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Between proto-Zionism and para-Masonry. The Early Activities of the Concordia Lodge of the B'nai B'rith Order in Katowice

Annotation: The purpose of this article is to explore the early roots of the B'nai B'rith para-freemasonic movement and proto-Zionism in Katowice and the Upper Silesia region. The 1880s marked the emergence of both the first international structures of the proto-Zionist movement and the spread of the ideas of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith on the European continent. In Katowice, there was an organisational and personal merger of these two streams, resulting in an unexpected outcome – the Katowice Conference, which is now considered the beginning of the path to the establishment of the State of Israel. The Concordia Lodge in Katowice was founded on 17 June 1883 as the fourth lodge in the German Empire, following lodges in Berlin and Halle. The main initiator behind the establishment of the lodge was Selig Freuthal, who had come from America and simultaneously was an active member of the Colonisation Society formed in Katowice in 1882. This dual role significantly influenced the activities of both organizations in their early years. Concurrently, Katowice's Concordia Lodge undertook an extensive agitational campaign aimed at establishing additional B'nai B'rith lodges in the industrialized Upper Silesia region, which yielded unexpected results. This historical exploration sheds light on the interconnectedness of the B'nai B'rith movement and early Zionist efforts, demonstrating how their collaboration in Katowice played a prominent role in shaping the path toward the eventual establishment of the State of Israel.

Keywords: The Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, Concordia Lodge, Katowice Conference, Selig Freuthal, Moritz Moses

Między protosyjonizmem a paramasonerią. Początki działalności Łoży Concordia Zakonu B'nai B'rith w Katowicach

Streszczenie: Celem niniejszego artykułu jest pokazanie początków ruchu parawolnomularskiego B'nai B'rith i protosyjonizmu w Katowicach oraz na terenie Górnego Śląska. Lata 80. XIX wieku to okres tworzenia się zarówno pierwszych międzynarodowych struktur ruchu

protosyjonistycznego jak również rozprzestrzenienia się na kontynent europejski idei amerykańskiego Zakonu B'nai B'rith. W Katowicach doszło do połączenia organizacyjnego oraz personalnego tych dwóch nurtów, co przyniosło nieoczekiwany efekt w postaci Konferencji Katowickiej uważanej dzisiaj za początek drogi do państwa Izrael. Katowicka loża Concordia powstała 17 czerwca 1883 roku jako czwarta loża na terenie Cesarstwa Niemieckiego zaraz po lożach w Berlinie i Halle. Głównym inicjatorem powstania loży był przybyły z Ameryki Selig Freuthal, który równocześnie był aktywnym członkiem powołanego w 1882 roku w Katowicach Towarzystwa Kolonizacyjnego, co znacząco wpłynęło na działania obu organizacji w pierwszych latach ich istnienia. Równocześnie katowicka Concordia prowadziła zakrojoną na szeroką skalę akcję agitacyjną zmierzającą do instalacji kolejnych loż B'nai B'rith na terenie przemysłowego Górnego Śląska, co przyniosło nadspodziewanie pozytywne efekty. **Słowa kluczowe:** B'nai B'rith, loża Concordia, Konferencja Katowicka, Selig Freuthal, Moritz Moses

Introduction

The recent decades have seen increased interest in the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith¹, which is evidenced, most of all, in a much greater number of articles and books published on that topic. However, most researchers have focused chiefly on the lands of the former Austrian partition, with a special focus on the inter-war period, which has surely been due to the preserved sources². The first to deal with the topic of B'nai B'rith after the Second World War were Ludwik Hass³ and Leon Chajn⁴, who would take up in their works not only issues related to masonry, but also para-freemasonry in the Jewish context. Since 1990s a greater number of scholars have taken up the task of producing a monographic coverage of the history of one selected lodge – here, one could mention

¹ This article uses the initial, international, name of the organisation, specified by its founding members, who adopted the phonetic version of Hebrew words “Sons of the Covenant” – B'nai B'rith (except for the titles of publications and citations). This version is used by the organization also currently, however, the Polish researchers use most often the name of B'nei B'rith, which was a Polonized name adopted on the territory of the Second Republic by those lodges that formed the Polish District of the organization. The current article will also use the term ‘Order’ (German ‘Orden’) instead of ‘Philanthropic Society’ (Polish ‘Stowarzyszenie Humanitarne’), which often appears in the works of Polish writers, however, in reference to the later period of the organisation’s activities – mainly after 1918.

² Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie, fond no. 29/557 Związek Żydowskich Stowarzyszeń Humanitarnych B'nei B'rith w Krakowie; *Archiwum Związku Żydowskich Stowarzyszeń Humanitarnych „B'nai B'rith” w Krakowie (1892–1938). Zarys dziejów związku, historia zespołu i inwentarz*, ed. Bogusława Czajacka, Kraków 1994.

³ L. Hass, *Żydzi i „kwestia żydowska” w dawnym wolnomularstwie polskim (do lat dwudziestych XIX w.)*, „Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego” (henceforth: BŻIH), 1977, no. 4 (104), p. 3–26; same author, *Wolnomularstwo w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XVIII i XIX wieku*, Wrocław 1982; same author, *Ambicje, rachuby, rzeczywistość. Wolnomularstwo w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej 1905–1928*, Warszawa 1984; same author, *Zasady w godzinie próby. Wolnomularstwo w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej 1929–1941*, Warszawa 1987.

⁴ L. Chajn, *Polski Dystrykt B'nei B'rith*, „Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego”, 1973, no. 85, p. 7–42; same author, *Wolnomularstwo w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1975; same author, *Polskie wolnomularstwo 1920–1938*, Warszawa 1984.

Cracow's B'nai B'rith „Solidarność” Lodge⁵, „Achduth” from Stanislavov⁶, „Leopolis” from Lvov⁷, „Borussia” from Gdańsk⁸ or „Austria” from Bielsko⁹.

Aside from these studies, the information on the first B'nai B'rith lodge on the Polish lands, Katowice's Concordia lodge established in 1884, appeared frequently, however, neither beginnings nor activities of the very lodge have received any monographic treatment to date. This is strange since the earliest idea of establishment of a Jewish para-masonic organization on the European continent came into being just here – alongside pioneering Berlin. The researchers investigating the para-freemasonic movement in Upper Silesia would devote their attention chiefly to the period after the breakup of 1922, or the moment when numerous disagreements and conflicts erupted between the local Jewish community with pro-German preferences and those Jews that settled in the area under the Polish administration and who represented a completely different cultural tradition¹⁰.

The purpose of the current paper is to elaborate upon the beginnings of the para-freemasonic movement of B'nai B'rith and proto-Zionism in Katowice and Upper Silesia. Throughout the 1880s, the first international structures of the proto-Zionist movement were established, and the ideas of the American Independent Order of B'nai B'rith spread across Europe. Katowice witnessed the organisational and personnel merger of those two movements, which resulted, quite unexpectedly, in the establishment of the Katowice Conference regarded currently as the beginning of the path to the establishment of the State of Israel.

Transfer of ideas of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith to Germany

The idea of establishing an organization bringing together different quarrelling groups of German Jews living in the United States, fascinated by the rituals and initiation of free-masonry, appeared in New York in 1843. The originator of the idea was Heinrich Jones from Hamburg, who gathered in the East End a group of Jewish emigrants from Germany belonging to the Anshe Chesed community. He also played an important role in the Odd Fellows society of masonic character oriented at philan-

⁵ A. Kargol, *Łoża „Solidarność” i zakon B'nei B'rith. Z dziejów parawolnomularstwa żydowskiego na ziemiach polskich*, „Przegląd Historyczny” no. 99 (2), 2008, p. 249–275; same author, *Zakon Synów Przymierza. Krakowska Łoża „Solidarność” 1892–1938*, Warszawa 2013.

⁶ Ł. T. Sroka, „Achduth” – B'nei B'rith Lodge of Stanislaviv in the Light of Documents Found in the Local Archive, „Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia” 2011, no. 9, p. 159–168.

⁷ Same author, *Members of the „Leopolis” Humanitarian Society in Lvov (1899–1939): a Group Portrait*, „Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia” 2014, no. 12, p. 99–119.

