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## **The BUND in REZEKNE**

This article is dedicated to  
my good friend and mentor

Dr. Martha Lev Zion<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dr. Martha Lev-Zion is an historian of modern European intellectual history.*  
[genealogy.org.il/.../courlandlativa-resource,www.isragen.org.il/siteFiles/1/198/4877](http://genealogy.org.il/.../courlandlativa-resource,www.isragen.org.il/siteFiles/1/198/4877). She is the  
author of many related articles on the subject, and of the book [Taking Tamar](http://www.amazon.com), [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

## Introduction

While building the website for Rezekne, it became clear to me that I didn't have enough information about the Bund in Rezekne, and that all the information that I did have should be confined in one place.

There is an abundance of information on the BUND, but barely any about the BUND in Rezekne. I understand that there is probably more information than I was able to find.

As usual Elie Valk<sup>2</sup> was very helpful in giving me information about Rezekne, and this time a bit about the BUND.

Professor Dov Levin<sup>3</sup> has always been a great help to me in all of my research<sup>4</sup>. He has also helped now.

My good friend and mentor, Dr. Martha Lev Zion was, as always, able to answer all of my historical and technical questions.

Because of my previous research, I knew that the place where I would possibly be able find information would be in YIVO<sup>5</sup>. I would like to thank Leo Greenbaum, the Archivist and his staff for their help.

The librarians in Yad VaShem<sup>6</sup> were also quite helpful. Recently Yad Va Shem received much new material about Latvian Jewry; but no about the BUND<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Elie Valk is the chairman of the Association of Latvian and Estonian Jewry. He himself is a former Latvian citizen. His family originally came from Rezekne. [www.holocaust-s.org/home/doc.aspx?mCatID=,www.holocaust-s.org/vault/files/irgunim-haverim-3.](http://www.holocaust-s.org/home/doc.aspx?mCatID=,www.holocaust-s.org/vault/files/irgunim-haverim-3.), [db.yadvashem.org/names/nameDetails.html?itemId=1228160...](http://db.yadvashem.org/names/nameDetails.html?itemId=1228160...), [www.algemeiner.com](http://www.algemeiner.com) < [Spirituality/Tradition](#) < [Jewish History](#)

<sup>3</sup> Professor Dov Levin is a renowned authority on Baltic Jews and on Eastern European Jewish communities in general. [www.acpr.org.il/ENGLISH-NATIV/authors/levin-d.](http://www.acpr.org.il/ENGLISH-NATIV/authors/levin-d.), [www.ijg.org/AboutUs/Officers/DovLevin](http://www.ijg.org/AboutUs/Officers/DovLevin).

<sup>4</sup> [kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/vitsyebks/bund](http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/vitsyebks/bund), <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Vitsyebks/>, <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/sveksna/>, <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/cherkasy/>

<sup>5</sup> [www.yivoinstitute.org/](http://www.yivoinstitute.org/)

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research was founded in Vilna- Wilno, Poland; now Vilnius, Lithuania), by key European intellectuals, including Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud, to record the history and pioneer in the critical study of the language, literature and culture of the Jews of Eastern Europe. From its inception, YIVO was deeply concerned that the language and culture of East European Jewry were undergoing radical change in a rapidly modernizing world. YIVO's founders were tireless in collecting the documents and archival records of Jewish communities across Eastern Europe, years before anyone could have predicted the devastation that would befall them. In 1940, YIVO moved its permanent headquarters to New York City, becoming the only pre-Holocaust institution to transfer its mission to the United States from Europe.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/index.asp>

Yad VaShem is the Jewish People's living memorial to the Holocaust. It safeguards the memory of the past and imparts its meaning for future generations. It was established in 1953, as the world's center for documentation research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust. Today it is a dynamic and vital place of intergenerational and international encounter.

For over half a century, it has been committed to four pillars of remembrance:

I did try to find information in many places; but to no avail. Therefore I still would be happy to receive whatever information you may have.

Note- The abbreviations in parenthesis and in the footnotes refer to the bibliography. A complete bibliography appears at the end of this article.

Sincerely,

Esther Rechtschafner

November, 2013

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Commemoration, Documentation, Research and Education.

<sup>7</sup> LYVS

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## History of the BUND (EJ, BNP, BS, HE, HEW1, HO)

BUND is an abbreviation of *Alegmeyer Yiddisher arbirer Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland* (General Jewish Workers' in Lithuania, Poland and Russia).

