

Juda Cymerman

## The Gordonia Movement in the Holocaust

The youth movements in the ghetto conducted regular activities in different manners. The Cześćochowa branch of *Gordonia*, at that time, numbered about 150 members. Their activities took place in private apartments. Seminars were organised. All the dates connected to the movement were celebrated, such as 24<sup>th</sup> Shvat (the anniversary of A.D. Gordon's death), 15<sup>th</sup> Shvat<sup>1</sup>, Purim and other events - all this, of course, clandestinely, silently and in the underground.

We organised aid for our members' parents, by giving them additional coupons for the public kitchen. Another kind of aid constituted the packages of food which we received from Switzerland. Natan Sholba [?<sup>2</sup>], who was living at the time in Switzerland, would send over all sorts of products - cocoa, coffee or sugar. We would then sell them to wealthier Jews and support the needy with the proceeds.

### The Beginning of the End

After some time, we established a training squad comprised of Gordonia members. We gathered the [Gordonia] members, who were among the refugees, who had been moved from their places [of origin]. We admitted them [into our group, and] clothed them, and they found their place amongst us. All together, we numbered about 200 organised members. The concern for others was exemplary.

During the long, winter nights of 1940, we read classical literature, sang, and even joked, as if we had forgotten that, "outside", there reigned the horror of death.

And then came the blow. The night following the close of *Yom Kippur* in 1942, the streetlamps were lit - despite the absolute darkness that was [usually] enforced – and the end began. I ran to many friends, asking them what to do. But it was already too late. The streets were blockaded. Contact between us was discontinued. Our dreams turned to nothing.

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: "New Year of the Trees." In contemporary Israel, the day is celebrated as an ecological awareness day, and trees are planted in celebration.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: שוליבה in the original Heb.]