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Nowo Radomsko

In Yiddish, the town should have been called “*Naye Radomsk*” - or better yet, “*Ying* [Young] *Radomsk*”, because Radomsko, [which is] near Częstochowa, was distinguished for its youthful ardour, hot temperament, lust for life and enthusiasm - both for old as well as new ideas.

Nowo Radomsko is like a suburb of Częstochowa. One takes a seat on the Warsaw-Vienna railway line and is in Radomsko within half an hour.

In Częstochowa, there were many Nowo Radomsker *Chassidim*¹. But there were even more *Częstochower “Chassidim”*² of other affiliations in Nowo Radomsko. This was the entire young generation of Zionists, Poalei Zion, members of SS, Vereinigte and Bundists, who were under Częstochowa’s influence.

But many young lads from Częstochowa were also influenced by Nowo Radomsko - more precisely, by the *Radomsker* girls, who were famed for their beauty.

This is what the renowned musician Mechel Gelbart, director of the *Arbeiter-Ring*’s choir, who in Radomsko directed the Ha’Zamir³, writes in the *Nowo Radomsker Almanac* about the town:

Nowo Radomsko belongs to the category of Jewish towns in Poland which was never left behind in any area. When Haskala [Jewish Enlightenment], and later Socialism, began to infiltrate the Jewish street, Radomsko was among the first [localities] where these ideas became adopted.

When the Ha’Zamir choirs blossomed in Poland, Nowo Radomsko was among the first to organise one such Ha’Zamir and when Nowo Radomsko did something, it had to be better and more far-reaching than anywhere else.

Before my eyes stands the magnificent Ha’Zamir locale, with its large, beautiful concert hall and its own library - a spiritual and communal home for the youth.

Ha’Zamir did not only have a good choir, but also a drama section, which performed dramas by Jewish writers, such as *With the Stream* by Sholem Asch. Yiddish literary works were read and discussed. Literary evenings were held.

According to the memoirs of the Nowo Radomsker Ha’Zamir, by Maks Szapiro in that same Almanac, Ha’Zamir was founded in 1909. Ha’Zamir achieved the highest level of its development when the renowned composer Matesyahu Bensman was engaged as director of the choir. Besides holding concerts of classical and folkloric Yiddish music, they also performed the Hebrew [version of the] opera *The Jews* by [Evgeny Nikolayevich] Chirikov, with music by M. Bensman.

¹ [TN: After the Chassidic courts of Góra Kalwaria and Aleksandrów Łódzki, the Radomsko Chassidic dynasty, which was founded in 1843 by Rebbe Szlojme Ha’Cohen Rabinowicz, was the third largest in all of Poland.]

² [TN: Borrowed from its religious Chassidic context, this term is used in Yiddish and Hebrew to denote an ardent follower of any ideology.]

³ [TN: The Nightingale; a musical society.]

Years later, during the First World War, thanks to Ha'Zamir, the *Kultura* society was established, which conducted wide cultural activity amid the youth.

After Mojsze Szwarc⁴ returned from the Land of Israel, he was an active figure in Ha'Zamir. He would give lectures and organise theatrical performances. He would also bring down, from Częstochowa, his friend Szmul Frank with the drama circle, who performed [Jacob] Gordin's *The Yiddish King Lear* and other pieces.

Under the Austrian Occupation During the First World War

Austria's occupation during the First World War was, in every respect much milder, than that of the Germans in an entire array of other cities.

Economic and communal life in town more or less stabilised. Pre-War industry was actually completely paralysed - the large furniture factories and [also] the small-scale ones came to a halt. As a result, new wartime livelihoods developed, such as transporting food products and other goods from one town to another. This became the main source of income for both the Jewish and non-Jewish population. Everyone handled and traded. The real name for this was *smuggling*.

But it was precisely during this period that fervent communal and cultural activity began in Radomsko, as in most cities of Poland. It was as if the youth had awoken from a long, lethargic slumber. With all the hot *Radomsker* temperament, they plunged into the new, life-giving stream that was called *culture*. The poorest echelons, as well as the richest, the tailors and cobblers, as well as the intellectuals – everyone was governed by this stream of culture.

The institution, around which all grouped, was the well-known *Kultura*, with its library and reading-room. Like hungry locusts, every evening, the youth fell upon the library and reading-room and the books are carried in the street, as if Radomsko had been turned into a university city.

Rich cultural evenings, with musical programmes, are held. Preparations are made for every cultural evening as if for a great holiday. The leaders of the Jewish bourgeois and labour parties come frequently from Warsaw to agitate for their programmes and ideals. [Among those who] came [were] the Zionist leader Heszal Farbsztajn, the SS leader Dr Josef Kruk, Pinie Bukshorn, the Bund's leader Vladimir Medem, *Poalei Zion's* Zerubavel and [Gerszon] Dua-Bogen.

