

Raphael Federman

From My Life¹

My environment, my hometown Częstochowa, has been destroyed in a gruesome manner by the Nazi beasts. All my closest family members and hundreds of friends and comrades, together with whom I lived and fought for a better and more humane world, did not even attain a tomb on this earth. May these memories of mine, therefore, be a *Kaddish* for them.

My childhood

I never knew my grandfathers at all. I only knew my maternal grandmother, Rywka. Her maiden name was Rudnik. For many years, she lived together with my parents and helped in the work for a livelihood.



Raphael Federman



My mother Gitla

My father Dawid was an employee in Kruk's liquor warehouse, the father of the renowned, socialist activist, Dr Józef Kruk. The liquor warehouse was in Kruk's own house on ul. Tylina (later Strażacka). My father dressed in long [Chassidic] garb, but already wore a stiff collar and trimmed his beard². He prayed at the *Rozprzer*³ *Shtiebel*, and travelled to the *Rozprzer Rebbe* to seek his advice when he found himself in a critical situation. My mother Gitla ran a tavern on ul. Garncarska, in the German Haller's building.

I was born in the building where the tavern was situated. The correct birth dates of all the children, even marking the exact hour, were listed in some Jewish religious book. That little book no longer exists and I take my date of birth from my official Russian passport and from my subsequent Polish one - 24th March 1892. As it turns out, I was incorrectly registered. My father later mentioned that he had done this because of my older brother Zalman⁴, for whom he was already thinking that he should not be too far removed in years from myself, so as to be granted certain concessions when he was called up for military service.

When the law forbidding Jews to run taverns with liquor was passed, we moved to the other end of ul. Garncarska, near the Old Market [Stary Rynek], next to the Old Synagogue and Study-Hall, in the Bentkowska's⁵ building. As a consequence of the monopoly on liquor that had been implemented, my father lost his long-standing position with Kruk. But, to make amends, Kruk exerted his influence and he was issued a licence to open a beer tavern (without [hard] liquor). This same tavern was actually located in Bentkowska's building.

¹ [TN: Most of this article is reproduced almost verbatim and also elaborated in the author's 1957 book, "On the Shores of the Warta and East River", which is the source of many of the elucidations that we have added in brackets.]

² [TN: A stiff collar would have been considered vain and modern by Chassidim, while trimming one's beard is a Kabbalistic prohibition which is strictly observed by all Chassidim.]

³ [TN: The Rozprza Chassidic group was part of the Przedbórz Chassidic dynasty.]

⁴ [TN: According to the official records in the JRI-Poland database, **Zalma** was born in 1890 and **Rafail** in 1896 - although this could be a different Rafail, as the date is much too late, because the author writes on p.376 that he was nine years old during the pogrom of 1902. The other siblings mentioned below appear there as follows: **Hinda** was born in 1883, **Szaja** in 1884, **Frajdl** in 1886, and **Cirla** and **Rajzla** both in 1898 (not twins).]

⁵ [TN: That is to say, "the Bentkowski woman's" building.]

It was a difficult struggle to make a living. Mother, my sisters - Hinda, the eldest, and the younger one, Frajdla - and even Granny Rywka, worked hard to squeeze out a livelihood for the whole household. My [eldest] brother Szaja studied at the Study-Hall, and my brother Zalman was already going to school and preparing to enter [Aleksander] Redko's *progimnazjum* [middle school]. I, the youngest son, attended the *cheder* of "Jechiel Shh..." (that is what he was called), later that of Majer Gliksman on ul. Warszawska, in Goldman's building, and, much later, that of Fajwel-Awigdor, who worshipped at the same *shtiebel* as my father. In that *cheder*, which consisted of just a few pupils, I became friends with Lajzer Berkowicz - with whom my friendship lasted until the most mature years of our youth. The *cheder* was on ul. Nadrzeczna, not far from the *Kastens* [Crates⁶] by the Warta. In the winter, I would go to *cheder* in the morning while it was still dark, holding a burning lantern.

As a child, I was extremely obedient and pious. When my mother had no time to make the *bruche*⁷ with me, I ran round to our neighbour Reb Isumor Joskowicz - a Jew with a broad beard and large spectacles on his nose, who looked like a rabbi - and he made the *bruches* along with me. He made the blessings together with me. Had he not done so, I should not have tasted a thing. He was very fond of me and had great influence upon me.

I went with my father to pray at the Rozprzer *shtiebel* and, more than once, tagged along on a journey to the *Rebbe* in Rozprza.

The people from the *shtiebel*, who remain in my memory, are those who led the prayers on holidays - Jankiel Kiełczygłowski, Reb Icze-Majer Frank (my friend Szmul Frank's father) and [Reb] Mojsze-Szabse, the long-standing *gabay*⁸, with whom the *Rebbe* stayed when he came to Częstochowa. The one who has remained most intensely in my memory is Reb Icze-Majer Frank - a tall Jew, always with a pipe in his mouth. He traded in furs and was the leader of the prayer services at the *shtiebel*, which had been set up inside his own building. He headed the *Mysef*⁹ service and blew the *Shoifer* himself. His sons Josef and Szmul were his supporting singers.

I recall one instance when his eldest son - who had a fine, long face and curled *payes* [sidelocks], and was at the time already a fully-grown lad - disobeyed him in something and received [from him] such a blow, that one of his teeth fell out¹⁰. From then onwards, I became very frightened of Reb Icze-Majer. Reb Jankel [Kiełczygłowski] was a Jew of ample build, and a merry, singing and good-natured one. I remember him best at his *Simchas Torah* dances - his enthusiasm swept me along. As a boy, I, too, was famed for dancing a Cossack [dance] on *Simchas Torah*. Year in and year out, the finale of the Chassidic dancing at the *shtiebel* was - "*Fulcze*¹¹ (that was their term of endearment for me) *is going to dance a Cossack!*"

As a result of my dancing prowess, all the boys in the *shtiebel* became my friends - and even Szmul Frank, despite being more of a *lamdan*¹² than myself, bonded with me. Another reason for my popularity was perhaps the fact that the barrels of beer for all the *Melave Malkes* [at the *shtiebel*]

⁶ [TN: As explained in the introduction to *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. I, the "*Kastens*" were "the crates put in this location by the fishermen and in which they kept the fish they caught in the river Warta.]"

⁷ [TN: Heb., "blessing" (ברכה); brief prayer made before ingesting any food or drink, akin to Christian "grace", without which Halacha forbids even tasting the food. When a child is still too young to say the blessing by himself, he is encouraged to seek out an older individual to say it with him before tasting the food or drink.]

⁸ [TN: Rabbi's attendant and/or synagogue curator.]

⁹ [TN: Pronounced "*Musaf*" in Israeli/Sephardic Hebrew, meaning "additional"; the second part of morning prayer service, which is only "added" on Shabbes or holidays. In this case, the ref. is obviously to Rosh Hashune, as blowing the *Shoifer* (or "*Shofar*", viz. ritual horn) is mentioned in conjunction.]

¹⁰ [TN: This same story - although not verbatim - and many other details regarding the Frank family may be found in the book "*Czenstochow*" (1958), in the article "*Szmul Frank and His Family*" (pp.147-151), also by R. Federman.]

¹¹ [TN: The Heb. name Raphael is pronounced "*Refuel*" by Polish Jews, thus the nickname "*Fulcze*".]

¹² [TN: Heb., lit. "studier"; term used in Yiddish in ref. to one who is well-versed in rabbinical sources, even if not an actual scholar.]

were bought from us, and we more than once hauled the barrels of beer together from the tavern to the *shtiebel*.

There were two other little sisters after myself - Cirla and Rajzla. I do not exactly remember their birth. I only have a dim recollection of my mother laying in convalescence with the youngest, Rajzla. But what I do remember very well is when Rajzla, a gloriously beautiful little girl four or five years of age, suddenly contracted scarlet fever and soon afterwards died. This was a great misfortune at home. Mother and father were not allowed to attend the funeral¹³. I remember how, for long years, father, and especially mother, would not lay down to sleep before having thoroughly wept over the great tragedy. I remember how I would go to the Old Cemetery and gaze for hours on end at the little tombstone on which [the words] "Here lies Rajzla Federman" and the dates of her birth and death were inscribed. As a result, I became even more attached to my youngest sister, Cirla.

Our financial situation must have been far from brilliant. Despite owning a tavern, even a little herring was quite a lucky find for us. Mother would only give us the leftover head or tail of the herring. We had to eat buns without butter. We were constantly in great fear of the *smoczykes*¹⁴ (*revisoren*). In our tavern, we also sold [hard] liquor in a clandestine manner. My mother or older sister would carry the bottle of liquor under their aprons, and we only sold it to Jews or to Christians whom we knew very well. More than once, the *smoczykes* sniffed the glasses to determine whether liquor had been served in them. Once caught, it took a considerable *łapówka* (bribe) for the "transgression" to be wiped clean.

With the constant fright, my father grew weary of this business and he employed all means to find a new, more respectable source of income.

Father Wins the Grand Prize

Early one winter morning, when I arrived in *cheder*, my *Rebbe*, [Reb] Fajwel-Awigdor, greeted me with an expansive "*Git morgen!*" [Good morning¹⁵], and gave me a *mazel tov*. I did not understand what this meant, and I thought the *Rebbe* was making fun of me - but the *Rebbe* and the *Rebbetzin* announced to me, in a serious mien, that my father had won the grand prize in the lottery. I did not wish to believe it, but they assured me that it was true - because the cobbler, who lived in the cellar of the same building, had also won with that same ticket, which had been shared among a group of neighbours.

I got up immediately and, at full speed, raced home to deliver the good news to my parents. Upon coming home, I found mother fixing [the fire in] the cooker in the kitchen, and father preparing to go down to the tavern (we lived above the tavern, on the first storey). Father heard me out and said the following words to me, "Go, my son, back to *cheder*. Were it true, that I won the grand prize in the lottery, they would already have let me know about it, and besides - I do not have any ticket. I play for half a rouble or something on Szyja-Lajzer's ticket. He came to see me last night and said nothing about that. I'm sure that we only won the *stawka* (stake) [viz. investment] back - and people rush to say 'the grand prize!'"

Woefully, I returned to the *cheder*, with a heart embittered towards the *Rebbe* for having deceived me. But the *Rebbe*, once more, assured me that he had not been making a joke and that people knew

¹³ [TN: Although very rare, there are precedents in Judaism of parents not being allowed to attend their children's funerals due to excessive grief.]

¹⁴ [TN: "Smoczek" was the nickname given in Poland to a Russian governmental official in charge of investigating businesses, who was officially called "nadsmotrszczyk" (надсмотрщик). The German/Polish word used to translate it, "revisor" or "rewizor", means "auditor/investigator".]

¹⁵ [TN: In those times, the social consensus was that the pupil greeted the teacher, and not vice-versa.]

better. If they said so, then it must be true. He even suspected that perhaps my father did not wish to admit that he had won the grand prize, so as not to tear people's eyes out [with envy].

After a few hours of study, I went back home with my friend Lajzer Berkowicz to catch something to eat. As I neared the house, I noticed that the tavern was closed. I understood that something had happened, and what came to mind was that what they had said was probably true - that father had won the grand prize.

At home, I found mother teary-eyed and father busy, as if he was preparing for something. To my inquiry as to whether the news which I had brought in the morning was true, mother's weeping became louder and Father came up to me and with moist, teary eyes, embraced me and gave me a kiss on the head, saying, "It's true, Fulcze, you were the first to deliver the happy news!". Whereupon I, too, broke out in a high wailing and, furthermore, expressed my chagrin at not having been believed. "I knew from the start that the Rebbe would not fool me!", I cried out.

That was the only kiss I recall ever having received from my father, even though he was very fond of me and always delighted in me when I danced the "Cossack" on *Simchas Torah* at the *shtiebel*.

That day, I already did not return to *cheder*. I only raced back to tell the *Rebbe* that it was true – that we were partners in the grand prize and that father had an entire rouble's stake in the ticket. Once more, the *Rebbe* wished me *mazel tov*, and told me to bring *lekach* [honey cake] and liquor to *cheder* on the following day.

Our house was seething like a boiler. People came, murmured secretively and talked out loud, wished my father *mazel tov*, and negotiations began to be conducted regarding the size of my father's share in the prize. It took quite a few days before an agreement was reached as to how much our share came to. All that I remember is that my father took me along with him to the negotiations and calculated the sums together with me. Father's share came to over 3,000 roubles, but they did not wish to give him more than 2,800 roubles. I just remember that, at that "meeting", I gave a "speech" (my first one), proving, with my calculations, that we were entitled to a much larger sum and I protested against this wrong (my first protest against wrongs) that they wished to perpetrate upon my father. My words helped, because another 100 roubles were paid to us. Afterwards, Szyja-Lajzer told my father that he was only giving the hundred roubles on my account, and requested that the other partners should not become aware of it.

[The lives of] dozens of Jews in town were set upright by the grand prize. All of them were partners in that same ticket. That was the largest ever prize of the Braunschweig [Brunswick] Lottery to be received in Częstochowa. I even remember the ticket's number - 52935.

