

Ben-Mordechai

Raphael Federman's Fifty Years of Social Activity (- for his Sixty-Fifth Birthday)

Raphael Federman, the Częstochowa *landsman* well-known by all, has turned sixty-five this year. This is the jubilee of a social activist, which needs to be noted in this current book, *Czenstochov*, together with all the other important *Częstochower landsleit* whose anniversary celebrations we mention in other parts of this book.

Raphael Federman has many great merits - both for the previous book, *Czenstochover Yidn*, and for the current one, *Czenstochov*, which is essentially a sequel and a completion of the first book. It would be no exaggeration for us to say that Raphael Federman has perhaps the **largest share** in these two historical memorial books which are dedicated to the destroyed Jewish city of Częstochowa. It is really only thanks to Raphael Federman's loyal and devoted work - with his constant awakening and rallying of the *landsleit* and friends - that these two important books have been published.

In both books, Raphael Federman is mentioned as a co-editor. And yet, he has been much, much more than just a co-editor. This is known to anyone who was involved in any way in the compilation and the publishing of these two books - in inviting the contributors or, for instance, in writing to fellow *landsleit* in all the corners of the globe, and in similar things. This was more than one man's work, but Raphael Federman carried everything out lovingly [and] quietly at his work-table in the room at the bookshop, during the hours when he was unoccupied. Especially on the free days - on Saturdays and Sundays - when the seventh floor of the *Forverts* building (in which the *Arbeiter Ring's* Educational Committee with all its departments is located) was silent, and all the employees were at home - Raphael Federman would sit, all by himself, in his bookshop and think, plan and work piously on the book *Czenstochover Yidn* and, of late, on the current book, *Czenstochov*.

In Raphael Federman's praise, it needs be said that he truly deserves the greatest acclaim for the fact that, following the publication of the first book, *Czenstochover Yidn*, other Jewish *landsmannschaften* had before them a fine model for how to immortalise their [own] destroyed cities in Poland, Lithuania and other neighbouring lands in Eastern Europe. The content-rich book *Czenstochover Yidn*, one might say, has **demande**d and **awakened** the living heirs of the annihilated martyrs not to forget their "Mothers and Cities in Israel" - the bygone Jewish towns in which generations of Jews lived and created.

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The writer of these lines is aware of the number of articles, memoirs and salutations that have reached the editors in connection with our jubilee celebrant. We have decided to publish these memories separately. In these salutations is expressed the love and veneration for our important *landsman*. He has won them fair and square*! Each of these articles tells a great many things about Raphael Federman, the cultural activist, the respected Bundist leader and fighter, Raphael Federman, the member of the Częstochowa City Council and the Jewish *kehilla* and, generally, about Raphael Federman, beloved in the Yiddish Word - in Yiddish literature.

* [TN: "Kusher" (kosher), in the original.]



Rafael Federman

From these memories, written by the friends of his youth, shines forth before us a young Federman as an important, social activist and idealist, a believer in Socialism and a fighter for Jewish rights. Here, we see him as a youth in the front lines of the fighters against the despotic Tsarist regime, in the years preceding the First World War. While still almost [just] a boy, he is already active in the Jewish Revolutionary Movement. We see him on the various missions - the clandestine ones - on the road from Częstochowa to Warsaw. In those days, Raphael Federman is arrested and is forced to temporarily leave Poland. He holds out in the city of Kraków, which was then under Austrian rule. And once he returns home, he is again engaged in all the Jewish social, political and cultural activities. Federman's youth coincides with the most beautiful years - the "Renaissance" years of modern Yiddish literature. Raphael Federman is active in the *Lira* cultural society, in the library and he wishes to establish a drama society. Here Federman displays his profound love for Yiddish and its creators. He maintains this same love to this day. And it is not by chance that now, on his sixty-fifth birthday, we find him still surrounded by Yiddish books, day in and day out.

Federman had once the opportunity of fighting on two fronts. As a councilman on the Częstochowa City Council, he would appear before the Polish representatives of the municipal government in Polish and would defend Jewish honour with dignity. In the years following the First World War, in liberated and independent Poland, Federman did not spare the antisemites and reactionaries who, at the time, were continuously oppressing and persecuting the Jewish populace with all kinds of decrees and maltreatments. Federman showed great courage in his speeches at the Town Hall and he demanded equal rights for the Jews in Częstochowa. Among his own - within the Jewish borders - Federman once again combated, in no lesser manner, for the wellbeing of the Jewish worker and commoner. Himself a child of the poor Jewish alleys, he grew up under the influence of Jewish Socialism and always fought against reactionism in the Jewish street - Federman helps establish the professional unions, organises the strikes and always sees to it that the Jewish working man's situation should improve.

In the last years, until the onset of the Second World War, we find Federman in Warsaw, in the ranks of the Bund. These are our jubilee celebrant's finest years. And once the great misfortune ensues with the outbreak of the War, a new, sorrowful chapter begins in Federman's life. Federman, however, succeeds in leaving the burning city of Warsaw, together with hundreds of thousands of other Jews. He passes through the seven lairs of hell, as did thousands like him. He saves himself by crossing the Soviet border and experiences, like all the refugees, the entire horror of the Soviet "paradise". Finally, he arrives safely in the United States.

As soon as he arrives, the instant he treads upon the free American soil, he throws himself into the work for his *Częstochower landsleit*. He is unable to rest during the days of destruction. He waits until the end of the War, when the liberated, surviving Jews in the German DP camps begin seeking aid. Federman's office, in which he worked, became **the de facto address** of thousands of Jewish refugees in Germany. He helps, he gathers funds, food packages [and] clothes and he does everything to rescue his countrymen from the DP camps.

In the work for his *landsleit*, Federman does not forget his old love - the creative Yiddish Word - Yiddish literature, the continuation of our spiritual life, here, in free America.

On his sixty-fifth birthday, we send dear Raphael Federman our hearty blessings and we wish him that here, too, like before, he should continue the work which is so dear to him and to all of us.