

BAŁABANOW Leon Lew (1872–1932), dentist, financier, director and head of the Herby- Kielce Railway, musician, teacher and social activist. He was born on 11th November 1872 in Kherson (Ukraine), the son of → Michał and Betty Betli née Bieguń.

Bałabanow graduated from Dr. Szymański's medical-dental school in Warsaw, as well as from the music conservatory. He continued his medical studies at the University of Berlin. During this period, he published articles in the field of bacteriology in German medical journals. He graduated and received his medical degree.

He settled in Częstochowa in 1901, becoming Finance Department Director in the building of the Herby-Kielce Railway and one of its main shareholders. Following, its launch, he held the position of Head of Materials Services.

During World War I, he was a member of the Food Commission of the Częstochowa City Council. In the 1920s, on behalf of the city, he was financial controller of the works to establish the sewage and water supply network being constructed by Ulen and Company. In 1927, he was appointed to a special commission examining the work of this company – he was the most active member of that commission. On behalf of the municipal authorities, he was appointed to electoral commissions during City Council elections.

Bałabanow was a talented musician. In the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, he taught violin Ludwik Wawrzynowicz's Music School in Częstochowa, and gave free music lessons. He performed in charity concerts. He was a leading player in the Częstochowa Chess Club. He was socially active, helping those in need, belonging to the "Dobroczytność" Charitable Society for Jews (TDdŻ). He supported the TDdŻ Hospital. (In 1913, he donated 1,500 rubles towards it, including 800 rubles for a hospital pharmacy).

W 1914–15, when the management of the Herby-Częstochowa Railway moved from Częstochowa to St. Petersburg, from his own funds, Bałabanow supported a dozen or so railway families. According the "*Słowo Częstochowskie*" (1932, No. 86), "He supported his god and close friends [...]. His philanthropy was not overt [...]. He helped people in various ways." During this period, he supported the St. Antoni Shelter.

In 1920, he belonged to the Provisional Civic Committee, established in order to prevent famine in Częstochowa. Dr. Stanisław Nowak described Bałabanow this

way, “[He was] a most intelligent, cultured and multi-talented man, a very good financier, an excellent pianist, operetta orchestra conductor, a good dentist and histologist. He was known throughout Częstochowa for his unstoppable talking, sprinkled with great humour”.

In 1915, he was arrested by the German authorities for the bold and public expression of his political judgments. Thanks to the intercession of Ignacy Bernecki (then Deputy Mayor of Częstochowa), he was soon released.

He was one of the most famous people in Częstochowa. In 1924, he found himself amongst the winners of the “Nowin Częstochowskich” plebiscite for the most popular people in the city. In 1932, as a representative of the Herby-Kielce Railway shareholders, he held talks with the state treasury regarding the purchase of the railway. He lived at ul. Jasnogórska 32. He died on 12th April 1932 in Częstochowa and was buried in the local Jewish cemetery.

He was married to Agrypina (1st January 1880 Ufa -) née Azierski, the daughter of Izajasz and Agrypina née Epsztajn. They had a son, Paweł (?).

Orenstein, *Churban Czenstochow*, p. 29; *Droga Żelazna Warszawsko-Wiedeńska. 150 lat tradycji kolejnictwa w regionie częstochowskim*, Częstochowa – Katowice 1998, p. 64 (regarding his father); Malko, *Życie muzyczne*, pp. 124, 179, 241; – Nowak, *Z moich wspomnień III*, pp. 189, 190, 191, 205, 227; - *Express Częstochowski* 1930, No. 2, p. 2; “*Goniec Częstochowski*” 1915 (24 II), p. 2, 1918, No. 88, p. 2; “*Nowiny Częstochowskie*” 1924, No. 232, p. 4; “*Słowo Częstochowskie*” 1932, No. 86, pp. 1, 3 (memoirs), No. 87, p. 3 (obituary); – *Handlowiec. Kalendarz 1914*, p. 191; *Sprawozdanie Towarzystwa Dobroczynności dla Żydów 1913*, pp. 3, 21; - APCz, MagCz 5503; USC Częstochowa, death certificate (L. Bałabanow), No. 103/1932; - materials (excerpts from civil registers) in the ODDC collection.

Juliusz Sętowski