov's birth a Vilna-born political exile named A. S. Liberman organized the first association of Jewish workers in London, the *Agudat ha-Sozialistim ha-Ivrim* (Hebrew Socialist Union).³ In the decades after 1881 Jewish socialist circles began to appear in the Pale of Settlement culminating in the founding of the Jewish Labor Bund in 1897 and the birth of the Socialist Zionist movement at the turn of the century. The same period witnessed the steady growth of the Russian revolutionary movements. Lev Davidovitch Bronstein, later known as Leon Trotsky, was born two years before Borochov in the province of Poltava.

The town in which Borochov spent his youth was a microcosm of these currents. Yitzchak Ben Zvi (then Y. Shimshelvitze and later second President of Israel), one of Borochov's good friends from the age of twelve or thirteen, has written that Poltava was not a big city, had no factories or large industry and had an economy based on small crafts and flour mills.⁴ It was not, however, a cultural vacuum and had museums, libraries and theaters. Jews began settling there in the late 18th century. By the late 1870s there were about 4,000 Jews

in residence, a figure which would go over the 11,000 mark by the late 1890s. The Poltava Jewish community was well organized, progressive and an early center of Zionist activities.

Poltava had yet another distinction — the Czarist regime used it as an exile for revolutionaries.⁵ Thus with Zionists and revolutionaries living in his hometown, the background was set for the "intense spiritual and public life" Ber Borochof was to lead.⁶

Both of his parents were maskilim (modernistic Jews influenced by the *Haskalah* or "Enlightenment"). Moshe Aharon Borochof, whose parents died when he was quite young, had gone to the renowned Volozhin Yeshiva but had nonetheless managed to study German, algebra and other secular subjects. He returned to Poltava at age 21, was rejected for military service and shortly thereafter married his cousin, Chaya Rachel, who was influenced by Rousseau's theories of child-rearing.⁷

Moshe Aharon was an active member and later secretary of Poltava *Hovevei Zion* which often met in the Borochof home. He was a noted Hebraist and teacher. In fact Borya, as he was known to his family, was born in Volotonoshi and not Poltava because his father had gone to the smaller town in an unsuccessful attempt to start a Jewish school there.

Among those to whom Moshe Aharon Borochof taught the Hebrew language were the Blaustein family's children, one of whom, Rachel, was to become one of the most famous Hebrew poets in Palestine.⁸ As a teacher licensed by the government, Borya's father was hardly suspect of harboring radicals or illegal literature — which he and his wife did nonetheless. Young Borya thus had easy access to an array of "subversive" materials.

The oldest of eight children, Ber Borochof was a restless, spirited and insatiably curious youth. He enjoyed singing, swimming and the theater. Reading was one of his favorite pastimes. The youngster's interest in travel stories led him to an attempt to build a flying "airship" after reading Jules Verne's *The Clipper of the Clouds*.

For the first two or three years of his life Borya's parents spoke Yiddish at home. When they discovered that Yiddish accents resulted in problems for students at the gymnasium, they began to speak Russian. Borya's Russian accent was to become flawless.⁹ He was able to read Russian at age three. His sister Nadia, who was two and a

half years his junior and with whom he was very close, recounts that their mother read to them regularly at bedtime. One evening four-year-old Borya marched to his father's bookcase and began going through his father's books, which were forbidden to the children in their early years.¹⁰ Borochof was to develop a characteristic love of knowledge and constantly sought more advanced reading. By the time he graduated in 1900 from the Poltava gymnasium he was fluent in his knowledge of literature, science, economics, mathematics, philosophy and several languages including Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and of course Hebrew and Russian. When he was twelve Nadia asked him why he was interested in Sanskrit and he informed her that "most of the languages" were based on Sanskrit. Borochof was later to develop a passionate interest in philology.

In addition to being intellectually advanced, Borya was an extremely sensitive child. Nadia tells of how once, at the age of eight, he came across a vendor selling caged birds in the Poltava market place. The young boy, who was taking a short cut through town on the way to cheder, decided that he had to "liberate at least one bird." The vendor informed him that the least expensive bird cost seven kopeks, much more than a youngster of his age would ever have. Borya ran home but his mother was not there. He took the money anyway and told Nadia, "Tell mama I took seven kopeks — I needed it very badly, I'll explain when I get home." He purchased the bird, put it under his shirt and ran to school where he informed his classmates that after class a bird would be liberated. Unfortunately the rabbi found out and announced, "You want to liberate a bird? You steal money from your mother? You come late to cheder and upset the whole class? Here, go liberate the bird." The rabbi promptly threw the bird out the window. A few days later Borya came to Nadia with plans to publish a "magazine" dedicated to the liberation of birds.¹¹

Although Borya's political activities didn't really begin until he was 19, he must have developed a social consciousness earlier in his teens. His father made a point of telling his children of the historical significance of each of the Jewish holidays.¹² Borya discussed Palestine with his friend Shimshelvitze and twice, at ages ten and sixteen, tried to leave for that far-off land, only to be returned from neighboring towns. Once Borya was found with a severe burn on his



Photo of Borochoy which he sent to his sister Nadia, 1903.

hand. He explained that he knew that he would one day be arrested and had held his hand over a candle to prove that he could withstand torture without betraying his friends.¹³

