The Rise of the Jewish Settlement in Częstochowa
1700-1939
(- a contribution to the history of the Jewish settlement in Częstochowa)

The city of Częstochowa was formed through the joining of two parts - the village Częstochowa, behind the Jasna Góra [Monastery] and Old Częstochowa [Starą Częstochową, or Częstochówka], which lies on the Warta River. Both sides developed individually. Old Częstochowa already existed in 1377. In 1502, King Aleksander [Jagiellończyk] granted Częstochowa municipal rights, based on the Magdeburg Laws. Until the second half of the 17th century, Częstochowa continued to belong to the County of Olsztyn. Following the Congress of Vienna (1815), both parts of the county fell under the Tsarist rule. Both parts continued growing territorially and, gradually, neared each other. In 1826, they united, becoming one city. In 1867, Częstochowa became a county town1.

The Beginning of the Jews in Częstochowa

Concerning the rise of Jewish settlement in Częstochowa, much has already been written. This question is handled particularly thoroughly in the book “Czenstochover Yidn”2. But, the oldest data concerning Jews in Częstochowa is given by the Polish Society for Knowledge of the Country3. There, it is mentioned that the Jewish community in Częstochowa was established in 1700. It is also stated there that, in 1765, 51 Jewish families were already in Częstochowa. In either case, the number of people is not given. The Polish writer Julian [Ursyn] Niemcewicz puts forth4 that, in the period of the Swedish wars, i.e. in 1655, the city borrowed 100 thaler from a Jew, for which he later received a house. But Niemcewicz does not say whether the Jew, from whom the loan was taken, settled in the city. That same incident of the loan is also mentioned by the historian Michał Baliński5.

Baliński writes that, for the 100 thaler borrowed, the Jew received a lease on the Town Hall. Additionally, Baliński mentions that, according to the privileges of Częstochowa, Jews did not have the right to live in the city. From his remarks on the privileged case, it emerges that this Jew was, in fact, granted the right to live in the city. If the settling of one [individual in] the city cannot yet be considered the beginning of the Jewish settlement in Częstochowa, we must instead assume as date of the beginning the year 1700, as stated in the aforementioned book “Przewodnik po Częstochowie i Okolicy”, which affirms that there was already a Jewish community then in Częstochowa.

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1 Report on the history of Częstochowa, written by the Częstochowa Municipality for the occupational organs, on 15th December 1942, number 0-1224/1/12, signed by [Stanisław] Rybicki, the mayor then.
4 “Podróże Historyczne po Ziemiach Polskich” [Historical Travels in Poland], pub. In 1958 [sic 1858].
5 “Pięcigrzynka do Jasnej-Góry [w Częstochowie]” [Pilgrimage to Jasna-Góra in Cz.], Warsaw 1846.
The Development of the Settlement

In parallel with the expansion and development of the general population in Częstochowa, the Jewish settlement also grew. In the third and last charter of the Christian Bakers' Guild in Częstochowa, which was authorised by King August III [Sas] and approved by the City Council on 6th October 1760, in clause 11 – which was dedicated to the question of Jewish bakers – it is written:

Due to fact that the Jews have multiplied and constitute a hindrance to the guild, and that they bake on the most important holidays and celebrations, the Guild master wishes to safeguard that they should not enjoy this protection, and the magistracy takes it upon itself to provide assistance.

From this, we may infer that Jewish craftsmen were already then active to such an extent, that they played the role of a competitive force. Of the growth of the Jewish population in that time, [and] of their part in the blossoming of the city, we are made aware by Niemcewicz's writings, in which he mentions that, when he was in Częstochowa in the year 1821, half of the 3,000 inhabitants in the Old City were Jews and that all the houses in the Old Market, except for three, belonged to Jews.

Once its two parts united and became a single city, Częstochowa began to grow more quickly as a commercial and industrial centre. The number of Jewish inhabitants in the city also increased steadily. In all fields, the Jews made very substantial contributions to the city's development.

