

## Political Life

The socio-political ideal was strongly developed within the Jewish population. This was expressed in the large number of reports, lectures and discussions that were held in the different organisations and at party premises. The humanistic (*Haskala*) currents struck deep roots in the [city's Jewish] life, reaching all circles and strata, and being expressed even amongst those who engaged in the sophistry of scholastic<sup>1</sup> learning.

The political parties were the following:

- **Agudas Yisroel**<sup>2</sup> and its divisions *Poalei Agudas Yisroel* and *Agudas Bnos Yisroel*. The leaders of *Agudas Yisroel* were Icek-Dawid [sic Dawid-Icek] Edelist, Icek-Majer Krell and Mendel Fogel<sup>3</sup>. [Those] of *Poalei Emunei*<sup>4</sup> *Yisroel* [were] Henoeh Pradelski, Paltyjel Borzykowski and Lajbel Fogel. The latter died a hero's death in Skarżysko. Prior to being shot, he called out slogans of freedom.
- **Mizrachi**<sup>5</sup> - its leaders were the *Maggid* [Reb Josef-Szymon] Koblenz, Szmul Goldsztajn, Blechsztajn, Finkelsztajn, Icek-Mendel Epsztajn and Joachim [Chaim] Weksler. It had a workers' organisation [named] *Ha'Poel Ha'Mizrachi* [The Eastern Worker]. Its leaders were Bratt, Abram Dancyger and Jankel Berman. In 1922, they established a farming school at ul. Warszawska 27 (plac Kotlickiego). The Mizrachi Sejm Deputy, Herszel Farbsztajn, came to the school's opening. A group of *Ha'Poel Ha'Mizrachi* completed the [Częstochowa] Crafts School as certified carpenters and travelled to the Land of Israel in the years 1920-1922. Leading personalities emerged from amongst them - [Szlojme-Zalman] Shragai<sup>6</sup> is currently leader of *Ha'Poel Ha'Mizrachi* in the *Sochnut* [Jewish Agency] in England and Jankel Leslau is a leading figure in the Land of Israel.

The Zionist organisations existed in all shades. The founder of the Zionist movement in Częstochowa was Nussen [Natan] Gerichter. He took part in the first Zionist congresses. The *Al Ha'Mishmar* [On Guard] ([Izaak] Grünbaum's group) was headed by Dr Bram. The *Et Livnot* [Time to Build] was headed by Dr Mering, Jechiel Gerichter and Abram Gerszonowicz. The youth was represented in *Gordonia*, *Ha'Noar Ha'Tzioni* [The Zionist Youth], *Herzliya* (headed by Gustaw Epsztajn), *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair* [The Young Guard] and *Akiva*, and the students in the *Kadima* [Forwards] union. *Ha'Noar Ha'Tzioni* was led by Dawid Kartuz, Samek Adelberg, Blechsztajn and Apl [?] Horowicz<sup>7</sup>. The latter and his wife, née Fiszpan [sic Fizman], were killed on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1943 in the *akcja* - the annihilation of the intelligentsia. The *Ha'Shomer*

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: Scholasticism is obviously used here as synonymous with critical thought.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: Heb., "Union of Israel"; ultraorthodox political party officially unaffiliated with Zionism. The two divisions mentioned here are "The Workers of Agudas Yisroel" and "The Union of Daughters of Israel", respectively.]

<sup>3</sup> [TN: These three men all appear in the book "Sefer Częstochowa", Vol. I, as "Gerer Chassidim", or followers of the Góra Kalwaria (Ger) Chassidic group.]

<sup>4</sup> [TN: Heb., "Believers"; older name of the same "Aguda" party.]

<sup>5</sup> [TN: Heb., "Eastern"; originally orthodox Zionist political party which eventually gave rise to nowadays' mainstream semi-religious Zionist movement ("settlers").]

<sup>6</sup> [TN: Formerly Fajwlowicz.]

<sup>7</sup> [TN: According to the article "The Zionist Youth in Częstochowa" by Szlojme Oderberg in "Sefer Częstochowa", Vol. I, "Ha'Noar Ha'Tzioni" was run by Szlojme Oderberg, Dawid Kartuz and Jakow Horowicz. However, according to the article "The Revisionists" in the book "Czenstochow" (1958), it was run by the same Oderberg and Kartuz but Horowicz's name is given as Efroim and Blechsztajn also appears, as he does here.]

*Ha'Tzair* organisation was run by the advocate Gitler (who perished along with the intellectuals on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1943), the engineers, brothers Lajbel and Szmul Horowicz (shot in their own factory a few days before the "Small Ghetto" was liquidated), [siblings] Pinchas and Mania Birencwajg, and Lajbel Leslau. The representative of *Akiva* was Fiszpan [sic Fizman]. The women also had a special organisation, WIZO [Women's International Zionist Organisation], run by Mmes. Gerichtter, Weksler, Blechsztajn and Gerszonowicz. The Revisionist Party was led by Niemirowski and Janowski, the Betar [group] by Perec Lasker, Cwi Kantor and Józefowicz (before the War, he completed the flying school in Lod, [Palestine,] with a decoration, as the first Jewish pilot). The "Jewish State" ([Meir] Grossman's group), was directed by Elias Izackowicz, Michał Ruzewicz, Efraim Bratman, and Izrael Tiberg. There were also *Brit Ha'Chayal*, *Brit Kanaim*, *Brit Ha'Tzohar*<sup>8</sup> and a Revisionist women's union - "Rewizjo". The non-partisan women had their own organisations - WIZO and WEREF [?].