The prize brought joy and great hope to our home. Father paid debts and was thinking about putting away a dowry and making a match for my eldest sister Hinda, and of improving his livelihood.

The custom in our household regarding the children's education also changed a little. My elder brother Zalman, who had hitherto studied at Złotnik's, made it to Redko's *progimnazjum* and, once more, I looked to my friend Lajzer Berkowicz, and joined the народная училище (public school) directed by the longstanding teacher, Leder.

During the few weeks that I attended this school - in the *wstępne* (preliminary class) – I had to endure many torments from my friends at the *shtiebel*. When I came with my father on *Shabbes* to the prayer service, they remonstrated with me to the effect that I had become a "Goy" [Gentile]. I took my short

coat and cap with the shiny visor¹⁶ back off and again donned my long caftan and, once more, began to study at Fajwel-Awigdor's with great diligence. Every *Shabbes* morning, I would study a page of the Talmud and read through the weekly Torah section¹⁷, and my parents were delighted and took pride in me, saying that here a young prodigy was growing up.

The Pogrom

The pogrom of 1902 in our city was a shock for my childish soul. I was then about nine years old. To this day, that fearsome image hovers before my eyes - one evening, all the shops were shuttered and Jewish windowpanes were smashed. All the neighbours gathered in our house and the landlady of the building, Bentkowska, who was our friend, calmed everybody down. Suddenly, a large stone hit the window of our house and shattered the glass into little pieces. We began to huddle by the walls. The landlady lit candles in the windows and put out crucifixes out. The landlord, Bentkowska's husband, every time, ran out onto the street and brought back news from there. But I had the impression that he himself was helping in the pogrom and, from time to time, was coming to reassure us, as it were. A few hours later, on the other corner in front of our house, at the shop in the Szmulewicz-Hasenfeld coffee roasters' building, a band of *shkutzim*¹⁸ appeared and looted the shop and set fire to it. We could see a red glow in our house through the window, and our wails intensified.

In the middle of the night, we heard several shots. It became calmer in town. Landlord Bentkowski came up running breathlessly, and told us to sit calmly. The "*Moskale*¹⁹" were shooting, there were wounded in the street.

Several days later, there was once again talk of a pogrom in town. My fear was so great, that I pleaded with my parents to be sent away somewhere. I took my youngest sister Cirla and travelled off to Piotrków, to my auntie Hinda Staszewska, my mother's sister. After a few days in Piotrków, my little sister contracted scarlet fever and ran a very high temperature. I felt guilty for having taken her away from home. Father and mother rushed to Piotrków and wished to send me home, so that I should not become infected. But I refused to leave my sick little sister's bedside under any circumstance, and I only journeyed to Częstochowa once she could already get out of bed.

As a child, my little sister Cirla (later called Cesia) attended the school of Wolf-Jankel Szacher - a tall, corpulent Jew with a long, broad, finely-groomed beard. My mother, too, had once studied with this same teacher.

The Fire in Landau's Factory

The giant fire in Landau's celluloid factory [in the summer of 1905] made a huge impression in our city. Five or six girls were burnt there²⁰ - some of whom were from ul. Garncarska, where we lived. It was actually from there that the funeral processions, in which thousands of people took part, were arranged [to begin]. Speakers stood on the shoulders of those around them. I lapped up every word. Secretly, without my parents' knowledge, I went along with the thousands-strong multitude to the cemetery, and was present during the burial.

¹⁶ [TN: This was the public-school uniform, as mentioned on the following page.]

¹⁷ [TN: The custom among religious Jews is to read, during the course of each week, the Torah section that is to be read at the synagogue during the Saturday morning prayer service; each verse is read twice in the original Hebrew and once in the Aramaic translation by Onkelos.]

¹⁸ [TN: Heb., lit. "loathsome creatures"; the term "*sheigetz*" (pl. "*shkutzim*"), which is used biblically in ref. to insects prohibited by the dietary laws, is a derogatory appellation for a particularly depraved individual, usually (though not exclusively) a Gentile.]

¹⁹ [TN: Muscovites, viz. the Russian soldiers.]

²⁰ [TN: According to the article "*The General Jewish Labour Bund*" (above, p.124), five female workers and two male ones were burnt to death in this fire.]

To this day, the fiery, yellow-haired young man with the elongated face still stands living before me, and his words in Lithuanian Yiddish are still ringing in my ears. This was Aron *Częstochower* (*Der Gejler*²¹ Aron), nowadays Dr Aron Singalowsky, General Secretary of ORT. His words reached both my soul and my mind.

I did not go back to *cheder* anymore. From my brother Zalman, who attended the *progimnazjum*, I gobbled up a bit of Russian and arithmetic, and I tried to get back into Leder's public school. I entered Year Two. My teachers were Leder and Awner.

I Make Demands

My schoolmates, Josef Zajdman and Lajzer Genendelman, lived in the building at ul. Dojazd 30, not far from Herc's [?] barracks. Our favourite game at school was playing soldiers. We drew almost all the school's classes into this game. We waged wars and bestowed awards upon the participants. Each one was given a book costing between one and five kopeks. Inside these books was an inscription to the effect that it had been awarded to so-and-so for his fine exploits in battle, signed by General Josef Zajdman and Colonel Raphael Federman. Zajdman was the practitioner, being familiar with military drills, while I was the theoretician.

We talked it through with [our schoolmates], all the pupils in the second division of the abovementioned school, [and decided] that the black caps with the shiny visors, that we wore, were too plain in comparison with the caps worn by the *gymnazjum* students. The latter sported multi-coloured ribbons and stars on the front of their caps. Therefore, we submitted a petition to the School Inspector, requesting that the pupils of the primary school also be given other uniforms and caps.

Following lengthy investigations, and after a personal visit from the School Inspector to our school, the pupils' request was fulfilled and, a few weeks later, all of us were already parading on a "*tabelny dien*²²" or a "*galówka*²³" in dark-blue tricot caps with green trimmings. Later, this style of cap also spread to the primary schools in the other cities.

I completed Year Two with a distinction. In Year Three, we already demanded greater things - and I was always the organiser. Our first demand was that Polish and German be taught at the school. In order to attain this, I, as the "*dyżurny*" [class monitor], registered all the pupils as having committed an offense, and I put down my own name also. When the teacher entered the classroom and saw, on the board, my report regarding the transgressions of the pupils, he punished us by making all of us stay in class after the lesson.

We were pleased with that, because we now had the opportunity to come forth with our demands. Our primary intent was Polish - the language of the land, which the Russians suppressed. We put German out as a decoy, substantiating this with the motive that we were living not far from the German border, and thus needed to know the language of our neighbouring country.

The schoolmaster understood that this was an organised "rebellion" on part of the pupils, and that there was a political lining to this demand. This was during the period when students' strikes were taking place in the universities. The teacher punished and admonished us over the course of two days. He reminded us that we were receiving our education completely for free and that we were the

²¹ [TN: "The Yellow", viz. the blond.]

²² [TN: Rus., lit. "table day" (табельный день), meaning an official holiday which appears in a state-issued table.]

²³ [TN: Pol., "celebration", from the word "gala". According to "Sefer Zgierz", p.275, "galówka" is what the Russian Tsar's birthday was called at the time. In Polish sources, this word also appears in ref. to the anniversary of the Tsar's coronation.]

children of poor people - and should we not calm down and relinquish our demands, the school would be shut down.

He also sent for the parents of the children and informed them of it. The meeting was a disaster. Several pupils broke out in a paroxysm of tears and the whole class renounced their demands.

After the failed strike at the school, I did not show myself there again. But I did come for the exams, and I actually completed the school with an award, in the form of some red book in Russian. I justified my not coming to school for several months by saying that my father had fallen ill and that I had been needed to help at home.

I Speak With the Governor

My father had been suffering from illnesses for a prolonged period now, and I was already helping us earn our living at the soda water factory, which my father was running at the time.

Opening a soda factory necessitated a special permit from the Governor in Piotrków. My father needed to present the best testimonies of [his] integrity, and he had all sorts of denunciations on part of the existing soda manufacturers with which to contend. It was necessary to grease [the palms of] the highest local police officials - or to "poison" them, as the Jews called it - for all these accusations to be waived. The police also kept my father constantly informed as to how the matter stood with the higher authorities. My father spent a fortune to be granted the permit for this enterprise, upon which he had built his whole future. He was rejected several times, which caused him great grief. This was, in fact, the source of his ill health.

The last hope to be granted the permit was bound up with me. I was sent off to my aunt in Piotrków, with whom I personally went to the Governor and requested an audience. With a "*prosheniye*" [прошение] (petition) in my hand, I stood before the Governor and pleaded with him to acquiesce to give us a licence for the soda water factory. I told him, in Russian, that the reason I had come was because my father was ill. When my aunt whispered to me that I should kiss the Governor's hand, I burst out weeping before his very eyes. The Governor gave me a pat on the head and said, "Within three days you will receive an answer - all will be well!"

As I was leaving the Governor with my aunt, she said to me, "My impression is that you've succeeded. As for the rest - may God grant His aid." And indeed, three days later - it was on a Saturday morning - the *prystav*²⁴ of our street called my father through the window and told him the good news - that the permit for his soda water factory had arrived. My father went off to the prayer service with a face beaming with joy, and in the conviction that all this had been on account of my own good luck.

We set up the soda factory in the same courtyard where we had had the beer tavern - in Bentkowska's building. With a handcart, we distributed the syphons of soda amongst the shops in the nearby streets. Instead of going to school, I helped my father. With great interest, I learned how to make the gas. One needed to be extremely careful in one's work - if the gas was not made just right, the vat could explode.

I became trained in this trade, and was already relied upon more than once. From time to time, I also helped push the cart with the syphons of water and collected the bills.

Some time later, a law was passed to the effect that soda factories could not be situated within any inhabited building. Our factory was relocated to a neighbouring building owned by Jankiel

²⁴ [TN: Rus., "bailiff/marshal" (ПРИСТАВ).]

Dawidowicz, who had built a small house with a few rooms especially for the factory, as specified. Jakow-Ber Silver's "*chaynaya*" [чайная] (tea-room), where the Bundists would gather, was in the same building.

I Join the Movement

In my free time, after work, I read a great deal. I read in Russian, Polish and Yiddish. When the Russo-Japanese War started, I devoured the papers with the news. Now and again, I began to bring home the thin booklets printed on Bible paper²⁵, which I received from my *cheder*-mate, Lajzer Berkowicz.

I started frequenting the "Bourse" [labour exchange], which was on ul. Ogrodowa, from the end of the New Market to the *Kapelusznia*. The agitators at the Bourse were "Mordche Kuperszytk" (Dylewski²⁶, a shoemaking labourer with long hair and fine, intelligent features), "Ira" (Dora Warszawska), Abram Lemanski, Dzialowski, Abram Kawa, Jarkowizna (a shoe-stitching worker), "Doctor" Icze Rzonsinski and others. This was the bourse of the Jewish faction of the SDKPiL [Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania] (later Communists), the so-called "Grupa Żargonowa" [Jargon Group]. I was admitted to the organisation and became an active member there. The organisation was divided into "*dzielnice*" (quarters²⁷). There was also a Jewish *dzielnica*, to which in fact I belonged. Each *dzielnica* had its own committee. From time to time, conferences of all the *dzielnice* were held. The representative of the "Grupa Żargonowa" was Kuperszytk.

The Jewish *dzielnica* periodically held meetings of its groups. These groups were headed by Kuperszytk (nowadays in America, a union leader in the leftist movement) and Ira. *Masówki* (mass rallies) would also be held, at which a delegate of the Central Committee would make an appearance. The *masówki* were held in the Polish language, and also in Yiddish - albeit very infrequently. The more well-developed workers were taught Polish. Miss Bryll (later the wife of Stanisław Pruszycki, Director of the Industrialists and Merchants Bank [Bank Przemysłowców i Kupców]) taught some of these groups. [Her brother] Adolf Bryll, who gave high-level lessons in the Polish language, was popular among the Jewish workers. He was known as the party's theoretician. Very often, Ira also taught and held lectures in Polish. Leon Kopiński, who had only just arrived from Germany, once held a *masówka* in the woods, in the Yiddish language. During this period, an inter-*dzielnice* conference took place at the Częstochowianka factory, which was attended by Comrade "Józef" Feliks Dzierżyński from the Central Committee (famed, after the Bolshevik Revolution, as the leader of the "Czeka"²⁸). At this conference, there was a heated discussion regarding the so-called "Jargon groups". In fact, in Polish, against an array of other Jewish intellectuals, I defended the standpoint of the organisation's ethnic independence and the publication of literature in Yiddish.

The delegate chosen to the first countrywide conference of the Jewish groups was Kuperszytk. After this conference, *Die Royte Fon* [The Red Banner²⁹] and *Was Wollen Wir* [What Do We Want] by Róża Luksemburg and other brochures began to appear.

Large discussion meetings were also held at Wajnberg's celluloid factory, where the representatives of various labour unions would make appearances. The meetings have remained strongly [imprinted] in my memory. [Those who] participated in them [were] Rabin-Rubinsztajn from the SDKPiL; Aron

²⁵ [TN: Thin grade of paper used for printing books which have many pages.]

