

## FROM "HASHACHAR" BRANCH IN KUTNO TO "BEITAR"

by Efraim WAJCHSELFISZ, Tel Aviv

These notes on the history of the national movement in the *Yizkor* Book for our town are not trivial. Every letter and tag were soaked with tears, from every word emanates and rises a silent murmur of pure souls. This Book of Lamentations is about the destruction of our city Kutno and its words – words of wailing and eulogy on *Beitar*.

I remember all those precious characters, who are no longer alive. In my imagination I am now wandering the streets of our city, wandering the courtyards, peeking into houses and standing in silence near my childhood and youth district – *Ken Beitar*. Here I see my friends in my mind, abstract faces staring at me with speechless lips, but the "Yizkor" prayer is accompanied by bitter weeping and vibrating tears rising and hovering in this mute atmosphere.

In everything I turn to, I meet in my imagination brothers, comrades and friends. They were all massacred and cruelly burned by the Nazis and this article is a memorial to their souls.

The huge wave of enthusiasm that has swept Hebrew youth in Eastern European countries since the rise of Ze'ev Jabotinsky in Riga in 1923 and the establishment of the first nucleus of a national youth movement did not miss Kutno either. In 1925, Jabotinsky parted ways with official Zionism and since then, Ben-Horin<sup>1</sup> has felt free

to roam the great Jewish kibbutzim and bear the word of great Zionism. Sparks were ignited here, somewhere. They became beacons and later a great flame, which surrounded the Jewish youth throughout Eastern Europe and most of the Diaspora.

In the same year, Jabotinsky's speech also reached Kutno and not long after, in the month of Nissan, which was April 1927, the "*Shachar*" branch in Kutno became a *Beitar Ken*. Young Kutners began to unite around the marvelous personality of the creator of the Hebrew battalions. The Jewish street, which was influenced by anti-Zionist and left-wing propaganda, mocked the "commandants with wooden rifles", but all this did not affect young people more. They did not rest or stay quiet, and by their own strength began to organize the actions, and first and foremost read the articles of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, which were published every Saturday evening in the newspaper "*Haynt*"<sup>2</sup> and others in "*Moment*".

The *Beitar* branches in Poland did not have a center in Warsaw in those days, as did the other youth unions in Poland. Far from Kutno, in the city of Stanisławów in Galicia, began an action of the leadership operation led by Mager. From there, Biberig received the first propaganda material for the *Beitar* in Kutno.



*Beitar* in Kutno – 1932

<sup>1</sup> TN: Eliyahu Ben-Horin (1902 – September 6, 1966), one of the founders of the "*Etze'l*" ("*Irgun Tzvai Leumi*" AKA "*Irgun*").

<sup>2</sup> TN: "Today", a Yiddish newspaper.

Among the founders of *Beitar* in Kutno was Abraham Goldsztajn, who also served in the first headquarters. The members of the headquarters were Moshe Goldwasser, Aharon Klar, Zvi Landau and the brothers Rapke and Zvi Krock.

In January 1928, the first conference of commanders was held in Warsaw with the participation of Aharon Propes of Riga, one of the founders of *Beitar* Worldwide. Following this conference, the two organizations "*HaShachar*" and *Beitar* that existed in Poland at the time united. This conference brought about changes in Kutno. Zvi Szczig was appointed commander of the local *Ken Beitar*. It was divided into ranks and companies according to a plan received from the main headquarters. The plan of action was also formulated, which consisted partly of political foundations according to the decisions of the institutions of the World Revisionist Zionist Alliance, and partly of educational foundations, which were later approved by the first World Conference of *Beitar* in Danzig<sup>3</sup>.

After *Beitar* institutions approved the "Ten Commandments of *Beitar*", the entire *Beitar*, and within it the branch in Kutno, began to work intensively. If it were a different youth movement then it would be simple, not so with *Beitar*. In the period between the two world wars, various "pacifist" doctrines were raised, and the fierce propaganda of the extreme left parties and even of the left-wing of Zionism did everything possible to incite hatred in the public over the issues of the great Zionist dream and the military renewal in Israel. *Beitar's* mission on the Jewish street was therefore very difficult.