The Yiddish word BUND means treaty, alliance, covenant. It was founded in a secret meeting, in Vilna in 1897. The BUND was a worker's association and an active political party (as much as this was possible) from the 1890's through the 1930's. After a short time the organization became known as the BUND. Its' members were called "BUNDsim" or "BUNDaim". Most of the members were from the Jewish working class, but there were also supporters from the Jewish intellectuals. All of the BUNDISTS were very loyal and attached to their organization<sup>8</sup>.

The original goal of the BUND was to organize and represent all the Jewish workers in the Russian Empire (Russia, Lithuania<sup>9</sup>, Belarus, Ukraine, and most of Poland [the majority of the Jews was then located in this area] of the Jews this area) in one political party and encourage their involvement in the Russian Socialist movement (the Social Democratic party). This was to help Russia become a socio-democratic state, which would consider the Jews a nation with a minority legal status. It called for equal rights for Jews within a Socialist frame work in which Jews would be given cultural freedom.

At first Hebrew was the official language of language, but this changed to Russian and then to Yiddish to make communication easier. Yiddish was considered the national language of Eastern European Jewry and thus the language of the BUND. The Bund was the Jewish Socialist secular party; however a few of the members were religious Jews<sup>10</sup>. The BUND completely opposed Zionism and Hebrew culture and language. Zionism was related to as *escapism* (Many BUND members became Zionist-Socialists and came on Aliyah. This was a big loss to the BUND). The BUND considered itself foremost Socialist and then Jewish; but the program was for obtaining a cultural Autonomy for the Jewish people in Eastern Europe. The BUND was not willing to change from this belief and goal. Therefore the BUND had many enemies both inside and outside of the Jewish people.

The BUND left the Russian Socialist movement party in 1903, after not receiving recognition as the only representative of the Jewish workers. Bundists were active in Russian socialist circles, and the party was an important participant in the 1905 revolution. Then the BUND had 35,000 members, of which 4,500 were political prisoners in Russia and Siberia. The BUND joined forces with Poéli Zion<sup>11</sup> and other groups in order to form and lead a united

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<sup>8</sup> DL

<sup>9</sup> The Lithuanian BUND organized and joined in 1900. BS, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Rivka Yaffe remembers what her Father, Shmuel Barb (Z"L), told about the BUND. She told me about her Father. He was a religious Jew who came from a very religious family. It is possible that he did not always show that he was a religious Jew. He was very active in BUND activities. Many times his Father had to pay in order to keep him out of prison. He summed everything up very nicely saying: "Zionism was very nice but we had to eat". He lived through the Holocaust. Soon a book about his life is going to be published. Mr. Barb and family went to Australia after WWII. Later on they came on Aliyah to Israel and he died here. RY

<sup>11</sup> This was a movement that aimed to base itself upon the Jewish proletariat, whose ideology consisted of a combination of Zionism and socialism. EJ, V.13, pps. 656-664.

defense front against the pogroms and riots of 1905. The BUND led the defense front in the Jewish villages, in the area that is now Belarus.

After this First Russian Revolution, the BUND became legal due to political reforms. Some members of the BUND sided with the Communists and this fact was destructive to the promotion of the BUND as a Jewish organization<sup>12</sup>.

After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the BUND split; for most of the members joined the Communist party. This was official in officially in 1921. The others remained in the BUND. The BUND became illegal again in Russia. The Communists wanted to destroy the BUND, even more than they wanted to destroy Zionist organizations<sup>13</sup>. The BUND continued to operate in independent Poland and Lithuania mostly in places that had a large Jewish population. The center shifted to Poland, where it built up a large following with its extensive network of social and cultural organizations. The Polish BUND flourished after World War I and became an important force among Poland's Jews. The Polish BUND's propaganda was that Jews should stay and fight for socialism and not seek refuge elsewhere.

Between the Wars, the BUND published more documents and propaganda than the Zionist organizations<sup>14</sup>. The BUND charged Jabotinsky (leader of the Revisionists<sup>15</sup>) as Anti-Semitic. Then small branches were also active in Lithuania, Romania, Belgium, France, and the United States (first in New York).

Before WWII, the BUND fought Anti-Semitism in Poland, and even organized Jewish Self-defense units. BUND members also became members of Polish city councils. Then the BUND was one of the most popular organizations on the Jewish street. It included youth organizations, women's organizations, sports, and was the strongest force in the founding of the Yiddish school organization. It joined the Soviet International and was associated with other Polish socialist parties.

