

Częstochowers in Paris

In Paris, there are now a large number of [Jews] from Częstochowa and the vicinity. It is difficult to provide the exact number - our estimate is around 300 people. Prior to the Second World War, the number was much larger. More than half were deported and perished in the German death camps.

A great emigration of *Częstochowers* to Paris began in 1919, shortly after the First World War. These were mostly people who had been forced to emigrate to Germany. From there, they came to Paris.

Reasons that were common to all the immigrants from Poland and other countries, such as loneliness, ignorance of the language and an unfamiliarity with the country's way of life, the longing for a home-like atmosphere and helplessness in cases of need and during an illness - all those things which drove the Jewish immigrants in Paris to form the *landsmannschaft* unions - also led to the formation of the society "The Friends of Częstochowa" [Les Amis de Czenstochow] in 1928.

It is difficult to give an account of the Society's activity in these twenty years. We only wish to emphasise that our work has been almost identical to that of all the immigrants' unions in France. At first, the work was conducted in a limited measure - few young people took part in it. The main weight was laid upon a bit of soil in the event of death, a small monetary support in the time of need, and medical assistance for a member and his family. It was also the practice to visit sick members and to aid them in all their needs. The Society was non-political and conducted its activity within its limited circle.

With the rise to power of Nazism in 1933, the situation changed. The first mass expulsions of Jews from Germany in 1934 to Zbąszyń (Poland) stirred the Jewish national conscience in the world. We, the *Częstochowers* in Paris, also contributed our share, collecting money and clothes for the first Jewish victims. When a large number of refugees began streaming into Paris, we joined in the work at the public kitchen that had been created, which fed thousands of hungry people. When, in 1936, the Fascist revolution broke out in Spain, and thousands of Jews fought in the ranks of the Spanish Loyalists, *Częstochowers* were among them, who fought and fell in the war against fascism.

In 1938, a great change took place in our *Częstochower* Society, prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

With the arrival of a younger element within the immigrants from Poland, who had already been through the fire of the struggle against the local fascism and antisemitism there, our society received a new countenance. The "soil" ceased to occupy the foremost position in the Society's work. Meetings became livelier. Cultural talks were introduced. Our society supported the TOZ, which cared for our hometown's sick and infirm children, and worked alongside the existing *Częstochower* Patronage in Paris, which supported the political arrestees in the Polish prisons. Our society also helped form the Jewish People's Clinic [?] in Paris, which administered medical aid to thousands of Jews in Paris.

Understandably, the struggle between old and young existed here also. But the run of events smoothed out all difficulties. The Society [also] endeavoured to include, within it, all the *landsleit* from the *shtetls* surrounding Częstochowa, such as Kłobuck, Krzepice and others.

The Second World War

With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the majority of the *landsleit* were mobilised or voluntarily joined the French Army. The contours of Oświęcim, Majdanek and Treblinka were already outlined on the horizon. The Society's activity was paralysed. Nevertheless, the small number of members, who remained not mobilised, busied themselves with sending support to the members in the army and, in a few cases, also supported their wives and children.

With the advent of the sorrowful date of 14th June 1940, when Hitler's armies marched into Paris, our society's work ceased altogether – but, individually, our members joined in the work of the general aid organisations which supported the victims of the barbaric Fascism and the first Jews imprisoned in the Drancy death camp, near Paris. The work became harder from day to day. The black clouds in the Jewish sky became darker with each hour. Sorrow and pain filled every Jewish soul and blood dripped from every Jewish heart. Men were torn away from their wives and children, women holding little infants in their arms were deported, and Jewish possessions and goods were pillaged and stolen by German bandits and French collaborators.

Every couple of days, [railway] carriages were packed with Jewish men, women and children, and sent away to the death camps in Poland and Germany. Among them, there was also a great number of *Częstochowers*. Under such circumstances, it was impossible to carry out any organised work - but a large number of *landsleit* took part in the Resistance Movement and distinguished themselves with their heroic courage. Within the framework of this article, it is impossible to dwell upon this any further.

After the Storm

Following the defeat of the Nazis, when the sky began to clear, we saw the profound devastation for the first time. Our best and most active members were missing. [There was] sorrow and agony in the hearts of the survivors, yet mixed with the joy that we had lived to see the defeat of the greatest and most fearsome murderer of Jews in our history - and it was as if we had risen from the dead!