⁸ H. Domańska, *Gdański Zakon Synów Przymierza. Dzieje żydowskiego wolnomularstwa w Gdańsku i Sopocie lata 1899–1938*, Gdynia 2002.

⁹ J. Proszyk, *Żydowskie Stowarzyszenie Humanitarne Bnei Brith Austria – Ezra w Bielsku (1889–1938)*, „Studia Judaica” 2009, vol. 12, p. 167–206.

¹⁰ A. Novikov, *Niemcy? Żydzi? Polacy? B'nai B'rith w Katowicach w latach 1922–1927*, [in:] *Żydzi na Górnym Śląsku w XIX i XX wieku*, eds. B. Kalinowska-Wójcik, D. Keller, Rybnik – Katowice 2012, p. 229–241; same author, *Quieta non Movere? The B'nai B'rith in East Upper Silesia, 1921–1934*, „Acta Poloniae Historica” 2014, vol. 109, p. 139–155. Anna Novikov devoted a chapter to this topic in her book entitled *Shades of a Nation: The Dynamics of Belonging among the Silesian and Jewish Population in Eastern Upper Silesia (1922–1934)*, Osnabrück 2015.

thropy¹¹. The newly established organization received the name the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith (the Independent Order of Sons of the Covenant), and its main aim was creating a platform for social and cultural cooperation between quarrelling groups of American Jews. For this purpose, the program would contain neither religious nor political elements, which enabled encompassing members originating from different traditions and focusing on intellectual, cultural and scientific development of Jews. In a way, it would lead to the establishment of a "secular synagogue"¹². The activities of the organization were to be directed at rebuilding Jewish solidarity in a supranational and supra-class dimension through philanthropy and charity. The motto of the order was kindness, brotherhood, love and harmony¹³. With such a wide, secular, and charity-oriented programme, B'nai B'rith would cultivate free-masonic traditions while restricting access to the organization. It could only be joined by Jews. After initiation, which only recommended candidates could be admitted to, the order would maintain a monastic formula with levels of masonic advancement, positions of officials, peculiar names, imagery adapted to the Jewish history and traditions drawing upon synagogue ceremoniality, even though it declared its secularity. The names applied in the order and visible outside it (order, lodge, brothers, symbols and rituals) made B'nai B'rith appear to be more of para-freemasonic, para-masonic or freemasonic organization, despite its charity-oriented nature¹⁴.

Official territorial expansion of activities of the B'nai B'rith Order was accomplished by Moritz Ellinger, who wished that the idea of the order encompassed also Jews on other continents. However, the chief reason why German Jews were most interested in having the Order develop in their lands was anti-Semitism growing there since the 1870s. It motivated them to undertake different initiatives grouping fellow believers, however, while making sure that religion would not be their primary motive¹⁵. According to Andreas Reinke, "B'nai B'rith was thus probably the earliest organizational attempt by German Jews to create a new, secular form of Judaism by strengthening group cohesion, self-awareness and identity and by pursuing a program of common activities"¹⁶.

M. Ellinger was officially greeted in Berlin on 12 March 1882. Eventually, after discussions with fellow believers and performing analysis of the local potential, he established the first lodge on 20 March¹⁷. The structures of B'nai B'rith as established in the United States followed a hierarchical arrangement with the Grand Constitutional Lodge in Cincinnati at the very top. Local lodges were grouped in districts covering a particular geographic area, which did not overlap with the territory of the state in case of the

¹¹ C. Wilhelm, *Deutsche Juden in Amerika. Bürgerliches Selbstbewusstsein und jüdische Identität in den Orden B'nai B'rith und Treue Schwester 1843–1914*, Stuttgart 2007, p. 59–61.

¹² D. Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership*, Albany 1981.

¹³ C. Wilhelm, *Deutsche Juden in Amerika...*, p. 67; G. B. Seidler, *Die Juden in den deutschen Logen*, Leipzig 2016, p. 378–380.

¹⁴ A. Kargol, *Po Jakubowej drabinie. O rytuale inicjacyjnym żydowskich łóz parawolnomularskich B'nai B'rit w okresie międzywojennym*, Kraków 2013, p. 21.

¹⁵ L. Marezki, *Geschichte des Ordens Bnei Briss in Deutschland 1882–1907*, Berlin 1908, p. 7.

¹⁶ A. Reinke, *Between Ethnic Solidarity and National Allegiance – The German Order of the B'nai B'rith*, „Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts / Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook” Vol. 1, 2002, p. 326.

¹⁷ L. Marezki, *Geschichte des Ordens...*, p. 13–15; Cornelia Wilhelm, *Deutsche Juden in Amerika...*, p. 59–81.

United States¹⁸. Each district was headed by the Grand Lodge, which could be installed only after 10 new local lodges had been established. In 1880 as many as 300 lodges of B'nai B'rith operated in the United States, which were divided into 7 districts due to the size of the country¹⁹. As regards Germany, the brothers from that country applied for the installation of the Grand Lodge earlier, even before 10 local lodges had been established. They justified this with the necessity to resolve disputes quickly on the spot, without waiting long for the answer of the Constitutional Lodge or the Executive Committee established for management of the Order.

The Grand Lodge was installed in Berlin on 28 June 1885 according to all the rules, which was in the presence of the President of the whole Order, Julius Bien. This meant the possibility to establish a new district (VIII), the first outside the US borders. In May 1895 it was finally granted organisational, financial and legal independence²⁰.

Over the course of many centuries social elites worked out different forms of influencing and shaping the reality around them. One of the most common practices was establishing societies, associations or less formal groups, which would be inaccessible for outsiders due to their secretiveness. The whole ritual of admitting new candidates served the purpose of limiting them only to selected persons, who would meet particular criteria and expectations. At the same time, the initiation ceremony was a consolidating element for the group, which would introduce and distinguish it from other societies and fraternities. One researcher of B'nai B'rith activities in Central and Eastern Europe noticed that the members of this organization would meet three criteria of definition of elite formed by Pierre Bourdieu: they would possess cultural capital (education, good manners, titles and used signs and symbols), social capital (mutual interconnections) and economic capital (funds and economic resources at the disposal of particular brothers)²¹. Candidates wishing to join the Order had to prove that they would meet particular criteria and possessed all the features of character expected of brothers, which was not an easy task. A special commission established for the purpose of conducting entrance examinations was supposed to verify a candidate's material and intellectual status, level of education, family connections, good physical and mental health (in some cases, medical certificates were required) and spotless record. All these precautions aimed at making sure that only the selected persons were admitted to the Order so that it would become an elite organization.

One issue which deserves mention at this point is a negative attitude of liberal lodges operating in Germany towards the activities of B'nai B'rith. Establishment of new lodges by the latter organization was perceived as an act of rivalry, which is why the German lodges attempted to prevent that from happening, among others, by excluding B'nai B'rith brothers from their structures. The criticism was based on the assumption that Jewish confessional lodges can create a negative image both of Jews and free-masonry itself²². However, these actions did not suppress quick dissemination of

¹⁸ G. B. Seidler, *Die Juden in den...*, p. 399.

¹⁹ L. Maretzki, *Geschichte des Ordens...*, p. 7.

²⁰ L. Maretzki, *Geschichte des Ordens...*, p. 39. G. B. Seidler, *Die Juden in den...*, p. 399.

²¹ K. Čapková, *Jewish Elites in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. The B'nai B'rith Order in Central Europe*, „Judaica Bohemiae“ 2000, No. 36, p. 119–142.

²² S.-L. Hoffmann: *Die Politik der Geselligkeit. Freimaurerlogen in der deutschen Bürgergesellschaft 1840–1918*. Göttingen 2000, p. 197.

the ideas of B'nai B'rith both in Upper Silesia and the whole German Empire. In 1885 12 lodges with 1,200 members were in operation, while in 1900 this number rose to 46 lodges with 4,340 members²³.