The BUND leaders fled when World War II broke out, for many members were then arrested, exiled, or murdered. At the beginning of WWII the BUND went underground. During the WAR the BUND was active in the underground and as partisans in ghettos and camps throughout Nazi-occupied Europe, and also sought to publicize the atrocities to the western world. It published the largest number of newspapers in Warsaw, which contained important information about the WAR, calls for a revolt, and even cultural information. As understood, this was very dangerous and many workers lost their lives doing so. The party elders of Warsaw refused to join the Zionists in order to form a united Jewish fighting alliance. They claimed they had ties with the underground outside the Ghetto. Younger leaders did support Jewish unity. All the Jews united after the major deportations from Warsaw in October 1942. There was a similar occurrence in Vilna, when the younger members joined the United Partisan Organization. Four BUND squads participated in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943.

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<sup>12</sup> DL

<sup>13</sup> IBID

<sup>14</sup> IBID

<sup>15</sup> This was a Zionist movement with the aim of the establishment of a Jewish state, with a Jewish, majority, in the entire territory of Palestine (on both sides of the Jordan River). EJ, V.14, pps. 128-132

The BUND leader Samuel Zygelbojm, who had fled to the US, was appointed to the Polish National Committee in London in 1942. After receiving reports of the mass murder of Polish Jewry, Zygelbojm desperately tried to enlist the help of international and Jewish organizations. He was shocked by the way the rest of the world reacted (didn't react) to the Jewish Holocaust. Zygelbojm committed suicide in 1943, after failing to receive support.

The BUND leaders who got to the USA founded a support group. The BUND leaders of this period worked very hard for our people and their organization.

The Holocaust caused an end to the greatness of the Polish BUND. The Communist government in Poland was responsible for the final liquidation of the BUND in 1948. At the end of the War, in 1945, the number of BUNDists in Europe dwindled greatly. The BUND became a small Jewish organization in a few major Jewish communities in the USA, Canada, and Australia.

The BUND did not return to its previous position; but did have a role in Jewish communities around the world. The World Coordinating Committee of the BUND Organizations was founded in 1947; and then the BUND became a transnational movement. The BUND Archives was transferred to YIVO, by the BUND, in 1992. Afterwards YIVO had an exhibition about the BUND

## Information on the BUND in Rezekne

The BUND in Latvia, and therefore Rezekne was similar to the BUND in other places in Eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup> There is an abundance of material about the BUND in Eastern Europe, which can be easily accessed online in Yad VaShem<sup>17</sup>.

People who had family in Rezekne have told specifically about the connection of their family to the BUND and about the BUND as an organization in Rezekne.

The BUND functioned as a social organization for Jewish people of all ages, as well as a social, economic and defense organization.

The "Bund" and other youth were responsible for the defense of the community. The "well-to-do" members of the community financed this. The revolutionary units were connected to the underground. In October 1905, there were anti-Jewish uprisings in the city, and the Jewish youth organized themselves to protect the community. Six of them were killed. Members of the Bund were among the leaders of the strike in a social uprising in 1905. The Yiddish poet Nachman Dimenstein<sup>18</sup>, who was one of the heads of the "folks' party" was born and lived in Rezekne.

There were elections for the Jewish Community Council in 1906. Then the BUND received 30% of the votes. There were therefore six BUND representatives on the council.

As is understood there were probably many documents that could have told the story of the BUND in Rezekne. I was able to locate two of them in the YIVO Archives. Mr. Leo Greenbaum of YIVO was kind enough to send me this information.

Here are copies of two documents, which deal with the BUND in Rezekne<sup>19</sup>:

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<sup>16</sup> DL

<sup>17</sup> YVS

<sup>18</sup> He published poetry in various Latvian publications. He and his family perished in the Holocaust. The first volume of his works was lost in the Holocaust. His brother was the Yiddish newspaper writer Zalman Dimenstein. Pin, p. 238. The latter was the editor of The Illustrated Almanac of 1939-40. This contains a short but thorough history of the Jews in the city. It is written in Yiddish, and illustrated by A. Naislosa. Ibid p. 242; I.AI. I have a copy of this almanac which I copied from the original which can be found in the O.L.E..

<sup>19</sup> YIVO Archives Files, NY, USA, BUND: RG 1401, Folder 328

Протокол.

