



Group of students of the *Beit Yaakov* school

"AGUDAT ISRAEL" IN KUTNO

by Arie Orner, Haifa, Israel

translated from the Hebrew by Thia Persoff z"l

"*Agudat Israel*" in Kutno was a branch of the International Organization of Orthodox Jews, established in Katowice in 1912. The Kutno branch of "*Agudat Israel*" stood for the same ideas as the rest of the movement, that is, opposing Zionism and immigration to Israel before the arrival of the Messiah. "*Agudat Israel*" was based mainly on the chassidim, their rabbis, and their various dynasties, mostly in Poland. It developed a political and social activity of its own in the towns and the Jewish communities.

Those Jews, from the ordinary people in Kutno, prayed in the large *Beit-Midrash* or in the various synagogues and other "*minyans*"¹, even though they had no sense of political organization. The "*minyan*" or "*shtiebel*"² where they prayed during the Shabbats, the holydays, and the weekdays, this was the mainspring of their lives.

In the Kutno branch of "*Agudat Israel*", there was an active life concerning what was going on in the various arenas. At the head of the chapter were R' Yoel Sztajnfeld,

Abraham Fishel Zandberg, R' Leibush Finkler and Abraham Orner. "*Agudat Israel*" kept a network of religious educational institutes for boys ("*Talmud Torah*") and for girls ("*Beit Yaakov*"). In Kutno, an institute was founded named "*Yesodei HaTorah*", headed by R' Leibel Mamlok and Shlomo Meir Liberman. Also, a school named "*Beit Yaakov*" was founded for young women.

Attached to the organization, the association of "*Agudat Israel's Youth*" was active. It was headed by Frost, Leibel Lichtensztajn, Hersh-Yaakov Najmark, and Yosef Brzezinski.

At the head of "*Poalei Agudat Israel*" in Kutno were the brothers Feivish and Yitzhak Kraut, and Simcha Traub. At the election to the community board, the "*Agudah*" appeared as one group and its representatives were R' Yoel Sztajnfeld, Shlomo Zylberberg, Leibush Finkler and Abraham Boms.

¹ TN: prayer group of 10 Jews, necessary for some prayers.

² TN: prayer room in a house.