

The Bund - Like All the Jews, With All the Jews

Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours; The Bund in Poland*

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Daniel Blatman's study fills a painful gap that has long been acknowledged in the historiography of the Holocaust in general and in the Hebrew historiography of the period in particular. Within the context of Holocaust research, a variety of subjects concerning the Bund—the story of the resistance of Bund members in Poland during the Holocaust, the realignment of party institutions in the face of new wartime realities, the involvement of the Bund in the daily life of the ghetto, and the complexities of the Bund's organizational leadership, fraught as it was with contradictions and confrontations—have been sorely neglected. In the past, the discussion of the subject has been confined to sporadic, parenthetical commentary—usually insubstantial—and barely qualified as an afterthought. More often than not, even these scant references were made in the context of reminiscences dealing with dated doctrinal bickering, in itself the legacy of ancient ideological disputes about which no one gets excited anymore.

The reasons are obvious. Aside from vestiges of the acrimonious ideological disputes between the Bund and Zionism, no documentary material about the Bund has been accumulated in our archives. Neither is there material to be found about the dilemmas the party faced during the Holocaust. These formidable obstacles were further compounded by the fact that neither the Polish Bundists who survived in various corners of the Jewish world, nor the self-appointed guardians of its ideological legacy felt an urge to address the subject and plumb its depths through research. Nor did they show much enthusiasm—again, for obvious reasons—for historical research on the Bund conducted by scholars educated in Israeli universities.

The paucity of research in this area can also be attributed to the oppressive, suspicious, and, at times, insulting habit of the Bund representatives in the United States. They closely watched every stranger who tried to gain entrance to the Bund archive in New York, where most of the relevant material on the subject is located. Many years passed before the party watchdogs and those who embodied the “party wisdom” decided to allow scholars access to the Bund documents.

Daniel Blatman is to be commended for showing good judgment in applying himself— when the circumstances were right—to this task and for producing an extremely valuable and informative study. His book does its subject honor. He was also helped in his endeavors by the felicitous occurrence of the earth-shaking transformations in Eastern Europe. Thanks to the political developments, he was able to gain access to the Bund materials in the archives of the former Polish Communist Party in Warsaw.

Indeed, the sad, if not depressing, story of the Bund during World War II once again brings into sharp focus the fact of the total destruction of an entire Jewish civilization. The unique matrix of cultural and social creativity and of feverish economic endeavor that brought to the surface the remarkable Jewish stamina and drive is all gone forever. Reading the story as told by Blatman, one can no longer find solace in reassurances about the restoration and continuity of Jewish life despite all that has happened.

The catastrophe of Polish Jewry forms an unfathomable rupture in Jewish history, a volcanic eruption that spewed forth a torrent of lava that destroyed everything in its path and turned existence into nothingness. No wonder that, from the perspective of fifty years, the naive Jewish belief that we might “renew our days as of old” turns out to be an illusion, a grasping at mental straws. This sort of thinking may have lightened the horrendous burden of many survivors as they attempted to reconcile themselves to their experience of utter horror, but such comforting reassurances were not enough to reinvent the Jewish existence from before the deluge.

The story begins with “The Shock of the Occupation” (pp. 33-71). The reader is held in thrall by a mesmerizing description of the consternation that gripped both the Zionists and the Bundists as they witnessed the collapse and destruction of the Polish political system. The loss of the formal legitimacy that had been enjoyed by the party and its ideology sent waves of panic through the ranks of the Bund. Like all the political parties, and like the entire Jewish collectivity in Poland, the Bund found itself catapulted into a void. The very foundations of its existence disappeared into the quicksand; hunted down mercilessly, it found itself reduced to a semblance of existence in the gray and frightening twilight zone of randomness and blind luck.

I choose my description deliberately because, after all, for the Bund, Poland was not just another country. It was *the* promised land, the actual and yearned-for homeland of masses of Jews, the only place where, according to Bund theoreticians, the Jewish problem could be solved, and Polish Jewry would at long last dwell in peace. But after September 1939, all the political and public structures of Poland, this promised land, disappeared as if they had never existed. Almost overnight, Polish Jews, including the Bundists, had to adjust themselves to a violent, unpredictable reality pervaded by malevolence. The fabric of this reality was rent asunder by indescribably devious forces, and, in this new situation, there were no clues offered as to how to survive. In short, the Jews of Poland were confronted with a system, devoid of rationality, leaving no room to breathe, no room for anything.

