

Economic Life

Jews played a great role in Częstochowa's economic life. They were the owners of a large number of big factories and employed thousands of workers and office employees. The production of these factories had a colossal significance for the economy and served the country's internal needs, as well as for export.

Częstochowa was a unique city due to the Catholic holy site on Jasna Góra and the "Holy Mother" (Matka Boska Częstochowska¹). Tens of thousands of devout Christians arrived in processions and purchased different sorts of souvenirs. All these souvenirs were manufactured in Jewish factories and sold in Jewish shops and they were made of celluloid, wood, iron and glass haberdashery.

The most prominent factories were the following:

"Gnaszyń" [Gnaszyńska Jutowa Manufaktura] - a large textile plant and also a brick factory. The two enterprises belonged to the partners, Directors Markowicz and Zigman. Both directors were communal activists and accomplished much for the Jewish population. Several thousand Polish workers and a small number of Jewish staff were employed in their enterprises.

"Lewlen" – a large textile plant. The owner, Jakub Lewit, emigrated to the Land of Israel at the right time and eluded Hitler's tyranny.

"Metalurgia" – a large iron foundry on ul. Krótka; a shareholder company. The main participants were Kisin, Szmul Goldsztajn, Jakób Rozenberg and Szwarc.

Horowicz & Giterman - factory of iron haberdashery.

"Wulkan" – a large metal foundry, owned by Preger and Landau.

Ickowicz – the owner of a metal factory on ul. Krótka.

"Braland" – a metal factory on ul. Krótka, owned by the firm of Landau Bros.

Altman - metal factory producing, spoons, forks, *wyżymaczki* [wringers/mangles] and metal haberdashery.

"Kon-Kon" - the largest factory of prams/strollers for infants. These products were distributed throughout the whole of Poland.

"Stradom" - a large textile factory, a shareholder company, the main shareholders being Jews.

¹ [TN: This is usually translated to English as "Our Lady of Częstochowa".]

“Papiernia” – a large paper factory on ul. Świętej Barbary, belonging to brothers Alfred and Leopold Kohn.

“Cegielnia” - a brick factory owned by Helman.

Lime kilns - most of them belonged to Jews.

“Warta” – a factory of jute products owned by Markusfeld and Kohn. The director was Senior, a Jew.

There were also the factories **“Malarnia”** and **“Kapelusznia”**².

“Strug” - a wood haberdashery factory owned by Leon Kopiński.

“Enro” - two large factories - metal foundry and *klejarnia* (manufacture of hard glue) – owned by N. Rotsztajn.

Jan & Stanisław Grosman’s button factory, manufacturing horn buttons and exporting its production to the whole globe - even to Japan, China and India, from where it imported the raw materials.

“Ribanit” - owned by Epsztajn, producing horn combs.

“Tranczila” – owned by the Wajnman brothers, manufacturing spoons and forks.

Landau - children’s toys and dolls factory.

“Kosmos” - toothbrush and doll factory.

“Ridal” - a large chocolate factory at I Aleja 4.

“Jurista” - a large chocolate factory at I Aleja 3.

There were a series of mills which belonged to the **Kurland brother, Bresler, the Rubinsztajn brothers, Rajchman** and others.

Ninety percent of wholesale businesses were concentrated in Jewish hands. The largest wholesale shops belonged to Jews. They were the following:

Praport - haberdashery on the I Aleja.

Hofman, Berl - at Stary Rynek 4, paint and chemical wholesale shop.

Lastman - *manufaktura* [viz. textile goods, fabrics], at Aleja 7.

Zyser - *manufaktura*, at Aleja 14.

Miska - *konfekcja* [ready-made clothing].

Glik - shoes, on the corner of ul. Berka Joselewicza.

Nudelman - *konfekcja*.

² [TN: These two factories also belonged to Markusfeld.]

Krauze - ladies' boutique on the II Aleja.
Berliner - ironmonger at I Aleja 5.
Rajchman— haberdashery at I Aleja 3.
Najman - women's and men's *konfekcja* at Aleja 14.

The financial operations were run by the state bank (Bank Polski) and by the following Jewish banks:

Bank for Industrialists and Merchants [Bank Przemysłowców i Kupców] - Director: Pruszycki, II Aleja 22;
Craftsmen's Bank³ - Directors: Bochenek and Dr Gajsler, Aleja 12;
[Częstochowa] Cooperative Bank [Częstochowski Bank Spółdzielczy] - Director: Szmul Goldsztajn, Aleja 7;
Aguda Bank⁴ - Director: Borzykowski, Aleja 5;
Private Bank [?] - Director: Enzel Wajnman, Nowy Rynek [New Market].

There was also a large bank at Aleja 6 for changing currency and for the purchase of lottery tickets ("*losy*"⁵). This belonged to Joachim [Chaim] Weksler.

The Jewish population was represented in the following trades: men's tailoring, ladies' tailoring, the fur trade, shoemaking, gaiter-making, cabinetmaking, building carpentry, men's linen, women's linen, men's *konfekcja*, women's *konfekcja*, embroidery, electrical engineering, mechanics, heavy metal industry, metal haberdashery, bicycles, celluloid, combs, textile, painting, metalworking, making small boxes, watchmaking, locksmithing, transport and an entire array of other professions.