By the time Borochoy was 17 or 18 he was deeply involved in his studies in philosophy. He taught philosophy to his friends and lectured on topics as diverse as Ibsen, Nietzsche, Stirner and Goya. Ben Zvi recounts that there was a saying in Poltava: "If you can't get Kant and Schopenhauer from the central library, it is a sign that Borochoy and his chevra (comrades) are dealing now in German philosophy."¹⁴

In 1900 Borya Borochoy graduated from the Poltava gymnasium. The gymnasium's director characterized him as "Quiet, modest, doesn't talk much... deals with nonsense."¹⁵ Because of anti-semitism Borya was refused a gold medal at school. Soon after graduation Borochoy moved to Ekaterinoslav (now Dnepropetrovsk). It was there that he would first make his mark as a political leader and activist.

From Social Democrat to Socialist Zionist

Ekaterinoslav had an active Social Democratic movement which put out an illegal paper, *luzhni Rabotchi* (the "Southern Worker") and had close ties with some of the country's leading revolutionaries such as Martov. Nineteen year old Ber Borochoy joined the Social Democratic party in Ekaterinoslav and worked as an organizer and propagandist.

As he became more concerned with the national question and became involved in Zionist affairs as well, he would soon find himself confronted by the "space between two chairs." Shmarya Levin, who would debate Borochoy on Socialist Zionism in Ekaterinoslav and later became a renowned Zionist leader, described the young Social Democrat in his memoirs:

He came to the city about the same time as myself, having just completed a course in the gymnasium of Poltava. But he was educated far beyond his years. He had an excellent grounding in general philosophy, had advanced far in the higher mathematics, and had studied with good results Marxian economics. He was, in addition, a man — or should I say boy — of unusual intellectual honesty. He carried on vigorous Zionist activity among the youth under the direction of Ussishkin. But his Marxism gave him no rest...¹⁶

Menachem Mendel Ussishkin was the leading Russian Zionist of the time and was living in Ekaterinoslav. He would take Borochoch under his wing although, like Levin, he disagreed with his socialism.

Borochoch's period in the Social Democratic Party was to be short-lived. In his "Reminiscences on the 10th Anniversary of the Poale Zion in Russia 1906-1916" Borochoch recalled that while in the party he gave some lectures to an education club of "intelligent young proletarians" in Ekaterinoslav on Socialist Zionism.¹⁷ One of his friends was a young Social Democrat named Pazniakov who had recently been expelled from a Christian theological seminary as an atheist. "Both of us were only lads of nineteen" Borochoch later wrote in the New York newspaper, *Die Wahrheit* (March 13, 1916) "but we knew Marx's *Capital* by heart."

Borochoch's interest in the national question and Zionism led to his expulsion from the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1901. He wrote in *Die Wahrheit*,

I don't remember what made me change my ideas. It must have been after a chance joint meeting of Jewish and Christian workers that the truth of Socialist Zionism dawned on me. The committee (of the Social Democratic Party - M.C.) then decided that I had a bad influence on workers - I was teaching them to think for themselves.

I was accordingly expelled from the Russian Social Democratic Party.¹⁸

He adds,

What can an expelled Russian Social-Democrat do when he becomes a Zionist "unbeliever"? I joined a large educational club of Jewish students and made them the first Poale Zionists in Russia.¹⁹

The group was known as the Zionist Socialist Workers Union and Borochoch worked in it with a friend named Shimon Dubin. Although it is impossible to know what effect Borochoch had on the Social Democrats, the Ekaterinoslav committee was to later publish a brochure attacking Zionism at the time of the Kishinev pogroms.²⁰

The claim that the Ekaterinoslav Socialist Zionists were the first in Russia is not completely accurate. In 1897 a group called "Poale Zion" (Workers of Zion) had emerged in Minsk. But Borochoch's group was one of the earliest and other Poale Zion groups began appearing in Vilna, Warsaw, Odessa, Vitebsk and other places. Dr. Nachman Syrkin (1868-1924), born in Mohilev, began formulating a Socialist Zionist position in 1898 with his article "The Jewish

Question and the Socialist Jewish State." Not long after the turn of the century Syrkin, then in Berlin, helped found a Socialist Zionist organization called Heirut.²¹

Around this time Borochoch began working for the General Zionist Organization. He lectured and cooperated with Ussishkin, whom he would later describe as "a man of steel and iron."²² Surprisingly enough, by 1905 he was one of Ussishkin's "lieutenants" as was Vladimir Jabotinsky, the future leader of right wing Revisionist Zionism.²³ Ussishkin must have been appreciative of his young radical friend and dismissed complaints that he had published one of Borochoch's essays.²⁴ Indeed, Borochoch's first published work, "On the Nature of the Jewish Intellect" (1903), was originally a lecture given in Ussishkin's home.