Free-masonry and Jews in Upper Silesia and Katowice before establishment of the first B'nai B'rith lodge

The first free-masonic lodge in Upper Silesia was established in Tarnowskie Góry in 1813²⁴. Subsequently, the ideas of this secret organization spread to other towns of the region – Racibórz, Gliwice, Opole. The development of industry would result in an influx of state administration officials, technical intelligentsia, doctors and other representatives of free professions, who all saw a great potential of the region for increased money-making. The representatives of these very groups would be particularly interested in establishment of a masonic lodge, which would make it possible for them to implement the ideals of brotherhood while maintaining a feeling of uniqueness and a sense of belonging to the intellectual-economic elite of the town. In 1868 a masonic lodge „Zum Licht im Osten” (Under light in the East) was established in Katowice. It was subordinated to the Old Prussian Grand Lodge established in 1770 by Johann Wilhelm Ellenberger (v. Zinnendorf). Its general position was that only followers of Christianity, believing in God, would be able to understand assumptions, symbols and rituality of free-masonry²⁵. Such an approach would not admit as its members those brother Jews who had not made the conversion. This caused expulsion of, among others, Solomon Hammer, who was one of the initiators of implanting the ideas of free-masonry in this town in the initial period of its development in Katowice²⁶. The approach of Old Prussian lodges to participation of Jews in their activities changed only in the 1890s, however, then Jews decided to take an alternative route and establish “parallel” organizations on their own. Such organizations would group exclusively (or almost exclusively) the followers of Judaism. Keeping Jews outside the influential groups in Katowice together with their growing economic and intellectual potential had to result, sooner or later, in the establishment of a rival organization.

In 1870 Katowice was inhabited by 812 persons of Jewish denomination, which was almost 12% of the town's population altogether. In the early 1880s the Jewish commune grouped 270 persons who paid taxes²⁷, while in 1895 this figure rose to 1,600, which was 7.5% of the total population of 21,191 persons²⁸. At that time, the Jewish commune in Katowice was one of the biggest and the most influential in the whole Prussian Upper Silesia. Even though in consecutive years the percentage of Jewish inhabitants

²³ A. Reinke: *Between Ethnic Solidarity...*, p. 324.

²⁴ M. Lorenz, *Geschichte der Joh. Loge „Silberfeld“ zu Beuthen O.-S. Denkschrift zur Feier des 100. Jährigen Stiftungsfestes am 24. Mai 1913*, Kattowitz [year of publication missing], p. 15. A permission to establish a lodge in Tarnowskie Góry was issued on 29 December 1812.

²⁵ L. Chajn, *Międzywojenne wolnomularstwo i parawolnomularstwo na obszarze obecnego woj. katowickiego*, „Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Śląska”, vol. 12, 1973, p. 306–307. This was “Grosse Landesloge der Freimaurer von Deutschland”.

²⁶ J. Myszor, *Masoneria*, [in:] *Katowice. Środowisko, dzieje, kultura, język i społeczeństwo*, vol. 1, eds. A. Barciak, E. Chojecka, S. Fertacz, Katowice 2012.

²⁷ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia U.O.B.B. IV. Nr. 340, 1883–1908*, Kattowitz [1908], p. 3.

²⁸ G. Hoffmann, *Historia miasta Katowice*, transl. D. Makselon, M. Skop, Katowice 2003, p. 95–96, 160.

would fall in the town's overall population due to an increasing number of workers encouraged to come to the town, the potential of this group was not about its sheer number, but the possessed financial capital, economic connections and intellectual potential. This was evidenced, for instance, in the number of city councillors in the years 1866–1894, when out of 92 city councillors as many as 30 were Jewish²⁹.

The beginnings of the proto-Zionist movement and the establishment of the Katowice B'nai B'rith lodge

In spring 1882, together with incoming reports of pogroms mainly in the lands of the former south-eastern Commonwealth and a few towns outside it³⁰, it was decided that an organization would have to be established in Katowice (the first of this kind in Germany), which would support Jewish settlement in Palestine and collect funds for this purpose³¹. Chief initiators of its establishment were merchant Moritz Moses (1848–1903) and teacher Selig Freuthal (1841–1922)³². Both were fascinated by the ideas of Zionism and settlement in Palestine, which is why they decided to take action to enable Jews to flee Central and Eastern Europe to the Near East. As regards Selig Freuthal, he was motivated by bad experiences during his trip to the United States, which largely influenced the shape of his manifesto prepared in Katowice in May 1882. The manifesto entitled „Ins heilige Land – Nicht gleich nach Amerika“ – „To the Holy Land – not straight to America“³³ was signed by the following top officials of the society: Moritz Moses (chairman), Selig Freuthal (minutes-taker), Josef Schmidt (member), Phil. Kaminer (member) and Albert Goldstein (treasurer). The manifesto was defined as secret and made available only to brothers³⁴. The very society was named B'nai B'rith or Sons of the Covenant, thus, the authors of the manifesto used the very term adopted by the American organization, which was most probably the result of connections established by S. Freuthal in

²⁹ P. Maser, A. Weiser, *Juden in Oberschlesien*, vol. 1, Berlin 1992, p. 110.

³⁰ J. Klier, *Pogroms*, [in:] *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (2010), <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Pogroms> (accessed 20 August 2023); K. H. Fischer, *Leon Pinskers Wegweisung zur Lösung der Judenfrage*, Baden 2013, p. 13–15; M. Aronson, *The anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia 1881*, [in:] *Pogroms. Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, eds. J. Klier, S. Lambroza, Cambridge 2004, p. 44–61.

³¹ The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (henceforth: CAHJP Jerusalem), Synagogengemeinde Beuthen (Preußen/Oberschlesien) (henceforth: D-Be2), D-Be2-34 – Unterlagen der Kommission zur Unterstützung der russischen Juden nach den Pogromen von 1882; *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus 1882–1933*, ed. J. Reinharz, Tübingen 1981, p. 3.

³² The date and place of death of Selig Freuthal remains open. Jehuda Reinharz reported that he died in 1922, see: *Dokumente zur Geschichte...*, p. 6. On the other hand, Louis Maretzki wrote in the history of the order published in 1908 that during the writing of the work S. Freuthal had already been dead. Louis Maretzki, *Geschichte des Ordens...*, p. 24. His death was not registered in the Civil Status Office in Katowice, and his tomb is not to be found on the local cemetery, which indicates that, most probably, he had left the town before his death. M. Brann's archive stored in the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem contains a letter from S. Freuthal to Markus Brann written on 27 April 1920 in Berlin, which seems to confirm the version of J. Reinharz. However, S. Freuthal's biography requires further studies. See: The National Library of Israel Jerusalem (dalej: NLI), Markus Brann Archive, ARC. Ms. Var. 308 01 408.

³³ *Dokumente zur Geschichte...*, p. 3–6.

³⁴ This is how the members of B'nai B'rith lodges called themselves. It is worth emphasizing, though, that there was no Katowice lodge at that time, so it implicitly meant fellow believers. One can, however, not exclude also attempts to transplant the habits observed by S. Freuthal in US lodges.

the United States. However, it is not clear whether he himself was a member of one of the lodges, or whether he was only given a chance to meet its activists. Anyway, interest in the ideals of B'nai B'rith resulted in a willingness to establish a society of this kind also in Katowice, where Freuthal lived at the time.

The manifesto called all Jews to provide help to their fellow believers persecuted in the East, compared their dramatic situation to expulsions in the Middle Ages and called for action, denouncing passive observation of their plight. It demanded long-term, rather than temporary, actions. Since extraordinary times required extraordinary reactions, relying on the activities of one organization was forbidden. Here, its authors meant Alliance Israélite Universelle³⁵ seated in Paris, which would promote only one direction for Jewish escapees from the East – West, to America. Seven points of the manifesto would deal with the issues, which, according to its authors, should encourage potential settlers to choose the Palestinian destination. First was the positive attitude of the Sublime Porte, which was interested in populating its territories and actually guaranteed special privileges to newcoming settlers, which, however, was not based on actual assessment of the situation in that region of the world. Second was fertility of the soil in Palestine and necessity of its modern cultivation, which, given good climate and lack of obstacles encountered by indigenous inhabitants of North America, would bring much better and quicker results. Another serious problem was high cost of trans-Atlantic travel for poor emigrants escaping pogroms. When compared with that direction, travelling through the Mediterranean Sea was a much cheaper option. The authors of the manifesto also paid attention to the issue of separation of Jews across such an immensely large country as the United States, which would weaken bonds between them and prevent them from providing mutual support and protection. "Palestine would also give contact with civilization", it did not result in isolation from the rest of the Jewish community. Most importantly, the travel had already and successfully started since first Jewish settlements were established by the Jews from Romania and Russia³⁶.