²⁶ [TN: On p. XXIX of the biographical section at the end of this book, the same individual appears as Maks (Kuperszytk) Delow, thus it would appear that his codename as an activist was "Kuperszytk", while his real name was Mordche or Maks Dylewski, which he perhaps changed in later life to Delow.]

²⁷ [TN: Viz. districts/neighbourhoods.]

²⁸ [TN: The All-Russian Extraordinary Commission (Всероссийская чрезвычайная комиссия); the first of a succession of Soviet secret-police organisations.]

²⁹ [TN: Although the SDKPiL had a short-lived Yiddish publication by this name between June and September 1906, it is more likely that this is a ref. to the Polish-language "Czerwony Sztandar", which is mentioned subsequently.]

Singalowsky (today's ORT activist, Dr Singalowsky), Benjamin, Golda and [Moyshe] Litvakov³⁰ from the SS, and Orel Flaszler and Lassalle-Władek³¹ from the Bund. The meetings were very instructive and interesting and were attended by hundreds of workers.

My activity consisted in being the contact person with one of the Polish *dzielnicy*, where I received the literature for the Jewish *dzielnica* - the newspapers *Czerwony Sztandar* [Red Banner], *Przegląd Społeczny* [Social Review] and the different proclamations for the Jewish *dzielnica*. More than once, I also had occasion to bring the literature from Warsaw for the entire region, viz. for Częstochowa and Zagłębie Dąbrowskie [the Dąbrowa Basin].

I shall hereby describe one such journey, which, incidentally, was my first trip to Warsaw:

I donned the clothes of my mate Lajzer Berkowicz, who already wore short clothes and a hat³², also took his passport and set off on my journey. When I arrived in Warsaw, I went to the address which I had been given. From there, I was taken to a confectionery, where a student was already waiting for me. His name, needless to say, was unknown to me. He had a brief conversation with me and, having become convinced of my "kosherness", he gave me a second address where I was to receive the literature. A Polish worker was living at this address. It was somewhere in Wola (a Polish workers' neighbourhood in Warsaw). They were drinking quite a bit there, and they also offered me a small glass of schnapps and snacks. I hardly tasted the liquor, because I was afraid that I would get drunk and jeopardise my entire journey, which was already complicated enough as it was.

I remember that an unconventional thought stole itself into my young mind at the time: how could they be drinking during such important and responsibility-laden illegal work? But I said nothing. I collected my "goods", which were packed in an elegant valise, took a seat on a *dorożka*³³ and travelled to the Warsaw-Vienna railway terminal. On the way, they had just stopped a young man with a package and, from the *dorożka*, I saw how the policeman tore open the parcel with his sword and a whole pack of literature cascaded out. A large crowd of curious people had already gathered around them and were observing the incident. It is possible that it was, by this "virtue", I was saved with my [own] pack of "goods".

Yet, with that, the danger had not passed. At the entrance to the terminal, as usual, constables and gendarmes were standing and inspecting the packages of anyone who seemed a little suspicious. Therefore, when I arrived at the terminal, I did as a wealthy man would do and called vociferously for a "*nosilszczyk*" [носильщик] (porter) to unload my package from the *dorożka*, and loudly ordered him to purchase a second-class passage on the "*kurier*"³⁴. First of all, I was freed from the package. If the porter was stopped, I would obviously make myself scarce!

On the carriage, I also distanced myself from the package. I sat on another bench and put it away on a shelf further off. These precautions were not unnecessary, for they also frequently carried out inspections in the carriages. I arrived in Częstochowa thus. There, too, I followed the same procedure - I obtained a porter and told him to take the package over to a *dorożka*, with which I travelled off in the direction of Stradom. When I alighted from the *dorożka*, I set out, on foot, towards a pre-agreed nearby field and, there, I put the valise amongst the wheat. At an appointed hour, several comrades came, took the valise and carried it away to the house of a Polish worker. Along the way, we also had to avoid the border guards who, due to Częstochowa's proximity to the German border, frequently

³⁰ [TN: One of the founders of the SS Party.]

³¹ [TN: Presumably a pseudonym.]

³² [TN: The custom in those days among ultraorthodox Jews was that only rabbis wore hats, whereas the common people wore black, kepi-like "Jewish caps", which were considered part of the "uniform", along with the long caftan.]

³³ [TN: Russian-type cart for transporting passengers, commonly used in 19th and early 20th century Poland as urban public transport.]

³⁴ [TN: From the Ger. "Kurierzug", or "courier train", meaning a passenger train.]

searched for contraband. In fact, we organised our own watch, which went ahead of us and gave us a sign when they noticed a patrol of border guards approaching. We hid in a courtyard until the patrol passed by.

After so many hardships and risks to freedom, the valise finally made it to the appointed address.

Besides the active local workers in the various factories - among whom I knew Roman Wowżyński, Pietrek, Domański and the intellectual, Józef Olszewski - the sons and daughters of the assimilated Jewish intelligentsia also participated in the Labour movement: the daughters of Juchel [sic Jechiel³⁵] Lerner, the Szwarces, Dadek Szajnweksler, [the] Mamloks, Senior and Birenbaum, the son of the German [Synagogue's] cantor. Of the intellectuals sent by the Centre, who would make appearances at the numerous *masówki* in the Częstochowa factories, I was acquainted with Adam, Konrad, Baszka (a sister-in-law of Sholem Asch³⁶, nowadays a high official in the government in Moscow), Janek and Ksawer [Xavier].

The stashes of illegal literature could no longer be kept in the Polish *dzielnice* - they were already being raided too frequently. The stash was transferred to the Jewish *dzielnica*, where things had been quiet for over a year. We found a room across the bridge over the Warta, in the [neighbourhood] called Zawodzie, in the house of a Jewish baker. Lajzer Berkowicz registered himself as the tenant of this "gentlemanly abode". At first, he did in fact live there, but the room was later filled with different illegal publications, and even a few rifles, which the organisation had occasion to obtain during an assault. Only a few comrades knew about this illegal book depository - the Centre's appointed distributor Lajzer Berkowicz, Zelig Rotbard (the son of Icze-Ber *Stodoła* [Barn]) and myself. From there, the illegal literature was circulated amongst all the factories in Częstochowa and the vicinity.

However, the owner of the bakery, a Jew whose own son, incidentally, was also in the movement, finally got wind of what was going on in the rented room. But, [as] he was already involved in the affair, he feared for himself and was forced to remain silent. Nevertheless, the police eventually picked up the trail of the depository. They knew that the illegal literature, which they so often found in searches, and the proclamations that were distributed, came from Zawodzie, but they did yet not know from which building, and they began to investigate. Once, they even carried out an *obława* [raid] on the entire area and conducted house searches. But, fortunately, they [only] searched the limekilns next door.

It was therefore necessary for the organisation to liquidate the stash in time. One fine, bright day - with the aid of a Jewish worker from Dziubas' soap factory, Nechemie Warszawski, who drove up with a horse and cart from the factory - we took out all the archives and transferred them to the warehouse in the Peltzer & Sons factory. There was a member of the organisation working there, and he took them under his care. We burned the rest of the material, which was not very important, over the course of two nights, in the fields near the limekilns, and a red glow covered a patch of sky. The only ones who knew about all these things were the organised Jewish workers of the SDKPiL.

There was also an incident with a depository of illegal literature that fell through, which already has a bearing on me personally:

³⁵ [TN: This individual is listed as "Jechiel" both in the author's 1957 book "On the Shores of the Warta and East River" and in the "Index of Names Mentioned in the Book Czenstochover Yidn" at the end of "Czenstochow" (1958).]

³⁶ [TN: She was the sister of Sholem Asch's wife, Mathilda née Szpiro.]

My Failure and My Mother's Arrest

By 1904-1905³⁷, I was already very strongly committed to this illegal movement, even though at the same time I was already also my family's provider. In 1905, my father, following a long illness that swallowed up a great deal of money, died of *rak* (cancer) in the stomach at the age of forty-two. For many years, my mother lamented his untimely death. She would always say, "That is how lottery money is spent!"

I became the provider and worked in the soda factory. There was a Polish worker there by the name of Pietrek. He was the factory's main foreman and, under my influence, he became a member of the SDKPiL Party.

As mentioned already, the Bundist "*chaynaya*" was also in our factory's courtyard. More often, I sat, more often, in the "*chaynaya*" and occupied myself in political agitation and singing revolutionary songs, than I worked at the factory. In the attic, above the factory, which had no staircase and could only be accessed by putting up a ladder, lay the [empty] gas canisters and broken soda syphons - and it was there that I found the [most] suitable hiding-place for the illegal literature. Lying there were a few copies of *The Red Banner*, [which was] the organ of the SDKPiL Party, Róża Luksemburg's brochures *What Do We Want?* and dozens of parcels with other "non-kosher goods". Some of these volumes were bound with the same binding as my legitimate books at home, so if the police discovered both libraries, they could easily know who was their true owner.

Once, on a cold, frosty winter night, our factory was raided by the police, headed by the then notorious *Prystav* Arbuzow and, along with a military squad, they began a rigorous search. They roused our entire family (we lived in a nearby house) and demanded of us the keys to the soda factory. My mother also had to be present during the search. Assured of her complete innocence, she went calmly with the police. To herself, she was laughing at their insane notion - they had found just the place where to seek illegal literature!

But, as for myself, my soul nearly flew out from the terror and fear. I accompanied them to the factory. They thoroughly searched every little corner and, having found nothing, *Prystav* Arbuzow inquired where was the entrance to the attic. My eyes dimmed and I felt as if my legs were breaking under me from the terror.

"The entrance to the attic is from the courtyard!", my mother tranquilly replied.

The police put up a ladder and, after a few seconds - they did not have to look for long - the *Prystav's* authoritative voice was heard, "*Vsech arestovat!*" [Всех арестовать] (Arrest everybody!)

My mother began moaning and crying. She defended her innocence [by saying] that the attic was an open one and that there was not even a key to it. She knew nothing. And, after all, this was true - she really did not know anything. Of the entire family, I was the only one who did know.

In that blink of an eye, something flashed up in my mind - the remaining legal books in our house, which were bound with the same binding as the illegal ones, could obviously put them on the right track. I resolved to destroy my books at home at any price - but how?

³⁷ [TN: Although Federman does not state this explicitly, it should be noted that he was only 12-13 years old at the time, which – if his story is in chronological order – sets his previous courier adventure in Warsaw at this or even an earlier age.]

When the books began to rain down from the attic and the *Prystav's* command "*Vsech arestovat!*" came, I donned a mien of innocence and approached the *Prystav*, who had already climbed down from the attic with a triumphant air, asking him, "And me too?"

"*Pashol von!*" [пошел вон, Go away!], the *Prystav* yelled, and landed me a resounding slap in the face. I took the slap gleefully, as if I had been given a present, and quickly ran home. When I breathlessly arrived at the house, I shouted to my sister in a choked voice, "*Take out the books!*" The entire library, which I had accumulated with such efforts, was immediately thrown down the toilet - and no more library!

My mother and the building's owner, Dawidowicz, were taken to the police station. The whole city was electrified with this arrest. Everybody blamed the Bundist *chaynaya* for this wrongful accusation. I, poor me, was the only one who knew the full truth.

After a few days in jail and following vigorous lobbying, the Governor sentenced my mother to an administrative fine and also the landlord of the building to three months in prison, for having kept the attic open, thus causing a nest of "*kramolny*" [Old Ru., seditious] literature to be established there. With great efforts, we raised a large enough sum of money to pay the fine so that my mother would not need to go to prison.

For many years, my sisters and brothers confronted me at every opportunity with, "That was *your* piece of work, Fulcze!" But they were not sure of this accusation. I only admitted it to them once Poland had become independent and there was already no longer any trace of the tsarist gendarmerie.

As I estimated, at the time, [it later turned out] that the factory's worker, Pietrek, had let slip word of the stash of illegal literature over a glass of liquor in the tavern with a policeman. But, during the investigation, he did not say who had put the packs with literature there. This saved me from years in prison.

In the Revolution Years 1905-1906

In 1905, during the general strike, a group of comrades - such as Lajzer Berkowicz, Chaim-Dawid Wolhendler and others - and I were among those who were to take part in bringing the Peltzer & Sons factory to a stop. We were guarding the outside, with weapons. But the police and military had arrived there before us. We only heard a few intermittent blasts of the factory sirens and some shots. Several soldiers and policemen fell, and [also] the later legendary hero Józek, of whom the Częstochowa workforce afterwards sang, "*Józek był odważny z partii bojowej*³⁸" At his grave, I bid him farewell with my most beloved revolutionary song, "*Szalejcie, tyrani*" [Go mad, tyrants].

After the "Constitution" [October Manifesto] was proclaimed, the party went out in the open for a while. The bureau of the SDKPiL was in Szwarc's building on ul. Teatralna. This freedom was too short and, therefore, very little has remained in my memory of the activity in those days. I only remember that it was livelier.

