

CHAPTER FIVE

RAV CHAIM OZER AND AGUDATH ISRAEL

Rav Chaim Ozer carved for himself and for Orthodox Jewry a glorious path in the hostile forest of a rapidly 'modernizing' Europe of the early 1900's. He wielded the mighty axe of Torah truth and strength to destroy the 'Haskalah' weeds which were emerging in all phases of traditional life. Advocating from the first an organization of Torah Orthodoxy on a broad scale, he was one of the founders of 'Agudath Israel'. It has, in fact, been said that he was the very cornerstone upon which the movement rested. 'Rav Chaim Ozer is not just an individual,' said the Chofetz Chaim z.t.l., 'he is an institution - a priceless Torah institution, whom it is our duty to preserve and uphold.'

First at Kattowitz and later at the Knessioh Gedolohs, he was one of the pioneers of Agudath Israel and Rosh of the Moetzeth Gedolei Torah. In his eyes, Agudath Israel was not just another party among the many parties. Rather, it was a union of G-d fearing Jews for the support of sacred Jewish tradition and the establishment of a pillar of Orthodox strength against the maze of misleading and misguided movements of a turbulent and traditionless period. The foundation and maintenance of yeshivas; the 'Chinuch' of the younger generation; the safe-guarding of the Torah