*Beitar* strived not only to observe the practical, daily observances, which involved observing the teachings of Zionism, such as learning Hebrew, raising



Mordechai Walter z"l

funds for the Jewish National Fund, etc., but also creating a new type of young Hebrew, a type that the people need to establish the Jewish state with a Jewish majority in *Eretz Israel*, at the greatest speed and in all ways. However, it placed more emphasis on the rooting of the Hebrew language, and above all, set up in the hearts of the youth the concept of belief in one ideal and not two, which is the principle of oneness, monism.

Like many other young people, the author of these columns went from "*HaShachar*" to *Beitar* in Kutno in 1929, the year of the events in *Eretz Israel*,<sup>4</sup> under the influence of Ze'ev Jabotinsky's speech in Paris at a protest meeting against these events and the behavior of the Mandate government. The echo of this speech reached Kutno at a mourning meeting that convened in the *Ken Beitar*. After the speeches of Mordechai Walter hy"d and Eliyahu Welcman hy"d, the commander of *Beitar* Zvi Szczig read the mourning order. *Ken Beitar* in Kutno was then in the Hebrew school hall and on Shabbat, after *Beitar* meetings, protest rallies were held against the bloody events in the country in the Great Synagogue as well, and Mr. Yehuda Riftin was then one of the leaders of the speakers.

After Mr. Yosef Klarman's<sup>5</sup> visit, more young people joined the ranks in *Beitar*. These were the years of prosperity of *Beitar* in our city. A training company was established at Brewda's place. Many *Beitarim* went to training, among them Abraham Goldsztajn, Yaakov Zaidenwar, Pesach Gwircman, Szewszewicz, A. Kulszinski, Arie Aharonowicz, Israel Walter, Israel Knut, Warszawczik, Menche, and others.

These were the years of *Beitar's* prosperity in Poland. Aharon Propes was appointed commissioner in *Beitar*, and *Beitar* in Poland took on a character of its own, which distinguished it from all other youth movements. *Beitar* has begun organizing companies for physical-military training P.W.F.W. The "*biksel*"<sup>6</sup> doctrine, the one that Jabotinsky gave great expression to in his article "*Oyfn Pripetchik*,"<sup>7</sup> which the *Beitarim* memorized literally, ceased to be a dream and became a reality. *Beitar* youth in Kutno began to study the theory of the Maccabees. Headquarters member Shmuel Elbaum z"l took over the military training in *Beitar*. Dr. Prochter and Mrs. Tajchner taught a first-aid course and lectured on the role of first-aid during the war. In 1930, *Ken Beitar* in Kutno received weapons for military training, and for the first time, the Jewish public could see upright young Jews marching and rifles on their shoulders, and the public's hearts throbbed and swelled with joy<sup>8</sup>.

*Beitar* Kutno began preparing vigorously for the movement's first sporting convention in Poland, and for the participation of tens of thousands of *Beitar* in the nationwide camp, commanded by Moshe Gold. In the first

<sup>3</sup> TN: Gdańsk.

<sup>4</sup> TN: pogroms by Arabs against Jews in Jerusalem, Hebron.

<sup>5</sup> TN: *Beitar* founder and leader, assistant of Jabotinsky (1909, Busko-Zdrój, Poland – December 1985, Israel).

<sup>6</sup> TN: Yiddish, "Small Rifle" or "Handgun".

<sup>7</sup> TN: "In the Fireplace", named after the title of a song for children to learn the alphabet, published in "*Haynt*" in October 16, 1931. It tells the Jews to prepare to defend, with guns (hence "biksel"), in the inevitable uprising in Mandate Palestine, both against British and the Arab nationalists.

<sup>8</sup> TN: Hebrew expression from Isaiah 60:5.

course that preceded the convention, Abraham Goldsztajn, on behalf of *Beitar* Kutno, participated.

In the other areas of operation, too, the work was conducted tirelessly. The cultural work in the nest was in full swing. Hebrew history courses were held, Hebrew language and Hebrew literature classes were held, conversations were held about Zionism, and most importantly, about an idea. A dramatic club was established as well as a library, near the nest, and a sports club began to operate. On Lag b'Omer, trips were made in the area. We received a few books from donors and thanks to the addition of pennies, we built with our own forces the beautiful library, a valuable tool for training and expanding knowledge. It had books by the best authors in Hebrew and Yiddish, as well as in the Polish language. The section on Palestinography and knowledge of Israel played a significant part in it. With great honor, we received the books and press from the *Beitar* Commission in Warsaw.