Jews produced bicycles and celluloid on a massive scale, delivering the articles to the whole of Poland. One of the largest bicycle factories belonged to Altman on ul. Warszawska, where he employed several hundred Polish and Jewish workers. The craftsmen and home-based labourers ("*chatupniks*"⁶), as well as the retailers and market stallholders (*straganiarze*), also played a great role in the economic and communal life.

The financial associations were the following:

Association of Industrialists and Merchants - Aleja Wolności 3, President was Henryk Markusfeld and later Maurycy Neufeld.
Craftsmen's Union - Chairman: Dr Gajsler, I Aleja 12.
Merchants' Union - Chairman: Sztyller, Aleja Wolności 2/3.
Retailers' Union - Chairman: Wajnsztok, ul. Orlicz-Dreszera 18.
Association of Retailers and Stallholders (*Straganiarze*) - founded by Icek-Mendel Epsztajn and Szmul Niemirowski. They were the presidents of the association.

³ [TN: Appears in other sources as the "Bank Spółdzielczy" (Cooperative Bank); founded in 1927 by the Craftsmen's Club in Częstochowa to provide Jewish craftsmen with funds for raw materials, etc.]

⁴ [TN: Officially named "Bank Kupiecki" (Merchant Bank).]

⁵ [TN: Pol., "lots" (as in "fate").]

⁶ [TN: From the Polish word "chatupa," meaning "hut."]

The Craftsmen's Union had to lead a struggle to support its members by enabling them to carry out their work. The regulations predicted⁷ [sic dictated] that every craftsman needed to have a craftsman's card. This card could be obtained [only] after completing a proper exam on professional expertise and general knowledge. The Jewish craftsmen were good professionals, but not all of them were proficient in the "general knowledge" regarding legislation, the form of government, what the name of each minister was, and similar things that were asked in the course of the exams. As a result, in 1938, special evening courses were established for the craftsmen and retailers, who fitted the conditions of the required [professional] expertise. These courses were under the directorship of Dr Filip Axer. The juridical lectures were given by lawyer Estera Epszajn on the following themes: the Codex [Laws] of Business and the Codex [Laws] of Obligations. After completing the course, an examination was conducted and valid certificates were issued, which were recognised by the government.

The free professions: lawyers, doctors, nurses, obstetricians, midwives, engineers, professors, directors, artistic painters, teachers, accountants and others.

The renowned Jewish advocate, Jan Glikson, who was active in Częstochowa's judicial arena for nearly fifty years, was for many years the judicial counsellor to the municipal authorities, despite the fact that the municipal authorities were disposed towards Jew-hatred.

The Bund's professional workers' unions - namely the Needle Union, *Stepper*⁸ Union, the textile, metal, construction [unions] and others - were located at ul. Piłsudskiego 17. The Commercial Employees Union was under the influence of the Communists and had its offices at II Aleja 22.

Initially, the large Jewish factories employed exclusively Polish workers. Jews were only employed in the administrations. With the worsening of the material situation of the craftsmen and home-based labourers, who were unable to withstand the competition of large-scale industry, they were proletarianised⁹ and began to worm their way into the factories in every kind of employment.

There was a similar phenomenon with the retailers and stallholders who, due to the "*Owszem*"¹⁰ politics, were picketed by the *Endecja*-affiliated students. Their wares were very often destroyed and they were completely impoverished by paying high taxes.

The process of impoverishment also led [some] to the despairing step of taking their own lives. The destitute Jewish masses, who sought employment in the factories in order to earn for bread, found the gates of the factories closed before them. The Jewish professional unions were forced to fight for every workplace. This phenomenon became a general communal one and, as a result, an operation was also conducted by the Jewish *Kehilla* and the Jewish Industrialists Association [?] to hire Jewish workers.

⁷ [TN: The term used in the original is the German and Yiddish "vorausgesehen", which means foresaw/predicted/anticipated, and which does not fit this context.]

⁸ [TN: Tradesmen who stitch the shoe/boot uppers to the soles.]

⁹ [TN: To proletarianise is to cause a person or group to become proletarian or working class, as defined in various dictionaries.]

¹⁰ [TN: Pol., lit. "of course!"; ref. to declaration made by the Prime Minister of Poland, General Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski, to the effect that whilst violence against Jews was deplorable, boycotting and shunning them - *Owszem!* (Of course!).]



Photo №1: The Czestochower Szejnhardt family.

Those who survived are Abram, who lives in Bamberg, and the other brother, Nachman, who emigrated to the Land of Israel before the War. The other members of the family perished in Treblinka.

The financial situation also brought about a stream of emigration to all the countries of the world. Some emigrated to European countries, such as France and Belgium, where they lived through the tragic era of destruction and extermination by Hitler's regime. The luckier ones emigrated to the overseas lands - to the Land of Israel, America, Canada, Australia, Brazil and even Africa. These ones evaded the Nazi sword.



Photo №2:

The Czestochower Frank family.

Those who survived are Mrs Sara Frank and her daughter Erna. They lived through the War with Aryan papers in Germany.

Rena Frank and Halina Szmulewicz went through the War in the Czestochowa HASAG camps. Rena Frank is in Bavaria, in the town of Marktredwitz, and Halina Szmulewicz is in Cyprus on her way to the Land of Israel. The rest of the family were killed.