July 1902 found Borochoch back in Poltava where he was soon involved in self-defense activities especially after the Kishinev pogrom. Ben Zvi has written that the pogrom was a great shock to him and deepened his Zionist commitments. His sister Nadia left for the United States to study medicine in 1902 and the rest of his family followed at her insistence after Kishinev. In July of 1904 Borochoch was arrested for the first time on charges stemming from his Ekaterinoslav activities in 1900 with Pazniakov. Unable to find evidence against him, the police released him after a month.²⁵

At this time an important debate was raging in the Zionist movement centering on an offer by the British to the World Zionist Organization to establish a Jewish homeland in Africa ("The Uganda Plan"). Many General and Socialist Zionists (such as Syrkin) became "territorialists" and argued that the Jewish problem could be solved by territorial autonomy in any territory - not necessarily Palestine. Ussishkin was violently opposed to this position. Borochoch became a "Zion Zionist" vehemently denouncing those who did not see Palestine as central to the Jewish national movement. In his 1904 article "To the Question: Zion or Territory" he attacked the Territorialists as "negative," "cold-spirited - armchair politicians." Borochoch continued to attack territorialism until the "Uganda Plan" was buried at the 1905 7th World Zionist Congress in Basle which he attended as a delegate from Poltava. He officially joined the Poale Zion in November of 1905, a year that was as momentous for Russia as it was for Borochoch.

Beginnings of "Borochovism"

Borochov did not play a prominent role at the Basle Congress. Afterwards, together with the woman he had recently married, Liuba Meltzer, he met with a number of Poale Zion activists in Zurich. He was quiet at this meeting as well, apparently not yet sure where he stood on several issues.

Rather than returning directly to Russia, Ber and Liuba stopped for a while in Berlin. A great lover of books, wherever Borochov travelled he could be found in the libraries doing research on countless subjects. Among those with him in Berlin was Rachel Yanait (later Rachel Yanait Ben Zvi, wife of Yitzchak Ben Zvi). Rachel later recalled one of her discussions with Borochov, this time on feminism:

Borochov felt there were no limits to what women could yet accomplish in intellectual and artistic fields. I used to go with him to the library every day, and one day, among other things, he talked of the problems of women. He was doing research on the subject and had gathered three hundred notes on the position of Jewish women from Biblical times to the present.²⁶

It was also in 1905 that Borochov wrote one of his most important essays — "The National Question and the Class Struggle." This thirty-five page analysis laid the foundations of Borochovism and developed a Marxist critique of the problem of nationalism.

Borochov's starting point was a further development of Marx's concept of the "relations of production." According to Marx every socio-economic system is based on a "relations of production," the relationship between the productive system and the producers within it. Division of labor leads to the formation of classes. The ruling class, always much smaller in numbers than the mass of laborers who actually do the productive work, owns the means of production and profits off the work of the laborers.

There are not only relations of production, argued Borochov, there are also *conditions of production* that vary in different places: "They are geographic, anthropological and historic. The historic conditions include both those generated within a given social entity and those imposed by the neighboring social groups."²⁷ On this basis Borochov claimed that there were two basic forms of social groupings: classes, and socio-economic organisms such as nations. As classes develop within the framework of the relations of production,

nations develop within the framework of conditions of production. The "feeling of kinship, created as a result of the visioned common historic past and rooted in the common conditions of production, is called nationalism."²⁸ Thus, "The national struggle is waged . . . for the material possessions of social organisms. The assets of a social body lie in its control of the *conditions of production*."²⁹ Borochov goes on to analyze the role of nationalism in the various classes of society coming to the crucial conclusion that *territory*, for the working class, plays the dual role of serving as a place to live and serving as a base for the class struggle. As such, for an oppressed nationality, nationalism, the assertion of rights to a land based on a common visioned historic past, is a progressive phenomenon, contrary to many popular Marxist notions.

Two important conclusions must be drawn from this all-too-brief summary of Borochov's seminal essay on nationalism. First of all, he does not deal with the Jewish question here but rather is attempting a broader Marxist formulation that will counter generally prevailing socialist dogma that all nationalisms are reactionary. Second of all, he lays the groundwork for Marxist Zionism. His analysis and emphasis on the importance of territory and the conditions of production will lead him to argue (in his "Our Platform" of 1906) that the Jews are an *abnormal* and oppressed nationality — the Jews have no land of their own and their conditions of production are dependent on their minority status in hostile countries.

* * * * *

The Russian revolution of 1905 shook the foundation of Czarist autocracy to its roots. In the midst of it there were pogroms against the Jews. Borochov quickly decided to return to Russia but first went with Rachel Yanait to Dr. Arthur Hantke of the German Zionist organization and informed him that there were two things he needed: "Money and arms."³⁰ He returned to the land of his birth with some pistols and threw himself into Zionist and self-defense work.

Ussishkin sent him on a speaking and organizing tour to help the Jews throughout the Pale. (Some reports claim that this was the first time Borochov came into contact with the anti-Zionist Jewish Labor Bund. Despite his profound disagreement with the Bund's stand on nationalism he maintained a good deal of respect for the Bund's role

in self-defense and the protection of the rights of Jewish workers. His final view of the Bund is best expressed in his own words: "The Jewish labor movement will erect in honor of the great accomplishments of the Bund a great memorial — in Jerusalem."^{3 1}

It was not long after this that Borochov set his mind to a most important task — the formation of a united Socialist Zionist party.

