

## FORMATION AND EARLY WORK OF "MACCABI" SPORTS ASSOCIATION ORADEA

MAROTI Ștefan, DUMITRESCU Gheorghe

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, University of Oradea, ROMANIA

### Abstract

**Purpose.** This paper aims to present the conditions and the key events that led to the establishment of Maccabi Oradea sports association.

**Methods.** The paper was carried out based on the study of monographic works regarding Oradea, the history of sports in this town, a series of documents from the National Archives of Romania, Bihor County Sports Directorate, in particular articles of sports publications in "Sporthirlap, Nagyváradi" relating to the establishment and sports activity among the Hebrew community in Oradea, in the period 1920 to 1925.

**Results.** Based on the analysis of information contained in the sources consulted there are presented the actions of the representatives of Zionist movement in Oradea, and other Hebrew community representatives that preceded the establishment of the sports association, people who have contributed decisively to this process. Also, the paper refers to a number of organizational aspects of the association, the involvement of the local leaders in supporting the Department of football, results in local and national competitions during the period studied.

**Conclusions.** The establishment of Maccabi Oradea sports association was done under the influence and leadership of the Zionist movement as an expression of the will of the local Hebrew community.

Maccabi, through the work of its members, through their results, honorably represented the Hebrew community of Oradea, helping the sports education of the Hebrew ethnic population and helping to promote the Hebrew national spirit.

**Keywords:** sport association, Jewish community, Maccabi Oradea

### Introduction

In the last years of the nineteenth century, under the influence of Nathan Birnbaum, Zionism was founded, a nationalist movement that had proposed, among other things, raising a new generation of Jewish that can propagate the Jewish nationalist spirit and can act for the cultivation of Hebrew as language of the Jewish and will promote Jewish culture and the return of Jews to Palestine. (G. Colțescu, 2005) Inspired by this principle in the Second Congress of the Zionist movement, held in 1898 in Basel, dr. Max North launched the idea that sport is "an effective means to serve the Zionist movement, to promote nationalist Jewish spirit. (<http://www.maccabiworld.org/nconfigout.asp?psn=306&tc=60>). Convinced that people must be trained and educated not only spiritually but also physically, representatives of the Zionist movement have campaigned to establish a greatest number of sports associations among Jewish population. Thus, in the European countries there were established the first sports association whose members were ethnic Jew: Jew Sports Club in Turkey, Bar Kochba in Germany, Haarlem in Holland, Blue Star in Switzerland, Hakoah in Austria, Fencing Athletic Club of Budapest in Hungary, Cechie Karolinentalt in Czechoslovakia. (P. Adorjan, 1922). Most of these names remind of glorious past, the power and heroism of the Jewish people. The principle that was the basis of founding these clubs was that Jews, wherever they lived, are not only a religious entity but they have a common history and a common culture, which determines them to be strongly attached of the community that they belong to.

An important moment in terms of organizational point of view was the formation of

Maccabi World Union at the XII World Jewish Congress, held in 1921 at Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary), Czechoslovakia. This was an international body that encompassed all Jewish sports clubs in the world and had objectives as "boosting physical education, strengthening faith in the homeland and Jew people, work and fight to restore the Jew state". (<http://www.maccabiworld.org/nconfigout.asp?psn=306&tc=60>)

**Establishment of Jewish sports associations in Transylvania.** In this context, the leaders of the Zionist movement in the main cities of Transylvania had conducted a laborious activity for the sport to be used as "a propaganda tool for awakening Jewish consciousness" (D. Fehér, 1937). Thus, since 1920, with the support of Zionist cultural committees of the National Federation of Jews from Transylvania, in villages in Banat Crișana, Maramureș and Transylvania, the first sports associations were formed among Jewish population, with organizations already existing on cultural, religious, professional, social assistance, the charitable women. Thus, Hagibor was founded in Cluj, the first Jewish sport association from Transylvania, at the initiative of the writer Giszkalai János, of the doctor Knopfler Bernát and lawyer Weinberger Chain. In the coming months, in the main cities of Transylvania more Jewish sports associations were started: Hakoah in Arad, Ivria in Brasov, Oradea Maccabi, Kadima at Timișoara, Samson in Sighetul Marmației, Bar-Kochba in Satu Mare (L. Erős, 1996)

### Formation of Maccabi Oradea sports association

The members of the local Zionist organization, particularly dr. Markovits Ignác, dr.