The few survivors began searching scouring the ruins to seek out any remaining living soul of our *Częstochower* family in Paris. With praise and gratitude, let us mention here our president Flw Wrocławski and the other members of the Committee, who did everything within their power to set our society back up again. When the first returning *Częstochower* Jewish deportees began to appear, each one - member or non-member - received 1000 francs¹ as first help. The treasury was nearly empty, but the Committee worked beyond its strengths to, at the very least, provide the survivors even if only with this small material and moral aid.

Our society is now working together with the General Aid Committee for the support the children of those who perished in the German death camps, with the Union of the Jewish Societies in France², with the People's Clinic and with the Loans Fund. Our ranks are slowly beginning to increase, but we are not yet able to come to the aid of all those in need. Some people remain whom we must aid. These are women with children who, even working, are unable to sustain the children. Our society is becoming stronger. On 12th January 1946, we held an evening ball with a great concert. We got together with joy mixed with sorrow - but life, after all, is stronger than death and its grief, and we rise up to a new life.



¹ [TN: A little over eight USD at the time.]

² [TN: Official name: "FARBAND – Union des Sociétés Juives de France."]

It is with joy that we, the *Częstochowers* in Paris, have welcomed the glad tidings of your decision to publish the book *Czenstochow* [sic *Czenstochover Yidn*].

We send you a brief history of the *Częstochowers* in Paris, along with our hearty greetings to all *landsleit* of *Częstochowa* and its vicinity [living] in America.

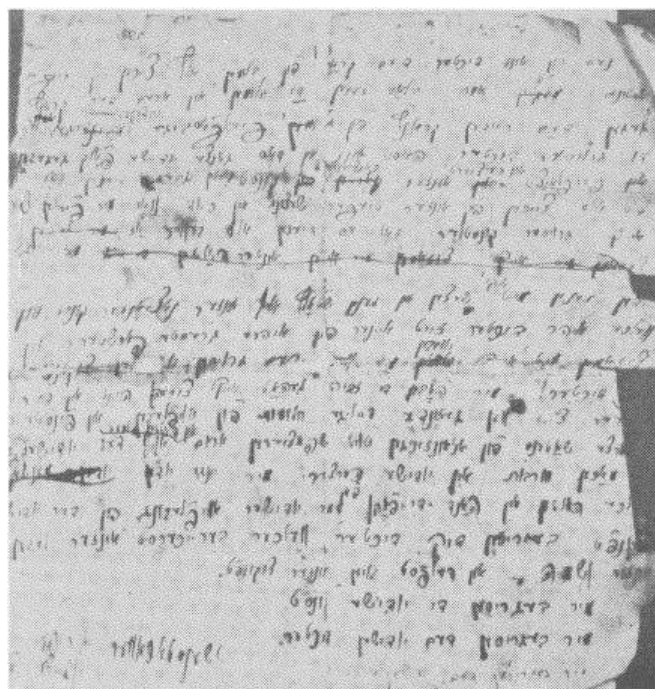


***Committee of the "Friends of Czenstochow" society in Paris, January 1946;
Seated (R-L): Tenenbaum (General Secretary), Levy (Vice-President), Wrocławski (President)
and Dawidowicz (Vice-President);
Standing (R-L): Wajnman (Treasurer), Firstenfeld, Krzepicki, Duman, Landau
and Pankulowski [sic. Pankowski]***

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, the United Czenstochover Relief in New York began a vigorous aid activity for the *Częstochowers* in Paris. Food parcels, money and other aid was sent in large measure. Now, too, the United Czenstochover Relief in New York does not cease to provide aid for the *Częstochowers* in Paris and other countries.



Along with our report, we also wish to mention the names of our society's founders. They are Blum, Artman, A.[x] Ferleger, the Wrublewski brothers, A.[x] Slabiak, the Gutman brothers, B. Kopinski, Wajsbrod, Cymberknopf, Kamelgarn, Pankowski, A.[x] Kopinski and J.[?] Lewkowicz.



A manuscript by Abram Wiewiorka, who lived in Częstochowa and died in Moscow, the brother of Wowcze Wiewiorka from Paris (the latter perished in Oświęcim).



For the article "Kamyk"