The horror was further compounded by the fact that those who escaped Nazi rule fled straight into the jaws of the Soviet justice system (pp. 53ff.). Unlike members of other Jewish public bodies, it was the Bundists who had to come to terms, almost overnight, with the bitter truth that a cruel fate awaited them in Soviet Russia. This became apparent with the arrest of their leaders, Henryk Ehrlich and Wiktor Alter, who subsequently vanished, as though swallowed up into the bowels of the earth. The leaders who were still at liberty feverishly sought a way to reach a safe haven—Vilna (Wilno; Vilnius), which, for the time being, became part of independent Lithuania. From there they would journey out of Poland and on to the United States.

The flight of Bundists from German-occupied Poland to the Soviet zone soon came to a halt. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that in a count of repatriates from Russia in 1946, the surviving Bund leaders were able (according to Salo Fiszgrund, p. 52) to locate no more than about 1,000 party members who had returned to Poland, a paltry number by all accounts. Thus, the bulk of the Bund's activist cadres remained behind German lines in occupied Poland. In this, the Bund shared the fate of all Polish Jewry. Blatman devotes much space to the question of how the Bund members absorbed these harsh truths and whether their responses differed from those of other Jewish collectives.

The author draws an apt distinction between Bundist ideology and praxis in the ghetto (ideology as a doctrine vs. ideology as a pragmatic endeavor). This distinction relates to three separate, though closely related, predicaments faced by the Bund: first, the dilemma of rigid ideology versus the urgent need to develop a practical means of adapting to reality; second, the gap between the old-generation leadership, on the one hand, and the young Bund members, on the other—the former suffering an ideological shock accompanied by operational paralysis, and the latter eager to break through the irrelevant ideological constraints in order to join the forces of activism in the ghetto; and third, the tension between the old guard, who continued to pin their hopes on the Central Committee and its rulings, and the young whose allegiances lay with the youth organization *Zukunft* and who abided by its directives.

Under the circumstances, the Bund could hardly embark on a different path from that of other political parties and public organizations. In some places its members assumed leadership of the *Judenrat* under duress and, in so doing, helped Jewish communities in a partial and temporary fashion. This was despite the fact that, at the same time, they unintentionally served the Nazi taskmasters, as in the case of *Piotrkow Trybunalski* (pp. 83ff). In the eyes of Jewish public opinion, the party accorded legitimacy to the actions of the Jewish leadership in the ghettos, even though the Bundists could not change the fact of being “appointed” leaders. The dissimulation lasted as long as the Nazi demands did not include selections and deportations. As they hid in Warsaw, the Bund leadership was prescient enough to try and dissuade its members in provincial cities from assuming posts in the *Judenrate*.

Under conditions of mortal danger, a meeting (widely attended considering the circumstances, pp. 85ff) was convened. At the end of a prolonged dispute, the leaders had to admit that they were unable to impose their will or render help. The party's ideological arsenal lacked the means to cope with the situation created by the Nazis. The Bund had no choice but to concentrate on social assistance and educational activities, and all its efforts were naturally geared to the task of mobilizing resources and establishing connections that would ensure the supply of needed services. These needs

also forced the Bund to avail itself of services provided by various institutions in the ghetto, to maintain contact with them on a daily basis, and here and there comply—either directly or indirectly—with their ultimatums.

Under these circumstances, the Bund ideology, with all its “commandments” as prescribed by the doctrine of the “class struggle,” became a burden that threatened tactical immobility. In the final analysis, such doctrinal entrenchment only served the interests of the principal enemy. Before dispatching them to their final fate, the Nazis did their utmost to sow confusion among the Jews, to deny them an opportunity to coolly appraise their situation, and make it impossible for them to engage in concerted action.

On the basis of the wealth of documentation assembled by the author, no reader can help but conclude that the Bund leadership could not have reacted differently, more effectively or more decisively, to the challenges of ghetto existence, as compared to other Jewish political bodies. The Bund boasted the largest membership, disciplined and prepared for adversity; it also commanded a large cadre of activists. It recovered from the initial blow faster than other political parties and was able to establish reliable underground frameworks (pp. 90ff). At the same time, however, due to the extreme situation in which it found itself, the party had to engage in feverish efforts in order to ensure the most basic sort of existence, an activity that gripped the adult population of the ghettos. Nor could the Bund shake off the overpowering anxiety about the future under Nazi rule. In other words, acute problems of survival swept away old loyalties and obligations, undermining party discipline.