Bárdos Imre Váradi, dr. Odon Gábor Kohn and Rabbi Goldstein Mor, have made extensive preparations to establish a Jewish sport association in Oradea. (S. Friedlander, 1921) As a result of these efforts, under the presidency dr. Markovits Ignace, in front of a large number of participants, they established the Maccabi Oradea Sports Association on June 5, 1921. Those present elected the initial board consisting of: President Löblé László, Executive Chairman Andor Sonnenfeld, Vice-President Lóránd János, Secretary Polgár András, the chief of football department Morgenstern Zsigmond, notary Zoltán Lukács, cashiers dr. Imre Horváth József Manhardt, dr. Balogh, doctors dr. Vertes and dr. Goldman and storekeeper Gond Sándor.



Dr. Markovits Ignác (D. Fehér, 1937)

At the initial meeting they also approved the emblem, the flag and the colors of the association. The stylized Star of David was included on the emblem also the Juvenal's dictum, both in Romanian (Minte sănătoasă, în corp sănătos) and in Hungarian (Ép testben, ép lélek).



The emblem of the sports association Maccabi Oradea (D. Fehér, 1937)

The flag had white and blue colors in equal measure and also on diagonal the name of the association, Maccabi. They have also adopted the colors of the sports association: blue and white (Sporthirlap, June 6, 1921)

The flag of the sports association Maccabi Oradea (D. Schon & al., 1981)



### The first years of activity

In less than a month from the establishment, the first training of the football team was held on a heavy rain on Tuesday, June 28, 1921, between 14.00 and 16.00 on the fields Banya –sori telep. Before the beginning of the training, the players - Winkler, Grünfeld, Goldstein II, Lowy, Lowenstein, Abraham, Izyák, Deutsch, Grünbaum, Goldstein I, Goldstein III and Schwartz - along with coach-player Markovits Mozi and football department responsible Morgenstern Zsigmond received the blessing from the Rabbi Goldstein Mor. (Sporthirlap, 4 July 1921)

In addition to the support received from Zionist local organizations and Jewish community in Oradea, the team had the support of local leaders such as Nuszbaum Samuel, dr. Kovács Gyula, dr. Blatter Sándor, dr. Janos Marton and others.

An important moment in Maccabi Oradea's activity was in December 1921, when together with other Jewish sports associations in Transylvania and Banat they affiliate to the Maccabi world union. Following this event, the subcommittee for Transylvania of the Maccabi world union was formed. (Uj Kelet, December 6, 1921, quoted by Gido, 2002).

Despite the inherent early difficulties, the football team was strengthened with two valuable players: Markovits, transferred from Athletic Club Oradea, and Breier, transferred from the Fencing Athletic Club of Budapest. Since the first year, the football team has played in the second league of the Regional Championship, where they honorably represented the Jewish community of Oradea. They won the preliminary matches and they were promoted in the first league of the Oradea Regional Championship.

Oradea Maccabi team won national consecration and recognition after they managed to get the first place at the first edition of the Cup Stalter, a competition organized in Arad and reserved for Jewish teams competing in Transylvania and Banat. Maccabi won the first game 2 – 0 with Hagibor Cluj (the best football team in Cluj at the time), and finished tied, 1 to 1, in the second game, with Kadima Timișoara (D. Fehér, 1937).

### Conclusions

The establishment of Jewish sports associations, including those of Transylvania and Banat, was done under the influence and support the Zionist movement.

Maccabi Oradea sports association was established as an expression of the will of the local Jewish population supported by Zionist cultural committee of the National Federation of Jews from Transylvania and Banat, in which an important role was played by dr. Markovits Ignace, dr. Bárdos Imre Váradi dr. Odon, Gábor Kohn and Rabbi Goldstein Mor.

Since the first years of activity, Maccabi has honorably represented the Jewish community of Oradea. In addition to sporting results, which were the reason for national pride, the association has also

contributed to promoting the National Jewish spirit educating the people of Jewish ethnicity.

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