A kind of Holy Spirit hovered over this library, which was an unflinching source for awakening hearts and educating generations. And no one believed possible then that a fierce storm would break out that would destroy a third of the best of our people, sow destruction and devastation and ignite a great fire that would burn all the sublime works of our great writers and poets. Man and book – everything would go up in flames. And for the survivors, their double sense of loss would be in men and in books. It is worth noting the mourning meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> of *Adar*<sup>9</sup>. It was the highlight of *Beitar's* work in Kutno, the fruit of the dedicated and hard work of all its members. The dramatic circle presented the fall of Tel Hai. Many outside guests attended this academy, among them the parents of the *Beitarim* and all spoke of the great success of this assembly.

As *Beitar* grew up, the Jews of Kutno began to consider it. In 1931, Abraham Goldsztajn traveled to the special course for instructors in *Beitar* Zielonka, near



A *Beitar* group in 1931

Warsaw, under the direction of *Beitar* government officer Yermiyahu Halperin. The composition of *Ken Beitar's* headquarters at the time was: Wigdorowicz, Elbaum, Warszawczik, Goldwasser, Krock, Moshe Kaufman, Yaakov Zajdenwar and Mordechai Zandberg.

1932 was a fruitful year for *Beitar*. From all walks of life, learning and working youths came. According to the decision of the Commission, a training program was organized in our city in the name of Pesach Gwircman z"l, who fell on his shift in Iwacewicze, near Baranowice, during training, together with Israel Walter, Zajdenwar and Domanowicz, *Ken Kutno* received additional manpower from the training at Brewda's place. The organizer of the training was Commissioner Gershon Aszkenazi. Among the training personnel was also Y. Viniarsky<sup>10</sup>, now Yaakov Meridor, former deputy commander of the *Etzel* and current Knesset member. In the same year, the fifth conference of *Brit HaZohar*<sup>11</sup> was held in August. The decisions of this conference outlined lines of action for the national movement and these further strengthened the movement in the world, in Poland and in particular in our city.

In March 1933, after the Katowice Conference, Ze'ev Jabotinsky visited Kutno. The visit of the leader of the movement was an unusual event. Crowds from all over the area came to town. The *Beitarim* stood out in their brown shirts. Stop talking; everyone wanted to know what the subject of Ze'ev Jabotinsky's speech would be.

The city was excited and happy, eagerly awaiting to welcome *Beitar's* Ze'ev Jabotinsky. At that time, a real state reception of masses of members of the national movement was organized at the train station. And just Jews. The heads of *Beitar* were received at the train station by the *Beitar* organization, with the *Beitar* song. The impression was immense. The Gentiles who were there stood still and had one word in their mouths: "The King of the Jews is coming; the King of the Jews has come." The procession arrived at the Frenkel Hotel. After the reception, the head of *Beitar* surveyed the *Beitar* organization in the Kutno district. When he reached the ranks of his favorite *Beitar* youths, he approached one among the ranks and asked if he knew Hebrew, his answer was: Yes. Then *Beitar's* head told him to stretch his muscles of his right hand and then he spoke and said: "Sons of *Beitar*, stretch your muscles, they will still be needed!"

After the reception at the Frenkel Hotel, the procession went through the city in the direction of the fire brigade theater on "*Stary Rinek*"<sup>12</sup>.

At the head of the procession rode three cavalry members in *Beitar*: Orner, Tajchner, and Brewda, followed by *Beitar* instructor Abraham Goldsztajn in the ceremonial outfit of adult course's instructors, the *Beitar* group from PW. FW. with their rifles, the "*Magen David*" group, led by Mrs. Tajchner and Dr. Prochter, and at the

<sup>9</sup> TN: battle of Tel Hai, March 1, 1920 (11<sup>th</sup> of *Adar* 5680).

<sup>10</sup> TN: September 29, 1913, Lipno, Poland – 30 June 1995, Israel.

<sup>11</sup> TN: Revisionist Party Alliance.

<sup>12</sup> TN: Polish, "Old Market" place.

end of the procession, marched Jewish soldiers and border guards of the future! Every Jew's heart was filled with much joy and the procession reached the theater that way.

It was the big day in our city. The meeting was opened by Mr. Kaplan z"l, chairman of *HaZohar*, and gave the floor to the head of *Beitar*, the creator of the Jewish Legion and first prisoner of Zion.