Poale Zion

"In the night of Purim 5666 (1906)" wrote Yitzchak Ben Zvi, "delegates from Poale Zion groups from all the regions of vast Russia, from Lithuania, from the Ukraine, from Poland, and the Crimea, assembled at Poltava in the Ukraine. . . . At this conference all the existing little groups were fused into one party. It was a decisive step at a decisive moment. . . . It led to ideological consolidation and the creation of an organization and political body of Socialist Zionists. Borochov was its ideological center . . ."^{3 2}

Twenty-nine men and one woman (Rachel Yanait) met in a bakery on the outskirts of Poltava for an historic conference, which consolidated all the pro-Palestinian (as opposed to Territorialist) Socialist Zionists into one unified party, the Poale Zion. They stayed in the bakery for seven days and nights fearful of police raids (which eventually came, resulting in shifts of location). Borochov wrote ten years later that "To this day seven pounds of dynamite lie buried in the courtyard of the bakery . . ."^{3 3} prepared by the Committee in case of a pogrom or uprising in the future.

Yitzchak Ben Zvi, then using his party name of "Avner," told his comrades about his two month visit to Palestine in 1904. Ben Zvi was the only conference participant who had actually been to the land of Israel.

Borochov told the gathering that he was a "prognostic Palestinian" — based on his understanding of Jewish realities he believed that a mass immigration of the Jews to Palestine was an historic necessity and would occur through a "stychic process."^{3 4} His key ideas were formulated in "Our Platform," which he wrote for the newly unified Poale Zion.

"The Jewish problem migrates with the Jews" declared Borochov after reiterating some of the basic ideas of "Nationalism and the Class Struggle" and analyzing anti-semitism. But emigration from one diaspora country to the next will not solve the Jewish problem.

Jewish emancipation can only be achieved by a normalization of the Jewish "conditions of production" in a Jewish territorial base in Palestine. This would establish a Jewish working class that was not a "chained Prometheus," exploited *both* as a proletariat marginal to the economies of the diaspora *and* subject to oppression as a nationality and as a proletariat.

Our immediate aim, said Borochov in "Our Platform," is Zionism, the establishment of a normalized Jewish nation on its own land. Our maximum program is socialism. In the diaspora the Jews must have autonomy, but this is not enough. It fails to deal with the real problem, Jewish extraterritoriality. A homeland in Palestine is the only answer. Furthermore, there was in process, Borochov claimed, a necessary pattern of immigration leading the Jews there. Ultimately,

The country into which the Jews will immigrate will not be highly industrial nor predominantly agricultural, but rather semi-agricultural. Jews alone will migrate there, separated from the general stream of immigration. The country will have no attraction for immigrants from other nations. . . . *The land of spontaneously concentrated Jewish immigration will be Palestine.*^{3 5}

In short, Borochov believed that the tragedies of Jewish life in the diaspora could be eliminated only with Jewish national liberation in Palestine. The fundamental maladies, in his view, were the lack of territory and the marginality of Jews in the economies of diaspora countries. (He would later develop this argument further with careful statistical work in his "The Economic Development of the Jewish People.") For Borochov these factors were the "empty space between two chairs."

A complete description of Borochov's trenchant analysis would take more space than I have here. Let it suffice to say that it has served as a basis for socialist Zionism since his day.^{3 6} This has been the case in spite of his prediction of a "stychic process" of necessary Jewish immigration into Palestine having been proven wrong by subsequent events. Borochov's "stychic process" reflected the highly deterministic Marxism of the Russia of his day — a determinism he himself would later give up. It is his analysis of the problems of diaspora life that has remained most influential.

Borochov had reached a turning point in his life. Henceforth he would be totally absorbed in Socialist Zionist work. He had expected to carry out his efforts in Russia. His plans, however, were to be abruptly cut short.

Prison and Exile

On the same evening in June 1906 that Czar Nicholas II disbanded the Duma (the quasi-parliament established as a result of the 1905 revolution) Ber Borochov was arrested. The police had found arms in Ben Zvi's house. Ben Zvi's father was arrested, then his brother, his sister and finally Borochov. Ben Zvi escaped after shaving his head and boarding a train with a false beard, stooped like an old man. On the train he overheard passengers discussing newspaper reports of an arms cache in Poltava and heard his own name mentioned.^{3 7}

Borochov was in jail for several months. He spent his time writing (mostly on ethics) and conducting a "People's University." As a result of his lectures to his fellow prisoners several Ukrainian nationalist groups later referred to themselves as "Borochovists." Fearing that he might end up in Siberia, Borochov's friends, including Rachel Yanait, arranged his freedom. He stayed in Russia for a period under a pseudonym and then left for what was to be a ten year exile.

The next few years was a time of travel, party work and constant research for Borochov. He was in England, France, Holland, Belgium (where he argued with Lenin and studied the Belgian national question) and Switzerland.

In 1907 Borochov began writing in Yiddish. He felt that it was an imperative for him to write in the language of the eastern European Jewish masses. His love affair with the Yiddish language stayed with him the rest of his life resulting in two pioneering works on Yiddish philology which he published in 1913 — "The Tasks of Yiddish Philology" and "The Library of the Yiddish Philologist." He corresponded regularly about his work on Yiddish with the well-known critic S. Niger.