The senior Bund leadership had no choice but to contact other parties and ghetto welfare institutions and to try to cultivate possible negotiating channels with allies in various factions of the Polish Socialist Party or those who had broken away from the Socialists in the wake of growing political radicalization (pp. 106ff). The Bund's ties with political parties outside the ghetto walls set it apart from other Jewish parties and gave it leverage. No wonder that many still regarded Bund ideology as relevant to the times, as providing a valid perspective on the future, and offering hope that was not entirely illusory. Before long, however, disappointment inevitably set in.

Blatman provides an interesting perspective on the processes of ideological differentiation within the party under the pressures of Nazi occupation and the destruction of Jewish life. He focuses, in particular, on the widening gap between the views of the senior party leadership, on the one hand, and the leaders of its youth section, the Zukunft, on the other. Bolstered by the results of the 1938 elections, the old guard remained incorrigibly doctrinaire and devoutly committed to traditional ideology, whereas the youth section grew increasingly skeptical about the wisdom of maintaining a distance, on “class” grounds, from the organized Jewish community.

The idea of keeping the party separate from the Jewish collectivity has a sad, if not absurd, history. Due to its commitment to the “internationalism” of Russian Social-Democracy, the Bund had attempted over the years to underscore its distance from the Jewish people as a whole and had heaped scorn on any form of political cooperation among Jewish parties that represented the interests of different social classes. In short, between the wars, the Bund did everything it could to set itself apart from other organized Jewish groups. This policy resulted in years of political paralysis on the Jewish scene, as well as sectarianism in several election campaigns to the Polish Sejm and community councils.

Regarding some aspects of the Bund's propaganda activity in the ghettos, the party persisted in its efforts to portray the plight of the Jews as inseparable from the dire straits of Poland in general, and as foreshadowing the fate in store for all Poles. In other words, the Bund worked hard to emphasize the parallels between the situation of the Jews and the Poles under the oppressive conditions that Nazi rule created for the two peoples. This symmetrical view gave rise to illusions and erroneous operational tactics. It caused the Bund to wait for Polish-Jewish solidarity to materialize “for our freedom and yours” (this was also the name of the party's underground press organ) and, when this failed to happen, to ignore or downplay the absence of solidarity. Ultimately, this led the Bund to encourage its members and sympathizers to languish in idle and embarrassing wait for redemption from the Polish side. Not all Bund members clung to this belief (pp. 110f.), but, as Blatman points out (pp. 111), “the Bund's underground press dutifully stressed

the shared [fate] of the two workers' parties, the Polish and the Jewish, and the shared suffering of Poles and Jews caused by the policies of the murderous German fascism.”

This emphasis on similarities between the two parties and on a shared fate, combined with the belief in “proletarian solidarity,” entailed yet another complication that Blatman's study does not address. Paradoxically, the Bund's positions made it easier for the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) to refrain from coming to the aid of the Jews and from actively committing itself to the struggle against Polish collaborators who sought to hand over Jews to the Nazis and remove them from Polish soil. After all, so the argument went, if the Polish people and the Polish proletariat in particular were subjected to terrible suffering (just as the Jews were) how could it be expected to rally to help the Jews in their plight? How could one even think that they would make sacrifices under such circumstances? All that could be done was to make the Polish proletariat stand bareheaded, together with all those other “poor Poles look[ing] at the ghetto” as it went up in flames.¹

There was yet another sad, if not tragic, aspect to this perception of the shared fate of the Jews and the Poles: the alleged existence of effective, reliable, and time-tested proletarian solidarity - as alleged by the Bund, solidarity that had proven responsive to fears and tribulations - by definition negated the wisdom of heaping scorn on national solidarity, and the arrogant attitude that often surrounded discussions of its worth. It comes as no surprise that the Bund, the largest political party in the Warsaw ghetto and many other ghettos as well, saw itself relieved of the need to lead the Jewish masses in times of terror. This would have meant to organize them, to take advantage of connections with Polish comrades in order to stockpile weapons, and to lead the way in armed resistance. Astonishingly, the Bund hesitated; this initiative came from other groups, mainly Zionist youth circles. According to Marek

¹ The title is from the article by Jan Blonski, which provoked a storm of controversy in Poland. It appeared for the first time in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 2 (1987), and was later reprinted in the author's collection of essays under the same title, Jan Blonski, *Biedni Polacy patrza na Getto*, (Krakow: WL, 1994). The article appeared in English under the title, “Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto, *Yad Vashem Studies*, 19 (1989), pp. 341-355.