Jabotinsky opened his big speech with these words: "I, Meir Grossman, Robert Stricker<sup>13</sup> and Soskin will work together again!" It was his first announcement after the split conference. It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm that was in our city after the visit of the great leader, whose name was uttered by the people of right and left alike. The speech still resonates in my ears, his visit will not be erased from my memory.

In the same year Mordechai Zandberg, commander of the *Beitar* district, went to Vilna to the Agricultural Training School.

After the 18th Congress, *Beitar* concentrated on one main task, namely: organizing a boycott of goods made in Germany. A large assembly was convened in the "Modern" cinema hall. Crowds flocked to the assembly, the hall was filled to capacity, and many stood outside. The meeting was opened by lawyer Eliyahu Welcman z"l. The speaker, Mr. Menachem Begin, shook the hearts of his listeners and the Jews living in Kutno began organizing the boycott.

At the end of the organization's operation, the *Beitar* went to a summer session in the small village of Gostynin. The session was noteworthy both because of the experienced commanders and because of the desire of the *Beitarim* to be ready for everything and to serve as a model in their dedication. In a contest with the Polish Scouts, the *Beitar* captured their flag.

In 1934, the *Brit HaChayal* organization founded in Kutno, by *Beitarim*.

In January 1935, the Sixth World Conference of the *Brit HaZahar* convened in Cracow. After this conference, the national movement in Kutno grew and expanded again. Many youths joined the ranks more, the national movement developed an extensive cultural action. The "*Brit HaChayal*" also prospered, and after a year of existence, an annual party was held headed by the commanders: the officers in the Polish army – Yosef Zelichowski and Yehoshua Zandberg, Abraham Goldsztajn, Wigdorowicz and Prync.

In July 1935, Yehoshua Zandberg, the deputy commander of the *Brit HaChayal*, immigrated to *Eretz Israel*.

On April 6, 1935, an academy in memory of Joseph Trumpeldor was organized with the participation of representatives of the national movement and the *Beitar* commission. Mordechai Zandberg opened the meeting and handed over the floor to Mr. Yosef Klarman, followed

by Moshe Gold, the emissary of *Beitar*. The dramatic circle and the other young women presented to the audience a play about the occupation of the wilderness and the defense of Tel Hai. According to a report in the newspaper "*Unzer Welt*"<sup>14</sup>, the drama department received a congratulatory letter from the *Beitar* commission.

On June 6, 1935, a general referendum was held in our city in the *Brit HaZohar* regarding the establishment of a new and independent Zionist organization. About 600 people answered yes. Immediately after the referendum, the administration of *HaZohar* went to organize the elections for the basic assembly of the New Zionists. All Jews who turned 18 that month were given the right to vote. After the referendum, Mr. Menachem Begin and other representatives of *HaZohar* and *Beitar* visited us. The person in charge of the election was Mr. Ludor, the chairman of *HaZohar* in the city, who worked with dedication together with Mr. Wlochbinski. According to a report in the newspaper "*Unzer Welt*", 925 voters participated in the elections in our city, 841 of them in favor, 75 invalid, and 9 blank ballots. Apart from the members of *HaZohar* and ordinary Jews, organized groups also participated in the elections, and among them, a cohesive group of ultra-Orthodox in Poland stood out, led by Levi Jungster, one of the leaders of the *Mizrachi* activists.

On September 7, 1935, the founding convention opened in the Concert Hall of Vienna. In December, Dr. Peker visited our city and submitted a report on the plan of the new Zionist Organization.

In 1936, Ze'ev Jabotinsky launched a propaganda campaign for the "Evacuation" program. That is: hundreds of thousands of Jews immigrating from Poland to Israel within ten years. The conservative newspaper "*Chas*" published an article by the head of *Beitar* about his ideas and talks with the Polish Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck, and other Polish ministers. Ze'ev Jabotinsky called for the intervention of the Polish government in Geneva in favor of the Zionist movement.

