

Martyna Rusiniak-Karwat

Nowe życie na zgliszczach

Bund w Polsce w latach 1944–1949

**Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk
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New Life in Ruins. The Bund in Poland in the Years 1944-1949 Summary

The book *Nowe życie na zgliszczach. Bund w Polsce w latach 1944-1949* [New Life in Ruins. The Bund in Poland in the Years 1944-1949] presents the activity of the General Jewish Labour "Bund" (The Bund; originally Yidisher Algemeyner Arberter Bund (Yiddish)) in the territory of post-Yalta Poland in the years 1944-1949. The work focuses on the "last chapter" of the party's activity in Poland. It touches upon issues concerning the attempts to modify/re-evaluate the political agenda of the party in the new, post-war reality (including the lack of its pre-war leaders on all levels of organisation), as well as a description of its activity, its importance and position in the Jewish world, starting from the foundation of the Lublin Bund Committee in the autumn of 1944 until 16 January 1949, which marked the last stage of the self-dissolution of the Bund in Poland. At the same time, it needs to be added that the image of the Jewish socialists is presented from the perspective of the Jewish community in Poland and beyond (mostly in North America), primarily from the point of view of the very members of the party.

Much space in the monograph is devoted to the issue of the post-war agenda of the Bund. The traditional, pre-war agenda of the party clashed with the new approach to the fundamentals of its ideology. Slogans such as national and cultural autonomy, anti-Zionist and anti-emigration sentiments were no longer applicable and had little support among the Jewish survivors seeking to leave Poland – a place associated with the Holocaust of the Jewish nation, an enormous cemetery. The three pillars of ideology originally serving as a basis for the activity of the Bund: here-ness (*doykayt*), family-ness (*mishpokhedikayt*), and Jewishness (*yiddish un yiddishkayt*), that is the things connected to the Yiddish culture and language, gained a new meaning. The book presents the shift in the approach of the Bund members to emigration

and to the establishment of a common Bundist structure, uniting organisations scattered all around the world, which came to be known as the World Coordinating Committee of the Bund and affiliated Jewish Socialist Organizations, founded in May 1947 in Brussels. One of the members, until March 1948, was the “Polish” Bund.

The work follows the structure of presenting various issues organised in chronological order, with each chapter focusing on issues and events connected to the reconstruction, activity, and main issues touched upon by the political party.

The book is divided into seven chapters with 38 sub-chapters, each of which is devoted to a particular issue that needs to be discussed separately. They are meant to determine the chronology of the events and distinguish three stages of the existence of the Bund in Poland: 1) autumn 1944–1946 – the reconstruction of the political activity and structures of the party (most Bund committees were established in 1946). One of the issues discussed in the work is the Bund’s cooperation with other political organisations in the so-called “Jewish street” and the Polish political stage, as well as the party’s attitude towards the political reality of “Lublin” Poland; various forms of activity of the Bund: publishing press, assemblies, lectures, celebration of Labour Day, etc.; 2) 1947 – first half of 1948 – the author of the work refers to this period as “small stabilisation” of the party, as it was primarily a time of organisation and the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Bund’s foundation in the autumn of 1947; 3) mid-1948–January 1949 – the decline of the party and its slow dissolution.

The first chapter, entitled “Odradzenie się Bundu” [Rebirth of the Bund], focuses on the process of reconstruction of the party in the first period of its existence (autumn 1944–1946), when most of its Polish committees were established and when it had the largest number of members. It contains the analysis of the political agenda of the Bund adjusted to the new reality, and presents the structure of the party as compared to the period before 1939 and with the indication of regional differences between each town. It also features the characterisation of the members of the Central Committee of the Bund elected in the years 1945–1946. The second (“Bund na »żydowskiej ulicy« politycznej” [The Bund in the “Jewish political street”]) and the third (“Bund na »polskiej ulicy« politycznej” [The Bund in the “Polish political street”]) chapter focus on the party’s cooperation with other political organisations in the “Jewish street” (in the departments and the Presidium of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland and in local Jewish committees) and the “Polish” political street (with the Polish Socialist Party and the Polish Workers’ Party), as well as on the Bund’s attitude towards the reality of “Lublin” Poland, including its participation in pre-election campaigns of 1946 and 1947. The fourth chapter, entitled “Formy działalności partyjnej” [Forms of Party Activity], is devoted to various forms of the Bund’s activity over the entire period of the party’s post-war existence (material aid, establishment of cooperatives and providing work opportunities; commemorating the history of the Bund through

the activity of the Historical Commission under the auspices of the Central Committee of the Bund, celebrating anniversaries of the foundation of the Bund, publishing press, etc.). The fifth chapter, called "Bund a syjonizm" [The Bund and Zionism], concerns the struggle against ideology and the revision of the Bund's attitude towards the creation of a Jewish state and the Jewish emigration from Poland (consent to emigration as opposed to emigrationism – mass emigration to Eretz Israel). The sixth chapter, "Kontakty z »zachodnim« Bundem" [Contacts with the "Western" Bund], contains the description of the cooperation and the conflicts emerging between the "Polish" and the "Western" Bund and indicates differences between the agendas of these two Bund fractions, as well as the attitude of the "Polish" Bund towards the World Coordinating Committee, established in May 1947 in Brussels. The last, seventh chapter is entitled "Proces likwidacji Bundu" [Process of the Dissolution of the Bund] and contains the description of the third, final stage of the existence of the party, which officially commenced in April 1948 in Wrocław and consisted in the process of the dissolution of the Bund in Poland, lasting until 16 January 1949. It presents the process of slow dissolution of local committees and the attempts of various Bundists to indoctrinate fellow party members and convince them to be self-critical and join the ranks of the Polish Workers' Party, and later the Polish United Workers' Party. The chapter is concluded with the description of the activity of the Bund Dissolution Commission, responsible for settling the affairs of the party and its affiliated organisations, a process which came to a close towards the end of June 1949.

The final part of the book consists of annexes containing the most important documents delineating the agenda of the Bund in Poland after World War II.