Edelman (Edelman, p. 171), the decision to join the Jewish Fighting Organization in Warsaw was reached with a majority of just one vote.

Blatman's efforts to uncover evidence of a different approach on the part of the Zukunft undoubtedly constitute the most significant aspect of his study. He argues convincingly that members of the youth section showed greater openness than did the old guard toward their Jewish political environment in the ghetto; they were more active in assistance and education efforts, more determined and level-headed in their appraisal of the party's ideological legacy and, therefore, more flexible (p. 163). This reader, however, remains unconvinced as to the consistency of their attitude. I would especially contest Blatman's proposition that the young were more clear-eyed than their ideological mentors from among the senior leadership of the Bund in the ghetto. There is, in fact, no evidence to prove the existence of different ways of thinking among the young Bundists as to the party's role on the Jewish public scene in the ghetto. Above all, as has been noted earlier, their decision to join the Jewish Fighting Organization was taken conditionally and at the last moment. They refused to join the Jewish National Committee (Zydowski Komitet Narodowy) on the astonishing argument that the Bund would forfeit its independence vis-a-vis the Polish government in London by doing so (p. 171). In order to overcome this "obstacle" and incorporate the Zukunft into the Committee, the decision-making process was compromised and another institutional burden was added in the form of the Coordinating Committee (Komitet Koordynacyjny) (p. 163), a truly "worthy" project under the circumstances.

The Bund was by no means exceptional in its doctrinaire attitudes. The various Zionist parties, for instance, that did come to some understanding did so hesitatingly and with much mutual dislike. Furthermore, we must remember that they came to an understanding only after the large *Aktion* in Warsaw, at the time when the city's Jewish community had been bled almost completely and had been reduced to a pitiful remnant crammed into a tiny territorial enclave. Last, but certainly not least, this understanding was reached in the face of the harsh realization that the recently established Jewish underground had no weapons. Only then did the underground try to procure weapons, and,

not surprisingly, the quantities turned out to be woefully inadequate. Its “strong ties” with the Polish Socialist Party notwithstanding, the Bund could contribute almost nothing to the Jewish arsenal.

Blatman's book also sheds new light on the Alter-Ehrlich affair (pp. 127-150). Here the author draws on the correspondence that was preserved in the Bund archive and recently uncovered. The letters offer abundant testimony to Ehrlich's and Alter's frame of mind and conduct after their release from prison. It also shows their lack of fear of the Soviet authorities— an attitude that bordered on naivete—and makes clear their hidden intention to disclose to their comrades the truth about Soviet “socialism.” There can be no doubt that these letters helped the Soviet authorities handle the two leaders as they did.

The word “helped” is used advisedly here, since there is no way of knowing for sure if the Soviet authorities originally intended to grant Alter and Ehrlich freedom of movement and an opportunity to slip from their grip. We know of no other instances that the Soviet authorities set their victims free. But even the attempt to incriminate the two Bund leaders by charging them with planning to mount an anti-Soviet propaganda campaign was without foundation. After all, they strove to become part of the anti-Nazi struggle on the side of the Soviet Union and its allies and would have been prudent enough not to sabotage this effort.

What was Alter's and Ehrlich's plan of action? Although he refers to it, Blatman does not subject the program itself or its implications (p. 134) to scrutiny. This is unfortunate in view of the fact that this program incorporated new ideological parameters. After their release in September 1941, Ehrlich and Alter were involved in negotiations with Soviet representatives about the establishment of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. In their view it was necessary to establish a Jewish representative body that would serve as the spokesman for world Jewry, a political committee that would represent all Jews politically and would function as an active combatant. Such a committee would engage in major recruitment efforts aimed at conscripting Jewish manpower to the armies of their home countries. It would mobilize the financial resources of American Jewry for ammunition and arms procurement

and ensure the best credit terms for the Soviet state. Furthermore, “in view of the fact that Soviet Russia now bears the main burden of the struggle against Hitlerism, the Committee, together with the American comrades, shall consider also other forms of active participation [in the war effort] on the part of American Jews [American Citizens Legion - M.M.]” The active representatives and executive of the committee were to comprise ten members: seven representatives of Polish Jewry, and three representing Soviet, American, and British Jews.²