When the head of *Beitar* published the plan for the evacuation, Jewish party activists launched a scathing attack on the above-mentioned plan, but one of the Jewish intelligence centers in Poland, the Physicians and Engineers Club, invited the leader of *Beitar* to lecture on his plans. Yosef Klarman came to our city at the time for a lecture on Ze'ev Jabotinsky's plans. Yosef Klarman spoke in the large cinema hall "Polonia" and analyzed the words of Ze'ev Jabotinsky in front of his audience. He began by saying: "Poland will help and assist in the "Evacuation" program. Israel can solve all the problems of Jewish immigration and Poland can help with that." And it is very unfortunate that the Jews of our city, like the other Jews of Poland, did not heed the "Evacuation" program and did not listen to the warning voice. Nor did

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<sup>13</sup> TN: Dr. Robert Stricker (August 16, 1879, Brno – 1944, Auschwitz), Austrian politician, Meir Grossman (July 3, 1888 Temryuk, Russia – 1964 Tel Aviv), Ukrainian journalist, and Dr. Selig Eugen Soskin (March 25, 1873, Crimea – February 26,

1959, Tel Aviv), Ukrainian agronomist. These Zionist leaders had disagreed with Jabotinsky, over Revisionists leaving the World Zionist Organization.

<sup>14</sup> TN: Yiddish, "Our World".

the words of Mr. Joseph Klarman bear fruit, and those who survived still remember what he said.

In our survey of the cultural activities of the nest in Kutno, it is impossible not to mention the participation of members of the national movement in the public Zionist institutions. Representative of our movement Moshe Wigdorowicz participated actively in all the debates within the Zionist institutions in the city.

In 1937 officers from *Beitar* and representatives of the national movement visited Kutno again. The ideological debates, and social tensions did not cease. On the contrary, the events among Polish Jewry followed closely one another.

And the situation of Polish Jewry was deteriorating. Israel is closed and sealed, the British denied their promises and on the Jewish street the suffocation grows. Admittedly, the cry of Ze'ev Jabotinsky still resonates in the air: "Jews, destroy the Diaspora and if not – it will destroy you!" But as mentioned, his warning remained as preaching in the wilderness. After all, the storm was approaching, the war was already at the gate, but many did not feel the terrible end that was about to uproot Polish Jewry. They were still living in the hope that the storm would pass over them and many who were moved by their sense of imminent danger, were comforted that the murky wave would soon pass.



Training group of *Beitar* (1934) at Brewda's place

However, when the war broke out in September 1939 when Nazi Germany's hordes, armed from head-to-toe, invaded Poland, the position of Polish Jewry was embarrassed, bewildered, divided and shattered. Only a few did not lose their temper, understood the new reality and what was required of them and began to prepare for battle. Needless to say, the fate of Kutno was no different from the fate of all Polish Jewry,

### Members of *Beitar* from Kutno in World War II

*Beitar* also worked in the ghetto. It organized courses for the Alliance and a memorial service was held in the ghetto in memory of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Ch. N. Bialik and B. Z. Herzl. M. Walter, Elbaum and others talked about their activities (according to Ringelblum documents).

There were very many *Beitarim* in the Polish army in World War II against Nazi Germany. Three *Beitarim*: Abraham Bennett, Tuvia Hirszberg and Simcha Mroz, soldiers in the Polish army, fell at the beginning of the war, excelled in heroic deeds in the battle for the city of Łowicz and fell in battle by the river Bzura.

Among the influx of refugees that began to flow into Russia, there were also many *Beitarim*, including three of the *Beitar* commanders in Kutno. Jabotinsky's teachings accompanied them in all their wanderings, respect for their people and his kindness was their guiding principles. That is why one of the founders of *Beitar* in Kutno, Abraham Goldsztajn, decided to address a letter to Marshal Stalin, suggesting that he organize a legion of Jewish youth to fight against the Germans and after the victory he would liberate Israel from English rule. Goldsztajn did not receive any response to this letter. But this very reference indicates to what extent my friends were adherent to Z. Jabotinsky's teachings and of the successors of the founder of the First Jewish Legion, for it took a great deal of courage to address such a letter.

Dr. Felek Tajchner, during his stay in Russia, searched for orphans and youth from Kutno, encouraged them and planted in their hearts the hope that their suffering was not in vain and that the state of Israel would be established in their day. After the war, many returned to Poland. Dr. Tajchner, Zandberg, and others in *Beitar* arrived in Silesia, where they continued their movement. The district commander of *Beitar* Mordechai Zandberg, a graduate of the Vilnius agricultural school, organized the escape of the *Beitarim* from Russia back to Poland. Many were the *Beitarim* who fought against the enemy in the ranks of the Red Army, many were promoted, awarded high marks of excellence and honors for their courage and bravery on the battlefield. Many were killed on the battlefields.

