

J.Win

## **Częstochower Branch of the Jewish National Workers Alliance**

The idea to organise a *Częstochower* branch of the Jewish National Workers Alliance emerged in a group of *Częstochower landsleit*, who were members of the *Poalei Zion* party. The initiators were H. Grosberg, Sz. Szlingbaum (Harlem Branch), Mojsze Cieszyński and H. Win<sup>1</sup> (Branch 6). After the *Częstochower* branch was organised, the four Wajnryt brothers, R. Berger and later Abram Litman joined the *Poalei Zion* party.

The branch's founding meeting took place in 1917, on Ludlow Street [Manhattan], in the hall of the Jewish National Radical People's School. The Alliance's organiser, Comrade Mitchell [?], declared the principles and goals of the new workers' order (the Alliance had been founded in 1913). The first to join the *Częstochower* branch [were]: Sz. Szlingbaum, R. Berger, the four Wajnryt brothers, S. Willinger, A. Willinger, H. Frajman, Grajcer, H. Win, Mojsze Cieszynski, H. Grosberg, the Wengliński brothers, M. Szapiro, L. Katel [Kotel?] and A. Frydman. Later, A. Birenbaum, Ch. Gliksman, I. Gliksman, Izzie Haber (Radomski) and L. Litman joined.

On 17<sup>th</sup> April 1917, the branch was officially inaugurated with a literary-musical evening. Mojsze Cieszyński was the chairman. At this evening, a banquet was held which was chaired by H. Win.

The branch's first Financial Secretary was Sz. Szlingbaum and the Minutes Secretary – J. [?] Grajcer. Other officials were H. Win, R. Berger and H. Grosberg.

The Alliance's *Częstochower* branch took an active part in the work of the [Jewish] People's Relief [Committee<sup>2</sup>], which was formed following the First World War, supported the then frequent strikes of the Jewish workers and held open-air meetings to support the candidates of the Socialist Party to Congress and the [NYC] City Hall.

The *Częstochower* branch, as a whole and all its members [as individuals], gave themselves over to the work of the Czenstochover Relief in New York with the greatest devotion. They greatly assisted in the creation of the fund for the I.L. Peretz building in Częstochowa. The branch and its members [also] collected a great number of books for the General Workers Library in Częstochowa. For many years, H. Win served as Secretary of the Czenstochover Relief.

The branch also occupied itself with cultural work and, quite frequently, held talks and lectures on Yiddish literature.

Some of the branch's members attended the courses on political economics, Jewish history and the history of socialism, which were held by the party school of the *Poalei Zion* party's Branch 6. A few of these members are currently active in various fields of Jewish communal life.

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: Herszl Win, the author of this article.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: One of the three organisations which formed the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, popularly known as the "Joint".]

As a consequence of the Balfour Declaration<sup>3</sup> at the end of the First World War, the Zionist ideal gained strength in the Jewish neighbourhoods and influenced great masses of Jewish workers. [Thus], the "Trades Campaign" for the Land of Israel was conducted, led by the Secretary of the United [Hebrew] Trades and energetic Socialist fighter, [Abraham Isaac] Shiplacoff, who had, until then, already raised several million dollars.

As a result of the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution occurred, which stirred the world's working masses like the wind of a storm. The results of the tempestuous war between Zionism and Communism were also felt in the *Częstochower* Branch 111 [sic 11] of the Jewish National Workers Alliance.

There were members who tried keeping the branch's hundreds of members together by forming an amalgamation between maximalist and minimalist Socialism (the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) and the aspirations of Zionism. But this did not succeed. Like many other organisations, the branch was split. The vast majority defected to the International Workers Order. A minority remained inside the Alliance, and they reorganised as the *Ichok-Ajzyk Hurwicz*<sup>4</sup> Branch 10, in order to commemorate the name of the Jewish scholar, theorist of the Socialist Movement in America and expert on matters of emigration.

And so ended the chapter of the *Częstochower* Branch 11 of the Jewish National Workers Alliance.

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<sup>3</sup> [TN: Public statement issued by the British government in 1917, supporting the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.]

<sup>4</sup> [TN: Commonly known in English-language sources as Professor Isaac Aronovich Hourwich (1860-1924), and in Heb./Yid. as *Ichok-Ajzyk ben (son of) Aryje-Cwi Ha'Lewi Hurwicz.*]