Borochov spent time in 1913 at the British Museum researching a massive *History of the Yiddish Language and Literature* which was never published. Liuba Borochov notes that while in London a friend remarked that it would take a regiment to tear him away from his work.^{3 8} His *History*, along with other manuscripts, was to disappear after his return to Russia in 1917. The Kerensky regime allowed his return but insisted that his works go through the censor. By the time Borochov died, shortly after the Bolsheviks took power, the fate of the papers became a mystery. Liuba recounts that a good friend,

Chazanovitch, tried to find his meticulously researched work and retrieved part of it after bribing the janitor at the censor's office where he found some of it in the garbage.^{3 9}

After helping found the World Confederation of Poale Zion in the Hague (1907) Borochov led the fight in the Socialist International for Poale Zion representation and an independent Jewish section of the International the following year. His adversaries included the Bund and it was not until the close of World War I that Poale Zion was accorded full rights in the International.^{4 1} Borochov was in the left-wing of his own party and opposed Poale Zion affiliation to the World Zionist Organization as a form of class collaboration with the bourgeois Zionists. His voice was constantly heard on important party issues. In Vienna Borochov edited *Das Freie Worte*, a party organ, wrote articles for newspapers in the U.S., Russia and Europe and enjoyed spending time in the city's cafes.

In 1909 Ben Zvi and Rachel visited him there. Rachel recounts that he was doing research on the economic situation of the Jewish masses, gathering depressing results. He was also discouraged by the slow growth of Poale Zion. Borochov was most eager to hear what his two comrades had to say about their recent experiences in Palestine:

He swallowed every word about Eretz Israel, and when we told him of our hope to have him with us as editor of our future journal, his eyes lit up.^{4 2}

Borochov later sent a letter to them expressing his readiness to come in a few months. This was to be one of the many times that Borochov's plans to go to Palestine failed to come to fruition. The exact reasons are not clear but may have had to do with his poor finances and his preoccupation with party work in the diaspora. The journal Rachel and Ben Zvi mentioned was *Achdut* which appeared with an editorial board including the two of them and one David Grin, who later changed his name to Ben Gurion.

Borochov remained in Vienna for the next few years with the exception of sojourns for either research or party purposes. The dark days of the summer of 1914 were to present a new situation. On June 28 of that fateful year Archduke Francis Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo and by August Europe was embroiled in the First World War. Austria was at war with Russia and Ber Borochov was a Russian citizen.

To America

Even before Russia and Austria were officially at war Borochov had been arrested and released.⁴³ As a Russian citizen he apparently had the choice of leaving Austria or staying and being interned.⁴⁴ Plans to go to Palestine, Switzerland and America fell through for the time being. With almost no money he decided to go to Italy in August and continue party work there. (The Poale Zion office in Vienna closed with the advent of the war.)

By now the epitome of the wandering Jew, Borochov must have been haunted by his own words from "Our Platform" that "The Jewish problem migrates with the Jews." He stayed at first in Milan and, as usual, spent time in the libraries doing research on Jewish literature. According to a letter to American chaverim, he hunted books in Rome at the Vatican and in Parma where he found old works that had not been studied.

In that same letter Borochov asked his friends to assist him in finding work in America where he soon planned to go. Because of his health, he explained, he could not do factory work. He could, however, read English although he was not yet proficient in writing and speaking it. He hoped to use his fluency in such languages as Yiddish, Russian, German and Italian for translation and correspondence work.⁴⁵

Borochov had apparently planned to go to America much earlier that year, even before the war broke out. In a letter to Hirsh Ehrenreich in the U.S. in February 1914 he announced his intention to cross the ocean before the end of the year. He also told Ehrenreich that he hoped first to visit Palestine. His finances were to make this impossible.⁴⁶

In November he planned to go via Genoa to the United States. He wrote to his chaverim in New York to inform them that he was delayed. The managers of the ship he was to sail on, the *Regina d'Italia*, would not sell tickets to nationals of countries at war. When the policy was finally changed Borochov found himself the victim of new circumstances. The "John Bulls" (the English) had seized some Italian ships at Gibraltar, including the *Regina d'Italia*, on suspicion of smuggling. Before he was finally able to travel, Borochov spent many more fruitful hours researching Italian Jewish literature in the Genoa libraries.⁴⁷

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On his arrival in the United States Borochov immersed himself in Poale Zion work and Socialist Zionist organizing. In his brief sojourn to North America he attended major Poale Zion conventions in Rochester (December 1914), Cleveland (August 1915) and Boston (October 1916). After the Cleveland convention he travelled to eighteen cities on behalf of the Poale Zion. He regularly wrote articles and did editorial work for a number of Yiddish publications, most importantly *Die Wahrheit* and *Der Yiddisher Kempfer*.