The first important enterprise which Jews undertook in Częstochowa was a printing press, which the Kohn family brought over from Wieluń in 1869. This printing press soon turned into an important lithographical institution which, at the time, served as an academy for all Poland. From it, skilled professionals in the field of lithography emerged. At this institution, the Kohn family, in partnership with the Oderfeld family, founded a coloured-paper factory. In 1873, the partners Ginsburg and Kohn established a paper factory [named] “Papiernia”. In 1883, Kronenberg founded the textile factory “Częstochowskaia”. In 1884, the partners Goldman, Oderfeld and Openheim founded the “Stradom” twine factory, which initially employed 150 workers. After 1902, when the factory became a shareholder company headed by Dr Berlinerblau and began expanding, it employed some 2,000 workers. In 1888, Seweryn Landau established a celluloid-products factory which initially employed 10 workers and, later, several hundred. In 1896, the partners Ginsburg, Kohn, Grosman, Markusfeld and Najman founded a textile factory [named] “Warta”, which quickly employed about 1,500 labourers. In 1897, Izidor Gajslr founded the glassworks “Paulina” in Wyczepry, near Częstochowa, which employed 750 workers. In 1901, Stanisław Grosman and Henryk Markusfeld founded the “Kapeluszarnia” hat factory, which employed around 450 workers [and], among them, 130 women. Besides these, we should also mention Grosman's large button factory, Wajnberg's comb factory and the Szaja & Rozenstajn cufflinks factory, which was the first cufflinks and jewellery-products factory in Poland.

All this conveys, more or less, an image of how significant the participation of the Jews was in the city's industrial and financial development. The Jews of the surrounding shtetls, who began streaming to Częstochowa once the boundaries of the Jewish area had been designated, also contributed to the city's economic growth.

The Jews held a hefty share of [the] commerce, too.

About the portion that the Jews had in trade, we find in Niemcewicz's travel writings, who mentions that when he was in Częstochowa (1821), the entire grain trade with Śląsk [Silesia] was in Jewish

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6 Wincenty Szatkowski, “Monograph of the Częstochowa industry” [Monografia przemysłu Częstochowskiego].
7 Catalogue of the exhibition in Częstochowa, compiled before the First World War.
* [TN: This paragraph appears twice in the original, as rendered here. The first, which I've included in italics, is clearly a misprint.]
hands [and] that Jews even sold [Catholic] devotional [objects], and that he personally purchased things of this sort from a Jew named Landau.

All this conveys, more or less, an image of how significant the participation of the Jews was in the city’s industrial and financial development. The Jews of the surrounding shtetls, who began streaming to Częstochowa once the boundaries of the Jewish area had been appointed, also contributed to the city’s economic growth.

Professional Unions

This particular issue is thoroughly discussed in the book “Czenstochover Yidn”\(^8\). However, I consider it necessary to add certain supplements pertaining to the professional unions during the period between the Wars.

In the years between the First and Second World Wars, there were many Jewish businesses in Częstochowa which employed a large number of Jewish salesmen and saleswomen, [as well as] large factories and many small ones, which manufactured haberdashery and employed a large number of Jewish workers. Many apprentices were employed in chalupnikes [cottagers working from home] and also in large and small craftsman workshops. Here, it is necessary to comment that the Jewish labourers in the factories and in the craftsmen’s workshops were forced to endure harassment on the part of their Jewish employers, who maintained that the Jewish workers were much too well-informed and that they also incited others to rebel. The salespeople had to endure no fewer vexations from their bosses. In this respect, the professional unions had a great deal of work to do in enlightening the less aware workers.

In the last years before The Second World War, as reported by M. Kusznir, the secretary at the time of the Professional Union, there were about 5,000 organised workers in the unions. Of these, members of the Tailor’s Union alone, which covered tailors, sewers of linen and knitwear workers, numbered more than 3,000; business and office employees – 600; socialist craftsmen – 320; transport (shoulder-carriers and handcarts) – 240; food (bakers, butchers and sausage makers) – 180; the union of the unemployed numbered 120 members (during the [busy] season, their union carried out public municipal works); barber-surgeons – more than 60 and some belonged to several other unions. Besides the regular work which these unions conducted in the Sanacja Poland of the time, in order to protect the workers’ interests, they were also tasked with fighting for the right of Jewish workers to work, even in the factories and enterprises where the owners were Jews. The unions also conducted cultural activities for their members and stamped their seal on the social and cultural life of the entire Jewish settlement in Częstochowa in general.