На собрании 12<sup>го</sup> февраля Рязанской Союзной организации Вспомогательной помощи кандидатами в уполномоченные для выбора делегата на V съезде Р. С. Д. Р. П., следующие лица:

- 1) Мотельский 2) Рикович 3) Фабриков 4) Майсель; 5) Юдасаков
- 6) Абрамисаков 7) М. Фудорович 8) Маслович 9) Добровина и 10) Кайковна.

Голоса между этими кандидатами распределились следующим образом: 1) 117гол. 2) 109гол. 3) 107гол. 4) 43гол. 5) 84гол. 6) 4гол. 7) 4голоса 8) 1гол. 9) 1гол. и 10) 37гол.;

Избранными такими образом оказались первые пять товарищей т. е. 1) Мотельский 117гол.

- 2) Рикович 109гол. 3) Фабриков 107гол. 4) Майсель 43гол. и 5) Юдасаков 84голосами.

Президиум: Финь

Гор. Рязань

Translation<sup>20</sup>:

### Minutes of the Meeting

At the meeting of the Social Democratic Organization-BUND of Rezhitsa , 127 members were present.

The following people were nominated as candidates for the selection of the delegates to the Fifth Congress of the RSDLP<sup>21</sup> (Russian Social Democratic Labour Party):

- 1) Motelevich
- 2) Finaovich
- 3) Fabianov
- 4) Moiseev
- 5) Yudisaakov
- 6) Abrmisakov
- 7) M. Tudorovich
- 8) Meerovich
- 9) Dobkovna female and
- 10) Haikovna. Female

Here is the outcome of the voting:

- 1) 117 votes
- 2) 109 votes
- 3) 107 votes
- 4) 43 votes
- 5) 84 votes
- 6) 4 votes
- 7) 7 votes
- 8) 1vote
- 9) 1 vote
- 10) 37 votes

Thus, the first five comrades were selected:

- 1) Motelevich, by 117 votes
- 2) Finovich by 109 votes

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<sup>20</sup> The translation was done by Pavlo Shmuelevich of the Ofek program for Russian students ([merkazherzog.org.il/programs/](http://merkazherzog.org.il/programs/)).

<sup>21</sup> Presumed date-

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th\\_Congress\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Social\\_Democratic\\_Labour\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th_Congress_of_the_Russian_Social_Democratic_Labour_Party). This was held in [London](#) between May 13 and June 1, 1907)

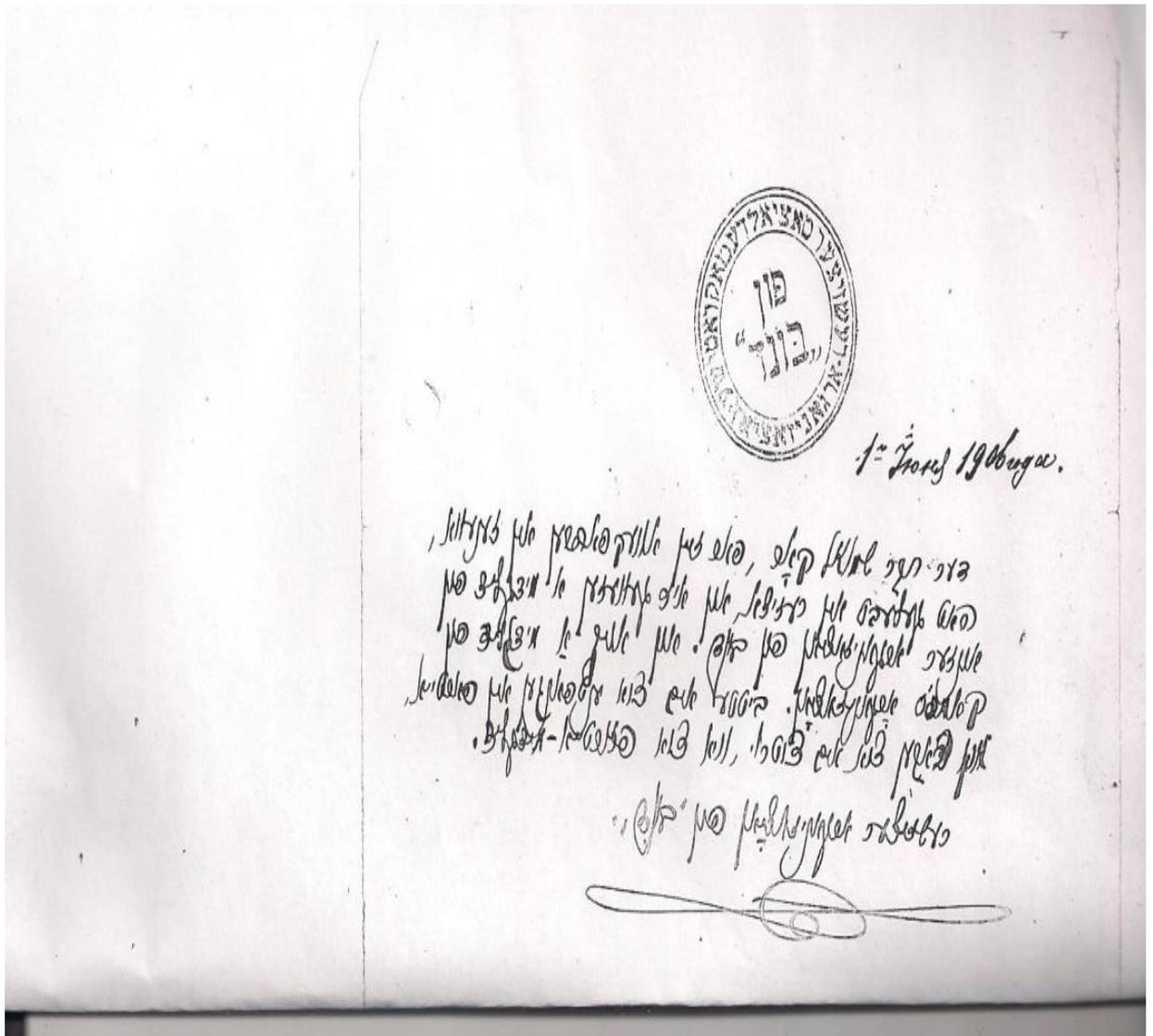
The **5th Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party** was held in [London](#) between May 13 and June 1, 1907.<sup>[1]</sup> (V. I. Lenin. [The Fifth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.](#) The 5th Congress had the largest attendance of the Congresses of the unified RSDLP.<sup>[2]</sup> Thirty-five sessions of the Congress were held in the [Brotherhood Church](#) in [Hackney](#), during which stormy debates took place.<sup>[3][4]</sup>