During this period, I was nearly arrested once and was saved thanks to my friend Fajersztajn. The two of us were walking from the Polish *dzielnica* to ul. Warszawska at an hour when the workers leave the factories and I had, with me, literature to hand out. All of a sudden, a patrol of policemen and soldiers bore down upon us and stopped us. I, being the one carrying the literature, ran away. My comrade Fajersztajn, who had nothing on him, remained standing there and they arrested him. After a few days

³⁸ [TN: Although grammatically incorrect, this verse conveys that Józek was a particularly brave fighter of the party.]

in jail, he was freed. He told them that he did not know me at all, and that we had been walking next to each other just by coincidence.

Nevertheless, I was still destined to feel the taste of imprisonment - which is impossible to avoid in illegal work. We were participating in the elections to the Second Duma and agitating for our own SDKPiL candidate, Emanuel Klajnman, who was, by the way, my good friend - albeit much older than myself - and had a great influence over me. It is in connection with our intensive activity that my friend Zelig Rotbard and I were arrested. For several days, we sat in *Prystav* Denisov's police station, after which we were released by that same *prystav*. Later, we found out that the *Prystav* was in the movement. He died as a prisoner in the Piotrków prison.

Comrade Baszka, who for a long time was the [head] functionary of the party in Częstochowa, made a great impression on us young socialist activists. Her light chestnut-coloured hair was combed straight [and] she always wore a long, black dress. She was in mourning for her brother Izaak, who had been shot by verdict of a court in Warsaw for belonging to the SDKPiL Party. Her appearances made the Polish workers very fond of her. She spoke only Polish. She could not speak Yiddish, but understood everything. The priests in the churches had much to do on her account. They preached to their faithful to the effect that the "*Żydówka*"³⁹ was demoralising Polish workers and that, once, she had even allowed herself to "defile" a [Christian] cemetery, by speaking at the funeral of a worker who had been killed during a bloody demonstration.

The Polish labourers ground their teeth, when they found out about this priestly propaganda. Baszka would make appearances in all the large Częstochowa factories, such as Raków, Częstochowianka, Szpagaczarnia and others. She had a very difficult life in our city. She did not spend the day where she had spent the night. For a certain period, I was the one who accompanied her. She spent some nights with the Lerner, in Lajbisz Kopinski's factory, in Zawodzie [and other places].

It was only in independent Poland that I discovered that her surname was Szpiro and that she was Sholem Asch's sister-in-law. Nowadays, she occupies a prominent position in Soviet Russia.

I Join the Zionist-Socialist Workers Party (SS)

I ceased being our household's provider - my eldest brother Szaja replaced me. I received a position as an office worker with Maurycy Lipski⁴⁰. After working there for a few months, I was sacked. I was studying, little by little, and continued to be engaged in political work. It was then that I made the acquaintance of SS activists Mendel Szuchter, Szaja-Jakow Miętkiewicz (Mencoff), Herszl Gotajner and others. [Life at] home became too constricting for me. I lived together with my close friends, and our discussions about different issues were interesting and lively. Our discussions were chiefly on "the Jewish question"⁴¹. Influenced by Mendel Szuchter, my friend Emanuel Klajnman and I joined the SS Party [because we were displeased with the SDKPiL Party's attitude towards Jewish problems]. At home, they realised that I would eventually end up in prison, [so] my brother Zalman, who had a position at Dr Wolberg's paint factory, undertook my support, [on condition] that I leave the country. I did, in fact, very soon afterwards travel to Kraków, with the goal of attaining a secondary school *matura* [certificate].

³⁹ [TN: Pol., "*Jewess*", used derogatively.]

⁴⁰ [TN: According to the memorial section at the end of the book (p. LVI), Maurycy Lipski was one of the largest timber traders in Częstochowa.]

⁴¹ [TN: Viz. what the Jews should do – or should be done to them – as a nation, and namely whether they should establish a sovereign state, and if so – where exactly?]

Emigrating to Kraków

In Kraków, I lived in the Podgórze [district], on ul. Kołłątaja, where I lived among the immigrants from the Kingdom of Poland [viz. Congress Pol.], who were called “*Królewiacy*”⁴². I had made a pact with myself that I would get the *matura* within the year. In the meantime, I met an entire array of *Częstochowers* there, who had returned from deportations - and even to Siberia - or who were just fleeing Poland as a result of the repressions that had started there at the time. Those who arrived were Herszl Gotajner, who escaped from Siberia, having earlier been imprisoned for several years in the Piotrków prison; Dawid Richter, who had been granted a free “*visilka*” [высылка, expulsion notice] to leave the country and Michał Alter. Motl Asz, Aleksander Haftka (he was a high official in the Polish Home Office in independent Poland and now lives in America) and Dawid Borzykowski were external students⁴³ in Kraków. Abram Wiewiorka (renowned writer who died in Moscow before the War), who had been forced to leave Częstochowa as one of the leaders of Poalei Zion, Dawid Guterman (Dawid “*Jajcorz*”⁴⁴) and dozens of emigrants who were members of the SS [Party] were also in Kraków.

The SS newspaper *Die Freiheit* [The Freedom] was being published in Kraków at the time. I did not relinquish my work for the party, even though my studies demanded that I do so. Little by little, I engaged in the work surrounding *Die Freiheit*. Later, the periodical *Freiland* [Freeland] arrived from Vienna, where it was published, of which I transported a few issues over to Poland. During this period, in Kraków, I met with Josef-Hillel Lewi, a poet, and with Szachna Sagan, a member of Poalei Zion. The Poalei Zion had their own club, and it is around this club that all of us grouped. We were frequent visitors to the “People’s University” that was under the influence of the PPSD [Polish Social Democratic Party of Galicia]. We heard Ignacy Daszyński speak and we participated in the great May [Day] demonstrations.

During this period, I had more than one occasion to travel to Częstochowa, and I crossed the Austrian border under the identities of Comrades Lewi or Sagan. My financial situation was far from satisfactory. More than once, I was forced to sell my textbooks to buy bread - after which I had to buy back the books, once the monthly stipend arrived from my brother Zalman, or the occasional support from my cousin Zalman Staszewski, my mother’s sister’s son (he later became a Bundist councillor in the Piotrków City Council).

An outlandish piece of information regarding “Baszka” had a severe impact upon me at the time in Kraków. I met once with SDKPiL member Józef Domański from Częstochowa, and he showed me a copy of the *Czerwony Sztandar*, in which a warning was printed to the effect that Comrade Baszka, the SDKPiL activist in Częstochowa, for whom I had such respect and whom I venerated, was in the service of the tsarist *Ochrana* [Secret Police]. I was truly stunned by this news. A group of friends and I were in such despair, that we took to the bitter drop⁴⁵. I got drunk and lost all my schoolbooks on the way. For a long enough time, I could not forget about it - such was my disappointment. (Years later, Sholem Asch explained this painful matter - it was simply a mistake by Feliks Dzierżyński. He was the one who had accused and betrayed her.)

⁴² [TN: “*Królewiak*”, from the Pol. “*królestwo*”, or kingdom, was an ethnic slur used in ref. to natives of Congress Poland, which is called “*Congress Kingdom*” in Polish.]

⁴³ [TN: Student who studies independently, without participating in the classes organised at the school or university, but only passes exams there.]

⁴⁴ [TN: Possibly “egg-seller,” from the Pol. “*jajko*” (egg).]

⁴⁵ [TN: Yiddish expression akin to the English “the hard stuff” – viz. strong liquor.]

I spent almost two years in Kraków. I did not achieve my goal of attaining a *matura*, but I nevertheless acquired a little knowledge. During my time in Kraków, SS activists Mendel Szuchter, Szaja-Jakow Miętkiewicz, Herszl Epsztajn from Radomsko, Bugajski, Szlojme Diner and others passed through on their way to America. All of them had been forced to flee Częstochowa or had actually escaped from Siberia.

During the Reactionary Years

Once the repressions in Częstochowa had quieted down a little, I returned home and found work as an employee in Maurycy Neufeld's pharmaceuticals warehouse. Comrade Ira (Dora Warszawska) worked there as a high official. I had a great affection for her. This was the period when the movement was dead. We read books, enveloped in a romantic atmosphere. At the time, Dwojra (Dorka) Szacher, the daughter of my mother's teacher Wolf Szacher, occupied a huge place in my heart. I invested a great deal of time and energy in her, so that she should be able to climb the ladder of life and go along with the spirit of the time. I drew her into communal life, into the Jewish Literary Society and Lira, and interested her in Yiddish dramatic art. Under my influence, she appeared, with success, in recitals and theatrical pieces. But she had a propensity for fantastic exaggerations, with which she tried to impress me. This, however, had the opposite effect on me and I distanced myself from her. She later became the wife of my fellow party member, Comrade Jakow-Icek Zarnowiecki, who perished in Oświęcim.

Over the course of our friendship, she was certainly quite a part of my life. During that same period, I was also friends with a girl named Jecza Pakuła, who had made our youthful path along with our group. We often gathered at her house. Her home was a modest one, but her father Mendel *Kowal* [Blacksmith], with his great affection for his wife and children, in his house, created an atmosphere of love and friendship. Mendel *Kowal* was like [Dovid Pinski's character] "Yankel the Smith". Ideas and moods for a new life were born in this house. A great many friends and comrades passed through this home, such as Mendel Szuchter (he became the husband of his daughter Szajndla), Szaja-Jakow Miętkiewicz, Jakow-Icek Zarnowiecki, Alkona Chrobolovsky and others. When Mendel *Kowal* died, following an operation in a Warsaw hospital, his death left a deep tear in my soul. I felt that I had lost my second home.

During the Renaissance Era of Yiddish Literature

That was the time of the renaissance of Yiddish literature. To counteract the existing assimilationist, Hebrew-language Lira Society, the Jewish Literary Society was founded. During this period, vigorous struggles for Yiddish took place. It was then that I held my first lecture on the Yiddish language, and I even remember that I finished by quoting from a brochure written by the author Sz.L. Kawa, in which the "*Toychaichu*"⁴⁶ is poured upon those who are ashamed of Yiddish. As a response to my lecture, there came a second lecture by Leon Kopiński, who defended Hebrew as the national language of the Jews.

It was then that [the actors] Mark Schweid and Miriam Izraels, the wife of the artist [Szymon-Ber (Bernard)] Kratka, came down to Częstochowa. This was a festive period for us. I participated in several one-acts by [I.L.] Peretz, with them and under their direction. At the time, I looked at Miriam Izraels as if she were a biblical figure. She spent a few months in our city, with small interruptions. At the home of Aron Perec, she was like one of the family. I recall when she was to arrive from Warsaw for the second time. I already then had feelings of great affection towards her, but I told no one about this. I waited for her at the train [station] with a bouquet of flowers but, to my great dismay, she did

⁴⁶ [TN: Heb., lit. "Admonition" (תוכחה), ref. to all the curses written in Leviticus 26:16-39 and Deuteronomy 28:16-68; to "pour the Toychaichu" on someone is to heap all the curses in the world upon them.]

not arrive that day. However, I hid the flowers, and I only took them up to her in Aron Perec's house on the following day.

It was warm in her company. She heartily interpreted songs, playing a small [wooden] box with metal plates and dancing rhythmically to the sounds of the music. During the same period when she was putting on Yiddish one-acts with us, the Lira also invited her to perform [Gerhart] Hauptmann's *Hanusia*⁴⁷ in Polish, with Koźmiński as a partner.

If truth be told, I was extremely vexed with her at the time - both because she was performing in Polish and because she was paying more attention to her Polish partner than to me. I was left with two photographs as a souvenir of her. In one of them, her gentle biblical features are seen in profile, wearing a hat with a large natural feather and, in the other, she is sitting in a sports outfit, with Koźmiński standing in front of her and reciting. I kept these photographs in my archive until the last days of my being in Poland. Years later, By chance, I met her on a tram in Warsaw as Maria [sic Tea (Tocia)] Arciszewska. We spoke to each other in Polish.

Mendel *Kowal's* son-in-law Mendel Szuchter and his wife, and later also [her sister] Jecza Pakuła, travelled away to America. Behind [them] remained a profound yearning for a warm home to remind [me] of our youthful struggle.

It was only years later, when I came to America, that I met [again with] Jetta Pakuła - a true and unforgettable friend. She is vigorously active in the Poalei Zion movement in Los Angeles. At her house, I also met her 82-year-old mother. There, I once again felt the warmth of my youth in Częstochowa. Mendel *Kowal's* love and human warmth hung in the air of her home.

I Travel to the Territorialist Conference in Vienna

At a time when the Reaction had begun to loosen its restraints, Comrade Berl Gutman arrived as an emissary of the SS Party's Central Committee, and a group of SS members was called together. The meeting took place at the barbershop of Wolf Pakuła (Mendel *Kowal's* son). The envoy informed us regarding the convention of the Territorialist Organisation, which was to be held in Vienna, and about the conference of the SS Party, which would be held during the same opportunity. Three comrades from Częstochowa volunteered to travel to the conference as guests - Pinchas Kalka, my humble self, and my brother Zalman.

