

MEMOIRS OF A BUNDIST

by Chench CHABUS, Paris

translated from the Yiddish by Carole Turkeltaub Borowitz

I remember the *Bund* organization in our town even from the First World War. As a lad of 16 years old I entered the movement which was then working illegally. From the foggy recollections remaining in my memory, I knew that the party had organized the Jewish workers to fight for higher wages and a shorter work day, which is those days was reckoned "from sun rise until sun set". This was an

important work issue for the discussion groups, at debates and meetings in what we called the "stock exchange".

In Kutno, the *Bund* had made a home for itself in the library building where many members, workers and ordinary people met. The major activists were the Szatan brothers – Yeshayahu, Moshe Yechiel and Naftali.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Kutno was occupied by Kaiser Wilhelm's army. Then the new, freer



A group of members of the *Bund*

regime allowed the institutions which had previously been working underground to come out into the open. True, the political parties had been forbidden during the war time, but since the library was a normal place for the working public, in that way the library became the usual place for Bundist activities.

In 1918, when Poland became independent the party developed a lively social policy and cultural program. At the

same time, very serious competitors had already appeared from the municipal parties and most important, from the working man in the street. In the craftsmen's' association which the *Bund* created, I was selected to serve in the administration.

In the year 1920, I emigrated to Paris. In the capital city of France, I was a better social activist, but that is a separate chapter by itself.