The implications of this program are brought into sharper focus when we compare them to the Soviet view of the tasks of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. The Soviets conceived the committee as a modest organization, inconspicuous as possible, one that would be used chiefly as a technical conduit for disseminating information about the horrors inflicted on Soviet nationals, including Jews, by the Nazi occupation. The committee was designed to function as part of the Soviet propaganda apparatus, acting in strict conformity with the mandate foisted upon it by the Soviet political machine, which would be the sole source of its authority. The committee was forbidden from deviating in any way from the formal patterns prescribed by the Soviets and could not challenge the ideological definitions of what constituted Soviet Jewry or facilitate “nationalist” Jewish lobbying efforts. Lastly, it was prevented from establishing any organizational ties with other Jewish collectivities.³

Interestingly, unlike both the Bund leadership in occupied Poland and their comrades exiled in the United States, Ehrlich and Alter applied themselves to the task of promoting world Jewish unity and concerted action in the struggle against Nazism. Thus, they left behind their “class” qualms from the period shortly before the war. This reviewer has no doubt that, had

² The text of the memorandum was published in Yiddish in the anthology *Henryk Ehrlich un Wiktor Alter: A Leben fun Kempfer, A Toit fun Martyren*, edited by B. Hart (New York: Bund, 1943), pp. 188-195.

³ See also the book of documents edited by Shimon Redlich, *War, Holocaust and Stalinism, a Documented History of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR* (Luxembourg: Harwood, 1995), pp. 9-19, documents 1-6, pp. 165-171.

their liberty and freedom of action not been taken from them, their Bundist colleagues in Warsaw would inevitably have arrived at the same conclusion and overcome their absurd aversion to cooperation with other nationally minded bodies of organized Polish Jewry under the occupation. The same goes for the Bund mission in New York, which—even in the face of harrowing reports on the fate of Polish Jews—still refused to budge from its traditional positions on the issue of cooperation with other Jewish political organizations, including the Zionist representative in the Polish National Council of the Polish government-in-exile, Ignacy Szwarzbart (pp. 247f.).

We may hazard a guess that Bund leaders such as Ehrlich and Alter (but not, for example, Emmanuel Nowogrodski or Emmanuel Szerer) could have achieved more for Polish Jewry than other Polish Jewish leaders outside the country who acted on behalf of Zionist parties, such as the Federation of Polish Jews, established in mandatory Palestine. This organization was effectively absorbed by the Zionist establishment, which deprived it of its independence and power, and often rendered it completely impotent.

Another novel contribution of Blatman's study is the information it provides about the relationships between the Bund mission in London and the political mission in New York. Blatman dwells primarily on the complex and difficult position of Shmuel Zygielbojm, whose power and influence were quite limited. The Bund team in New York considered him intellectually unqualified for his job and took exception to his various ventures. His suicide sowed confusion. Some Bundists tried to downplay the significance of Zygielbojm's desperate act. This reprehensible reaction stemmed from narrowly conceived party interests and stands in stark contrast to the glorification lavished on the suicide later on.⁴ Emmanuel Szerer, who arrived in London to assume Zygielbojm's post, no longer objected to cooperation with Szwarzbart. In this he acted like the Bund leaders who still survived in the ghettos; they realized that all Jews under Nazi rule shared the same fate and that “class” tactics had proven devoid of content and irrelevant.

Blatman is right to emphasize (Afterword, p. 359) that after the war the Bund shelved its traditional ideology, which had delegitimized any attempt at

⁴ Y. S. Hertz, ed., *Zygielbojm Bukh* (New York: Unzer Zeit, 1947).

establishing an international framework for the movement. It shied away from any assertions about the absence of a link between the fate of Jews in different countries and began supporting concerted Jewish action on a world-wide scale. Incidentally, a similar criticism of the Bund's approach had been made in the first decade of the century by Malka Lifshitz (Esther) on the occasion of the Language Conference in Czernowitz.⁵

At the same time, however, there is no evidence to support Blatman's argument that the Bund had “an old tradition of negating Jewish nationalism” (p. 359). The Bund played an integral role in the Jewish national awakening; although, its efforts to raise the national consciousness of Jewish workers by means of Yiddish language and culture were more successful than their efforts to raise professional and class consciousness. Many Zionists also thought that attempts to foist Hebrew culture on the Jews worked against the efforts to rescue them from the plight of Diaspora existence. The Bund did not consider emigration a feasible solution to the Jewish question and opted, instead, to develop Jewish life in the various countries within the framework of cultural autonomy. This would be achieved as a result of the struggle for democratization.