Borochov's period in America was not his happiest. He lived with his wife and young daughter Shoshana (born in 1912) in Brooklyn. Much of the time he was at odds with the Poale Zion leadership. Borochov, who was apparently more radical than many of his American chaverim, led a "social democratic opposition" to the leadership and resigned more than once from various party positions. In 1915 he vociferously attacked the party leadership for collaboration with the bourgeois Zionists, continued to oppose participation in the World Zionist Congress, refused to pay his "shekel" or support the Jewish National Fund. Although he would later modify these positions, the immediate consequences were suspension. He eventually returned and placed himself under party discipline.⁴⁸

As the condition of European Jewry worsened as a result of the war, Borochov called for a total mobilization of world Jewry to face the drastic situation across the ocean. He was also one of the few Jewish leaders to support the creation of the Jewish Legion. He played an important role in the agitation for democratic world and American Jewish congresses to confront the war situation, prepare Jewish demands for the peace afterwards, assert Jewish national rights and generally reorganize Jewish life. The Poale Zion "was to act as a spearhead of the entire Congress movement at the socialist and at the general level of Jewish politics."⁴⁹ In this battle Borochov fought both the Bundist dominated Jewish Socialist Federation and the "Jewish establishment." He also attacked the undemocratic domination of Jewish life by the philanthropies and organizations such as the American Jewish Committee.

Meanwhile it appears that Borochov's Marxism underwent a reorientation away from his more mechanical views of 1906. By September 1917 he would reject his own concept of a "styctic

process" leading Jews to Palestine and became more supportive of the constructivist socialism of the Palestine labor movement (as opposed to an emphasis on class struggle). He became even more impatient with those espousing uncritical Marxist dogmas. No doubt the failures of the Socialist International and its ensuing collapse in World War I had something to do with this. On March 20, 1915 he wrote in *Die Wahrheit*:

I can imagine Marx arising from his grave. Upon seeing his present disciples, he motions them away and utters, "I — God forbid — I am no Marxist."

Marx was undoubtedly the greatest thinker of the nineteenth century. None has better analyzed the complex problems of our social organization. But because Marx is dead and because new problems have arisen, we must think independently and arrive at our own solutions.⁵⁰

Indeed, Karl Marx himself had once written in frustration "Je ne suis pas Marxiste."

The belief that Marxists had to think independently was already implicit in Borochoy's earlier attempts to reach a Marxist analysis of the national question. In 1916 he prepared a series of articles entitled "The Economic Development of the Jewish People." With careful use of tables and statistics Borochoy concluded that "the concentration of Jewish labor in any occupation varies directly with the remoteness of that occupation from nature."⁵¹ Thus once again the logic of his Zionism became evident — in a Jewish homeland with Jewish workers in all branches of the economy the Jews would be normalized, de-marginalized and have a strategic base for the struggle for socialism. "The landlessness of the Jewish people is the source of its tragedy and malady" he wrote.⁵²

Because his world-view synthesized both socialism and Zionism, Borochoy's nationalism was never narrow. Since 1906 he was a consistent advocate of Socialist Zionist support for broader socialist causes. In 1916 he supported the congressional candidacy of socialist Morris Hillquit against a Tammany Hall Democrat named Rosenblatt (who tried to run as a Zionist). Borochoy, in an article entitled "Socialism and Tammany Hall" in *Die Wahrheit*, attacked Rosenblatt's Zionism as a debasement of ideals.⁵³

The author of "Nationalism and the Class Struggle" was also a vocal opponent of the First World War. Yet he was quick to

denounce those who felt that nationalism was the sole cause of the war while simultaneously attacking "present-day reactionary chauvinism." He criticized with biting sarcasm those socialists who had gone to war: "If socialists may become loyal to the Kaiser, His Majesty can also become a Marxist."⁵⁴ In December 1915 he argued against U.S. entry into the war and denounced militarism:

Militarism aims at letting loose man's instincts and enslaving humanity; Socialism aims at creating a humanity which will control its instincts. Militarism aims to convert nations into armies, men into soldiers; Socialism aims to free men and nations.⁵⁵

After the Czar's overthrow and the actual entry of the U.S. into the war in 1917, Borochoy shifted his position and claimed that the war should be concluded "for the future of humanity."⁵⁶ This brought Borochoy very close to Nachman Syrkin who supported the allied war program.

Russia and Death

The events in Russia and the appeals of his comrades brought Borochoy to the conclusion that he had to return to the land of birth. In February 1917 the world of Czar Nicholas II came crashing down around the "little father" of the Russian people. As a Jew, a socialist and a former guest of the Czar's prisons, Borochoy could only greet the revolution with satisfaction. Despite his enthusiasm he still declared that "The two most important problems of our time — the social oppression of the working class and the national oppression of weak nationalities shall despite the present revolution remain unsettled."⁵⁷

On his way back to Russia Borochoy stopped in Stockholm to help prepare a Poale Zion statement for the Holland-Scandinavian Socialist Conference. The statement was a mixture of socialism and Zionism with a little bit of Wilsonian-sounding idealism mixed in. It attacked the imperialist powers responsible for the European carnage, greeted the Russian revolution and the formation of a League of Nations, demanded full equality for Jews in all countries and national autonomy for the Jewish people in Palestine.⁵⁸ He would return briefly to Sweden to see his son David born on August 1.

In Russia Borochoy served as a delegate to the new regime's Nationalities Congress where he called for a Socialist Federative Republic. In September he made an important speech entitled "Eretz

"Yisrael in Our Program and Tactics" to the Russian Congress of Poale Zion. The speech was recorded in the minutes of the meeting. In it Borochochov showed himself faithful to his Socialist Zionism while displaying a modified practical approach that shocked some of the comrades whom he had not seen in ten years.