The unions continued expanding and their activity intensified that much more. Their power and prestige became so substantial, that they became a deciding factor not merely in the framework of Jewish life. Only the union of business and office employees was closed down for some time, in the last years before the Second World War, due to police persecution. At the end of 1937, this union, too, thanks to the combined efforts of the Bund and the Communists, was again revived, and embarked upon intensive activity. From that time on, until the outbreak of the War, the union was located in the building on aleja Wolności 3/5. The writer of these lines was elected as Chairman of the union and as secretary, Wladek Blumenfrucht. The union’s most important actions, before the final years, included the great strike of the merchant clerks (summer of 1938) for a standardised work day and an increase in wages, which was crowned with a victory. This same union also distinguished itself, at the time, with its intensive cultural work among its members.

\(^8\) “Czenstochover Yidn” p.50
Craftsmanship

Craftsmanship is also fully discussed in the book *Czenstochover Yidn*9. But, in my opinion, it would be good to complement all this with certain particulars, which were presented to me by the former craftsmen’s activists Szaje Granek, Josel Goldberg and Szmul Altman. In the years preceding the Second World War, almost all the craftsmen were organised into thirteen guilds, which encompassed the following trades: tailors, hatters, zwittemacher’, rope-makers, upholsterers, cobblers, box-makers, bakers, barbers, joiners, turners, locksmiths, goldsmiths, watchmakers, engravers, butchers, painters and electricians. The largest and most beautiful of the craftsmen’s buildings was the building of the mechanical bakeries, which was built just before the Second World War and which was to have become a bakers’ cooperative. The Retailers’ Union was also a powerful organisation with a large membership, which included hundreds of small traders and marketplace stallholders, as well as some fifty village peddlers.

Culture and Education

Culture and education are widely discussed in the book *Czenstochover Yidn*10. There, the rise, activity and significance are accurately presented of such cultural and educational institutions such as the Gardeners’ School, the Crafts School, the I. L. Peretz primary school and Children’s Home, the Jewish Gymnajzum, evening courses, “Lira”, Jewish libraries [and] Jewish theatre, as well as Jewish newspapers and sports clubs. Yet, all this needs to be supplemented with some important points: the book *Rocznik Częstochowski*11 [“Częstochowa Yearbook”], contains a report by the former Vice-Chairman of the *Dobroczynność* [Charity] Society, Dr Henryk Szpigel. In this report, among other things, it is mentioned that

> Until 1888, about 40-50 needy Jewish children were taught at the community’s expense. Rawinson, the contemporary [Chief] Rabbi, conducted a “cheder” for 125 children in the “Kehilla” building on ul. Garncarska. In 1897, craftsmen’s workshops were set up next to this “cheder”: a locksmiths’ workshop with 30 trainees, a joiners’ workshop with 15 trainees and an upholstery workshop with 6 trainees. In 1900, the “Kehilla” management bought 11 acres of land, where a horticultural farm was set up. The initial number of pupils in the practical course was 14. Evening courses for 50 attendees were also established which were comprised of pupils in the craftsmen’s workshops, of pupils on the farm and from craftsmen in the city.

Of great interest is the information that Szpigel presents subsequently - that a Saturday school was also established for seamstresses, saleswomen and cooks. This Saturday school, Szpigel writes, operated every Saturday from 3:00 in the afternoon to 8:00 in the evening, with an attendance of about 150 girls.

The aforementioned book, *A Guide to Częstochowa and the Surrounding Area*, mentions that, at the start of the 19th century, in Częstochowa, Jewish children had two municipal schools, a Talmud Torah [municipal cheder for the poor] which was attended by 100 children, a crafts school with 80 pupils, a gardening school with 30 pupils, 50 [private] cheders with 4,000 pupils and that there were 4,945 Jewish pupils in the [public] primary and middle schools. These same figures give us a picture of how driven Jewish parents in Częstochowa were in educating and raising their children. Despite all the hardships the Jews then found themselves in to fulfil their drive to become educated, the number of self-educated continued increasing. We find very interesting material on this topic in the “Self-Education Courses” brochures which were published in Częstochowa in 1915-1917. In these

