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From My Memories of the Zionist Organization in Częstochowa

The World Zionist Organization started its days when its foundation was announced - at the first Zionist congress in Basel, which was named after its leader, T. Herzl z"l.

As early as 1898, it was represented in Częstochowa by the dedicated Zionist public figure, Natan Gerichter, who was relentless in his work to propagate the Zionist ideal among our townspeople, despite the many difficulties that hindered him.

His first working colleagues in the organisation were Mendel Horowicz, Welgrin, Zeew Gostynski, M. Mokraujer, the engineer Ratner, R. Fizman, Szymson Mass, M. Rozenwajg and others whose names I've forgotten.



A memorial service for Dr.Ch. Herzl on Tamuz 20th 5694 [July 3rd 1934]. Seated: Dr. Mering, Dr. Bram and Szmidi; Standing: Turner, Szajnfeld and Orbach.

With the foundation of "*Keren Kayemeth Le'Israel*", Natan Gerichter was appointed its agent. He carried out his duties dedicatedly and excellently until the day of his death.

After his passing, his son Jechiel took his father's place and he, too, distinguished himself in his dedication to this National Fund until his last day (until the accursed Nazis put an end to his life, which he had always dedicated to Zionism and the revival of [the nation of] Israel in its land).

Although, over the years, other Zionist organizations from all the currents of this world movement were established in our city, ultimately, the other Zionist organisations saw in it a "mother", which had laid the foundations from which they, too, had originated and branched out.

In 1917, all the movements, with the World Zionist Organization at their head, began to widen the scope of their activities in all areas of public life.

The Hebrew high school in our city was established. It introduced new educational modes and [a new] learning system. The Hebrew language assumed its proper place. Young people began studying it with doubled enthusiasm and began reading its literature. The language became a living language among the young men and women who flocked to the youth movements, in which they also received instruction and training for their future in the land of Israel.

At that time, the Zionist Organization was headed by Dr. Arnold Bram, Jechiel Gerichter, Jechiel Jochimowicz, Abram Luzor Szajnfeld, Natan Dawid Berliner, Abram Gerszonowicz, Leon Kopinski, City Councilor Fiszal Szapira, Zeew Icek and others. All of them also saw to the infiltration of the Zionists into

all municipal institutions - the City Council, the *Kehilla* and financial and public institutions. They took central positions in them, thanks to the high level of responsibility and the commitment to public affairs in which they always excelled.

Naturally, they were helped in their work by the aid they received from central Zionist institutions and by the frequent visits from the Zionist leaders to our city.

Among those leaders who visited Częstochowa, the names of Izaak Grünbaum, Dr. Yehoshua Tahan, the *Sejm* deputy Hartglas, Dr. Zalman Bychowski, Dr. Yehoshua Gottlieb and Dr. Izaak [Ignacy] Schipper should be mentioned.

One special chapter in the life of the Zionist Organization in our city, which is noteworthy, is its trusty and almost predominant participation in organising receptions for important guests from the land of Israel. These included visits by the national poet Ch. N. Bialik, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Dr. Shmaryahu Levin, Leib Yaffe, Rabbi Gold, Rabbi Dr. M. Nurock and many others who came in the name of other Zionist organizations and for whom the Zionist Organization provided exemplary hospitality.

The Zionist Organization also imparted its spirit to different financial organisations, which supported the Zionist cause. It especially helped to found the "Ha'Chalutz-Craftsmen" at the head of which stood Jakob Lewkowicz, Abram Gotlib and the writer of these lines.

(The cup of sorrows from which Polish Jewry drank also harmed the Zionist Organisation and only [a few] individuals were saved from annihilation by Hitler's troops, may his name be obliterated).