In 1945, after the liberation of Poland, I was given the mission to find the remains of Jews, survivors in the towns of Rivne and Dubno<sup>15</sup>, to gather them together and thus save their lives after the liberation. Once again, a small Jewish community was established in the city of Chelm. After the liberation of Lublin, I met in this city with Chaim Lazar, Adam Halperin, Y. Lubocki and Shimon Łeczycki.

On January 17, 1945, after the liberation of Łódź, I was appointed city officer by the Polish army. Immediately after coming to the city I started organizing a Jewish community there, because the remnants of the Holocaust began to return, from different places to Łódź. *Beitarim* was also among them. Although they were not many, they felt a duty and a need to rehabilitate their movement. First of all, they decided to reprint the photo of the head of *Beitar*, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, and there was an urgent need to provide various documents to the members in order to allow them to escape. The documents and photos were printed in a government printing press under my supervision, but the work was carried out in constant

<sup>15</sup> TN: today northwest of Ukraine.

danger of death. One who risked himself the most was the *Beitar* instructor Victor Aurbach as well as Shimon Łęczycki, who received the material from him and distributed it among the Jews in Silesia. At that time, I brought to Łódź Commissioner *Beitar* Peretz Lasker z"l, who was one of the survivors of the Częstochowa camp. That same year, 1945, *Beitar's* first commission was elected after the liberation of Poland. Peretz was elected commissioner in *Beitar*, and among the members of the commission were the Kutners: Zandberg, Tajchner and the author of these columns.

A new hope began to arise in the hearts of us all. We believed that a new phase in *Beitar's* action would open. The emissaries of the Jewish Brigade arrived in Łódź: Micha Paz, Yehuda Datner and Surkis<sup>16</sup>, who began an operation to rescue survivors. They devoted themselves to this action in heart and soul and more than once risked their lives. Particularly great was the action of Dr. Tajchner, who did much to save the remains of the Holocaust. It seemed that this man didn't know exhaustion and that no difficulties and dangers could deter him in this action. It was a sacred duty to him and every success gave him great satisfaction. He even managed to get Jews out of prison and flee Poland, until he himself was forced to flee to Austria. For his dedicated work, Dr. Tajchner received the "*Hagana*" award from the Israeli government. Mordechai Zandberg was in charge of operations in Szczecin, from there he moved to Germany and joined the *Beitar* Commission. Abraham Goldsztajn came to Austria, where he worked to establish the younger *Beitar*. Shmuel Wajchselfisz, who was one of the commanders of the *Beitar* companies, also operated in Austria, from where he boarded an illegal immigrant ship to Israel, but was imprisoned like many others in Cyprus. At the beginning of the War of Independence, he fled the Cyprus camp and arrived in Israel. Upon his arrival in Israel, he was appointed commander of Company 5 of the *Palmach* and fought on the Jerusalem front. He currently serves in the IDF with the rank of Major.

Shmuel Laron was a pilot-officer in World War II. He was captured by the Germans, but managed to escape and reach London. Here he again enlisted in the RAF. And took part in the bombing of German cities and was again captured by the Germans.

Upon arriving in Israel, he participated in Operation "On Wings of Eagles"<sup>17</sup>, as chief pilot. Today he continues to serve in the IDF as a pilot with the rank of officer.

On the ship "Altalena"<sup>18</sup>, *Etzel* soldiers arrived in Israel: Aharon-Peretz and Shmuel Stuczynski. Both participated in the War of Independence.

Shmuel was in charge of military education in *Ken Beitar*, he participated in the newspaper "*b'al peh*"<sup>19</sup> every

Friday in feuilletons and stories. Shmuel was an archetype of which the head of *Beitar* dreamed. As a child he joined the ranks of *Beitar* where he saw the way to the liberation of our people.

Shmuel Elbaum, also a man of splendor, born in Kutno in 1910. To fulfill his dreams, of a homeland free from the yoke of foreigners, and of the kingdom of Israel on the two banks of the Jordan. Shmuel was a man of action, active in Kutno *Beitar*. He had great organizational ability and vision and was one of the organizers of the course WFPW. During the Holocaust he did not leave the city, he remained in the ghetto. Faithful to the principles of *Beitar* until his last day.

Everyone found in Shmuel a good friend and comrade who was willing to help others at any time. In the ghetto, he encouraged the people of our city not to fall in spirit, and not to succumb to their bitter fate. Samuel went with all the people of our city to Chelmno, his soul was burned in the flame of G-d and in the storm of destruction, he returned his spirit to his Creator.