- 3) Fabianov by 107 votes
- 4) Moiseev by 43 votes
- 5) Yudisaakov by 84 votes

Presidium: (Signature)

Rezhitsa

Yiddish Document:



Translation<sup>22</sup>:

1/6/1906

Samuel Korr was a member of the BUND organization in Rezekne before being sent as a representative to Geneva. He also took part on the socialist uprising. . I request that he be received nicely by your organization, as faithful and trustworthy member.

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<sup>22</sup> The translation from the Yiddish was done by Yocheved Klausner of Be'er Sheva Israel.

He has a warm recommendation in the name of The BUND Organization of Rezekne.

Signed: The Rezekne Socialist BUND Organization.

After 1917, the BUND became less popular in Rezekne, and the Zionists organizations became more popular.<sup>23</sup> It is also possible that the immigration of the Jews of Rezekne, similar to the immigration of all the Jews of Eastern Europe at this time, caused a decrease in the popularity of the BUND<sup>24</sup>. The Latvian Constituent Assembly, of May 1, 1920, included nine Jewish delegates which represented all groups of the Jewish population, including the BUND. There were regular Jewish deputies in the Latvian Parliament. Noah Meisel represented the BUND.<sup>25</sup>

The Latvian Constituent Assembly, of May 1, 1920, included nine Jewish delegates which represented all groups of the Jewish population, including the BUND. There were regular Jewish deputies in the Latvian Parliament. Noah Meisel represented the BUND.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> EV

<sup>24</sup> LYVS

<sup>25</sup> EJ, V.10, p.1466

<sup>26</sup> EJ, V.10, p.1466

## **Conclusion**

As is now understood, The BUND in Rezekne helped the Jewish population in many ways:

On a local basis the BUND gave economic, social, and defense security.

On a National and international basis the BUND gave economic, social, and defense security as well as political representation for the Jews.

There were other organizations in Rezekne. All of these organizations played a part in making the life of the Jews of Rezekne more enjoyable.

I am sure there must have been much more information; but so far I have not been able to locate it.

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Conversation with Rivka Yaffe, April, 2009 (RY)

Telephone conversation with Professor Dov Levin, November 10, 2013 (DL)

Telephone conversation with Elie Valk, November 7, 2013 (EV)

Telephone conversation with librarian in Yad VaShem , November 31, 2013 (LYVS)