The source publication issued in 1981 by Jehuda Reinharz with documents on the history of the German Zionism in the years 1882–1933 and the Katowice manifesto is the first out of the chronologically ordered documents, which clearly symbolizes the beginning of proto-Zionism in the German Empire³⁷. The manifesto was dated May 1882, which was almost two months after the first founding meeting in the Sax Hotel in Berlin, where decisions on the establishment of the B'nai B'rith Order in Europe and the installation of the first lodge on this continent (and one year before the establishment of the Katowice lodge) were taken³⁸.

³⁵ The organization was established in Paris in 1860 by French Jews. It aimed at supporting and providing assistance to Jewish communities all over the world who were persecuted due to their denomination. The organization focused on the educational domain (for instance, building schools), the social domain (help for immigrants) and the diplomatic domain (reacting to political events in different regions of the world where Jewish people were involved or suffering). In 1906 also a local committee was opened in Germany. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 1, 2nd ed. 2007, p. 671–674. On 23–24 April 1882 the representatives of Alliance Israélite Universelle from the whole Western Europe gathered in Paris to discuss the situation of the Jewish community in Russia. Finally, it was decided that emigrants should be directed to America and all travel should be organized in that direction.

³⁶ *Dokumente zur Geschichte...*, p. 5.

³⁷ *Dokumente zur Geschichte...*, p. 3.

³⁸ G. B. Seidler, *Die Juden in den...*, p. 387.

The establishment of B'nai B'rith Society for the Colonisation of persecuted Russian Jews – Verein zur Colonisierung der verfolgten russ. Israeliten (henceforth: B'nai B'rith Colonisation Society³⁹, to be distinguished from B'nai B'rith Order) in Katowice on 11 May 1882 was an important initiative aiming at drawing German Jews' attention to the problem of fellow believers in Russia and engaging the latter in providing material and spiritual assistance⁴⁰. The organization developed (as was reported by its founders) very well, however, it encountered some resistance of Katowice rabbi dr Jacob Cohn, who was initially sceptical about the cooperation. Despite that, several dozens of people were gathered around the idea of the Colonisation Society, with the data given in sources and literature ranging from 50 to 500. The latter number, due to the overall size of the Jewish community in Katowice, is rather unlikely since the total number of Jews was only slightly higher than 800 in the 1870s⁴¹. It was possible, though, to involve Jewish inhabitants of other towns and settlements in Upper Silesia in the activities of the Colonisation Society, which was evidenced in the monthly reports of its activities⁴². On 21 December 1882 a trial issue of the newspaper entitled „Der Colonist. Zeitschrift für Beförderung der Emigration der Juden aus dem Länder, in denen ihre Menschenrechte nicht geschützt sind“⁴³ was published in Katowice by the B'nai B'rith Colonisation Society. It presented the main aims of the newspaper, modified in reference to those included in the manifesto of May 1882, informing the public that it is going to be a “Guide” for emigrants. According to its assumptions, the newspaper was to be published once a week and would contain only “educational, educating” contents, not competing with other Jewish daily or specialist newspapers. The newspaper would also publish information about dates of meetings of society members, who would get together in the seat of the Concordia Lodge. Initially, the editor of the weekly was M. Moses, who was later replaced by A. Wolfgang from Lipiny (currently one of the neighbourhoods of Świętochłowice), S. Friedländer was in charge of sales and shipment, while Theodor Staben was responsible for printing. In spring 1883 printing of the paper was moved to Karol Miarka's workshop in Mikołów⁴⁴.

³⁹ This form of Hebrew words was used by Jehuda Reinharz in his work *Dokumente zur Geschichte...*, p. 3, he was followed by E. Petry, *Ländliche Kolonisation in Palästina. Deutsche Juden und früherer Zionismus am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Köln – Weimar – Wien 2004, p. 244.

⁴⁰ The somewhat forgotten and insufficiently researched role of German Jews in the emergence of the Zionist movement was noticed and emphasized by Erik Petry in the work *Ländliche Kolonisation in Palästina...*, p. XV.

⁴¹ J. Reinharz, *Ideology and Structure in German Zionism, 1882–1933*, [in:] *Essential Papers on Zionism*, eds. J. Reinharz, A. Shapira, New York 1996, p. 271.

⁴² They are referred to by Julius Schoeps in his article *Autoemanzipation und Selbsthilfe. Die Anfänge der nationaljüdischen Bewegung in Deutschland, 1882–1897*, „Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte“ Vol. 31, No. 4, 1979, p. 354–355.

⁴³ Only a few issues of the newspaper survived to date. The trial issue of 1 December 1882 can be found in Internationales Zeitungsmuseum in Aachen, while the following issues: 1883 no. 49, 1884 nos. 1, 21, 23, 24 in the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem.

⁴⁴ „Der Colonist. Zeitschrift für Beförderung der Emigration der Juden aus dem Länder, in denen ihre Menschenrechte nicht geschützt sind“ Probe Nummer von 1 XII 1882, nlb. Karol Miarka's printing house published also the German-speaking version of the Katowice Conference Protocols, which is even more interesting as Karol Miarka's „Katolik“ would publish also anti-Semitic contents.

M. Moses made it clear in the trial issue that all proceeds from the sale, except for publishing costs, would be transferred for the benefit of the colonisation action in Palestine. However, even with 1,200 subscribers, the paper did get into financial trouble⁴⁵. As S. Freuthal complained to Isaak Růlf, involvement in promoting the proto-Zionist movement provoked attacks from both sides – both Orthodox and assimilated Jews expressed their disapproval for these actions⁴⁶. „Der Colonist” was the first German-speaking newspaper devoted to the matters of Jewish settlement in Palestine, which indicates the innovativeness of the activities in Katowice grouped around the B’nai B’rith Colonisation Society⁴⁷.

The installation of the Concordia Lodge

Alongside the activities of the Colonisation Society efforts were taken to install an official B’nai B’rith Order lodge in Katowice. This was a more complex process, which demanded specific organizational actions. As has been already mentioned, the first to emerge was the Deutsche Reichs Loge in Berlin on 20 March 1882, which was followed by the Germania Lodge in Halle (1882), the Berthold Auerbach Lodge in Berlin (1883) and the Concordia Lodge in Katowice⁴⁸. This filled the Katowice brothers with great pride, and they emphasized that it was so far in the East, in the region regarded as culturally underdeveloped, that the B’nai B’rith initiative could be implemented so early, well before such important cities with substantial Jewish communities as Hamburg (1887) or Frankfurt am Main (1888). The analysis of the geographical distribution of the lodges established in the first years of the B’nai B’rith activities in Germany clearly shows their concentration to the east of Berlin: in 1884 – Bytom, Szczecin, Berlin (the second lodge), Gliwice, in 1885 – Magdeburg, Drezno, Wrocław, Poznań, Kluczbork. Only in 1886 the lodges in Hannover and Bielefeld were established⁴⁹. Thus, in the first period of the Order’s development the Jews from the Eastern part of the Reich were most interested in the establishment of an organization alternative to the already existing masonry. It is possible that the reason were persisting difficulties with admittance to the existing masonic lodges (even of liberal character) and a small number of them on these territories.

All B’nai B’rith lodges had a similar internal structure with elected officials at the top: president, vice-president, secretary (minutes-taker), financial secretary, treasurer, as well as officials appointed by the president: marshal and janitor⁵⁰. The officials were

⁴⁵ Julius Schoeps, *Autoemanzipation und Selbsthilfe...*, p. 354. In January 1900 M. Moses wrote on that topic to Alfred Klee, a pioneer of Zionism close to Theodor Herzl.

⁴⁶ J. Schoeps, *Pioneers of Zionism: Hess, Pinsker, Růlf. Messianism, Settlement Policy, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Berlin – Boston 2013, p. 64.

⁴⁷ M. Maksymiak, *Mental Maps im Zionismus. Ost und West in Konzepten einer jůdischen Nation vor 1914*. Bremen 2015, p. 34; J. Schoeps, *Die missglůckte Emanzipation. Wege und Irrwege deutsch-jůdischer Geschichte*, Hildesheim – Zurich – New York, 2010, p. 285.