The *Częstochower* activists Dr Józef Kruk, Majer Fajnrajch and Icek Gurski, who was one of the organisers of the conference and the convention, were already in Vienna.

When I returned from the Vienna convention, we no longer had the soda factory. It was now being run by our first son-in-law, the husband of my eldest sister Hinda, Mattes Fuks. We lived with mother and my youngest sister Cirla in Tenenbaum's building on ul. Ogrodowa. We lived a bit more tranquilly, because my brother and sister and I all had jobs, and our financial situation was not bad.

A Search of Our House

On a certain night, gendarmes and policemen raided our house and conducted a search. Nothing fishy was found. A few books from the library were seized in the raid, but no one was arrested. We did not know whom they had been after with this search – whether my brother or myself. Later, when I was summoned to the gendarmerie for questioning, I realised that the raid had been in connection with the Vienna conference.

⁴⁷ [TN: The original German title is "*Hanneles Himmelfahrt*", or "*The Assumption of Hannale*".]

How My Brother was Freed from Military Service



Zalman Federman

My brother Zalman needed to present himself for the *prizyv* [conscription]. At the time, he was working for Dr Wolberg in the paint factory, and his earnings were not bad. The problem arose as to how to rescue him from the “hands of the Gentiles⁴⁸” - for, should he be forced to go to the army, we would lose our household’s main income provider. He gave himself a bit of a maiming⁴⁹, but was conscripted despite his mutilation. It was only sometime later that a “*macher*” from Lublin had him released, and an “angel” went to serve in his place (an “angel” meant sending someone away to the military instead of the person who had been conscripted).

Once my brother had made it home safe and sound from his “military service”, our livelihood problem was resolved. But two years later, I, too, was faced with the issue of going to serve [in the army].

I Write *Tnuyim*⁵⁰ According to the Customs of Moses and Israel⁵¹ and Go “Serve” Phonya⁵²

Up until the *prizyv*, I was working well, as an assistant bookkeeper, for Maurycy Neufeld in his pharmaceutical warehouse. My boss Neufeld, as well as his wife Klara, had the best of attitudes towards me. Maurycy Neufeld was also a radical man himself, and had been banished abroad due to his political convictions. He lived in the German [town of] Herby, near Częstochowa, from which he conducted his business. In 1905, he took part in the great demonstration, when Tsar Nikolai [II] issued the “Constitution”. He wore a *paraiches*⁵³ from Napoleon’s times, embroidered with a Polish eagle⁵⁴. It was for this very demeanour that he was punished. His daughter Wanda, a musician, was wed to a Czech named Kopecki – also a musician – and they occasionally gave concerts for philanthropic causes. In her younger years, Wanda had belonged to the Bund, and her parents’ house had been a meeting place for various socialist gatherings.

His second daughter, Dr Natalia Neufeld, fell as a victim to the typhus epidemic that was reigning over Częstochowa during the First World War. Sitting for three days and nights next to a worker from the Raków factory ill with typhus, not allowing anyone to take her place, she contracted the same disease and left this world within a week. She gave her life in this fight against the epidemic. Maurycy Neufeld lived his last years [out] in solitude (his sons and daughters had all tragically perished), and he was left only with his daughter Wanda, who had been abandoned by her husband - the Czech. He died of natural causes, already under the Nazi rule.

In communal life, there was a stillness. The youth was [out] dancing. I experienced several disappointments. I was lacking someone close with whom to share my joys and pains.

⁴⁸ [TN: A Jewish recruit in the Tsar’s army would not have been permitted to keep the Jewish religious laws – such as *kashrus* or *Shabbes* – and would have thus been forced to adopt the ways of the Gentiles. Such people later found it almost impossible to return to Jewish society.]

⁴⁹ [TN: In order to evade conscription to the Tsar’s army, many Jewish youths employed tactics such as sleep deprivation, starving themselves or self-inflicted wounds, which in some cases reportedly included the chopping off of digits.]

⁵⁰ [TN: Heb., lit. “conditions” (תנאים), viz. the conditions of betrothal which are signed by the bride and groom to be upon their engagement to be wed. The term “*tnuyim*” in Yiddish is synonymous with “engagement” in English.]

⁵¹ [TN: This formula appears prominently in the Jewish wedding ceremony, in which the groom says to the bride, “By accepting this ring you will become my exclusive spouse according to the customs of Moses and Israel.”]

⁵² [TN: Derogative term for a typical Russian derived from the name Aphonasy, which was very popular in Yiddish, especially in the 19th century.]

⁵³ [TN: Ornamental screen or curtain covering the Holy Ark in which a synagogue’s Torah scrolls are kept.]

⁵⁴ [TN: A photograph of this flag-turned-synagogue-curtain with the white Polish eagle may be seen at the beginning of *Sefer Częstochowa*, on col. 37.]

It was during this period that I became acquainted with a girl named Hela. She was the daughter of my mother's friend, the limping Gitla Hasenfeld. In this girl, I thought that I had found it. She was an intelligent girl, always with a book under her arm - the daughter of quite affluent parents, with make-up on her dainty and delicate face. Her constant laughter, neatness and proficiency in [world] literature attracted me, and I became fond of her. I acquainted her with the Yiddish literature, of which she had no idea. I read to her often. Some time later - even though it did not suit her parents, due to my insufficient source of income – we wrote *Tnuyim* according to the customs of Moses and Israel. - There could be no talk yet of getting married, because I was, after all, not free of the *prizyv* yet.

In 1913, I finally reported for the *prizyv* and I was sent in the first evaluation to Piotrków for [further] assessment on the part of the *gubernia*. There I was declared "*godyen*" [годен], meaning fit for military service. Needless to say, I felt strongly disinclined to serve Phonya, and I sought all kinds of ways to get out of it. In the meantime, the gendarmerie came one night and arrested me, putting me in the Częstochowa prison. Once more, I was interrogated in connection with my journey to Vienna for the SS convention. I sat there for four weeks, until they notified me that the trial against me would be cancelled, should I be sent immediately for military service. With a special convoy, they sent me to the "*punkt zborny*" [rallying point] in Piotrków, from which I managed to abscond with the aid of the Częstochowa military tailor Baum, who was living in Piotrków at the time. I then put myself in contact with the "*macher*", a Chassidic Jew from Lublin, who had freed my brother Zalman. Firstly, he made efforts to remove, from my military file, the appended paper stating that I was a political suspect. He came from Lublin to Piotrków explicitly for this purpose. After that, I received the papers in my own hands and had to report to my assigned *pułk* [regiment] in Jurjew (Dorpat) [Tartu, Estonia], where I was to do my military service.

The "*macher*" and I settled that he would free me completely for the sum of 1,000 roubles⁵⁵. He took 500 roubles in cash and the rest in vouchers, which were given to him by my employer Maurycy Neufeld.

I travelled with my papers up to Winnica [Vinnytsia, Ukraine], where the "*macher*" awaited me at a hotel. He took the papers from me and told me to travel to Lublin or another city, and to wait there until he let me know that I had been freed. A so-called "angel" went to serve in my place. I never did discover his name. I only saw him once, in a corridor of the hotel in Winnica. Later, *Częstochowers*, who had served in Jurjew, told me that they had served along with one certain Raphael Federman, who was an utter invalid and had been immediately released from the *pułk*.

I Become My Mother's *Shadchen* [Matchmaker]

Throughout the duration of my "angel's" military service, I was forced to hide out in unfamiliar cities where I had no acquaintances. I stayed in Warsaw for a little time, but I could not remain there long - because too many *Częstochowers* were showing up there. I was at the "*macher's*" house in Lublin several times. And then, I once got the idea to seek out my great-uncle - with whom I was not acquainted at all, but of whom I had often heard things said in our home. This was my father's uncle - Dawid Federman. He was one of the soldiers of [Tsar] Nikolai [II], and he had been married in Russia. As a result, he was estranged from our family and never came to visit us. He had settled in Augustów, where he became a barber-surgeon [*felczer*].

After staying for a few days with him, I told him about my father's premature death, the children who had been left behind and our family's financial situation. He, too, deplored his own loneliness to me.

⁵⁵ [TN: In 1913, 1,000 roubles were roughly equivalent to 500 contemporary US dollars, which was quite a hefty sum in the day. At around the period, in 1907, one could purchase slightly over 761 grams of gold for 1,000 roubles (source: <https://www.quora.com/How-much-would-have-been-1-000-Russian-ruble-in-US-dollars-in-1907>).]

His wife had died not long ago and his two daughters had been married - one was in America and the other in Charków [Kharkiv, Ukraine]. As far as livelihood went, he said that he was actually doing not badly and that he had every luxury. The peasants saw him as a doctor, and the Jews also strongly approved of him. In his words, I sensed a tone of yearning for a family life and, as we were speaking, it dawned upon me - my lonely, perpetually mourning mother. What would ultimately happen with her? Perhaps I was the emissary. Maybe my mother would no longer be a widow. Uncle had the same name [as my father, Dawid]. Yes, this was an idea.

Before leaving my uncle, I spoke openly with him regarding the idea that had occurred to me and we agreed that, as soon as I had talked it over with my mother, I would send him a telegram and he would come to Częstochowa. A few weeks later, when I received a telegram to come to Winnica, I understood that my "military service" had ended, and that I was a free man. In Winnica, I was given my release papers, got a haircut like a true Phonya - leaving the whiskers untouched - donned a pair of boots and journeyed, with my soldier's pack, to Częstochowa. When my friends and acquaintances saw me, they all said, "See what a few weeks of service in the military can make of a man! The barracks leave a stamp on one's face".

This was in January 1914.

I came home a free man and with the mission of arranging a marriage for my mother. I immediately got the entire family interested in this same issue - I held a "family conference", as it were. I summoned my sisters and brothers, my aunt Hinda Staszewska (my mother's sister from Piotrków) and my uncle Szulim Federman (my father's brother). I discussed the match for my mother with everyone, and all of them agreed that it was the right thing to do. A few weeks later, at the behest of my telegram, Uncle Dawid Federman came to Częstochowa - and my mother was happily wed for a second time. Interestingly, my mother never called her second husband by his name, only "Uncle". She addressed herself to him in the [respectful] third person - "Let Uncle go", "Let Uncle do", and so forth.

My mother left Częstochowa and only my brother Zalman, my sister Cirla and I remained in our house. Within a few months, the First World War broke out.

Under the German Occupation

Częstochowa was immediately occupied by the Germans. Throughout the entire duration of the War, we retained our workplaces. My sister Cirla kept house. From week to week, life became harder. The city's workers began to organise and professional unions were established. The rickety professional unions that had existed in the tsarist times began to display a lively activity. Some level of aid work was organised around these unions, such as a tearoom for workers, together with which political life began to sprout up. I took part in organising this work. Even though we were separated from the rest of the world, we nevertheless hoped for the revolution that was to come following the downfall of tsarism.

A library and an educational union for Jewish workers were established. The "dusty" former SS members got together and the organisation was revived. Once Warsaw had been already taken by the Germans, we sought out a contact and, using a *Passierschein* [entry/transit permit] of a suburb in Warsaw, I got into the city and immediately established contact with Szlojme Zusman, who was then standing at the head of the SS Party in Warsaw.

At the time, elections to the City Council were being held in Częstochowa, according to a system of curiae⁵⁶. The SS organisation decided to take part in these elections. The candidates were required to be no younger than thirty years of age and, as such members were hard to come by, we were forced to turn to sympathisers or to those who had once had a small connection to the party. We then nominated all four candidates in the sixth curia. [They were] Szlojme Horowicz, formerly a commercial employee; Dawid Torbeczko, a barber-surgeon [*felczer*] who had never belonged to the party; Szaja Nirenberg, and Lifszyc, who had once been a territorialist. As we proceeded towards the municipal elections, it was very difficult for us to formulate a platform with which to approach the masses, because we were not in connection with Warsaw. Therefore, we appropriated the platform of the Bund in Łódź, adding a point regarding emigration and colonisation⁵⁷ - and this became platform of the SS.

The history of the SS in Częstochowa is rich in interesting episodes. At the end of the [First World] War, when the news reached us that Wilhelm II had abdicated, I quickly summoned the SS organisation's acting body, and I also notified all the other existing [Labour] organisations, such as the Bund and Poalei Zion. I proposed that we hold a joint demonstration across the city. The proposal was adopted. This was in the evening. The Jewish workers were the first to go out, with red flags, onto the street and demonstrate for the victory of the German Revolution and for an independent Poland.

The German patrols, which were still walking about in the streets, were so stunned that, for the time being, they did not react. On the contrary, they saluted very respectfully and honoured the demonstration. But to compensate, the hooligan [element among the] young Polish students could not bear it, and they set upon the Jewish demonstrators with great rage and dispersed them. The red flags were rescued at great risk - several comrades of both genders were badly beaten in the process. The following day, the leaders of the organisations were sought after by the German secret police.