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9 p.61
10 [TN: in the original Yiddish (possibly a misprint); translation as yet unavailable.]
11 Published in 1903.
brochures, it says that, in the years 1915, 1916, and 1917, higher education courses existed in Częstochowa. In 1915, the courses had 547 attendees - 58 with higher education, 312 with middle education, 152 with 4th grade education and 25 with home education. Of these 542 attendees, 235 were Jews, making 73% [sic; 43%]. In 1917, the number of listeners was much smaller - only 204. Of these, however, a full 50% consisted of Jews. As we see, the number of Jewish listeners was larger in percentage. As for the number of Jewish students in the period between the Wars, I was unfortunately unable to find authoritative material. The scant material remaining is from 1939, which was collected in 1940 by B. Stala, formerly in charge of the Częstochowa City Council’s Scholastic and Cultural Report. These reports include most of the Jewish educational institutions existing in 1939 and they present the following:

1) the Z. Wajnsztok Fröbel [19th c. German pedagogue] School, with 49 children (girls 23, boys 26); headmistress: Laja Zelkowicz. This Fröbel school was in a building at the 2nd Aleja 20;
2) a Fröbel school directed by Miriam Przajzerowicz-Glewicka, at ul. Berka Joselewicza 13, with 20 children (7 boys and 13 girls);
3) a Fröbel school directed by Lota Faktor on Aleja 8, with 12 children (6 boys and 6 girls);
4) the Dobroczywność” Society’s preschool at ul. Przemsłowa 6, headed by Róża Gelbard (“Ochronka”), with 220 children (60 boys and 160 girls).
5) the I. L. Peretz Children’s Home at ul. Krótka 22, under directorship of Sara Ginsburg, with 102 children (38 boys and 64 girls).
6) a Fröbel school headed by Bela Lipszyc, at aleja Wolności 11, with 25 children (11 boys and 14 girls).

To this should be added the groups of preschool-age children, which were managed privately (not legalised) by a qualified body [of people] and which were not included in the School Inspector’s lists. The summer-groups for children of preschool-age, which took place in various orchards in the open air, are also not listed.

**Primary Schools:**
1) School #12 for Jewish children at ul. Przemsłowa 10/14. This school had 14 classes and was attended by 808 children (245 boys and 563 girls);
2) School #15, with 12 classes, at ul. [Rynek Gabriela] Narutowicza 19/23, with 694 pupils (468 boys and 226 girls);
3) a four-grade school at the Axer Gymnazjum at ul. Focha 26, with 33 pupils (only boys);
4) a six-grade school at the Jewish Gymnazjum at ul. Jasnogórska 8/10 with 205 pupils (90 boys and 115 girls);
5) a seven-grade school named after Z. Wajnsztok, at Aleja 20, with 122 pupils (49 boys, 73 girls);
6) Grylak’s four-grade school at ul. Berka Joselewicza 9, with 70 pupils (only boys);
7) D. Wajnberg’s five-grade school at Aleja 8, with 50 pupils (only boys);
8) a seven-grade Girl’s School at ul. Berka Joselewicza 15, with 125 pupils.

**Middle Schools:**
1) a private lyceum (the Jewish Gymnazjum) at ul. Jasnogórska 8/10, of nine classes, with 300 pupils (135 boys and 165 girls);
2) the Axer Gymnazjum at ul. Focha 24, of eight classes, with 200 pupils (120 boys and 80 girls).

These were the numbers, according to the reports shown above. Besides these, many children attended the **Machzikei Hadas cheder**, secular studies were administered [privately] as well and many children studied with corner [i.e. private] **melamdim**.
Statistics on supplementary courses are also presented in the aforementioned reports: at ul. Garncarska 8, in the Crafts School building, there was a supplementary course for apprentices under the direction of engineer Stanisław Przysuski. The course had six classes with 210 pupils (only men). At ul. Przemysłowa 10, there was a supplementary course for women, which was attended by 102 pupils. The director of this course was the teacher Lila Awner.