⁴⁸ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv, Moscow, Tsentr khraneniia istoriko-dokumental’nykh kollektzii tzw. Osobyi arkhiv (henceforth: RGVA OA), Tochterloge der Groűen Loge Deutschlands des jůdischen Ordens „Bne Brith”, f. 1219, del. 1–118, p. VI.

⁴⁹ RGVA OA, Groűe Loge fůr Deutschland des unabhąngigen Ordens „Bne Brith” (U.O.B.B.) Berlin, f. 769, del. 1–94, nlb.

⁵⁰ A. Kargol, *Po Jakobowej drabinie. O rytuale inicjacyjnym ỹydowskich lůź parawolnomularskich B’nai B’rit w okresie miėdzywojennym*, Kraków 2013, p. 22. The book elaborates also upon the tasks and compe-

appointed for a one-year term, from 1 April until 31 March. When leaving office, the president would automatically become a mentor, who would supervise the extent to which the lodge operated in accordance with the B'nai B'rith laws and the lodge regulations usually published in a book form upon the lodge's establishment or on the occasion of another anniversary⁵¹. As regards the Concordia Lodge, the collection of the Silesian Library in Katowice stores both the original, undated, book with the order of proceedings with the instruction for the president, the vice-president and the mentor, which was used by brothers during meetings, and the statute of the lodge published in 1903⁵².

The first petition pleading approval of the Executive Committee in the United States to install the Katowice lodge of the B'nai B'rith Order was submitted to the Reich Lodge in Berlin on 2 February 1883. It was initiated by Selig Freuthal, probably a member of the Berlin Lodge, who decided to establish a B'nai B'rith lodge in this town apart from his activities in the Colonisation Society⁵³. The name suggested was Concordia, since this virtue was at the foundation of the Order's establishment. The petition was signed by the following persons: S. Freuthal, Mich[ael?]. Abraham, Cassel Alexander, Jakob Appel, Jakob Bach, Adolf Bengler, Heinrich Bengler, Gustav Brahn, Simon Friedländer, N[?]. Händler, Phil[?]. Kammerer, Moritz Klemann⁵⁴, Moritz Liebermann, Moritz Michnik, Moritz Moses, Emmanuel Niebyl, Simon Persikaner, Ludwig Pollak, Jacob Preuß, Nathan Proskauer, Louis Rund, Josef Schmidt, Salomon Siedner, Nathan Sime-nauer, Moritz Sorski, Moses Strusberg, Jacob Wiener, Wilhelm Wolf, Emanuel Zernik⁵⁵.

The petition of 31 March 1883 was written in response to the Katowice petition by the then secretary of the Executive Committee Meyer Thalmessinger and it contained both expression of support for the initiative and the instructions on the role and tasks of the order, which should focus on providing support for the brothers in need, paying benefits for widows and orphans, promoting intellectual development through establishing appropriate institutions and building personal relations among brothers. The installation of the lodge was to be conducted by brother Sigmund Hamburger⁵⁶, however, due to communication issues the task was assigned to the Temporary General Committee in Berlin, and, on its behalf, Julius Fenchel, one of the founders of the B'nai B'rith Order in Germany, then ex-president of the Berlin Lodge Bertold Auerbach, who became the first president of the Grand Lodge in Germany after its installation. Unfortunately, due to a family member's illness he could not perform this duty, instead, he sent a congratulation letter and a replacement in the person of Moritz Jablonsky, ex-president of the Reich Lodge, who made a ceremonious installation of the lodge on 17

tences of particular officials, which essentially had not been changed since the 19th century.

⁵¹ G. B. Seidler, *Die Juden in den...*, p. 403.

⁵² *U.O.B.B.*, place and year of publication missing. [The order of proceedings, a document with a handwritten note: Concordia Loge IV 340 Kattowitz]; [Statute with introduction] *Concordia-Loge. IV. No. 340. Gegründet am 17. Juni 1883, [Kattowitz] 1903.*

⁵³ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ There is also another version of the name - „Kleeman“.

⁵⁵ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 4-5.

⁵⁶ In 1883 Sigmund Hamburger performed the function of the secretary of the first district in New York, he was also present during the installation of the Grand Lodge in Berlin in 1885 as the Grand Treasurer.

June 1883. During the ceremony the installation letter of 5 April 1883 was read out loud, after which the following officials were elected: M. Moses as president, G. Brahn as vice-president, N. Händler as mentor, S. Freuthal as minutes-taking secretary, L. Rund as financial secretary, N. Proskauer as treasurer, J. Schmidt as janitor.⁵⁷ On the same day 7 new candidates were inducted into the lodge. The Katowice Lodge was given the number „IV. Concordia-Loge No. 340”, which denoted the 4th lodge in the German district and the 340th in the entire organization.

The lodge in a particular district had a significant amount of autonomy in undertaking particular actions and initiatives, while the Grand Lodge would perform general supervision of the whole Order, conduct audits as well as collect reports elaborating upon financial, economic, organisational as well as cultural-social issues. Some fragments of these would subsequently be published in „Bericht der Großloge für Deutschland”⁵⁸, while a part can be found in the documentation stored in Moscow⁵⁹.

The statute of the Katowice Lodge published in 1903 listed in its structure 9 permanent commissions responsible for the following areas: finances, book audit (more precisely, documentation produced by officials), budget (dealing with the seat of the lodge, its inventory and staff), visits to the sick, support, peace (catering for good and amiable atmosphere, if necessary, resolving disputes), intellectual development (dealing with organization of scientific meetings and expansion of library collections), spirituality (spiritual development of brothers and their families) and holiday outings for children⁶⁰. The commissions would comprise brothers in different number, depending on the tasks and needs. Most probably, not all the commissions were in operation since the very beginning of the lodge’s existence, however, once time passed and the lodge grew in size, tasks were assigned to all of them.

In 1908 the Concordia Lodge decided to make a big celebration of the 25th anniversary of its operation. For that purpose, dr David Braunschweiger⁶¹, B’nai B’rith Order brother and auxiliary rabbi in Katowice Jewish commune prepared and published the history of the lodge in Julius Herlitz’s publishing house in Katowice. Braunschweiger described the history of the lodge with a lot of delight and positive opinions but omitted unwanted elements, which was usually the case in such anniversary publications. Such a style exemplifies the nature of writing in a particular epoch, at the same time, however, due to scarcity of preserved archival sources, it has immense informational value⁶².

⁵⁷ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 7.

⁵⁸ The title of the newspaper changed. The reports were to be published once a month, however, it was not possible to maintain regularity of publication. To date only incomplete reports from the years 1891–1920 have been preserved.

⁵⁹ The files made their way to Moscow after the Second World War and right now are a part of the Russian State Military Archive. This is more than 3,000 archival units. *Nazi-Looted Jewish Archivers in Moscow. A Guide to Jewish Historical and Cultural Collections in the Russian State Military Archive*. eds. D. Fishman, M. Kupovetsky, V. Kuzelenkov, Scranton – London 2010.

⁶⁰ [Statute with introduction] *Concordia-Loge. IV. No. 340. Gegründet am 17. Juni 1883*, [Kattowitz] 1903, p. 13–21.

⁶¹ In the years 1900–1912 David Braunschweiger was a rabbi assessor in Katowice and a teacher in a real school and gymnasium there; after 1912 he was a rabbi in Rybnik, since 1917/18 until his death in 1928 a rabbi in Opole. *Braunschweiger, David Dr.*, [in:] *Biographisches Handbuch der Rabbiner*, eds. M. Brocke, J. Carlebach, Teil. 2 *Die Rabbiner im Deutschen Reich 1871–1945*, Bd. 1, München 2009, p. 101.

⁶² D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 19.

When describing the early years of Concordia, David Braunschweiger particularly appreciated the significance and role of S. Freuthal in all the undertaken actions, as well as the latter's involvement in dissemination of the B'nai B'rith ideas among the inhabitants of Katowice and nearby areas. As a member experienced in and knowledgeable about rituals and regulations of the Order, he was the one to support and teach the members of the newly established lodge⁶³.

Since the establishment of the Concordia Lodge, its activities and role were intertwined with those of the Colonisation Society. This interconnection was both of personal (both organizations were headed by the same people – S. Freuthal and M. Moses) and factual nature (the same seat and a similar name). Both organizations used the name "B'nai B'rith", which made it difficult to distinguish them not only at that time, but also at present, significantly obstructing contemporary research and making clear division of the two organizations largely impossible.

