

The Book Committee

The Retailers' Union

As everywhere else, soon after the first World War and the rise of the independent Polish state, our city also saw the creation of a Retailers' Union with the purpose of protecting the interests of the weaker elements of Jewish commerce - the so-called *soicherim'lech* [Yid.; little merchants], who scraped together their livelihoods from their little shops or stalls, which they had set up in the city markets or which they took with them on their journeys to fairs in neighbouring *shtetls*.

It is interesting to note that these Jews, the majority of whom were such that their daily livelihood worries did not abate literally for one minute, still found for themselves an entire row of activists, who committed themselves with heart and soul to the interests of the Retailers' Union and who conducted a wide-ranging activity in all areas. They procured cheap credit for their members, defended their interests at the customs-house and at City Council and even provided the Union with a sports club, a library and a chess club, where members could meet in their free time.

Unfortunately, there were also periods during which "backward-thinkers", who in certain measure hindered its development, also formed part of this Union's management. However, thanks to the truly-committed members, these obstacles were eliminated and the work was conducted normally anew.

The founders of the Union were (alphabetically [in Heb.]): Chaim Wajnsztok, Sz. Nemirowski, M. Epsztajn, Dawid Filipowicz and Szlojme Krauze (until he left Częstochowa and settled in Metz, France).

From a 1924 report, which we have been able to find, we know that, already by then, the Union numbered 740 members and that, at its Annual General Meeting, the following were elected to its Board of Management: Sz. Opoczynski, A. Orzycki, R. Berkowicz, J. Dzialecki, Chaim Wajnsztok, Ch. Wajsberg, H. Jakubowicz, Adolf and A.M. Epsztajn, L. Fajerman, P. Rotensztajn, J. Sztrozberg and A. Szylit.