

THE MIZRACHI YOUTH MOVEMENT
by Yitzhak MAJRANC, Rechovot
translated from the Hebrew by Carole Turkeltaub Borowitz

The *Mizrachi* youth movement was established in the year 1917, but had only a small number of members because, until then, the *Mizrachi* party had not been organized in our town. Only a few people, for example Aharon Elberg, were occupied with Zionist activities. Following its establishment, the organization started to broaden its activities, such as distribution of the Zionist shekel, donations to the Jewish National Fund and the United Israel Appeal. The Young *Mizrachi* movement was represented at the immigration office and its delegate was deputy chairman of the council. However, its main activity was during election time for the community council in 1930. At that time, a combined front was set up together with the General Zionists, and the "*Mizrachi*" party won two mandates. As one, Young *Mizrachi* and *Mizrachi* took part in all public events in our town and the youngsters did not initiate independent functions on their own. At the time that I left the town, Meir Łęczyski, from the *Mizrachi* movement, was active on the community council. Because he refused to act as a tool in the hands of the murderers and carry out their cruel and savage orders, he was executed by the Nazis, together with the rest of the Jewish council members.

The writer of these lines was a delegate for the *Mizrachi* party and together we worked on community projects.

"HeChalutz" ["The Pioneer"]

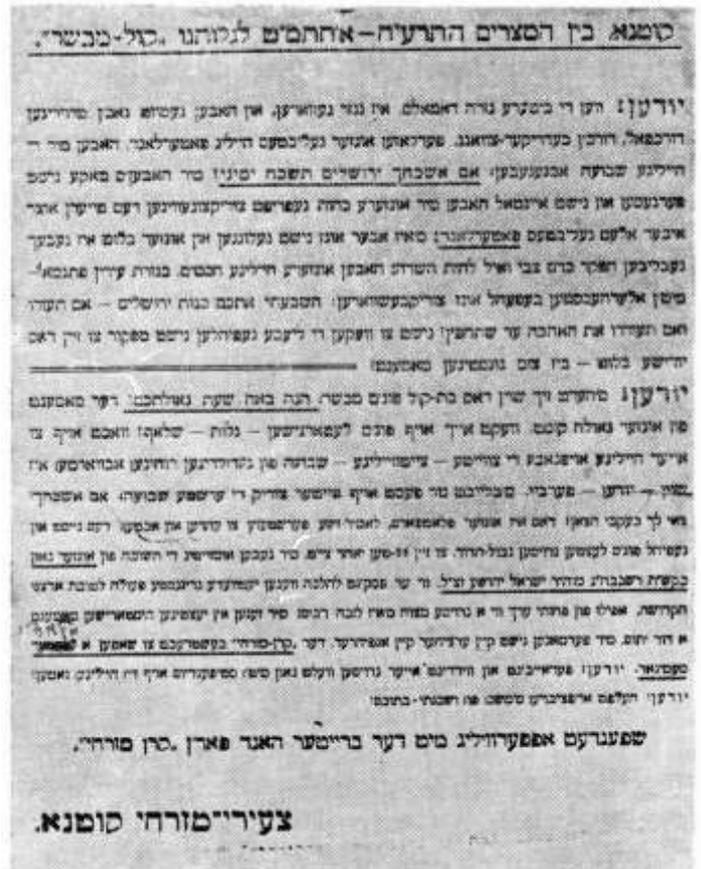
The "*HeChalutz*" movement was set up in our town during the early years of Polish independence, after the First World War. At that time the heads of the council were members Majranc, Klingbajl, Szymonowicz, Sh. Landau and Mahler. We organized camps for training prior to emigration to Israel and obtained a piece of land next to the municipal bath house; later also in Konin. Fifteen young men set out for there. After the *HeChalutz* congress in 1920, when a resolution was passed stating that whoever had not gone on training could not be considered a candidate for emigration to Israel, many left the movement. We were issued with three emigration permits and although many had applied for them, only those for Rabinowicz, Yehuda Bromberg and one other member were confirmed. Suddenly, in 1920, riots broke out in Jaffa and emigration was halted. However, anyway, they decided to take the illegal emigration option and after much wandering they

arrived in Vienna and from there continued on their way to Israel.

The Jewish National Fund

Another area in which all the parties cooperated was the *Keren Kayemet* [Jewish National Fund]. We willingly did all we could for this venture without splitting hairs. In 1922 a delegate from Israel came to us – Mr. Halperin. He assembled the Jews of Kutno in a big hall and announced to them that the board of governors of the *Keren Kayemet* required them to collect the sum of 6000 gold rubles for the Fund. And so it came about – the eagerness of the Jews was outstanding. The sum was collected within a few days. No one preached philosophy or needed any urging; everyone brought his contribution according to his generosity.

Typical of the Zionist spirit reigning in our town was to do with the traditional fun celebrating the 1st of April 1925. On that day Arie Zeitlin (of blessed memory) gave a lecture and brought with him a telegram announcing the



establishment of the Jewish state in *Eretz Israel*. Chaim Weizmann was chosen as president and Z. Jabotinsky was appointed minister of defense. The enthusiasm of the Jews knew no boundaries on hearing this news. For a moment, everyone forgot reality and the date – which was no other than the 1st of April, 1925. But much was awaiting the Jewish people, much more blood would flow and millions of victims would be sacrificed by this nation before the

independent state would be won. But the yearning for liberation, for sturdy independence, national and political, was real. For a moment we all took flight in our imagination and fancied ourselves in our liberated country! But the lecturer brought us back to foul reality.

However, the donations to the United Jewish Appeal and the *Keren Kayemet* did not decrease.