It helps to bear in mind that such theories emerged among Jews who lived in multiethnic settings, like the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, and who were deeply involved in the political culture and unique problems particular to those countries.⁶ In any event, the theory in question led to the conclusion that many Jewish nations were bound to emerge, each adapted to the specific conditions prevailing in its country of residence. On these grounds, the Bund rejected the idea of a world-wide Jewish organization, arguing that such a body could not—and must not—aspire to political power.

⁵ See Matitiah Minc, “Zionists and Poaley-Zion at the *Shprakh Konferenz* in Czernowitz 1908” (Hebrew), *Shevut* 15 (1992), pp. 135-148; idem, “The Belated Document and its Context,” *Iyunim Be'Tekumat Israel*, 2 (1992), pp. 362-377.

⁶ See Matitiah Minc, “Jewish Nationalism and Nationalism of Other Minorities in Multi-Ethnic Countries” in: Yehuda Reinharz, Yosef Shalmon and Gideon Shimoni, eds., *Jewish Nationalism and Politics, New Perspectives* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Shazar, 1996), pp. 201-224.

All that can be said with certainty on this subject is that, during the war, the Bund came to realize the absence of what was called “proletarian solidarity” and gave its backing to a form of national cohesion by opening a dialogue with “all of Israel.” Furthermore, dispersed throughout various countries around the world, survivors of the Bund started looking for ways to gain a foothold in Jewish secular collectives that had a Yiddish cultural orientation without, at the same time, forcing on these groups the party's autonomist political agenda. It was these individuals who turned the Bund into a cultural movement that transcended political boundaries.

Is it true to say, as Blatman does, that “the Bund was the only party among all traditional Jewish parties in Eastern Europe up to 1939 which effectively ceased to exist following the destruction of Polish Jewry” (p. 358)? In this reviewer's opinion, such a statement is bold and unnecessary. The argument that other sectors of the party found similar or identical follow-up movements “in other places” is hasty and based on unexamined assumptions. The Holocaust eliminated an entire Jewish civilization and wiped out the Jewish people in Poland, Russia, and the Baltic countries. In other words, it swept away not only the Bund, but the entire, multi-faceted Jewish national movement in Eastern Europe.

It is mistaken to think that post-Holocaust Zionism and its standard bearers constitute a direct continuation of the pre-war movement. Today the foundations and expectations of the original Zionist world view remain useless and mostly incomprehensible. I have in mind here chiefly what is called “Jewish secular nationalism,” of which the Bund formed an integral part. But the State of Israel has ceased to be a secular Jewish state, and the Jewish nationalism that is emerging in Israel has become increasingly religious, eschatological, and ultra-Orthodox—a phenomenon that was the stuff of nightmares for the founders of Zionism. This breach was opened even wider by the Palestinocentric ideology, which, in its doctrinaire zeal, distanced itself more and more from the fundamentals of Zionist philosophy.

One must also admit that both the Bund and Zionism turned out to be irrelevant to the real plight of the Jews, especially in those dark times. It is truly heartbreaking that the most concrete form of Jewish catastrophes took

place right before their eyes and left them speechless. Afterward came contradiction-solvers and continuity-enthusiasts who tried to prop up their collapsing house by means of conjectures and arguments that were both comforting and illusory. Not only did the Bund go up in smoke, but so did the all of European Jewry, the setting that had spawned the national Jewish movement.

The rupture was severe, and the Yishuv was unable to carry on without its original human reservoir. It resolved to cast its lot with other Jewish collectives, groups whose notions of national consciousness had been forged within a completely different mental make-up. There is no doubt that the establishment of the state provided the surviving remnant with an opportunity to ease the pain somewhat, but true renewal was not a real option. What was gone had vanished forever.

At the same time, however, it would be most unfortunate if this conclusion were construed as equating the failures of the Bund with those of Zionism. There are sharp distinctions to be made between the two movements and world views. The survivors who emerged from the inferno did not wax rhapsodic about the Bundist ideology and did not pin their hopes on it. This attitude stands in sharp contrast to the survivors' devoted and euphoric attitude toward Zionist ideology. They sought in Zionism a balm for their wounds and rallied around the cause of its implementation. The survivors paid their price in the struggles of illegal immigration⁷ and were not swayed from the fervent belief that their salvation lay in the Land of Israel.

Translated by Jerzy Michalowicz.

Source: *Yad Vashem Studies XXVI*, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 403-418.

⁷ No argument could be more offensive than the one that is common in Israel under the influence of deconstruction, which maintains that the survivors were like a shapeless mass in the hands of Zionist manipulators.