Borochochov criticized his earlier concept of a "stychic" process and expressed sympathies for the Jewish National Fund while reasserting the need for independent Socialist Zionist work in Palestine based on the Palestine Worker's Fund established by Poale Zion in 1909. He announced that whereas Poale Zion's previous programs had simply used the term "Jewish nation," a more emotional terminology should now be used: "Now we can and must proclaim 'Eretz Yisrael — a Jewish home!'"

Finally Ber Borochochov eloquently repeated his classic analogy on the plight of the Jewish proletariat:

In short we must initiate a Socialist program of activities in Palestine. The Jewish worker, like the rock-bound Prometheus, will free himself from the vultures that torture him and will snatch the heavenly fires for himself and for the Jewish people.⁵⁹

Three months later, on December 17, 1917, Ber Borochochov was dead, apparently of pneumonia, in Kiev. The man whom Shlomo Kaplansky, a fellow Poale Zionist, later called "the Prince of our intellectual world during the formative period of Socialist Zionism" was thirty-six years old.

Aftermath

Among the words inscribed on Ber Borochochov's tombstone in Kiev were the following:

Jewish Scientific Socialism
 Jewish Socialist Culture
 A Jewish Socialist Society in Palestine
 — This is Borochochovism

In 1963, through the personal intervention of the then President of Israel Yitzchak Ben Zvi, Ber Borochochov's remains were transferred to Israel. Besides the immediate family (who had settled in Palestine in the 1920s), a list of luminaries attended his second funeral including David Ben Gurion, Zalman Shazar, Golda Meir and Yitzchak Tabenkin. Borochochov was reburied in a small cemetery by Lake Kinneret, near the graves of Moses Hess, Nachman Syrkin, Berl



Ber Borochochov, circa 1908.

Katznelson and Rachel Blaustein, the poet who had learned Hebrew from Borochov's father in Poltava.

Today, sixty years after Ber Borochov's death, the future of Socialist Zionism rests as much on a reassertion of his vision and ideas as in a reorientation to new realities. Borochov would have been among the first to demand an honest, constant and careful recognition of changing conditions. His own development, as a political leader and as a Socialist Zionist theoretician equaled by few, exemplifies the life of a person unafraid of the future, willing to change when necessary, yet always committed to his principles.

He never lived to see his dreams fulfilled. He would have considered the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 an event of revolutionary importance. But he would have considered it only a first step. Ber Borochov's life was dedicated to freeing a chained Prometheus so that what Lenin claimed was an empty space between two chairs would be filled by a new and solid foundation for Jewish life, a Socialist Israel.

FOOTNOTES

1. The list of people without whom this article would not have been is quite long.

I would first like to give special thanks to Nadia Borochov Ovsey, Ber Borochov's sister, and Betty Frank (Nadia's daughter and Ber's niece) for the many hours of reminiscences, hospitality and friendship they have both afforded me. It was a recent visit with Nadia and Betty this past summer that inspired this article.

Very special thanks goes to my friend Aviva Cantor for her assistance, ideas, expert editing, endless energy and committed interest in Ber Borochov. Aviva first introduced me to Nadia and Betty and gave me access to a wealth of information she had acquired on Borochov (some with the help of Harry Borochov, Ber's youngest sibling) as well as transcripts of earlier interviews she did with Nadia.

Thanks go to the following for assisting me in a variety of ways ranging from translations to directing me to useful material: Jack Jacobs, Steve Zipperstein (who had to put up with phone calls at all hours of the night), Lior Yaron, Mr. Yizchak and Mrs. Bracha Ziv-el, Yoram Amihud, the Zionist Archives in New York, Mr. H. Kempinski of the Bund Archives, Dr. Z. Szajkowski of Yivo, and Mr. Jacob Katzman. Dr. Norma Fain Pratt was most kind in allowing me to see an earlier draft of her forthcoming book, *Morris Hillquit: A Political History of an American Jewish Socialist* (Greenwood Press, 1978).

I would also like to thank my father for utilizing his photographic talents to reproduce the photos which accompany this article.

Any errors are, of course, my own.

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5. Jonathan Frankel, *Socialism and Jewish Nationalism in Russia, 1892-1907*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1961, p. 357.