The most important initiative undertaken by the members of the newly established B'nai B'rith lodge and simultaneously the Colonisation Society was organization of the Katowice Conference (6–11 November 1884). This meeting was attended, for the first time, by representatives of both East-European and West-European Jews, who gathered to discuss the most significant issues related to the emerging Zionist movement.

After 1881 new organizations grouping proponents of Jewish colonisation in Palestine started to appear in the lands of the Russian Empire (in Poland and Russia) as well as in the territory of contemporary Romania. They were named Sarubabel, Nehemia, Esra, Ohawe Zion. In 1881 Jesod (Jesud) ha-Maala was established in Suwałki, in 1882 a society of the same kind in Międzyrzecz Podlaski, however, this idea gained momentum only with the proto-Zionist movement called Chowewe(j) Cij(j)on (חובבי ציון) heb.) or Chowewej Cijen(jid)⁶⁴. In December 1881 the town of Fokshan hosted the first meeting of their representatives, and it was possible to bring to life the Central Committee seated in the town of Galac. The most important figures of the whole movement were Leon Pinsker⁶⁵, Samuel Mohylewer and Mosze Leib Lilienblum, who agreed with the offer of Warsaw activists of Chowewe Cijon to meet in a border town such as Katowice⁶⁶. An important role in making the decision was played by the active operation of the Colonisation Society and the readiness of local activists (S. Freutahl and M. Moses) to be responsible for the organization of the undertaking. Also their affiliation with the B'nai B'rith Order, or organizational connection with a group of Jews in Germany and the United States with significant financial and socio-cultural potential, could play a

⁶³ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ One can also come across the spelling of Hovevei Zion (German), while *Polski Słownik Judaistyczny* gives the equivalent of Miłośnicy Syjonu. *Polski Słownik Judaistyczny*, online version <https://delet.jhi.pl/pl/psj?articleId=14998>

⁶⁵ J. Surzyn, *Antysemityzm, emancypacja, syjonizm. Narodziny ideologii syjonistycznej*, Katowice 2014, p. 121–171.

⁶⁶ Initial discussions of organizational issues and preparation of the Statute of the Central Committee of the Colonisation Society of the Holy Land took place in Katowice in autumn 1883 during a meeting of activists of Katowice Colonization Society, other activists from Upper Silesia, guests from Jassy and Warsaw. A. Druyanow, *Ketawim le-Toldot Chibat-Zion we-Jischuw Erez Israel*, Vol. 1, Odessa 1919, col. 114–115.

great role here. This was even more so since L. Pinsker was determined to involve the Jews from Western Europe in the matters of colonisation of Palestine. However, in such an early period of its operation the B'nai B'rith Order would not determine its clear attitude towards Zionism. At the same time, Pinsker would realize that both S. Freuthal and M. Moses „were truly brave people, however, not known enough to raise public trust and guarantee success”⁶⁷. The letters also demonstrate that S. Freuthal's behaviour raised Pinsker's concerns, and he asked Isaak Rülff to bring him to consciousness since he raises only ridicule, after all, he is “a general with no army, a banker with no money”, which can do harm to the cause even before the meeting is about to start⁶⁸.

The Katowice Conference was attended by 36 people, who presumably put their names into the memorial book of the Concordia Lodge no longer preserved in 1934 – on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Conference it was searched for in the Lodge's headquarters, however, in vain⁶⁹. The most numerous group were delegates from Russia (22 persons), France was represented by 1 delegate while England by 2 persons. The initial plan was to start the meeting on 24 October on the day of birth of Moses Montefiore (1784–1885), who was supposed to be the patron and a key figure for the planned organization⁷⁰ – his name and authority were meant to evoke prestige and ensure support of all Jewish groups in the world⁷¹.

The most important outcomes of the conference were determining the modes of financing the settlement action in Palestine, the ways of seeking and spending funds. After long discussions a temporary central committee headed by S. Mohylewer as chairman and L. Pinsker as president was elected, which was supposed to take intensive action to prepare new settlers to do farming in Palestine. Moreover, a charity society named “Montefiore-Verband zur Förderung des Ackerbaues unter den Juden resp. zur Unterstützung der jüdischen Colonisten in Palästina” (Montefiore Society for supporting farming among Jews and providing assistance to Jewish colonists in Palestine)⁷² was established for collection of funds. Finally, it was decided that envoys would be sent to Constantinople to conduct talks with the Sublime Porte and to Palestine to gather more precise data on the situation in already existing colonies.

As a result of decisions taken during the Katowice Conference, the publication of the newspaper “Der Colonist” stopped in November 1884 and it was decided that the

⁶⁷ A letter of 12 November 1883, L. Pinsker to I. Rülff, *Palästinaliebe. Leon Pinsker, der Antisemitismus und die Anfänge der nationaljüdischen Bewegung in Deutschland*, hrsg. J. Schoeps, Hildesheim 2012, p. 118.

⁶⁸ A letter of 2 December 1883, L. Pinsker to I. Rülff, *Palästinaliebe. Leon Pinsker...*, p. 119.

⁶⁹ *Katowice: Perochata u-Szekijata Szel ka-Kehila ha-Jehudit; Sefer Zikaron*, eds. J. Chrust, J. Frankel, Tel Aviv 1996, s. 21, online version: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/katowice/kat020.html>.

⁷⁰ Moses Montefiore was a British, financier, politician, diplomat, and philanthropist who supported Jewish settlement in the Middle East by funding the establishment of the first settlements outside the walls of the Old City in Jerusalem. J. Perutz, *Pięćdziesiątolecie Konferencji Katowickiej*, [in:] *W pięćdziesiątolecie „Chibbat Sjon”*, [Kraków 1934], s. 38.

⁷¹ More on the Katowice Conference can be found in N. Gelber, *Die Kattowitzer Konferenz*, Wien 1919; H. Kohn, *Die Kattowitzer Konferenz*, „Die Jude” Jg. 5, 1920/21, p. 613–615; D. Vital, *The origins of Zionism*, Oxford 1975, p. 161–172; *Palästinaliebe. Leon Pinsker...*, p. 10–18, also in M. Pielka, *Syjniści Małopolski Zachodniej i Śląska w latach 1918–1939. Szkic z dziejów ruchu ogólnosyjonistycznego w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Bydgoszcz 2020, p. 50–51, 85–86, doctoral dissertation available online at https://www.ukw.edu.pl/download/59676/Rozprawa_poprawiona.pdf

⁷² The Hebrew name was much shorter – Agudat Montefiore.

members would participate in the activities of a bigger society known as the Montefiore Society. The establishment of the organization supporting colonisation of Palestine in Katowice and holding the Chowewe Cijon conference there in such an early phase of development of this movement in Europe is particularly worth noting, especially if we take into account the fact that in March 1885 out of all 55 local structures of the Montefiore Society only two were in Germany – in Heidelberg and in Katowice. This, obviously, resulted in its small impact on the nation-wide level and did not ensure sufficient funds for the developed initiative.⁷³ In November 1885 M. Moses was very involved in the development of the Montefiore Society and informed Leon Pinsker that „Warsaw complains that too little money is coming from Germany. This is quite natural, as, first of all, here [in Germany] there is too little propaganda, second there is not enough trust in managing skills and laboriousness of our Russian fellow believers. For that reason I cannot make sure that societies from Zabrze, Racibórz, Wodzisław etc. send their money to me or to Warsaw, they always send much more to [Adolf] Salvendi⁷⁴ to Dürkheim. I collect around 100–150 marks per month [...]. All this money is collected only because of trust in myself, the reason and aim are to most donors of no greater importance”⁷⁵. This confirms L. Pinsker’s earlier predictions of only local capacity of Moses.

In summer 1886 there was a serious disagreement between S. Freuthal and M. Moses. The documents do not indicate its main cause, there are only remarks of rather quarrelsome character of Freuthal, who did not value authorities and did not want to obey them. At the same time, some brothers were against involving the lodge in the proto-Zionist movement to such a great extent. S. Freuthal informed Nathan Birnbaum that his devotion for the cause resulted in „ruining peace in his family, in social relations and in the state of his health”⁷⁶. The whole situation had a very negative effect on the operation of Concordia. Some of its members wanted secession and establishment of a new independent lodge in Katowice. The conflicted group decided to apply for a permission for its installation in August 1886 and only radical steps involving removing or forcing the inappropriate “elements” (sic) to leave the lodge would pacify those troubled minds. It was also stressed that this enabled inviting representatives of higher-level social groups to the activities of the lodge, which largely improved its image⁷⁷.