The Crafts School, under directorship of Stanisław Przysuski, was attended by 120 pupils (only men). A certain number of pupils also attended Ludwik Wawrzynowicz’s [composer] private conservatory and the state school for Fröbelian schoolmistresses, to which only a small number of Jews were admitted.

The numbers cited above by no means encompass all the children and youth who received education and an upbringing and also do not include the youth studying in the university-cities in Poland and abroad.

Speaking of culture and education, we must also mention the activities of Lira. Every Częstochowa Jew, as well as anyone else who has become familiar with the book Czenstochover Yidn, is aware of Lira’s great importance within Częstochowa’s Jewish cultural life - especially after Jewish labour leaders R. Federman, Chrobołowski and Aron Perec, and the progressive Jewish cultural activists in general, fought the assimilationist tendencies which had dominated this society. Nevertheless, it is necessary to add a few facts, as reported by Dr Aron Perec (former chairman of Lira), the progressive cultural activists first began their offensive against the assimilationist directorship of Lira at the end of 1911, after the Jewish Literary Society was closed down by the Tsarist government. The members of the Society that had been closed down joined Lira and gradually pushed the assimilationist management leaders out. Only Henryk Markusfeld remained, who maintained that the [assimilationist] tendencies that had begun prevailing in Lira were not to his liking. Henceforth, he wished to collaborate with this Society and to support it financially, because wherever he sees fine, intensive cultural activity being conducted, he, too, wishes to be. Among the members of Lira, Aron Perec reports that there were also some who were not interested at all in the institution’s activities. Here, they had the opportunity to be close to Markusfeld, thanks to which they could receive credit at the Jewish bank with greater ease.

The permits to arrange undertakings, Aron Perec further reports, were obtained in the following manner - every year, in January, the management of Lira was required to present a plan of activities for the entire year. The plan was dispatched to Gubernator [Governor] [Michaïl]Jaczewski, in Piotrków. Permission was granted to arrange 12 lectures and 48 concerts during the course of the year. Lira, however, mostly arranged literary undertakings. The senior police official, Michalyuk, who supervised Lira’s activities in the Gubernator’s name, used to take two roubles for every event, to be present at every lecture and concert. Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, Nomberg, Wajsenberg, Hillel Cajtlin and other Jewish writers used to come to such “concerts”. The newspapers and posters would announce that a concert would be taking place, in which I.L. Peretz, Sholem Aleichem or another writer would perform a solo dance. These events took place in [Lira’s] own locale, which held 225 seats. It was situated in Gitler’s building, on the corner of the First Aleja.

Regarding I. L. Peretz’s appearances, Aron Perec reports [some] characteristic particulars: I. L. Peretz used to recite one of his stories by heart. During one of these recitals, The Case Against the Wind, several Lira members took down what Peretz had said, in shorthand. A week later, people were already reading the same in a Warsaw Jewish newspaper, word-by-word as it had been taken down during the lecture in Częstochowa. In a second characteristic instance, I.L. Peretz was very pleased with his appearances in Częstochowa and gladly shared his impressions with the active cultural figures and especially with his relatives, Aron and Chana Peretz. He always used to end his letters to
them with the request, *Burn this letter of mine – I am not required to create an easy livelihood for my biographers.*

The fine cultural activities of the *Lira* Society in Częstochowa ended with the outbreak of the First World War. After the First World War, a new chapter of social and cultural Jewish life began in Częstochowa.

The growth of cultural and social life, following the First World War, was very closely connected to the activities of the political parties, which began to penetrate and influence Jewish life in our hometown of Częstochowa. Furthermore, in the field of modern education, the Jewish secular I. L. Peretz School now played an important role, producing pupils with a rich political and social agenda, which filled out and strengthened the workers’ ranks and the leftist political parties.

**Representation of the Jewish Kehilla**

The representation on the Jewish *kehilla* in Częstochowa is thoroughly discussed by Dr. J. Szacki. From Dr Henryk Szpigiel, we learn that the management of the community, at that time, consisted of H. Ginsberg, M. Henig and M. Markusfeld. As Dr Aron Perec reports, the same *kehilla* representatives were elected several times by a majority of Jews in the city, supported by both poor Jews, who came to them after [receiving] support (they were philanthropists) and by retailers and merchants, who became their supporters by receiving interest-free loans.