Being committed to the communal work which, at the time, was very important, I resigned my position at the pharmaceutical warehouse - under the influence of Dr Józef Kruk - and took over the leadership of the movement's widespread activity. The communal work became the content of my life and I completely discarded the idea of a family life. My fiancée's parents were not pleased with my new employment and I, on my part, also feared the obligations of a family man. One fine, bright day, I sent the *tnuyim* back. Shortly afterwards, my bride-to-be was wed and moved away to Piotrków. On her wedding day, she came to me to say farewell. We parted company in a very friendly manner. I accompanied her out the house with a bouquet of flowers and we remained good friends. Thirty years later, I met her once again in Boston. She is the mother of three fine, grown children. She was recently widowed.

In Independent Poland

After the First World War, my mother and her husband Dawid Federman, who had accompanied the Russian army into deepest Russia, returned to Augustów. They had been through the Russian Revolution and suffered extensively, but had finally come back to the shtetl in independent Poland.

I was caught up in the hubbub of Jewish communal life in newly, independent Poland. I carried out my duties with intensified energy. The SS organisation in Częstochowa, with its multi-branched institutions, grew vigorously. It fell to me to be the chairman of the organisation, representative in the

⁵⁶ [TN: An indirect election system employed by the Germans, whereby the voters are divided into classes/colleges according to their financial standing, such that the vote of one wealthy individual, who paid the most tax, was equal to those of the tens of thousands who paid less - and those who paid nothing were completely unrepresented.]

⁵⁷ [TN: While both the Bund and the Zionists-Socialists (SS) were socialists and pro-Yiddish, the former were opposed to a Jewish homeland altogether - in any location - whilst the latter (as the term "Zionists" implies) advocated the establishment of a Jewish state, anywhere but in Palestine.]

Workers Council, councillor and secretary in the City Council and representative on the town hall's main committees. I made appearances at many gatherings and participated in various campaigns.

Our city's SS organisation, or "Vereinigte" [United⁵⁸], as it was later called, was the country's liveliest branch of the party. As a result, the representatives of the Central Committee would very willingly come to Częstochowa. All of them, without exception, visited our city and indeed found there the warmest of atmospheres. During this period, we were visited by Sz. Zusman, Giliński, Jakow Pat, Icek Gordyn, Berl Gutman, Leon Fajgenbaum, Dr Józef Kruk, Pinie Bukshorn, Mendelsberg, Wiktor Fiszman, Guta Margulis, Dr Ajger, Isser Goldberg, Sz. Bastomski, Janke'le Dancyger, Halpern, Chaim Rozenbest, Gajst and others.



The Vereinigte faction at the first Scholastic Convention in Warsaw

During this blossoming period of the party, the first Scholastic Convention took place and *Vereinigte* participated with a noticeable faction. A considerable number of delegates arrived from Częstochowa. When the party later went through its ideological crisis, many defected to the Communist Party and to the Bund. But Częstochowa remained the most steadfast and this was thanks to the personal influence of Dr Józef Kruk, "the *Częstochower*". The discussions surrounding this crisis were very heated.

Comrade Guta [Margulis], for instance, was in love with Częstochowa - viz. with the people of the Częstochowa [*Vereinigte*] organisation. When she wished to rest and brighten up, she came to Częstochowa. She was as if in her own family with the *Częstochower* comrades. At the time, I was opposed to joining the Bund and I expressed my opinion, in a discussion, that the Bund had no ideological material. Comrade Guta then sprang up and called me to order with a bang on the table, "One must speak respectfully of a party that has such a rich history behind it!", she shouted.

If the word "happiness" truly exists, this was the happiest period of my life. I had found complete fulfilment in my communal work, in the worthy fight for my people's human rights.

The movement was continuously growing larger and rising higher and, along with it, so was I. We needed new, young people. We needed teachers for our schools and activists in the professional unions. We looked for these people everywhere - amongst the student youth and the among the workers at the machines. And many of them were drawn into the work. One of them was a young, blossoming girl. Her name was Chaja Waga.



R-L: Raphael Federman, Guta Margulis, Ester Fuks, Szojel Landau, Chaja Waga and Rajzla Fajertag (Berkensztadt)

⁵⁸ [TN: To be found in various sources as "The Jewish Socialist Workers Party 'Ferajnigte' (United)".]

Chaja Waga, with a profound, inner devotion, began to study, concurrently carrying this over into the kindergarten or the colony [viz. summer camp] and all the other branches of the movement. To the children, Chaja'le became the teacher "Waga'le". If music was needed for the children's rhythmic dancing and songs, she learned music. If the organisation needed a speaker for a women's meeting, she became an orator. When the organisation arranges a masquerade ball for financial purposes, she is there at the masquerade ball wearing a mask and helping along the evening's success. When an opponent is speaking and she disagrees, she does not hold back an interjection and, when it is necessary to go to a demonstration, she calls on everyone to do so - but is in the foremost rows [herself]. She gained the trust of the little ones and the adults. Everyone loved her. Everyone knew that she was honest and true to the common cause in which she believed, and that her thoughts were unambiguous. If someone praised Chaja'le, she accepted it with joy, but she would blush and cast her eyes down. If someone wronged her, she went aside and more than once wept. The main thing was to ignite faith in her, and this was not difficult to achieve. Chaja'le put her whole soul into the work she undertook and never said a word about it.

Amidst the chaos of this fervent life, I nevertheless, more than once, felt that I was lonely. My older brother Zalman had married. My youngest sister Cirila (Cesza), who was the one who understood me best and was proud of my activity, and to whom I was bound with every thread of familial feeling, had also found herself a young man, whom she wed. This was Michał Alter, a long-standing, committed activist in the SS movement. All at once, I felt completely alone. My loneliness began to disappear with my close friendship with Chaja'le.

The *Vereinigte* movement expanded. The Yiddish primary schools were on ul. Krótka and Strażacka. The pedagogical staff consisted of several teachers who had been sent by CISZO. Among them were Juza Sztam, Terenia Fajgenblat, Rajze'le Berkensztadt, Jochewed Zusman, Róža Kantor-Lichtensztajn, Masza Kalabus, Milman, Itka Lazar, Mina Wajsberg, Krul, Pola and Mania Frydman, Rywka Cuker and others.



Rywka Cuker

The personnel employed in all of *Vereinigte's* existing institutions, both economic and cultural, numbered between 25 and 30 individuals. A secular Yiddish environment was created. The male and female teachers, who were young and talented, regardless of the difficult economic conditions, created a warm family atmosphere and they participated in general, communal life.

During this period, I fell ill. They operated on me and my life was hanging by a thread. My friends of both sexes, and particularly Chaja'le and Rywka Cuker - both girlfriends⁵⁹ - nursed me and did not leave my bedside. Following my recovery, I was forced to rest for a long time and was not allowed to take part in any communal work. It was then that Rywka and I became very, very close friends and, in 1922, we were married in Warsaw.

I Join the Bund

That same year, momentous events took place in the life of the party. [That summer], the *Vereinigte* were united with [Bolesław] Drobner's socialist group, to form the Independent Socialist Party. The

⁵⁹ [TN: The wording here, "beide chavertes" (ביידע חבֿרעטעס), is ambiguous, as it could be used to mean three different things, which are actually all true in this case, as explained at length in Federman's 1957 book: a.) the two girls who were each other's friends; b.) Federman's two girlfriends (in the romantic sense), or c.) the two girls who were comrades in the party.]

conference of unification was held in Częstochowa. I participated in the conferences that took place following this merger. Elections to the Sejm were also held during this period, and all of us were sure that the Częstochowa region would put through Dr Józef Kruk, who was the first candidate in the list.

The result was that Kruk did not make it through [to the Sejm]. Not only that, but the close elections in the Częstochowa region [also] caused the downfall of the [second] candidate, [that of] the Jewish *Koło*⁶⁰, Prof Majer Bałaban. The PPS activist [Zygmunt] Żuławski made a joke about the failure of the Independent [Socialist Party] at a meeting, to the effect that "Even if only his [viz. Dr Kruk's] admirers had voted for him, he would still have drawn more votes than the whole Independent Party together".

Even as we merged with the Drobner group, I represented the view that the points which Dr Kruk and his followers had stressed in the project of unification - viz. "centralised emigration and concentrated colonisation, or territorialism" - were not the main focus of the programme. During the electoral campaign itself, I had the opportunity to appear before a large Jewish crowd in Kraków, where the main speech was delivered, in Polish, by Dr Drobner. In his formulation of the electoral platform, he showed how little acquainted he was with the Jewish question. Comrade Dembitzer answered him extremely well. His speech was so crushing, that I was forced to come up on stage and make a declaration to the effect that Dr Drobner's formulation had been erroneous, and that this had been a result of his lack of familiarity with the Jewish question.

I became even more convinced that the purpose of the merger was solely organisational - far from any territorialist ideology. For me, personally, this was the turning point in my ideological development that drove me to join the Bund.

I travelled home from this meeting in a depressed mood. Immediately, I met with the members in Częstochowa and declared that I had decided to leave the party.

At an official session of the city's collective of the independent organisation, which took several hours, I delivered a detailed declaration regarding my leaving the party and joining the Bund. A few active members left along with me, such as Rajzla and Mojsze Berkensztadt and others. This was a painful moment in my life. It took several months before I became active in the Bund. The comrades [from the party], with whom I was tightly bound at work, tried to convince me not to join the Bund and to continue working in the cultural institutions.

My first appearance for the Bund was at a meeting of the professional unions, alongside Comrade Berl Gutman, who had joined the Bund a bit earlier. My declaration, regarding joining the Bund, took place at a banquet, at which Comrade Henryk Erlich was present. This was one of the most elevated moments in my life. I felt that I had freed myself from the utopian ideals of so-called territorialism, which were not compatible with the idea of socialism.

When all the seats were given over, the Independent Party nevertheless did not demand of me to relinquish my position as a councillor on the City Council. I delivered a declaration in the City Council regarding this matter, and immediately joined the Bundist faction.

My second public appearance was with Dr Aron Singalowsky, who came from Berlin especially for Comrade Vladimir Medem's memorial *akademia* [ceremony]. The work in the party lifted me up. The organisation expanded. Several intellectual forces joined the party, such as Icek Samsonowicz, Zygmunt Epszajn and Ch. Wilczyński, and [there were also] sympathisers, such as Joachim Markowicz and the lawyer Lewkowicz, the teachers at the schools.

⁶⁰ [TN: Pol., lit. "Circle"; ref. to the bourgeois (Zionist and orthodox) element among the Polish Jewry (see above, p.134 and "Czenstochow" (1958), p.160).]



Chaja-Sure'le Federman

The *Arbeiter Zeitung* [Workers Newspaper] began to be published. Frequent lectures and meetings were held. Through my house such the party activists passed such as, the honourable comrades Henryk Erlich, Wiktor Alter, Chaim Wasser, Gerszon Zybert, Artur [Szmul Mordechaj] Zygelbaum, Moniek Orzech, Sura Szweber, Wiktor Szulman, Jakow Pat, Sz. Gilinski, female comrades Dina and Hister, Dr Aleksandrowicz, Baum, Dr Emanuel Szerer and Zygmunt Muszkat. Comrade Mojsze Lederman then returned from Berlin, with his wife Chaja [who was] from Berlin. He was a shoemaking labourer in a workshop - an exemplary Bundist. His loyalty to the Bund was truly "without limits". His home breathed Bundism. We became great friends and people always saw us together, which often led comrades to get our surnames mixed up - they called me Lederman, and him Federman. Consequently, they began to refer to us by our given names - to me as Comrade Raphael, and to him as Comrade Mojsze.

The meat worker, Izrael Jaronowski, a respected member of Vereinigte-Independent, also joined the party. Despite his trade⁶¹, he grew into one of the most conscientious workers. He was honest in his work and devoted to the labour cause with all his soul. In later years, he was elected *parnes* [delegate] of the Jewish Kehilla and took my place as chairman of the Częstochowa Bundist organisation.

I participated in all the party's conferences and in all branches of the movement. In the elections to the Kehilla, the organisation's two candidates were voted in - Aron Perec and myself. The appearances in the Kehilla put the organisation in a face-to-face fight with the Jewish religious officials. There, we introduced dozens of demands, thus gaining great sympathy from the Jewish populace. The delegates of the opposing parties treated our speeches with great civility, even though the battle was a bitter one. In the Kehilla, I met Szmul Goldsztajn (Wiktor Alter was his uncle), a scholarly and clever Jew. He represented Mizrachi [Religious Zionists], which fought doggedly against all the parties, but most acutely against the Bund. Rabbi Reb Nachum Asz, who had *hadras punim*⁶² and who was present at the Kehilla meetings, in principle, fought against the Bund - but in an elevated, cultured manner. And I must admit that, even though in the Kehilla I fought against the budget for religious needs, I could never bring myself not to rise along with all the delegates when he entered the session⁶³. Before I left Częstochowa for Paris, he saw fit to present me with the book he had written, with an appropriate educatory [sic dedicatory⁶⁴] inscription. All the Jewish parties were represented in the Kehilla, such as Mizrachi⁶⁵, Agudas Yisroel who were led by [Mendel] Fogel, General Zionists led by Katz and Niemirowski and the Craftsmen led by Abram Dzialowski, the former member of SDKPiL.