This whole affair resulted in a bad publicity of Concordia persisting for years. Post-audit reports prepared for the Grand Lodge in Berlin contained numerous references to those events. In February 1905 one opinion on the operation of the Katowice Lodge said that “its installation is due to involvement of S. Freuthal and M. Moses, who had believed even long before Zionism adopted its current shape [...] that by joining our

⁷³ E. Petry, *Ländliche Kolonisation in Palästina...*, p. 193.

⁷⁴ Adolf Salvendi (1837–1914) was an Orthodox rabbi and activist of Chowewe Cijon. Since 1864 he was a rabbi in Berent in Prussia, then a district rabbi in Dürkheim – Frankenthal. He conducted charity activity collecting funds to support Jews in Russia and Persia, then since 1877 in Palestine. He published lists with names of donors and amounts paid regularly, which was highly transparent, welcome by the donors and increasing trust in his actions. During the Katowice Conference he was elected a honorary member of the Central Committee of Chowewe Cijon, and his 30-year work earned him respect. E. Petry, *Ländliche Kolonisation in Palästina...*, p. 224–227.

⁷⁵ Letter of 7 November 1885, M. Moses to L. Pinsker, *Palästinaliebe. Leon Pinsker...*, p. 204.

⁷⁶ J. Schoeps, *Pioneers of Zionism: Hess, Pinsker, Rülff. Messianism, Settlement Policy, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Berlin – Boston 2013, p. 64.

⁷⁷ RGVA OA, 789, del. 1–95, p. 54.

Order they could gain incomparably greater support. Valiant as nobody else, Freuthal fell out with Moses soon so much that in 1895 there was a plan to dissolve the lodge altogether". The involvement of ex-president Gustav Lewy was of great importance here⁷⁸.

After leaving the lodge M. Moses was still an active member of the Zionist movement, among others, a delegate to the first world Zionist congress in Basel in 1897 as well as a participant of a secret meeting in Vienna together with Theodor Herzl, Marcus Ehrenpreis, Abraham Salz, Natan Birnbaum and Ozjasz Thon⁷⁹. On the other hand, S. Freuthal most probably left Katowice for Berlin, however, he was apparently no longer active in the Zionist movement⁸⁰.

The number of members of the Lodge in the first years of its operation and its presidents

The number of members would grow every year, and the only moments of some uncertainty occurred when new daughter lodges were installed and some brothers participating in meetings in Katowice would start to attend those organized in their hometowns. This was the case when lodges in Bytom and Gliwice were installed. Upon installation the lodge comprised 29 members, while by the end of 1883 this number rose to 57. In April 1884 there were 64 brothers in the lodge, and such a small increase was explained by the installation of the Bytom Lodge in January 1884, which was joined by some brothers from Katowice. A more significant increase was noticed by the end of 1884, since the lodge comprised 80 brothers at that time, while by the end of 1885 the number rose to 99. The size of the lodge would be at the same level over the following years, since in January 1891 it still had 99 brothers. However, in the same period quite a significant fluctuation took place, as 2 brothers died, 32 were admitted while 30 left the lodge due to installation of a new lodge in Bielsko in 1889⁸¹.

Since the very beginning the location of Katowice near the border made it difficult to admit foreigners as brothers, which was not so much due to internal regulations of the Order, but rather a restrictive migration policy of the German state. Both Austrian-Hungarian and Russian citizens tried to cross the border with Upper Silesia and settle down in the region due to its very intensive economic development and high industrialization. A large percentage of those were also Jews.

In 1885 25 Jewish families which came to the town from the lands of the Russian partition and Austria-Hungary were expelled from Katowice. Since they were not granted a long-term stay permission by the Prussian authorities, they had to leave the German Empire and move across the border. As was reported by Jacob Cohn, then a Katowice rabbi, the commune lost "mainly craftsmen, who created permanent foundations for their existence in the current town thanks to their diligence and laboriousness"⁸². Some of them moved to Bielsko (50 kilometres away from Katowice), hoping that a change in the Prussian policy towards Jews would enable their return to the town. This, however, did not happen. These people comprised also active members of the Katowice

⁷⁸ RGVA OA, 789, del. 1-95, p. 55.

⁷⁹ J. Perutz, *Pięćdziesięciolecie Konferencji Katowickiej*, [in:] *W pięćdziesięciolecie „Chibbat Sjon”*, [Kraków 1934], p. 33.

⁸⁰ See footnote 32.

⁸¹ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 8-9.

⁸² J. Cohn, *Historia gminy synagogałnej w Katowicach na Górnym Śląsku*, Katowice 2004, p. 27.

B'nai B'rith lodge who were prevented from attending meetings of the Concordia Lodge and who decided to establish the first lodge in the territory of the Habsburg monarchy in Bielsko in 1889⁸³.

In 1896 the number of members of Concordia fell to 75, while in 1900 it went up back to the level of 99, finally, in 1908 it amounted to 118 brothers⁸⁴. However, it should be noted that at the same time the number of inhabitants of Katowice rose dramatically, from 12,285 in 1880⁸⁵ to 43,173 in 1910⁸⁶ (more than three-fold). A similar increase was seen in the Jewish population – from 812 in 1870 to 2,979 in 1910 (6.9% of the total population, which was a slight decrease of 0.6% in relation to 1895⁸⁷).

The statistics from other B'nai B'rith lodges in Germany indicate that around 25–30% of brothers took part in meetings. It was also the case in Katowice, where efforts were made to encourage members to take an active part in meetings. If that was in vain, financial penalties and deprivation of active and passive voting rights were applied. Until April 1886 lodge meetings were held once every two weeks, and later once a week⁸⁸.

The presidents of the Concordia Lodge were initially elected for three months so that the ex-president could be commissioned to join the Temporary Committee in Berlin. Afterwards, the term would last for half a year and after 1888 for a full year. For certain reasons, such as bad state of health or moving to a different place, the term could be shortened and a new president could be elected.

The presidents of the Concordia Lodge in the years 1883–1901:

Moritz Moses (01.1883.–10.1883.)

Gustav Brahn (10.1883.–01.1884.)

Selig Freuthal (01.1884.–07.1884.)

Adolf Loebinger (07.1884.–07.1885.)

Simon Friedländer (07.1885.–07.1886.)

Isak Frey (07.1886.–07.1887.)

Adolf Loebinger (07.1887.–07.1888.)

Gustav Brahn (07.1888–03.1889)

Isa[a]k Frey (04.1889.–04.1893.)

Heymann Cohn (04.1893.–04.1896.)

Gustav Lewy (04.1896.–04.1898.)

Eugen Goldstein (04.1898.–04.1899.)

Bernhard Guttmann (04.1899.–04.1901.)

Each B'nai B'rith lodge would publicly announce the number of still living founding brothers on the occasion of different anniversaries and celebrations. In 1913 there were 6 such founding brothers, while in 1933 only 3, who were listed in the article written on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the lodge: Louis Rund, Eljasz Ehrlich and „Moritz Klemann, who has been living in Wrocław for several years“. However, out of these E. Ehrlich was not listed as a founding brother in 1913. The anniversary article emphasized that „a whole range of eminent commune members had worked for several

⁸³ J. Proszyk, *Żydowskie Stowarzyszenie...*, p. 171.

⁸⁴ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 9.

⁸⁵ G. Hoffmann, *Historia miasta...*, p. 96.

⁸⁶ *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, Bd. 240, *Die Volkszählung im Deutschen Reich am 1.12.1910*, Berlin 1915.

⁸⁷ P. Maser, A. Weiser, *Juden...*, p. 116.

⁸⁸ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 13.

years with full devotion on prestigious positions in the Concordia Lodge, which made it possible to accomplish several undertaken actions”⁸⁹.