Under the influence and leadership of the party centres in Warsaw, as well as those in the neighbouring city of Częstochowa, the organisations of the Jewish Labour parties in Poland are formed in Radomsko. The organisations of the SS, later Vereinigte, are established, which - following [the example of] Częstochowa - occupy first place in Radomsko. They were followed by *Poalei Zion* and the Bund. The professional unions, which were later formed, were run by Vereinigte and the Bund. A *konsum* cooperative [shop] was created, which was run by Vereinigte and *Poalei Zion*. A workers' kindergarten was established - the most modern and beautiful that was created on the Jewish street. The great, new epoch of the Russian Revolution arrived, which revolutionised the working masses in a large measure. This [was] already [something that] the occupation force, even that of the "beloved" Austrians, disliked very much.

The War, however, also presented Radomsko with other events, which interrupted both the "cultural idyll" and the fight of the political parties.

⁴ [TN: Later an active member of the *Nowo Radomsker landsmannschaft* in New York.]

A train arrived in Radomsko, with homeless people from the warfronts in White Russia [Belarus] and Lithuania. The homeless - mostly Jews, and a few of their Christian neighbours - had travelled arduously on the trains for several weeks, until they were brought to Radomsko. The *Radomsker* youth (may they be blessed!) interrupted the battle of the parties for a while, rolled up their sleeves and, with their habitual *Radomsker* fervour and enthusiasm, threw themselves into the work of providing the first aid for the unfortunate Jewish war victims. Young, powerful hands carried the old, broken bodies of the refugees and dragged their *klimakes*⁵, which they had managed to rescue from the War's destruction. A temporary home for them was arranged in Kohn's factory. Immediately afterwards, groups organised to collect food and to procure bedding and everything that the homeless needed. This was not a one-time task, but a regular, day-to-day, devoted concern and work, which also entailed a difficult struggle with the Austrian municipal authorities, because - while it was possible to obtain warm food and other necessities from the Jewish population - such luxuries as sugar and coal had to be wrenched from the Austrian "*Behörden*" [authorities]. But this, too, was done. In this field, the brilliant activists Fiszl Gliksman and Lajzer Bajgelman distinguished themselves in quite an exceptional manner. Fiszl Gliksman, with his vernacular soulfulness and humour, particularly encouraged and cheered the spirits of the dejected homeless.

The brotherly affection and friendliness that Radomsko showed the homeless evoked, within them, the warmest sentiments towards the town and its Jews. They venerated Fiszl and Lajzer. Many of these homeless later moved to America - and, here, with their aid and interest for Radomsko, they showed their gratitude towards our hometown of old.

This, obviously, is but a brief and incomplete picture of Radomsko during the [First World] War.

A Town of Torah and Chassidism

Nowo Radomsko, however, was also famed for its rabbis, pious Jews and *Chassidim*. The names of the most famous rabbis have remained immortalised in the books which they created - *Tiferes Shloime*⁶ and *Chessed Le'Avruhom*⁷. Numerous popular legends were spun around them, which were passed down from generation to generation.

The Good Jews⁸ of Radomsko had a large number of followers in Poland and Galicia. During the High Holidays, the town was filled with them.

From the start of the 18th century, when Jews began to settle in Radomsko and until the 1930's, the Jewish population there reached over 11,000 souls.

Trade and Crafts

The trade and crafts lay mostly in Jewish hands. The four-sided marketplace was made up of the [town's] most beautiful buildings, and it was like a large display of Jewish businesses. Every Thursday was "Market Day". The peasants, from the surrounding *shtetls* and villages, would bring their rural products to sell and to trade for the town's goods.

⁵ [TN: Most likely meaning "bundles"; probably mutation of the Belarusian word "клубак" (klunak), which may have been used by the refugees and was unfamiliar to their Polish hosts.]

⁶ [TN: "Splendour of Solomon," by Rebbe Szlojme Ha'Cohen Rabinowicz (1801-1866), First Grand Rabbi of the Radomsko Chassidic dynasty.]

⁷ [TN: "Mercy to Abraham", by Rebbe Avrum-Yissuchor-Dov Ha'Cohen Rabinowicz (1843-1892), youngest son of the former, and Second Grand Rabbi of the Radomsko dynasty.]

⁸ [TN: Among the typically minimalistic Polish Jews, the Hebrew term "tzaddik" (righteous man) which is generally used in Judaism in ref. to a saint was usually replaced with the much simpler title "Gitte Yid," or "Good Jew."]