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10. Interview with Nadia Borochov Ovsey.
11. Interview with Nadia Borochov Ovsey. Also see "My Brother Ber Borochov" by Nadia Borochov Ovsey in the *Jewish Liberation Journal*, Summer, 1971 and "Life Dedicated to Justice Starts with Freeing of Bird" by Nadia Borochov Ovsey, *Boston Jewish Advocate*, November 26, 1964.
12. Interview with Nadia Borochov Ovsey.
13. Harry Borochov, "Reminiscences of My Brother," *Israel Horizons*, May 1968. Also interview with Nadia Borochov Ovsey.
14. Y. Ben Zvi, "Ne'urei B. Borochov," p. 9.
15. Liuba Borochov, *Prakim me'Yoman Chay'ai*, p. 22.
16. Shmarya Levin, *The Arena*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1932, p. 262.
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24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Rachel Yanait Ben Zvi, *Coming Home* (translation of *Anu Olim*). New York: Herzl Press, 1964, p. 152.
27. Ber Borochov, "The National Question and the Class Struggle" in *Nationalism*, p. 137.
28. Ibid., p. 144.
29. Ibid., p. 140.
30. R. Y. Ben Zvi, *Coming Home*, p. 200.
31. *Nationalism*, p. 75 fn.
32. Yitzchak Ben Zvi, "First Steps - The Beginning of Borochov's Zionist Work" *Itonut Avodah*, London, Nov.-Dec. 1942.
33. *Nationalism*, p. 181 fn.
34. R. Y. Ben Zvi, *Coming Home*, p. 203.
35. Ber Borochov, "Our Platform" in *Nationalism*, pp. 201-2.
36. For recent applications of Borochov's theories to modern times, see Allon Gal, *Socialist Zionism*, Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing, 1973 and Moshe Zedek "Borochovism" in *Jewish Radicalism* edited by J. N. Porter and P. Dreier, New York: Grove Press, 1973.
37. R. Y. Ben Zvi, *Coming Home*, p. 206.
38. Liuba Borochov, *Prakim*, p. 57.
39. Ibid., p. 54.
40. Interview with Nadia Borochov Ovsey.
41. See Ezra Mendelsohn, "The Jewish Socialist Movement and the Second International, 1889-1914: The Struggle for Recognition" in *Jewish Social Studies*, July 1964.

42. R. Y. Ben Zvi, *Coming Home*, p. 143.
43. Borochof's Letter to Niger, 12 August 1914. This letter as well as the others cited in this article (unless otherwise noted) are from the American Jewish Archives on the Cincinnati Campus of the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion.
44. Interview with Nadia Borochof Ovsey.
45. L. Shpizman, *Geschichte fun der Tzionistischer Arbeiter Bewegung in Tson America* (History of the Zionist Workers Movement in North America) 2 vol. New York: Yiddisher Kemfer, 1955. In Yiddish. pp. 275-6.
46. Borochof's Letter to Ehrenreich, 4 Feb. 1914.
47. Borochof's Letters of 5 and 9 November 1914.
48. *Labor Zionist Handbook*, New York: Poale Zion Zeire Zion, 1939. pp. 66-67.
49. Jonathan Frankel, "The Jewish Socialists and the American Jewish Congress Movement" in *Essays on the American Jewish Labor Movement*, E. Mendelsohn, editor. New York: Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science, Vol. 16, p. 209.
50. Quoted by Moshe Cohen in "Editor's Preface" to *Nationalism*, p. 9.
51. Ber Borochof, "The Economic Development of the Jewish People," in *Nationalism*. p. 68.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
53. Norma Fain Pratt, *Morris Hillquit: A Political History of an American Jewish Socialist* (forthcoming from Greenwood Press). This information is from Chapter 6 on Hillquit and the Jews.
54. Ber Borochof, "Nationalism and the World War," in *Nationalism*. p. 112.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
56. Joseph Rappaport, *Jewish Immigrants and World War I — A Study of American Yiddish Press Reactions*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1951. p. 280. The article by Borochof was in *Naye Welt*, May 4, 1917.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 268. Borochof's article was in *Der Yiddisher Kempfer*, March 23, 1917.
58. Declaration to the Hollando-Scandinavian Socialist Committee submitted by the Jewish Socialist Labour Confederation Poale Zion, Stockholm, 1917.
59. See Ber Borochof, "Eretz Yisrael in Our Program and Tactics," in *Nationalism*. pp. 124-131.

Photos courtesy of Mrs. Betty Frank and Mrs. Nadia Borochof Ovsey.

Plans are currently being made to form the Ber Borochof Foundation for Socialist Zionist Research. Ideas should be sent to and information can be obtained from:

Borochof Foundation Project
POB 795
Old Cathedral Station
New York, N.Y. 10025

Doron Rosenbloom

Sparks of Independence

(Translated from *Ha'Aretz Supplement*
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Accumulations

The Americans have Fort Knox where they store their treasure of gold, the French have the Louvre, the abode of art, and Israel — that doesn't have much money or much art — has a treasure of books on the ideology and thoughts of the first hundred years of Zionism, namely: words, words to the extent that they are an international treasure.

Since we do not have parades any more on Independence Day, it is good to make a personal pilgrimage to the "Eretz Yisrael History Department" at one of the research libraries. It is hard to believe what an overwhelming amount of space is taken up by memoirs, correspondence, collections of speeches, predictions and orations, anthologies of articles, essays, diaries, albums, letters, pamphlets, journals, quarterlies, the proceedings and various other printed matter that documented all that happened in this tiny piece of land during such a short period of time. Tens of thousands of volumes, billions of words, thousands of points of view and statements poured out and are still pouring out in an ever-increasing tempo all about what's happening in this tiny area. A colossal verbiage is buried here on the shelves, just as on the wall of a cave. How many people (and what a variety of people), strived energetically to express a view, to clarify a point, to describe the face, place and atmosphere relating to the realization of the Zionist dream in Eretz Yisrael.

Put out your hand (as you leaf through rapidly) and you will find Brenner howling like a jackal on a moonlit night!; Gordon, old and weak is looking out a window in Tel Aviv in the 20s, a report on absorption and construction; a Bible quiz and the sinking of the "Dakar"; the battle of the languages and the dedication of the