The transfer of the B'nai B'rith ideas to other towns in the region and beyond Prussia

The first lodge to be installed under the influence of Concordia was the one in Bytom. This was due to S. Freuthal, who had close relations with the Jewish community there and who disseminated the ideas of the Colonisation Society. Officially, it was dr A. Rahmer who applied to the Temporary Committee of the Grand Lodge in Berlin for a permission to install a new lodge. The reply, which arrived in Katowice on 25 October 1884, contained a permission for official installation, which took place on 27 January 1884. This is how the “first child” of Concordia came into being, which adopted the name of “Memreh” and was the fifth lodge in Germany. The installation ceremony was attended by 43 brothers from Katowice, who would not only attend the lodge’s opening ceremony, but also undertook collaborative initiatives and maintained close links with the brothers in Bytom⁹⁰.

In the same 1884 year another lodge was installed in Upper Silesia – the Humanitas Lodge started its operation in Gliwice on 26 October, which was also due to the influence of the Katowice brothers⁹¹. On the other hand, the origin of the installation of the Caritas Lodge in Kluczbork on 26 April 1885 is not clear. It needs further research to find out who was the originator of the idea and whether it came directly from Katowice or from another town in Upper Silesia⁹².

As regards Racibórz, the idea of installation of a lodge in this town can be attributed to the president of the Gliwice Humanitas Lodge. On 9 May 1886 an official installation ceremony of a new lodge was held in Racibórz. The lodge adopted the name “Friedens-Loge”, or Lodge of Peace. It was 361st lodge in the entire order and 17th on the territory of the German Empire⁹³.

The operation of Concordia was not limited only to the territory of the Reich. As mentioned above, as a result of administrative decisions of the German authorities who ordered several Jewish families of Katowice to leave, the “Austria” Lodge was established in Bielsko on 1 September 1889 as the first lodge in Austria-Hungary.

At the same time, new lodges were installed in Upper Silesia already in the 20th century – the Michael Sachs Lodge in Królewska Huta in 1903, the Veritas Lodge in Zabrze in 1906 and the Freiheit (Freedom) Lodge in Opole in 1911⁹⁴.

⁸⁹ 50-ciolecie Łoży Concordia/50 Jahre Concordia-Loge, „Urzędowa Gazeta Gminy Izraelickiej w Katowicach” June 1933, no. 33, p. 3.

⁹⁰ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 20.

⁹¹ RGVA OA, 789, del. 1–94, nlb.

⁹² RGVA OA, 789, del. 1–94, nlb. L. Marezki, *Geschichte...*, s. 24, Marezki gives the wrong date of 26 April 1884.

⁹³ CAHJP Jerusalem, Synagogengemeinde Ratibor (Preußen/Oberschlesien) (henceforth: D-Ra1), D-Ra1-35 – Statut der Friedensloge XVII. Nr 361 U.O.B.B., p. 9.

⁹⁴ RGVA OA, 789, del. 1–94, nlb.

Seats

The Concordia Lodge changed its seat several times in the search for the most appropriate place for its meetings. Not all localities could be actually tracked down⁹⁵.

The most interesting matter was finding the first seat where the lodge was located in the years 1883–1888, since the Katowice Conference took place on its premises. As evidenced by the Jewish commune files of Racibórz stored in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem (and more precisely the publication *Gesetze, parlamentarische Regeln und Geschäfts-Ordnung der Friedens-Loge XVII. Nr 361 U.O.B.B. zu Ratibor* published in 1887 or 1888⁹⁶ which can be found there), the seat of the Katowice Lodge was at that time a building at 43 Warszawska Street⁹⁷. The building was erected in 1876 and then rebuilt several times. It was owned by merchant Robert Stiller⁹⁸. Determining the meeting place of participants of the Katowice Conference is essential since for a few decades there have been attempts to commemorate the place and events which “have led to the emergence of the State of Israel”⁹⁹. On the 120th anniversary of the “first meeting of Chowewej Syjon” a delegation of Israeli youth installed a commemorative plaque at 7 Kaczyńskis Square, which was the place of the former address of 18 Stawowa Street (since the building of 19 Stawowa Street was demolished in the 1960s during construction of a new railway station and a flyover leading to it). As reported by already mentioned D. Braunschweig, the members of Concordia would move their seat in 1888 and 1894 when a new location had to be found due to a growing number of brothers¹⁰⁰. Finally, the lodge moved to a part of the Kaiserhof hotel at Teichstrasse 19, which was renovated for the sum of 4,000 marks (the hotel could not be the seat of the lodge in 1884 since it was constructed only after 1892¹⁰¹). The new seat housed a library, two rooms for social meetings and the main meeting hall of the lodge. Lodge members were planning to erect a separate building for the lodge, however, this idea was abandoned due to financial reasons.

Summary

The Concordia Lodge played a very important role in the social-cultural-national development of the Jewish community in Central and Eastern Europe. The dissemination of the ideas of American B'nai B'rith started in Upper Silesia even before the first lodge was installed in Katowice. This was because S. Freuthal initiated discussions in spring 1882 on such fundamental issues as colonisation movement in Palestine, charity work for those who suffered from pogroms in Europe, solidarity beyond religious

⁹⁵ Most probably, the answers to these questions can be given only with the use of Moscow archives. Unfortunately, Katowice did not have address books published in the 1880s, and the municipal files pertaining to the 19th century were burnt down, which makes investigations much more difficult.

⁹⁶ The last lodge to be listed in the address list was the Henri Jones Lodge, established in Hamburg in 1887. However, the list would not include another lodge installed in Halberstadt in the same year.

⁹⁷ CAHJP Jerusalem, D-Ra1-35, p. 7.

⁹⁸ Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach, fond no. 12/4 Sąd Obwodowy w Katowicach, spis 4, nr 793, Grund-Acten, Grundstück Hyp. No 450 Kattowitz.

⁹⁹ A plaque on the building of 13 Młyńska Street.

¹⁰⁰ In April 1891 the address of Friedrichstr. 34 was still in use. *Verzeichniss der Logen, deren Sitzungstage und Präsidenten des 8. Districts U.O.B.B. für den Termin bis 31. März 1892. „Bericht der Großloge für Deutschland“* No 2, April 1891, nlb.

¹⁰¹ D. Braunschweiger, *Geschichte der Concordia...*, p. 13.

divisions within Judaism and integration of Jewish elites around international scientific and cultural aims. However, despite initial overlap of aims between the proto-Zionist movement and the B'nai B'rith Order, these parted after a few years. It was particularly visible in Katowice, where quarrels and disagreements between activists almost resulted in secession, and ultimately dissolution of the lodge. Those brothers who had more moderate views on settlement in Palestine wanted to engage in humanitarian and social work in their surroundings, town and region, so acting mainly locally, while trying to reconcile the ideas of American founders with the local German specificity striving for the goals common for all German lodges. Support for colonization, in their view, was supposed to have a limited, chiefly financial, dimension, which was visible in the amounts of money collected by M. Moses as support for settlers. Another dimension was scientific – establishment of the B'nai B'rith library in Jerusalem in 1892 made it the first public library in Palestine for the Jewish community and later gave rise to the National Library of Israel. More importantly, though, the idea of the rebuilding of the Jewish state was not the primary aim of their organization. The elitist nature, so frequently taken for granted in para-freemasonic organizations, was not compatible with the required widespread mass nature and class slogans appearing subsequently in the Zionist movement. The beginning period of the Katowice Concordia Lodge best exemplifies the contradictions, conflicting views and different ideas for the future permeating the Jewish community. Geographical location of the town was obviously an issue here, as was the growing industry of Upper Silesia attracting more and more numerous groups of people.

Management-wise, after a period of internal disagreements and turmoil caused by such external factors as expulsion of some brothers from the Prussian Upper Silesia, Concordia managed to operate successfully, accept new members, build financial stability and find an appropriate place for its seat. It was also very successful at disseminating the ideas of B'nai B'rith to the neighbouring Jewish communes. In this case, the Katowice Lodge was highly successful at establishing new structures of the Order in Upper Silesian towns, which resulted in great density of such organizations in this region which was not to be found in Germany.

The present article elaborated upon the beginnings of the proto-Zionist movement in Katowice and the organizational development of the Concordia Lodge. It did not analyze other spheres of its operation, in particular, cultural and charity work. These deserve separate studies in a wider temporal perspective, without focusing only on the 1880s and 1890s, which the current article has been restricted to.

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