From the time that the new reforms of *kehilla* management were implemented in Poland until 1936, the majority of the *kehilla* management was made up of *Aguda* leaders and Zionists. Szmul Goldsztein, the Częstochowa Mizrachi activist, was Chairman during a succession of years. From 1936 until the outbreak of the Second World War, the retailers and craftsmen attained the greatest influence inside the *kehilla* management and they were also supported by a certain portion of the Jewish workers. The respected public figure of the newly established Jewish Democratic Party, Jakub Rozenberg, became Chairman. He showed great interest in the Jewish social and cultural life of the city’s Jewish population, in Jewish poverty and even in the cultural needs of the Jewish workforce.

Jakub Rozenberg was the last *kehilla* leader of the large Częstochowa Jewish settlement and was the only Jewish official representative who also personally felt the heavy hand of the *Sanacja* Minister [Felician] Sławoj Składkowski, who had Rozenberg imprisoned, because the wall surrounding the Jewish cemetery was not “in keeping” with Składkowski’s regulations concerning “urbanisation”.

**Jews in the Shtetls Around Częstochowa**

As for the Jews in the towns around Częstochowa, certain facts should be mentioned. In 1914, a brochure was published in Wrocław by a certain priest, Stanisław Muznerowski, with information about Krzepice, supported by archival documents. There, among other things, it is stated that the oldest knowledge of Jews in Krzepice dates back to 1633. How many Jews then lived in Krzepice itself is unknown, because the Jews of Krzepice were included within the Jews of Działoszyn and, together, they numbered 1,956 souls. Subsequently, it is mentioned there that, in 1720, three Jewish families lived in Kuźniczka (a suburb of Krzepice). This brochure also mentions that, in 1765, thirty Jews lived in Kuźniczka and that they had already built their own study-hall, which had previously been forbidden and for which they had eventually received permission from Archbishop Adam [Ignacy] Komorowski. Further on, Muznerowski reports that, in 1810, there were 270 Jews in Krzepice; in 1847, 1,045 Jews; in 1,860, 1069 Jews and, in 1914, an estimated 2,500 Jews. In the

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12 *Czenstochover Yidn,* p.23.
13 *Krzepice w Przeszłości* [Krzepice in the Past, by Stanislaw Muznerowski, pub. 1914.]
14 p.88
same brochure it is also mentioned that, on 25th June 1711 and 10th December 1715, the priest Wojtek Rupiński lent the management of the study-hall in Koniecpol (a town near Częstochowa) 13,000 złoty at 10% interest, from the capital accumulated by the Krzepice cloister. In 1716, Rupiński lent the management of the study-hall in Działoszyn 5,000 złoty, under similar conditions.

In 1721, he again lent 500 tìnfe (a silver coin in the time of Jan [II] Kazimierz [Waza]) and, five years later, on 20th August, he lent a further 2,700 złoty to the Jews of Działoszyn. Incidentally, it is also mentioned there that the Jews did not meet the terms of repaying the loan and were threatened with excommunication (klątwa [a curse]).

Based on this information, it emerges that, in certain towns around Częstochowa, there were already Jewish settlements before there was any trace of a Jewish community in Częstochowa itself and that their financial situation was a difficult one, as they were forced to resort to borrowing money, which they were unable repay.

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From everything that has been published until now about the Jewish settlement in Częstochowa, and from the short contribution that I have presented here now, one does not yet glean a full picture of the history of the Częstochowa Jewish settlement. Yet, from this, one may still perceive what an honoured member the Częstochowa community was in the glorious Jewish settlement of Poland and how very significant Jewish Częstochowa was within the city itself.

This throbbing, colourful life of the populous Jewish community in Częstochowa was, however, disrupted the moment the Second World-Slaughter broke out and Hitler’s legions marched into the city.

The great disaster had begun, which ended in 1942 – with the catastrophe on the entire Jewish settlement in Częstochowa, which was severed by Hitler’s murderers, may their name be obliterated!

Warsaw, February 1956

[TN: In the original, the footnotes for this article are printed here, as a bibliography.]
Koszary "Zawada" [The Zawada Barracks]  

The New Market