[Even] before the time of an independent Poland, several elections were held both to the City Council and the Kehilla. Each time, the Bund organisation received a larger number of votes.

Despite the organisation's growth, my financial situation was far from satisfactory. My only child, Chaja-Sure'le, who was being educated at the [I.L.] Peretz Kindergarten, was a very fine child and the joy of her parents' life. All the comrades who visited Częstochowa became very fond of her. It was not

⁶¹ [TN: See above, p.142, in the article "The General Jewish Bund" regarding Jaronowski and his profession: "The butchery trade – and working with kosher meat in particular – presented one with opportunities for fat, un-kosher profits. As leader of the professional union, he was a guardian of cleanliness and honesty.]

⁶² [TN: Heb., lit. "glory of the face", viz. majestic bearded countenance, from the Talmud Bavli, tractate Shabbes, p.152a: "The glory of the face is the beard."]

⁶³ [TN: To fulfil the biblical precept "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man" (Leviticus 19:32), which according to the rabbinical literature includes not only elderly persons but all Torah sages, even young ones – and the Rabbi was both elderly and a great sage.]

⁶⁴ [TN: This is stated explicitly in the author's 1957 book; the term "educatory" which appears here is most likely a misprint.]

⁶⁵ [TN: This party was headed by Szmul Goldsztajn, as mentioned above.]

a single occasion when, upon my arrival in Warsaw, for Bejrysz Michałowicz or Henryk Erlich, who had frolicked heartily with my dear little daughter, to remind me of one of her ditties.

When my wife's sister Terca [Tirzah] came on a visit to Częstochowa from Paris and saw our wrangle for existence, she vehemently implored us to settle in Paris.

Piłsudski's Party Takes Over the HMO [Health Fund] and I am Forced to Leave Częstochowa

By then, I had been employed for two years in the Insurance for Intellectual Workers (white-collar employees) department of the HMO. My office doubled as that of the organisation. When the so-called "Sanacja" came to power and all the socialist elements were effectively banished from there, I, too, fell victim, because I refused to sign a declaration of allegiance to the Piłsudski regime. I was rendered jobless and was forced to send my wife and child away to Paris.

My little daughter Chaja-Sure'le had begun attending school in Paris, and her mother did not wish to be separated from the child. I, too, needed to start thinking about leaving Poland and settling in Paris.

There is one event that took place in Częstochowa during Sanacja rule which, at the time, shook the entire city and which I cannot pass by without recounting:

An old PPS member - a loyal party activist named Jan Kostrzewa, whose home had always been inside the PPS Club premises - could not bear with indifference the fact that the Sanacja people, alongside the former NPR⁶⁶ members, in their wild rampaging, had demolished the PPS premises and publicly disgraced the red flags in the Town Hall square. This happened during the same period when all the PPS members were ousted from the HMO. Without the knowledge of his party, he burst into the magnificently-built HMO building precisely when a meeting of the Sanacja activists was being held and, with his revolver, shot almost everyone present - six people in total, including the commissar and a few higher Sanacja officials who worked there. With the seventh⁶⁷ bullet, he shot himself.

Kostrzewa himself was the *woźny* (caretaker) of the city's Museum of Hygiene, and that is where he lived. In his house, he left a note along with a couple of dozen złoty that he had saved up, requesting that they be put towards repairing the party's premises, and bequeathing his books to the club's library.

Even though the PPS organisation denied any part in this terrorist attack at the time, the repressions against the PPS poured down from every direction. Dozens of them were arrested, and an action was brought against two PPS workers in connection with the terror attack - and they were sentenced to death. The trial was held in the hall of the Częstochowa City Council. The two innocents were defended by lawyer Ludwik Honigwil (a Bundist) and other lawyers. It was only in the supreme court that they managed to be completely acquitted. Jan Kostrzewa, the one who had perpetrated the shooting, had certainly done this on his own initiative. You should have known him. He was a typical PPS member - a conscientious socialist. When he marched with the flag during a May [Day] demonstration it was like a sacred duty, [and he did so] with a profound conviction in the ideology with which he was permeated.

Despite the fact that it had been banned by the police, tens of thousands of workers from the factories attended his funeral, and they placed a wreath of flowers with a fitting inscription on the coffin. His own party hushed up his death and deed.

⁶⁶ [TN: *Narodowa Partia Robotnicza* (National Workers Party).]

⁶⁷ [TN: *It is likely that he used a Nagant M1895 seven-shot revolver, which was widespread throughout Eastern Europe at the time.*]

May these scant words of mine be our wreath for that humble, loyal fighter against fascism and for socialism, Jan Kostrzewa, the hero in whose honour they should nowadays erect a monument - because [his] was the first shot [fired] in our city against Polish fascism.

Twice I travelled to Paris during this period, to settle there with my family. But I was [still] drawn to the movement and to the Jewish working class. The second time I was in Paris, when I actually wished to become acclimatised there, for a certain period, I worked in handing out the *Pariser Wochenblatt* [Paris Weekly] together with Flws Sz. Rozenberg and Sz.L. Sznajderman.

I Travel Back to the Communal Work in Poland

At the bidding of the party's Central Committee, I immediately journeyed back to Warsaw and took over the work as one of the secretaries in the Commercial Employees Union.

The work was intense. Several successful Italian strikes⁶⁸ were carried out under my leadership. At the request of the Central, for some time, I also moved to Łódź and headed the work of the Commercial Employees Union there, which later grew into a very large organisation.

Back in Częstochowa, when I was still working as chairman of the Commercial Employees Union, I had several incidents with Markus Herszlikowicz, who was the Częstochowa Commercial Employees Union's secretary and represented the leftist faction [viz. Communist Party]. He had tried to control the Commercial Employees Union in Częstochowa by means both honourable and foul. He published pamphlets that were literally an open provocation against the union.

Later, he also worked in Warsaw in the so-called "leftist" faction's Commercial Employees Union on ul. Leszno, which was a rival to the [Bund's] Commercial Employees Union at ul. Zamenhof 5. The leadership of the union on ul. Leszno lay, at the time, in the hands of Comrade Mirski-Tabacznyk. Due to his unethical dealings in Częstochowa, I avoided meeting Herszlikowicz in Warsaw - even though he sought this at every opportunity.

A couple of months later, Comrade Mirski and several other activists were arrested and sent away to Kartuz-Bereza, and Herszlikowicz was shot by his own comrades - which they themselves made known. It had turned out that he had actually been in the service of the Polish secret police.

I Become Secretary of the Typographical Union

When Comrade Binem Warszawski⁶⁹ travelled away from Poland to Australia, the National Council of Professional Unions nominated me as secretary of the Central Management of the Typographical Union in Poland. I held this post from 1935 until the outbreak of the Second World War.

As secretary of the Typographical Union, I carried out several successful strikes in the *Akzidenzdruckereien*⁷⁰, as well as in an array of newspapers. The last strike at *Der Moment* even took on a political character. I was arrested twice. The first time was in a strike at the Polish-Yiddish Warsaw newspaper *5-ta Rano* [5:00 AM], which in a provocative manner let the union's delegation be detained. The publisher and editor of this paper was the renowned Zionist activist [Stanisław] Świsłocki⁷¹. But, under the union's pressure, he was forced to intercede personally for our release. The

⁶⁸ [TN: Most likely meaning strikes modelled after the Italian general strike of October 1922, led by the socialists against Mussolini.]

⁶⁹ [TN: Binem Warszawski died on 2nd March 1956 in Melbourne, Australia, at the age of 62.]

⁷⁰ [TN: Ger., commercial printing presses that print brochures, advertisements, business cards, menus etc.]

⁷¹ [TN: Although Świsłocki was most certainly a journalist who wrote for "5-ta Rano", we have found no mention in historical sources of his also having being the publisher and editor thereof.]

second time I was arrested was in a police raid on the union during a lecture by Comrade Sz. Mendelson. Dozens of Jewish workers were apprehended and beaten then. Along with me, on this occasion, they also arrested my wife Rywka, who had returned from Paris, my sister Cirla Alter, who was just then visiting us in Warsaw and also our friend Pola Kastersztajn. Following the interrogation, which took several days, all the detainees were released. I was held the longest because, in my interrogation, they questioned me rigorously regarding the shooting of the provocateur Herszlikowicz. Their suspicions arose from a report that they had to the effect that I had fought a war with him in the Częstochowa Commercial Employees Union, and from the fact that the moment he was killed, I had precisely then travelled for a short time to Paris.

My Daughter Chaja-Sure'le Dies



*Chaja Sure'le in 1936 in
Warsaw*

My journey to Paris was [actually] in connection with the most tragic event of my life. My daughter Chaja-Sure'le was in Paris together with her mother and attended school there. At the age of fourteen, in 1936, she came with her mother on a visit to Poland. After a few months of vacationing in Poland, she already travelled back to Paris on her own. My wife stayed with me in Warsaw. Sure'le made it to Paris safe and sound. At the very start of the school year, she suddenly fell ill with appendicitis and, despite having been operated on by one of the greatest professors, they still did not manage to keep her alive. My wife arrived in Paris and found her still in full consciousness. In her last words before she gave up her spirit, she said to her mother, "I have two mothers - you and Auntie Terca". She inquired after me, but by the time I had returned to Paris, all I found was a grave. She died on 24th October 1936.

This great tragedy cast darkness upon my personal life and even more so upon the life of my wife. A profound sorrow spread over both our lives.

I presented the police with documentary evidence regarding the cause of my abrupt journey to Paris, and this time, as one may expect, I was able to bring about the cessation of my interrogation.

When I returned to Warsaw with my wife, I once more reported for work at the Typographical Union. I must add that it was only thanks to the comradely atmosphere that reigned around the Typographical Union that I was able to bear, more lightly, the personal tragic loss of my only child, Chaja-Sure'le.

We cannot go on further without mentioning the magnificent figure of the beloved, kind-hearted, sagacious and always optimistically smiling chairman of the Typographical Union, Luzer Klug, with whom we worked and lived socially as with a kind, devoted father in a model family. It was very seldom that the anniversaries of communal activists were celebrated in Poland, but it was not without reason that Comrade Luzer Klug's fiftieth birthday was celebrated in such a joyous and uncontrived manner, not only by [all] the typographical workers without distinction of political affiliation - but by the entire Jewish proletarian Warsaw. All our Bundist activists and all the typographical workers, regardless of their political party, who only knew [him] and had something to say and write, participated in the album [published] in honour of Comrade Klug's birthday. He was one of the most active figures in the underground work in the Warsaw Ghetto, where he perished alongside his large family, to which he was so paternally bound. For as long as my eyes are open and my memory works, I shall see his figure [in my mind] and remember [him] with exaltation and respect.

The Typographical Union was a model union for all of Poland - it was never divided. Within it, all the factions of the proletarian movement cooperated. As late as May 1939, the fourth [annual] convention

was held in Warsaw and a plenary session of the Central Management Committee took place in Wilno. I helped in this work with all my strength. Even two or three weeks before the outbreak of the War, I represented the typographical workers at a convention of the Polish typographical workers in Katowice. The horror picture of the War already stood before one's eyes. I made a public appearance, together with the contemporary Sejm deputy [Jan] Stańczyk (currently a minister in Poland), and I spoke about the importance of a solidarity in the struggle for a new Poland - a Poland headed by the representatives of the peasants and workers.

By the time I had returned from the convention, the union, at the behest of the [Bund] Party, had already organised workers' battalions to dig trenches around Warsaw. Every day, the labourers marched willingly to work to help in the war against Hitler. Bundists, Poalei Zion, communists and nonpartisan - young and old - reported for the work.

It was precisely then - on the very eve of the War - that my wife left Warsaw. She wished to see her closest family in Paris and also had the intention to extend her consular passport [i.e. visa], the validity of which was about to expire. She was no longer able to return, as several days later - on 1st September 1939 - the War broke out.

The Second World War and My Refugee Path

The events of the War proceeded with lightning speed - bombs over Warsaw, thousands of wounded and casualties, trails of marching military and refugees from all the towns and *shtetls*. With giant strides, the War was nearing the gates of Warsaw. By the fourth and fifth days of the War, it was clear that Warsaw would fall into the hands of the Germans. By orders of the party's authorities, we destroyed all the important documents and the union's membership books so that they should not fall into the hands of Hitler's men.

The party's leadership decided that anyone, among the party members, who wished to do so, should leave Warsaw and cross to the other bank of the Wisła [Vistula River], where it was hoped that a resistance would yet be mounted. The party leaders settled that they would leave on 6th September at ten o'clock in the morning, and we were all to meet at the [Warsaw-]Wilno railway terminal.

This moment was more than painful. It was difficult - very difficult - for me to decide to leave Warsaw. I was at Comrade Mydler's house just then.

The party's leadership was leaving Warsaw at ten in the morning and we had to meet at the Wilno terminal. When, at the appointed hour, we arrived at the Wilno terminal, we already found little groups of members here and there. We were supposed to have taken a train, but a hail of bombs from incoming German aeroplanes dispersed us in all directions.