May his memory be blessed.

Moshe Goldwasser, a pleasant-mannered young man, welcomes everyone with a smile. From the dawn of his youth, he was drawn to the ideas of Zionism. He was one of the first *Beitarim*, together with Abraham Goldsztajn. When the national movement was founded in our city, he was one of its activists and over time became a member of the headquarters and power of attorney to the Tel Hai Foundation in our city. Moshe was also accepted by the youth of all streams. He perished in the Holocaust.

May his memory be blessed.

Lawyer Eliyahu Welcman son of Yaakov, grandson of Rabbi Yekatriel and great-grandson of Rabbi Eliyahu Welcman (called Kaliszer) from a privileged family in our city. His father traded in grain, studied in a *cheder* and later in the Hebrew Gymnasium and the University of Warsaw. But Eliyahu was not satisfied with this and being close to the age of twenty, he was already among the chiefs of the city and of the whole of the Kutno district. Tall, handsome-looking and educated, he spoke in the company of older people and everyone listens attentively to him and accepted his opinions. He was among the first to fight for the Hebrew language in *Ken Beitar* and also in the city in the Zionist movement. He graduated from university and received a law degree. He had come recently from Warsaw and when he arrived in Kutno, he immediately entered the *Ken Beitar*. The *Beitarim* liked him. The memory of Eliyahu is engraved in the hearts of all his surviving friends.

May his memory be blessed.

<sup>16</sup> TN: Mordechai Surkis, of "Escape" fame, future member of the Israeli Knesset.

<sup>17</sup> TN: June 1949 – September 1950, also nicknamed "Magic Carpet", a secret operation to bring Yemeni Jews to Israel. Named after a verse of the Book of Exodus 19:4.

<sup>18</sup> TN: the Altalena was bringing weapons from France and Menachem Begin wanted to keep part of the weapons for the

*Irgun*. Ben Gurion issued an ultimatum. The Altalena was sunk on the shore and 20 fighters died, mostly from *Irgun*. The name "Altalena" was a pen name of Jabotinsky.

<sup>19</sup> TN: "*Herut b'al peh*", newspaper of Menachem Begin's Herut, precursor of the Likud.

Mordechai Walter, was the son of respected parents in our city. His father was one of the founders of the Hebrew Gymnasium and an active member of its parents'



committee. Mordechai received a distinct Zionist education, and was one of the activists of the *HaShachar* organization. After the establishment of the *Beitar* national movement in our city, he joined it and was among its leaders. He visited the towns of Poland to bring to the attention of the Jewish youth the story of Ze'ev Jabotinsky. After settling in the city of Łódź and even there he continued the movement and there the war also found him. Like all Jews, he spent the war in the ghetto, but did not stop his activity for the national-Zionist idea even in the difficult conditions that prevailed there. Until the last moment he was a devoted and loyal friend of *Beitar* and did much for its existence even in the terrible conditions. May his memory be blessed!

Mr. Chaim Zajdenwar excelled in his activities for the national movement in our city. He educated his sons in a Zionist spirit, for the love of *Eretz Israel* and the people of Israel. He was a carpenter by trade, but this craft did not prevent him from being active in the Zionist movement, arguing with opponents and proving them wrong. He immigrated to Israel with his family, where his sons also followed in their father's footsteps. His two sons, Yaakov and Moshe, are members of the national movement. Yaakov was one of the founders of the National Health Fund and serves as secretary of the National Workers' Association of Construction Workers. His son Moshe



The blue box of the KKL that was hanged at the entry of the Great Synagogue in Kutno

works in the Ramat Gan municipality. His third son perished during the Holocaust.

May their souls be bound in the bond of eternal life.

I have given only a few details about the wondrous stories, love and devotion of *Beitar* Kutno in World War II and the War of Independence. In all their ways, deeds and adventures, they faced the figure of the head of *Beitar*, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, whose teachings were sucked from the dawn of their youth and who were their guiding principles in all the hardships of life that befell them and the whole House of Israel during these years of horrors. In all that they conceived, acted and performed, only one goal was before their eyes – the honor of Israel, the protection of the life of the people, its redemption and liberation to a life of communion and independence – this was the teachings of *Beitar's* head, Ze'ev Jabotinsky and this is the way his followers went!