Radomsko also had a large button factory, where many Jewish workers were employed. The owners of this factory were the renowned Fajerman family. There was also a large cigarette-papers factory there named "Grunis."

Jews also played a dominant role in the professions of cobblers, tailors and joiners. The town had an entire array of professional unions, run by the Jewish parties SS, Poalei Zion, Bund and Communists.

Soon after the First World War, when the Workers' Councils were established, the PPS, together with the NZR (Narodowy Związek Robotniczy) [National Workers' Union] formed a Workers' Council without the participation of the Jewish workers. Later, they let in one representative of each Jewish Socialist faction - the only representative in the Provisional Workers' Committee was Vereinigte's Hirszl Krauze.

In the 1919 elections to the City Council, six Jewish and three Polish lists of candidates stood. Those elected as councillors were three from Vereinigte, three from Poalei Zion, two from the Ha'Poel Ha'Mizrachi⁹ craftsmen and Zionists list, and two from [Agudas] Shloimei Emunei Yisroel¹⁰. Seven were elected from the PPS, three from NZR and four from *Endecja*. The Bund and Tzeirei Zion [Youth of Zion] received seventy votes each - in order to put a candidate through, 165 votes were necessary. The City Council, which was made up of twenty-four councillors, had a Socialist majority - thirteen against eleven.

The Religious Life

The religious Jews, too, were divided into various groups. The *balebatim*¹¹, who were cobblers, tailors and of other trades, congregated on *Shabbosim* and holidays at the town's [Main] Synagogue.

The New Study-Hall was the gathering point of the middle-class, quiet *balebatim*. The bakers and small traders also worshiped there. The Jewish porters had their own *minyán* [prayer quorum].

Chassidic groups, such as the *Gerers*, *Aleksanderers*, *Rozprzers*, *Amshinovers*¹² and others had their own Chassidic *shtieblech* [small prayer-houses].

The Old Study-Hall belonged, by right of inheritance, to the *Radomsker Rebbe's* court. That is where the *Radomsker Chassidim* would congregate on the *Shabbosim* and on holidays to celebrate Chassidism.

Thus events transpired for long years. The last *Rebbe* was *Rebbe Awreme'le*, the son of the *Amshinover Rebbe*, who married the daughter of the *Radomsker Rebbe*, Reb Jechaskiel¹³. He had many *Chassidim* among the small tradesmen and craftsmen. He adapted himself to the progressive world and was much loved in Radomsko.

With him, Hitler's murderers severed the chain of the *Radomsker Rebbes'* court.

⁹ [TN: "The Eastern Worker"; religious Zionist political party.]

¹⁰ [TN: "Union of Faithful Believers of Israel"; full name of the Agudas Yisroel party at its beginning.]

¹¹ [TN: Plural form of the Hebrew term "ba'al ha'bait" (pronounced "balebus" in Yiddish), lit. "owner of the house," used in Yiddish in ref. to a working or middle-class burgher, generally uneducated in the Talmud, yet respected.]

¹² [TN: Followers of the Chassidic courts of Góra Kalwaria, Aleksandrów Łódzki, Rozprza and Mszczonów, respectively. The dynasties of Ger, Aleksander and Amshinov are widely known to this day (2021). The less-known Rozprza dynasty was an offshoot of the Przedbórz dynasty, founded by Rebbe Awrum-Mojsze Weltfajd (1839-1918).]

¹³ [TN: According to historical sources and known family trees, Rebbe Awreme'le Kalisz, the youngest son of Rebbe Menachem of Amshinov, married Cypa-Miriam Rabinowicz, the daughter of Rebbe Avrum-Yissuchor-Dov Ha'Cohen, author of "Chessed Le'Avruhom" and father of the Reb Jechaskiel (author of "Knesses Yechezkel" and Second Grand Rabbi of Radomsko) mentioned here - thus making Rebbe Awreme'le of Amshinov-Radomsk and Rebbe Jechaskiel of Radomsk brothers-in-law, and not father and son-in-law, as stated here.]

The Annihilation of Nowo Radomsko

The annihilation of the Jewish population in Nowo Radomsko was carried out by the German Nazi murderers by the same standard and according to the same system as in an entire array of other Jewish towns. In many cases, the German killers employed the same methods as in Częstochowa. The two towns - which were so closely connected in their life and development - suffered the same fate in their undoing.

"O earth, cover not thou their blood¹⁴" - let the innocent blood never be forgotten. We shall never forgive the murderers!

¹⁴ [TN: Altered from Job 16:18: "O earth, cover not thou **my** blood."]