There was no more talk of travelling on a train and we, a group of members, decided to march on foot. Our route [after crossing to the eastern bank of the Wisła] was via Mińsk Mazowiecki, Kałuszyn, Siedlce, Międzyrzec [Podlaski], Biała Podlaska, Janów [Podlaski], Wysokie Litewskie [Vysokaje, Belarus], Kamieniec [Kamienyets], Prużana [Pruzhany], Kartuz-Bereza, Drohiczyn, [and finally] Pinsk. We were chased by German aeroplanes in every town and city in which we arrived. Burning cities, piles of dead and wounded, roads blocked with cars and people. From Siedlce onwards, I had the opportunity to walk in the group which included Henryk Erlich with his wife and son, Szlojme Mendelson, Emanuel Szerer and his wife, Chaim Wasser and others.

It was thus we walked all the way to Pinsk. Who knows if we would ever have reached it, were it not for the loyalty of the Bund members whom we met on our path of wandering? Much of the strength

to complete this route was drawn from Comrade Erlich, for example. Dozens of times, we had to fall to the ground due to the incoming German aircraft. Like a magnet, Comrade Erlich, with his dignified figure and self-control, his firm steps and intelligent smile, transferred to us his will to march on and on and strengthened everybody.

The last explosions of German bombs that we heard were when we arrived, in the morning, in Pinsk on 17th September. The local Pinsk residents suffered several casualties and a few wounded. In Pinsk, we found out that we would not need to continue walking onwards, as the Red Army was approaching from the other direction. We waited two days for the Red Army.

On 20th September 1939, the Red Army marched into Pinsk. I remained in this city until 13th October. Other comrades later arrived, such as Nojeh [?], Sura Szweder and others. The economic situation was difficult. I reported to the Commercial Employees Professional Union, which had then already been organised, and asked for work⁷². They registered my whole pedigree - both personal and political. I was not given any job. In the meantime, news arrived from the entire vicinity that my party comrades were being arrested in an array of cities, and that Comrade Wiktor Alter was apparently also already among the detainees. The last time I saw Wiktor Alter was in Międzyrzec [Podlaski], during a consultation [we held], and he was appointed to go with a group to Lublin, to carry on there, in any way possible, with his work against the Nazi invasion. There, in Międzyrzec, I shook his hand for the last time.

After the unsettling news regarding the treatment of Bundists by the Soviet regime, we decided that Comrade Erlich should leave Pinsk. The moment of parting company with Comrade Erlich was a touching and tragic one for everyone. I remember how we exchanged kisses with him with choked tears - and it is certain that no one at the time had an inkling that these would be our last [parting wishes of] "stay healthy" with our leader and teacher.

It was certainly a great disappointment to me when, several days later, I found out that Comrade Erlich had been arrested in Brisk [Brześć], and under what circumstances.

When it became known that Wilno would be given back to Lithuania⁷³, and that there was also no work, a group and I decided to move to Wilno. On 14th October 1939, I left Pinsk along with the group of Comrades Szerer, Chaim Wasser and Andzia Munowicz. We arrived in Wilno on 15th October. We were still by the train when the news reached us that my dear comrade Josef Aronowicz, who had worked so much along with me in developing the Labour movement in Częstochowa, had been arrested the previous night by the Soviet authorities, together with all the other members of the Bundist Committee in Wilno. Once more my soul is torn - *Why?* and dozens of times - *Why?* But who could give me an answer to that?

When Wilno was given over to Lithuania, the situation changed once again. Thousands of Jewish and Christian refugees arrived in Wilno. A refugee committee was formed. [Female] Comrade Andzia Munowicz and I were among the first who set about organising a soup kitchen for the Jewish refugees. Comrade Giterman, from the Joint, aided me greatly in provisioning the kitchen. The local Bund members also helped - particularly the schoolteacher Katz and her husband, who procured the first products for the kitchen by quite simply disregarding their personal safety and making great efforts, and who displayed great friendliness and devotion to our work. I [also] participated in the newly-formed Workers Aid Committee throughout the duration of its existence. Postal contact was established with the outside world. As soon as the Lithuanians took control, letters began to arrive from Poland and France. But [the transfer of power] did not go by without a small pogrom by

⁷² [TN: The organised professional unions acted as labour exchanges, finding jobs for their unemployed members.]

⁷³ [TN: During this period, Lithuania was a neutral country.]

Lithuanians and Poles. In this respect, the two enemies made peace. They smashed windowpanes and beat Jews.

After a few months, the Aid Committee's intensified and widened to such an extent - it set up dormitories to spend the night in and distributed clothing - that cultural activity also began to be established around the kitchen, where over five hundred lunches were given out every day.

The Lithuanian authorities, however, were not indulgent of the Workers Aid Committee's work, and they cast a bad eye upon it. Once, the police raided the premises, arrested several dozen individuals and made many of them leave Wilno, forcibly settling them in other Lithuanian towns, such as Poniewież [Panevėžys], Ukmergė [Wilkomierz] and other *shtetls*. The fate that befell me was to travel to Ukmergė. There, I received letters from my wife in Paris and my sister in Częstochowa and also from America. My friend Chaja'le Waga-Rotman had found out about my existence - and how great was my joy and encouragement when I received the first letter from her with the first fifteen dollars! This was already in the beginning of 1940.

A normal life was established in Lithuania under a temporary Lithuanian government.

Politics, at the time, were interpreted in various ways. When I had the occasion to be present, on May Day in 1940, in Wilno for a cup of tea with my own comrades, all I remember is that, when we discussed the situation, I told them, "At the moment, I am unable to show, with figures, how it will happen. But I have a profound conviction that the redemption in this war will come from Soviet Russia".

The arrests of Bundist still continued. The persecutions against our members cast fear in the ranks of the masses of Bundist refugees in Lithuania. The contacts that had been established with America awoke the hopes of being able to travel there from Lithuania. Even though it seemed like a fantastic dream – with what fantasies did a person *not* go about at that time?

Some time later, I received news from my friend Chaja'le Waga-Rotman to the effect that the Jewish Labour Committee in New York was making attempts to affect a wartime rescue of the labour activists who were in Lithuania. In short, the fantasy no longer seemed like a fantasy at all - it could become a reality. Chaja'le also wrote that she would do everything to hasten and facilitate my arrival.

Meanwhile, the situation in the battlefields was continuing to worsen. The Germans went from victory to victory. The embassies of the countries to which one could only escape gradually began to close. It is therefore self-evident that, when I entered the American consulate and the consul declared that he was willing to grant me a visa to America, I hardly dared believe my own ears. He asked me if I knew William Green in America. I replied that I knew who William Green was - that he was the President of the American Federation of Labour [AFL], and that I had had the opportunity to see him once at a convention of professional unions in Poland. "That will do!", the consul answered, "Make [every] effort to secure your visa as quickly as possible – the consulate is about to be closed."

Only after I had received the American visa - just a few days before the consulate was closed - did I start the [mad] dash and hustle to obtain the transit visas to cross Soviet Russia and Japan. That was the only way to reach America. After several weeks of exertions and fears, with my heart pounding every time I needed to be issued a paper or document, on 22nd September 1940, I finally left Lithuania.

Our comrade Rywka Pat, Jakow Pat's wife, had also already received an American visa along with myself, but she unfortunately did not live to obtain the Soviet transit visa. She died of a heart attack

and I was among the few members who accompanied her to the Wilno cemetery. This was the last funeral of a close friend that I attended in Poland.

In America

In my voyage⁷⁴, I passed through the following main cities: Minsk, Moscow, Sverdlovsk [Yekaterinburg], Brisk Tatarsk [?], Krasnoyarsk, [Lake] Baikal, Irkutsk, Chita, Kuybyshev⁷⁵, Birobidzhan and others. I was in Vladivostok by Rosh Hashana. On 7th October 1940, I boarded a Japanese ship in Vladivostok along with the whole group of thirty people, who were the first to be rescued by the Jewish Labour Committee. On 9th October, we arrived in Tsuruga and, on the 10th, in Kobe. On 16th October 1940, we departed from Kobe aboard the Japanese vessel Heian Maru. On the 19th, we were in Yokohama [and] on the 30th, we sailed through Vancouver. On 31st October, we disembarked from the ship in Seattle, Washington. Here, Comrade Mencoﬀ, the representative of the Labour Committee, awaited us.

The first meeting with the American friends took place in Chicago and, on the second day, I travelled to see my fellow *Częstochower landsmann*, the renowned Yiddish publisher Mojsze Cieszynski. On 9th November, we finally arrived in New York - the global city which I had once dreamt to visit, and which I had almost visited before the War as a delegate of the *Częstochowa* organised workforce, but had not done so due to some hindrance. Now, I had come as a refugee.

I had no family or relatives in America, but I knew that I had comrades and friends, and even intimate friends here - only I had almost never conducted any correspondence with them.

New York already made no special impression on me – not even the skyscrapers. The greatest wonder for me was the greenery, the parks, that I found here. I had always imagined America as one big factory and I ended up seeing grass - truly green grass - and trees, and hearing the twittering of the birds.

Upon meeting friends and acquaintances, I was often asked, “How do you like America?” Having no response, I shrugged my shoulders and, without waiting for my answer, they immediately told me that I was going to “live it up”⁷⁶ and that I was going to be “alright”⁷⁷ in America. This gave me a stab in the heart. My reply was, “I have not come here to ‘live it up’ - I am only staying temporarily”. I could by no means come to terms with the idea that I was already a local - I was still thinking about “there”.

When Comrade Artur [Szmul Mordechaj] Zygelbaum arrived here, bringing live greetings from the tortured and fighting Jewish masses, towards which I felt such a profound and devoted closeness, my desire to work for my remaining *landsleit* there grew even stronger. It was my hope that all the rescued Bund members, who had been flung by the War’s torrent all the way to New York, would build from ourselves our own self-imposed barrack and live on bread and salt⁷⁸, taking “here” the same path of many sacrifices that those who had remained loyal to our ideology - that of the Bund - were following “there”. How could this be any other way? But upon whom could one count, if hatred and civil war were reigning in the Jewish working street, instead of international solidarity?

Weeks and months race by. I look around me. The majority of my comrades have been swallowed up by the workshops. People lead a comparatively normal life, “live it up”, and are “alright”.

⁷⁴ [TN: As mentioned in the author’s 1957 book, he travelled by train from Moscow to Vladivostok – obviously with the Trans-Siberian Railway, as may be seen from most of the stops listed below.]

⁷⁵ [TN: Probably ref. to the town by this name in the Novosibirsk Oblast in eastern Russia, although this would mean that, unlike all the other towns, this one is listed out of the geographical sequence, as it is to the west of Krasnoyarsk.]

⁷⁶ [TN: The expression used in the Yiddish original is “machen a leben” (make a life), which is used as “live it up” or “have a blast” is in English.]

⁷⁷ [TN: In English in the original (אַל־רײַט), to show that even his friends already spoke in a manner alien to the author by introducing English words into their conversations in Yiddish.]

⁷⁸ [TN: Both the “barrack” and the “bread and salt” are used figuratively, meaning that they would live a Spartan life.]

[Nevertheless,] we have conversations about the great yearning for our home of old. Letters are written and the tidings we receive [in response] are bad and worse. We send aid and we feel how we are starting to spin along with the wheel of American life.

In order to survive, I was compelled to come to a workshop, and I bound my communal activity to the Czenstochover Relief Committee. I set myself the goal to entwine and bind the simple Jews among the *landsleit*, regardless of any ideologies, with the old home Cześćchowa - so that, when the resplendent hour arrived, we should be able to take over the role of the annihilated community.

During the entire time that I have been in America, I have considered myself a member of the Polish Bund Party. I have sought ways to be physically reconnected with it. Sadly, I am powerless to achieve this - and this is a painful experience for me.



**Rywka Federman, wife
of R. Federman (came to
America from Paris on
9th September 1946)**

I have made the activity for the United Czenstochover Relief Committee my main goal. Here, *Cześćchower landsleit* of all tendencies work together - from religious people to communists. I have endeavoured to strengthen the warm atmosphere and to promulgate the cause for which the Relief has been working. The idea to publish the book *Czenstochover Yidn* has cemented this cause.

In connection with this activity, I came into contact with hundreds and even thousands of *landsleit* in New York, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, Toronto and Montreal – and all of them without exception, both members of the [Bund] Party and opposers, welcomed me in a friendly and comradely manner and responded with loyalty to the cause with which I came to them. I sensed from them understanding and a deep feeling of love to their *landsleit* in the home of old, to their sisters and brothers across the ocean who survived our bloodied foes. May their hands be strengthened!

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As I finish writing these words, I am turning 55. I am in well-fed, wealthy and great America, yet I am nevertheless in exile. I am the only one left of my family, whose legacy - the ashes scattered over the world, which are a part of the six million-strong annihilated Jewry - I absorb into myself. I shall carry it inside me for as long as my eyes see this world. I shall continue devoting my strengths so that the ashes should awaken and demand that the soil, which has been made fruitful by the ashes of our sisters and brothers, should only be able to bear upon itself a world of rectitude, justice and love of one human being to another and one nation to another, and that my Jewish people be among them.