Częstochowa, as a partially industrial city with a large number of Jewish enterprises and factories, had an organised workforce. The most important role was played by the Bund, organising the workers into the trade unions. Its representatives were in the *Kehilla* and on the City Council. Its leaders were Raphael Federman and Mojsze Lederman. As a political party, they had the following divisions: the general Bund workers' party, the *Zukunft* [Future] youth organisation, the JAF (*Jidisze Arbeter-Frojen* [Jewish Working Women]) women's organisation and the SKIF (*Socjalistischer Kinder Farband* [Socialist Children's Union]) children's organisation.

The Zionist labour party *Poalei Zion* (ZS) [Workers of Zion (Zionists Socialists)] had various divisions and was headed by Professor Sak<sup>9</sup>, Luzer Płocki, Szyja Stróż, Lajbisz Arysta [sic Jurysta?] and others.

The *Hitachdut* [Unification] organisation was directed by Izrael Dancyger, Mojsze-Ruben Stroz and others. There was also the Left-Wing Poalei Zion party, run by Abram Bram, Dawid Jakubowicz, Gerszon Pręcki, Dawid Kaufman and Lajbisz Tenenbaum.

The Independent Socialist Labour Party, to which [both] Jewish and Polish workers belonged, played a significant role. The founder of this party was the *Częstochower landsmann* [townsman], Dr Josef Kruk. The leaders of this organisation [were] Dawid Szlezinger, Mojsze Lewenhof and others. They conducted cultural activity in both Yiddish and Polish. Their library contained both Yiddish and Polish books.

The Communist Party also had great influence upon Częstochowa's Jewish workforce. They had significant influence within the Commercial Employees Union and, therefore, they were called the "*Handlowcy*"<sup>10</sup>. The Communist Party was illegal in Poland. People found out about their leaders from the political trials. One of the communist activists was Dawid Rychter. He was a writer and contributed to various newspapers. When the War broke out, he moved to the Soviet side, to Białystok, where he published a Yiddish newspaper until the Nazis arrived. The Nazi sword did not pass him over and he fell in the ghetto.

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<sup>8</sup> [TN: *The (Demobilised) Soldier's Alliance, Alliance of Radicals and Alliance of the "Tzohar"* (Heb. acronym of "Revisionists Zionists"), respectively.]

<sup>9</sup> [TN: According to the book "*A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*", this was Josef Sak from Przemyśl, who taught literature in Częstochowa and died in Israel in 1965 at the age of sixty-seven.]

<sup>10</sup> [TN: From the Pol. "*handlowy*", or commercial (employees).]

A remarkable phenomenon was that a certain group of Jewish youths belonged to the PPS' (Polish Workers' [sic Socialist] Party) youth organisation, TUR (Towarzystwo Uniwersytetu Robotniczego [Society of the Workers' University]), led by Mgr.<sup>11</sup> Zorski.

The Jewish community, which before the War numbered 35,000-40,000 souls, was a significant component of Częstochowa's general population. It was represented on the City Council and within the municipal authorities. Councillors included the engineer Orłowski from the Jewish State Party, Drs Bram and Mering of the Zionists, Raphael Federman from the Bund, and [Szmul] Goldszajn and Joachim [Chaim] Weksler from Mizrahi. The craftsmen had were represented on Council by Dr. Gajslar, Szmul Kac and Josef Goldberg.

The *ławnicy*<sup>12</sup> in the municipal authority were Szpiro of the Zionists, Niemirowski of the Revisionists, Towja Fajgenbaum of the craftsmen, and, later, Szpiro and Nirenberg. The *Częstochower* rabbis, Rabbis Rubinsztajn and Kowalski - both from *Mizrahi* - were candidates to the Polish Parliament (Sejm). Truskier of the Zionists was a member of the Polish Senate<sup>13</sup>.

Communal activist and great philanthropist Henryk Markusfeld was the Honorary President of the firefighters' organisation - even though it was a Polish one. He donated a great deal of money to motorise the fire brigade and to buy the most modern machines and tools. The huge, three-story ladder, which he purchased, was inscribed with a shortened form of his name - "Henrykówka". (Henryk Markusfeld) was called "Henrykówka"<sup>14</sup>. He was much beloved by the city's entire population and, for many years, was the Jewish *Kehilla's* Honorary President. The *Kehilla* [building] was adorned with a sculpture of him and, in the Jewish Hospital, his name shone down from a marble plaque as its greatest donor. He also did much for the rest of the important institutions, such as the aged care home, the orphanage, the Crafts School and for the other charitable societies. He was also founder of *Bais Lechem*.

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<sup>11</sup> [TN: Abbreviation of "Magister" - meaning the holder of a "magisterijum" or Master's degree.]

<sup>12</sup> [TN: a non-professional member of an adjudicating panel (court), who provides a communal factor in the administration of justice.]

<sup>13</sup> [TN: the upper house of the Polish national parliament.]

<sup>14</sup> [TN: We have rendered this sentence verbatim as it appears in the original, including the parentheses, but it is most likely misprinted because "Henrykówka", which is female, would probably have been the nickname of the ladder ("drabina" in Polish) and not the individual.]